

PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 12 July 2023

PRESENT: Councillors John Ifan Jones, R LI Jones, Pip O'Neill, Llio Angharad Owen, Nicola Roberts, Ken Taylor, Ieuan Williams and Robin Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Regulation & Economic Development, Chief Planning Officer (DFJ), Planning Policy Manager (JIW), Head of Democracy (DS), Legal Services Manager (RJ), Committee Officer (MEH).

APOLOGIES: Councillors Trefor Lloyd Hughes MBE and Jackie Lewis

ALSO PRESENT: None

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

Councillor John I Jones was elected Chairperson of the Planning Policy Committee.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON

Councillor Ieuan Williams was elected Vice-Chairperson of the Planning Policy Committee.

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None received.

4 UPDATE ON ESTABLISHING A NEW PLANNING POLICY TEAM AND THE PREPARATION OF A NEW LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Submitted – a report by the Planning Policy Manager in respect of the above.

The Chief Planning Officer reported that the new Local Development Plan is a priority for the Planning function and the Council. The Planning Policy Committee will have a key role in the development of the plan and will have an important contribution to make the process to the creation of the Local Development Plan. He noted that a detailed Terms of Reference for the Committee will be submitted to the next meeting. The Chief Planning Officer further said that the role of the Committee will be to afford leadership and guidance on such matters as draft documents submitted for consideration, the development of Supplementary Planning Guidance, annual monitoring reports and other documentation linked to the Local Development Plan preparation; together with comments from the public and stakeholders.

The Planning Policy Manager reported that following the dissolution of the Joint Planning Policy Unit at the end of the joint working agreement between Gwynedd and Anglesey in March 2023, the County Council took over the full responsibility for preparing its own Local

Development Plan. Despite twice advertising for several posts for the newly created Policy Team, the process thus far has not been successful. The Team benefitted from the TUPE transfer of one officer who commenced duties on 1st April, 2023 and a unit Manager was subsequently appointed on a 12 month secondment basis. The required staffing resource for the Team is as follows:-

- Planning Policy Manager
- Senior Planning Policy Officer
- 2 x Planning Policy Officers
- Assistant Policy Officer

The need for a Local Housing Challenge Co-ordinator was also subsequently identified.

In view of the staffing shortfall, another concerted recruitment process is to be implemented by the Service to try and attract experienced individuals to the posts. The intention is to extend the scope of advertisement to include professional journals, direct advertising in targeted universities and greater use of social media. It is essential to have a suitably capable Team to ensure that the various stages of the plan preparation are to be met within the agreed timescales and that subsequent statutory duties can be satisfactorily discharged. The Service is currently undertaking a procurement process to engage a suitably qualified and experienced consultancy to provide professional support for its Planning Function under a Framework agreement. This will include support for the Council's statutory planning policy responsibilities.

The Planning Policy Manager further reported that the Local Development Plan preparation entails meeting several distinct milestones which include the requirement to be encapsulated within a Delivery Agreement which must be agreed by Welsh Government. Once agreed, the programme for delivery of the Plan must be rigorously adhered to with any deviation having to be agreed with Welsh Government. An indicative timeline was provided within Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Robert LI Jones questioned the reasons for ending joint working arrangements between Gwynedd Council and the Isle of Anglesey County Council. The Chief Planning Officer responded as this decision had already been made by the Council there was no merit in revisiting the matter at this meeting. However, publicly available reports dealing with the matter would be forwarded to Councillor Jones if he so wished.

Councillor Pip O'Neill enquired as to the staffing complement of the Team and this was clarified by the Planning Policy Manager.

Councillor Ken Taylor enquired as to the webcasting arrangements for future meetings. The Legal Services Manager responded that he didn't have the answer to hand but that the matter could be looked at before the next meeting.

Councillor Ken Taylor said that whilst some members of this Committee are not members of the Planning and Orders Committee he enquired whether paper copies of the Joint Local Development Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance's and the National Planning Policies could be made available. The Head of Democracy responded that the Council has a digital policy as regards to the distribution of documentation.

Councillor Ieuan Williams proposed that an index be prepared with links to the digital planning policies, supplementary planning guidance and the national policies. Councillor Nicola Roberts said that training as regards to the planning process and the Local Development Plan needs to be afforded to this Committee.

Councillor leuan Williams enquired whether adequate budget is available to be able to commission external expertise if the recruitment process proves unsuccessful. The Head of Regulation and Economic Development responded that funding is available to proceed with the establishment of the Planning Policy Team together with reserved budget for the preparation of the Plan. He further said that there is a risk that additional funding will be required to fund any external assistance in the preparation of the Local Development Plan, however, the cost effectiveness and affordability will be monitored and reported to this Committee in due course.

Councillor Williams further ascertained whether the role of the Local Housing Challenge Co-ordinator relating to the potential introduction of an Article 4 direction on Angles ey pertaining to second homes and short term holiday lets would fall within the remit of the committee. The Chief Planning Officer responded that there were clear linkages between this work and the development of a Local Development Plan and consequently there would be a role for the committee.

It was RESOLVED:-

- **To proceed with a targeted recruitment process aimed at recruiting appropriately qualified individuals to populate the team with the necessary capabilities required to deliver a robust and effective development plan;**
- **To engage with private sector expertise to undertake specific stages of the Local Development Plan preparation process (with the Planning Policy Manager acting as contract manager);**
- **To develop the draft Delivery Agreement to a point where it can be consulted upon and completed to deposit stage;**
- **To provide a programme of training and development for Elected Members in addition to a programme of training for Chief/Senior Officers external to the Planning Department. This to manage expectations and enable constructive dialogue as to what a Local Development Plan can realistically address and deliver;**
- **That an index be prepared with links for digital documentation i.e. planning policies, supplementary planning guidance's and national policies.**

The meeting concluded at 12.55 pm

**COUNCILLOR JOHN I JONES
CHAIR**