

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE: OCTOBER 2019

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a brief update on how key pieces of work, including the development of policy documents and supporting evidence, are currently progressing. It aims to give a broad indication of the projected work programme for the Council's new Local Plan and the South Essex (Joint Strategic) Plan.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The latest plan-making timetable adopted by the Council on 19 February 2019 identifies the key milestones for the development of the Council's new Local Plan and the South Essex (Joint Strategic Plan). These documents must be underpinned by robust, proportionate evidence, including technical studies, which the Strategic Planning team is responsible for commissioning, project managing and, in some cases, undertaking, ensuring they comply with relevant guidance and are based on appropriate, robust information.
- 2.2 This report highlights progress made on the development of these two policy documents, key evidence and other work tasks within the Strategic Planning team's remit.

3 LOCAL PLAN-MAKING

New Local Plan

- 3.1 The most recent Local Development Scheme (adopted 19 February 2019) set a timetable for the preparation of the Council's new Local Plan, including envisaged dates for future stages of public consultation. In light of delays to the preparation of the South Essex (Joint Strategic) Plan and a need to reflect on the most effective way of bringing forward a development plan for Rochford, any 'Preferred Options' draft will not be ready to be consulted on in the autumn. A revised Local Development Scheme will be presented to the Planning Policy Sub-Committee at the nearest opportunity in order that a revised timetable can be agreed.

South Essex Plan

- 3.2 The Strategic Planning team is continuing to support the preparation of a Joint Strategic Plan for South Essex (the 'South Essex Plan'). As explained in previous reports, the South Essex Plan would be a joint plan covering the authority areas of Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend and Thurrock. It would set an overarching framework for how the sub-region will grow and develop in the future, addressing key cross-boundary challenges

and opportunities, delivering joint ambitions for the area and allowing for an effective, joined-up approach to be taken to future growth and infrastructure.

- 3.3 The first stage of the South Essex Plan, the Issues Document, is expected to be consulted on in Q4 2019 or Q1 2020. The Issues Document, when finalised, will be presented at a future meeting of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee for Members to consider.

4 CONSULTATION ON AMENDMENTS TO THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

- 4.1 The Council recently consulted on a number of proposed amendments to its adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). These amendments related to neighbourhood planning and data protection. A total of 35 responses were received to that consultation.
- 4.2 These amendments have been recommended to be adopted into the existing SCI, as set out earlier in the agenda for this Sub-Committee meeting. More information on these amendments and the recommendation is set out in item 5 of the agenda.

5 ESSEX COAST RECREATIONAL DISTURBANCE AVOIDANCE AND MITIGATION STRATEGY (RAMS)

- 5.1 In partnership with 11 other Essex authorities and Natural England, the Council's Strategic Planning team continues to support the development and implementation of the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (the 'RAMS'). The Planning Policy Sub-Committee endorsed the RAMS Strategy in April 2019.
- 5.2 A supplementary planning document (SPD) has now been prepared to provide applicants with an easy-to-use guide explaining the implications of the RAMS for them and their planning applications. This includes information on why the RAMS strategy has been developed and what it aims to achieve, which applications fall within the scope of the RAMS and the procedures and processes in place for paying the £122.30 per-dwelling contribution due under the RAMS. This SPD is the subject of agenda item 7. More information on this SPD is set out in item 7 of the agenda.

6 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

- 6.1 As at September 2019, the Canewdon and Wallasea Island Neighbourhood Area remains the only designated neighbourhood planning area in the district. The Strategic Planning team continues to support the Neighbourhood Forum in the preparation of its neighbourhood plan but there is no substantive progress to report.

7 EVIDENCE BASE UPDATE

- 7.1 The Strategic Planning team is currently overseeing the preparation of several technical evidence studies. Together, these evidence studies are required to inform, shape and justify any future policy approaches taken by the Council through its new Local Plan and the South Essex Plan. A brief update on the status of this evidence is provided below.
- 7.2 The Council, along with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, has jointly commissioned a Landscape Character, Sensitivity and Capacity Study (LCSCS) and a Green Belt Study (GBS). These studies will be important considerations in developing any future spatial growth strategy for the District. These studies are both in the process of being finalised and, once finalised, will be presented to a future meeting of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee for Members to consider.
- 7.3 A raft of technical evidence has also been commissioned jointly with other South Essex authorities as part of the South Essex Plan process. This evidence will help to inform both the South Essex Plan and approaches taken at the local level through local plans. The evidence commissioned includes a Strategic Growth Locations Study (SGLS), Green and Blue Infrastructure Study, Economic Land Availability Assessment (ELAA), Grow-on Space Study, and a Retail, Leisure and Tourism Study. Many of these studies are in their infancy but will be presented to Members at a future meeting of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee, once completed.
- 7.4 The Strategic Planning team will continue to develop the evidence base needed to support the Rochford new Local Plan and South Essex Plan, undertaking and commissioning further technical studies where required.

8 HOUSING DELIVERY TEST ACTION PLAN AND OTHER MONITORING

- 8.1 In line with national policy, the Council has been required to prepare an 'action plan' setting out the key causes of the under-delivery of housing over the previous three years and identifying any actions needed to improve housing delivery in the future. The Council was required to prepare this action plan as its housing delivery fell below 95% of its requirement over the last three years.
- 8.2 A Housing Delivery Test Action Plan has been prepared and is the subject of a separate agenda Item. More information on this Action Plan is set out in item 6.
- 8.3 The Strategic Planning team continues to be responsible for the monitoring of the Council's policies, including housing delivery and Section 106 contributions. The team is in the process of finalising an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2018-19 which summarises the performance of the

Council's policies over that period. This AMR will be the subject of a Portfolio Holder report in due course.

9 STATUTORY REGISTERS

- 9.1 The Strategic Planning team continues to maintain the Council's Brown field and Self and Custom Build Registers. There are no substantive changes to report on the contents of these registers at this time.

10 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The team fulfils a strategic role in planning for the future growth of the district and ensuring that the Council's statutory plan-making functions are advanced in a timely manner. It is important that the team appropriately prioritises and fulfils tasks and projects in a timely manner to ensure that the Council's duties under planning legislation are fulfilled and that the outcomes for its communities are maximised. If the team does not appropriately prioritise tasks and projects within its remit, the timetables for the preparation of development plan documents could slip making it more difficult to effectively and positively plan for the future of the district and its communities.

11 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This work programme is being achieved through existing agreed budgets and resources.

12 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Council is required to prepare a Local Plan under Section 17(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in order to set out its policies relating to the development and use of land in its area. Section 13 of this Act requires the Council to keep under review matters which may affect the development of its area. Section 17(6) of the Act also requires the Council to keep under review its Local Plan in light of any review of its policies.
- 12.2 Other sections of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, and Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 provide the legal basis for the current plan-making system. These are supported by the recently revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 12.3 The Secretary of State has powers to intervene in plan-making under to Section 27 of Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 where he considers a Council to be failing or omitting to do anything necessary in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a planning policy document. He may prepare or revise a plan or direct that the Council or another do so.

- 12.4 Furthermore, the Localism Act 2011 requires Rochford District Council to co-operate and work with other prescribed bodies as part of the Duty to Co-operate on strategic cross-boundary issues. Such issues include, amongst other matters, planning for new homes and jobs, infrastructure (such as utilities, schools and health care), open spaces and roads.

13 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed as no decision is being made.

14 RECOMMENDATION

- 14.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RESOLVES**

That the strategic planning work programme update: October 2019 be noted.



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Background Papers:-

None. None

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