

Report to Duty to Cooperate Member Forum
13th October 2016

Report of Norfolk Strategic Framework Project Manager

Subject Norfolk Strategic Framework

Purpose

To update members on progress with the Norfolk Strategic Framework since April. It includes progress on each of the task and finish groups, estimated timescales, group membership and any likely future budgetary implications.

Recommendation

To note the contents of the report and the extension of the project to the Summer of 2017 including the extension of the project staff.

Financial implications

No financial implications and no additional budget required.

Contact officers

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Further Information

None.

Report

Purpose

1. The purpose of the Norfolk Strategic Framework Project is to produce a non-statutory framework with, and for the use of planning authorities across Norfolk. The framework encourages joint working, which ensures the Duty to Cooperate is discharged. It will recognise strategic planning issues which cross district boundaries, and ultimately aid in the creation of individual local plans. The framework will draw on existing information held by authorities around housing, economic growth and infrastructure, and then seek to fill in any areas where existing information falls short by consulting with other key public bodies, private sector providers, and commissioning studies where necessary.

Introduction

2. The Norfolk Strategic Framework (NSF) project has continued to progress well. All task and finish groups are meeting on a regular basis. Whilst much of the project's work remains on schedule, there is work which requires completion by each authority separately. The production of HELAAs based on the agreed methodology is now underway but most authorities expect this process to take at least the rest of this year. Authorities having confidence that they can meet their own housing need is an important aspect of the NSF and the project steering group, supported by the wider planning officers group, have now suggested that it would be sensible to delay the production of the first draft of the NSF until early next year to allow time for these to be produced. The actual authoring of the report is required by group chairs and this would also benefit from a delay in the drafting due to time constraints caused by priorities like devolution. Even with this extension each authority will be required to continue to commit time to tasks and make significant progress in the coming months to ensure the project remains on track.
3. The key task for the project since the last report was to produce the outline NSF document and this has been achieved. The headlines from the outline document have been sent to the member forum with this report for review and will be updated with any feedback received.
4. The Delivery group put out to tender 3 reports around land value, mortgage costs and build costs; these only received one return and the group will need to decide if a different approach to the work is now required. It has been concluded that an Electricity study will not be required and contact has been made with UK power Networks to obtain the information needed for the report.

Steering

5. The drafting of the outline Norfolk Strategic Framework document has been completed and the headlines from this have been sent to the member forum for review. Once the review is complete the report writing can get underway.
6. The Steering group has proposed an extension of the project to allow additional time for drafting of the task and finish group reports, and the writing of the NSF document due to other priorities.
7. The project assistant left in July and a new assistant is being recruited, it has been deemed that the assistant role does not need to be full time going forward so it has been recruited on a 0.5 fte basis.
8. The spreadsheet created to look at further opportunities for commissioning work jointly has been finalised and distributed to all authorities for use in the commissioning of studies going forward.

Housing

9. The public consultation of the HELAA (Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) methodology has been completed. All authorities are now required to complete HELAAs based on the Methodology (Breckland are reviewing their recently produced SHLAA to understand what work is required). However most authorities are not expecting these to be completed until the end of the year.
10. The housing group are now looking at the work required around specific housing types and there are proposals to complete Gypsy and Traveller, and Elderly Housing Studies jointly with some authorities.

Infrastructure

11. Evidence continues to be gathered for the different infrastructure areas of roads, rail, public transport, green infrastructure, flood defence, water disposal, electricity network, education, telecommunications, and health. Work in most areas has been progressing well and the group has been working with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Anglian Water to ensure the evidence is robust using subgroups to focus on specific areas. However it has been identified that in the area of green infrastructure, limited evidence will be completed within the timescales and the full Green Infrastructure Network mapping will need to be incorporated into the NSF later in 2017.
12. All evidence gathered will help identify any constraints to land use in these areas, assisting the production of the HELAAs, and highlighting potential issues for growth.

Economic

13. The Economic group will be using the East of England Forecast Model (EEFM) as the main basis for evidence of the economic land needs for Norfolk. The latest run of the EEFM was published in mid-August and the Economic group are now in the process of reviewing the output. The collation of Tier 1 employment sites across Norfolk has been completed. This information, along with any local interventions planned, will provide the final information used for both the HELAAs and within the NSF document.
14. A document is being produced to highlight Strategic Economic Planning Matters that cross authority boundaries. The group has started to pull together information on the issues, and ways to address these for each district. This can then be used to highlight the issues and interventions required for the NSF document. The Group is continuing to work with the New Anglia LEP to ensure any evidence is aligned to their work, and to highlight where there are opportunities for joint-working.

Delivery

15. The delivery group has created a site progression database of sites that have been allocated and their progression. This was reviewed at a workshop and the key findings have been recorded in a report, information from this report will be included in the NSF.
16. The delivery group external work is being reviewed because of the poor response to tenders that have been submitted.

Conclusions

Timescales

17. The proposed high level timetable has been included at the end of this report. For the reasons highlighted earlier in the report it is being recommended to the Member Forum that we now look to complete the drafting of the report early next year. The DtC forum will then be asked to recommend adoption of the framework in the summer of 2017.
18. Under the new timetable, timescales remain tight particularly around the production of HELAAs by all authorities. Therefore each authority will be required to commit to tasks and make significant progress in the coming months to ensure the project remains on track. There will need to be a commitment from the chairs of the task and finish groups to support the production of the NSF document.

Budget

19. The project can be extended without the need for additional budget. This is because there have been some savings in staffing costs because the assistant role is now being made part time. There has also been less external study work required than was budgeted for.
20. Delivery Group external work has £30,000 allocated and £20,000 is allocated for the Green Infrastructure work. Final figures for this work will become clearer once the tender process for the delivery work is complete. There is likely to be some additional cost around the consultation of the final document and some Website costs.

Norfolk Strategic Framework Project- Timeline

Key : ■ Possible External Work ■ Time Critical tasks ■ High Level Tasks

Version : Revised Delivery – 9th Sept 16

