



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL RLDP STEERING GROUP

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the RLDP Members' Steering Group held on Thursday, 26 November 2020 at 3.00 pm.

County Borough Councillors - RLDP Steering Group Members in attendance:-

Councillor J Bonetto	Councillor G Caple
Councillor D Grehan	Councillor G Hughes
Councillor J James	Councillor P Jarman
Councillor M Powell	Councillor S Rees
Councillor G Thomas	Councillor J Williams
Councillor R Yeo	

Officers in attendance

Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr J Bailey, Head of Planning
Ms C Hewitt, Planning Policy Team Leader
Mr O Jones, Development Services Manager (Planning Policy)
Ms K Scott, Senior Planning Policy Officer

1 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct there were no declarations of Personal Interests pertaining to the agenda.

2 Apologies

An apology of absence was received from County Borough Councillor L M Adams.

3 To Appoint a Chair

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint County Borough Councillor G Caple as Chair of the RLDP Members Steering Group.

4 To Appoint a Vice Chair

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint County Borough Councillor G Hughes as Vice Chair of the RLDP Members' Steering Group.

5 Terms of Reference for the RLDP Members Steering Group

The Service Director Democratic Services & Communications welcomed Members to the inaugural meeting of the RLDP Members Steering Group.

The Service Director referred to the draft Terms of Reference which had been developed to reflect the purpose, role and objectives of the RLDP Members' Steering Group and he added that should Members wish to move any

amendments to the draft version they had the opportunity to do so.

Following consideration, it was **RESOLVED** to agree the draft Terms of Reference as set out.

6 Introduction to the Revised Local Development Plan

The Development Services Manager (Planning Policy) introduced his colleagues Ms C Hewitt, Planning Policy Team Leader and Ms K Scott, Senior Planning Policy Officer who had both played an integral part in bringing the plan forward and he advised the Steering Group that the report would provide them with background to the LDP process in general, before setting out the key stages of the RLDP preparation. It was also intended to outline the role of the group in the initial, Preferred Strategy stage of the RLDP and identify the topics and areas that were not as prevalent during the preparation of the current LDP.

Members were advised that since the production of the current LDP (2006-2021), there have been many changes with regards to the priorities, issues and aspirations of the council as well as economic and environmental aspects of society. There have also been major changes in national legislation and national planning policy during this time.

Members were reminded that the impact of the Coronavirus had delayed the original delivery agreement (DA) start date of June 2020 and so on 29th July 2020, Council approved an amended RLDP (2020 – 2030) DA, with a start date of September 2020. The Development Services Manager (Planning Policy) outlined the key stages of the RLDP preparation and final submission to the WG Planning Inspector in April 2023.

In conclusion, the Development Services Manager (Planning Policy) provided a brief synopsis of the role of the Members' Steering Group in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy through a series of visioning events, the first virtual event likely to take place towards the end of January 2021. Members views and thoughts would be sought on a number of issues that the LDP should address and a range of strategy options.

The Development Services Manager (Planning Policy) confirmed that reference at 5.15 within the report to the number of Welsh speakers from 12.1% to 12.35 should read an 'increase' and not 'decrease' as set out in the report.

A member of the Steering Group suggested the RLDP should be an opportunity to plan for the future and address any nuances, for example there could be a chance to identify suitable sites for businesses in the field of manufacturing as there has been a decline in this industry over the last 10 years.

Another member asked if there were any areas the steering group was not permitted to consider or request with regards to site identification following reference to the former Phurnacite land in the Cynon Valley where investment has already been made in part-remediating the site and large areas of the land allocated to housing is within a flood risk zone. It was suggested that unlike the original LDP this would be revised from the early stages of the strategic options but nothing was 'off-limits' to the steering group in that sense. The Head of Planning added that officers had to be satisfied that the current allocated sites are going to be deliverable and would seek justification from promoters around the allocation.

Members were informed that there was still uncertainty about the outcome and the impact of Brexit after the 31st December 2020 on the Legislation, industries and areas that the revised LDP will cover.

Members also raised the following queries and made the following comments:-

- Consideration needs to be given to all the previous sites e.g. Mountain Ash phurnacite;
- How do we marry up with the environment after Brexit?
- How is the viability of housing sites quantified?
- The importance of heritage/tourism sites particularly when they are replaced by housing developments and the community loses key buildings
- How covid will influence the development of future office space.
- How the RLDP will incorporate supplementary planning guidance with regards to HMO's and bringing former chapels back into use.
- The impact of Brexit on the manufacturing industry-the UK will have to be more self-sufficient and bring the work to the people not the reverse.
- The importance of providing affordable housing which is in demand particularly in strategic areas such as the Cwm Coke site.
- The local planning guidance needs to be more detailed.
- Improved, future transport links such as railway links are needed to encourage investment.
- The net outward flow of commuters (28,642) is relevant- an aspiration for the Cynon Valley Gateway is to extend to Aberdare and into the Industrial Estate.
- New waste management facilities at Hirwaun Industrial Estate will bring employment.

The Development Services Manager (Planning Policy) advised that there are a number of stages to the candidate site process such as environmental assessments, deliverability and with regards to housing/retail, they need to be based on evidence to ensure they meet the identified needs.

With regards to the viability of housing sites, the Development Services Manager stated that there are a number of matters to consider which includes software, house prices and build costs which are all taken into consideration. He added that Brownfield sites are more costly. Members were informed that it may be more cost effective for a housing developer to redevelop derelict buildings rather than rebuild them. Members were advised that there would be opportunity to discuss pivotal buildings within the community and HMO's within the visioning events.

Tourism will play a more integral part of the RLDP and appropriate and relevant policies will need to be put in place. The Welsh Language will also need to have an impact and how the needs and interests of the Welsh language have been considered during plan preparation will need to be evidenced.

It was confirmed that the Cwm Coke Works just north of Beddau has been designated as an area suitable for development and there are a number of options in place for similar sites to come forward based on comprehensive evidence that the site would be viable and deliverable.

The Development Services Manager advised that the impact of COVID-19 on buildings, future office space and development in general as well as other

employing industries is a consideration and over the next month or so offices will need to be revisited. He emphasised that creating an evidence base is key to the development of the plan.

Following discussion of the report it was **RESOLVED** to note the information provided.

7 Next Steps

The Steering Group was advised that following the inaugural meeting, there would be a series of virtual visioning events that will seek to progress this first stage, in accordance with the agreed Community Involvement Scheme.

It would be for the visioning sessions and feedback from participants to determine the issues that the LDP should address and a range of strategy options.

The Chair confirmed that information regarding the next steps would be circulated to the Steering Group in due course.

This meeting closed at 4.05 pm

**G Caple
Chairman.**