

Report of	Record of	Date
Director of Planning and Development (Introduced by Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform))	Executive Member Decision	4 April 2022

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	No
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Appointment of Consultants to prepare an Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) for Central Lancashire and provide additional viability support through development of a Topic Paper and Policies for the Local Plan

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to appoint Aspinall Verdi (with sub-contractors Fore for the IDP) to prepare an Infrastructure Development Plan (IDP) for the Central Lancashire Local Plan, along with additional policy support in the preparation of a topic paper and policy development advice to inform the development of the preferred Options consultation for the new Local Plan.
2. To justify the approach of a direct award to Aspinall Verdi for this work.

Recommendations

3. To approve appointment of Aspinall Verdi by direct award to undertake this work at a cost of £13,500 (plus VAT), to be split 3 ways across the three Councils

Reasons for recommendations

4. This work is needed to enable the Local Plan work to progress to Preferred Options.

Other options considered and rejected

5. To continue without the preparation of an IDP or specialist support in policy development on infrastructure and viability. This was rejected as the IDP is a fundamental part of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) process and is required to understand what infrastructure needs are required to be funded via developments coming forward through the Local Plan.
6. Without such a document in place, we would not be able to secure funding for key infrastructure needs over the plan period.

Executive summary

7. This report details the proposal to appoint Aspinall Verdi to prepare an IDP the Central Lancashire Local Plan. Aspinall Verdi are proposing to work with consultants Fore in delivery of the IDP via a sub-consultancy agreement. Fore and Aspinall Verdi have a history of working together on such areas of planning for Local Authorities and Fore have demonstrated a good track record in the preparation of an IDP for Local Councils.
8. Fore also demonstrated a good knowledge of the Infrastructure work used to inform the current Local Plans and the process required to review and update them.
9. In addition, the report details the work Aspinall Verdi will be undertaking to support the delivery of the Preferred Option consultation for the Local Plan to enable that work to progress to preferred Options stage for consultation this year through the development of a Topic Paper.

Corporate priorities

10. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Involving residents in improving their local area and equality of access for all	A strong local economy
Clean, safe and healthy communities	An ambitious council that does more to meet the needs of residents and the local area

Background to the report

11. Aspinall Verdi were appointed in 2021 to support the Local Plan through the provision of consultancy support in undertaking a viability assessment of the Local Plan and the CIL review.
12. Since then a further need has been highlighted for support in the delivery of an IDP associated with this work, and Aspinall Verdi were asked to assist with this.
13. In addition, following approval by cabinet to produce additional consultancy support to progress delivery of the Preferred Options, Aspinall Verdi were identified as being a consultant who could assist in this matter and have submitted costs for support in the preparation of a topic paper.

Appointment of Aspinall Verdi (Including sub-contracting with Fore) for the preparation of the IDP

14. Aspinall Verdi are currently providing support to the Local Plan in relation to viability assessment and CIL. Linked to the work is the need for a clear understanding of the infrastructure needs to ensure all developments in the plan can be delivered sustainably.
15. The current version of the Central Lancashire Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) was produced in 2012 and was accompanied by a series of infrastructure schedules – one for each District identifying projects specific to each local authority area and one remaining pan-Central Lancashire schedule listing cross-boundary projects. The schedules formed part of the evidence base for the Central Lancashire Core Strategy and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule agreed at that time.

16. Since this work was done some time ago, and linked to infrastructure needs of the current plan, not the emerging plan, there is a need to review and update this information, as well as preparing a single IDP for the Central Lancashire.
17. Individual infrastructure schedules will still be prepared for the three Councils, but the evidence will be collated to ensure we meet the requirements of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and to enable us to identify which schemes could be put forward for potential external funding where available.
18. As this work is directly linked to the Viability and CIL review, Aspinall Verdi have been asked to assist in this work rather than going out to open tender. This reduces the work required in procuring this support, but also adds value in utilising consultants who are already supporting in this area of plan making offering best value to the councils.
19. Aspinall Verdi recommended partnering with Consultants Fore in delivery of the IDP. Fore have a good track record in the preparation of such documents and in preparing IDP's for Joint Local Plans having been involved in the delivery of the viability work for the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.
20. The approach put forward by Fore to deliver this work reflects the requirements of NPPF and seeks the involvement of key infrastructure providers in understanding their likely needs over the new plan period as a direct result on new planned growth.
21. Having an established working relationship between the consultants preparing the IDP and undertaking the viability assessment of the plan will ensure they are both kept abreast of the requirements for infrastructure needs and will ensure swift progression of these documents due to the trust between each in the work being completed.

Appointment of Aspinall Verdi for preparation of a Topic Paper

22. Cabinet agreed on the 24th February to an approach of contracting existing consultants to support the Local Plan team in preparing the Local plan. This support is targeted to those consultants with specialist knowledge on specific topics who are already preparing key areas of evidence for the Local Plan. This includes the topic viability and infrastructure planning. Aspinall Verdi are therefore also being proposed for use in providing additional support in preparing a topic paper on this area and in providing technical review of the existing evidence and policies.
23. Again, this approach offers best value to the council in that the consultant responsible for this area of plan making will be able to utilise this knowledge in supporting us and preparing the Topic paper. Conversely, involving a further additional consultant at this time would require additional costs for them to review and digest the documents prepared by Aspinall Verdi before they could begin to prepare a topic paper, adding both cost and time to the process

Costs

24. The total cost of the work is £13,500 plus VAT for all elements and will be shared across the 3 councils. This is broken down as £2,500 for the topic paper and £11,000 for the IDP.

Climate change and air quality

25. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

26. This report will have no impact on Equality and diversity

Risk

27. The IDP is required to enable developers to understand fully the infrastructure requirements going forward.
28. Not contracting this work now could lead to an evidence gap in the Local Plan which could lead to a funding shortfall for infrastructure needs for the new Local Plan
29. As such it is considered necessary this is completed at this stage.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

30. The cost of £4,500 can be covered by the existing local plan budgets.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

31. This is a low value procurement and spend and would not usually require an executive decision, however, as this is contract is shared between 3 council's it is appropriate to do a decision for transparency.

Background documents

There are no background papers to this report

Appendices

There are no appendices

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Following careful consideration and assessment of the contents of this report, I approve the recommendation(s) contained in Paragraph 3 of the report in accordance with my delegated power to make executive decisions.



Councillor Alistair Bradley
Executive Member for Economic Development and Public Service Reform Dated 4/4/22

This decision will come into force and may be implemented five working days after its publication date, subject to being called in in accordance with the Council's Constitution.