

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	14 October 2004
Subject:	Local Development Frameworks
Responsible Officer:	Executive Director (Urban Living)
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Portfolio Holder:	Planning, Development, Housing and Best Value
Key Decision:	Yes
Status:	Part 1

## **Section 1: Summary**

### **1.1 Decision Required**

Cabinet is asked to approve the appointment of four interim staff and the commencement of land use surveys and business mapping to facilitate the production of a Local Development Framework for Harrow to the timescale set by Government.

### **1.2 Reason for report**

The Local Development Framework, which will replace the Urban Development Plan in March 2007, requires extensive research, needs analysis and community involvement prior to production of a holistic spatial strategy with numerous linked Local Development Documents. The total timeframe for this work is 2 years.

The production of the last UDP took approximately 7 years and was a more straightforward office-based set of processes than the requirements for the LDF. It will not be possible to meet the Government deadline of March 2007 unless additional dedicated staff are appointed.

Cabinet was advised in July 2004 that the staffing and other requirements for 2004 would be quantified as soon as possible. Advice has been received from the Planning Consultants to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as to the minimum requirements necessary to get the LDF production underway and this report confirms the resources required.

### **1.3 Benefits**

The production of a Local Development Framework for Harrow is a statutory requirement intended to improve strategic planning by local authorities and, consequently, to streamline and ease conflict within the planning process. Customer satisfaction with the planning process should improve and there should be resource savings within Development Control once the LDF is implemented.

### **1.4 Cost of Proposals**

The cost of 4 interim staff, engaged for between 3 and 5 days per week until 31 March 2005 is £90,000. The days worked by each person will be varied as necessary to get the work done and remain within the proposed budget.

The estimated cost of the business mapping and land use survey/ analysis is £120,000. This work will provide the evidence base and information needed for numerous other purposes including the business Portal and economic development and regeneration strategies.

### **1.5 Risks**

- It has not been possible to fill all vacant permanent posts within Planning in recent months and it is proving extremely difficult to obtain even interim staff for the required posts. The timescale set by Government is very demanding and will be hard to achieve. If we are unable to obtain a full staffing complement soon we may fail to deliver on time.
- The Project Plan and Community Involvement Strategy must be approved by Government at the start of the process and the Council's performance will be assessed against these plans. There are inherent tensions in balancing the needs and wishes of the community against the wider needs of Harrow, stakeholders and the demands of the Mayors Spatial Strategy for London. It is essential that sufficient staff with appropriate skills and experience are employed.

### **1.6 Implications if recommendations rejected**

The Local Development Framework could not be produced to the deadline set by Government.

## **Section 2: Report**

### **2.1 Staffing Requirements in 2004**

Four posts are required to enable the LDF project plan to be produced and implemented in the coming months - Project Manager, Community Involvement Co-ordinator, Researcher and Policy Planner. In order to get the work underway it is proposed to appoint Interim staff on a part-time basis, then recruit to the posts full-time at the start of the new financial year. It is intended to tailor the use of Interim staff to maintain costs within a £90,000 ceiling.

The business mapping and land use surveys need to be commissioned as soon as possible. The estimated cost of this work, which takes into account the elements that we can do in-house is £120,000.

### **2.2 Financial Implications**

The total estimated cost is £210,000 in 2004/05. As there is insufficient flexibility within the Urban Living budget, this expenditure will be funded from general reserves. The general fund balance will still exceed the recommended level of £7m.

### **2.3 Legal Implications**

Legal Services will be involved at all stages of the LDF assessment process.

### **2.4 Equalities Impact**

The LDF Community Involvement Strategy will demonstrate how we will involve difficult-to-access groups and will include community capacity building as necessary to enable minority ethnic groups, people with disabilities, etc to engage effectively in the LDF process.

## **Section 3: Background Documents**

### **Previous decision**

Cabinet report of 29 July 2004 'Developing and Resourcing the Local Development Framework in Harrow'