

**Report on Draft District Plan Member Event, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

**Summary of the proceedings**

1. The event was held in the Council Chamber between 10am and 4 pm on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> October. 27 out of the total 50 District Members attended the event, which is considered to be a very good turnout for an event of this kind. At the end of the session it was explained that there will be two further private sessions for Members.
2. The day was structured around two main parts. The morning consisted of presentations and context-setting, and the afternoon consisted of discussion of the emerging draft strategy and the way forward.
3. The morning session started with an introduction from Cllr Mike Carver, Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Transport. Cllr Carver outlined the importance of the work for the future of the District, and the challenges ahead.
4. Dr Steven Smith of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) delivered a presentation entitled "Why Plan?" which set out the importance of getting a plan in place. The main reasons for getting a plan in place highlighted by Dr Smith are as follows:
  - planning for community needs including jobs, housing (including affordable housing);
  - providing greater certainty for communities and businesses as to where development will go;
  - providing a robust starting-point for negotiating with developers;
  - allows infrastructure providers to plan and delivery capacity enhancements;
  - using the plan to lobby for infrastructure funding ;
  - attracting investment to the district; and
  - avoiding 'planning by appeal', involving a loss of local control, with planning decisions, including those of major strategic importance, effectively being taken by the Planning Inspectorate.

## Essential Reference Paper 'B'

5. Mr Rob Smith of the Advisory Team for Large Applications (ATLAS) gave a presentation entitled "Dealing with Strategic Matters: The End-to-End Process". Mr Smith explained that the District Plan was the first in a number of stages of local controls, with increasing detail addressed through successive stages, ranging from site-specific plan, outlined planning applications, design codes, and finally reserved matters. Mr Smith gave a number of examples of how large-scale development was being addressed and delivered positively by Local Planning Authorities elsewhere in the country, leading to better outcomes for local communities.
6. Officers then set out the background in relation to how national policy requirements shaped local decision-making. The main points were as follows:
  - The overall housing requirement based on the latest DCLG projections;
  - the requirement for the first five years of the plan;
  - backlog and historic under-supply;
  - the importance of meeting needs within each housing market area, and having a strategy for addressing any unmet needs;
  - the Duty to Co-Operate on strategic cross-boundary matters in particular;
  - the importance of an integrated approach to consideration of evidence, national policy requirements, and engagement with stakeholders including the public
7. In the afternoon Members discussed the challenges and alternative options and policy approaches. It was explained that Officers would provide help and support to Members within the resources available.
8. It was explained that given the large amount of work to consider, and the need for Members to have an opportunity to properly scrutinise the draft development strategy and settlement policies, the agenda items proposed for the District Planning Executive Panel on 3<sup>rd</sup> December would be split across two panel meetings, with a further panel meeting scheduled for 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

## Essential Reference Paper 'B'

9. There was discussion around the responsibilities of the District Council and the role of District Members. Cllr Carver explained that Members would need to understand the process and requirements in order to be able to explain the draft Plan to their local communities. It was acknowledged that Members would inevitably come under local pressure, but that as District Councillors it was very important to understand the District-wide significance of getting a sound plan in place with endorsement from the Planning Inspectorate.
10. Cllr Carver concluded the session by requesting that Members keep the contents of the day confidential until they could be presented through the proper channels in the near future. There would be plenty of opportunity for public discussion and scrutiny through the forthcoming series of meetings of the District Planning Executive Panel, Executive, and Full Council prior to public consultation.
11. Early leaks of material through other channels would introduce a high risk that third parties would misunderstand or misinterpret the emerging plan without the full supporting context and benefit of the presentations. It would also put significant pressure on Officers at a very busy time.
12. Members thanked the guest speakers from PAS and ATLAS and Officers organising the event.