

**WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
JOINT STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

REPORT OF THE INTERIM HEAD OF THE JOINT PLANNING UNIT

REVIEW OF THE MEMORANDUM OF INTENT – PROPOSED CHANGES

Purpose

- 1.1 This report has been prepared as a matter of urgency to enable the Memorandum of Intent (MOI) to be reviewed in the light of progress, experience and recent decisions of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee (JSPC), so as to bring it up to date.

- 1.2 A key issue for Members consideration is Para. (P1) which relates to the appointment of the Head of the Joint Planning Unit, and consequentially the appointment of new Officers to the approved structure.

Recommendation

- 2.1 That Committee consider the proposed changes to the MOI as set out in Appendix 1 and, if satisfied, recommend them to the Partner Local Planning Authorities (PLPA's) for formal approval.
- 2.2 That Committee delegate to the Director of Planning and Regeneration at Northampton Borough Council, in consultation with the Monitoring Officers of the Partner Local Planning Authorities, any necessary authority to make further and consequential future changes to the MOI, prior to recommending changes to the PLPA's.

Details

- 3.1 A key change to be considered is the employing authority for the post of the Head of the Joint Planning Unit (JPU), (ref. P1), and other directly appointed posts.
- 3.2 It has been agreed previously that whilst the Head of the JPU would be responsible to the JSPC, direct line management of that person would fall to the Director of Planning and Regeneration at Northampton Borough Council. Given that the JSPC has previously agreed that Northampton Borough Council should lead on the recruitment processes required (including that of the Head of the JPU), it appears entirely reasonable and sensible for Northampton Borough Council to

be the employing authority for the Head of the JPU and the other directly appointed posts, and for the other PLPA's to contribute to any costs, claims, proceedings and demands arising from the appointment and employment of this post, and the other directly appointed posts, in accordance with the proportions set out in Paragraph P3 of the MOI.

- 3.3 If Northampton Borough Council are to be the employing authority, then this requires a change to P1 of the existing MOI, in the following form:-

“PI (revised): Each PLPA agrees to the servicing and support of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee (JSPC) by a professional and technical Joint Planning Unit (JPU), accommodated at Northampton Borough Council, comprising a Head of the JPU (appointed by Officers of each of the PLPA's and the Chair of the JSPC, or appointed substitute), seconded Officers and directly appointed Officers. Northampton Borough Council would be the employing authority for the Head of the JPU and directly appointed Officers, and the other PLPA's will contribute to any costs, claims, proceedings and demands arising from the appointment and employment of these Officers, in accordance with the proportions set out in Paragraph P3 of the MOI”.

- 3.4 P2 of the existing MOI requires change; the revised wording proposed is as follows:-

“P2 (revised): Each PLPA agrees to formally identifying budgets or resources, to enable the JPU to function effectively and deliver according to adopted timeframes and milestones in the approved Local Development Scheme (as may be amended from time to time by the JSPC)”.

3.5 In addition our experience of operating jointly has identified the need for a financial protocol to be drawn up between the PLPA’s to ensure proper governance, expenditure, collection of income, monitoring, budget setting and procurement. Such a protocol will be jointly prepared as soon as practicable, and when approved by the PLPA’s will be attached as an addendum to the revised MOI. South Northamptonshire Council, as the accountable body, will lead on the preparation of this protocol.

3.6 Given the recent formal approval of the composition and Terms of Reference of the West Northamptonshire Programme Board (WNPB) and West Northamptonshire Business Sub-Group (WNBSG), P6 of the existing MOI needs to be updated as follows:-

“P6 (revised): The JPU will be directed and advised by the West Northamptonshire Programme Board in accordance with their agreed Terms of Reference and Membership (set out in Appendix 2). Furthermore the PLPA’s agree to the establishment of a West Northamptonshire Business Sub Group to monitor progress of the

LDS, its resourcing, both financial and staffing, and to provide strategic guidance to the (WNPB) in accordance with their agreed Terms of Reference and Membership (set out in Appendix 2)”.

- 3.7 These proposed changes, clarifications and other minor updates, are set out together as “tracked changes” in a proposed revised MOI at Appendix 1 to this report.

Implications

- 4.1 There are no resource implications directly related to these recommendations.
- 4.2 Failure to recruit to new posts within the approved structure is recognised in the Risk Register as being of high impact on both the timely completion and soundness of Development Plan Documents (DPD’s). Clarity as to the employing authority and line management responsibilities is critical to mitigating this risk. The MOI, from time to time, as the partnership grows and strengthens will need to be reviewed and revised to ensure priority and sound governance.