

COUNCIL**25 July 2013****7.00 pm – 10.05 pm****Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud****3****Minutes****Membership:**

Dennis Andrewartha**	P	Chas Fellows	P	Nigel Prenter	A
Liz Ashton	P	Paul Hemming	P	Andy Read	P
Dorcas Binns	P	Nick Hurst	P	Mark Rees*	A
Rowland Blackwell	A	Haydn Jones	P	Frances Roden	P
Philip Booth	P	John Jones	P	Mattie Ross	P
Tim Boxall	A	Daniel Le Fleming	A	Roger Sanders	P
Chris Brine	P	Graham Littleton	A	Emma Sims	P
Paul Carter	P	Stephen Lydon	P	Paul Smith	P
Molly Cato	P	John Marjoram	P	Ken Stephens	P
Miranda Clifton	P	Brian Marsh	P	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy	P
Nigel Cooper	P	Russell Miles	P	Brian Tipper	P
June Cordwell	P	Stephen Moore	P	Geoff Wheeler	P
Doina Cornell	P	Alan O'Connor	A	Martin Whiteside	A
Gordon Craig	P	Keith Pearson	P	Rhiannon Wigzell	P
Karon Cross	P	Elizabeth Peters	P	Tom Williams	P
Paul Denney	P	Simon Pickering	P	Penny Wride	P
David Drew	P	Gary Powell	P	Debbie Young	A

** = Chair of Council

* = Vice Chair of Council P = Present A = Absent

Officers Present

Chief Executive
 Legal Services Manager and
 Monitoring Officer
 Strategic Head (Development Services)
 Head of Planning
 Head of Corporate Resources
 Head of Housing Management

Head of Finance
 Principal Planning Officer
 Senior Planning Strategy Officers
 Planning Strategy Officers
 Principal Marketing Officer
 Democratic Services and Elections Officer

Also Present

Mrs Pauline Simpson

CL.011 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rowland Blackwell, Tim Boxall, Daniel Le Fleming, Graham Littleton, Alan O'Connor, Nigel Prenter, Mark Rees, Martin Whiteside and Debbie Young.

CL.012 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

CL.013 MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 16 May 2013 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

CL.014 ANNOUNCEMENTS**(i) Chair of Council****Former Councillor Ray Apperley**

Members of the Council joined the Chair in paying tribute to the service, hard work and dedication of former Councillor Ray Apperley, who had recently passed away. He would be particularly remembered for his commitment and support for improving the health service and his membership of the County Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He had served as a Member of this Council from 2002 to 2012 which had included an appointment to Vice-Chair of Council.

The Council stood for a minutes silence in his memory.

(ii) Chief Executive**Investors in People (IiP) Standard and Health and Well-Being Award**

Members were informed that the Council had held the IiP Standard since 1999. It was one of only three authorities nationally and the only authority in the South West, to be accredited the Health and Well-Being Award. The Chief Executive was pleased to announce that following a recent assessment in June, the Council had been awarded the Investors in People and Health and Well-Being Award for the forthcoming year.

Renewal Heat Payment Premium Social Landlord Competition for Funding

The Chief Executive announced that the Council had been successful with its grant application for the installation of 400 air source heat pump units (equivalent monetary value of £900,000). This had been the largest allocation in the UK and would represent 25% of installations nationally, providing 400 out of the 480 units for the South West. The Council joined the Chief Executive in congratulating those involved with production of the bid.

CL.015 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

None received.

CL.016 PETITION REQUESTING THE COUNCIL TO RECOGNISE, REINSTATE AND SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR TENANT REPRESENTATION IN SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES

Mrs Pauline Simpson, petition organiser, presented the following petition to the Council:

“We the undersigned concerned citizens, call upon Stroud District Council to recognise, reinstate and support;

- the 55 democratically elected volunteer tenant representatives in SDC’s sheltered housing schemes across the Stroud District
- the related Sheltered Accommodation Panels
- and USAP – the independent charity which supports all of the above to ensure that tenants in sheltered housing have their own independent voice.”

The petition organiser made a statement in support of the petition which outlined the background to the charitable status and operation of USAP, the housing initiatives that it had developed and supported with the Council and other tenants, and the changes made by the Council to sheltered housing, which she felt had decimated the service. She drew attention to the Council withdrawing its support for USAP meetings and to the unfair imbalance of representation between USAP and others on the Sheltered Housing Project Board. She informed Members that USAP representatives had not walked out of meetings and had not withdrawn from consultation, refuting any claims that USAP representatives had been difficult to work with. In her view, the Council no longer recognised USAP, and as a consequence of its exclusion, it no longer had a voice.

Approaches had been made to the Tenants and Residents Organisation of England (TAROE) to assist with mediation between Officers and sheltered housing tenant representatives. The Council’s complaints procedure had been exhausted and subsequent recourse had been made to the Local Government Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman. She questioned the unjust and unfair dismissal of the 55 democratically elected volunteer sheltered tenant representatives, and believed that the human rights of these representatives and sheltered housing tenants had been violated. She also challenged the marginalisation of USAP, a well established tenant led body, which could have been an integral part of the new structure.

Having supported sheltered housing tenants for a long period of time, the Chair of the Housing Committee expressed her dismay at the position before the Council. She reminded Members of the imminent reductions in funding for the sheltered housing service and the measures put in place by this Council to move the service forward. She explained that whilst mediation had been discussed by all parties concerned, this had not been progressed due to the disengagement of USAP, who remained unwilling to work with the Council and who had been relentless in its opposition, rejection and constantly revisiting the past.

The Chair of the Housing Committee referred to the importance and value given to tenants' views and the Council's aim to do the best it could for them, to ensure that the highest level of service could be provided where possible, despite having to make essential service changes due to the loss of Supporting People funding. Unfortunately, such changes had been met with continued resistance by USAP and threats had been made by them if their demands could not be met.

She reflected on the Council's efforts to directly engage with tenants, the need to make changes and the positive desire to move forward with new housing initiatives, which should be celebrated. She concluded that now was the time to stop dealing with complaints and campaigns from USAP and to move on, directly consulting with sheltered tenants and doing what was best for them.

Prior to debate the Chair of Council explained that he would ensure that the Council's response was sent to each signatory on the petition.

The ensuing debate demonstrated the Council's desire to look forward and progress the new arrangements and tenant structures established for the sheltered housing service, with all parties engaged and being treated respectfully. There would be no going back to previous arrangements including the reinstatement of USAP; representation had to be far wider, with new sheltered housing representation on the project board. An impasse had been reached and Members felt that mediation and reconciliation to encourage and develop positive relationships between the Council and its tenants remained an option.

Acknowledgement was given to the briefing note circulated to Members from the 'Future of Sheltered Housing Project Board', outlining the new arrangements in place for the sheltered accommodation service and the reasons for moving forward.

In concluding debate, the Chair of Council explained how the new arrangements had received cross party support from the Council and from the Project Board. The care of the vulnerable remained a high priority for this Council.

CL.017 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

Environment Committee and Strategy and Resources Committee (8 & 10 July 2013, respectively)

Stroud District Local Plan

The Leader of the Council moved the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting of 10 July 2013, as set out on the agenda for this meeting. The motion was seconded by Councillor Molly Cato.

The Chair of the Environment Committee stated how the Local Plan sought to meet future development and employment needs within the District, protect iconic green spaces and enable the Council to defend sites through the Local Plan. He hoped that the motion would receive cross party support.

The Strategic Head of Development Services reminded the Council of the importance of producing the Stroud District Local Plan, which set the planning strategy and policies for promoting and managing development in the District for the next 15+ years.

He referred to the significant debate, discussions and extensive consultation undertaken since 2009, which had contributed to the production of the draft Plan now under consideration. Substantial evidence had supported the understanding of complex issues concerning land use and development to ensure sustainable development continued to be delivered into the future.

Members were informed of the approach taken to provide sustainable development in view of the unprecedented period of recession and in line with national objectives, with plans to be progressed as quickly as possible to ensure that sustainable development could be approved without delay. The Strategic Head of Development Services stated that the draft plan sought to achieve the balance between economic, environmental and social factors whilst supporting sustainable growth.

The Plan had been based upon a concentrated growth strategy around larger settlements rather than dispersed development within small settlements; an approach overwhelmingly supported through public consultation. The Plan also provided flexibility for local communities to propose further growth, via Neighbourhood Plans, if required. It was vital that the growth proposed was based on solid evidence supported by professional and independent experts and that it was both deliverable and viable.

The Strategic Head of Development Services drew attention to the risks of delaying a decision on the plan in terms of the number of current speculative planning applications for Greenfield development on unplanned areas and moving forward with a Plan which did not seek to meet the fully objectively assessed needs of the district. Each of the risks would involve further delay and uncertainty for residents and the local community.

Officers believed that the draft plan, with some minor changes, represented a good and robust plan to go out to formal consultation in September 2013 and then submitted to the Government in early 2014 for public examination. Once approved, the draft Plan had some weight for use in considering future planning applications, alongside the current Local Plan.

He drew the Council's attention to the minor changes proposed, as reported to each of the Environment and Strategy and Resources Committees. Namely to replace the jobs figure in Policy CP2 from 5,100 to 6,200, based on the latest Cambridge Econometrics LEFM 2012/13 projections, and to the inclusion of the additional map change to extend Stonehouse Town Centre boundary, to include retail and service properties along Elms Road. A copy of the map had been circulated with the papers for the meeting.

The need to include a reserve site in the Plan was questioned. Attention was drawn to page 3 of the officers' response to Committees, which explained the requirement for a reserve site (identified as West of Stonehouse). In essence, a reserve site at this stage would prevent the Inspector from delaying the public examination, to allow the Council to identify other sites, whilst also preserving the flexibility of the Plan.

Any delay in producing the Local Plan would pose an increased risk, with development decisions potentially being made by the Inspector and appeals being permitted. The Inspector could prevent any substantial developments from taking place until the Plan had been adopted.

The Strategic Head of Development Services was unaware of any other authorities including a reserve site within their Local Plan. The Council was in a unique situation and had gone through an unprecedented period of recession. It was possible that the Inspector may view housing need based on pre-recessionary trends and might therefore wish to include the reserve site West of Stonehouse.

He confirmed that there would be no time available to consult upon alternative reserve sites and gather the requisite supporting evidence. The evidence base established since 2009 supported the sites currently put forward and any new site would not be supported by this evidence.

Although supporting the motion, Councillor Paul Denney moved an amendment to the housing figures as indicated below.

Location	Current Number	Proposed Number
Hunts Grove	500	500
North-East Cam	450	250
Sharpness	300	300
Stroud Valleys	300	300
Council housing	150	150
Windfalls	750	950
Total	2,450	2,450

The motion was seconded by Councillor David Drew.

The viability of the Plan was questioned on the basis of the reduction proposed to the allocation at North East Cam.

The proposer of the motion referred to the loss of key employment sites in Cam over the past 10 years. He believed the current proposal would make Cam the largest developed area in the district, likely to be occupied by persons out commuting for employment. He referred to the potential increase in traffic movements and believed that an additional 500 dwellings in Cam would be unsustainable and impact on the capacity of the existing community infrastructure.

However it was highlighted that to make Cam an economically viable area and create approximately 1500 jobs, a development of 450-500 houses would be necessary. If the Plan's jobs and growth strategies were not supported, there would be no opportunity to increase employment within the area.

The potential risk of increasing the windfall figure to 950 dwellings was questioned. A Member referred to previous trends in windfall growth which had been constant at approximately 70-80 dwellings per year. He believed the increased figure would equate to approximately 40 dwellings per year over the Plan period, would be aligned to a more realistic Council position and would allow some flexibility for development in other areas of the district.

The Strategic Head of Development Services pointed out that there had been non policy compliant windfall sites which had been excluded from the current windfall allocation as permission would not be granted for this type of development once the Plan was in place. He advised against undertaking comparisons with historic data.

The Council was informed that any reduction in the allocation for North East Cam would reduce the sites' viability and it might not be deliverable. With an allocation of 500 dwellings its viability was already marginal but had included a lot of assumptions about infrastructure costs.

The subsequent debate indicated some support for the amendment. It was pointed out that development had already been permitted for some windfall sites and it was considered that the reserve site West of Stonehouse would not be viable.

Discussion took place on the adequacy of the 500 houses for North East Cam and whether this would even be sufficient to attract employment to the area. There was concern at the impact that a large scale development of 500 houses or more would have on the local amenities in Cam.

The Chair of the Environment Committee reminded Members of the need to adopt a draft deposit Local Plan to enable the Council to defend its housing sites and create opportunities for employment. The Plan had to be strong and defensible, with sound advice backed up by strong evidence. He advised Members to vote against the amendment, should the Council wish to have a defensible Local Plan.

The seconder of the Motion referred to the time spent by the Council's Development Control Committee to defend sites in Cam where housing was not wanted. He felt such a high allocation for Cam to be both inappropriate and unfair. He considered that windfalls had also been under allocated and a coherent approach should be developed to protect Cam from future development.

The proposer referred to the historic housing and employment position within Cam and felt that it would soon become an area consumed by housing. He felt that Cam would gradually be abandoned as people moved to areas where employment was available. He hoped that Members would support his proposal to reduce the North East Cam allocation to 250 dwellings.

On the amendment being put to the vote it was LOST by 15 votes in favour, 26 votes against and no abstentions.

The Leader of the Council referred to the uncertainties that lay ahead, unsure of the future economy and the position of the Council in 15-20 years time. Whilst the growth in the local economy could be guided to some extent via the Local Plan and working with partners, there was uncertainty as to how the Council would be able to influence future decisions. For this reason he felt that there needed to be some flexibility within the Plan allowing communities to come forward with their own development proposals or neighbourhood plans. On this basis he moved an amendment for the Local Plan to be reviewed in no more than five years from its adoption. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Chris Brine.

The review timescale proposed was questioned. The Leader maintained that a thorough review of the Plan during this time would enable the Council to fully evaluate its position when faced with a number of future uncertainties.

In response to questions, the Strategic Head of Development Services advised that setting a specific timescale for a review might lead the Inspector to believe that the

Plan was unsound. This would also be largely dependent upon the national policy context and the Plan's strength and ability to withstand change.

There were mixed views on whether the amendment should be supported. Some Members believed that setting a timescale for review could jeopardise the standing of the Plan. Other Members believed that it would provide a commitment by the Council to review its projections and assess the appropriateness of future development in line with any uncertainties. It was stated that the review should not be used to reduce realistic needs for the future.

On the amendment being put to the vote it was CARRIED by 22 votes in favour, 17 votes against and 2 abstentions.

A debate on the substantive motion ensued. Those opposing the motion expressed concern at the level of some allocations and consequent viability of sites, together with the absence of a reserve site within the Plan. It was felt that the Council was missing substantial development opportunities and the ability to generate employment opportunities. Additionally, there was concern that the Inspector would consider the Plan unsound.

Whilst acknowledging that the Council had to have a Plan in place, some Members still felt unable to support the motion. Although the Plan contained a range of good initiatives, it was felt that its soundness could be challenged. Forcing the Inspector to consider a review period imposed by the Council, together with removal of a reserve site, stripped the Plan of any flexibility and put the District at risk.

Others were reluctant to support the motion, but were minded to do so as a necessary compromise to enable the Council to have a draft Local Plan in place. The Plan was judged as highly ambitious and challenging. Housing allocations were considered sufficient without the need to include a reserve site West of Stonehouse. The Council should maintain focus on securing employment opportunities, whilst planning housing sites that were deliverable. It was considered unnecessary to have sites with high concentrations of housing, the view being that dispersal would be more appropriate to the topography of the District. It was felt that the Council should be more prescriptive on the locations of sites and plan how these would be developed.

Some expressed the view that the over allocation of housing sites, realistic windfall figures and sustainable allocations for the Stroud Valleys and North East Cam would be more acceptable. It was acknowledged that there were a range of policies which sought to promote industry and protect sites.

A Member was concerned that whilst the advice given on how to progress the Plan had been clear, the Council had already decided to go against it. Based on the information available, the Council would be deciding on a Plan which at best would last for five years, with its robustness left open to challenge.

In summing up, the Leader stated that he believed that the Council had a good Local Plan, fit for consultation and public examination.

The Council joined the Chair in applauding the members of the Planning Strategy Team for all the work they had undertaken to produce the Plan.

On the substantive motion being put to the vote it was CARRIED overwhelmingly, with 1 vote against and 1 abstention.

Councillor Chas Fellows requested it be recorded that he had voted against the decision.

- RESOLVES** a) **The draft Stroud District Local Plan attached at Appendix A to this report, together with supporting documents, is approved for publication in accordance with Regulations 19 and 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and subsequently to be submitted to the Secretary of State in accordance with Regulation 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, subject to amendments to the requirement for new housing and its locations as follows:-**

<u>Location</u>	<u>Number</u>
Hunts Grove	500
North-East Cam	450
Sharpness	300
Stroud Valleys	300
Council housing	150
Windfalls	750
Total	<u>2,450</u>

Reference to a reserve site west of Stonehouse is to be deleted from the Stroud District Local Plan.

- b) **Authority be delegated to the Strategic Head of Development Services to make textual changes to the draft Stroud District Local Plan in consultation with the Chair of Environment Committee prior to publication.**
- c) **The Local Plan is reviewed in not more than five years from the date of adoption.**

CL.018 MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

The Council noted the meetings that had taken place since the Annual General Meeting held on 16 May 2013.

CL.019 MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

None received.

CL.020 NOTICE OF MOTION

Investigations into becoming a Unitary Authority – 04/13

Councillor Paul Carter (proposer) and Councillor Chas Fellows (seconder) announced that they had agreed to withdraw the above Notice of Motion which would now be submitted to the next meeting of the Council for consideration.

The Chair of Council asked Group Leaders to consult with each other on the Motion prior to discussion at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.05 pm.

Chair of Council