

CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING POLICY & CITY DEVELOPMENT

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Planning Policy & City Development held on Thursday, 1 February 2024 at 10.30 am at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Hugh Mason (in the Chair)

Councillors Matthew Atkins
George Fielding

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

Councillor Judith Smyth was in attendance.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. National updates to planning and their implications for Portsmouth City Council

The report was introduced by Ian Maguire, Assistant Director Economy, Planning and Transport, and Lucy Howard, Head of Planning Policy. As an introduction to key matters raised in the updates to planning published by the Government in December 2023, the Head of Planning Policy highlighted key information and implications for Portsmouth from the table in Appendix 1.

Members' questions

In response to members' questions, officers clarified:

- Some of the changes and amendments in the documents take effect immediately particularly the changes with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, all the changes in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (LURA) will be subject to secondary legislation. There will also be consultation on several matters such as changes to the extensions of time for planning applications.
- The dates for progressing local plans under the old system were confirmed as 30 June 2025 for submission and 31 December 2026 for adoption.
- An advantage of adopting the local plan under the old system is that the council's Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) will remain in force for longer.

- Planning fees will increase from December 2024 and Portsmouth was awarded £100,000 from the first round of the Planning Skills Delivery Fund. This will be used to help fill skills gaps through temporary staffing and some additional digital improvements and IT support.
- Reporting on member decisions on planning applications that are made against officer recommendations will now be done by the Planning Inspectorate.
- A presumption in favour of sustainable development for decision taking applies currently at PCC as we do not have an up to date Local Plan or a five year housing land supply.
- The new NPPF brings in the concept of a four year supply, and Portsmouth will match this categorisation on pre-submission.
- Strategic policies must ensure outcomes that support beauty and placemaking. There will be a robust policy to support good design and it will also mention 'beauty'.
- Portsmouth is just outside the top 20 cities (using ONS data) so the uplift incorporated in the new NPPF does not apply. Brighton and Southampton are both included and neither has the land to provide the housing required.
- Where a local plan has identified a five year supply of specific deliverable sites at the time its examination is concluded, it will no longer need to prove a 5YHLS for five years and this is an incentive to move the new local plan forward.
- Although not directly relevant to Portsmouth, the NPPF removes the requirement for green belt boundaries to be reviewed.
- A Written Ministerial Statement published in December bans local plans from including policies that impose more stringent standards on energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements than building regulations.
- Tighter sustainability regulations may affect attitudes to good design as, for example, smaller windows and overhangs may have to be factored into what makes good design and may result in planning compromises.
- The importance of mansard roofs as a source of additional housing supply is recognised in the NPPF though this will need to be considered in the light of the Design policy. The use of mansard roof will be appropriate in some areas of Portsmouth but not universally.
- There is already an urban uplift policy in place; more effective density will be needed, and guidance has been without reference to change of character brought about, for example, by mansard roofs or taller buildings.
- A date has been announced for mandatory biodiversity net gain of 12 February 2024. All developments above a set threshold approved after this date will have to deliver 10% biodiversity net gain.
- The Government does not believe that its proposals will reduce housebuilding and therefore disproportionately affect young people.
- Definitions relating to gypsies and travellers have been amended to include those who have ceased to travel for educational, health or age reasons.

- Portsmouth is close to the bottom of the league table setting out net homes delivered over 3 years compared to net homes required, with the consequence that the presumption of sustainable development applies.
- In relation to nutrient neutrality and the Local Nutrient Mitigation Fund, £12m in funding has been received by the PFSH authorities and a scheme of sites has been outlined.
- The removal of extension of time agreements could have implications for the city as they are a useful tool in granting applications, in making bad applications acceptable or good applications better. There is an argument that such agreements mask under performance, but removal will result in worse scheme and more refusals.
- There is no change to renting of properties as holiday lets or longer 6-month shorthold tenancies.

Members' comments

Members thanked officers for the information and noted that it made clear the importance of maintaining progress towards delivering a new Local Plan.

It was noted that one member suggested that a seminar on how sustainability may impact on consideration of what makes good design would be useful.

DECISIONS - that the information report be noted.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am.

Councillor Hugh Mason
Chair