

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD**

**29 June 2021**

**Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Services**

**Part 1- Public**

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken by the Cabinet Member)**

**1 TUNBRIDGE WELLS LOCAL PLAN STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

**This report summarises the Statement of Common Ground between Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling and seeks approval in order that the Statement can be returned to Tunbridge Wells to accompany their Local Plan at submission to the Secretary of State.**

**1.1 Introduction**

1.1.1 The 2019 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires Local Planning Authorities to prepare Statements of Common Ground with neighbouring Authorities to supplement their Duty to Cooperate Compliance Statements.

1.1.2 National Planning Policy Guidance describes Statements of Common Ground as:

“..a written record of the progress made by strategic policy-making authorities during the process of planning for strategic cross-boundary matters. It documents where effective co-operation is and is not happening throughout the plan-making process, and is a way of demonstrating at examination that plans are deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working across local authority boundaries. In the case of local planning authorities, it also forms part of the evidence required to demonstrate that they have complied with the duty to cooperate.”

1.1.3 Members will be aware that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is preparing a Local Plan for submission to the Secretary of State this July and has requested signed Statements of Common Ground with all of their neighbouring Authorities and Kent County Council to form part of their submission documents.

1.1.4 Although the Council’s Regulation 19 consultation response in respect of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan raised a number of concerns relating to the locations of strategic sites in proximity to the Borough, the evidence to support these and mitigation of any impacts, the Statement of Common Ground is a process tool intended to demonstrate that strategic cross boundary issues have been properly

identified and that there is evidence of effective cooperation in support of the Duty to Cooperate.

## **1.2 Statement of Common Ground between Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council**

- 1.2.1 The proposed Statement of Common Ground can be found at **Annex 1** to this report. The Statement relates to the Local Plans produced and being produced by TMBC and TWBC. It covers strategic cross-boundary matters, such as housing need (including unmet need), housing provisions, gypsy and traveller provisions, employment and retail needs, natural environment and infrastructure. It demonstrates commitment by TMBC and TWBC to engage and be active on an on-going basis in relation to Duty to Cooperate matters in the preparation of their respective local plans, and future local plans.
- 1.2.2 Members are invited to consider the content of the Statement and subject to any further changes approve the recommendation that the Statement be signed by the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure and returned to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in due course.

## **1.3 Legal Implications**

- 1.3.1 Local Planning Authorities are required to prepare Statements of Common Ground with neighbouring strategic authorities to demonstrate that they have met the Duty to Cooperate.

## **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **1.5 Risk Assessment**

- 1.5.1 Failure to secure a signed Statement of Common Ground may put at risk the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan when the legal compliance tests are examined by an independent Inspector.

## **1.6 Recommendations**

- 1.6.1 That the content of the report be **NOTED** and that subject to any further amendments that the Statement of Common Ground with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is **APPROVED**.

The Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental services confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

Nil

contact: Ian Bailey  
Planning Policy Manager

Eleanor Hoyle  
Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Services