

Executive

LEADER: Cllr Gordon Hook

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cllr Gary Taylor

DATE: 8 October 2019

REPORT OF: Business Manager Strategic Place

SUBJECT: Local Plan Working Group

PART I

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is recommended to

Resolve

That a Local Plan Working Group is set up as proposed in the report.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To establish a Local Plan Working Group consisting of 9 members to informally consider and discuss the Teignbridge Local Plan Update.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council has agreed to carry out an update to the Teignbridge Local Plan which will take account of new information on housing and other development needs of the area, as well as changes in national policy since the current Local Plan was adopted. It is currently expected that the work will be completed by the end of 2022. This work will be undertaken alongside the joint working on the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan.

2.2 The Council has some clear ambitions which it is seeking to deliver through the update to the Local Plan, including raising the standard of design, reducing carbon emissions, improving housing affordability and increasing jobs and productivity in the district.

2.3 Councillors will be aware that local plans go through a formal legal process which includes consultation at various stages, and requires consideration by a formally appointed planning inspector. The plan can only be adopted when the inspector finds that it is "sound" including any amendments required by them. To ensure soundness, council planning officers provide advice upon which councillors make decisions about the content of local plans based on

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experience, professional knowledge and an understanding of relevant national policy.

- 2.4 However, it can sometimes appear that a fully formed plan is presented by officers without any earlier interaction or involvement by members. In order to deepen cross-party Councillor involvement in plan preparation it is recommended that a Local Plan Working Group is set up.

3. MAIN IMPLICATIONS

Roles and Responsibilities of the Group

- 3.1 The Group will act in the capacity of an informal 'sounding board', giving advice and guidance to officers to progress updates to the Local Plan and other associated planning guidance and infrastructure proposals. The Group will not have decision-making powers.

Format

- 3.2 The policy group will meet informally, normally in private. This will ensure that officers and members can have uninhibited discussions of potentially sensitive matters in advance of such information becoming public knowledge. In addition to reports, documents and other information presented by council officers, the group may invite external expert witnesses as appropriate, in order to test and consider emerging local plan policies and proposals.
- 3.3 The Group will elect a chairperson and vice chairperson at its first meeting, with new elections taking place at the first meeting after the Annual Council Meeting.
- 3.4 Discussions of the group will aim to achieve a consensus on local plan matters between councillors and officers in advance of formal officer recommendations to council committees. Working Group members should use this as an opportunity to facilitate a two way dialogue between wider Group members and officers preparing the Local Plan. The objective will be to prepare a Local Plan update which is both sound in planning terms and reflects the aspirations of the council as far as possible.
- 3.5 There will be no formal minutes of the group but a note will be taken of the subject matters discussed, witnesses invited and any broad points of agreement or matters to be considered further. The notes will be available to Councillors and council officers but should not be made public as they may contain sensitive information in advance of formal publication of committee reports.

Membership

- 3.6 In order to ensure there is a political balance, Executive direction, and the involvement of Planning Committee it is recommended that the membership of the Group is comprised of 9 councillors as follows (with deputies permitted if necessary):

- Portfolio Holder for Planning

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- Portfolio Holder for Housing and Climate Change
- Chair of Planning Committee
- Vice Chair of Planning Committee
- Chair of Overview and Scrutiny
- 4 other Members nominated by the council's political groups to bring the Working Group into political proportionality overall (currently 5 Liberal Democrat members; 2 Conservative members; 1 Independent member; and 1 Newton Says No member).

3.7 The meetings will be an open forum for all District Councillors to attend if they wish and all Members will be notified when meetings are held. However, the 9 named Members will be the primary advisors and their involvement will ensure continuity throughout the process of preparing the Local Plan.

3.8 The group meetings will be attended by council planning and other officers.

Arrangements

3.9 It is proposed that meetings of the Group will take place on a need to meet basis rather than scheduled meetings, to be arranged by the Business Manager, Strategic Place after discussion with the chairperson.

3.10 The first meeting will take place at 9.30am on Monday 21st October 2019.

4. GROUPS CONSULTED

4.1 None.

5. TIME-SCALE

5.1 The Group will continue to be constituted until a formal decision is made for the Group to be disbanded.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no associated costs with the setting up of this Group.

7. JUSTIFICATION

7.1 Local Plans can be complex and controversial, but are a key mechanism for achieving a range of council objectives. By improving member involvement in their preparation a more robust and widely supported plan should be delivered.

8. DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION (CONFIRMATION OF DECISION SUBJECT TO CALL-IN)

10am - 15 October 2019.

Simon Thornley
Business Manager, Strategic Place

Cllr Gary Taylor
Portfolio Holder for Planning

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BELOW TO BE FILLED IN BY REPORT AUTHOR:

Wards affected	All outside Dartmoor NP
Contact for any more information	Michelle Luscombe
Background Papers (For Part I reports only)	Teignbridge Local Plan
Key Decision	Y
In Forward Plan	Y
In O&S Work Programme	N
Community Impact Assessment attached:	N
Appendices attached:	N