

PLANNING POLICY PROJECTED WORK PROGRAMME

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a brief update on planning policy work over the past six months, how key pieces of work are currently progressing, and an indication of the projected work programme for the development of the new Local Plan.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Whilst the Council is progressing a review of its planning policies, there is a need to ensure that the Council is mindful of what other Councils are proposing. This will ensure that policies are robust and compliant with current legislation, national policy and guidance, and that Rochford District Council's interests – including its communities, infrastructure and environment – are not adversely affected.
- 2.2 There are a number of key pieces of work that the team is looking to progress and, where possible, finalise over the next 6 to 12 months; this includes ongoing work on the evidence base. Looking forward as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan there are a number of important background documents that are being refreshed, or will need to be prepared.

3 NEIGHBOURING COUNCILS' CONSULTATIONS

Background

- 3.1 The team has continued - as part of the Duty to Co-operate - to respond to neighbouring Local Authority consultations. This ensures that any emerging plans would not have an adverse impact on the District's interests, including its communities, infrastructure and environment. Officers have reviewed and responded to each consultation as appropriate.
- 3.2 Policy consultations that officers have responded to since the previous Sub-Committee in June 2016 include:-
- Castle Point Borough Council's Draft New Local Plan 2016 (including the Draft Sustainability Appraisal) on 30 June 2016.
- 3.3 The 2016 Draft New Local Plan was submitted to the Government for independent examination by a Planning Inspector on 25 August 2016. The Planning Inspector appointed to examine the draft Plan has corresponded with Castle Point Borough Council specifically on the Duty to Co-operate. The Inspector has arranged a hearing session on the Duty for 12 December 2016 and has invited officers from Rochford District Council to attend. The Inspector has also invited the Council to provide a response to his questions

on the Duty to assist with the examination. The Council submitted its response to the Inspector on 18 November 2016.

- 3.4 The Council has also responded to consultation on the Southend and Essex draft Waste Local Plan throughout its preparation. This draft Plan is currently at examination stage as well. Following hearing sessions last month, the Planning Inspector examining the draft Plan identified a number of modifications required; this includes the potential allocation of a previously unallocated site at Dollymans Farm (which is located in Rochford District and Basildon Borough). The proposed modifications, including this additional site, will be formally consulted on in the next few months. The Council will therefore consider the proposed modifications to the draft Waste Plan, and provide an appropriate response, as necessary.

Looking Forward

- 3.5 The Council will continue to work with other Local Planning Authorities at the South Essex, and, where appropriate, Essex level. Officers will review and respond to planning policy consultations as they emerge to ensure that the Council's interests are protected and will be involved during examinations, where necessary.

4 GOVERNMENT CONSULTATIONS

Background

- 4.1 The Government recently completed its consultation on proposed changes to the Neighbourhood Planning regulations, such proposals included the following:-
- The Local Planning Authority would be able to make minor modifications to a neighbourhood plan or Order at any time without the need for public consultation, examination or referendum;
 - An additional basic condition that requires the examiner to consider whether the plan proposal would have any adverse consequences on an existing plan, and if so, what measures would mitigate the effects;
 - Regulations to specify that Statements of Community Involvement (SCI) should be reviewed at least every five years; and
 - A new requirement for Local Planning Authorities to publish their policies on giving advice or assistance to groups preparing or updating neighbourhood plans in their SCI. There would also be a new requirement for LPAs to set out, in their SCI, their policies for involving interested parties in the preliminary stages of plan-making.

- 4.2 The Council provided a formal response to this consultation to ensure that the district's interests are appropriately considered, within the Government's timeframe.

Looking Forward

- 4.3 The Council will continue to comment on any proposed changes to the planning system, as appropriate, to ensure that any areas of concern are highlighted to the Government, as demonstrated by previous consultation responses. In particular, the Council needs to be mindful and responsive to any further changes to the planning system which may arise from the forthcoming Autumn Statement scheduled for 23 November 2016.

5 NEW LOCAL PLAN

Background

- 5.1 A number of evidence base documents have already been published to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan, including a Retail and Leisure Study Update 2014, Employment Land Study Report 2014, Environmental Capacity Study 2015 and South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016.
- 5.2 The Council is working in conjunction with the other four Local Planning Authorities in South Essex to prepare a South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment and a South Essex Retail Study being led by Thurrock Borough Council. An update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment is also underway, necessitated by the publication of more up to date national demographic projections. It is anticipated that these three strategic studies will be completed by the end of 2016.
- 5.3 The Call for Sites closed earlier in the year, and will be used to inform the Council's updated Housing Land Availability Assessment (an assessment of the viability, availability and suitability of sites for residential development). Sites for economic development will also be assessed. This update is due to be published alongside the Issues and Options Document. Additional evidence, including a baseline highways report, is also being prepared to inform the new Local Plan process.
- 5.4 The Council's Statement of Community Involvement which sets out how local communities – including residents and businesses – will be involved in plan-making and other planning functions was consulted on and adopted in July 2016. A programme of community engagement events was rolled out in partnership with Parish/Town Councils across the District between May and October. The purpose of these community-led events was to discuss the challenges, opportunities and vision for each local area. These events were also supplemented by a survey. The outcome of this early engagement is considered in a separate report.

Looking Forward

- 5.5 The timetable for preparing the new Local Plan – the Local Development Scheme – was updated and agreed by Full Council on 18 October 2016. It is anticipated that the Issues and Options Document will be published in spring 2017, once all the necessary evidence work has been completed. This will be a fairly ‘light touch’ document setting out a range of issues identified and potential options to address these.
- 5.6 Alongside the new Local Plan we are also looking to deliver an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The projected work programme and any further changes to national policy and guidance would have a number of resource implications (both time and cost), as set out above. There is an existing local plans budget and this will need to be subject to review through the next budget cycle.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The projected work programme and any announcements from the Autumn Statement would have a number of legal implications for the plan making process, as set out above.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee considers the projected planning policy work programme and **RESOLVES**

That, subject to resource constraints, current work streams continue on the preparation of the new Local Plan evidence base and the Issues and Options Document over the next 6 months.



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Background Papers:-

None.

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