

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF PLANNING	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	5 MARCH 2024	8

ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOCAL PLAN MEMBER STEERING GROUP

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

<p>RELEVANT LEAD MEMBER</p> <p>This item is within the remit of Lead Member for Corporate and Economic Development, Councillor Karen Buckley.</p>
--

<p>PURPOSE OF THE REPORT</p> <p>The Planning Peer Review Action Plan includes provision for the establishment of a cross party board of councillors to oversee and input into the production of the next Local Plan period beyond 2032. This report seeks to establish a cross party Local Plan Member Steering Group and sets out the prime objectives of that group to provide councillor oversight during the evidence gathering, analysis and policy development stage of the review of the existing local plan and the future production of an updated local plan that will guide officers and members in reaching any decisions regarding the development of planning policy.</p>
--

<p>RECOVERABILITY</p> <p>This decision is recoverable under section 7 of part 3 of the constitution.</p>

<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the committee agree to establish a Local Plan Member Steering Group, to be chaired by the Lead Member for Corporate and Economic Development, to act as an informal cross-party panel to ensure councillor oversight during the evidence gathering, analysis and policy development stage of the review of the existing local plan and the future production of an updated local plan that will guide officers and members in reaching any decisions regarding the development of planning policy. 2. That the Executive Committee nominate 3-4 members to attend the Local Plan Steering Group, of which at least one should be an opposition member. 3. That the Executive Committee requests the Planning Committee to nominate 3-4 members to attend the Local Plan Steering Group, of which at least one should be an opposition member.

REPORT

1. In 2022, the council invited the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to carry out a 'Peer Review' of its planning service which culminated in the publication of a [Feedback Report](#) in January 2023. In October 2023, following scrutiny by the council's Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee, a [Planning Peer Review Action Plan](#), which seeks

to address the 18 recommendations contained in the Feedback Report, was adopted by the Executive Committee.

2. The PAS Team recognised that the council has an up to date local plan in place and that there is often a tension between growth and protecting the environment and heritage and it is therefore important to establish a process to co-ordinate, capture and agree the focus for the Local Plan beyond 2032. In particular the PAS Team considered that a formal governance structure would help to:
 - set the vision and longer-term aspirations for the local plan,
 - obtain clarity on key strategic issues as early as possible in the plan production process, to ensure the process is resilient to changes to the planning system and election cycles,
 - co-ordinate, capture and agree the focus for the Local Plan beyond 2032,
 - be clear about the alignment of growth and environmental ambitions, providing clarity and managing tensions between economic growth, the environment and preservation,
 - assist in addressing strategic housing and homelessness challenges.
3. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 introduced the primary legislation required to implement the Government's programme of reforms to plan making. There have also been recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, with further revisions expected during the coming year, which will need to be considered in a review of the adopted local plan.
4. It is important, therefore, that the council establishes a formal process to co-ordinate, capture and communicate the early thinking that will shape the next local plan, starting with consideration of the evidence base that will help inform the review and the direction of the next iteration of the local plan. Early and structured involvement of councillors in the plan-making process, especially from senior members, will help to set the vision and longer-term aspirations of the council.
5. The PAS Team considered that a cross party board of councillors should be established to work alongside a similar officer group of representatives from across the council which, it is envisaged, would take ownership of, oversee and input into the production of the next local plan.
6. It was considered that a governance process of this nature would also allow the prioritisation of activities and ensure that resources are directed to the right corporate priorities, giving individual members of the planning team a clearer sense of the priorities for their own time in the event of competing demands. It would also support good risk management at a corporate level which needs to be owned at all levels of the organisation.
7. The PAS Team report included a recommendation to:

*“Set up a politically representative board of councillors and one for senior officers to oversee and input into the production of the next Local Plan period beyond 2032. There is a tension between growth and protecting the environment and heritage. It is therefore important to establish a process to co-ordinate, capture and agree the focus for the Local Plan beyond 2032. A formal governance structure will help to set the vision and longer-term aspirations. It will provide clarity and manage the tensions between economic growth, the environment and preservation. It will also strategically address the housing and homelessness challenges. Obtaining clarity on key strategic issues as early as possible in the plan production process is a critical factor in making the process resilient to changes to the planning system and election cycles”.*¹
8. This recommendation of the PAS Team is reflected in Action 1.1 of the approved Planning Peer Review Action Plan which proposes the establishment of a Local Plan Delivery Board. On reflection, it is considered that this terminology should be reviewed to ensure that it is clear that the objective of this group will be to oversee the formulation of the next local plan, rather than the delivery of the current plan. It is proposed, therefore, that the group be referred to as the “Local Plan Steering Group”.
9. To maintain synergy between the Executive Committee which has responsibility for developing and agreeing corporate and development plan policy and the Planning Committee, which has responsibility for delivering the objectives of the development plan through the determination of planning applications, your officers consider

¹ Recommendation 1: Planning Service Peer Challenge Feedback Report January 2023

that the board should include representatives of both the Executive and the Planning Committee. Other lead members could be co-opted to the board in future, for example if specific issues relating to their areas of responsibility would benefit from their knowledge.

10. As the responsibility for the development of planning policy rests with the Executive Committee, it is proposed that the Steering Group be chaired by the Lead Member for Corporate and Economic Development as this brief includes overseeing matters relating to planning policy.
11. It is intended that the Steering Group would not be a formal Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council and so would not have any decision-making powers, but it would provide guidance on the content of planning policies for consideration by the Executive Committee and/or Full Council as appropriate.
12. The role and purpose of the Steering Group would be to:
 - Oversee the process for reviewing the local plan and the progress made on individual work streams;
 - Discuss the scope of potential studies to be commissioned by the Council as part of the local plan evidence base;
 - Review the conclusions and potential implications of the evidence base for the local plan;
 - Provide the Planning Policy Team and Corporate Local Plan Officer Team with a Member perspective on issues raised;
 - Ensure integration/complementarity of the vision, objectives and policies of the Local Plan with those of the Corporate Strategy and wider council policies and their discharge by the Planning Committee;
 - Advise on other key decisions on matters relating to Local Plan production including: resources, scope of documents, evidence base, identification of alternative development options, content of the local development scheme, sustainability appraisal/appropriate assessment, and consultation methods;
 - Provide a critical friend role to advise on the production and content of Supplementary Planning Documents in support of the Local Plan.
13. The Committee is therefore requested to nominate members of the council to form the Local Plan Steering Group. It is proposed that the Planning Committee would also be asked to nominate members to attend the Local Plan Steering Group, which would then consist of:
 - Representatives of the Executive Committee
 - Representatives of the Planning Committee
 - At least two opposition members.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	√
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	√
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	√
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	√

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	None
Legal	None
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	None
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

On **17 October 2023** the Executive Committee RESOLVED to adopt the Planning Peer Review Action Plan having accepted the amendments of the review of the draft Action Plan by the Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee.

BACKGROUND PAPERS REVELANT TO THIS ITEM

Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Planning Peer Review Action Plan	October 2023	Planning Peer Review Action Plan
PAS Planning Service Peer Challenge, Final Report	January 2023	Peer Review Final Report

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
Mark Evans	mark.evans@fylde.gov.uk & Tel 01253 65846	February 2024

Attached documents

None