

**ABERDEEN CITY & SHIRE
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY**

Date: 25 March 2011

Title: Development Plan Scheme 2011/12

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) for a replacement development plan scheme.

2 Background

2.1 Under s20B of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, the SDPA are required to prepare a development plan scheme at least annually. The development plan scheme needs to set out the programme for preparing and reviewing the strategic development plan and what is likely to be involved at each stage.

2.2 The current development plan scheme was agreed by the SDPA on 26 March 2010. A new development plan scheme must therefore be published and submitted to Scottish Ministers by 31 March 2011.

3 Review of 2010/11

3.1 Scottish Government policy is that the development plan scheme should focus on actions that have to be taken to ensure that an up to date development plan is in place as swiftly as possible. The current structure plan was only approved in August 2009 so the strategic element of the development plan is already up-to-date. The main driver for preparing a strategic development plan is the need to submit a proposed plan to Scottish Ministers by August 2013 (four years after the approval of the structure plan).

3.2 The focus of the current development plan scheme for 2010/11 was on the preparation of various studies and assessments which need to be published alongside the main issues report (MIR), as well as preparatory work for the MIR itself. Also covered was the need to speak to stakeholders (including Key Agencies) about the plan, as well as issues and options that may be available.

3.3 Many of these studies and assessments are at an advanced stage. A housing need and demand assessment has been submitted to the Scottish Government for appraisal and a monitoring statement is almost complete. A strategic environmental assessment scoping report has been prepared, the views of the consultation authorities sought and amendments to the methodology agreed.

3.4 A meeting of key stakeholders and agencies took place in late 2010 to discuss the review of the structure plan and the likely nature of change required for the preparation of the strategic development plan (SDP).

3.5 Due to the timing of consultation on the Aberdeen City local development plan in particular, it was decided to delay communication with Community Councils until 2011 to avoid potential confusion between engagement on the two plans. This will now be done over the next few months.

4 Good Practice

4.1 The Scottish Government provided general best practice feedback in relation to previous rounds of development plan schemes. The development plan schemes of all four SDPAs were commended as good – being short, simple, well laid out and clear. The Scottish Government has identified that development plan schemes should:

- be short, simple and clearly laid out;
- provide a brief context;
- present timetables only showing key stages;
- use a table format to combine key information;
- use diagrams and images; and
- print off well from the web.

4.2 The current development plan scheme meets the requirements of legislation and the above criteria, along with having a ‘Crystal Mark’ from the Plain English Campaign.

5 Areas for Amendment

5.1 The timetable for the strategic development plan was set out in the first statutory development plan scheme in March 2009 and has not changed substantially since. However, it is proposed to make three amendments this year, the main one being a re-profiling of the timetable for the SDP.

5.2 The current timetable was prepared on the basis of local government elections taking place in May 2011. However, in July 2009 the Scottish Local Government (Elections) Act came into force. This changed the election timetable to avoid Scottish Parliament and local government elections taking place on the same day. With local government elections moving to May 2012, this presents a significant challenge and requires a re-profiling of the timetable to take place.

5.3 The current timetable would have seen the main issues report published in May 2011 and a proposed plan in April 2012. There are significant risks in seeking the agreement of both councils to this long-term strategy a matter of days before an election and in any event, the window of opportunity is now very small due to local development plan adoption timetables.

5.4 The timetable cannot be brought forward due to the timetable for the adoption of the two local development plans. As a consequence, the only option is to move the timetable back to avoid the election period.

- 5.5 Given that the SDPA is likely to experience a change of membership at that time, as well as new members being elected to the two councils, it is important that the significant decision to publish a proposed SDP is not sought with undue haste. As a consequence, it is proposed to organise a councillor induction session for June 2012 and seek approval from the SDPA and both councils in September / October 2012. This would be followed by a period for representations in late 2012 and submission to Scottish Ministers prior to August 2013.
- 5.6 As a consequence of the above, it is also proposed to move the agreement of the main issues report and subsequent consultation back to avoid an extended period between the publication of the MIR and the proposed SDP. Keeping this period short is highlighted as important in Circular 1/2009 to facilitate active engagement from stakeholders and the public as well as reduce the opportunity for new issues to emerge. A main issues report would be agreed in September 2011 rather than May, with consultation up to the end of the year.
- 5.7 The legislation would suggest that a proposed strategic development should be submitted to the Scottish Ministers by August 2013 (given the approval of the structure plan in August 2009). The revised timetable set out in the development plan scheme will still enable this target to be met, even though it doesn't have statutory force for the preparation of the area's first strategic development plan.
- 5.8 A second change proposed is to add a "Risk Assessment of the Current Structure Plan" to the list of supporting documents to be prepared alongside the MIR. This recommendation reflects the decision of Aberdeen City Council at the time of the approval of their proposed local development plan.
- 5.9 A third change is to update the text to reflect progress with the two local development plans and a number of other minor changes.
- 5.10 Appendix 1 contains the proposed 'Development Plan Scheme 2011/12' setting out a structure and dates for the preparation of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan. The revised development plan scheme will continue to have a 'Crystal Mark' from the Plain English Campaign.

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 The development plan scheme, once agreed, will be submitted to Scottish Ministers by 31 March 2011.
- 6.2 In line with a commitment to environmental responsibility and resource efficiency, the preferred means of distribution of the development plan scheme will be through the SDPA website. However, there will be a limited circulation of hard copies as follows:
- Scottish Ministers (2 copies);
 - All public libraries in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire;
 - All Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councillors;
 - All Key Agencies (2 copies each);

- All Community Councils in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire; and
- On request from the Strategic Development Plan Team.

However, additional copies will be printed this year to facilitate engagement on the MIR.

6.3 This meets the statutory requirements for publication set out in s20B of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

6.4 A new development plan scheme needs to be prepared at least annually, with the next scheme required by 31 March 2012.

7 Financial Implications

7.1 The costs associated with the publication and distribution of the development plan scheme are likely to be around £800. This will be met from the SDPA's existing resources.

8 Recommendations

8.1 It is recommended that the SDPA:

- agree to amend the SDP timetable in light of the timetable for local government elections and local development plan adoption;
- agree the content of the Development Plan Scheme 2011/12 (Appendix 1) and its submission to Scottish Ministers by 31 March 2010; and
- agree the publication and circulation of the development plan scheme as set out in paragraph 6.2 above.

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