

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 11 AUGUST 2011
title: CORE STRATEGY – SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: COLIN HIRST – HEAD OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider commissioning additional work as part of the approach to Sustainability Appraisal for the Core Strategy.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – The matters dealt with in this report relate to the production of the Council's Local Development Framework, and the ambition of helping to protect and enhance the local environment.
- Community Objectives – The matters covered in this report will contribute to the objectives of creating a sustainable local economy and ensuring that there is a suitable supply of sites for employment and housing.
- Corporate Priorities – This paper supports the plan-making process and will assist the performance of the Council as a well-managed authority.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Members will recall a previous report considered by this Committee at its meeting on the 16 June 2011. At that meeting it was resolved to commission specialist consultancy to support the delivery of the Sustainability Appraisal for the Core Strategy. As agreed Hyder Consulting have been appointed and have commenced work on the appraisal.

2.2 The cost of the work is contained within existing budgets currently derived from Planning Delivery Grant and money set aside in reserves for the LDF. Given the importance of the work to the delivery of the Core Strategy and that the document has a relationship with securing economic growth and regeneration, it is also proposed to via some money between budgets to support the delivery of the Core Strategy. As Members are aware, additional option scenarios have been published and there is therefore an additional element of testing required. Consequently a contingency was allowed to accommodate this additional work within the budget and an initial budget provision of £15,000 was identified.

3 PROPOSED EXTENSION TO PROJECT

3.1 In commissioning the work a programme has been established to co-ordinate the appraisal timetable with that of the Core Strategy. However an additional stage has been discussed with the consultants that would require an extension to the budget provision which, combined with the potential for additional work on the "Appropriate Assessment" element if required, would lead to further expenditure of around £3,000.

For reference the consultation element is costed at £1280 and the Appropriate Assessment at £2795.

- 3.2 Appropriate Assessment is a separate statutory assessment that is required by the regulations if there are impacts identified in the sustainability appraisal on sensitive sites such as sites of Special Scientific Interest or Special Interest, Special Protection Areas (we have SPA's within the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). We will only be able to determine the extent of this requirement once the initial assessment due.
- 3.3 The additional element now proposed is to hold a specific consultation event when the findings of the SA and the implications for the Core Strategy can be discussed in an open day format. In addition on the same day a separate briefing and meeting for Members to discuss the appraisal would be held. This would incur an additional cost of just under £1,300. Given the importance of the process and views expressed by Members regarding the need to promote public engagement I consider this additional step will bring benefits to the process and would provide a robust approach that will assist in satisfying the Inspector's tests of soundness at Public Examination. The additional cost can be identified within existing budgets, however it is an additional cost to be found or addressed through future savings in later stages of the Core Strategy process.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources –Including the additional consultation will exceed the identified budget of £15000 by £100. However if the Appropriate Assessment work is required this will add a further cost of £2800. In effect the additional contingency to allow for the testing of the alternative options has been used.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – Sustainability Appraisal is a statutory requirement of the LDF process.
- Political – Delivery of the Core Strategy is a priority for the Council.
- Reputation – The Sustainability Appraisal will inform the Council's decision-making and demonstrate how the Council can deliver sustainable development.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Agree to extend the project commission to include the additional consultation element and note the overall budget implications.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1 SA Project file
- 2 SA Regulations – various.

For further information please ask for Colin Hirst, extension 4503.