FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE & OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a joint meeting held on Thursday 30 May 2013, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Barrott, Mrs Blacklock, Mrs Bromley, Brookes, Dean, Dhillon, Edwards, Mrs Falp, Mrs Gallagher, Gifford, Gill, Mrs Higgins, Kinson, Mrs Knight, MacKay, Mrs Mellor, Rhead, Mrs Syson, Ms Weed, Williams and Wreford-Bush.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Grainger and Councillor Mobbs.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Copping, Guest and Pittarello.

Councillor Wreford-Bush substituted for Councillor Boad.

1. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

It was proposed and duly seconded that Councillor Gifford be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

It was also proposed and duly seconded that Councillor Barrott be appointed as Chairman for the meeting. This motion was put to the vote and was lost.

The Committee therefore resorted to the original motion and a show of hands.

RESOLVED that Councillor Gifford be appointed as Chairman for the meeting.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED OPTIONS**

The Committee discussed the proposals for the Preferred Options for the new Warwick District Local Plan.

The Committee made the following comments in respect of the Local Plan Preferred Options:

The Joint Finance and Audit & Overview and Scrutiny Committee were impressed with the amount of work that had been put in to producing the revised strategy and agreed that their congratulations should be passed to all of the officers for their hard work.

In addition, they agreed that the following comments be passed to the Executive:

a) Members had concerns about the decreasing strength of the Council's existing Local Plan and the effect of this being thrown out at appeals. Members were mindful that it was important to have a strong Local Plan that would stand up to inspection;

b) There was concern regarding the definition of affordable housing against social housing – although Members welcomed the 40% target, they would have liked it to be even higher;

c) There was a strong feeling by some Members that the Local Plan had changed too much, that the balance had altered and there was too great a reliance on building to the south of Warwick;

d) Regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy, Members had concerns that some villages seemed to have differing rates to others. It was suggested that the Executive may wish to look at this issue more closely. Officers advised that the CIL study would be published before the Executive meeting;

e) There was strong support for a Park & Ride system and some Members felt that the Strategy should include a more definite idea as to how this could be provided. Concerns were raised regarding the transport details in the strategy including the Strategic Transport Assessment – it was felt that a Park & Ride System may help alleviate already congested areas of the District;

f) Members were very much in support of renewable energy resources being an integral part of the Council's planning policy & believed that WDC should strive to be a leader in this area;

g) Members felt that it was important that all Councillors were able to feed their thoughts on policy into the Policy Review Group, and were reminded that this could be achieved via their Group's representative and lead officers;

h) Members were mindful that the Sub-regional Employment Site had been based on evidence from the Regional Spatial Strategy which had now been abolished. Queries were raised as to whether this meant that this could weaken the Local Plan before a planning inspector. Officers advised that the Employment Land Review would be published before the Executive meeting;

i) It was agreed that Ward Councillors would be fully consulted regarding the consolidation of employment land;

j) Air quality was a major concern and Members felt it was important that it was looked at closely throughout the District. The Committee welcomed the proposal of further work between lead officers & Environmental Services;

k) Members felt strongly that town centre policies needed to protect and enhance the District's town centres, making them viable and vibrant.

Concerns were raised that some issues had the potential to override others;

l) Members were mindful that full account needed to be taken of the NPPF and all available evidence;

m) Members felt that there was a need to consider the total impact of any development on infrastructure and not just on the area nearest and local to any development;

n) It was felt that officers should contact the local network of secondary schools head teachers as well as Warwickshire County Council to discuss the potential provision and location for secondary school(s) within the Local Plan's life time; and

o) Members felt there would be a need to clarify the times for infrastructure development in relationship to any building schemes to ensure the necessary infrastructure was in place. For example sites might be completed in phases but by half way through the development the impact on undeveloped infrastructure could be so substantial as to cause harm to the community as a whole.

It should also be noted there was a view of some Members, but not all, that the draft Local Plan had changed significantly from its original aspiration with regards to housing.

(The meeting ended at 8.05 pm)