

Stephen Chard

From: Ross Mackinnon
Sent: 19 December 2023 20:24
To: Tony Vickers
Subject: FW: Notes from our Local Plan discussion

Importance: High

It's in the chain Tony.

Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Conservative Councillor for Bradfield
Conservative Group Leader & Leader of the Opposition
West Berkshire Council, Market Street, Newbury RG14 5LD
[REDACTED]

From: Tony Vickers <Tony.Vickers1@westberks.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2023 2:52 PM
To: Dominic Boeck <Dominic.Boeck@westberks.gov.uk>; Howard Woollaston <Howard.Woollaston1@westberks.gov.uk>; Jake Carpenter <Jake.Carpenter2@westberks.gov.uk>; Joanne Stewart <Joanne.Stewart1@westberks.gov.uk>; Richard Somner <Richard.Somner@westberks.gov.uk>; Ross Mackinnon <Ross.Mackinnon1@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Notes from our Local Plan discussion
Importance: High

I'm trying it so we'll see!

Cllr Dr Tony Vickers
Liberal Democrat (Hungerford & Kintbury Ward)
Portfolio Holder for Planning & Community Engagement
[REDACTED]

wbld.org.uk/news

From: Clare Lawrence <Clare.Lawrence1@westberks.gov.uk>
Sent: Wednesday, May 31, 2023 2:47 PM
To: Tony Vickers <Tony.Vickers1@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Notes from our Local Plan discussion
Importance: High

Hi Tony

I am pleased to confirm that the lists have been updated and again apologise this was not done before.

Kind Regards

Clare Lawrence

Clare Lawrence, Executive Director of Place
West Berkshire Council, Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury, RG14 5LD

clare.lawrence1@westberks.gov.uk

From: Tony Vickers
Sent: 28 May 2023 09:33
To: Clare Lawrence <Clare.Lawrence1@westberks.gov.uk>
Cc: Nigel Lynn <Nigel.Lynn1@westberks.gov.uk>; Lee Dillon <Lee.Dillon@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Notes from our Local Plan discussion
Importance: High

Hi Clare,

This was extremely annoying and should never have happened. The address "All Members Executive" which I chose to use last Friday to share my email to you with my Lib Dem Executive colleagues was still pointing to the outgoing Conservative Executive. It was a highly sensitive subject politically, as I'm sure you will appreciate.

Our Group Executive Melanie Booth assured me that as soon as Lee announced our Executive Team's names – at least a week before Full Council – she asked IT to make the change. Clearly it didn't happen, although the Council website does now have all new councillors correctly named including our Executive portfolios.

Luckily Ross Mackinnon picked this up and has done the decent thing.

Please ensure that this is put right without delay. I'm copying in Nigel but sending this to you as Acting Head of Paid Staff.

Cllr Dr Tony Vickers
Liberal Democrat (Hungerford & Kintbury Ward)
Portfolio Holder for Planning & Community Engagement

wbld.org.uk/news

From: Ross Mackinnon <Ross.Mackinnon1@westberks.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, May 26, 2023 3:43 PM
To: Tony Vickers <Tony.Vickers1@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Notes from our Local Plan discussion

Hi Tony

It appears that the All Members Executive mailing list has not been updated yet, so this has been sent to me and my colleagues.

We will delete the message as I'm sure you didn't intend to send it to us.

Best regards

Ross

Councillor Ross Mackinnon
Conservative Councillor for Bradfield
Conservative Group Leader & Leader of the Opposition
West Berkshire Council, Market Street, Newbury RG14 5LD


From: Tony Vickers <Tony.Vickers1@westberks.gov.uk>
Sent: Friday, May 26, 2023 2:51 PM
To: All Members Executive <MembersExecutive@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Notes from our Local Plan discussion
Importance: High

FYI.

The Inspector wrote to us on 22nd May with a list of [Questions](#) that need answering by 23rd June. I have not yet read them but officers are working on draft Answers. Now I've found the letter I don't need to wait for Clare to answer the bit in my email below that is highlighted for you in yellow. It is in the public domain. I'm keeping track of the dedicated [West Berkshire Local Plan Review website](#).

I see we have a Group meeting on 13th June. I'm away 3-10 June and hope to get sight of the draft paper for Full Council when I get back as well as the draft Answers to the Inspector's Questions. We need then to discuss at Group and Gp Exec, then Ops Board when we have formed our collective view.

I'd be interested in any comments you have on my email and will forward Clare's response when I get it.

Finally (for now) Clare & Eric asked me this 'top level' question: "What are **you** trying to achieve through this Local Plan process?" She said that if they had a better understanding of the outcome we want then they would focus their work on helping us to achieve it. Answers on a **small** piece of paper please!!

Cllr Dr Tony Vickers
Hungerford & Kintbury Ward (Liberal Democrat)
West Berkshire Council

www.wbid.org.uk

From: Tony Vickers
Sent: Friday, May 26, 2023 11:37 AM
To: Clare Lawrence <Clare.Lawrence1@westberks.gov.uk>
Cc: Katharine Makant <Katharine.Makant@westberks.gov.uk>; Eric Owens <Eric.Owens1@westberks.gov.uk>
Subject: Notes from our Local Plan discussion
Importance: High

Dear Clare,

Following yesterday's discussion, I understand this to be the situation. I wish to appraise Executive colleagues as to where we stand with our manifesto commitments that relate to this before we meet next Thursday with our LGA Lib Dem Group peer.

Just to remind you what we committed to:-

No. 2 in our "BIG SIX – to fix a.s.a.p." was "***We will take all available action to change the flawed local plan.***"

I have highlighted the key word! Of course, we lay Members (politicians) **think** the Plan is "flawed". You will no doubt disagree and it is up to the Inspector to decide. I have no doubt that whatever you advise us to do, my colleagues will not readily drop this commitment.

There are also several other features of the Manifesto that will be directly or indirectly affected by the outcome of the LP process. I won't list them here and now but we will have to weigh them up at some stage.

I am left awaiting a paper that will set out three broad options:-

1. Do nothing
2. Request a pause internally re-evaluate some of the evidence.
3. Withdraw the Plan

Option 1

This would in effect seem to put the Executive at odds with the LPA. You told me that having submitted the Council (LPA) Reg 19 draft to PINS, you are obliged to defend it at Examination. On the other hand, as politicians who never voted for the submission to happen and who have consistently said it was “flawed” in respect of NET strategic housing site, we cannot now simply change our minds!

Since I assume it is the new Executive that decides what resources to put into defending the current LP, we might simply not authorise those resources to be spent – or at least limit them to a statutory minimum. We would in effect, consider ways of ‘changing sides’ and act in ways to support other stakeholders who will no doubt seek to change the Inspector’s view to accord with theirs and ours.

The advantage to the Council would (if Executive has its way!) be a speedier outcome, i.e. more nearly meeting the deadline and not risking failure to maintain a 5 year housing land supply. However this carries the risk (for us) that we fail to change the Inspector’s mind. But politically we could say we tried. We would have to demonstrate to the voters somehow that we **had** tried, which is where advice from LGA Lib Dem political colleagues comes in. So it is only a “Do Nothing” option in the sense that it involves no **dramatic** action but is more subtle.

Option 2

This requires an urgent decision. I have not seen the Inspector’s letter which you say recently arrived with Questions that the LPA **must** answer within 25 (? Working) days. You said that when replying – if not before – we/you should ask the Inspector to pause the process for [3-6?] months to allow the incoming Administration (the Executive with officers’ advice) to re-evaluate the evidence on NET and other possible housing sites.

The advantage to us politicians is that this clearly shows action “a.s.a.p.” The disadvantage is that we lose time and increase the risk of failing to maintain that 5-year land supply. There is also an additional cost in terms of officer time: un-budgeted expenditure (opportunity cost when some planning policy officers are helping reduce the applications backlog) that could impact on the budget and other KPIs.

Option 3

Withdrawing the Plan shows voters we are serious. If the Inspector rejects our request to pause the Plan, we would be left to choose between a delayed Option 1 and this ‘nuclear option’! Even if we are allowed a pause, we may after re-evaluating the evidence be advised by you that there is little or no chance that the changes we seek to make to Reg 19 would be allowed, i.e. we might as well withdraw and start again.

There do not seem any advantages at this stage to withdrawal but we do need to have some costings done, because I expect this would have a major impact on budgets for at least 2 years.

I would hope that you are re-reading my submission on before of our (pre-election) entire Group, also that of Bucklebury and Thattham TC. I took as read their comments and my contribution was to attempt to produce alternatives sites that could take the approx. 500 dwellings that Thattham wished to remove from its allocation on NET. Note that they also strongly preferred to put the remaining 750 on different sites adjacent to the current settlement area, of which at least one is PDL. The bulk of those 500 taken off Thattham would, in my view, be accommodated as ‘windfall’ within Newbury or other settlements including Thattham. About 200 would be in countryside linking to our Viable Villages proposal.

All this is in our submission. I attach it in the form that was requested but as a single document, together with Lee’s covering letter.

I would appreciate by return sight of the Inspector’s letter that you referred to. **As soon as possible, Exec needs to see the draft paper.** Please confirm the deadline for a response to be signed off and sent, also confirm whether I am broadly correct with my 3 options.

Finally, you said that it is normal for the Leader and Portfolio Holder to be invited to meetings requested by developers and other stakeholders which come to the Chief Executive. I would very much welcome being included in such meetings.

CLlr Dr Tony Vickers
Liberal Democrat (Hungerford & Kintbury Ward)
Portfolio Holder for Planning & Community Engagement


wbld.org.uk/news