

LOCAL PLAN WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Planning introduced the report and said the purpose of the report was to:-

- Provide Scrutiny with an update.
- Provide a timetable for the process going forward and details of the plan's progress towards regulation 19.
- To bring the attention of the meeting to the report from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS), and to note the risks identified to the timetable which was very challenging.
- To note that the report from PAS indicated that the Council was on course for regulation 19, subject to approval through Cabinet and Council.

He said the timetable was in the report under appendix 3. A clearer printable version of the timetable would be produced.

The Chair said that Scrutiny's role was to be a guardian of the process, which had been delegated to the Committee by Full Council. He said that the report from PAS was outstanding and was a testament to the professionalism of the team working on the Local Plan. He said that for good governance and transparency there needed to be clear written documentation produced for the Local Plan Panel (LPP) and this had not been the case for the most recent meeting.

The Chair received permission from the meeting to continue over the two-hour threshold.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Strategic Director of Planning made the following points in response to questions from Members:-

- The last LPP had received a presentation from consultants which focused on Climate Change and therefore paperwork beforehand had not been possible. The meeting had been supplemented by written material following on from the discussion and matters raised.
- It was the intention to provide written paperwork in advance of meetings going forward.
- Topics would be revisited to allow for any feedback received to be considered and updated.
- The Regulation 19 Consultation would be extended to 8 weeks in recognition of it taking place partially within the summer holiday, unfortunately there was no scope within the timetable to move it out of the holidays completely.
- Third party meetings and the duty to co-operate would be documented.
- Draft responses were being collated on the 1742 comments received, this required time and testing of ideas that could not be carried out in a public meeting forum.
- All the comments made further to the Regulation 18 consultation had been published, the responses would be provided with the plan papers for governance in June.
- The Parish workshop was only for those larger villages that had a small housing allocation to offer them the chance to take responsibility along with Planning to plan for their allocations.

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- By the summer it was hoped that there would be a regulation 19 plan in place which would begin to gain weight in decision making and with that plan a four year housing supply would also be released as part of the new arrangements put forward within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- Housing requirements between April 2023 and April 2024 could be shared with the LPP but not published until June along with the Local Plan.
- Highway data would be one of the last pieces of evidence completed as it would depend on site selection.
- Provisional strategic sites would be taken to the LPP in May but could not be published to avoid developers and land promoters who did not have sites within the plan from putting in speculative planning applications before the Regulation 19 stage was completed in June.
- It would be investigated whether Takeley Parish Council could be part of the Highways and Essex Education Duty to Co-operate meetings, however precedence and risks would need to be checked.
- Time and diary dependent a meeting with Takeley Parish Council could be arranged.
- The CPZ had not been referenced within the plan and there had been a lot of comments made in the consultation that it should be. A session would take place with the LPP on the responses and the options around CPZ issues.
- An all Member briefing would be organised when there were some milestone markers laid.

Following concerns raised by a Member about the timetable and the lack of evidence provided to the wider public, the Strategic Director said:-

The requirements for engagement with the public through the Local Plan Process under statute was for two, six week consultations, one at Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages. It was not possible to involve the public at all times as Officers were reviewing the documentation and drafting responses to the feedback from the Regulation 18 stage. There was, however, engagement on a monthly basis through the LPP meetings and this would continue with more documentation being made available to these meetings in May and June.

The Chair said that he understood the concerns raised but drew the meetings attention to the PAS report and their conclusions which stated that they were comfortable with the timescales and the current process. He said that there would be documents to read towards the end of June and said that the documentation provided was robust.

Members made the following points:-

- Concerns were raised around new sites coming through after the Regulation 18 consultation and the possibility of significant differences between the two documents. It was important to be as clear as possible to residents what changes had been made.
- Concern about a large amount of documentation relating to the Local Plan being published without enough time being given for it to be read and considered before a formal meeting.

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- The LPP and Scrutiny meetings needed to be cross referenced so that the Local Plan detail that came to the Scrutiny Committee were also easily available through the Local Plan documentation or the LPP.
- A suggestion was made that the Local Plan timetable should be affixed to each LPP agenda in future to ensure that if there was any slippage it would be picked up.

The Director of Corporate Services agreed to refresh and circulate terms of reference for both the LPP and Scrutiny meetings after concerns were raised that there needed to be more clarity in each meetings role to avoid either gaps or duplication.

The meeting agreed unanimously to the recommendation within the report, which was;-

'that the Committee notes the conclusions of the report on risk and project management; the implications of possible timetable slippage; and provides its views on the matters covered in the report'.