



**Policy, Finance and
Development
Committee**

**Tuesday 22 July
2014**

Matter for Decision

**Title: Appointment of Joint Strategic Planning Manager
for Leicester and Leicestershire**

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1. Introduction

1.1 This report relates to the establishment of a Joint Strategic Planning Manager to oversee the preparation of a strategic planning strategy for the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (HMA) for a 2 year fixed term period.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that:

- 1 Members give approval for the Council to become an equal partner in the funding and setting of work priorities for a Joint Strategic Planning Manager in the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area.
- 2 That the Borough Council contributes 10% of the total cost equating to a maximum contribution of £7,000 per annum for two years (2014/15 and 2015/16).

3. Information

- 3.1 The East Midlands Regional Plan was revoked in 2013 following Government's commitment to remove the regional tier of planning in England. The Regional Plan had a key role in establishing the spatial planning strategy for Leicester and Leicestershire including, for example, the number of houses to be provided in each district over a specified timescale.
- 3.2 The role of spatial planning at a strategic (Leicester and Leicestershire) level now falls to each of the district councils who are required to work jointly through a 'Duty to Co-operate' introduced through the Localism Act (2011).
- 3.3 The Duty to Co-operate places an obligation on all councils in the HMA to co-operate over both the bringing forward of their own Local Plans and of the Local Plans of other councils in the HMA. The Planning Inspectorate will consider whether or not a council has met the requirements of the Duty to Cooperate as a first step in examining a Local Plan. If they find that the Duty to Co-operate has not been met then the Plan will need to be withdrawn and the process restarted. This demonstrate the importance that needs to be placed on the Duty to Co-operate in effective plan making and emphasises the need for the Borough Council to be equally involved in co-operating with partners to ensure that our own Local Plan meets the requirements of the Duty.

- 3.4 Co-operation can take a number of different forms but it is particularly important in identifying where growth is going to take place in the HMA during forthcoming plan periods (to 2031 and 2036). It is also important in evidencing any decisions made during this process (for example, through the production of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment, transport modelling, infrastructure capacity etc) and in expressing the outcomes of this work in a manner that all councils agree to.
- 3.5 A number of mechanisms have already been put in place to enable co-operation between councils with responsibility placed upon the Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Group (involving senior officers) and the associated Member Advisory Group (involving council Leaders and Lead Members).
- 3.6 However, it has become apparent that a specific officer resource is required to manage and where appropriate carry out work associated with the Duty to Co-operate, such as the work set out in paragraph 3.4 above. It is the intention therefore that a Joint Strategic Planning Manager is appointed to fulfil this role. The Joint Strategic Planning Manager would work to the Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Group and the associated Member Advisory Group and would work closely with and alongside the planning policy teams in each of the councils. This type of arrangement has worked successfully in a number of other parts of the Country, for example, Cambridgeshire.
- 3.7 It is anticipated that the Joint Strategic Planning Manager resource will be required for a period of 2 years (until 31st March 2016) and a maximum budget of £70,000 per annum has been allowed for this. The cost is to be split between 10 partners with each contributing a 10% (maximum £7,000) share of the cost per annum. The partners are the 7 district councils, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council and the Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Partnership.
- 3.8 It is proposed that the Council's contribution towards the Joint Strategic Planning Manager is funded from an appropriate Reserve as agreed by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.9 The Joint Strategic Planning Manager will be based at North West Leicestershire District Council which will manage the postholder on a day to day basis. North West Leicestershire District Council will also undertake recruitment of the post, however in the spirit of the partnership there will be representation from several of the partner organisations on the interview panel.
- 3.10 There is some urgency to immediately progress work under the Duty to Co-operate in order to facilitate the work required by the Planning Inspector that is examining Charnwood Borough Council's Local Plan by December 2014. As such, interim arrangements to cover the Joint Strategic Planning Manager role have been put in place.

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Implications	
Legal (KG)	A cost sharing agreement has been drawn up by North West Leicestershire District Council (NWLDC) which has been considered by Corporate Resources (Legal) and has been returned to NWLDC for further clarification as to terms and

	conditions of such an arrangement for this engagement.
Financial (PL)	The revenue cost of £7,000 in 2014/15 will be funded from savings realised within the year. The budget for next financial year will need to be included when compiling the budgets for next financial year.
Equalities (KG)	It is understood that the recruitment of the Joint Planning manager will be controlled by NWLDC and it is hoped that they will ensure that equality of opportunity in their recruitment.
Risk (PL and AT)	CR1 Decreasing Financial Resources – however, this is mitigated through joint working and the sharing of costs.