



**Report To:** Planning Portfolio Holder  
**Lead Officer:** Director, Planning and New Communities

9 September 2014

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## **Local Plan – Member Liaison during the Examination**

### **Purpose**

1. To consider Member Liaison during the Local Plan Examination.
2. This is not a key decision.

### **Recommendations**

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder confirms the methods of liaison with Members during the Local Plan Examination set out in paragraph 8.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

4. To ensure that Members are kept informed about the progress of the Local Plan Examination and have an opportunity to provide a steer as necessary within the overall Local Plan framework agreed by Council on 13 March 2014.

### **Background**

5. The Local Plan was submitted for independent Examination on 28 March 2014. The appointed Inspector, Miss Laura Graham, is holding a Pre Hearing Meeting at 2pm on 11 September jointly with the Cambridge Local Plan at the Guildhall, Cambridge.
6. The Inspector has issued initial draft issues for the first five matters. These have been placed on the dedicated Local Plan Examination page of the Council's website. The Inspector has published guidance notes for the Examination that are also available to view on the website. Those notes indicate that further matters and the programme for the Examination will be made available ahead of the Pre Hearing Meeting and potentially discussed at that meeting.

### **Considerations**

7. The Examination process is led by the Inspector. There will be a programme of hearings on the matters and issues the Inspector identifies as ones she wishes to explore with the Council and objectors. The start date for the hearings will be confirmed at the Pre Hearing Meeting and is not expected to be before the middle of October.

8. It is proposed that Member Liaison will take two forms during the Examination process. Decision making will take place under the Councils' Constitution.
- (a) Regular Updates and Briefings –
    - (i) Weekly email updates to all Members outlining the matters to be examined the following week, and providing a summary of the previous week's hearings. This will be issued each Friday, unless circumstances arise which necessitate a change, in which case Members will be kept informed.
    - (ii) The Portfolio Holder will have monthly informal meetings with Group Leaders to provide a regular opportunity for feedback and discussion.
    - (iii) The Portfolio Holder will be kept informed of progress throughout the Examination and ensure other liaison as appropriate, for instance, an All Member Briefing.
  - (b) Formal Portfolio Holder meetings –
    - (i) Formal meetings will be arranged each month for the duration of the Examination hearings. These will be held as necessary or cancelled if not needed.
9. The Planning Inspectorate has adopted a more iterative approach under its latest approach to plan making. This means that the Inspector may ask officers at the hearings to indicate whether the Council is minded to make modifications to the Local Plan in order to make the plan sound. This approach enables progress to be maintained, and assists the efficient running of the Examination. It is recommended that the Council's representatives at the Examination use their professional discretion to indicate whether the Council may be willing to accept changes. In all cases, changes will need to be consistent with the objectives of the Local Plan. When appropriate, the views of the Portfolio Holder will be sought during the course of the Examination.
10. At the end of the hearings, or at an appropriate point in the Examination process, a formal decision will need to be made on any Modifications that the Council wishes or is prepared to publish for public consultation. The Council's normal decision making rules will apply to this decision.

### **Options**

11. The recommended option for informal liaison is outlined in paragraph 8(a) above. The Examination will be intense. The weekly 'look forward' will help Members to decide which Examination sessions to attend; and the weekly 'looking back' will bring Members up to speed with the progress of the Examination.
12. Alternative means of informal liaison could be used, such as weekly all member briefings. This is not recommended. Verbal briefings would not reach all Members, and would introduce greater potential for lack of clarity. As stated above, the Portfolio Holder has discretion to arrange an all-member briefing at any time.
13. The monthly Formal Portfolio Holder meetings will provide opportunity for all Members to discuss the progress of the Examination, and any modifications that have been requested. These meetings will be used for decision-making. As the

Examination progresses, the extent of requested modifications to the Local Plan will become clear. If appropriate, decisions regarding consultation on modifications may be made by Cabinet.

### **Implications**

14. There are no direct implications arising from this report in terms of any key issues including financial, legal, staffing, and climate change. The risks associated with the Local Plan are captured in the Corporate Risk Register, and actively managed through agreed mechanisms including reports to Portfolio Holder meetings.

### **Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)**

15. No consultations have been undertaken.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

16. The Local Plan is a key document for the Council, and effective engagement with Members has been and remains an important part of its development, consultation, Examination and adoption.

### **Background Papers**

None.

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