

BABERGH / MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCILS

To: Executive Committee Strategy Committee	Report Number: N110
From: Head of Economy	Date of meetings: 10 February 2014 13 February 2014

STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To agree a basis for the future strategic direction and Member steering for combined planning policy related work outputs for MSDC/BDC.
- 1.2 In line with the above purpose, to agree that a planned, short-term, working group be established on a task and finish basis, including both senior officer and nominated Member representation. This will have the following 2 key roles:-
 - To oversee an agreed overall programme of future planning policy work, including the main outputs / deliverables to be achieved.
 - To agree an appropriate approach for officer / joint working in future in this regard operating on a collaborative basis that meets both service delivery needs and Member wishes to allow for their involvement in policy planning and its preparation.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Terms of Reference for this working group and Future Member Involvement Principles as contained in Appendix (a) be agreed.
- 2.2 That Executive and Strategy Committee Members nominate and agree (no more than) 8 representatives (4 from each Authority) to work on a (short term) task and finish group concerned with the future strategic direction of planning policy across the 2 Councils. Appendix (b) lists those nominations received to date. Further, that the suggested timetable / work programme for this new working group (attached at Appendix (b)) be agreed.

The Committees are able to resolve the above matters.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications, such as costs incurred in the decisions involved here, although less directly, the decisions and choices to be taken are likely to influence the nature of financial receipts for the 2 councils in future. These revolve around financial incentives and rewards for growth delivery and accordingly, the group's work will need to factor in such considerations.

4. Risk Management

4.1 This report is not directly linked with any one of the Council's Corporate/ Significant business risks. Key risks are set out below:-

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Failure to provide a realistic / achievable basis to put in place an up-to-date, NPPF compliant, local planning policy framework	2 (Unlikely)	3 (Bad)	Ensure that short-term group works to a clearly focused remit, together with contingency measures in case of mission failure

5. Consultations

5.1 To date discussions and internal consultations around this area appear to have taken 4 main forms:-

- Debate and outputs from Joint Scrutiny committee on this matter.
- Various discussions within Committee and Council meetings since late last year.
- Joint Member Integration Board (meeting on 21 January 2014).
- Resulting discussions within Portfolio holders group (MSDC) and Political Leaders Group (BDC).

5.2 The agreed basis for this report arose from JMIB at its meeting on 21 January 2014.

6. Equality Analysis

6.1 Not applicable.

7. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

7.1 These have been highly instrumental in helping to set the backdrop to this report, including in particular:-

- Agreement of aligned visions for each council, together with aligned strategic priorities and outcomes.
- The planning service transformation and integration work, resulting in the agreed 'One Service' vision, including agreement to work towards a combined / single policy framework in future (providing for those differences or locally distinctive nuances where appropriate).
- The Transformation Enquiry groups process (TEGs), particularly the 4 external facing TEGs (Economy; Environment; Housing and Communities TEGs).

8. Key Information

- 8.1 With the 2 Councils now well placed to soon be at a milestone stage of having 2 up-to-date Core Strategies in place (plus Stowmarket AA Plan) the time is ripe for the Councils to consider what key areas of planning policy development and outcomes they wish to pursue from here onwards, together with the agreed principles / processes for preparing new policy work and outputs. Members are reminded they have already agreed to develop the policy framework across both districts as part of the Planning transformation programme of work.
- 8.2 Members have developed significant ambition in relation to the sustainable growth agenda through the Transformation Enquiry Groups and all have called for a strategic review of the policy framework to understand how it can enable the delivery of growth in a timely way at the meeting on 29 October 2013.
- 8.3 This needs to be agreed quickly, since the Spatial Planning Policy team is now in a healthy position to deliver, in terms of its strength (and capacity); has the remit and ability to make good progress; and to operate on a highly innovative basis. Much (delivery focused and preparatory) work is already underway but the medium - longer term / larger projects need to be resolved in particular in order that their longer delivery timeframes can be managed and minimised.
- 8.4 Demands, expectations and Member interest levels in outcomes from planning policy related activity (such as growth delivery, plus other stated aspirations) are very high, so the service needs to be in an agreed position to proceed without any unnecessary delay.

9. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) Terms of Reference / Future Member Involvement Principles	Attached
(b) Suggested Group Work Programme/ Member Representatives	Attached

10. Background Documents

10.1 None.

Authorship:

Rich Cooke
Corporate Manager – Spatial Planning Policy

Tel 01473 825775
Email
rich.cooke@babergh.gov.uk

Terms of Reference

- A1. Appointed Members to oversee a strategic level review of future planning policy direction.
- A2. Members to agree the overall form and approach of a future planning policy work programme (resulting in a new agreed 'Local Development Scheme').

This work will be preceded by a review of what Plans, policies, guidance etc. are already in place (locally and nationally) to ensure that the existing policy framework is understood clearly, deployed better and to avoid any potential duplication arising through calls to produce what already exists.

- A3. Members to oversee work to conclude agreement on future member involvement principles and practical working arrangements.
- A4. Any substantive changes to current governance arrangements (such as new committee structures) do not form part of this remit.

Under the constitution, the parent Committees for this activity will remain as Strategy Committee (BDC) and Executive Committee (MSDC), who have designated responsibility for future policy making and decisions.

Future Member Involvement Principles

- A6. The transformation agenda, together with the resource environment and the imperative to deliver the outcomes desired (the Councils' strategic priorities in particular) in a timely way, indicate that the nature of Member involvement should focus in future on the strategic direction and issues (this suggests that traditional, formalised task group / panel arrangements would not serve the councils well in future.
- A7. Timely progress to achieve successful delivery is also critical (for example, in this sense, time taken to deliver growth outcomes will influence financial incentives / rewards), so any agreed processes to engage members more fully need to ensure that they do not delay progress.
- A8. This agenda could also be served well by informal arrangements for Member involvement, focused well in advance of formal committee meetings operating on project group / thematic lines utilising appropriate member and officer representation on a task and finish basis.
- A9. Informal arrangements (regarding Member involvement) on a task and finish basis could be adapted to ensure appropriate and effective involvement arrangements without resorting to the disadvantages inherent in some more conventional forms of structures.
- A10. A range of different potential options for future Member involvement will be explored and identified for review and subsequent agreement.
- A11. It will be very important to also identify principles and approaches to effective policy rollout, publicity and implementation / support since the effective use of policy can be at least as important as what is actually produced.

- A12. Future policy preparation work will need to respect some vital planning system tenets, such as ensuring the soundness of emerging Development Plans through examination; compliance with National Planning Policy Framework; the evidence based nature of the system; and meeting the Duty to Co-operate. Accordingly, it is likely that further Member planning training will be necessary, requiring early consideration of how this is to be both delivered and subsequently maintained.
- A13. Officers will undertake to avoid any planning jargon, or unhelpful technical language as far as possible in order to ensure that the most effective platform for future collaborative officer / Member working is established.

Proposed New Draft Group Work Programme (and Target Dates)

1. 10 / 13 February 2013 Executive and Strategy Committees to consider / agree recommendations from JMIB to establish the new group.
2. 14 February – 25 March (5.5 weeks) new forum to meet 4 times to work through the programme (based on agreed Terms of Reference) and agree resulting recommendations (to Executive and Strategy Committees).
 - Meeting 1: Introductions; Orientation; plan and details for subsequent 3 meetings.
 - Meeting 2: Future Member involvement approach, principles, practical working arrangements.
 - Meeting 3: Future Work Programme and ensuring its practical and most effective use.
 - Meeting 4: Conclusions, Review / Refinement; recommendations to Committees.
3. 7 / 10 April 2013 Report to Executive and Strategy Committees to consider / agree recommendations from the Strategic Planning Policy development group.

Member Representative Principles and Nominations notified to date

It is suggested that to ensure adequate reference to the TEG work already carried out and the emerging strategic outcomes, Members who have been involved in the 4 external facing TEGs are to be chosen (Economy; Environment; Housing and Communities TEGs). Given the strong focus on sustainable growth from the TEGs, it is also recommended the Economy TEG lead members should lead this work.

MSDC

- Rachel Eburne
- John Field
- Sara Michell
- John Whitehead

BDC

- Simon Barrett
- Dave Busby
- Rex Thake
- To be confirmed