

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 14 MARCH 2012**

**PORTFOLIO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**

**REPORT FROM HEAD OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**

**SUBJECT: TOWN CENTRE PLANS – HOCKLEY, ROCHFORD AND RAYLEIGH AREA ACTION PLANS**

**1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 That arrangements be made to progress the Town Centre Area Action Plans for Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh as set out in the report, with the aim being for all plans to be formally submitted for public examination by September 2013.

**2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The town centre plans will provide opportunities for regeneration/redevelopment in each of the town centres benefitting the local economy, providing new jobs and improving the public realm.
- 2.2 In light of the discussions at Full Council on 28 February 2012, this report sets out proposals to accelerate the process and complete the necessary stages of plan preparation to enable submission versions of each town centre area action plan to be completed and made available for public examination by September 2013.

**3 SALIENT INFORMATION**

- 3.1 Consultation versions of each town centre plan have previously been prepared and published as follows:-

- Hockley Area Action Plan (HAAP) – February 2009
- Rochford Area Action Plan (RAAP) – September 2009
- Rayleigh Area Action Plan (RayAAP) – November 2009

In addition a revised options report on the HAAP was published in November 2010.

- 3.2 Pre-submission versions of each town centre plan now need to be prepared, together with sustainability appraisals and an assessment to comply with the requirements of the habitats regulations. The current timetable for reaching submission on each plan is:-
- HAAP – Spring 2013
  - RAAP – Spring 2014

- RayAAP – Spring 2014

- 3.3 However, subject to additional resources being made available, it is possible to bring forward the submission dates of the three plans so that the HAAP can be submitted slightly ahead of the current timetable in February 2013, with the RAAP and RayAAP to follow by the end of September 2013.
- 3.4 The three plans must be accompanied, as pointed out earlier, by sustainability appraisals and habitat assessments. Each stage of plan preparation involves further public consultation and engagement and pre-submission consultation must be carried out prior to the submission of each plan. Therefore, the plan preparation process is somewhat lengthy with a number of complicated procedures to complete.
- 3.5 In order to bring forward the submission dates for each plan it is proposed that consultants be appointed to prepare the pre-submission drafts and to assist the Council's Policy Team as necessary given the burdens of work on the Core Strategy legal challenge, Core Strategy review and Allocations DPD.

#### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 The current timetable for plan preparation does aim to give some priority to the HAAP, but the RAAP and RayAAP submission dates would be well into the future.
- 4.2 It would of course be perfectly possible to stick with the existing timetable but there is no doubt that in the current economic climate there is a need to look at opportunities for regeneration/redevelopment likely to make a positive contribution to the economic vitality of the area, deliver jobs and enhance the public realm.

#### **5 RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There is a risk in not making progress towards the preparation of the town centre plans. Resources are tight and the investment climate is difficult and ensuring plans are in place will provide advantages for each town centre when suitable opportunities arise.
- 5.2 The timetable for each town centre plan is reasonably ambitious and will depend on a number of factors, not least being the appointment of suitable consultants. Supporting evidence based documents must also be prepared and consultation carried out. That being the case, the timetable is tight but deliverable, though progress will need to be carefully monitored.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 It is estimated that a budget of £50,000 should be allocated to progress each town centre plan to submission. This will include the preparation of the plans themselves, and the supporting evidence base, including sustainability appraisal and habitats regulations assessment.

- 6.2 The total budget requirement of £150,000 can be funded from the environmental reserve.

## **7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The appointment of consultants will be subject to a tender process in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Head of Planning and Transportation**

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### **Background Papers:-**

None.

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