

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## SWT Executive – 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019

### District wide Local Plan: New Member Steering Group - Nominations

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Mike Rigby

Report Author: Paul Browning: Strategy Specialist

#### 1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Having commenced the review of the district wide Local Plan, this report seeks to establish a Member Steering Group to support the review process.
- 1.2 To this end, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport and the Chair of Executive are invited to nominate 8 Members to sit on the new Local Plan Member Steering Group. This cross party Member group is to run alongside an officer group (ie the Strategy team), thereby providing suitable governance for the review process.

#### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 With regard to the production of the Review of the District wide Local Plan, **Executive** resolves to set up:
  - A crossing working party is set up to support the Review Local Plan.
  - 8 Members are nominated to sit on the new Local Plan Member Steering Group.
- 2.2 The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport and/or Chair will give a verbal update at the meeting on the nominations to the new Member Steering Group.
- 2.3 The Member LDF Steering Group will run until the District wide Local Plan is adopted by the Council and will meet on average on a quarterly basis. The draft terms of reference are enclosed as Appendix 1.

#### 3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

- 3.1 The potential risks that might impact on the preparation and timely delivery of the Local Plan and other Development Plan documents are set out the “Risk Assessment section of the Local Development Scheme.

#### 4 Background and Full details of the Report

- 4.1 The reasons for the Review of the Local Plan are set out within the report accompanying the Local Development Scheme. The Review is currently

about updating our local plan policies to reflect current the latest position and government advice.

4.2 The nature of various aspects of planning policy means that members have in the past been actively involved in the local plan process. For example, members will recall that adopted planning policies for Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council were informed by regular meetings of a LDF Steering Group and the West Somerset Local Development Panel.

4.3 Accordingly, with regard to the Review, Appendix 1 highlights the importance of effective, sustained engagement between Council Officers and Members. Thus, this report gives authority to establish a Member Steering Group to support the review process. The draft terms of reference for this member group are enclosed as Appendix 1.

4.4 This Member group is to run alongside an officer group (ie the Strategy team), thereby providing suitable governance.

4.5 The timetable for the review is outlined in the latest Local Development Scheme. The aim is to publish:

- Publication of an “Issues” document (Regulation 18) document in Q2 quarter of financial year 2019/20 and consider responses.
- Publication of an “Options” style document (Regulation 18) in Q3 of 2019/20.
- Publication (Regulation 19) in Q2 of 2020/21.
- Submission Plan (Regulation 22) to Secretary of State in Q3 of 2020/21.
- Examination (Regulation 24) ie Public Inquiry with appointed Inspector- Q1 of 2021/22.
- Adoption Inspector’s Report, approval at Full Council in Q3 of 2021/22.

4.6 In addition to attending meetings with the aforementioned Steering Group, Member engagement on the Local Plan Review is anticipated to include:

- Other topic-focused meetings - such as workshops attended by Council Members and other stakeholders;
- Member Information sheets linked with the Council’s evidence base underpinning the Review of the district wide Local Plan;
- One to one briefings of Members including, but not limited to, relevant Portfolio Holder ; and
- Member training events and site visits.

## **5 Links to Corporate Aims / Priorities**

5.1 Officers are in the process of preparing a new Corporate Strategy to replace those previously prepared for Taunton Deane and West Somerset. The Local Plan is an important document which will help articulate and translate the Council’s emerging strategic objectives into planning policy.

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

- 6.1 There is an agreed budget and reserves to support the delivery of the Local Plan process.
- 6.2 The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport and the Head of Strategy has reviewed and approved this report with no issues arising. Minor changes to the text were suggested and incorporated.

## **7 Legal Implications (if any)**

- 7.1 The Council's Constitution describes how Somerset West and Taunton will discharge its responsibilities, including responsibilities for the preparation and adoption of the Local Plan, which must be considered and endorsed by Full Council, prior to adoption.

## **8 Environmental Impact Implications (if any)**

- 8.1 None at this stage. . In order to comply with the legislations that govern the local plan process, a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal will be prepared and consulted upon at key points throughout the plan making process.

## **9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)**

- 9.1 None at this stage.

## **10 Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)**

- 10.1 None at this stage. In order to comply with the public sector equality duty: an Impact Assessments (IA) accompanies this series of reports and agenda items on the Local Plan. Further Impact Assessments will be prepared in due course as part of the plan making process. Further, details of the process are also available from:

<https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/your-council/equality-and-diversity/>

## **11 Social Value Implications (if any)**

- 11.1 None at this stage.

## **12 Partnership Implications (if any)**

- 12.1 The recommendations outlined above seek to ensure that Members continue to play an active and important role in considering in the review of the District wide Local Plan, helping to deliver a sound Plan that embeds the Council's policies and priorities' and takes account of community interests.

**13 Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)**

13.1 None at this stage.

**14 Asset Management Implications (if any)**

14.1 None at this stage.

**15 Data Protection Implications (if any)**

15.1 None at this stage.

**16 Consultation Implications (if any)**

16.1 None at this stage.

**17 Scrutiny Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)**

17.1 A verbal update will be given to Executive.

**Democratic Path:**

- ~~Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – Yes / No~~ (delete as appropriate)
- ~~Cabinet/Executive – Yes / No~~ (delete as appropriate)
- ~~Full Council – Yes / No~~ (delete as appropriate)

Reporting Frequency:  Once only       Ad-hoc       Quarterly  
 Twice-yearly       Annually

**List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)**

Appendix 1	Member Steering Group. Draft Terms of Reference.
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Note: For sight of individual background papers and more information on the supporting evidence base please contact the report author.

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## **Appendix 1: Local Plan Member Steering Group**

### **Draft Terms of Reference.**

**Drafted May 2019**

#### **1 Introduction**

1.1 Somerset West and Taunton has statutory responsibility to prepare a Local Plan which must be up-to-date and fit for purpose. Planning Policy Guidance advises updating such Plans in whole or part at least every 5 years.

1.2 The Taunton Deane Core Strategy was adopted in 2012. The West Somerset Local Plan was adopted in 2016. Thus there is now a pressing need to start the process of reviewing both documents and combining them into one Strategy given this process is likely to take 3 to 4 years to complete.

1.3 Member input in planning policy development is essential, offering an opportunity for officers to relay technical information that will inform the decision making process and ensure that adequate oversight is in place to steer development of robust planning policy.

#### **2 Purpose & Key Tasks**

2.1 The Steering Group's key function is to contribute to the production of planning policy documents which form part of the Local Development Framework. Over the period to 2021/22, the primary focus of Steering Group's work will be on the new District wide Local Plan which involves reviewing and updating the following related planning policies:

##### **Taunton Deane BC**

- Relevant remaining saved policies of the Taunton Deane Local Plan (2004).
- The Town Centre Area Action Plan (Adopted 2008).
- Taunton Deane Core Strategy (Adopted 2012).
- Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (Adopted 2016).

##### **West Somerset (excluding Exmoor National Park)**

- Relevant remaining saved policies of the West Somerset Local Plan (2006).
- West Somerset Local Plan (Adopted 2016).

2.3 The broad timetable of work and specific outcomes is detailed within the Council's latest Local Development Scheme (LDS). The role of the Steering Group is to act as a sounding board for policies and proposals as they are drafted and to advise when they consider issues should be reported to Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.

2.4 Once adopted, the new district wide Local Plan will form part of the “development plan” and it is the duty of the planning authority to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Such policies are essential to the Council achieving its aims, such as those within the Council’s Corporate Strategy and plans for boosting our local economy alongside better infrastructure for Somerset.

2.5 Given the potentially contentious nature of housing and employment related development, it is important that Members are kept fully informed of developing policies and proposals.

2.6 In addition to attending meetings with the aforementioned Steering Group, Member engagement on the Review is anticipated to include:

- Other topic-focused meetings - such as workshops attended by Council Members and other stakeholders;
- Member Information sheets linked with the Council’s local plan evidence base; the AMR (Authorities Monitoring Report); infrastructure planning and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), which underpin the Review of the district wide Local Plan;
- One to one briefings of Members including, but not limited to, relevant Portfolio Holders; and
- Member training events and site visits.

### **3 Timescales**

3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to prepare such Local Plans under the: Planning Act 2004 (as amended) by the Localism Act 2011; and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Furthermore, in accordance the Local Government (Boundary Changes) Regulations 2018, we must adopt a local development document under section 23 of the 2004 Act to apply to the whole of the Council area within a period of 5 years starting with the reorganisation date.

3.2 The broad timetable of work and specific outcomes is detailed within the Council’s latest Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS establishes the priority to review adopted planning policies and adopt a revised Local Plan by 2021/22.

3.3 Delivery of the work programme summarised in LDS is the subject of regular monitoring and review to ensure that the strategy team priorities are still appropriate taking into account any change(s) in: local circumstances and national and regional legislation and policy. Any issues with and associated alterations to the adopted LDS are reported to the Local Plan Member Steering Group prior to any recommendations to change the LDS are considered by the Council.

### **4 Monitoring Progress**

4.1 Regular updates in the form of short written highlight reports will be provided for Local Plan Member Steering Group.

## **5 Membership, Chairing and Administration**

5.1 The membership of the LDF Steering group should comprise of 8 members. The members of the Steering Group can be selected from any non-executive Member of the Council and must be agreed by Executive committee.

5.2 The nature of various aspects of this planning policy work means that those selected will have the necessary skills and experience and have in the past been actively involved in this process. Member input is essential, offering an opportunity for officers to relay technical information that will inform the decision making process and ensure that adequate oversight is in place to steer the development of robust planning policy.

5.3 Where possible the membership of the Local Plan Steering Group should reflect the political balance of the Council.

5.4 One of the Members needs to be nominated and endorsed by the remaining members to act as Chair for the Steering Group. Duties of the Chair include chairing the meeting, consensus gathering of members and (if appropriate) briefing the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport.

5.5 Unless agreed with the Chair, Members of the Group shall not be entitled to send nominated representatives acting in their absence.

5.6 Unless agreed with the Chair, the venue for Steering Group meeting shall be in rotation between Deane House (Taunton) and West Somerset House (Williton).

5.7 The aim is that the Steering Group usually meets every quarter as a minimum. Meetings are always booked for approximately 2 hours, but usually aim for around an hour's worth of information (plus question time). This format, together with a Forward Plan and short informative papers and power point presentations distributed before the meeting has in the past been an effective way of working.

## **6 Limitations of the Local Plan Steering Group**

6.1 The Steering Group shall act as an advisory and coordinating group. It has to adhere to the Council's governance and constitutional arrangements. For example, declaring member interest.

6.2 Members shall be free to respond to consultation documents in their own right as well to participate in any coordinated Group response.

6.3 The Steering Group cannot direct the actions of any member representative, although it is anticipated that the groups' advice shall be thoroughly considered.

## **6 Invited Representations**

6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport is invited to attend each meeting of the Local Plan Steering Group.

6.2 Other individuals / officers from the Council and/ or stakeholders may be invited from time to time for specific issues on a one off basis. (For example, the Housing Development & Enabling Manager to discuss affordable).

6.3 In all cases invited representatives may be excluded from certain items on the agenda for confidential or commercially sensitive reasons. Such exclusion, if in dispute, is at the sole discretion of the Chair.

**End**