

Local Development Plan - Project Management Team Annual Monitoring Report 2019/20	16th December 2020
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PLANNING COMMITTEE

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Outcomes
Leader and Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Elected Members will provide leadership to our citizens, working to promote the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit. • We will establish key relationships with Government agencies and potential strategic partners in Northern Ireland and external to it which helps us to deliver our vision for this Council area.
Protecting and enhancing our environments and assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All environments in the area will benefit from pro-active decision making which protects the natural features, characteristics and integrity of the Borough. • Our citizens will have the maximum opportunity to enjoy our natural environments. • Our natural assets will be carefully managed to generate economic and social returns without compromising their sustainability for future generations.
Lead Officer	Principal Planning Officer/Local Development Plan Manager
Cost:	N/A

For Decision

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Council's Development Plan team is currently preparing a Local Development Plan (LDP) for the Borough, a statutory requirement for the Council. In preparing its LDP the Council must provide a 15-year plan framework to support the environmental, economic and social needs of the Borough in line with regional strategies and policies, and with the objective of promoting sustainable development.
- 1.2 The LDP is subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

2.0 LDP Project Management Team

- 2.1 In order to oversee the implementation and publication of the LDP SA (Inc SEA) and in line with Council's 'Statement of Community Involvement in Planning'

(SCI), a Project Management Team (PMT) was established (see Terms of Reference at Appendix 1).

- 2.2 At Preferred Options (POP) Stage key consultees provided information on key strategic issues that the LDP should address. Consultees are currently providing input into the wide range of topic-based draft planning policies for the LDP Draft Plan Strategy.
- 2.3 An invite also extends to all party leads (or a nominee) and Council Directors.

3.0 LDP Timetable

- 3.1 It is a statutory requirement to prepare, and keep under review, a timetable for the preparation and adoption of the LDP. The timetable must include indicative dates for each stage of the LDP preparation and the publication of the Preferred Options Paper and the development plan documents (Draft Plan Strategy and Draft Local Policies Plan) as well as accompanying documents such as the SA.
- 3.2 Members approved a revised LDP Timetable at the 25th September 2019 Planning Committee. Following agreement with the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) on 8th October 2019 and DfI on 14th November 2019, the revised timetable was published in the local paper and on the Council's website on 25th November 2019.
- 3.3. In line with this timetable the Development Plan team was working towards the publication of the LDP Draft Plan Strategy in autumn/winter 2020. A busy schedule of PMT meetings had commenced in January 2020, to inform draft planning policy approaches to be discussed at the numerous planned LDP Member Workshops.
- 3.4 However, evidence gathering (site visits, surveys etc), face to face meetings and workshops had to be postponed as a result of government advice in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Only one of the scheduled LDP Workshop and one PMT meeting took place.
- 3.5 Throughout the pandemic council planning officers have continued to work towards the Draft Plan Strategy publication. Engagement has continued (electronically) with the PMT on progressing our draft policy approaches. Member workshops also recommenced in September (virtually), and these will continue into 2021.

LDP Evidence Base

- 3.6 The LDP must have a robust and sound evidence base.
- 3.7 The Council's Landscape Study (presented to Members at the 14th October 2020 LDP Workshop) was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as the consultant was unable to travel to Northern Ireland to complete the final stage of the study. Given that four of Northern Ireland's eight Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) lie within the Borough (wholly or partially), this critical piece of evidence

was required to inform our draft policy approach on the protection of the Borough's landscapes.

- 3.7 The SPPS requires a council, in the absence of an up to date Plan, to undertake an assessment of retail need/capacity. The regional policy requirement set out in the SPPS for a "town centre first" approach to retailing has also been highlighted with the submission of a number of recent retail applications within the Borough.
- 3.8 This piece of work ordinarily would have taken place at a later stage in the LDP process. However, to ensure that our evidence base (for both plan-making and decision-taking) is up to date, an addendum to the Council's Retail & Leisure Capacity Study (2017) was undertaken. This was presented and agreed at the 25th November 2020 Planning Committee.
- 3.9 The employment land monitor has been postponed ensuring that we allow sufficient time to get a fuller picture of the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the Borough.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.10 The Council received a revised Service Level Agreement (SLA) from our consultants (SES) in relation to provision of the LDP Sustainability Appraisal/SEA. This set out significantly higher costs than the current SLA. Officers sought a breakdown of costs from SES and legal advice on this issue. This information is currently being considered by all of the affected NI Councils.

Impact on LDP Timetable

- 3.11 All of the above has had a considerable knock-on effect on the Plan team's ability to meet the current LDP Timetable. Members have been kept up to date on the issue through the verbal updates provided at each planning committee by the Local Development Plan Manager. The Draft Plan Strategy will not be published in Autumn/Winter 2020 and a revised timetable will be brought before Members in due course for discussion and agreement.
- 3.12 It is important to note that the Northern Ireland LDP process is totally new. Although it was anticipated that the new regime would take some time to settle down, it is fair to say that it has been a much steeper learning curve than was originally anticipated, for all 11 councils and the Department for Infrastructure.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Members accept this LDP Project Management Team Annual Monitoring Report.

**Local Development Plan
Project Management Team
(SA Group)**

Terms of Reference

NAME

The name of the group will be the 'Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Local Development Plan Project Management Team (SA Group)'.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Project Management Team, in line with the Council's published 'Statement of Community Involvement in Planning' (SCI), is to facilitate key consultee co-operation in the plan making process. This team will be consulted on and act as the screening and scoping group for the LDP Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and any other necessary assessments and appraisals.

OBJECTIVES

- Engagement by key stakeholders (in an advisory role), senior council officers and elected members in the Plan process.
- To secure the necessary expert input into the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) process.
- To seek agreement on the final input to inform the Plan documents to be presented to Council for approval.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

In line with Council's published "Statement of Community Involvement in Planning" (SCI) the LDP Project Management Team will comprise of:-

- Senior Council Officers;
- Plan Manager; and
- Key government departments

All Council directors will be invited to participate in the Project Management Team meetings.

The Head of Planning will chair the Group.

The Plan Manager will act as Secretary to the Group.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members of the Project Management Team should declare **any** personal interest that may exist, or may be perceived to exist, in relation to any decisions or recommendations made by the group.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality must be maintained at **all** times.

In the conduct of their duties, members of this group will be privy to material that is confidential, or which should reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential nature. This material must **not** be distributed outside of the group.

MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

The Project Management Team will normally meet on a quarterly basis. However, there may be occasions when an ad hoc meeting is required to ensure that we meet our published LDP Timetable. In this instance at least one week's notice will be given (via e-mail).

The Project Management Team shall take minutes of all meetings. These may be open to public scrutiny.

Minutes of the meeting will be circulated to all attendees within one week of the meeting being held.

REPORTING STRUCTURES

The Group (through the secretary) will supply an annual monitoring report to inform Council on its progress in meeting the Plan timetable and identifying the causes of any significant delay.

The Group will be required to complete its objectives within the timescale for the adoption of the Plan, as per the Plan Timetable.

SIGNATURES

1. Chairperson in group: DERISE DICKSON (CHAIR)

Signed: Derise Dickson 02/08/2017

2. Name and Position in group: SHARON MULHERN: SECRETARY

Signed: S. Mulhern 2/8/17.