

Subject:	DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY
Meeting and Date:	8 May 2017
Report of:	Nadeem Aziz, Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Nicholas Kenton, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Waste and Planning
Decision Type:	Key
Classification:	Unrestricted
Purpose of the report:	To seek approval for the Local Plan Engagement Strategy
Recommendation:	Cabinet approves the Local Plan Engagement Strategy attached at Appendix 1 and it is made available on the District Council's website.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The decision was taken by Cabinet in March 2017 to proceed with a review of the Dover District Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Local Plan Engagement Strategy sets out the Council's approach to consulting and engaging the community in the review of the Local Plan.
- 1.3 The Strategy has been prepared to expand on the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2016) to give residents, businesses and key stakeholders more clarity on how we will consult them at each stage of the Local Plan preparation process, what issues they will be consulted on, how they can respond and how we will treat their comments.
- 1.4 The Strategy also sets out the governance structure for the key decisions that have to be made in taking forward the Local Plan, to ensure that the decision making process is as transparent as possible

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council has a duty under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning)(England) Regulations 2012 to consult with a number of different groups, as set out in the Regulations, at key stages of the Local Plan preparation process.
- 2.2 Furthermore, under the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a legal duty to engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis with 'duty to co-operate bodies' to maximise the effectiveness of local plan preparation relating to strategic cross-boundary matters.
- 2.3 The Statement of Community Involvement (2016) sets out the Council's over-arching approach to engaging the community in the planning process.
- 2.4 The Local Plan Engagement Strategy has been prepared to expand on the Council's Statement of Community Involvement to give residents, businesses and key stakeholders more clarity on how we will consult them at each stage of the Local Plan preparation process, what issues they will be consulted on, how they can

respond and how we will treat their comments. This should make the process more transparent with the aim of increasing levels of participation in the Local Plan preparation process.

2.5 The Local Development Scheme, agreed by Cabinet on the 1st March 2017, sets out the different stages involved in the production of the Local Plan and the timetable for this. The Local Plan Engagement Strategy builds on this and sets out what consultation will be taken at each stage in the process.

- (a) Evidence gathering: Consultation will be undertaken with key stakeholders, infrastructure and service providers, land owners, developers and other groups as appropriate.
- (b) Call for sites: As part of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment the Council will issue a call for sites in the Summer of 2017. Here, developers, land owners, agents, and the public will be invited to submit sites to the Council for assessment, to see if they are suitable for inclusion within the Local Plan.
- (c) Regulation 18 Public Consultation on the Key Issues for the Local Plan: Statutory public consultation to be undertaken in Autumn 2017, for a period of 8 weeks, on the key issues that the Local Plan will cover.
- (d) Preparation of the Local Plan: As part of the preparation of the Local Plan the Council will hold topic specific workshops with key stakeholders, infrastructure and service providers, land owners, developers, Parish and Town Councils, the Project Advisory Group and other groups as appropriate. This will take place between Autumn 2017 and Autumn 2018.
- (e) Regulation 19 Public Consultation on Draft Local Plan: Statutory public consultation on the draft Local Plan to be held in Autumn 2018 for a period of 8 weeks.
- (f) Submission to Secretary of State for Examination: Following the Regulation 19 Public Consultation, the draft Local Plan and associated documents will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in Winter 2018.
- (g) Examination of Local Plan by Planning Inspector: An independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State will consider the 'soundness' of the draft Local Plan as part of a public examination. As part of this, the Inspector will consider the representations received during the Regulation 19 consultation, and where appropriate, individuals or organisations that submitted representations will be invited, by the Inspector, to appear at the examination. This is anticipated to take place in Spring 2019.
- (h) Adoption of Local Plan: In accordance with the Council's constitution, the adoption of the Local Plan must take place at a meeting of Full Council. This is anticipated to take place in Summer 2019

2.6 When undertaking the statutory public consultations, the Council will, where possible, encourage online responses to consultation and the Council's preferred means of receiving comments is through the interactive online system 'Objective' via the Council's website. Using the Online Form has a number of advantages. It is the fastest and most accurate method and helps us to manage representations quickly and efficiently. It ensures that representations are attached to the correct section of

the consultation document. It also allows respondents to provide their own summaries to representations, which helps us avoid any risk of misrepresentation of respondent concerns.

- 2.7 The Council however recognises that not everyone is able to use the online consultation system, so paper copies of response forms will also be made available.
- 2.8 When representations are received, they will be added onto the Council's online consultation system 'Objective'. Once all representations have been processed in this way, confirmation emails/letters will be sent to all those who have submitted representations.
- 2.9 At the end of each consultation period, all representations will be considered and analysed by officers. A response will be formulated and changes will be proposed to the draft Local Plan, where necessary. A summary of all representations, responses and proposed changes will be considered and agreed by Councillors prior to moving onto the next stage. Once changes have been approved, officers will respond to consultees who have submitted responses. Replies will include a response to the initial comment and any actions that the Council will take in response to these comments.
- 2.10 To promote transparency in the Local Plan decision making process, the Local Plan Engagement Strategy also sets out the hierarchy of decision making; at what point key decisions will need to be made; and which body will make them.

3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 Option 1: To approve the Local Plan Engagement Strategy attached at appendix 1.
- 3.2 Option 2: Not to approve the Local Plan Engagement Strategy attached at appendix 1.

4. Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 At Cabinet on the 1st March 2017 Members requested that officers produce a Local Plan Engagement Strategy.
- 4.2 The Local Plan Engagement Strategy expands on the Council's Statement of Community Involvement to give residents, businesses and key stakeholders more clarity on how we will consult them at each stage of the Local Plan preparation process and what issues they will be consulted on. This should make the process more transparent with the aim of increasing levels of participation in the Local Plan preparation process.
- 4.3 To not approve the Strategy would go against Cabinet's recommendation.

5. Resource Implications

- 5.1 Once agreed by Cabinet, a copy of the Local Plan Engagement Strategy will be placed on the Council's website.
- 5.2 There will be resource implications associated with the delivery of the Local Plan Engagement Strategy; however these will be met from the existing Local Plan budget.

6. **Corporate Implications**

- 6.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Finance has been consulted and has nothing further to add (SB)
- 6.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make.
- 6.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equalities implications, however in discharging their responsibilities members are required to comply with the public sector duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>

7. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Local Plan Engagement Strategy

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