

Briefing Note for Scrutiny Committee Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Regeneration

Planning

Local Plan

The Local Plan was the subject of public consultation in the spring which generated over 2,000 comments. The forward planning team has been assessing these responses and following further advice from statutory consultees is undertaking additional technical work before submitting the Plan to government early next year. It was previously envisaged that this technical work could be done later in the process at the master planning stage. This work includes further investigation in respect of highway infrastructure issues at J28 Cullompton. The necessity to bring this work forward has postponed the expected submission date.

5 Year Land Supply

A report was taken to Cabinet in August setting out the Council's latest 5 years land supply calculations and recommending that a number of sites be released to provide sufficient development options to reduce the risk of successful challenge. Current calculations now give us a buffer of 29% against the Government's expectation of a 5% buffer, or in the case of persistent under delivery 20%.

Tiverton Eastern Urban Extension

This is a major development proposal to the east of Tiverton with in the order of 1500 dwellings and employment floorspace, new primary school, neighbourhood centre and major highway works. It is a site allocated in the adopted Local Plan. The Masterplan for Area A was adopted in April 2014. Work is in progress for the production of the Masterplan for Area B. Peter Brett Associates has been commissioned to produce a design guide for the urban extension as a whole. This work is being externally funded via the Homes and Communities Agency. A project officer has also been employed to work on this project. Christie McCombe started work on 14th September. Her post is also externally funded from the Homes and Communities Agency.

The first outline planning permission has been granted for residential development for up to 330 houses towards the NE of the site and there is a resolution to grant permission for a further outline application for up to 1,000 dwellings, employment floorspace, neighbourhood centre, primary school etc. S106 discussions are ongoing on this application. Planning permission has been granted for the new highway junction onto the A361. The first reserved matters application is expected early 2016.

Cullompton North West Urban Extension

Land was allocated in the adopted Local Plan for an Urban Extension on the North West side of Cullompton, between the Tiverton Road and Willand Road. This proposal includes 1100 houses, employment floorspace, new primary school and community facilities. Consultation is currently being undertaken on the draft Masterplan for the area which is expected to be adopted later this year.

Tiverton Town Centre Masterplan

The masterplan is being commissioned and is intended to be focussed around issues of regeneration and investment. It is programmed to be delivered as corporate project in 2016 with significant planning input.

Conservation Area Assessments

There are 51 conservation areas in the District. These are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Following consultation, Cabinet approved the amendment of the boundaries of five conservation areas; Cheriton Fitzpaine, Morchard Bishop, Newton St Cyres, Silvertown and Thorverton. This also included adoption of the related appraisal and management plan documents.

Cullompton Article 4 Direction.

The Article 4 Direction in Cullompton has been reviewed, consultation undertaken and design guidance written. A report to finalise the review process is due to be taken to Cabinet on 22nd October.

Cullompton Manor House Hotel

Work continues to progress, within the context of the constraints and difficulties of dealing with a complicated and structurally fragile Grade II* listed building. Main issues have been ensuring use of appropriate materials, ongoing structural issues, and the associated impact of works on traffic flow in the area. This latter issue is further compounded by unrelated work being undertaken imminently on the opposite side of the road which have extended the time of the road closure. Access for emergency vehicles through the Tiverton Road junction is now available again.

Planning Committee has granted delegated authority for the issuing of an urgent works notice in the event that works cease or stall. Officers continue to work with the owner and Historic England to resolve the issues as soon as possible.

Planning Performance

The performance for quarter 1 of 2015/16 shows that in the majority of instances targets are being met or exceeded. However the major application target of 60% determined within 13 weeks was narrowly missed (57%) and Listed Building Consent application performance against the target of 80% determined in 8 weeks was 70%. A separate briefing paper on listed building consent performance has been prepared.

It continues to be a challenging period for the Planning Service in terms of staffing due to maternity leave and the departure of members of staff. Recruitment has been undertaken to replace the majority of vacancies. New members of staff have recently arrived.

Building Control

A review of the Building Control Service has taken place. Recommendations have been made to improve future service delivery including the development of a shared service and management between Mid and North Devon Building Control.

Economic Development

Working with Businesses and other agencies

The Economic Development Officer has been working closely with our business community to deliver economic development and ensure that we offer a business friendly service. He has directly supported a number of businesses and sites across the district including (not an exhaustive list):

- Hitchcock's Business Park
- Flock Mill
- Broad Oak Toiletries
- Diggerland
- Pallex
- Swallow Court

Further to these activities he has been working with key stakeholders from across the district, and beyond, to pull together and better coordinate the support that is offered to the business community. This has involved building stronger partnerships with organisations including (not an exhaustive list):

- Business Information Point
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Mid Devon Gazette
- Business Forum Mid Devon
- Department of Business Innovation and Skills
- Better Regulatory Delivery Office
- PETROC College

Exeter and Heart of Devon (EHOD) Economic Development

We are developing closer working relationships with Exeter City Council, East Devon District Council and Teignbridge District Council to explore better ways of working together so that our combined activities can have a much greater impact than we individually could achieve.

Current areas of focus include:

- Joint inward investment strategy
- Commercial property register
- Monitoring Economic Trends
- Growth Hub Bid
- Joint procurement of EHOD wide Business Support
- EHOD employment and skills Board
- Joint tourism promotion

Mid Devon is playing a leading role in many of these activities, and we are now seen as a local authority with a significant voice and a strong role to play across the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area.

LEADER

LEADER is a French acronym which roughly translates as 'liaison among Actors in Rural Economic Development'.

Under LEADER, Local Action Groups (LAGs) can allocate grant funding to local businesses and organisations to help them carry out rural projects which:

- Create jobs;
- Develop rural businesses; and
- Support the rural economy

To be successful, applications must contribute to one or more of DEFRA's 6 priorities for LEADER, which are to:

1. Increase farm productivity;
2. Support micro and small businesses and farm diversification;
3. Boost rural tourism;
4. Provide rural services;
5. Provide cultural and heritage activities; and
6. Increase forestry productivity

In September 2014 the Council worked with Devon County Council to submit a Local Development Scheme for the funding and we successfully obtained circa £1.2m for the programme running from 2015 to 2020. Grants will range from a minimum of £2,500 up to approximately £50,000 and will be for capital projects only.

DEFRA are doing a national launch 14th October and it is anticipated that the Local Action Group will be open for applications following this date. The Economic and Community Development team are working with the programme coordinators to bring projects forward and support local businesses.

Growth Hub Bid

The Economic Development Officer has been leading a South West bid for the delivery of a Growth Hub service, which will provide signposting and diagnostic services for businesses across Devon and Somerset. This is an exciting proposal that is now being finalised in partnership with Devon County Council (who will act as the accountable body for the project) and which has gathered a vast swathe of support from all across the region. We have the support of nearly all local authorities in the LEP area, business support organisations, education bodies, all regulatory services and other groups that see the work we are doing as greatly positive for the region. The manner in which the Economic Development Officer has been able to gain support for this bid and the way that the project has been developed, has earned interest from other parts of the country, and from the government department BIS, who wish for him to present at one of their conferences in October on the way we have been working in the South West.

This is an exciting time for Mid Devon District Council, as we are being viewed far and wide as a local authority that is supportive of its business community and understanding of business needs, and leading the way across the country on developing partnership work to deliver business support services.

High Street Innovation Fund

At time of writing this briefing note we are currently in the middle of the interview process in respect of the High Street Innovation Fund. 16 proposals were submitted. The split was 2 for Cullompton, 5 for Crediton, 6 for Tiverton, 2 for Bampton and 1 for Oakford. A decision is to be announced at the beginning of October.

Shop Front Enhancement Scheme

Following successful schemes in Crediton and Cullompton we have now rolled this out in Tiverton. Initial focus is on targeting a number of shop fronts that require improvement before this is rolled throughout the town centre.

Inward Investment and Business Support Strategy

The Economic Development Officer has drafted an Inward Investment and Business Support Strategy which sets out actions to be delivered over the next 5 years to build a stronger business community. This includes details of key staff within the Council who will need to play a role in each activity, and identifies where costs are involved and how much they are likely to be. The strategy is due to go before Cabinet in November. The priorities and actions will also feed into the Corporate Plan process, which will next be discussed with Members on the 30th October 2015, prior to the report going to Cabinet.

Tourism Strategy

This is in a similar position to the above strategy. The Economic Development Manager has drafted a Tourism Strategy and this will go forward to Cabinet following discussion with the Mid Devon Attractions Group. The priorities and actions will also feed into the Corporate Plan process, which will next be discussed with Members on the 30th October 2015, prior to the report going to Cabinet.

Town Team update

Cullompton Town Team

Penny Bayer continues to provide support and assistance to the Cullompton Town Team.

They are working on the following projects:

- The first Cullompton food and drink festival taking place on Saturday 10th October
- Further food and drink projects and festivals for 2016
- Townscape Heritage Initiative – potentially up to £1m external funding to support improvements to town centre conservation area
- Public art projects including improving the entrance to the town
- Tourism projects including town guide, events listing, interactive touch screen information, coach tours

Crediton Town Team

Paul Tucker continues to provide support and assistance to the Crediton Town Team.

They are working on the following projects:

- Crediton Festival 2016
- Crediton flags project 2016

- Improving signage on the entry points to the town
- Café culture and improving the use of Crediton Town Square
- Tourism projects

Tiverton Town Team

The Portas Team are working on the following projects:

- The 3rd Feast of St James taking place on 23rd July 2016
- Literary Festival for 2016
- Coach Parking
- Positiv Radio
- Business Improvement District

Town Centre Manager

Rachel Jenman has now started in post (three weeks ago) as the Town Centre Manager. Rachel's initial task will be to work with the various groups in Tiverton to unify them and work together with the common goal of improving the town centre.

The Town Centre Manager has already visited all of the businesses in the Town Centre and has also met with many of the groups in the town including the Portas Team, Tiverton Trade Association, Pannier Market Traders, Tiverton Town Council, the Events Committee and others. Current focus is on plans for Christmas, events for 2016, coach parking, improving the appearance of the town, the High Street Innovation Fund proposals and working with businesses and the Portas Team towards a Business Improvement District for Tiverton.

Electric Nights

Five successful events took place at the Pannier Market in 2015 with the Economic Development team working in partnership with street food traders. We saw several thousand visitors at each event and are already planning the events for 2016.