

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS		
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	9 April 2014
3.	Title:	Proposed Revisions to the Local Plan Steering Group Constitution and Terms of Reference
4.	Directorate:	Environment & Development Services

5. Summary

Consideration of proposed revisions to the Local Plan Steering Group Constitution and Terms of Reference.

6. Recommendation

- 1. That Cabinet recommends to full Council adoption of the revised Local Plan Steering Group Constitution and Terms of Reference.**

7. Proposals and Details

Background

The remit of the Steering Group was last revised in March 2010 (LDF Steering Group 23/4/10, Cabinet 28/4/10 and Council 21/5/10). Public consultation on the Local Plan and the involvement of members in the process was the subject of a spotlight review by Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in early 2012. The results of the review were reported to Cabinet 17/7/12.

The Local Plan Steering Group considered the proposed revisions to the group's Constitution and Terms of Reference at their meeting of 14/2/14 and, after consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, endorsed the changes at their meeting of 14/3/14.

It is generally accepted that the existence of a steering group, together with effective corporate support and adequate resources, is an essential pre-requisite of successful Local Plan delivery. Many other local planning authorities have similar informal officer/member steering groups to guide Local Plan preparation.

The Steering Group's role

The Steering Group, comprising senior politicians supported by corporate advisors, is intended to:

- Enable early political and corporate understanding and buy in to the preparation and review of the Local Plan
- Encourage informal discussion to guide ongoing technical work and formulate options, often on potentially controversial subjects (ie housing development sites)
- Facilitate improved efficiency in corporate and key stakeholder contributions to Local Plan preparation and consultations (ie the Rotherham Partnership)
- Help mitigate identified risks associated with delivering the Local Plan to quality, budget and timescale requirements
- Advise on reporting arrangements for key issues to be addressed within the Council's publicly accountable formal decision making process

Why revise the remit of the Steering Group?

It is important that the Constitution and Terms of Reference remain fit for purpose. This is especially timely with another round of public consultation on the Sites & Policies document programmed for summer 2014. It is vital that all ward members have the opportunity to engage in the process prior to public consultation and are fully briefed on potential development sites in their area.

Updating of the wording of the Constitution and Terms of Reference is also required due to recent planning reform and revised regulations governing the preparation, consultation, examination and adoption of Local Plan documents.

Balancing efficiency with democratic accountability

The principal function of the Steering Group is to promote the timely and efficient preparation of the Local Plan. Informal discussion and debate within the Steering Group is intended to prepare the ground for key decisions to be made within the normal publically accountable reporting structures of the Council. The operation of the Steering Group is not intended to replace this process.

Public engagement in Local Plan preparation will continue to be via the methods and media set down in the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) and bespoke consultation plans approved under this framework. A revised SCI is being drafted in light of revised government regulations for consideration by members in due course. Draft development plan documents will continue to be subject to public consultation and scrutiny before progressing to examination by a Government-appointed, independent planning inspector.

The Constitution and Terms of Reference have been revised to:

- give greater scope for ward members and parish council chairs to attend special meetings on issues of local importance, ie briefing on potential development sites in local areas
- update and future proof the document by referring in general terms to relevant officers and services input rather than listing named services, to reflect changes to Council structures
- refer to correct job titles for officers in the Council's scheme of delegation
- allow greater scope for all member briefing sessions and scrutiny overview of the Local Plan process
- reflect the revocation of regional strategies and other legislative changes
- reconfirm that Cabinet and full Council must approve a development plan document before it is published and submitted to government

The revised Local Plan Steering Group Constitution and Terms of Reference are set out in Appendix 1.

8. Finance

There are no direct financial implications from this report although continuing to ensure the timely and efficient preparation of the Local Plan will accrue efficiency savings and improved receipts under Government grant incentives.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Complex reporting arrangements could cause further delays in Local Plan preparation. The proposed revisions will permit efficient internal reporting whilst still guaranteeing decision making at the appropriate Council level.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Updating of the remit of the Steering Group will assist performance in meeting milestones in the Local Development Scheme and targets in the Corporate and Service Plan.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The content and recommendations of this report have been discussed with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services.

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APPENDIX 1: Revised Local Plan Steering Group Constitution and Terms of Reference

CONSTITUTION

The purpose of the Steering Group is to provide a forum for corporate discussion and political guidance on all aspects of the Local Plan and to oversee the statutory process of preparing Local Plan documents.

This requires:

- The Steering Group to have some decision making over routine Local Plan matters (excluding matters of policy) as set out in the Terms of Reference below.
- The Chair of the Local Plan Steering Group, in consultation with the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Culture, to prompt the attendance of appropriate Cabinet Members as required by agenda content. Appropriate ward members and parish council chairs to be invited to attend matters of specific local interest.
- Appropriate items to be referred to Strategic Leadership Team, Cabinet and the Rotherham Partnership. Steering Group minutes to be included on Cabinet agenda.
- Major issues to be dealt with in an open seminar or briefing sessions for all Council Members or reported to the appropriate scrutiny committee as required.
- The Rotherham Partnership Manager to receive Steering Group agendas and minutes with attendance prompted as appropriate. Other stakeholders to be invited to attend appropriate meetings as required.
- Relevant Council officers and departments to receive agendas and minutes and to attend meetings as appropriate. The Chair of the Local Plan Steering Group, in consultation with the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Culture, to determine circulation lists and periodically review attendance.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Matters referred to Council

- Adoption of all Development Plan Documents (including Policies Map)
- Adoption of the Statement of Community Involvement
- Resolution for the Local Development Scheme to come into effect
- Approval of all Development Plan Documents (including Policies Map) prior to publication and submission to the Secretary of State
- Withdrawal of Development Plan Documents

Matters referred to Cabinet

- Approval of draft Development Plan Documents (including Policies Map) prior to public consultation
- Approval of major revisions to the Local Development Scheme (that have significant corporate priority and resource implications)
- Endorsement of the Council's consultation response on regional or sub-regional spatial planning policy

Routine matters for consideration by the Local Plan Steering Group

- Draft Development Plan Documents (including Policies Map)
- Sustainability Appraisal of Draft Development Plan Documents
- Draft Supplementary Planning Documents
- Annual Monitoring Reports
- Consultation Plans
- Employment and housing land forecasts and requirements
- Evidence base studies and findings
- Settlement capacity findings and potential site allocations
- Draft Masterplans
- Regional and sub-regional planning issues and interaction with the Local Plan
- Minor amendments to, and updating of, the Local Development Scheme
- Planning Inspectorate Service Level Agreement and Examination arrangements

Appropriate reporting and approval arrangements for these matters (and any others not anticipated above) will be agreed by the Chair of the Local Plan Steering Group in consultation with the Director of Planning, Regeneration & Culture and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services.