

NOTES OF MEETING

CROSS BOUNDARY MEMBERS' REFERENCE GROUP
8TH September 2008
MKP OFFICES

Attendees:

Members

CLlr Carole Paternoster	AVDC (Chair)
CLlr Douglas McCall	MKC
CLlr Cec Tallack	MKC / SEERA
CLlr David Rowlands	Bucks CC
CLlr Fiona Chapman	Mid Beds DC
CLlr John Scott	Beds CC

Officers

Ian Haynes	MKC
Rachel Jones	BCC
Nicola Dilley	Mid Beds DC
Andy Barton	AVDC
Bruce Stewart	MKC
Diane Webber	MKC
Sheila Keene	MKP
Cheryl Montgomery	MKP

Regional organisations

Neil McKillen GO - East

Milton Keynes Parks Trust

David Foster
Phil Bowsher

**Item
No.**

Action

1 Welcome / introductions / apologies

Apologies received from:
Mark Williams – SEERA
Mark Wathen – SEEDA
David Paine – GOSE
Hilary Chipping – MKSM
Richard Watts – Beds CC
Andrew Peck – MKP

2 Minutes of 23 June 2008 meeting

2.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 South East Plan – Proposed Changes

3.1 Ian Haynes introduced the item. Officers have tried to identify some areas of common ground which, whilst not being a 'joint response', as the Reference Group does not have executive decision making powers, could be referred to in each authority's own response to the consultation. Underpinning the areas of common ground is the theme that there should be a strategy (within the RSS) which enables

sustainable growth and efficient delivery.

Five key areas have been identified as per the briefing note circulated at the meeting:

1. Housing allocations expressed as minima
2. Weakening of support for East-West Rail
3. Deliverability of the level of housing in the MK Growth Area implicit in the Proposed Changes
4. The regional planning boundary as a constraint to integrated planning for growth.
5. Deletion of phasing policies for new housing.

Cllr McCall gave the MKC view, that having gone through a lengthy process, trying to work cross-boundary and following government advice, it is very frustrating to have that thrown aside. Certain that the 5,600 dwellings east of the M1 will represent an overall increase in the level of development in this area, as development in Mid Beds is unlikely to disappear. This, together with the proposed eco-town makes the total number of houses to be delivered unreasonable. Furthermore, the (annual) housing levels required have never been previously achieved, and are unlikely to be achieved now or in the foreseeable future.

Cllr Fiona Chapman could not support the fourth point (regional planning boundary) as it has always been unacceptable for SEERA to make decisions about land in Bedfordshire. Also concerned about the impact of additional development on flooding.

Cllr David Rowlands raised two points – the reference to East-West Rail should refer also to the western sector and the northern Aylesbury loop - these need to be referred to so as not to weaken the argument for them. An additional concern is the inclusion in the Proposed Changes of land at Leighton-Linslade contrary to the findings of work carried out by the joint committee, and the prospect of hostile planning applications in Aylesbury Vale which, if successful, would increase further the total amount of development in this area.

Andy Barton confirmed that AVDC are likely to see three hostile planning applications which are outside of policy. The Leighton-Linslade proposal is similar to the sleight of hand that MKC have seen with the identification of land east of the M1.

Cllr John Scott – Beds CC are opposed to the Leighton-Linslade proposal as it was excluded by the Joint Planning Committee following consultation and sustainability appraisal. Beds CC also have strong concerns about the proposal for land east of the M1 in terms of the impact of continuing expansion and coalescence affecting the rural communities in that area and the fact that growth in the area around Cranfield in Bedfordshire is not based on consultation and is not supported locally.

Cllr McCall suggested that the relative positions of Mid Beds and MKC and the rest of the Group are not as opposed as might initially seem to be the case – we need to stress that we have been and remain committed to joint working with each other. Supported Cllr Scott's comments on land east of the M1 – our opposition to the proposal is based on strong planning reasons including the issue of the additional infrastructure required to cross the M1 – how would this be funded and where would the bridge go given that land to the west of the M1 is already being developed.

Cllr Tallack commented that not only will infrastructure costs increase as a result of the proposals but Government commitment to funding infrastructure is watered down/not guaranteed.

Cllr Paternoster summed up the discussion – there seems to be much common ground, namely

- The way that regional boundaries are dealt with in the proposed changes
- Double standards – cross-boundary allocations have been removed in the SE SDA but added in respect of the Leighton-Linslade proposal.
- The watering down of the references to East-West Rail
- The possibility of hostile bids in Aylesbury Vale
- Concern over coalescence of settlements
- The costs of infrastructure

IH

Ian Haynes confirmed that he would revise the areas of common ground and recirculate a new version of his note for agreement.

Cllr David Rowlands raised an issue in respect of land east of the M1 as he understood that this land would not be covered by a tariff.

Sheila Keene confirmed that under the proposed delivery arrangements for this area in the Proposed Changes it would be outside of MKP control and would be dealt with by MKC Development Control team. This is a further example of the lack of clarity and consistency in the Government's proposals.

Cllr Paternoster asked that the local authorities make reference to the areas of common ground in their responses on the Proposed Changes.

4 SDAs – update on progress on joint working

4.1 SW SDA

Andy Barton referred Members to the draft Memorandum of Understanding which had been drafted by officers to set the ground rules for how we engage in joint working and progress the SW SDA.

Cllr David Rowlands referred to the section on joint working and notes

that while there is Member input to all of the organisations listed, there is no reference to Member input to the Steering Group for the Development Framework. He would prefer for there to have some Member involvement – possibly a Member overview group to discuss the work of the officer group.

Cllr Tallack agreed with Cllr Rowlands – although an officer task group is needed to do the work there should be wider involvement to prevent problems arising from misunderstandings and a lack of communication.

Andy Barton confirmed that the original intention of an officer steering group was to deal with the nuts and bolts of preparing a development framework. Add a reference to a Member group to the Memorandum.

AB

Ian Haynes noted that the role of a Member group would be similar to the relationship between the Cross Boundary Officer Group and this Member Reference Group.

The recommendation that:

“The Member Group notes the memorandum of understanding agreed between officers, and agrees that this should guide the way in which joint working will progress in the future between AVDC, AVA, BCC, MKC and MKP” was agreed.

It was also agreed that the members group (on the SW SDA) should be added to the MoU arrangements.

4.2 **SE SDA**

Nicola Dilley confirmed that MBDC at their Executive on 17 September would be considering their response to the South East Plan Proposed Changes. Officers are recommending to Members that they continue their current approach – to seek a reduced number of dwellings (around 2000) and an extension to the Green Belt in this area and that they continue to work with MKC on a joint development framework.

Cllr Chapman agreed with this approach.

Ian Haynes confirmed that although there is uncertainty now in respect of the land within MBDC, there is pressure for MKC to move forward with a Development Framework for the area, as some of this land is identified as Strategic Reserve in the adopted Local Plan. A Development Framework is likely to introduce a number of possible scenarios for the development of the area to try to deal with the uncertainty.

Cllr Mc Call agreed with this point

Ian Haynes also suggested that the Memorandum of Understanding drafted for the SW SDA might also provide a useful model for something similar for this area.

Cllr Fiona Chapman felt that this was possible – although noted that within Mid Beds they also have the challenge of local government reorganisation to deal with so anything agreed now might need to be revised in the future.

Cllr John Scott suggested the Joint Committee in South Beds and Luton as a good example of joint working. The SW SDA could also provide a model for a similar Memorandum of Understanding between the local authorities and MKP for the SE SDA

**MBDC/
MKC to
meet and
progress.**

Councillor Paternoster summarised the discussion by saying that those involved continue with the current joint working initiatives.

5 Presentation from the Parks Trust

Ian Haynes introduced David Foster and Phil Bowsher from the Parks Trust. He explained that the idea for this presentation arose from a cross-boundary parishes meeting on the SE SDA where there seemed to be some areas of confusion and uncertainty as to the role of the Parks Trust in Milton Keynes. The South East Plan and the Proposed Changes place considerable weight on the delivery of multifunctional /green infrastructure, especially in growth areas.

David Foster referred to the superb multi-functional Green Infrastructure that Milton Keynes benefits from and that this also includes areas of productive farmland as well as providing the setting for leisure and service routes. The Parks Trust would like to see the new development areas integrated with the Green Infrastructure network.

Phil Bowsher gave a Powerpoint presentation to explain:

- *What the Parks Trust does* – manages and safeguards a green estate of over 1800 hectares, mostly within the city of Milton Keynes although there is a small area within AVDC. Most of the green estate is held on a 999 year lease from MKC, with major water bodies held on leases from Anglian Water.
- *The organisation* – the Parks Trust is a self-financing, independent social enterprise, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee, governed by a Board of Trustees. The Trust was established in 1992 when the MK Development Corporation was wound up, together with a £20 million endowment of freehold commercial property. This generates an annual operating budget of around £5 million. The Trust employs 39 people with most landscape work carried out by local contractors – it also has a regular volunteer force of some 200 people.
- *Key principles* – The Trust is: independent, charitable organisation with sole purpose for maintaining green space for public benefit; self

- financed with a long term financial strategy ensuring that there is no cost to public sector finances; able to deliver economies of scale within a sustainable and entrepreneurial approach; responsive and respected locally; able to provide a balanced approach – taking account of ecology and biodiversity as well as public access and recreation.
- *Its contribution to the planning and delivery of new green infrastructure.* Phil's role exists to support planning bodies, developers and agencies in the planning and delivery of new parks and infrastructure. The Parks Trust can provide independent advice and expertise as well as a viable option for the long term stewardship of green infrastructure. The Trust ring fences commuted sums from S106 agreements in perpetuity at no cost to the public sector and is nominated by both MKC and MKP as the preferred body to adopt new parks and green spaces in the current expansion areas in MK.

Cllr McCall emphasised the close working relationship that MKC has had with the Parks Trust over the years and the very high regard that they are held in which is why they have been selected as the preferred body to adopt the new green spaces.

Cllr Rowlands asked if AVDC would contemplate using the Parks Trust for the green space north and west of Newton Longville.

Andy Barton replied that this sort of decision has not been made yet.

Cllr John Scott asked about blue infrastructure and how the Parks Trust liaises on the Bedford to MK Waterway Park.

David Foster commented that the Parks Trust supports the canal and that most of the route in Milton Keynes is on their land. They are keen to see it succeed but are unable to commit large sums to it. The Parks Trust does manage a number of large water bodies and SUDS schemes - many local authorities are reluctant to take on SUDS systems due to a lack of experience in dealing with them.

Cllr Fiona Chapman found the presentation very interesting – she is Chair of the Marston Vale Trust and felt that it would be very useful to take the presentation to the cross-boundary group of parishes for the SE SDA.

Cllr Tallack emphasised the point that the high standard of parks and green spaces in Milton Keynes is a direct result of the existence of the Parks Trust and endowments and ability to ring fence commuted sums in perpetuity. The Parks Trust model is especially relevant due to the possibility/potential of reduced funding for parks.

Cllr Paternoster felt that it would be useful for AVDC to speak to the Parks Trust about their experience.

**AVDC/
Parks
Trust**

Ian Haynes noted that for most members of the public the general perception is that any piece of undeveloped land is owned by the Parks Trust whereas it may often be a reserve site awaiting development. This can lead to misunderstandings as to the role of the Parks Trust in development.

6	Any other business	None
7	Date of next meetings	
	3rd December , 12-2pm at MKP Offices.	MKC
	16th March, 12-2pm at MKP Offices.	
	Chairs for the next two meetings – Cllr John Scott (Beds CC) agreed to chair the December meeting; A Member from Milton Keynes Partnership will chair the March meeting.	Beds CC MKP