

Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Meeting	
Meeting Date	19 th September 2023
Report Title	Terms of Reference for the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson, Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning
Lead Officer	Jill Peet, Planning Policy Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To agree Terms of Reference for the PTP Working Group.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 As Members are aware, local politicians and council officers operate within a governance framework of checks and balances to ensure that local authorities' decision-making is lawful, informed by objective advice, transparent and consultative. Some parts of local governance are locally defined, such as whether a council will follow a cabinet or a committee style of governance. In May 2022, the Council elected to switch from a cabinet system to a committee style of governance. The Policy and Resources Committee is the main decision-making body for emerging planning and transportation policy (enroute to full Council). The purpose of formal committees is to make decisions based on information presented to the committee by officers of the council.
- 1.2 In the case of planning and transportation policy, especially local plan policy, it is necessary for members to have a greater knowledge and depth of understanding of national policy and local evidence so that informed decision can be made when the time comes to discuss the proposed policies at Policy and Resources committees. To help facilitate this, the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group (PTP WG) was set up with the first informal meeting of this administration taking place in June 2022.
- 1.3 The Council Constitution confirms that the PTP WG acts as an advisory group that makes recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee and that Terms of Reference may be set. Agreeing Terms of Reference (ToR) will support both officers and members as policies and policy documents progress. Terms of Reference will support a shared understanding of how the Working Group will operate and set out expectations for how work will be presented and shared with members and with the wider public.

- 1.4 It will be for the Working Group to determine and agree Terms of Reference but as a stimulus for discussion, a 'starter for ten' is contained within section 3 of this report.

2 Background

- 2.1 Under the previous cabinet governance system, the Local Plan Panel (and before that, the Local Development Framework Panel) was set up to discuss all relevant matters for the Local Plan Review and other planning policy and made recommendations to Cabinet. Where items were 'key decisions' (e.g. the local plan document itself) specific reports were presented to Cabinet and to full Council. Under the committee system of governance, the PTP WG will make recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee through specific reports that include a record of the discussion or through the reporting of the minutes if that is appropriate.
- 2.2 It is usual for local planning authorities to have a local plan working group, steering group or similar. Many of these types of groups have Terms of Reference to specify how the group will operate. There are plenty of examples online of Terms of Reference for such groups. Links to examples can be provided on request.
- 2.3 Agreeing Terms of Reference will help to keep clear the roles and responsibilities of the Working Group and will identify the processes to be followed. This is particularly important to avoid duplication of work and to ensure that members have the opportunity to understand and question evidence for the LPR as it becomes available and to feed back this information to their respective groups.
- 2.4 It is for the Working Group to identify and agree Terms of Reference and to determine the processes to follow. Section 3 below includes a 'starter for ten' to stimulate discussion and facilitate the completion of Terms of Reference that can subsequently be agreed.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Agreeing Terms of Reference will secure a shared understanding between members and officers. This means the work of the Group is underpinned by the assurance that everyone involved understands the purpose, direction and outcomes of the Group and their collective and individual roles and responsibilities.
- 3.2 Members are asked to consider the 'starter for ten' Terms of Reference set out below and to propose and discuss amendments as they see fit.

Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group Terms of Reference

The purpose of the PTP WG is to discuss and make recommendations in relation to the development and implementation of Planning and Transportation Policy, including the Local Plan Review.

The Working Group will undertake all but not exclusively the following activities:

- 1. To review progress in preparing the Local Plan Review*
- 2. Receive updates on Government policy changes and priorities insofar as they might impact on the preparation of the Local Plan*
- 3. Receive and note reports and presentations on the Local Plan Review evidence base*
- 4. Provide comment on the scope and nature of the thematic policy approaches to be considered in developing the Local Plan*
- 5. Provide comment on the development of an evidence-based preferred spatial option*
- 6. To keep under review the Council's approach to community engagement in the plan-making process*
- 7. To consider other planning and transportation policy areas and heritage policies and projects and make recommendations to Policy and Resources committee as appropriate.*
- 8. From time to time, matters may arise from discussion of planning applications, enforcement matters and so on. These matters shall be referred to this Working Group.*

As the Working Group is a subcommittee with no decision-making powers it will refer all recommendations directly to P&R and keep other members of their political groups informed.

Formal meetings of the Working Group shall be held in public and shall be serviced by Democratic Services. Informal meetings shall be held at the discretion of the chair and will not be held in public and shall be arranged by officers as required. From time to time, the WG may need to discuss matters of a confidential nature. Group members will be expected to respect this confidentiality and should not discuss such matters outside the Group until they have been formally placed in the public realm.

Meetings will be held in person or virtual or hybrid at the Chair's discretion.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 There is no requirement in the constitution to agree Terms of Reference and members may choose not to proceed with setting these out for the Working Group. Deciding not to progress with Terms of Reference would be a missed opportunity to set out parameters and create greater clarity and transparency around the roles and responsibilities of the Working Group.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 As the Terms of Reference are a matter for the members of the Working Group to agree, no consultation has been undertaken or is proposed.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The proposals align with corporate objective 4: renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future.
Financial, Resource and Property	The proposals are likely to have a positive impact on resources as there will be a shared understanding around the purpose of the Working Group and expectations of officers
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The proposals are aligned with the Council's constitution and corporate objective 4
Crime and Disorder	No implications identified
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No implications identified
Health and Wellbeing	No implications identified
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	No implications identified
Risk Management and Health and Safety	The proposals reduce risk because it creates a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Working Group and expectations of officers
Equality and Diversity	No implications identified
Privacy and Data Protection	No implications identified

7 Appendices

7.1 NONE

8 Background Papers

NONE