

## **Transcript of West Lancashire Borough Council Cabinet Meeting 11<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

**Cllr Ian Moran (Council Leader)** - Item 1 first, apologies

**Council Officer, Member Services**- No apologies, Leader

**Cllr Ian Moran** - Thanks very much. Item 2, Special Urgency Rule 16

**Council Officer, Member Services** – None

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Thank you very much, Item 3, Declarations of Interest

**Terry Broderick, Borough Solicitor** – I haven't been notified of any Leader

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Thank you. Item 4, Public Speaking, Do we have two speakers?

(inaudible, talking amongst people at the table and confusion as first speaker thought he was being asked to commence his speech)

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Item 5, Minutes. Minutes dated 12<sup>th</sup> of June and 18<sup>th</sup> July, are they agreed as an approved record

**Cabinet** – Agreed

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Thanks very much. I propose to move now item 6e, Local Plan Review forward to the first item. So these people get to what they're here for, is that agreed?

**Cabinet** – Agreed

**Cllr Ian Moran** – So we move now to 6e, Local Plan Review. This (inaudible) speaks now

**Mr Ian Rigby, Local Resident** – Thank you very much leader, thanks to the council for the opportunity to speak tonight. My comments concern the (inaudible...) consultation. Public consultations are expensive and time-consuming necessities, it is therefore vital that draft plans submitted for consultation are thoroughly developed and are supported by evidence-based analysis derived after full dialogue and input from local residents and interest groups.

This said, it would appear that in this respect the current draft plan falls short, and raises concerns over future handling and consideration of the consultation process and responses. The worse of the extent of these plans has not previously been evident to those wards most effected, limited disclosure of information, via a newspaper media who's circulation does not reach those communities severely impacted. It is only due to a survey of housing needs, put out by Bickerstaffe Parish Council within the last five weeks, that any insight into the plans has become known. As yet, these responses have not even been opened, therefore cannot form part of the evidence base.

It is also a fact that four weeks ago, ten farmers most impacted by these proposals were not aware of the plan's intentions, and certainly have not been consulted on any of the proposals. Furthermore, not all land indicated in the plan has been notified for consideration by the landowner, meaning information contained therein is misleading or indeed intended misinformation.

It now appears that councillors are being asked to support the start of a consultation that has limited validity based on input from the electorate from which full disclosure of information has not been forthcoming. How is it possible that fair and open consultation can be actioned if all supporting technical papers and views have not been available for councillors to consider? Without this background information, is it legitimate to expect council officers to effectively communicate the

basis of the plan and to solicit public input into the full six weeks? Unless of course there is no intention to consider public input at all, and decisions have already been made.

\*Hear, hear applause\*.

It is also clear that the intended media channel for notifications is inadequate in terms of communication to affected wards, and even the one to one sessions planned do not take place in those areas most significantly impacted. Surely this a prerequisite of a consultation process? I therefore urge councillors to move a motion to postpone the start of the consultation until such time as all evidence is available and has been assessed by relevance to local needs. Only through full disclosure of the evidence base can a public consultation be meaningful and constructive and give the preferred option at the lowest cost. Thank you.

\*Hear, hear applause\*.

**Mr Stephen Heyes, Local Resident** – Thank you for allowing me to speak. How can a consultation of the public go ahead when there is the issue of the underground gas mains under the proposed development area running through the farmland in Bickerstaffe? There is one high pressure 42 inch gas pipeline, one ethylene pipeline, and two water pipelines which all cross the development sites. No suitable alternative route for the gas line – the 42 inch gas line, as the original route was deemed the only suitable route for a number of factors. 1. The proximity of the ethylene pipeline, 2. The geology of the pipeline. This is not mentioned in the proposed Local Plan Preferred Option Consultation.

What estimate should be made on the cost of diverting these pipelines? Who will pay the cost, as it will not be sustainable from the development budget? How will the public be properly informed of these matters prior to, or at the time of consultation, so that they can provide their informed response to the Local Plan Preferred Option Consultation? Thank you.

\*Applause\*

**Cllr John Hodson, Portfolio Holder for Planning** – Technical difficulties. Thank you Leader. Erm, since the questions were of matters of process, I will ask the director of development and regeneration to cover those points please, and address them. I think it would be helpful to do that at the earliest opportunity, which is immediately after the comments were made.

**John Harrison, Director of Development and Regeneration** – Thank you. I'll speak to some of these issues, I'll bring my colleague Peter Richards in as well.

In relation to the issue of consultation, well any local plan has to start somewhere in terms of a consultation process. This is the beginning in terms of setting out what our preferred options are. In 2017 there was a consultation exercise where the council set out a number of options and asked a series of questions to the public, and we had a response to them and they set out various strategies in terms of the amount of development we might have, questions relating to safeguarding etcetera.

Those consultations and responses to them have been reported to Cabinet and they have influenced the preparation of this report. It is true to say that this a comprehensive document. Much of what's in this document will be new to the public, but as I say, the consultation process has to start somewhere, this is not the finished product, or project. This is the beginning, and the whole point of this exercise is to set out what the Council believes is the preferred solution to meet its development needs going forward.

Clearly, we go now into a consultation exercise if we agree to tonight, of a six-week period, that six-week period is the time set out in the statutory regulations, it is a period that we have utilised time and time again for all our local plans for all the years I have been here. I have been fortunate enough to actually go through the best part of six or seven local plans, and as I say, this is the start of the process, this is not the finished product. The whole point of the consultation exercise is to glean from the public what their views are on the issues, in terms of the strategic issues relating to the amount of land that we're allocating for residential, for commercial, where we're making those allocations, the issues of safeguarding, those in the plan incorporate a number of clear development control policies, and again we'll be asking the public for comments on them.

The view, I think, the impression I got from the speakers was that this was the end process that had been kept quiet, and it was a fait accompli. No, this is the beginning of what will still be a lengthy process, and there will be this exercise, we will take account of the representations that come in as part of this consultation exercise, that will then influence the next iteration of the plan, that will equally go to Cabinet before we agree to go to consultation, there will then be another consultation exercise before we get to the point in time where we submit this to government as being the Council's approved plan.

As I say, it's encouraging that there are as many people as we have here, that says that actually the word is getting out, and that's right because this is \*inaudible, laughter\*. I think we can say that effectively this is the start of the process. This plan has only just been agreed in terms of Cabinet working group, in terms of other groups, fresh off the press. As I say, now is the consultation, now is when we advertise that it is ready, that we're waiting for people's comments, and we'll have those published so that meetup point around the borough as we go forward. As I say, you've got to start the consultation period somewhere, and this is that particular point in time.

In relation to the gas pipeline, water pipelines etcetera yes, we're aware that they are there, I think many people in the local area are aware that they're there. The location and the designation of the residential and commercial sites take some account in terms of the location of those pipes. This is not development hard up to the M58 or Skelmersdale boundary, there is a grey buffer there. That takes account of the fact that there is a pipeline there. Now what I would say, is at this point in time it is early days, again we set out our proposals, and the basis of having those proposals on the table, we can now get ourselves involved in detailed discussions, and they've already started, in terms of the owners of that pipeline and the HSE, to determine are they a barrier to development and can that barrier, that constraint, be overcome?

Now, the information we're getting is 'yes' - you can do works to those pipelines that will allow development to take place and could potentially allow for the reduction in the existing exclusion zones. That's part of the consultation process that we'll go through, that will again come to the fore when we get to the next stage of the local plan.

In terms of the evidence that we've got before us, I think I'll just ask Peter Richards to come in and just respond there in that respect.

**Peter Richards, Planning Policy Manager** – Yes councillors, in terms of the evidence base issue, you're aware there's a wide range of evidence base that has to inform a local plan preparation, a large amount of that is already on the Council's website, it has been since the issues and options stage, and has been added to since then. Not all of it is there yet, the bottom line of a local plan process, particularly one this early in the process, that Mr Harrison referred to, is that it's an

iterative process, so some of the evidence base can't be done until we put forward an option to consider.

So, for example things like viability assessment, transport assessments, habitat regulation assessments, the infrastructure delivery plan, sustainability appraisal, none of those can be done until the plan is put forward. So, they are being done at the moment, and they will be available at least in draft for the consultation, and should you approve it, plan. So, there is a wide range of evidence in that regard. In terms of members having regard to this evidence base, or being aware of it, the local plan cabinet working group has been aware of this evidence and been updated on it, and where it could influence proposals in the local plan, they're aware of that. There was an all-member briefing last week where all members were invited to come and ask questions, find out about the background to it, so members are aware of the evidence and how they're informed of local plan preparation.

\*inaudible murmuring\*

**Cllr Ian Moran, Council Leader** – moving on to item 6a, pardon, oh sorry John

**Cllr John Hodson, Planning Portfolio Holder** – Thank you Leader.

In addition to the following motion which I'm going to read out, there was also a request at the Planning Committee held last Thursday, made by Councillor Paul Cotterell, Bickerstaffe ward, that there be, or consideration would be given to the provision of an additional public session, drop in session, in the south eastern parishes. That's since been agreed; it's not in writing here but it's noted alongside the other comments, agreed comments from the planning committee.

So, members of the public can be assured that we've taken that suggestion on board and agreed with it. The location is yet to be decided, officers are just in discussions at the moment as to the most appropriate location, but there will be an additional public session in the southern eastern parishes.

The motion I wish to put forward is that the agreed comments that I just mentioned of the Planning Committee be noted; that the Local Plan Preferred Options document provided at appendix C of the report be approved for a six week public consultation exercise, subject to the revision of paragraph 3.12 in order to provide further clarification of the calculation of the housing requirement of the Local Plan; and that the Director of Development and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning be authorised to finalise and make amendments prior to public consultation to the Local Plan Preferred Options, following consideration of any agreed comments from the Executive Overview and Scrutiny committee. D Call in is not appropriate for this item as a report is being considered at the next meeting of the Exec O&S. With that motion, I so move.

**Cllr Ian Moran, Council Leader** – Is it seconded?

**Female** – Seconded

**Cllr Ian Moran, Council Leader** - Agreed?

**Multiple voices (Cabinet)** – Agreed

**Cllr Ian Moran, Council Leader** – Thanks very much. We'll go back to the agenda now, item 6a, Water Grant, Water Environment Grant - Councillor Gagen.

**Cllr Yvonne Gagen, Deputy Leader** – Thank you, Leader. This is to seek delegated authority to accept an offer of external funding from the Water Environment Grant scheme operated by the

Environment Agency and Natural England. It is to be used for the development of sustainable urban drainage systems, floods and Tawd Vale Park. The recommendation is set out in 2.1 and 2.2 and I would like to move those recommendations.

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Agreed?

**Multiple voices (Cabinet)** – Agreed

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Before I move on, can I just say we've moved off the Local Plan, no more local plan, and there's more items on the agenda tonight. We've agreed to take the consultation forward (inaudible) what's happening here. What I'm saying that is a comment was made is that its already a done deal, its far from being a done deal, well.

\*inaudible comments from crowd\*

**Male in audience** – (starts in audible) shows no respect in terms of (inaudible) and refuses to answer, we got no answers to the points that were raised.

**Female in audience** – Who's going to pay?

**Same male in audience** – no respect from that character

**Second male in audience** – you've already consulted the pipeline people, so how come you didn't tell all local residents first?

\*applause\*

**Second female in audience** – and you can put a solar farm across those pipes, that pipeline, didn't make one blind bit of difference. 460 objections to the solar farm, just search for it

**Cllr Ian Moran**, – All I can say is, please go to the consultations please give your –

**Second female in audience** – why? It's a waste of time

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Well...

**Third male in audience** – Can I request that the councillors identify themselves when they're speaking? There's a lot of people here don't know who the councillors are, and some people can't see you. So, identify your name please, and also the party you're in. Thank you

\*well said from the audience\*

**Cllr Ian Moran** – Moving on, item 6b

\*crowd jeers\*

**Third male from audience** – Rubbish. What's your name please?

**Cllr Ian Moran, Council Leader** – My name's Ian Moran

**Third female in audience** – Who's responsible for taking my house, my farm, my life away from me? You're ripping the heart out of our community. Everyone (drowned out by applause and noise)

\*applause\*

**Third female** – You don't know what you're doing to people. You do not know what you're doing to the community, to people who have farmed tons of acres all their lives.

**Audience member** – You should be ashamed of yourself

**Another audience member** – It's disgusting

**Third female** – This is Grade 1 agricultural land. Where's all the food going to come from if you do this? Hundreds of acres, (inaudible). This is Merseyside's allocation, this is not West Lancs housing needs this is Merseyside's allocation

(inaudible) \*Applause\*

\*Leader and Deputy Leader rise from seats to leave Council Chamber\*

\*boos and jeering\*

**Different male in audience** – Do we even need to do it? We have one until 2027

**Male** – We've got a plan, why make another one?

**Male** – Your own planning committee said you can't forecast for thirty years, and it go noted down so...

**Different female** – and you made promises on Firswood Road and you went back

**Male** – Another horrible Labour plan like the last one from Gordon, I forget his name, from way way before him. Another thirty year plan and it lasted 18 months.

**Female** – can't be trusted. They only care about making a name for themselves

(inaudible comments) \*Portfolio Holder for Planning leaves the Council Chamber\*

**Male** – What are you laughing at? It's not bloody funny, this is people's lives.

**Male** – You've got the whole community here.

**Male (off camera)** – Can we call the police please?

**Male** – You've got no bloody shame, have you?

\*booing and applause\*

\*out, out out\*

**Female** – I think the police have got better things to do

**Male** – What police? There is none

\*crowd chatter\*

**Male** – We're not going anywhere

**Kim Webber, Chief Executive** – Can I ask people to respect the fact that (inaudible)

**Male** – What's your name? What's your position? Tell us your name and your position.

**Male** – Since we pay your wages.

**Kim Webber, Chief Executive** – The meeting is not able to take place at the moment. Please could you leave (inaudible) or please be quiet so that the meeting can continue?

**Male** – Can you please tell me your name?

**Kim Webber, Chief Executive** – I'm sorry but this is not appropriate, I will have to ask people to leave if they don't calm down.

\*jeering from crowd\*

\*calls of shame shame shame\*

\*applause\*

\*booing\*

\*inaudible chatter\*

\*booing\*

**Cllr Ian Moran, Council Leader** – Thank you very much everybody. We'd like to reconvene the meeting. You're all welcome to stay, if you could all (inaudible). We know you're not happy, we know you're not happy, we need to move on with our business here, you're welcome to stay, you're welcome to listen, please (inaudible), or we'll have to ask you to leave. Thank you very much everyone. Item 6b