

West Northamptonshire Joint Local Development Document/ Local Transport Plan Steering Group	
Meeting Date	17 October 2006
Title	Programme Director's Progress Report

1. Recommendations

- a) That the proposals for the development of the Joint Local Development Document/ Local Transport Plan Steering Group as contained in the attached Revised Memorandum of Understanding be AGREED.
- b) That the progress on the recruitment of the Joint Planning Team Manager, the Joint Planning Team office location, the Resources Plan and Joint Planning Team secondments and the Communications Plans be NOTED.

2. Purpose of Report

To summarise progress, activity and key issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Report Background

a) Joint Planning Team Manager

The recruitment of an experienced Project Manager to lead the Joint Planning Team was agreed at the last Steering Group. A job description and person specification (attached as Appendix 1) have been prepared using the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Manager as a benchmark. The job has been submitted to Northampton Borough Council's Human Resources department for urgent job evaluation. Once the job evaluation has been completed it is proposed to place an external advertisement in the "Planning" journal and the Guardian newspaper. It is expected that this advertisement can be placed in early November. A recruitment panel drawn from this Steering Group and the Programme Board will then shortlist and interview in late November. It is anticipated that the appointment will then commence in January or February next year.

b) Joint Planning Team Office Location

At the last Steering Group South Northamptonshire Council offered to host the Joint Planning Team at its Towcester Mill offices in Towcester. The suitability of these offices is currently being investigated in terms of their facilities and accessibility. Subject to the offices being satisfactory it is anticipated that the Joint Planning Team could move into them as soon as the secondments to the Team have been agreed.

c) Resource Plan and Joint Planning Team Secondments

Daventry District Council is developing a draft Resource Plan based on the latest version of the Joint Local Development Scheme (LDS). It will not be possible to complete this work and identify Joint Planning Team secondments until the LDS has been agreed in detail identifying key milestones.

d) Communications Plans

Northampton Borough Council's Communications team is completing a draft Communications Plan (first draft attached as Appendix 2) for discussion with each Council's Public Relations/ Communications team. At this stage a steer is requested on the following issues:

- i) whether a new identity / brand is favoured for the Joint Planning Team, or the existing councils' identities are retained alongside a name; and
- ii) the budget that will be available for communications.

e) Governance

Review of Steering Group Governance Arrangements

In light of revised agreement over the nature of joint working, particularly the preparation of a Joint Core Strategy, the current Joint West Northamptonshire LDD/ LTP Steering Group arrangements require strengthening further. This will facilitate more effective joint working arrangements and swifter agreement and decision making by the Joint Steering Group and each Council.

It is proposed that modifications to the existing Memorandum of Understanding (last approved in March 2006) are made as follows:

- a) The Steering Group name is changed to "Forum" to indicate its role to debate and develop common planning policy;
- b) Its role as the main means of debating and provisionally agreeing common planning policy is emphasised;

- c) Members and officers are expected to reach provisional agreement over matters within the Forum and then champion the agreed policy within each Council; and
- d) All authorities review which decisions require the approval of each separate Council to enable Portfolio Holders and thereby the Forum itself to exercise more ability to agree matters without ratification by each Council.

A revised version of the Memorandum is attached as Appendix 3 with tracked changes to show the changes that are proposed.