

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM TO COUNCIL

16 September 2009

1. ADOPTION OF CORE STRATEGY

Submitted by: Directorate for Regeneration and Development

Portfolio: Regeneration and Planning

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To consider the adoption the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy.

Recommendation

That the Council adopt the Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy (incorporating the changes recommended in the Government Inspector's Report dated 23 June 2009) as part of the Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Development Framework.

Reasons

Following an independent examination by a Government Inspector the Core Spatial Strategy has been found 'sound' subject to making a number of changes to the document. The next stage is to formally adopt the document as part of the Local Development Framework for Newcastle.

Members of the Planning Committee have been informed of the outcome of the examination but have not been required to make a decision because the Inspector's Report is 'binding,' which effectively means that the Borough Council must change the Core Spatial Strategy in accordance with the recommendations set out before the document is adopted.

1. Background

- 1.1 All local authorities are required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to produce a Core Spatial Strategy as part of their Local Development Framework. The Core Spatial Strategy provides the overarching framework to develop and support detailed planning policies, guidance and programmes to secure the sustainable regeneration of the Borough. It covers the twenty year period from 2006 to 2026.
- 1.2 A revised Preferred Options Core Strategy document was published in summer 2007 and the 1,300 detailed representations received were taken into account in the production of a Submission Draft. In May 2008 the Council approved the final Submission Draft for publication and submission to Government for independent examination.
- 1.3 The Submission Draft Core Spatial Strategy was subsequently published in August 2008 for a period of 8 weeks and comments were invited relating to the tests of 'soundness' as defined by Government. A total of 404 duly made representations were submitted by 64 individuals and organisations.
- 1.4 The Core Spatial Strategy was finally formally submitted to Government in December 2008, along with the 604 representations received from interested parties. As part of the examination process Public Hearings were held over a two week period at the end of April

2009. Interested parties who had made representations were invited to attend the Hearings at the discretion of the Inspector.

- 1.5 Following independent examination by a Government Inspector the Core Spatial Strategy has been found 'sound' subject to making a number of changes to the document. The next stage is to formally adopt the document as part of the Local Development Framework for Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- 1.6 It is the first Core Strategy to be found sound in Staffordshire and only the second Core Spatial Strategy to be found sound in the West Midlands. It is also the first sound Core Strategy in England produced jointly by two planning authorities.
- 1.7 The Inspector's Report is 'binding' which effectively means that the Borough Council must change the Core Spatial Strategy in accordance with the recommendations set out before the document is adopted. These are summarised in Appendix 1 below. The only other alternative would be to not adopt the Core Spatial Strategy at all; but this would be in breach of our responsibilities as a planning authority.
- 1.8 The City Council are expected to adopt the Core Spatial Strategy on 1 October 2009. Once the City Council has adopted the Core Spatial Strategy a final version, will be printed and published in accordance with the planning regulations. In the mean time draft copies of the final Core Spatial Strategy can be made available on request.

2. The Importance of the Core Spatial Strategy

- 2.1 The Core Spatial Strategy is the principal Development Plan Document. All other Development Plan Documents must be in conformity with it and the Regional Spatial Strategy. It sets out the overarching spatial planning framework for the sustainable regeneration of the Borough and it plays a key part in guiding investment to deliver the North Staffordshire Regeneration Partnership (NSRP) Business Plan, and the Sustainable Community Strategies for both Newcastle and Staffordshire.
- 2.2 It advances eighteen strategic aims relating to the themes of people; prosperity and place and advocates a strategy of targeted regeneration to meet projected development needs in accordance with sustainability principles and to maximise development within key priority areas.
- 2.3 Bespoke 'Area Spatial Strategies' are set out for the Town Centre; the rest of the urban area, including Kidsgrove; and the Rural Area. These area strategies provide the framework for the nature, scale and broad location of development in each of these key locations. There are also ten core strategic policies, which are applicable across the plan area and all developers will need to take account of. A comprehensive monitoring regime is set in place to measure the impact of the new spatial policies.
- 2.4 Significantly the Core Spatial Strategy also provides the hook for the preparation of site specific allocations; detailed planning policies and further supplementary guidance. In this way its adoption will be a key stage in the creation of the Borough's local development framework

3. Appendix 1 - Core Spatial Strategy Government Inspector's Recommended Changes

3. The recommended changes set out in the Inspector's binding report are to amend the document in the light of legal requirements and/or for reasons of 'soundness'. The Inspector concluded that none of the changes should materially alter the substance of the overall plan and its policies, nor undermine the sustainability appraisal and processes of public participation already undertaken.

3.2 In summary the recommended changes are:-

- New headings to spatial principles SP1-3 to make clear they are policies; changes to Policy SP1 and supporting text to clarify its application to the RENEW Pathfinder areas and the test of harm.
- Updating of the housing trajectories to clarify the position about demolitions and delivery.
- Reformatting of the area spatial strategies as policies.
- Provision of flexibility in respect of possible increases in housing numbers from the current West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy review.
- Amendment of the criteria for the selection of gypsy sites in Policy CSP7 for consistency with Circular 01/2006.
- Rewording of policy CSP3 in respect of renewable energy and sustainable construction to provide consistency with national policy; addition of new point 7 regarding flooding.
- Amendments to Policy CSP8 for consistency with national policy on minerals. (applies to the City only)
- Insertion of cross references to the Strategic Infrastructure Planning and Delivery Document and its relation to the Annual Monitoring Reports.
- Revision of Section 8 'Monitoring Framework' including monitoring targets and indicators.
- Amendments to the Key Diagram and plans to make them clear, accurate and consistent.

3.3 In addition the Inspector has endorsed a number of minor changes relating to typographical errors, factual updates and for clarity.

2. **NOTIFICATION OF COMPLETED OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REVIEW – SUPPORTING LOCAL POST OFFICES WITHIN THE BOROUGH OF NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME**

Submitted by: Central Services Manager

Portfolio: Customer Service and Transformation

Ward(s) affected: Non-specific

Purpose of the Report

To submit the report and recommendations of the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Council following completion of the review report 'Supporting Local Post Offices within the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme'.

Recommendation

That Council note the Overview and Scrutiny Report 'Supporting Local Post Offices within the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme'.

Reasons

The Council has previously agreed that completed Overview and Scrutiny review reports should be submitted to meetings of the full Council for discussion. This report meets that requirement.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 In June 2008, the Active and Cohesive Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee commenced an investigation which sought to identify how the Council could support the local post office network. This work was undertaken following the closure of four post offices across the Borough through Post Office Limited's Network Change Programme.
- 1.2 Between that time and the spring of this year, the Committee met with representatives of Post Office Limited, as well as receiving reports and presentations from officers.
- 1.3 A copy of the final report and recommendations arising from that review was submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 9 September 2009 and Members are requested to bring the agenda for that meeting to refer to that report. For the convenience of those who have not read the report, the recommendations were made as follows:

- ***Direct Support to the Post Office***

- (1) That the Borough Council should not provide any direct financial support to Post Office Limited to protect the existing post office network.
- (2) That the approach of Essex County Council should be rejected by the Borough Council as a model to directly support the post office network.
- (3) That the Borough Council maintain regular contact with Post Office Limited to identify opportunities for closer working to improve public access to services, as outlined with the vision of the Customer Access Strategy.
- (4) That the Borough Council should continue to promote the use of the post office through its customer services staff, the website and *The Reporter*
- (5) That the Borough Council should encourage Staffordshire County Council and the other districts and boroughs in the County to adopt a Staffordshire-wide strategy for supporting local post offices

- ***Helping the community to support their post office***

- (6) That, in the event of future network change proposals, the Borough Council's relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee should prepare the response to such consultations on behalf of the authority.
- (7) That the Borough Council, when responding to consultations in respect of proposed post office closures, engage local communities to provide supporting evidence for the retention of post offices in localities
- (8) That the Borough Council should engage local media organisations, such as *The Sentinel* and BBC Radio Stoke, to make people aware of any future closure proposals

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the Borough Council's Constitution require that the full Council and/or the authority's Cabinet respond to the recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny. To assist this process, a draft response schedule has been prepared for use by the Cabinet and officers to comment and detail what action will be taken or otherwise in response to the recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2 The schedule requires the Cabinet to indicate whether it agrees, partially agrees or does not agree with the recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny. It also provides for detail of the actions that are going to be taken in response to the recommendations, along with a timescale and identification of which officer will be responsible for overseeing implementation of any agreed actions.

- 2.3 The response of the Cabinet should then be reported back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with attendance by the relevant Portfolio Holder(s) and lead officers to explain the response to the recommendations and the actions that will be taken forward. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will then agree a programme to monitor the implementation of agreed recommendations.

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM TO THE COUNCIL

16 September 2009

3. ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Submitted by: Head of Corporate Policy and Performance

Portfolio: Customer Service and Transformation

Ward(s) affected: All

Members are requested to refer to the copies of the Annual Report circulated on the 24 July 2009

Purpose of the Report

To present to members the 2008/9 Annual Report, available on the Council's Internet, and raise their awareness of its contents.

Recommendations

That the presentation of the Annual Report 2008/09 be received.

Reasons

The Annual Report will provide information on the Council's performance and resources used to deliver that for the previous financial year (2008/9) in an easily digestible form. This is the third year that the report has been presented, previously information has been provided separately in more technical documents; the Statement of Accounts and the Council's Performance Plan, these are still available for stakeholders that require greater detail and are referred to in the Annual Report.

1. Background

- 1.1 The production of an Annual Report reflects this Council's desire to promote external accountability. The report includes a summary of the accounts and explanation of key financial and performance information designed to be easily digestible to the reader. The report also allows stakeholders the opportunity to contact the Council for the full reports that sit behind the Annual Report and to comment on the appropriateness of the reports design. Previous consultation demonstrated a need from the Council's stakeholders for a summary of the financial statements.

2. Issues

- 1.2 In producing the Annual Report, conscious that the production of mass produced Council reports can be interpreted as a waste of tax-payers money we have produced the document for communication on the Internet primarily with paper copies being produced only on request. The document also links to supporting information on the web, the Council's Performance Plan and Statement of Accounts that details the issues summarised further.

3. **Outcomes Linked to Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities**

- 3.1 The Annual Report identifies clearly with the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Priorities in terms of performance achieved and planned for the following year.

4. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 4.1 There is no legal requirement to produce this plan, but it is perceived as best practice and is recognised in the Audit Commission's Use of Resources criteria as part of the Comprehensive Area organisational assessment.

5. **Equality Impact Assessment**

There are no differential equality impacts identified within this report.

6. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 6.1 The production of the document has been met from within existing resources

7. **Major Risks**

- 7.1 The Annual Report includes unaudited financial data, it is unlikely that this will change significantly once audited, but there is a slight risk. This is mitigated by following appropriate accounting practices and legislation.

8. **Background Papers**

Council's Performance Plan 2008/9, Statement of Accounts 2008/9
Annual Report 2008/09