



WATCH LIVE
on MK Council's YouTube channel
www.youtube.com/MiltonKeynesCouncil



Minutes of the meeting of the STRATEGIC PLACEMAKING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Baume (Chair)

Councillors Crooks, P Geary, Hall, Hussain and B Nolan.

Officers: S Proffitt (Director Environment and Property), P Thomas (Director Planning and Placemaking), G Cox (Interim Head of Highways), N Hannon (Head of Environment and Waste), L Smart (Development and Network Manager) and A Melia (Overview & Scrutiny Officer).

Apologies: Apologies were received from Councillor Gilbert. Councillors K Bradburn and Taylor gave apologies for absence but joined the meeting remotely in order to contribute.

Also Present: Councillor Townsend (Cabinet Member for Public Realm) and Councillor E Kelly-Wilson (Chair, Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council).

SPSC08 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor P Geary disclosed a personal interest in Item 8 as the owner of land in Tathall End that was affected by the flooding in 2020 and noted his position as Ward Councillor for Lavendon at the time of the serious flooding in 2012.

SPSC09 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee held on 1 July 2021 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

SPSC10 PUBLIC REALM ADOPTIONS

Witnesses: S Proffitt (Director Environment and Property), P Thomas (Director Planning and Placemaking), G Cox (Interim Head of Highways) and L Smart (Development and Network Manager).

The Interim Head of Highways introduced the item, and gave a presentation which highlighted the salient points:

- The Council was required to follow a process as set out in a Department for Transport advice note from April 2017, which outlined legislation from the 1980 Highways Act.

- Each step of the process had been developer led and constituted a legal agreement with the developer, meaning there had been no set timescale. It was confirmed that this was a standard process for all Local Authorities.
- 697 Highway comments were made on planning applications in 2020. The same year, 34 major developments were technically approved and at the time of the meeting, 26 more were in the process of being technically audited.
- Attention was drawn to several common issues that occur during the adoption process, along with specific examples within Milton Keynes and the subsequent actions taken.

Members of the Committee made comment and heard:

- It was suggested that it would be beneficial for councillors to have access to an officer who is responsible for overseeing individual developments.
- The Committee emphasised the need to formulate a process at the planning stage of developments, to avoid the problems listed in the presentation being repeated.
- Concerns were expressed that, in the opinion of some Parish Councils within Milton Keynes, the adoptions team within Milton Keynes Council was understaffed in comparison with the scale of development in the Borough.
- In response to comments about the Newton Leys development, it was advised that developers had entered into Section 38 agreements but had not signed them. The Council had been unable to force developers to enter into agreements over private land.
- Members of the Committee acknowledged the legal constraints but suggested that some of the issues could be attributed to a failure of communications, as residents were unaware of these constraints.
- As such, it was noted that reputational risk to Milton Keynes Council was high, as the Local Authority was considered responsible for the problems faced in unadopted areas.
- Some members of the Committee cited other Local Authorities as examples where the adoptions process had been accelerated.
- In response, the Director of Environment and Property advised that the Councils cited had been contacted on this matter previously but agreed to re-examine the issue as requested.

- It was suggested that the work of the officers involved in the adoptions process be noted, in order to emphasise the legal constraints under which they operate.
- In response to questions, the Director of Environment and Property advised that it was not possible to score developers in advance of granting planning permission for an area of land. Officers agreed to reassess this issue and provide an answer at a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Strategic Placemaking Scrutiny Committee welcome the efforts officers on this issue and note the restrictions which restrict the work of Milton Keynes Council.
2. That the relevant officers be requested to consider the work of other Local Authorities in order to develop a system of best practice and a toolkit that can be used to ameliorate issues in the adoptions process.
3. That the Council be requested to provide to councillors officer contacts that are responsible for overseeing the developments within Milton Keynes.
4. That the relevant officers create a colour-coded system to indicate the different phases of adoption in developments as per the 1980 Highways Act.

SPSC11

LANDSCAPE SERVICES APPROACH FROM 2023

Witnesses: N Hannon (Head of Environment and Waste) and L Townsend (Cabinet Member for Public Realm).

The Head of Environment and Waste introduced the item and gave a presentation which highlighted the salient points:

- Attention was drawn to the Delegated Decisions taken by the Cabinet Member for Public Realm on 31st August 2021 and the subsequent progress of the strategy following these decisions.
- An extensive scheme of service changes had been agreed for 2023. This had formed part of a phased transition for the Landscape Services Approach, which entered its second generation in 2020.
- It was advised that the approach to devolve services and enter partnerships with Parish Councils was amongst the first of its kind.

- Workshops for both devolved and non-devolved Parish Councils were scheduled for the 18th and 19th October 2021 respectively.
- At the time of the meeting, a universal standard had been pursued to integrate the approach for all public land, along with an equalisation of standards to enable a “One Council” estate.
- It was confirmed that the timeline was on track to achieve commencement of the new service in April 2023.

The Committee asked questions and heard:

- It was advised that no contracts had been handed back at the time of the meeting, but a mechanism was in place if this were to occur in future.
- The general feedback from Parish and Town Councils was that longer contracts would be preferable, although not all services were forecast for by 2028.
- The Committee also heard that the Parish Councils were generally in favour of taking on responsibility for the landscape services but were under no pressure to do so.
- The differing levels of engagement available within the process were highlighted.
- Attention was drawn to the partnership model, which offered Parish Councils the chance to purchase and share specialist equipment amongst themselves.
- The importance of community engagement in acquiring expertise and local knowledge was emphasised.
- It was confirmed that landscape management, waste collection and cleansing services were planned for an integrated tender. There were three separate contracts agreed in 2009 and renewed in 2014 for these services, and the integration of cleansing with landscaping was deemed critical.
- The Council had considered the impact of a single provider and it was advised that consortium bids will be requested, in order to utilise local suppliers and specialist skillsets.
- The Committee heard that Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council initially joined at the “third way” of service delivery, although it was suggested that was insufficient, and a move to fully devolved service delivery had been considered.

- Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council had also provisionally discussed a shared approach with neighbouring parishes.
- It was confirmed that certain services, such as the deep cleansing of alleyways in Wolverton, would continue.

RESOLVED –

That the Committee be provided with regular updates on the progress of the strategy.

SPSC12 COMMISSIONING 2023

The Chair introduced the item and indicated that it was primarily for information purposes. No comments were made by the Committee.

RESOLVED –

That the Commissioning 2023 report be received and noted.

SPSC13 S19 FLOODING REPORTS

Witnesses: N Hannon (Head of Environment and Waste)

The Chair introduced the item and advised that it was primarily for information purposes before comments were invited from the Committee.

Some members of the Committee raised concerns that, whilst the reports and action plans were logical, residents had asked to see action taken and resources put in place.

The Head of Environment and Waste advised that the process to employ a dedicated provider for S19 investigations had commenced, and individual actions have been outlined. These actions will be detailed as part of the S19 Flooding Reports in future.

RESOLVED –

That within future updates on the topic of flooding, the relevant officers be requested to provide a list of completed actions and confirmed outcomes to accompany the S19 Flooding Report action plan.

SPSC14 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Chair introduced the item and drew attention to the revised draft work programme, copies of which were circulated to the Committee ahead of the meeting following discussions amongst the Planning Group that took place after the Agenda was published.

RESOLVED –

1. That the draft 2021/22 Work Programme be received and noted.

2. That if members of the Committee have any suggestions for items for scrutiny which are within the Committee's remit during 2021/22, they be fed into the Committee's Planning Group.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 21:07 PM

[The recording of this meeting is available to view on the Council's YouTube Channel:
https://www.youtube.com/user/MiltonKeynesCouncil](https://www.youtube.com/user/MiltonKeynesCouncil)