REPORT of
CHAIRPERSON OF THE PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP

to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
14 MARCH 2024

WORK OF THE PLANNING POLICY WORKING GROUP 2023 / 24

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an annual update on the work carried out by the Planning Policy Working Group (the Working Group) during 2023 / 24. The update is provided by the Chairperson of the Working Group, Councillor K M H Lagan.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee receives the content of the report.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 On 23 February 2021, the Council agreed to review its Local Development Plan (LDP), setting a timetable in statutory document called its Local Development Scheme (LDS). To support this work, on 18 March 2021 the Council agreed to establish a Planning Policy Working Group (Minute No.342 refers).

3.2 From the Working Group's Terms of Reference:

The Planning Policy Working Group is an advisory group will support the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Council in the legal and sound development of planning policy documents and guidance as set out in the LDS.

The Working Group will provide an important Member perspective on the preparation of all planning policy for the Maldon District.

The Working Group will:

- provide cross-party member engagement and discussion in the work being undertaken to prepare the policy documents set out in the LDS.
- provide informal feedback and discussion with officers on key draft evidence, documentation and policy options to guide officers formulating formal recommendations to the Strategy and Resources Committee; and
- provide regular updates to the Strategy and Resources Committee on its work informing the LDP Review and SPD preparation.
- take an active part in any planning policy training and encourage other Members outside the Working Group to attend that training when offered to the wider Membership of the Council.

3.3 The Planning Policy Working Group has been meeting regularly since its formation in 2021 (24 times).

3.4 The Working Group has carried out the following work in 2023 to January 2024:

Discussed the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (which have now become effective) – it was concluded that overall, the changes will not have a major impact on Maldon District.
Discussed a draft of the front portion of the reviewed plan – this includes the Vision, Issues and Objectives. This followed on from the Issues and Options Consultation Jan. – Mar. 2021 and considered the comments made during that consultation.
Discussed a draft of the of the Maldon Nature Conservation Study – this has been carried out by consultants and apart from the mapping which needs to be checked for accuracy to ensure it adheres to the site outlines.
The Working Group had a presentation by JBA the consultants who have updated the District`s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). This is also nearly complete apart from the mapping, which is presently being worked on. This particular piece of work will carry weight once published as it will replace the existing SFRA and will need to be rolled out to both Development Management Officers and Members in terms of understanding and training in due course.
Discussed the Employment Land and Premises Study.
The Working Group had a discussion on the proposed changes to the Plan-Making system (these changes have now been enacted)
The Working Group discussed a draft of a Major Projects Policy, they asked for the policy to be checked against one drafted by Essex County Council (ECC) which officers did and came back to the Working Group for a further discussion.
The Working Group had a discussion around Community Led Housing – there is further guidance from Government to come around this and when this is produced a more formal discussion will be held with invited specialist guests to the group.

3.5 The Working Group has agreed the following work plan to September 2024.

MONTH	AGENDA ITEM
14 MARCH	Update to the Strategy and Resources (S&R) Committee
MARCH	Update on Central Area Master Plan (CAMP) and Policy S5
MARCH	All Member and Development Management (DM) Officer briefing on the updated SFRA with JBA consultants.
MARCH	Rural Exceptions and Community Led Housing discussion with guests (If the national guidance has been produced).
MARCH	Discussion on a Single Plot Exceptions Policy – should we have one?
APRIL	All Member Briefing on Net Zero Policy – ECC will be assisting from the Climate and Planning Unit
APRIL	Heritage Policy
APRIL	Houseboats Policy
APRIL	Affordable Housing Policy
MAY	Rural Exceptions and Community Led Housing Policy
MAY	Tourism Policy
MAY	Discussion around retail and its policy considerations.
MAY	All Member Briefing on the work carried out on policies so far.
JUNE	Employment Policy (Not rural)
JUNE	Self-Build – Custom Build Policy
JUNE	Single Plot Exceptions Policy (If Members determine it should come forward)
JULY	Leave Free for evidence work that is coming forward for discussion
JULY	All Member Workshop on the progress of the Design Policy and Design

MONTH	AGENDA ITEM
	Code
AUGUST	Retail Policy and its evidence base
SEPTEMBER	Update to S&R Committee
SEPTEMBER	Design Policy and Design Code

3.6 The pink highlighted items on the workplan are all Member briefings, the blue highlighted items are updates to the Strategy and Resources Committee.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The work of the Planning Policy Working Group is positively assisting in the process of moving forward with the LDP Review. The work will, going forward also include briefing/training for all Members, as the case with the SFRA, where Members and Officers will need this training, prior to the publication of the updated study, for decision making on planning applications.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027

5.1 The LDP Review covers all three Strategic Themes of Place, Prosperity and Community. The theme of Place seeks to deliver the District`s housing needs and deliver sustainable growth and new infrastructure through development. The theme of Prosperity seeks to ensure that the council supports business, economic growth and tourism. The theme of Community seeks to build on the strengths of our communities and what they can do to support themselves and help each other to thrive.

5.2 **Supporting our communities**

5.2.1 The LDP seeks to build on the strengths of our communities and what they can do to help each other to thrive.

5.3 **Enhancing and connecting our place**

5.3.1 The LDP will include transport and movement policies in it to connect places.

5.4 **Helping the economy to thrive**

5.4.1 The LDP will include employment site allocations and economic policies to support the wider economy.

5.5 **A greener future**

5.5.1 The LDP will include policies that cover climate change.

5.6 **Provide good quality services.**

5.6.1 Working with strategic partners through the Duty to Co-operate enables services such as health to be funded and expanded.

6. IMPLICATIONS

(i) **Impact on Customers** – None.

(ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.

(iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud implications)** – None.

(iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.

(v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.

Background Papers: None

Enquiries to Councillor K M H Lagan, Chairperson of the Planning Policy Working Group