

**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:

- Luton and Central Bedfordshire progress on Local Plans;
- Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans;
- Economic Development Strategy;
- Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan: Employment Areas of Search; and
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the report on strategic planning matters be noted.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 To keep Cabinet informed of recent developments on strategic planning matters.

**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.

**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**

***Luton and Central Bedfordshire progress on Local Plans***

8.1 At the time of writing a hearing date had yet to be confirmed for the Judicial Review into the Planning Inspectorate's decision that Central Bedfordshire's Development Strategy failed the duty to co-operate and could not proceed.

- 8.2 In the meantime, Luton and Central Bedfordshire have jointly commissioned an update to their Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Officers from North Hertfordshire have been attending the steering group of wider authorities.

### ***Economic Development Strategy***

- 8.3 The draft Economic Development Strategy consultation has now closed. A number of varied responses have been received. The final strategy, together with an action plan will be going to Cabinet in September following some more focussed consultation with representative groups and business forums in the summer culminating in a workshop to form an action plan.
- 8.4 On 18 May 2015 the Council launched a service called My Incubator Ventures (MIV) which is a free online support service providing access to professional business mentors who offer advice to small business owners and start up companies in North Hertfordshire. The website's live chat service lets you speak with experienced business advisors from 9am–5pm, Monday to Friday. The advisors are from an offshoot of Wenta, a not-for profit organisation which runs business incubators elsewhere in the county. The website also offers residents access to a business information library and the chance to network with other entrepreneurs. For more information see: [www.north-herts.gov.uk/businessadvice](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/businessadvice)

### ***Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan: Employment Land Areas of Search***

- 8.5 Hertfordshire County Council has published a draft supplementary planning document (SPD) on 'Employment Land Areas of Search'. This is to accompany the Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan, which envisaged some waste developments being accommodated within the existing employment areas that the Waste Local Plan termed 'employment land areas of search'. The SPD does not propose specific sites for waste development, but gives guidance for applicants wishing to develop waste facilities within the employment land areas of search. Consultation on the SPD runs until 10 July 2015.

### ***Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire Local Plans***

- 8.6 South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council have been working to produce their local plans in tandem with each other, with the two plans being examined concurrently. The inspectors examining their plans wrote to the two councils on 20 May 2015 recommending that the examinations be suspended to allow for further work on a number of potentially serious issues.
- 8.7 The draft plans have proposed that a significant proportion of the new growth should be in the form of new settlements on former airfield sites in South Cambridgeshire. The inspectors have concerns that delivery of new settlements may be difficult, with a significant funding shortfall, and that they would be highly dependent upon out-commuting, which may be unsustainable. The inspectors are also concerned that the alternative options of green belt releases on the edge of Cambridge itself were ruled out too early in the process and that the green belt review did not fully take into account the NPPF's requirement to promote sustainable patterns of development. (The inspectors do stress that they are not necessarily saying further green belt releases will prove necessary, more that they are looking for convincing evidence that the two councils have properly assessed all the alternatives.)
- 8.8 The calculation of the 'objectively assessed need' for development is also questioned. The inspectors are concerned that the two councils do not appear to have taken into account the Planning Practice Guidance of March 2014 which requires consideration of

whether market signals indicate that higher targets should be adopted than those based simply on demographics and migration.

### ***North Hertfordshire Local Plan***

- 8.9 Consultation on the Local Plan Preferred Options paper closed on 6 February 2015. We can now confirm that about 8,400 comments have been made, which are now being processed, read and analysed.
- 8.10 Work continues with Stevenage Borough Council and consultants Opinion Research Services on updating the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. The new study will look again at the objectively assessed need for housing development, taking into account the latest household projections from the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the latest Government guidance (notably on market signals). It is anticipated that the study may be ready for publication within the next few weeks.

## **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. Final approval of Local Plan documents shall be a matter for Full Council.
- 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 There are no 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 1<sup>st</sup> October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5<sup>th</sup> 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 although individual schemes or considerations hereafter will be subject to appropriate review to ensure they comply with latest equality legislative need.

**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. Temporary staff have been brought in to assist processing the representations on the Local Plan.

**15. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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**16. APPENDICES**

None.