

**CABINET, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Scullion (Deputy Leader, In the Chair)  
Councillors Metcalfe, Patient, Press, Shoukat and Wilkinson.

**54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor T Swift MBE.

*(The meeting closed at 18:49 hours).*

**55 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF CABINET HELD ON 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019**

**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2019 be deferred to the meeting of Cabinet to be held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019 for approval.

**56 QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions asked by members of the public or Councillors.

**57 CALDERDALE LOCAL PLAN**

Councillor Scullion, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Resources presented a written report of the Director, Regeneration and Strategy regarding the implications of the interim conclusions reached by the Planning Inspector, who examined the Calderdale Local Plan (Publication Draft) following the first stage of Hearings, which were held between 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019 – 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019. The Local Plan, which was the Council's key land use planning document for the next 15 years underpinned the Council's 'Vision 2024', with its emphasis on resilience, enterprise, distinctiveness, kindness and the attraction/nurturing of talents.

Following receipt of the post-Hearing letter, which was received by the Council on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the Council commissioned Turley, (who had prepared the 2015 and 2018 Strategic Housing Market Assessments) to undertake further analysis of the relationship between Calderdale's housing requirement and economic growth aspirations. The report highlighted the key conclusions of the Turley study and recommended the next steps that the Council should be taking to achieve a sound Local Plan which would deliver a sustainable scale and distribution of new homes, jobs and facilities, whilst protecting and nurturing the environment.

The report considered two alternative approaches to providing sufficient supply of housing, and in responding to the Inspector, it recommended the 'sustainable' option which embodied a focus on regeneration and brownfield sites within or around the town centres of Calderdale, and timely delivery on allocated sites and creative mixed use, where appropriate. In respect of the requirements for new allocations, these would be in sustainable locations close to existing or planned transport investments and established transport corridors. The approach balanced environmental, social and economic factors, whilst being sensitive to the climate emergency declaration; it supports the delivery of 10,000 jobs and 3,000 affordable homes in the next 15 years. The approach would enable the Council to adopt its Local Plan within an acceptable timescale, facilitate carefully planned investment and resist lower quality or damaging proposals, which were likely in the absence of adoption of the Local Plan.

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The report outlined background information, options considered, financial, legal, human resources and organisational development, environmental, health and economic implications.

Councillor Scullion, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Resources recognised the work that had gone into the analysis of the underlying assumptions and statistical projections on which the current Local Plan proposals, and in particular the paper before Cabinet was based. Commentators on the Plan, particularly Friends of the Earth had gone into great detail to challenge some of the underpinning arguments. At the same time Officers had prepared the Plan meticulously, seeking to bring forward a document that would be right for Calderdale and would pass the tests of soundness, deliverability and compliance with National Policy, which the Inspector would apply. Officers had further sought to underpin the Council's response to the Inspector's letter with a short but clear commissioned report from Turley, which explained the links between housing and employment figures. The report updated the principal statistical drivers of the housing need calculations and then indicated revised requirements under different scenarios.

The Officers' report was well prepared and presented Cabinet with options. The Sustainable Option was considered the more attractive one, given the Council's ambitions of balancing economic, social and environmental agendas. It would assist the Council's aim in protecting Calderdale's open land, and higher quality areas for wildlife and landscape, wherever this could be reasonably balanced with providing good jobs in the Borough to the benefit of its residents.

It was deemed that the Council should not lose sight of the fact that the Inspector had indicated that its approach to economic growth and employment land provision was 'soundly based' and in accordance with National Policy. The 'soundly based' economic growth ambition, linked to ongoing and planned investments in infrastructure, would bring vigour and resilience to the Borough, and up to 10,000 new jobs. The Inspector indicated briefly that consideration could be made in 'scaling back' this ambition. At that point, the Plan was likely to unravel. There was potential for there to be non-compliance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its requirement for the Local Plan to be positively prepared and supportive of economic growth. The Council would put new jobs at risk, and potential risk to existing jobs, as firms would be trapped in older, cramped, premises, unable to grow and with poor transport links to markets, to their workforce and to suppliers.

The Inspector strongly advised that a revision be made of the housing allocation, to better match the Council's economic ambition. The Inspector stated that this would likely mean allocations to support delivery of at least 1001 dwellings per annum. This figure was linked to the findings on housing needs of the Strategic Market Housing Assessment (SHMA), and would support baseline growth as a minimum, which would allow for some 3,000 affordable homes as part of that total.

Further work by Turley had identified a recommended figure of 1040 homes per annum. This would support what was termed the 'Policy On Plus Transport' option. This option reflected the Leeds City Region and Economic Partnership growth aspirations, the development and support of high quality jobs in key sectors of the economy, and all of the associated investment in infrastructure, for example: roads,

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rail and bus, cycling and walking, and associated community facilities that had been planned.

Much consideration had been made to all of this and there was a need to make a decision for Calderdale, for the Council to 'move on' and sustain the momentum in adopting a Local Plan. It was acknowledged that there was a real risk of the Government imposing a Plan, if one was not adopted. There was also a risk in terms of random application and consents, of development unchecked by a set of policies which were consistent with the Council's values; of continued low delivery and housing shortage, and a lack of affordable housing and higher housing requirements per annum, due to time lost. In taking all of this into account, a decision needed to be made on a number, clarification of impact on the sites which would be put to public for consultation and the results of this consultation going to the Inspector for the consideration at the next round of Local Plan Hearings. The advice from Officers, informed by the Turley study, was to agree a figure of 1040 per annum. The sites were required to deliver that, using the sustainable option which had been circulated with the Cabinet papers.

Following consideration of all the evidence, an amendment was to be proposed. Following scrutiny of the Turley study, which was logical and methodical but inevitably based on various assumptions about economic activity, commuting rates, population change and household formation rates and participation rates in the job market, etc. The Turley study was one of the best the Council had available, but in reality it was felt that nobody was certain it would 'hold good' for 15 years, and some of the variables were deemed to be volatile. The relationship between homes and jobs were also complicated, and the Inspector had also commented on this complexity in the letter, which brought an element of uncertainty. Therefore, there was a note of caution required for Calderdale, and it was proposed the Policy on Plus Transport scenario was considered, but at this stage provision for its housing implications over 10 years (rather than 15 years) would be proposed. This would mean providing around 1000 homes per annum, a figure almost identical to the Inspector's steer of a minimum of 1001 homes per annum. In year 10, the approach would then be able to be reviewed if necessary.

Following the Local Plan Working Party meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019, Officers had been asked to provide a model of impact based on 1000 dwellings per annum, which would mean that around 600 homes in the greenbelt could be removed from the plans circulated prior to this Cabinet meeting. This would identify those which were deemed to be 'less sustainable' in the current plans and the more isolated sites, etc. A map was circulated at the Cabinet meeting showing the removed sites. If this were to be approved, a 6 week consultation period would commence. The results would not come back to Calderdale, but would be submitted to the Inspector for consideration.

Councillor Press, Cabinet Member for Public Services and Communities acknowledged the reduced impact on the greenbelt with an amendment in numbers, and queried which additional sites would be utilised, which were closer to the town centres and closer to public transport. Councillor Scullion responded briefly with some sites which had formerly been excluded, due to concerns regarding flooding, however recent significant investment for work on these sites had brought these

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sites back into consideration and would provide positive impacts for the town centres, e.g. sites indicated in Elland.

Councillor Patient, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Environment commented on the positive reintroduction of carbon reduction which had been built into the Local Plan; however in terms of building houses (BT1 of the Plan), it would be better to see something more solid than the word 'encouraged' in terms of the build of houses. Councillor Patient gave an example of a recent award achieved by Norwich for their consideration to climate change when building properties.

Councillor Sutherland addressed the Cabinet and highlighted a concern that consideration had only been given to one choice from the Inspector's letter, in relation to increased housing allocation; however a key part of the Plan was to revise economic growth and this was something which could be considered. There were not many opportunities for the Council to make decisions in Planning, and once greenbelt sites were built on, there would be no opportunities to change this which would have a lasting impact on Calderdale. In essence, what were the tangible benefits on these sites and how would these be balanced and tested?

Mr. Rae (Coordinator of Friends of the Earth) addressed the Cabinet and acknowledged the views of Councillor Sutherland. It was key that members of the public would be able to comment on housing proposals in the greenbelt and that reviewing the economic and employment strategy was an important part of the process. It was unclear whether all members of the public understood the option presented to them.

Mr. Bamforth addressed the Cabinet on behalf of the residents of Wheatley; he commented that he was pleased to hear the aspirations of the amended proposal and in relation to travel in and out of the borough and the changes to greenbelt sites. Mr. Bamforth shared a presentation of signatures and letters from residents in this area and requested they be shared with Members and Officers.

Ms. Rimmer addressed the Cabinet and commented on the sensibility of delivering the Plan with a period for reflection due to times of uncertainty; she queried how likely the 10 year option would be accepted by the Inspector, and in terms of consultation, would sites be included prior to the final consultation or be determined by the option.

Ms. Tattersall addressed the Cabinet regarding the Council taking into account the Inclusive Economy Strategy as part of the Local Plan, especially in relation to increased skills, pay, etc. There was a need in terms of meeting job and transport provision; however reports indicated a shortage regarding a working age population in the region. The strategic market assessment indicated in the report highlighted a need for employment growth and new housing, however this was complex and there was consideration to be made over the participation housing rates. A letter from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority regarding the strategy ensured alignment with other policies, however Calderdale needed to ensure they also did this if pursuing the more sustainable option and in making the right decision for the future.

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Mr. Porter addressed the Cabinet regarding a specific site and requested the Council ensured its methodology for placing on greenbelt sites was revisited and that this would perhaps be better looked at where there were two other potential sites, rather than one. Mr. Porter asked that there were no lost opportunities regarding the greenbelt infrastructure.

Councillor Scullion advised members of the public that specific sites could not be discussed at this meeting and that there would be a six week consultation period through which members of the public would be advised to share their views. In terms of the points raised by Mr. Rae and Councillor Sutherland, there would be an opportunity to respond to these aspects during consultation, and advised that Officers would address the remaining issues raised by members of the public.

The Director, Regeneration and Strategy, and Corporate Lead for Planning addressed the Cabinet on the Inclusive Economy Strategy, which had been a factor discussed in depth at the Hearings. It had been pleasing to see the Inspector acknowledge the relationship between housing growth and employment as a complex one for Calderdale. The steps the Council had taken to increase participation rates had very much been factored into the work which had been undertaken. The Council would continue to emphasise the steps it would be taking to increase productivity and the work of the Inclusive Economy Strategy. In terms of consultation, if 'Option C' was to be approved and consultation began, it would be inevitable that omission sites would also be commented on in the consultation, through which all members of the public would be welcome to respond. In terms of soundness, this would be a matter for the Inspector. However there was a sensible rationale and the evidence to support 'Option C', which had been discussed. Although there was further work to be done to evidence the approach in terms of the achievability of densities and deliverability rates, the argument was deemed to be a reasonable one.

The Chief Executive advised that the preferred option would be what was to be consulted on and would enable the investigation and further discussion on specific sites; the consultation would provide ample opportunity to have discussions and this was what would be put forward, subject to any outcome of the Inspector at the next stage.

The Director, Regeneration and Strategy provided some clarity around the reflection stage in the tenth year, as proposed in the amendment. It was felt that this would allow for further integration between the Policy and Plus Transport works and the relationship between housing and economic growth strategy. Although this would still be a 15 Year Plan, it would still be compliant and sound in terms of what the Government was looking for, with a 'Calderdale stamp' with the caution and pause for thought. It would also, as suggested by Councillor Scullion, reduce the number of units proposed in the greenbelt by approximately 600 units.

**RESOLVED** that:

(a) the report to Cabinet and recommendations of the Local Plan Working Party held on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019 be noted;

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(b) the Housing Update Paper (attached at Appendix 4) provide the basis for the Council's case at the forthcoming Local Plan Hearings with the new number of 997 dwellings per annum and removal of sites, (indicated in red on the plan and list of omission sites which had been distributed at the meeting); and

(c) a six week public consultation be undertaken, based on the changes as set out in the Housing Update Paper (as amended and stated in resolution (b) and attached at Appendix 4), in order to inform the Inspector's consideration of these matters at the forthcoming Local Plan Hearing sessions.