

Committee: Scrutiny

Date: 16/09/2021

Title: Local Plan Project Management – Quarter 2

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 2 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 notes the attached draft letter update to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for Quarter 2 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 2 in accordance with the agreed arrangements and seeks any comments to the proposed MHCLG update.

Risk Register Update

- The latest version of the Risk Register is attached as Appendix 1.
- There are eight changes since the last report to committee. Two significant risks relate to staffing (ID refs 2 and 17 move to a lower risk), a senior planner has been appointed in the local plans section bringing the team up to full strength. The risk relating to political consensus (ID ref 21) has been elevated following a recent Local Plan Leadership Group meeting to reflect the fact that plan preparation is moving into a stage when it will be more challenging to maintain consensus.
- A risk associated with evidence base work not being completed on time (ID ref 34) is assessed as a higher risk and officers are working closely with consultants to ensure effective co-ordination of work takes place between consultants as well as with officers and a monthly co-ordination meeting has been set up. A further risk around decision making (ID ref 36) has an elevated risk and a separate report on this agenda seeks to address the issue. There is also an increased risk related to the transport modelling (ID ref 38) which officers are currently reviewing.
- Two new risks have been added in (ID refs 39 – 40). Both of these relate to the use of internal officer resources. The higher risk of the two is the likelihood that officer work on site assessments will take longer than anticipated given the relatively high number of identified sites and changes to the work programme are being considered to ensure that the publication of factual information in October can still take place on time.

Project Plan Update

11. The format of the update follows the approach agreed at the October Scrutiny Committee which is in three parts, the overview 'Dashboard', the 'Workstream Status' and an extract from the live Project Plan.

Workplan Dashboard

12. This document is shown in Appendix 2, and provides a high level summary of what is happening. The arrow changes refer to the previous dashboard as it was reported to Committee in June. In comparison with last quarter the total number of live tasks has increased from 389 to 559. 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 twenty-seven 'Amber' rated tasks that require prompt action. Details of all the tasks are summarised in the following sections.

Workstream Status

13. This document is shown in Appendix 3 and is intended to provide a single assessment of the overall status of the project (with a Red/Amber/Green RAG rating) and then a commentary. Significant progress has been made since the last report. Leadership Group and the Cabinet have discussed the housing requirement, and agreed a Preliminary Outline Strategy. The Cabinet has discussed and supported a New Communities Collaboration Partnership for the larger sites. Around 300 sites identified through the 'The Call for Sites' process are currently subject to a technical assessment following a methodology agreed by the Leadership Group.
14. The main areas of risk that are being attended to are the co-ordination and management of the evidence base work which comprises seventeen studies, with a range of different consultants. On the governance side the main issue is the need to adjust the programme to provide more time for members to examine and consider the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan and a separate report is included in the agenda of this meeting to address that issue. This change could lead to up to eight weeks more needed to prepare the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan however the overall timetable may be adjusted to contain these changes within the overall programme which seeks to submit the draft plan for examination in September 2023.

Project Plan Live Tasks

15. This document is shown in Appendix 4, and is an extract from the live database in Microsoft Project for Quarter 2. 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 all ratings to green ones.

Draft Progress Letter to MHCLG

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

Conclusions

17. 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

18.

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.