

14th December 2011

**Report of the Portfolio Holder
Economic Development and Enterprise**

**ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK**

EXEMPT INFORMATION

N/A

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is for Cabinet to approve the Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members agree the contents of the 2010-2011 Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Council must prepare an Annual Monitoring Report for the period 1 April to 31 March and then submit the report by 31 December of the same year to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

The report sets out some key findings in relation to the two main purposes of the Annual Monitoring Report. Firstly, it assesses the implementation of the Local Development Scheme, the three year timetable that sets out which Local Development Framework (LDF) documents will be prepared and when. Secondly, it has to assess the extent to which policies in the LDF are being achieved. Production of the Core Strategy has progressed but there are no adopted policies yet. This AMR therefore assesses the extent to which the saved Local Plan policies are meeting the nine Local Plan Objectives.

Monitoring of the indicators shows that the Local Plan objectives are largely being met. All housing development has taken place on previously developed land and there is enough housing and employment land to meet the existing Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Revision Preferred Option (RSS) targets. Affordable housing completions are considerably up on the previous year. The town centre primary shopping frontages are being protected by keeping them mainly in retail use.

The main areas where the Local Plan objectives are not being met relate to low levels of development associated with housing, employment and town centre uses, which reflects state of the economy over the last couple of years.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

None identified.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

There are no financial or legal implications arising from the report. However the Annual Monitoring Report is being prepared to meet the requirements of S.35 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Failure to submit a sound and robust AMR would be a cause of concern to the Secretary of State and could question the integrity of the Planning Service. Having a robust AMR in place could also reduce the chance of a successful legal challenge in respect of individual planning decisions.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

With the focus of the planning system on sustainability issues, the indicators used are geared towards measuring the delivery of sustainable development and sustainable communities.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Monitoring has become an important part of evidence based policy making. In the past, monitoring was used as a corrective mechanism for guiding land use plans back on track, now it should be regarded as a positive way of identifying key challenges, opportunities and possible ways of revising and adjusting spatial planning policies. Under the current planning system, monitoring is essential to build up a robust and credible evidence base. We must also identify clear mechanisms for implementing and monitoring our development plan documents to show that we are meeting spatial objectives and delivering policies.

In accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004, the Borough Council is required to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and submit it to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This AMR relates to the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. It has two elements, assessment of the implementation of the Local Development Scheme and assessment of Local Plan policies. There is also reference to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) preferred option in terms of monitoring housing provision. The full AMR is attached as an appendix.

Some of the targets and indicators are difficult to monitor and so there are some gaps in the information. Some fall outside the planning process, such as domestic renewable energy installations and bus priority measures. The LDF will need to consider appropriate targets and indicators which are measurable.

This is the Council's last Annual Monitoring Report in this particular format. The government's recent Localism Act removes the requirement for local planning authorities to produce an annual monitoring report for Government, while retaining the overall duty to monitor. Authorities can now choose which targets and indicators to include in the report as long as they are in line with the relevant UK and EU legislation. Their primary purpose is to share the performance and achievements of

the planning service with the local community. As a Council, we will need to decide what indicators to use and the frequency of publication.

1. Assessment of Implementation of the Local Development Scheme

The AMR has to assess the implementation of the Local Development Scheme (LDS), the three year timetable that sets out which Local Development Framework (LDF) documents will be prepared and when. This AMR relates to the 5th LDS that was submitted to the GOWM in July 2009.

Key findings

- A fifth LDS had to adjust the timetable for production of the first two development plan documents (DPDs). The commencement dates of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPDs have been pushed back. This reflects staffing issues and the need to collect up to date and robust evidence, which is resource intensive. There will be a need to revise the LDS in advance of publication of the Core Strategy in early 2012.
- Following the results of the Preferred Option consultation undertaken in late 2009, the Council re-drafted its housing policies and subjected them to a 6 week consultation period in February-March 2011. The re-drafted policies reflected an important piece of evidence on affordable housing viability which enabled the setting of realistic targets for affordable housing. Advice obtained from Gypsy and Traveller representatives facilitated a more responsive policy to be drafted.

2. Assessment of Local Plan Policies

The second purpose of the AMR is to assess the extent to which policies in the Local Development Framework Documents are being achieved. Production of the Local Development Framework is underway and draft policies have been produced but the Core Strategy has not yet been adopted. The Local Plan 2001-2011 was adopted in 2006 and under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the policies remained in place until July 2009. The Council applied to the Secretary of State to 'save' a number of policies beyond this date. The Secretary of State saved 25 of the 79 policies. This AMR therefore assesses the extent to which the saved Local Plan policies are meeting the nine Local Plan Objectives.

Key findings

- The overall strategic aims of the Local Plan are being met.
- There is a limited portfolio of available employment sites although there is sufficient available land to meet the 5 year requirement in the RSS Phase 2 Revision Preferred Option.
- There have been no employment completions in the monitoring period, although sites under construction are on previously developed land.
- The residential brownfield target was met and indeed exceeded with 100% of new dwellings being built on previously developed land.
- Only two applications for renewable energy installations were received, although many of the small domestic scale ones are permitted development and do not

need planning permission. This highlights the difficulty in monitoring this indicator.

- Visitor numbers to the Castle have increased on the previous year. Figures for the Assembly Rooms suggest a fall in customers.
- 81% of the primary shopping frontages are in A1 use, compared with the target of 75%.
- Vacancy levels in the town centre are 6%, which is well below the national average of 17.4%. However, this figure has now (December 2011) increased to 8%.
- There has been no development for town centre uses, such as new retail, leisure or offices within the defined town centre boundary. Retail development has taken place outside the town centre.
- The housing trajectory for 2006-2026 shows that the targets in the RSS Phase 2 Revision can be met. However this is reliant on Anker Valley site receiving planning permission.
- Net housing completions were relatively low at 137, which is a reduction of about 11% on the previous year. 100% of completions were on previously developed land. This is likely to drop considerably if the Anker Valley comes forward.
- There were no additional Gypsy and Traveller sites completed in the monitoring year.
- 70 affordable units were completed in 2010/2011, which equates to 53% of all completions. This represents a considerable improvement on the previous year and is above the current 30% target, however we expect next year's number to be considerably lower.

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

APPENDICES

The 2010-2011 Annual Monitoring Report