

Committee: Scrutiny

Date: 16 February
2021

Title: Local Plan Project Management – Quarter 4

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

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Key decision: No

Summary

1. This report provides an update report on risks and project management for the local plan during Quarter 4 of the current financial year.

Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the conclusions of the report on risk and project management and endorses the proposed actions.
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees the attached letter update to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for Quarter 4 of the current financial year.

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 7 October 2020 the Committee endorsed the arrangements for regular project and risk management reports on the local plan, including formal quarterly updates for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in accordance with a Full Council resolution. This report provides an update for Quarter 4 in accordance with the agreed arrangements and seeks agreement to the proposed MHCLG update.

Risk Register Update

- The latest version of the Risk Register is attached as Appendix 1, changes since the last report are shown together with reasons.
- There are two changes since the December report to committee. The most significant relates to procurement capacity (ID ref 33). The next stage in the evidence base work will be to commission several consultants covering a range of work on strategic transport studies, Habitats Regulation scoping work, landscape sensitivity studies, employment needs assessments and heritage assessments. The District Council has one full time procurement officer who has in recent weeks played a central role in commissioning local plan work on transport accessibility, an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and also a Sustainability Appraisal. There is, however, a limit to the capacity of this officer especially as the local plan is only one part of her work. To address this risk it is proposed to commission procurement capacity from the County Council and neighbouring authorities.
- One change in risk scoring is in relation to the revised national housing standard methodology (ID ref 15). Members will recall that in the autumn the Government published a revised methodology that would take our housing supply requirement from around 700 dwellings per annum to over 1,200 per annum and consequently this risk was identified as high at a score of 20. The Council, along with our authorities, made strong representations to Government objecting to the change. More recently the Government has published alterations to the revisions which place the requirement at the original level. In the light of this alteration it is recommended that the risk is reduced to 15.

Project Plan Update

10. The format of the update is in three parts, the overview 'Dashboard', the 'Workstream Status' and an extract from the live Project Plan.

Workplan Dashboard

11. This document is shown in Appendix 2 and provides a high level summary of what is happening. The arrows show changes in comparison to the Quarter 3 dashboard as it was reported to Committee in December. In comparison with last quarter the total number of live tasks has increased. It is important to note that there are currently no 'Red' rated tasks (ie critical tasks that require to be urgently resolved) but there are 21 'Amber' rated tasks that require prompt action and which are being actioned.

Workstream Status

12. This document is shown in Appendix 3, and provides a single assessment of the overall status of the project (with a Red/Amber/Green RAG rating) and then a commentary. Steady progress has been made since the last report with the appointment of the Sustainability Appraisal consultant, and the Community Stakeholder Forum has now dealt with five themes (at the time of report writing), a member workshop and a separate Town and Parish Council workshop have taken place, the Call for Sites has been issued and the Strategic Infrastructure Delivery Group has been established with an agreed programme of work.
13. The main areas of risk that are being attended to are ensuring that officer capacity and skills are available and being applied effectively. Interim appointments are in place whilst the Principal Urban Designer and Principal Transport Planner are recruited to the established posts. The need to bring in additional specialist procurement resources has been identified and is being addressed. A further area of potential risk is more associated with the development management process and the cumulative impact of proposals that may be promoted in advance of adoption of the local plan and close liaison is taking place between Development Management and planning policy officers to ensure that potential cumulative impacts are properly identified and addressed.

Project Plan Live Tasks

14. This document is shown in Appendix 4 and is an extract from the live database in Microsoft Project for Quarter 4. 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.

Draft Progress Letter to MHCLG

15. A draft update letter is shown in Appendix 5 based on the information above and the Committee is requested to agree the contents.

Conclusions

16. The current progress on the local plan is in accordance with the timetable set out in the approved Local Development Scheme and the actions identified in the Risk Register and Project Plan are being actively undertaken.

Risk Analysis

17.

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.