

CABINET

16 December 2014

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

AGENDA ITEM No.

7

TITLE OF REPORT: STRATEGIC PLANNING MATTERS

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF PLANNING, HOUSING AND ENTERPRISE
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR DAVID LEVETT

1. SUMMARY

1.1 This report informs Members of the current positions regarding:

- Economic Development Strategy;
- Government announcement on roads;
- Government consultations;
- Neighbouring authorities' plans;
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan; and
- Neighbourhood planning.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the report be noted.

2.2 That Cabinet approve for consultation purposes the proposed Economic Development Strategy ("Productive North Herts") at Appendix A,

2.3 That delegated authority is given to the Head of Development and Building Control to make minor amendments in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise and typographical corrections and presentational formatting to the Strategy as may be necessary before the consultation period begins.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To keep Cabinet informed of recent developments.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

5.1 The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Enterprise, has been kept informed on the matters set out above. Discussions with the Shadow Portfolio Holders for Economic Development have taken place in preparing the Economic Development Strategy.

6. FORWARD PLAN

6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Members will be aware of, and familiar with, many of the issues surrounding the strategic planning matters referred to in paragraph 1.1 above. This report is intended to provide Members with the current positions on these matters.

8. ISSUES

Economic Development Strategy

- 8.1 A draft Economic Development Strategy, entitled "Productive North Herts" is attached as Appendix A.
- 8.2 Productive North Herts is designed to link with the work being undertaken by the Local Enterprise Partnerships, and to complement the Local Plan. It includes eleven strategic priorities for economic development in the district over the next ten years:
- Make more of our location and develop more of an identity;
 - Work more with businesses and strengthen business links;
 - Improve the condition and look and access of our existing employment areas;
 - Encourage recycling of manufacturing land, premises and jobs;
 - Improve infrastructure and connectivity;
 - Encourage entrepreneurialism and retention of skilled workers;
 - Work with other public sector, community and business groups to improve skills and jobs prospects of our residents;
 - Support and develop the rural economy and business links;
 - Work with BIDs and stakeholders to support our town centres;
 - Work with schools and colleges to increase opportunities for pupils and businesses arising from an increase in vocational skills for those below school leaving age; and
 - Increase opportunities arising from the increased use of the area as a location for local and international film production.
- 8.3 Consultation on the draft strategy is scheduled to take place in February/March 2015. The document will be specifically targeted at businesses and key economic stakeholders although anyone will be able to comment on it, should they wish to. The document will be publicised by key stakeholders such as the Hertfordshire LEP, the Federation of Small Businesses, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and North Hertfordshire College and sent out through their various consultation databases. An article will appear in Outlook magazine as well as traditional publicity through press releases and through the Council's Twitter and Facebook account.
- 8.4 This document will be important as it will set the strategic context for economic development in North Hertfordshire and will start to identify possible projects and activities that a Economic Development Officer could undertake in the future

Government announcement on roads

- 8.5 A £15 billion plan to increase the capacity and condition of England's roads, was announced at the Start of December to Parliament by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin and Chief Secretary to the Treasury Danny Alexander. Of specific interest to North Hertfordshire is the project which identifies the stretch of the A1(M) between Junction 6 (Welwyn North) and Junction 8 (Hitchin) and its upgrade to a smart motorway including widening of the two lane section to dual three lane and hard shoulder running. There will also be a study undertaken for the stretch of the A1 between Peterborough and the M25 which will investigate how to improve the safety and performance of the road.

Government consultations

- 8.6 The Government is consulting on measures to encourage people to build their own homes ("custom build"). The consultation suggests that local authorities will be required to make plots of land available to prospective custom builders. This therefore raises several significant questions about how the scheme will work, particularly for local authorities which do not own significant land themselves.
- 8.7 If there was a viable market for serviced buildings plots, it would seem reasonable to think that private enterprise would already have started making serviced plots available to custom builders. The almost complete lack of such an industry suggests it is not currently viable. In effect, the Government is therefore potentially asking local authorities to spend significant money buying land that is unlikely to be fully recovered from the sale of the land.
- 8.8 Whilst the overall aim of encouraging custom builders is to be encouraged, the currently proposed method could have the effect of diverting limited public resources away from other services. Evidence appears not to have been given as to whether there are sufficient aspirant custom builders for such a scheme to be successful, or the overall complexity of the whole process.

Neighbouring authorities' plans

- 8.9 Central Bedfordshire have now submitted their plan for examination to the Secretary of State. Details of the examination are awaited.
- 8.10 St Albans has consulted upon a Preferred Options draft plan based upon the lower end of a range of figures for their objectively assessed need.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan

- 8.11 Following Full Council on 27 November 2014, arrangements are being made for the consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Options paper. The consultation will run from 18 December 2014 to 6 February 2015.

Neighbourhood plans

- 8.12 St Ippolyts Parish Council has submitted a request to designate their parish as a neighbourhood planning area. This is now being consulted upon and will be reported back to a future Cabinet for decision.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Terms of Reference for Cabinet confirm that they should exercise the Council's functions as Local Planning Authority except where functions are reserved by law to the responsibility of the Council or delegated to the Strategic Director of Planning, Housing and Enterprise.
- 9.2 Section 110 of the Localism Act 2011 sets out the duty to co-operate between local planning authorities and other prescribed bodies, to maximise the effectiveness in the preparation of development plan and other local development plan documents, so far as they relate to a strategic nature. These bodies should consider if they are able to work together jointly on such matters and must have due regard to any guidance given by the Secretary of State.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The costs of running the consultation on the Economic Strategy are covered within existing budgets, otherwise there are no other direct financial implications arising from this report.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 No direct risk implications from this report but Sustainable Development of the District and the Local Plan are both Cabinet Top Risks.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty, described in 12.2, that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give **due regard** to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.3 There are not considered to be any direct equality issues arising from this report.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report do not constitute a public service contract, the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 need not be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at Paragraph 12.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no new human resource implications arising from the contents of this report.

15. CONTACT OFFICERS

Report author

- 15.1 Richard Kelly, Principal Strategic Planning Officer
01462 474847 richard.kelly@north-herts.gov.uk

Contributors

- 15.2 Ian Fullstone, Head of Development and Building Control
01462 474480 ian.fullstone@north-herts.gov.uk
- 15.3 Louise Symes, Strategic Planning and Projects Manager
01462 474359 louise.symes@north-herts.gov.uk
- 15.4 David Hill, Senior Planning Officer
01462 474453 david.hill@north-herts.gov.uk

16. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Productive North Herts (Economic Development Strategy).