

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>15 July 2020</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Downland Whole Estate Plan Approval</b>
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Ian Fitzpatrick, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Regeneration and Planning</b>
<b>Cabinet member:</b>	<b>Councillor Jonathan Dow, Cabinet member for climate change</b>
<b>Ward(s):</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<b>For Cabinet to agree adoption of the final Downland Whole Estate Plan and prioritisation of possible future projects.</b>
<b>Decision type:</b>	<b>Non-Key Decision</b>
<b>Officer recommendation(s):</b>	<p><b>(1) To agree adoption of the Downland Whole Estate Plan, as attached at Appendix A, noting the summary of main changes to the document outlined at Appendix B;</b></p> <p><b>(2) To agree prioritisation of future possible projects outlined within the Downland Whole Estate Plan, as attached at Appendix C;</b></p> <p><b>(3) To agree that initial work should focus on changes to the Beachyhead Countryside Centre and re-purposing redundant farm buildings at Black Robin Farm to reflect the Downland Whole Estate Plan priorities, subject to a business case.</b></p>
<b>Reasons for recommendations:</b>	<b>Public consultation on the Downland Whole Estate Plan has completed and the Plan is now in its final form. The Plan requires formal adoption by the Council prior to endorsement by the South Downs National Park Authority.</b>
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b>	<b>Name: Mark Langridge-Kemp</b> <b>Post title: Head of Property, Delivery and Compliance</b> <b>E-mail: mark.langridge-kemp@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk</b> <b>Telephone number: 07900 057102</b>

## **1 Introduction**

**1.1** The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) is seeking to collaborate with landowners across the National Park in the development of Whole Estate Plans

(WEPs), a non-statutory plan that seeks to protect the Park and demonstrate the aspirations of its landowners. The Whole Estates Plan process seeks to assist SDNPA and large estate organisations to work together in delivery of this vision.

- 1.2 In June 2019 Cabinet agreed the vision for the Council's Downland WEP which focussed on conservation and preservation of the estate, supporting the tenant farmers and enabling a self-sustaining, financially resilient Estate. Following further consultation events in 2019, February Cabinet then agreed the draft WEP subject to public consultation. The public consultation ran for 8 weeks until early April and around 70 responses were received including those responses that were delayed as a result of the impact of Covid-19.
- 1.3 Cabinet had delegated final agreement of the WEP to the Director of Planning and Regeneration in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change , however, the matter is being brought before Cabinet in order to additionally approve an initial project to make changes to the existing Beachyhead Countryside Centre as well as a prioritisation of possible future WEP projects.

## **2 Proposal**

- 2.1 Officers have continued to work closely with SDNPA in production of the WEP which has been produced in accordance with the guidelines set down by SDNPA. There are four main sections of the plan:
  - Vision: this was agreed by Cabinet in June 2019;
  - Asset Audit : this audit establishes a complete picture of all of the assets on the Downland;
  - Ecosystem Service Analysis: this includes a SWOT (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis of the many eco systems on the Estate which provide life's essentials such as clean air and water, food, fuel and raw materials and opportunities for improved health and wellbeing.
  - Action Plan: this takes the opportunities and threats identified in the Ecosystem Services Analysis and identifies the actions required and the specific projects attached to achieving those actions.
- 2.2 The final draft version of the WEP is attached at Appendix A (please note that the Historic Environment Record will follow and be appended to the final version of the WEP and final formatting will be undertaken) and a high level summary of the main changes in the document are outlined in Appendix B. It is intended that WEP remains a live document and as such further refreshes will be possible in order that it remains current and continues to reflect policy changes and priorities.
- 2.3 The Action Plan outlines the range of future possible projects that could be undertaken across the Downland in support of the WEP priorities. Appendix C proposes a prioritisation list of these projects from High to Low, this is not say that projects identified as medium or low are not important, but merely a way of attempting to ensure the identified outcomes of the WEP are presented in a manageable way for future focus. Cabinet is not being asked to make a

commitment that all the projects should be taken forward, just to give approval to an initial prioritisation of them. Some projects are already being undertaken to an extent as part of current management of the Downland and others are being investigated; officers will report back to Cabinet with a full business case on any projects where there are any financial implications.

- 2.4 Noted as a high priority, officers would like to initially progress proposals around two linked projects, subject to a future business case being presented to Cabinet:
- changes to the Beachyhead Countryside Centre: the Centre is identified as a key element in the WEP due to the central role it can play in signposting activities, promoting the Downland and supporting education and volunteering initiatives.
  - re-purposing redundant farm buildings at Black Robin Farm to reflect WEP priorities around increasing education and income opportunities.
- 2.5 Subject to agreement from Cabinet, SDNPA will consider endorsement of the Plan in September.

### **3. Corporate plan and council policies**

- 3.1 This proposal meets the following aspirations of the Corporate Plan 2020-2024:
- Quality Environment: supporting a low carbon and sustainable open space;
  - Thriving Communities: promoting physical health and mental well-being
  - Best Use of Resources: increasing revenue and generating social value;
- 3.2 Cabinet adopted the Corporate Asset Management Plan (AMP) in 2017. The AMP focuses on 4 key areas:
- Improving yield from the investment portfolio.
  - Reducing maintenance costs and liabilities.
  - Delivering efficiencies through smarter procurement.
  - Increasing the capital value of the Council's asset base.

The Whole Estate Plan sets out a strategy to support these aims.

### **4. Financial appraisal**

- 4.1 The recommendations are to agree adoption of the final Downland Whole Estate Plan, prioritisation of future possible projects and that initial work should focus on changes to the Beachyhead Countryside Centre. There are no immediate direct revenue consequences arising to the Council as a direct result of this report, and any other future costs associated with the report's recommendations will be contained within a future report to Cabinet.

### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **6. Risk management implications**

- 6.1 Producing a WEP is the best way in order to ensure that the Eastbourne Downland Estate is protected, meets future environment priorities and is enhanced for future generations. Once adopted, the Council will have a clear action plan setting out its future commitments to the operation of the Estate that stakeholders can help support and take forward.

## **7. Equality analysis**

- 7.1 An equality screening has been undertaken and has assessed that an Equality Analysis is not required for this report. Further equality screening will be undertaken on future projects arising from the Action Plan.

## **8. Environmental impact analysis**

- 8.1 The WEP by its very nature seeks to conserve and preserve the Downland Estate and the Action Plan sets out workstreams that will help support the Council's ambition for a carbon neutral town by 2030.

## **9. Appendices**

- Appendix A –Eastbourne Downland Whole Estate Plan;
- Appendix B – Summary of Changes
- Appendix C – Action Plan Prioritisation

## **10. Background papers**

- Cabinet report 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020 'Downland Whole Estate Plan'  
<https://democracy.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/documents/s13462/Downland%20Whole%20Estate%20Plan.pdf>