

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	General Purposes Committee Council	Date:	13 March 2018 22 March 2018
Subject:	Planning Policy Sub-Committee		
Report Of:	Head of Paid Service		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	None		

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To recommend the dissolution of Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 General Purposes Committee is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

(1) The Planning Policy Sub-Committee is dissolved.

2.2 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

(1) The Planning Policy Sub-Committee is dissolved.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 Legislation and national planning policy requires local authorities to prepare a Local Plan, covering its administrative area, working with neighbouring local authorities to address strategic issues of a cross-boundary nature. Local Plans need to cover a period of at least 15 years and to be updated at least every five years.

3.2 For Gloucester City, the Joint Core Strategy (JCS), prepared in partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council was adopted in December 2017. However, the authorities are required to undertake a housing supply and retail/town centres review and work has already begun on these. Work also continues on the Gloucester City Plan, the next stage of which will be the Pre-Submission version, currently programmed for public consultation at the end of 2018. At the same time the Government has placed a great emphasis on councils to prepare and adopt Local Plans in a timely fashion, with penalties for those that underperform. The Council is therefore required to deliver future Local Plan documents and in as timely and efficient manner as possible.

- 3.3 At each stage of plan-making, the Council's constitution requires planning documents to be considered by elected Members; this is where officers seek resolution to either consult or adopt the planning document in question. The current route for this is firstly the Planning Policy-Sub Committee (PPSC), followed by Council.
- 3.4 PPSC is a sub-committee of Planning Committee, comprising five Members including the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee. The constitution sets out that the purpose of PPSC is to make recommendations to Council – it is not a decision making committee.
- 3.5 The requirement to present reports to PPSC in advance of Council creates long-lead in times, often amounting to somewhere between four and six weeks. In a time when the City Council is looking at all opportunities to work in smarter and more efficient ways, this is time that could be better spent. It is therefore proposed that PPSC is removed from the constitution, leading to a more streamlined and resource efficient process for decision making by the Council. The Council's JCS partner authorities currently operate under a similar model.
- 3.6 Notwithstanding the above, it is considered there is an opportunity for better Member involvement in plan-making. A Councils' Local Plan needs to reflect the needs and aspirations of local communities. At the same time, in order to be found 'sound' at examination, Local Plans must be based on an appropriate evidence base and be consistent with national planning policy. It is therefore important that the emerging evidence base is shared with Members in a timely fashion and that Members have an opportunity to consider the implications for policy formulation.
- 3.7 With this in mind, it is proposed that a new 'Member Liaison Group' is established. The group will meet on a regular basis, reflecting the plan-making timetable. This will provide an opportunity for the evidence work to be shared more comprehensively with Members and for queries about the implications for policy formulation to be discussed. There would be a more constructive opportunity for Members to discuss emerging planning policy and to consider whether it reflects local aspirations and needs. It will provide a more collaborative approach to plan-making and provide Members with a better understanding of complex/technical planning issues. Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough Councils already have in place similar arrangements, which have proved incredibly useful in informing their emerging plans.
- 3.8 In terms of democratic accountability, it is important to note that all emerging planning documents will still need to be considered at Council. In addition, from a community involvement perspective, the planning system requires local authorities to consult and engage with local communities throughout the plan-making process. The way in which the City Council will do this is set out in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement, which is available on the website.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 None

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 To inform the thinking around this subject conversations have been held with the Chair and Vice Chair of Planning Committee. Overall, there is agreement from all three that the proposed changes represent a positive approach.
- 5.2 An option was discussed and considered, whereby the role of the committee is amended to include decision making responsibilities. However, it is considered important that decisions at each key stage of plan-making continue to be made by Council. Furthermore, Regulation 4(i) of the Local Planning Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 requires that a Local Plan be adopted by Council.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of plan-making processes, whilst maintaining community involvement and democratic accountability.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 7.1 If the recommendation is accepted by Members, the Constitution will need to be revised so as to remove reference to the PPSC.
- 7.2 Planning officers will continue to prepare the Local Plan for Gloucester in accordance with the amended democratic process.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The dissolution of the Planning Policy Sub-Committee will create a more streamlined and resource efficient process for decision making by the Council.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Local authorities must prepare a Local Plan for their area in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Local Plans must reflect the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 9.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendation.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 10.1 None

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

- 11.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

12.1 None

Sustainability

12.2 None

Staffing & Trade Union

12.3 None

Background Documents: None