

RURAL, ECONOMIC & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

29th OCTOBER 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

CONTRIBUTION TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING MANAGER

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's authority to enter into a permanent Partnership Agreement with other Planning Authorities in Leicestershire and Leicestershire County Council to jointly employ a 'Strategic Planning Manager' to take forward cross border and county-wide issues central to production of the County's Development Plans, including the Melton Local Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **It is recommended that authority is granted to enter the Partnership Agreement to employ a Joint Strategic Planning Manager on a permanent basis, as described below.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is a participant in the Leicester and Leicestershire 'Members Advisory Group' in which planning issues that extend beyond administrative boundaries are addressed and recommendations formulated for the consideration of the respective Authorities. Examples of such work to date are the Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market assessment and the Memorandum of Understanding on housing distribution, both of which were presented to and adopted by full Council recently.
- 3.2 There are a number of pieces of evidence required to enable an a continued understanding and agreement to be reached on the future levels of growth, and infrastructure capacity work to ensure infrastructure can satisfactorily absorb the additional levels of growth identified.
- 3.3 This work is needed to be carried out on a 'cross border' basis due to the emphasis placed on Local Planning Authorities in the NPPF to operate on a Housing Market Area basis and to demonstrate fulfilment of the Duty to Cooperate. The Duty to Cooperate, in particular, is one of the principal factors that are tested by Inspectors in Local Plan Examinations.
- 3.4 The 9 Leicestershire Local Authorities and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) agreed in Spring 2014, to jointly fund the appointment of a Joint Strategic Planning Manager over a 2 year fixed term period. The budget agreed by HPIG for funding the post and project support is £140,000 over 2 years, shared 10 ways across the 9 Local Authorities and the LLEP. Recruitment to the role was always likely to be challenging, as the specific market in the areas of strategic and sub regional planning, combined with high quality of experience in stakeholder management at a senior level, is by its very nature, limited. The range of experience required for the post is very specific and the successful applicant must have the following skills and expertise:
- Significant sub-regional experience;
 - Experience in a broad range of diverse stakeholder management at a senior level;
 - Detailed understanding of the technical aspects of the role.

Recent recruitment has failed to attract a suitable candidate.

3.5 Due to the difficulty in filling the post on a temporary basis, the partners consider that the permanent recruitment option was the most realistic one to pursue. A permanent post should attract more experienced applicants who would be willing to re-locate to a new area. This option can be actioned immediately and any successful applicants could be interviewed by November. Based on average notice periods, it would mean that the post could potentially be filled by February or March 2015.

4.0 **POLICY & CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The post would fulfil an important role within the context of cross boundary and duty to cooperate responsibilities, both of which will form important elements within the production of the Melton Local Plan and will be the subject of stringent examination (see paras. 3.1 to 3.3 above).

5.0 **FINANCIAL & OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The appointment of the post on a permanent basis would require salary costs to be built into partners' baseline budgets. The salary plus approximately 25% on-costs would result in a cost per partner, per annum, in the region of £7,500. Recruitment costs would be in the region of approximately £1,000 which would be a one off payment of actual cost divided equally by the partners.

5.2 The funds associated with the salaries above would be met from the existing budgetary provision for the Local Plan.

5.3 There would be a need for all partners to agree to share the potential future redundancy and/or pension capitalisation costs in the event of the termination of the role or the cessation of the partnership arrangement. Further detailed financial calculations will need to be circulated to all authorities and the LLEP, for agreement in the event of this occurring. It is considered that there is a low to medium prospect of this arising and that our share of the sums incurred will be modest, such that it is anticipated they could be met from existing budgets.

6.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

6.1 The Council is able to enter a partnership agreement to allow its contribution to the post and authorise recruitment and subsequent terms and conditions by a partner Authority (North West Leicestershire DC).

7.0 **COMMUNITY SAFETY**

7.1 There are no direct links to community safety arising from this report.

8.0 **EQUALITIES**

8.1 There are no equalities issues arising from this report.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 The risks to the Council are as follows:

Very High A				
High B				
Significant C			1	
Low D		2		
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic

Risk No.	Description
1.	Failure to adequately address cross border and duty to cooperate issues
2.	Additional costs arising from redundancy, pension etc (see para 5.2 above)

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change issues directly arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

11.1 No consultation has been carried out on this matter.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

12.1 All wards are affected.

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Date: 24th October 2014

Appendices: None