

## **Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 9 September 2025**

### **Note: Regarding Deferral of North Herts Town Centres Strategy**

- Officers presented an overview of the Town Centres Strategy to the Strategic Planning Project Board on 15 July 2025. The Board received a presentation from officers and their consultants, Lichfields, on the status of the project and an overview of the interim Draft Strategy. This presentation included a detailed discussion of Section 3: Individual Town Centre Strategies within the Draft Strategy, which provides per town centre a vision statement, summary of key priorities including development opportunities for larger parcels of land and how these could be taken forward through partnership working. The discussion also revolved around the requirements for a further section (Section 4) outlining next steps to identify various funding and delivery opportunities to support the future vitality and viability of the town centres. The Board members acknowledged receipt of the presentations and the comprehensive work undertaken by officers and their consultants.
- The proposed timeline for delivery of the Draft Strategy for September Cabinet was agreed with the Board, officers, and their consultants, with intentional consideration for time to review further redrafts and respective holidays. However, due to the number of comments received and the detailed amount of work associated with Section 3 to review the priorities for the individual town centres, including drafting a further section (Section 4: Funding and Delivery), the consultants have taken longer than anticipated. This extra time and effort towards the project have allowed for re-reviewing the evidence base and cross-checking/linking across the various sections of the Draft Strategy.
- Officers had hoped to receive a copy of the completed Draft Strategy from our consultants in time for review prior to submission to O&S and to Cabinet in September, unfortunately this has not been the case for reasons outlined above.
- For officers, the Executive Member for Place and Project Board Members to have sufficient time to review the completed Draft Strategy it has been agreed to defer the Draft Strategy to the November Cabinet meeting. This will result in a more robust and comprehensive document to be presented to Cabinet for public consultation in December and January. This revised programme will also afford wider public engagement with the Area Forums during the consultation period, in addition to consulting with key stakeholders, local businesses and members of the public registered on the council's Local Plan data base. The Draft Strategy can also be presented to O&S at its meeting in November prior to Cabinet.

#### *Note Prepared by:*

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