

Minutes of the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Panel



Location: Council Chamber, The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough, LE16 7AG

Date: 16th November 2023 commencing at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillors: Finan, Galton (ex-officio), James (Chair), Nunn, Sarfas, Taylor, Whelband

Officers: D. Atkinson – Director of Planning
T. Nelson - Head of Strategic Planning
E. Newman – Democratic Services Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Johnson (Councillor Finan substituted) and Bannister.

2. Declaration of Members' Interests

There were none.

3. Draft Community Scrutiny Panel Minutes – 10th October 2023

The minutes of the meeting on 10th October 2023 were accepted as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chairman after the following amendments were made:

Councillor Whelband was nominated as Vice Chair, not Councillor Nunn.

The Chair updated the panel that the Interim Chief Executive will be providing further direction on Portfolio Holder attendance at scrutiny panel meetings.

4. Portfolio Holder Update

The Portfolio Holder for Planning provided an update on the progress of the Local Plan development, and on the work completed by the Local Plan Advisory Panel. He considered that first critical step in the development of the Local Plan will be to discuss the Regulation 18 process. In April 2024, Harborough's Local Plan will be 5 years old.

5. Local Plan Timetable (Local Development Scheme/LDS) and Issues and Options consultation (Regulation 18)

The report was presented by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, alongside the Head of Strategic Planning. He discussed the importance of this report as the first step in the development in the new Local Plan.

The following questions and responses were as follows:

Question	Answer
How will the authority work to the short timescale to submit the Local Plan?	The authority has and is implementing further good governance and budget management, is using available toolkits, engaging external expertise, and finding additional resourcing/staffing.
What will happen if the council does not meet the deadline set out in the report?	Circumstances outside of the council's control may halt the progress. Various external bodies that will be involved, are being approached early to advise them of the upcoming Local Plan development. If the deadline is not met, the evidence collected and work already completed will not be wasted, it will be re-used to submit at a later point.
What will the costings to produce the Local Plan be?	The current Local Plan cost £1.8million, it is likely that due to rising costs outside of the council, the new plan costs will be increased. The reporting is being prepared and will be progressed to the next Cabinet meeting and subsequent Council meeting.
How will the council ensure the project is appropriately resourced? How much would the increased staffing cost?	Currently, there is a national shortage of planners, however, the planning team have started reaching out via professional networks and are receiving positive feedback from this initial contact. The additional cost will be outlined in an extra report to be reviewed by Cabinet.
How has the new Settlement Hierarchy been determined? And will it be voted on?	Cabinet will be required to vote on this at the next meeting on 27 th November 2023. The document being discussed regards

	Regulation 18 and issues and options, and the Settlement Hierarchy can be commented on during the public consultation.
How has it been determined that Harborough would likely be in a later group of Local Plans under the new central government legislation (LURA)?	Recent Counsel advice provided at previous council meeting (6 th November 2023) provides some information on this. There are no guarantees that Harborough District Council will be part of the pilot scheme in the new central government led process. As it is a new process there is still extra legislation to come from central government to guide local authorities. There is still much to be determined around how the new system will operate, for example, via secondary legislation.
What specific stakeholders are being engaged in the consultation?	Clarification was provided that every resident of the district is a stakeholder. As well as this various companies and public bodies (National Highways, Natural England, Leicestershire County Council, NHS) are being invited to comment on the consultation presented.
How is growth in warehousing being accounted for?	A piece of evidence is being developed for the Leicester and Leicestershire area, reporting on strategic distribution of warehousing to guide the Local Plan process.
What additional costings will there be if the deadline is not met?	The costings of the new Local Plan are dependent on absolute details of transitional arrangements. If the deadline is not met, the existing work and evidence completed will be bundled and taken into the following plan preparation under the new system. Additional costings are not included in the upcoming financial report, as an estimation cannot be made at this stage due to the changing evidence base.
Is this report developed with the assumption that the Leicester and Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground will be agreed?	The Issues and Options report and the Leicester & Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground report are not dependent on one another, the report being discussed at this panel is a separate decision to be made regarding the Regulation 18 Issues and Options document.
Would figures in the report need to be adjusted if the Leicester and Leicestershire Statement of Common Ground is not agreed?	Within the report there are three different scales of growth identified to provide a range of data as a way of future proofing the Local Plan for potential circumstance change (e.g. Annual Housing Needs)

	between the Regulation 18 consultation and the Planning Inspectorate review following submission of the plan for its examination.
What will the consultation process taking place in January and February 2024 look like?	There will be a six-week consultation process. The responses will be analysed and collated, then reviewed by the Cabinet & Council to inform the Regulation 19 draft plan that will again go to Cabinet & Council prior to publication for consultation. As part of the Regulation 18, Issues and Options consultation there will be a static notice board to view in the customer service area of The Symington Building. The consultation will be taking place largely online but will be supported by further telephone and email consultation and in person drop-in sessions. Drop-in sessions are mainly for members of the public to ask any questions that they may have answered. As well as this, parish councils and parish meetings in the district are being contacted to receive their thoughts. There will be an advertisement in the Harborough Mail, and it was also suggested that there be an advertisement in the Swift Flash. The authority is working to front load the publicity for the Regulation 18 Issues and Options consultation.
Where will the consultation drop-in sessions be held?	It is likely that the drop-in sessions will be held in Market Harborough, Lutterworth, and potentially Scraptoft, (certainly in that area of the district.)
When will the consultation drop-in sessions be held?	The sessions are normally held for ½ - ¾ of a day, and this will ensure that the sessions span both working and non-working hours.
Could a consultation drop-in session be allocated to a larger village in the district?	This suggestion was noted.
Will the outcomes of the consultation be publicised?	The data provided in the consultation will be organised, catalogued, analysed, and a response will be provided to it. This information will be considered by officers, and then presented to councillors.
How will the council ensure that larger stakeholders/significant service providers are engaged with on consultation?	This is a link to the Statement of Community Involvement - https://www.harborough.gov.uk/directory_record/563/statement_of_community_involvement This is available on the Harborough District Council website. This lists the significant service providers that will be involved in the consultation. To ensure contribution to the

	consultation, communications are followed up, and an ongoing dialogue is opened.
Will there be an impact on other duties of the planning department's service delivery?	It is unlikely that the development of the Local Plan will have an impact on the provision of other council services.
How is the need for water infrastructure upgrade considered?	As part of the consultation, important consultees such as the water authorities, lead local flood authority, and the environment agency are approached for their expertise. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan will sit alongside the Local Plan to provide further information on the infrastructure required to deliver and implement the local plan.
Have there been any definite appointments to the planning department for the required increase in resourcing?	There haven't been any confirmed additional appointments to the Strategic Planning team yet.
Is the 6-week timeline for the consultation enough time?	There will be a pre-consultation notice, to advise people of the consultation and drop-in sessions. Parish Councils will receive notice, prior to the consultation, to make the necessary meeting arrangements to discuss the matter. The consultation development process has considered demographics of the district to accommodate as much of the public as possible.
What will be the timescale to receive a fully comprehensive risk assessment on delivery of the Regulation 18 process?	The Head of Strategic Planning will take this query away to review and respond.
What would the increased resource in the Strategic Planning team look like?	There is already a very capable existing team in place, which will be integral to the Local Plan process. What is looking to be done is to supplement the already existing team, with equally capable new members of the team, as well as members of outside bodies and consultants, for areas of specialist knowledge.

Key issues discussed were the costings of the Local Plan Regulation 18 process, the planning department resourcing to deliver the plan to the timeline provided, and the consultation that would take place with the public and key significant stakeholders.

The panel members commented on the proposed updated Local Development Scheme, and on the scope of the first public consultation on the new local plan.

It was discussed that the questions and comments provided by the panel would be reviewed and passed onto the Cabinet for discussion at their next meeting.

6. Any Urgent Business

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 20:00

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