

Annex 2: TMBC Member, Officer and Parish Council Engagement Plan

A local plan Engagement and Consultation Strategy has been prepared to provide further detail in relation to how we will engage and consult both internally and externally on the local plan as we progress through the various local plan stages. The Strategy sets out that we will engage internally within the Council, including other Council services and with Council Members, as well as with Parish Councils. The Engagement Strategy is a high-level report building on the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement and detail about internal engagement programming is not included within this document. The purpose of this report is to set out the further detail on the programme of engagement for Officers, Members and the Parish Councils.

Member Engagement

The Engagement Strategy sets out that a Local Plan Member's Advisory Group (LPMAG) will be established. The LPMAG will be a confidential informal meeting and all Council Members will be invited to attend. The LPMAG will have no delegated decision-making powers.

The purpose of the LPMAG will be to:

- Discuss local plan issues and opportunities;
- Share local plan evidence base documents prior to publication; and
- Provide informal feedback on draft policies / documentation and help build consensus on local plan direction to assist officers in the production of the local plan.

A programme of meetings is proposed as below. The meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss the local plan on a topic-by-topic basis. Please note that dates will be provided for these meetings in due course. This is partly dependent on when a revised NPPF will be published. Therefore, the below is an early draft proposal at this time and may be subject to change to allow sufficient time to prepare policies based on a revised NPPF and any associated guidance.

LPMAG	Topics
January	Local Plan Vision
	Sustainable Settlements Study
February	Natural and Built Environment
	Climate Change
March	Housing
	Local Economy
April	Infrastructure
	Mop up session for any remaining areas or policies
May (In person)	Site allocations and spatial strategy

Meeting information

- Meetings will generally be held on MS teams to facilitate and maximise attendance. However, in person meetings may be appropriate from time-to-time, particularly for those sessions where the spatial strategy and / or potential sites for development will be discussed. Extraordinary meetings may be required from time-to-time also.
- Meetings will be arranged with adequate notice provided.
- Information will be shared electronically with Members on a confidential basis one week ahead of the meeting. Please note that confidentiality relates to ALL information shared. It is advised for Members to read this information ahead of the meeting to ensure informed discussions.
- Members should consider whether they have any interests to declare and take advice on their action as necessary.
- The LPMAG will be supported by the Planning Policy team and both Senior and planning officers will be in attendance as relevant.
- Meeting minutes will not be taken. This is to facilitate both free and open speech.
- Instead, key actions will be identified, confirmed and agreed throughout the meeting, taken away and considered by officers.
- Feedback on key actions will be provided to political party leaders for information and for further dissemination as relevant. Feedback may include an update to confirm that suggested changes have been made to draft documentation / draft policies, or where updates are not possible, feedback will be provided to explain why.

Parish Council engagement

The Engagement Strategy sets out that engagement with Parish Council's will be through the quarterly Parish Panel meetings. An additional set of meetings are also identified to be held during the next Regulation 18 consultation to provide an opportunity for Parish Council's to ask questions about the consultation and / or the content of the draft local plan or its evidence base to assist in responding to the consultation.

Given that there are 34 Parish Council's and two town wards it is proposed to split the borough up into geographical areas to allow smaller group discussion. The groupings will be considered at a later date.

Regulation 18 consultation Parish Council meeting information

- Meetings will be held on MS teams to facilitate attendance and will be held in the first three weeks of consultation to help facilitate Parish Council consultation response timetabling.
- The meetings will be supported by the Planning Policy team and both Senior and planning officers will be in attendance as relevant.

- Meeting minutes will not be taken.

Officer engagement

The Engagement Strategy notes the importance of cross department liaison to ensure that corporate priorities and challenges experienced in the borough can be addressed where it is relevant to do so in the local plan. The Engagement Strategy states that internal liaison will take place through a Local Plan Officer Working Group(s) (LPOWG).

Purpose of the working group

The purpose of the LPOWG will be to:

- Discuss local plan issues, challenges and opportunities;
- Discuss evidence base requirements / outputs and facilitate cross team working to ensure Council priorities can be considered and addressed through policy, where it is possible and relevant to do so;
- Share experience and provide informal feedback on draft policies / documentation to assist officers in the production of the local plan.

Form of LPOWG

In considering the approach for the LPOWG, we have been mindful of the time that will likely be required by officers to participate and engage in the local plan process. Membership of the LPOWG will require officers to read documentation provided, attend meetings and provide meaningful feedback. The same programme is proposed as that provided for members, however, the programme will work one month ahead to enable officers to feed into the process prior to providing policies / documentation to members. This is set out below:

LPOWG	Topics
January	Natural and Built Environment
	Climate Change
February	Housing
	Local Economy
March	Infrastructure
	Mop up session for any remaining areas or policies

Membership of the LPOWG

Membership of the LPOWG will consist of officer(s) from the below teams, as agreed by the relevant Managers.

- Planning Policy
- Development Management
- Building Control
- Housing
- Environmental Health

- Climate change
- Waste
- Leisure Services
- Economic and regeneration
- Tonbridge Town Centre Manager
- Conservation and Design (External)

Officers should be of sufficient seniority to input into the process including making decisions on proposed policy options that will contribute to Council priorities.

Meeting information

- Meetings will be held either via MS Teams to facilitate attendance or will be held in person / hybrid.
- A LPOWG Teams channel will be created and documentation / draft policies will be shared with LPOWG members. Information will be shared on a confidential basis. Such information will be draft and must not be used in any other Council business.
- Meetings will be arranged with adequate notice provided and meetings will be held ahead of the relevant topic meeting with Members, to ensure that all services have had an opportunity to feed into draft policies and are satisfied with them.
- Information will be provided as soon as this is practically possible and no later than one week ahead of a meeting.
- Comments will be invited on draft policies once these are shared and officers will be encouraged to provide any comments on these 3 working days ahead of the meeting to ensure informed discussions.
- Information provided will be split on a topic-by-topic basis to allow for input and effective time management alongside other Council duties.
- The LPOWG will be supported by the Planning Policy team.
- Meeting minutes will not be taken. Instead, key actions will be identified throughout the meeting, taken away and considered by officers.
- Feedback on key actions will be provided within the shared documentation within Teams. Feedback may include an update to confirm that suggested changes have been made to draft documentation / draft policies, or where updates are not possible, feedback will be provided to explain why.

Development Management

Throughout local plan production it will be important to work closely with the Council's Development Management team. This is because planning officers have direct experience of using existing local plan policies and will be aware of the

effectiveness of these, alongside understanding the issues that the Council faces when considering whether development is or can be made acceptable in planning terms.

Given the tight local plan timetable alongside limits on officer time and overall staff resource, it will not be possible for the planning policy team to engage with all DM officers. Instead, Team Leaders will represent development management on the LPOWG representing their respective teams and sharing information and feedback as relevant.

Local Plan DM Forum (LPDMF)

In addition to the above, it will be helpful in the formulation of planning policy to have a forum to discuss specific planning matters. This may include topics such as the Green Belt, housing land supply, landscape, heritage, design, validation lists for example.

It is envisaged that a separate forum will be set up to facilitate such discussions and for meetings and liaison to occur as the need arises. A separate forum consisting of experienced planning officers will allow the LPOWG to run more efficiently, allowing the LPOWG to focus on specific corporate issues by taking specific and potentially complex planning matters to an alternate forum.

The purpose of the LPDMF will be to:

- Discuss specific planning matters that are mostly relevant to the development management / planning policy team, for example Green Belt matters, housing land supply, landscape, heritage, design, validation lists;
- Discuss matters relating to the spatial strategy and the suitability of potential development sites;
- Share experience and provide informal feedback on the options and direction of draft policies to assist officers in the production of the local plan.

Meeting information

- Meetings will be held in the office where this is possible or hybrid via MS teams. Meetings relating to the spatial strategy and / or potential site allocations will be held in the office.
- Meetings will be arranged with adequate notice provided. However, it is proposed to set up a meeting every two weeks starting in January 2025 to discuss planning matters, this includes potential site allocations.
- A folder will be created in the LPOWG teams channel to share to facilitate the LPOWG. All LPOWG Members will have access to this information for transparency. Information will be shared on a confidential basis. Such information will be draft and must not be used in any other Council business.

- Where discussions are required in relation to the spatial strategy and / or potential site allocations, information will be shared in a confidential teams channel, given the sensitivities around these matters.
- Information will be provided as soon as this is practically possible and timescales will be agreed for responding to information.
- Information provided will be split on a topic-by-topic basis to allow for input and effective time management alongside other Council duties.
- The LPDMF will be supported by the Planning Policy team.
- Meeting minutes will not be taken. Instead, key actions will be identified throughout the meeting, taken away and considered by officers.
- Feedback on key actions will be provided and liaison will be ongoing.

Further information

As with most local plan work there are often a number of options in how policy can be progressed, and it is not unusual for officers, members or communities to have different views on these. During all meetings, it will be expected for all participants to be respectful and courteous to each other. Where there are conflicts in relation to how to progress policy then decisions will be made at the appropriate level taking into account available information and the ultimate goal of achieving a sound, robust and legally compliant local plan. Where there are matters of difference during Member engagement then these will be taken to political group leaders for resolution.