

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

From: Councillor David Burn, Cabinet Member for Planning	Report Number: CMU9
To: Council	Date of meeting: 26 September 2019

TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING

1. Overview of Portfolio

1.1 The role includes the following responsibilities:

Ensure the Council carries out its statutory duties as Local Planning Authority
Ensure Development Management makes good quality and timely Decisions
Ensure that the Council has up-to-date Planning Policies that have a positive impact without unduly restricting development

1.2 These collectively deliver the following outcomes:

- Protect and enhance our built and natural environment
- Understand what housing and employment sites are needed
- Unlock the barriers to sustainable growth
- Help create and maintain sustainable communities
- Agree where growth goes
- Liaise with neighbouring authorities to fulfil our Duty to Cooperate

2. Recommendation

2.1 That Council notes the report.

3. Key Activities/Issues Over the Past Six Months

3.1 In Babergh, performance on planning applications (as judged by MHCLG statistics) for majors in time in the six months to the end of August 2019 was 92.3% (13 cases). On non-majors Babergh decided 98.4% applications (500 cases) in time.

3.2 In Mid Suffolk, 100% of majors (30 cases) were determined in time in the six months to the end of August 2019. On non-majors Mid Suffolk decided 96.9% applications (618 cases) in time. This improvement in timeliness results from significant work within the team including the implementation of new workflow tools available following implementation of the new planning IT system a couple of years ago.

3.3 Following a period of public consultation, Housing Land Supply Position Statements were published on 9th September 2019. These show that Babergh is able to demonstrate 5.67 years' supply and Mid Suffolk is able to demonstrate 5.66 years'. Further details can be found on the Councils' website here: <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/planning/housing-delivery/> and <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/housing-delivery/>.

- 3.4 In June both Councils considered and approved a Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (HDTAP) for publication. These documents were produced and published in accordance with the Government requirement to achieve HDTAPs for both Councils within six months of the Housing Delivery Test results which were published in February 2019 (so by August 2019). The 23-point Action Plan (for both Councils) carries forward parts of the Joint Homes and Housing Strategy Action Plans aimed at the increase in the supply of new dwellings together with additional focused outcomes from the HDTAP process.
- 3.5 Recruitment and retention of experienced staff remains a risk to resilient service and performance and has been flagged as a significant risk on the corporate risk register. We continue to take an approach focused on career development to invest in our own staff. The Market Factor Supplement for Planning Officers, introduced in 2018, still stands and is paid to all existing and newly appointed qualified staff.
- 3.6 Neighbourhood Plans continue to make positive progress in both Councils. In Babergh, Aldham's Plan is under Examination. Having just completed that stage, Elmsett's Plan is being readied in anticipation of advancement to a referendum and is now a material consideration with statutory weight in planning decisions locally. There are some twenty-two other neighbourhood plans being progressed across Babergh.
- 3.7 In Mid Suffolk, a local referendum on Haughley's Plan was held on 29 August and a referendum on Thurston's Plan takes place on 12 October. Having recently been through examination, the Botesdale & Rickinghall Plan is being readied in anticipation of advancement to a referendum. All three mentioned plans are now a material consideration with statutory weight in planning decisions locally. The Eye Plan is currently at Examination and, of the fourteen other plans currently being progressed across Mid Suffolk, Fressingfield is at submission consultation and Drinkstone at pre-submission consultation.
- 3.8 As part of the CIL Expenditure Framework review, several Joint Member Panel meetings have been arranged during September and October together with the consideration of a report to Joint Overview and Scrutiny. Two 'All Member' briefings have also been arranged so that views on the current scheme can be captured and outcomes at the end of the process can be fed back to Members. One of the key changes in circumstances which will have some bearing on CIL expenditure going forward is the publication of the Joint Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which sits alongside and supports the Joint Local Plan and sets out infrastructure priorities on a critical, essential and desirable basis.

Joint Local Plan Update

- 3.9 The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan - Preferred Options Consultation (Reg 18) was approved by Babergh Full Council on 25th June 2019 and Mid Suffolk Full Council on 27th June 2019. This is an important document which will provide the strategy for the growth of the Districts, setting out what and where development will take place up to 2036. Residents, local businesses and stakeholders are invited to have their say on the new Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan.

- 3.10 The consultation commenced on Monday 22nd July. Comments must be received by 4pm on Monday 30th September 2019. Copies of the document were provided to all Councillors, sent to Town and Parish Councils and have been available at Libraries in Capel St Mary, Debenham, Elmswell, Eye, Glemsford, Great Cornard, Hadleigh, Lavenham, Long Melford, Needham Market, Shotley, Stowmarket, Stradbroke, Sudbury and Thurston.
- 3.11 During the consultation period there have been four Town and Parish Council briefings, two events specifically for Neighbourhood Planning Groups, and twenty public drop in events at local venues across both Districts. Full details of the drop in events can be found here: <https://www.babergh.gov.uk/features/have-your-say-on-our-draft-joint-local-plan/>. Details of all events have been promoted through both traditional (print, radio) and social media and posters were made available so that Parish Councils could advertise the events on local noticeboards.
- 3.12 The joint Council, cross-party, Councillor Steering Group met in the lead up to publication of the plan. This will be chaired on an alternate basis by the respective Cabinet Members for Planning and will run on a permanent basis. The group will reconvene shortly after the consultation period closes to reflect on the responses received and discuss the implications for further iterations of the plan.

4. Future Key Activities

- 4.1 Continuing to deal with Planning applications in a high quality and timely way remains a priority. A number of significant items will be coming to planning committees including market-led proposals for occupation on our key strategic employment sites and new residential proposals being developed in-line with the emerging JLP, alongside detailed reserved matters applications for sites with outline permission, giving confidence in delivery going forward.
- 4.2 With a number of Neighbourhood Plans reaching submission and examination stage it remains important that we continue to provide effective support to the groups working on them.
- 4.3 The CIL Expenditure Framework review will continue and any revisions will result in reports being brought to Full Council in each respective Council prior to Bid round 5 opening in May 2020. Alongside the review, bids for future infrastructure projects will continue to be received and developed and where appropriate presented to both Council's Cabinet for determination.
- 4.4 The Councils will publish their Joint Annual Monitoring Review during September.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The service continues to deal with high demand on a day-to-day basis as well as several significant projects. It is vitally important to maintain momentum and engagement on the Joint Local Plan. Refining the Councils' approach and governance around CIL Expenditure is also high priority. At the same time, it is important that we retain focus on decisions made on individual planning applications and continue to improve the efficiency and quality of our decision-making processes.