

## **Breckland Council**

### **Report of Paul Claussen, Executive Member for the Housing and Economic Portfolio to the Cabinet – 10<sup>th</sup> June 2008**

#### **THETFORD AREA ACTION PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS CONSULTATION**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To consider and approve the Thetford Area Action Plan Issues and Options consultation document for consultation:.

##### **2. Recommendations**

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Approve the attached Thetford Area Action Plan Issues and Options consultation document, subject to final editing by the Growth Point Team.
- 2.2 Approve the preparation of a 'slimmed-down' consultation leaflet.
- 2.3 Approve the publication of the above for a six week consultation period, probably commencing in week beginning June 23<sup>rd</sup> and ending first week of August.

**Note:** In preparing this report, due regard has been had to equality of opportunity, human rights, prevention of crime and disorder, environmental and risk management considerations as appropriate. Relevant officers have been consulted in relation to any legal, financial or human resources implications and comments received are reflected in the report.

##### **3. Information, Issues and Options**

###### **3.1 Background**

- 3.1.1 A key objective of Moving Thetford Forward is to prepare a statutory based 'Thetford Area Action Plan' (TAAP), which will form one of the Development Plan Documents for Breckland District.

- 3.1.2 There are six key stages in preparing a TAAP:

- 'Issues and Options' consultation stage
- 'Preferred Options' consultation stage
- 'Submission' consultation stage
- Public Examination of comments, conducted by Independent Inspector.
- Inspector's Binding Report received
- TAAP adopted and published

- 3.1.3 We are at the first of these stages, and attached is the Issues and Options consultation document for your consideration and approval. This stage is about setting out the key issues, and asking questions about options for Thetford.

###### **3.2 Issues**

- 3.2.1 The document has been prepared on a theme basis, covering topics appropriate for

an AAP. We have attempted to set easy to understand questions, with multiple choice answers so as to enable as wider engagement as possible. For those who wish to go in to detail or set out detailed responses, there are opportunities for them to do so.

3.2.2 To make it even easier for these respondents, we will prepare a separate consultation paper which is about 8 pages long and just has the questions and the most basic of background information.

3.2.3 For today's meeting, the following issues are in particular drawn to Members attention so as to stimulate debate:

- Overall, does the document appear engaging?
- Is there a topic missing which you would have expected to have been included?
- Is there anything which you didn't expect to be in the document, which perhaps might best not be included?
- Do each of the questions being asked make sense?
- Should we add more, or take away, any questions?

Members should note that the nature of Issues and Options stage is that decisions or a preferred course of action is not being made; rather, it is seeking the public's views on options so as to inform the later stages of plan preparation.

3.2.4 It should be noted that whilst the Growth Point Team has prepared most of the document, a considerable number of people have contributed to the document you have today. This includes a full debate and comments from the MTF Officer Group on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 and the Moving Thetford Forward Board on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2008. The document has also been passed to BDC Communications Team, in particular to ensure the wording of the questions make sense (their response is awaited at the time of writing)

### 3.3 Options

3.3.1 Option 1: Approve the document and the preparation of a separate consultation leaflet, subject to final adjustments by the Growth Point Team, and issue for consultation in late June for six weeks.

3.3.2 Option 2: As Option 1, but with the addition / deletion of sections or amendments to the text or questions.

3.3.3 Option 3: Not approve the document, and ask for a revised version to be brought back to a future MTF Board meeting in due course.

### 3.4 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

3.4.1 Option 1 or 2 is recommended, as it is important that we progress the Thetford Area Action Plan without delay. We feel it is soundly produced, meeting all necessary regulations and planning advice. Any delay in publication could result in a lack of confidence in the process.

## 4. Risk and Financial Implications

### 4.1 Risk

4.1.1 Failure to publish the document by the end of June will mean we will have missed our plan timetable, with the consequent risk of a loss of confidence in our ability to

produce the Thetford Area Action Plan. However, publishing a poor, confusing or non-engaging document has its own risks attached, so Board Members must be comfortable that the document is suitable.

## 4.2 Financial

4.2.1 There is a cost associated with publishing consultation documents. However, Breckland Council has budgets to cover 'standard' items through its core LDF budget, so unless Members are seeking anything out of the ordinary in terms of consultation launch then there should be no financial impact on MTF. Clearly, the consideration of responses will also be a staff resource draw. Until we know the scale of responses it will be unknown whether we need to bring in any temporary staff to cover analysis and inputting of responses on to databases.

## 5. Other Implications

5.1.1 The preparation of any development plan document has to take into account an ever increasing vast amount of legislation and policy covering a wide spectrum of fields and professions. Planning is increasingly being seen as a 'one-stop shop' fix of a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues. The Growth Point Team, with the support of the MTF Officer Group, has endeavoured to ensure all relevant such legislation and policy has been taken into account.

Background Papers: None Specifically

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Appendices attached to this report:

- Thetford Area Action Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document attached.