

## **FURTHER ISSUES AND OPTIONS 2024 ENGAGEMENT PAPER FOR THE LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

- 5.2 The Panel discussed the Further Issues and Options 2024 engagement paper for the Local Plan Update at its meeting on 4th September 2024.
- 5.3 In response to an enquiry from Councillor Wells, the Panel were assured that the development of the new Local Plan was a long process and that resourcing of this had been noted within the Council's MTFS and a Local Plan reserve in addition to this. The Panel were further assured that there were sufficient resources to develop the Plan as it currently stood but that this would be carefully monitored to ensure smooth process in the event of any changes occur to plan-making nationally, or in response to local ambitions. It was noted that the Planning team were specialists in Planning and Plan making and that they were able to call on consultants for specialist evidence gathering as appropriate.
- 5.4 Following further questions from Councillor Wells, Howell and Martin, the Panel heard that a robust Communications Plan was being developed with the Council's Communications Team which would include the let's talk Huntingdonshire website along with information being available in local libraries across the district, including the mobile library, banners in car parks, parks and on refuse vehicles along with exhibitions in towns and villages across the district. The Panel heard that there would also be further sessions for Town and Parish Councils. Members were also advised that where they had additional suggestions or were aware of gaps in communication it would be appreciated if that could be communicated to the team as soon as possible to assist in the development of the Communications Plan.
- 5.5 Members were assured that the Executive Summary was designed to signpost the reader to the sections which they were interested in or that were relevant to them.
- 5.6 In response to a question from Councillor Gardener about the dates for the local exhibitions, the Panel were assured that the dates and locations of these would be communicated out to Members once they were available. Following a further question from Councillor Howell, the Panel heard that exhibitions within local venues would be held between 2pm and 8pm to be as accessible as possible for residents and that the exhibition information would also be available online. Further to an additional question from Councillor Cawley, the Panel were assured that a Member's briefing note with key points would be communicated as part of the Town and Parish briefings including a communications pack with posters and leaflets to those attending the briefing to allow for Councillors to communicate with their local parishes and residents.
- 5.7 Following a question from Councillor Terry with regard to planning applications, the Panel were assured that as the Local Planning Authority a decision on applications did need to be made and that comments from residents and businesses were taken into account as part of this decision making process. They were also assured that the structure of the Further Issues and Options consultation paper includes in each chapter a section on 'what you said' this shows what people said at the last consultation and these comments follow through to the development of the options presented in the paper. The Panel also heard that National guidance stated that local Council's are

required to have a Local Plan and the current work was intended to refresh the existing plan to ensure that it was relevant to the needs of residents and the district as a whole.

- 5.8 In response to a question from Councillor Jennings relating to the absence of an option with an alternative choice under Section 10, which was available in every other section, the Panel heard that the team would investigate this and the response would be communicated back to the Panel at a later date.
- 5.9 Councillor Martin observed that Section 5 appeared to focus on generating new business in the district rather than growing the employment opportunities already available in the district. The Panel heard that the team were working closely with the Economic Development Team to develop complementary evidence bases that not only will inform the Economic Growth Strategy but also feed into the production of an economic evidence base and that as part of this surveys will be undertaken with local businesses. The team has also attended and will be attending business events to spread the word.
- 5.10 The Panel were assured following a question from Councillor Howell that the Internal Drainage Boards and Middle Level Commissioners had been consulted to date and that this communication was ongoing.
- 5.11 In response to a question from Councillor Gardener over the clarity of the wording on pages 117 and 118, the Panel heard that the team would investigate this and the response would be communicated back to the Panel at a later date.
- 5.12 Following a question from Councillor Cawley who observed that Options A and B within the Transport and Connectivity section were very similar, the Panel heard that the team would investigate this and the response would be communicated back to the Panel at a later date.
- 5.13 Following the discussion, the Panel were informed that their comments would be added to the Cabinet report in order for an informed decision to be made on the report recommendations.