



Combined Authority Board Meeting

5 June 2024 – Ordinary Meeting

Title: Public Questions

Public Report: Yes

Question 1 – from The Save Wilburton from Overdevelopment Community Group

To: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board

Question: We write to you as residents of the community of Wilburton in East Cambridgeshire.

In April 2020 the Mayor's office submitted a letter in support of a planning application by the SWCLT and Laragh Homes to develop 'Camps Field' in Wilburton, asserting its 'community benefits'. Subsequently, in 2022, the Combined Authority determined that this 'Statement of Community Benefit' had been improperly submitted, and requested that it be withdrawn from the planning application.

An investigation was initiated by the Scrutiny and Oversight Committee in July 2022 into areas concerning the Combined Authority's governance with specific regard to their housing programme. This investigation has been delayed.

On 26th April 2024 the Camps Field planning application was formally 'Disposed Of' by the LPA under Article 40 of the General Development Procedure Order (2015). With the application now terminated, we wish to ask a public question of the Combined Authority regarding the progress of the promised 2022 enquiry.

Please could you provide an explanation for its delay, an update with respect to the 'Key Lines for the Enquiry' set out in the 25th July 2022 Oversight & Scrutiny Committee Agenda (page 80), and a timeframe for its completion.

Response:

Thank you for your question. The relevant committee to respond to this question is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Your question will therefore be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chair of the Committee is expecting the question at the July meeting.

I want to thank you personally for your question and acknowledge that you first contacted myself about this matter as far back as 2021. It was raised with senior officers at the Combined Authority at the same time. It has taken far too long to get to where we are today.

I am pleased to understand that as a direct result of your community group's hard work and efforts over many years that the representative voice of your community has been recognised and the planning application that has caused so many concerns to so many residents has been finally "disposed of". It is to your credit that even though your community is no longer facing the prospect of a large development that your campaign group remains committed to understand the circumstances not only of the improperly submitted "Statement of Community Benefit" but also the much wider and systemic question in regard to the Combined Authority's governance with specific regard to their housing programme.

July 2022 was when the investigation was first discussed and initiated by the Scrutiny and Oversight Committee. The reasons for the delay are unclear but in preparing to answer this question I have been reassured by senior officers of the CPCA and the Chair of the O&S Committee they are now in the position to move forward at pace.

I have always shared your concerns and as far back as summer 2023, throughout 2022 and as recently as December 2023 I have been raising these issues within the organisation and with external independent organisations.

From July 2022 onwards, I want to acknowledge the support of senior officers both within my own organisation and in those external bodies in their willingness to take the very concerns your community has raised seriously and begin the appropriate processes and investigations. On a final note, I will add that the Combined Authority as an organisation has been through huge changes over the last few years.

I am proud to be the Mayor and Leader of this organisation and I am reassured that in answering your question in full we will be able to demonstrate how the organisation has changed for the better and how we are now well placed to serve all the residents and communities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough