

LOCAL PLAN DRAFT COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Head of Service:	Viv Evans, Head of Planning
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Communications and Engagement Strategy (August 2020)

Summary

The Draft Communications and Engagement Strategy sets out a framework as to how the Council can publicise and inclusively involve stakeholders in the forthcoming Regulation 18 consultation for the new local Plan. The Strategy takes account of the potential impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Consider and comment on the Local Plan Draft Communications and Engagement Strategy 2020 attached at Appendix 1**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Strategy will help guide the Council's communication and engagement activities in relation to the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation. The Strategy will help to optimise the use of resources and ensure the consultation is as inclusive and far reaching as possible.

2 Background

- 2.1 As set out in the recently revised Local Plan Programme, the Council intends to conduct a Regulation 18 public consultation on the emerging Local Plan. Given the range of issues being addressed in the Local Plan and the vested interests of the Borough's communities and stakeholders in the Plan, consultants were commissioned to support the Council in the consultation process. One of the outputs of this commission has been the production of a Draft Communication and Engagement Strategy.

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- 2.2 This Strategy when adopted will complement the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, providing a detailed framework and recommendations to guide the Council's actions before and during the Regulation 18 consultation period. The aim is to maximise community/stakeholder involvement and make efficient use of the resources available, while adapting to any potential impacts/limitations from the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 2.3 The draft strategy identifies the objectives, principles and core messages of the emerging Local Plan, ensuring these are reflected in the strategy itself. Key sections of the strategy include:

Stakeholders the consultation must reach

- 2.4 Key stakeholder groups to be targeted during the consultation are identified in the draft strategy. This is an expansive list and it is recommended that the Council collaborates with certain stakeholders to improve the reach of the consultation; for example using educational institutions as a platform to engage with young people.

Ensuring an inclusive consultation

- 2.5 A mixture of communications, marketing and advertising methods are advised to help deliver an inclusive consultation. Specific actions are identified for both delivering Local Plan information and engaging with stakeholders. Due to the challenges presented by the pandemic, the use of online platforms and virtual meetings are suggested, which will complement or, where necessary, replace physical meetings. Visual displays for use at physical and virtual events will help deliver key messages and information. The creation of a bespoke micro-site (already available on the [Council's website](#)) for the Local Plan will be a valuable tool, enabling all information to be readily available in one place.

Indicative communications plan

- 2.6 The draft strategy sets out an indicative plan for a four-month Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation. This includes the actions required to prepare for the consultation and then monthly activities throughout the duration of the engagement process. No specific dates are attached to the communications plan to provide flexibility. The strategy recommends the Council provides clarity to stakeholders from the outset as to how the consultation will run, to ensure full awareness of the process.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

- 3.1 Impact Assessment

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3.1.1 Consultation and engagement with those 'who have an interest in the subject of the Local Plan' is required by the current Planning Regulations (Regulation 18, Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012). The Local Planning Authority is required to take into account any representation made to them under this regulation.

3.1.2 The Communications and Engagement Strategy will help the Council prepare for Local Plan consultations, which may need to be conducted under more restrictive circumstances brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 None arising.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 None arising.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 Future changes to national planning policy as proposed in the recent White Paper 'Planning for the Future' (6 August 2020) may have a significant influence on the development of the Local Plan.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None arising.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 Consultation and engagement is a statutory stage in the production of a new Local Plan and will incur costs. However, the production of the Communications and Engagement Strategy will help to ensure resources are used in the most cost effective and efficient manner.

4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The consultation cost should be met from within the service's existing agreed budget envelope.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

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6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Green and Vibrant, Safe and Well, Cultural and Creative, Opportunity and Prosperity, Smart and Connected, Effective Council.

6.2 The new Local Plan will contribute towards meeting the Council's Visions and objectives identified in its Four Year Plan.

6.3 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.4 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

The Local Plan has a key role in implementing a number of key objectives that are set out in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

6.5 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

The Communications and Engagement Strategy recognises the impact and restrictions caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

6.6 **Partnerships:**

The Council has a duty to cooperate with relevant stakeholders in the preparation of a Local Plan. The Communications and Engagement Strategy will assist with this.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

- Reports

None

- Other

None