

Isle of Anglesey County Council	
Report to:	Planning Policy Committee
Date:	12 th July 2023
Subject:	Update on establishing a new Planning Policy Team and the preparation of a new Local Development Plan
Portfolio Holder(s):	Cllr. Nicola Roberts (Planning, Public Protection and Climate Change)
Head of Service / Director:	Christian Branch Head of Regulation & Economic Development Service
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Local Members:	Applicable to all Elected Members

1.0 Purpose of report

1.1 This report is prepared to provide an update on recruitment to the newly-formed Planning Policy Team and the implications this will have on preparing a new local development plan (LDP) for Anglesey.

2.0 Background

2.1 Following the dissolution of the Joint Planning Policy Unit at the end of the joint working agreement in March 2023, Ynys Mon County Council took back full responsibility for preparing its own Local Development Plan.

2.2 Despite twice advertising several posts for the newly-created Policy Team, the process has not, thus far, been successful.

2.3 The Team benefitted from the TUPE transfer of one officer who commenced duties on April 1 2023. A Unit Manager was subsequently appointed on a 12 month secondment basis, the secondment commencing on 1 April 2023, and this situation will be reviewed prior to the expiration of the initial secondment period.

3.0 Staff resources

3.1 The required staffing resource for the Team is listed below:

- Planning Policy Manager (Grade 9)
- Senior Planning Policy Officer (Grade 7)
- 2x Planning Policy Officers (Grade 6)
- Assistant Policy Officer (Grade 4)

The need for a Local Housing Challenge Co-ordinator (Grade 7) was subsequently identified. Other than the seconded Unit Manager and one PO position, the other four posts remain vacant.

3.2 In view of the staffing shortfall, another concerted recruitment drive is to be implemented by the Service to try and attract experienced and capable individuals.

3.3 The intention is to extend the scope of advertisement to include professional journals, direct advertising in targeted universities and greater use of social media outlets. As a result of discussions, an application package is to be produced to further promote the roles and their attached benefits.

3.4 It is essential to have a suitably capable Team to ensure that the various stages of plan preparation are to be met within the agreed timescales and that subsequent statutory duties can be satisfactorily discharged.

3.5 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.

4.0 Plan preparation stages

4.1 Plan preparation entails meeting several, distinct milestones. Such milestones are required to be encapsulated within a Delivery Agreement which must be signed off by Welsh Government (WG). Once agreed, the programme for delivery of the LDP must be rigorously adhered to with any deviation having to be agreed with WG. An indicative timeline is provided in **Appendix 1**. In short, the stages are as follows:

- Delivery Agreement (DA) & Community Involvement Scheme (CIS)
- Pre-deposit Plan
- Deposit Plan
- Deposit & Examination in Public
- Inspector's Report & Adoption

4.2 The Inspector's Report would follow Examination with a requirement that adoption is achieved within 8 weeks of the Report's receipt.

5.0 What is achievable given current resources?

- 5.1 Given the current lack of staff resources, the indicative timeline for the different stages of plan preparation and the recent discussion with officers from WG's policy team referred to at 7.1, preparation and deposit of the DA and CIS will be subject to having the necessary resources in place to enable the subsequent stages triggered by the signing off of the DA.
- 5.2 As the next stage of the plan preparation process, namely, preparation of the pre-deposit plan, is likely to generate the greater proportion of work in the programme, limited staffing resources will inevitably impact this process. As such, ready access to staff and/or other resources will be key to progressing this and, indeed, subsequent stages of the process.

6.0 Use of external assistance

- 6.1 In the event that the concerted recruitment drive fails to successfully recruit, either in part or in full, consideration must be given to the commissioning of external assistance to make up the resource deficit. If this were the case, it is suggested that any contracts awarded be for individual stages indicated in the timetable, for example:

- Delivery agreement and Community Involvement Strategy;
- Vision and strategic options paper;
- Preparation of specific background papers; and
- Undertaking the main impact assessments (SA/SEA, HRA etc.).

7.0 Initial progress

- 7.1 Prior to the termination of joint working arrangements, the JPPU had commenced the preparation of a draft DA for Ynys Mon. The document provides a basis upon which to build but there are gaps that require addressing, for example, in relation to corporate arrangements for reporting and agreeing progress.
- 7.2 A recent meeting was held with relevant officers of WG to explain the current position in relation to the planning policy situation. It was acknowledged that the County Council was facing a challenging situation but that WG's planning policy unit would be available to discuss progressing the process of preparation and submission of a draft plan. In terms of the initial milestone of agreeing the delivery agreement, it was made clear that such an agreement should not be submitted for consideration until conditions existed to allow realistic delivery of the agreed programme. As previously referred to at paragraph 4.1, the indicative timeline provided in **Appendix 1** illustrates the different stages involved in the plan preparation process.

8.0 Future actions

8.1 In light of the current circumstances the following actions are underway:

- 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.
- Engage with private sector expertise to undertake specific stages of the LDP preparation process (with the Planning Policy Manager acting as contract manager).
- Develop the draft DA to a point where it can be consulted upon and completed to deposit stage.
- Provide a programme of training and development for elected members in addition to a programme of training for chief/senior officers external to Planning. This to manage expectations and enable constructive dialogue as to what a LDP can realistically address and deliver.

Appendix 1

LDP indicative timeline (drafted prior to cessation of joint working arrangements)

Stage No.	Stage	Timetable	Key Consultation Period
Definitive			
1	Delivery Agreement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare • Consult with key stakeholders • Deposit 	April 2023 – October 2023	Public consultation June/July 2023 Endorsement by Council October 2023 Deposit with Welsh Government November 2023
2	Pre-deposit – prepare contents and consult Vision and strategic options paper Call for sites Require Specific Background Papers	December 2023 – May 2025	Call for sites December 2023 for a minimum of 6 weeks March 2024 – April 2024
	Pre-deposit Consultation Strategy and Main Impact Assessments SA/SEA and HRA	December 2023 – May 2025	Public consultation September/October 2025
3	Deposit Plan	June 2025 – May 2026	Public consultation September/October 2025
Indicative			
4	Deposit	June 2026	n/a
5	Examination	11 months from deposit (target)	May be a further consultation post-examination
6	Inspector's Report	April 2027	
7	Adoption	May 2027 (must adopt within 8 weeks of accepting the Inspector's Report)	n/a