

## **Chief Executives' Group – North Yorkshire and York**

**8 February 2018**

### **Report of the YNYER Directors of Development Group**

#### **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To update members of the Chief Executives' Group as to the work and progress of the YNYER Directors of Development Group.

#### **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 This report advises and updates members of the Chief Executives' Group of the work of the Directors of Development Group (DoDs) and the key issues arising.
- 2.2 The Directors of Development Group met on 7 December 2017 and again on 25 January 2018. The principal items of business addressed at the meetings related to:
- Housing delivery, unimplemented planning consents and potential interventions
  - Developing a 'housing deal' for YNYERH
  - Understanding town and country planning technical capacity across the sub-region and developing a more strategic approach to planning services
  - Harrogate District Local Plan
  - YNYERH Natural Capital Framework

#### **3.0 Housing Delivery, Unimplemented Planning Consents and Potential Interventions**

- 3.1 Following initial discussions at the September meeting, Directors received and considered a report setting out options and recommendations for taking action to understand and tackle the reasons underlying why key housing sites with planning consent are not being built-out.
- 3.2 Directors felt that any approach should focus upon a manageable number of sites which could potentially be brought forwards and deliver levels of housing that are significant within their localities. It was felt that a shared central resource would be the most efficient way of delivering this task, however in the short term consultancy support is necessary to carry out the initial work. It was therefore agreed that consultancy support be procured through North Yorkshire County Council for phase 1 of this 'hit squad' approach, and that financial contributions towards it be sought from partner authorities.

#### **4.0 Towards a Housing Deal for YNYERH**

- 4.1 During the Autumn of 2017 the Directors of Development had met with the Chief Executive of the Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) Nick Walkley. He advised that a strong and committed housing offer from the sub-region would be welcomed, and indeed would be critical for YNYERH to compete successfully with other parts of the country for Homes England (HE) funds. In

response to this, DoDs has begun the task of developing a sub-regional 'Housing Deal' to be put, in due course, to HE. As part of this, discussions have been held with key stakeholders within the area, including off-site modular housing constructors, about their appetite to be part of such a deal. Work has also been undertaken to benchmark against how other parts of the country have developed similar deals tailored towards their own specific needs and opportunities.

- 4.2 Directors were presented with a report at their January meeting which provided a context for developing the draft housing deal in more detail. Again, there was a view that the sub-region had particular comparative strengths in relation to off-site / modular constructed homes (OSM) and the availability of surplus MoD land. Directors recognise that traditionally built homes will also continue to have a central role in meeting housing needs and have identified a number of issues that should be the focus of the emerging draft housing deal, including: improving housing mix and tenure including in relation to the provision of affordable housing; enhancing quality; and making-up for any under-supply of provision that may have existed in recent years over and above current (and increasingly healthy) rates of delivery.

## **5.0 Towards a More Strategic Approach to Town and Country Planning Technical Capacity**

- 5.1 There are growing issues in relation to the levels of technical and professional planning capacity available within the local authorities across the sub-region. In some cases, authorities are hampered by low levels of capacity, and challenged by difficulties in relation to recruitment and retention. There is also a concern that there are fewer schools turning-out graduate planners now, and the demographic profile within some planning teams is aging. A lack of capacity within the public sector planning field is bound to have a detrimental impact upon delivering services and supporting the place-making and growth agenda.
- 5.2 In response to these concerns Directors agreed to undertake a mapping exercise to better understand the overall situation across YNYERH, with a view to then determining whether a more strategic approach might be taken to addressing capacity constraints, including perhaps through collaboration on training and development a shared/pooled staff pool enabling younger planners to gain a wider range of experience across the area as a whole and thereby addressing one of the known barriers to recruitment.
- 5.3 Directors considered the results of the mapping exercise at their January meeting. Whilst recruitment issues were recognised in some authorities, these were not felt to be unmanageable generally across the piece. However concerns were shared in relation to the ageing profile of some planning teams, and the increasing difficulties in maintaining specialist posts unless on a shared basis due to cost. The Heads of Planning Group has been tasked with advising on how these issues might best be addressed, potentially including through:
- Joint workforce planning for key roles prior to retirement
  - Looking at ways of promoting the benefits of planning as a career, and
  - Exploring the principle of a sub-regional staff training and development programme and associated pooling and sharing arrangements.

## **6.0 City of York and Harrogate District Local Plans**

- 6.1 The DoDs group has received presentations on both the emerging City of York and Harrogate Local Plans and considered associated strategic and cross-boundary issues and implications. In both cases this has assisted the two local planning authorities, including in relation to meeting requirements under the statutory Duty to Cooperate.

## **7.0 YNYERH Natural Capital Framework**

- 7.1 Building upon previous discussions, Directors have considered and agreed more detailed proposals to progress the development of a Natural Capital framework across the sub-region. Indeed the principle of such an approach aligns with, and has subsequently been strongly supported by, the government's 25 Year Environment Plan. Developing a local approach now puts us ahead of the curve and well placed to capitalise upon any opportunities that might emerge from national and post-EU policy.
- 7.2 Directors have agreed that work to develop the Framework be driven through both the York/North Yorkshire and Hull/East Riding Local Nature Partnerships and have taken steps to ensure that there is technical capacity available to deliver it.

## **8.0 Key Strategic Issues**

- 8.1 In addition to a work programme already under delivery, Directors have identified key strategic issues that will need to be central to their work over the coming year. As examples (and not exhaustively) these include housing delivery, the growth and 'place' agendas; rural post-Brexit; connectivity (including physically and digitally); natural capital; longer term infrastructure issues arising from the Spatial Framework; and inward investment.
- 8.2 Further work is being done to seek to map out some of the key elements and timings of relating to these topics, and Directors will consider this together with any related resourcing requirements when they next meet.

## **9.0 Recommendations**

- 9.1 That Chief Executives note the recent and on-going work of the YNYER Directors of Development Group.

DAVID BOWE  
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in the capacity of Chair of the YNYER Directors of Development Group

January 2018