

Committee: Scrutiny

Date:

Title: Local Plan Project Management

7 October 2020

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Evans Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Local Plan

Report Author: Simon Payne, Local Plan Project Manager
01799 510465

Summary

1. This report considers arrangements for project and risk management for the local plan.

Recommendation

2. That the Committee endorses the arrangements for regular project and risk management reports on the local plan as outlined in the following report.

Financial Implications

3. The project management arrangements are funded from the approved local plan budget.

Background Papers

4. No additional papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	No impact
Community Safety	No impact
Equalities	No impact
Health and Safety	No impact
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No impact
Sustainability	No impact

Ward-specific impacts	No impact
Workforce/Workplace	No impact

Situation

- At the meeting on 1 September 2020 the Committee discussed draft local plan project initiation documents and in particular arrangements for project and risk management. This report sets out the arrangements that have been put in place and seeks endorsement for the form and regularity of reports to this committee.

Project Management and Risk Management Principles

- There are seven Principles that underpin the management of successful projects and which are leading the approach to preparing a new local plan for Uttlesford. These are:
 - Focus on outcomes
 - Plan realistically
 - Prioritise people and behaviour
 - Tell it like it is
 - Control scope
 - Manage complexity and risk
 - Be an intelligent client
 - Learn from experience
- Clearly the first Principle is to identify the outcome, which in our case is the achievement of a sound and timely local plan that achieves the objectives of the District Council following effective community engagement. This outcome underpins the Local Plan Project Initiation Document (the subject of a separate report on this agenda). The question then arises, what is the role of Scrutiny Committee in ensuring that the local plan process is successful and that a sound plan is the product of the process?
- The principal role of the Committee in relation to project management is to regularly receive evidence about the progress of the local plan work and to probe and explore this information so that any remedial action may be identified and then taken in a timely way.
- A further role for the Committee relates to the preparation of quarterly updates to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). At the Council meeting on 30 April 2020 it was resolved to withdraw the previous local plan and prepare a new one and in doing so the Council resolved:

..to updating on a quarterly basis, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government on the progress being made regarding the Local Plan, including slippage in the programme that may be encountered accompanied by full explanations. Before being sent, these updates will be referred to a member group.

Governance Arrangements

11. Cabinet has agreed a Governance structure for preparing the local plan with the work of the Scrutiny Committee being supported by an officer group, the Corporate Overview Board, which is chaired by the Chief Executive. This Board also routinely receives reports on the progress of the local plan and will have oversight of the project management data on a monthly basis.

Risk Management Reporting

12. A comprehensive Risk Register has been established and the latest version of this data is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. At the present time there are twenty-eight live items in the Register and this will constantly change as the project progresses. The Register will be updated on a daily basis.
13. The up to date Risk Register will help inform the Project Plan so that all mitigation measures that have tasks will also feature in the Project Plan and the Committee will be able to track how risks are being dealt with.

Project Plan Monitoring

14. It is proposed to provide the Committee with three levels of reporting on the Project Plan to reflect the fact that this is a complex project spanning several years of activity. This approach allows the Committee to have an overview, be able to focus on potential 'show stoppers', and delve into progress on any live aspect of the project. These levels are as follows, and more detail is provided in subsequent paragraphs:

- Workplan Dashboard
- Workstream Report
- Live Project Plan Tasks

Workplan Dashboard

15. This document is shown in Appendix 2, rather like dashboard in a vehicle, and is intended to provide a high level summary of what is happening. The total number of project tasks during the quarter, and their status is shown together

with changes marked by arrows since the last report (in the appendix all arrows are shown as neutral as this the first report).

Workstream Status

16. This document is shown in Appendix 3, is intended to provide a single assessment of the overall status of the project (with a Red/Amber/Yellow/Green RAG rating) and then a commentary. In addition the top risks which might, if not successfully managed, derail the project are also shown together with recommended mitigation measures. This document acts as an Executive Summary so that the Committee can see the most important issues all in one place.

Project Plan Live Tasks

17. This document is shown in Appendix 4, and is an extract from the live database in Microsoft Project. It shows all the tasks which have been or are due to be progressed within the current quarter with a description of the task, assigned officer, key dates, a RAG rating and comments which set out what needs to be done to change amber or red ratings to green ones. It should be noted that RAG ratings do not apply to completed tasks. The tasks should be largely self explanatory, however in the case of tasks ID 312-340 it is important to note this work relates to an initial assessment by officers of the evidence base at commencement of work on the new local plan.
18. As the project proceeds there will be many hundreds of tasks in the database and it is recommended that the Committee only examine the detail on specific tasks of interest to the Committee, otherwise a line by line review of every task would take many many hours of Committee time.

Conclusions

19. The Risk and Project Management reporting described above represents best practice and the approach is consistent with the Principles set out in Section 1 above.
20. A system has been established for inhouse collection and collation of the data and this is operated by a Project Officer who is fully trained in Microsoft Project. The Business and Performance Manager in the Planning Department is also fully trained and both have access to the Microsoft Project Licences.
21. A key element of the approach is to ensure that an experienced and dedicated Project Manager has overall responsibility for the system and will routinely attend Corporate Overview Board and Scrutiny Committee to be able to answer

questions and provide advice (as described in the Principles to 'tell it like it is' without fear or favour).

22. The Committee is requested to endorse the Risk and Project Management proposals set out in this report with reports provided on a quarterly basis and more frequently when and if required.

Risk Analysis

23.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Failure to successfully Project Manage the Local Plan will result in an unsound Plan	1 – Provided robust and effective project management system established	4 - Lack of Spatial Strategy and planning policies leading to potentially unacceptable development	Establish a robust and effective project management system with appropriate oversight by the Scrutiny Committee

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.