

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Planning Portfolio Holder

18 November 2014

**LEAD OFFICER:** Director of Planning and New Communities.

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### **Greater Cambridge Planning Charter.**

#### **Purpose**

1. To endorse the Greater Cambridge Planning Charter.

#### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder endorses the Planning Charter, at Appendix 1, as a joint document between Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The Planning Charter forms part of our commitment within the Greater Cambridge City Deal. It sets out how the three Local Planning Authorities (Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council) will support and deliver growth through the planning system. As part of the City Deal, we have agreed to have a Charter in place by December 2014.

#### **Background:**

4. The Greater Cambridge City Deal brings together Cambridge City Council, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, the University of Cambridge and, through the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership, local businesses, colleges and research facilities to work innovatively together to maintain and grow Greater Cambridge's status as a prosperous economic area.
5. The deal agreed between Government and the Greater Cambridge Partners will:
  - accelerate delivery of 33,480 planned homes;
  - enable delivery of 1,000 extra new homes on rural exception sites;
  - deliver over 400 new Apprenticeships for young people;
  - provide £1bn of local and national public sector investment, enabling an estimated £4bn of private sector investment in the Greater Cambridge area;
  - create 45,000 new jobs;
  - create an infrastructure investment fund with an innovative Gain Share mechanism
  - create a governance arrangement for joint decision making between the local councils
6. The Planning Charter confirms our approach supporting this growth through the planning system.

7. The Planning Charter builds upon our existing collaborative work and best planning practice.
8. The three planning authorities have a good track record of worked closely together, for example, on the new local plans and associated transport strategy. We have aligned our plan-making processes to achieve the benefits of what amounts to a single overarching development, infrastructure and delivery strategy for Cambridge.
9. Together we have established joint working arrangements for the delivery of strategic sites and have recruited teams of appropriately experienced staff and established elected member Joint Development Control Committees dedicated to this task. Best practice approaches such as master-planning, a Quality Charter, design coding and the use of Planning Performance Agreements are already part of the approach and will be rolled out across the City Deal area. The Planning Charter provides an opportunity to capture and further develop this good practice.

### **Considerations**

10. The Planning Charter forms a series of pledges to both the applicant and community, so that all parties know what to expect of each other. It shows our commitment to providing excellent and co-ordinated service and a quality outcome. It is not a guarantee that planning permission or building regulations will be granted.
11. The Charter emphasises the importance of the Local Planning Authorities (LPA), developer and key stakeholders working together from an early stage and to continue to do so throughout all stages of the planning process.
12. The potential benefits of the Charter include:
  - Providing certainty for all development partners (the council, developer, elected members and the community) in terms of an agreed timetable for the handling of complex major projects
  - Nomination of a project lead on behalf of both the council and developer to take forward the major development proposals in accordance with the agreed timetable
  - Providing certainty about the requirements for processing large scale complex applications
  - Clarifying the means of engagement and consultation with the local community.
  - Establishing a clear framework for the delivery of the complex major projects
13. The Charter also summarises what measures the three authorities have put in place to support growth, and provides several examples of where and how we have put these pledges into practice.
14. The approach will also underpin the improvements being brought about in the wider Planning Department, as part of the Planning Improvement Plan. Planning Performance Agreements, for example, are a useful tool which will in the future be used across all major developments. Discussions have taken place with agents through the Agents Forum and appropriate training will be put in place for officers.
15. Once in place, effective monitoring of the agreed service standards do need to be undertaken. This will be the responsibility of the respective Heads of Service and Team Leaders supported by the Business Manager.

## **Options**

16. No options are proposed as the three local authorities have already committed to a preparing a Planning Charter as part of the City Deal.

## **Implications**

17. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:

18. **Financial.**

Fees from both pre-application and applications are important to support the service delivery. The fees are being used to fund posts dedicated to particular projects. The Planning Charter, and use of Planning Performance Agreements in particular, provides greater structure to our approach. Income generation is being kept under review. A Business Manager is currently being recruited to oversee the financial planning and ensure systems are in place to ensure resources match services required.

19. **Legal.**

The Charter is not a legally binding document; it forms part of the Council's commitment as part of the City Deal. It also is a further indication of how the Council is demonstrating its duty to co-operate.

20. **Staffing.**

The Charter acknowledges the need for appropriate staff resources to deliver this service. Officers from a range of disciplines with appropriate knowledge and experience are needed who can manage the size and complexity of proposals involved. This is recognised in the Council's approach to recruitment and retention.

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

21. No specific consultation has been carried out for this report.

## **Effect on Strategic Aims**

22. The Planning Charter supports all our strategic aims. It is a commitment to continue to work together with our partners, to engage with our local communities, to provide excellent service and to support growth of the Greater Cambridge area while ensuring that the district remains an attractive place to live, work and study.

## **Background Papers:**

None

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