

Item No: 8
Date: 16 December 2008

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Structure to deliver the approved Local Development Scheme

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF THE JOINT PLANNING UNIT

Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the proposed permanent structure for the Joint Planning Unit that will deliver the necessary staff resource and capacity to meet the approved Local Development Scheme timetable.
- 1.2 The Final Report on Findings of the Review of the Joint Planning Unit by Addison & Associates in August 2008 set out the gaps in skills and capacity required to make the Joint Planning Unit fit for purpose. This report builds on that work and is based on finer grained analysis – it sets out the broad responsibility of postholders' skills and experience needed.
- 1.3 The Addison report recommended that approximately 18FTE posts would be required to staff the Joint Planning Unit in order to deliver the Core Strategy and associated documents.
- 1.4 Following the appointment of the Interim Head of the Joint Planning Unit, the fine grain analysis of the evidence base and work done to date by the Joint Planning Unit has refined this requirement and concluded that some 13FTE posts would be required as set out below.
- 1.5 The need to resource the Joint Planning Unit with further staff and skills does not mean that partners' help is not required. In the period before recruitment of the full team help is urgently required to progress the Local Development Framework, and is indeed being offered by all partners including WNDC. This is most valuable and critical to progress and it is clear that all partners recognise this fact and the urgency of the approved Local Development Scheme timetable. This need will continue with respect to contributions from partners and this is outlined in more detail below in paragraph 3.0.

Proposed Structure

1.6 A structure diagram is set out at appendix 1. The following posts are proposed and an indication of responsibilities and skills set out:

1.7 Head of Joint Planning Unit

At Assistant Director level this postholder will lead the unit and programme, develop and maintain relationships with key partners such as WNDC and GOEM in addition to Daventry DC, Northampton BC, South Northamptonshire DC and Northamptonshire CC through both the formal structures and technical workstreams to ensure the engagement of the right officers in DPD production. The Head of the JPU will support the Programme Board, Business Sub Group and Joint Strategic Planning Committee (JSPC) and lead the technical work. The appointment should be an individual who can demonstrate success towards the delivery of a sound core strategy and a clear understanding of the integrated nature of building sustainable communities and place making in a growth context.

DPD production team

1.8 Team Leader DPD Production

This officer will line manage the team of officers producing the DPD as well as contributing to the technical work. The post holder will ensure the integration of the workstreams for DPD production and that sound plans are achieved. The appointment should be an individual who can demonstrate success towards the delivery of a sound core strategy and a clear understanding of the integrated nature of building sustainable communities and place making. The ability to analyse the implications of evidence and apply this to predicted future scenario is critical.

1.9 Principal Spatial Planners

Across the group these experienced officers will provide a strategic perspective as well as the technical ability to develop spatial policy and detailed site planning and guidance to bring forward development. They will lead project workstreams for all DPD. Specialist experience is required covering housing policy, employment/ economic/ retail policy, sustainable communities and environmental assessments, rural planning and the capability to move from broad strategic location to clear site based guidance. At this level at least one appointment should be able to demonstrate success towards the delivery of a sound core strategy, site allocations or area action plan DPD whilst experience in delivery of sites for development and masterplanning would be required for a second postholder. The ability to analyse the implications of evidence and apply this to futures is critical for all of these post holders.

1.10 Senior Planning Officer, Planning Officer and Graduate Planner

These postholders will support the work on DPDs and deliver additional specialisms in transport and infrastructure planning from the strategic perspective, leisure, community and cultural planning. Experience in consultation activity for plan making would also be valuable. They will be capable of research, analysis and policy development and at least one of the postholders will be engaged in production of the annual monitoring report whilst another will take responsibility for the upkeep of the Limehouse system for consultation and

document production. They will need to be flexible in approach to assist in a range of projects.

- 1.11 All post holders in the DPD team must be capable of working with others within and external to the JPU and partner authorities to achieve sound DPDs and SPDs. In addition they must be capable of interacting with the public in a professional manner.

Information and monitoring team

1.12 Information and Programme Manager

This experienced postholder will have the dual role of assisting the DPD Team Leader in chasing and monitoring the programme for the LDS and of providing and managing the monitoring and information systems for effective plan monitoring. Therefore project management skills and a good grounding in information and ICT systems to support plan making are required. The team will produce the Annual Monitoring Report for the LDS, data reports and analysis. It will use and access data systems held by partner authorities and other local agencies as well as regional and national data.

1.9 Planning Technician

This postholder will provide all GIS and mapping support, as well as meeting needs for graphics, publicity and consultation materials production.

1.10 Monitoring Officer

This postholder will maintain monitoring systems collecting and updating data from constituent authorities and other bodies inputting and running reports on aspects of the database and assisting with production of the Annual Monitoring Report. This post must be ICT and literate with respect to statistical techniques and their application.

Administrative Support

1.11 Administrative Assistants

One post holder will provide personal assistance to the Head of the JPU and DPD team leader with respect to diaries, meetings, etcetera. Another will be engaged in administrative support for the activities of the team for example: filing, copying, mail outs and maintenance of library. The work will include maintaining office systems such as recording leave, analysing time sheets etc. These posts are both critical to ensuring that professional officer time is not spent on administrative tasks.

Existing Staff

- 2.0 The six existing professional staff in the JPU (excluding the Interim Head) are seconded from the constituent authorities on the basis that these secondments would be temporary with the exception of one who was recruited to the JPU. Following approval of the budget and structure, discussions will be required with the relevant officers in each authority to determine the procedures by which the permanent posts will be filled.

- 2.1 There is also one administrative officer on an agency contract and this will be regularised.

Additional Staff Resources

3.0 It is anticipated that from time to time the JPU will need to draw on the expertise of officers from the constituent authorities to assist with specific tasks and workstreams. This is noted in the previous report at item 6 of this agenda. The co-operation of the authorities in this will assist in keeping staffing costs to a minimum. In addition to the budget contribution to finance the team and work the following is still required from partner authorities:

- a. Continued contributions to the wide range of steering groups already attended for key aspects of the evidence base.
- b. Continued contributions in time from heads of planning and heads of policy in the respective authorities as well as transport colleagues from the County Council.
- c. Continued engagement of Vincent Goodstadt and increased engagement of other staff in the WNDC such as those with infrastructure specialisms– this has been the subject of initial discussions.
- d. The specific participation in the analytical processes and workshops outlined in paragraph 2.1 of item 6 on this agenda to be held in January 2009.

3.1 These contributions are needed to fulfil two main objectives:

- a. The participation of key professional staff in a plan making process that they rightly should be engaged in on behalf of their Councils and the Development Corporation.
- b. The effective use of experience, expertise and local knowledge that these officers hold.

Conclusion

4 The recommended structure with respect to staff numbers, position and skills sought is a pragmatic but robust response to the Addison report which, on the basis of our current knowledge, and if we are able to recruit, should deliver the work to the approved Local Development Scheme timetable. Recruitment to the right skill and capability level must be made and no appointments that fall short of the requirements can be acceptable if we are to meet our milestones.

4.1 There are a number of key risks associated with the situation:

- a. Recruitment of staff must take place early in 2009 to progress work on the Local Development Scheme at the pace required. Members should note that there is a risk that recruitment may not be successful at the first attempt.
- b. Partners must continue to be engaged to support the progress on the LDF and not consider a full complement of staff in the JPU as a reason to scale down their current professional contributions to the work. Indeed, in the interim and at times throughout the process, there may be

occasions when to maintain progress on the LDF partners may be required to second other staff to engage. (refer paragraph 3.0 above and agenda item 6).

- 4.2 The risks of an inadequate rate of progress in the interim period before new staff are in post must be avoided by the use of help from partners and with temporary staff applied to particular projects.

Recommendation

- 4.1 The Joint Strategic Planning Committee is recommended to agree the proposed structure and note the risks.
- 4.2 The Joint Strategic Planning Committee is recommended to agree that Northampton Borough Council lead on the recruitment processes required and for the post of the Head of the Joint Planning Unit an interview panel be established consisting of an officer from each council together with a member of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

Appendix 1 - West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit Permanent Establishment



