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| <b>NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE<br/>JOINT DELIVERY COMMITTEE</b> |  | Item<br>11                    | Page 1 |
| <b>Councils<br/>Affected</b>                               | All  | 31 <sup>st</sup> January 2017 |        |
| <b>Report Title</b>  | <b>FUTURE JOINT DELIVERY UNIT ARRANGEMENTS</b> |                               |        |

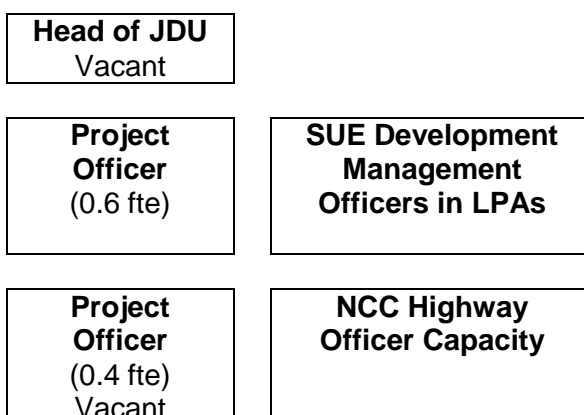
## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider and agree arrangements for the future of the Joint Delivery Unit.

## 2. BACKGROUND

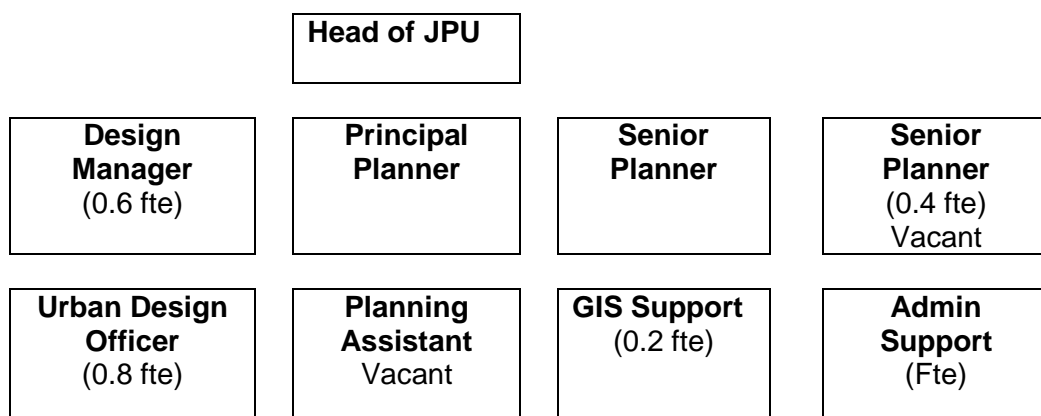
- 2.1 The Joint Delivery Unit (JDU) was established in 2015 to support the Joint Delivery Committee (JDC) in coordinating and driving the delivery of the consented Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs) and associated infrastructure (collectively described as the North Northamptonshire Garden Community). The JDC and JDU have been supported by £750k DCLG Garden Communities funding in 2015/16 and £250k in 2016/17.
- 2.2 The day to day work of the JDU is overseen by the Garden Communities Steering Group, comprising the Chief Planning Officers, NCC Transport Planning Team Leader, and KBC Executive Director. A Garden Communities Stakeholder Group provides a forum for discussion of key delivery issues. This includes representatives of the Councils, Joint Planning Unit (JPU), SEMLEP, health and education sectors and Government departments and agencies.
- 2.3 The Garden Communities Delivery Plan agreed by the JDC in January 2016 provides the basis for a prioritised work programme for the JDU. The DCLG funding has paid for, amongst other things, the employment of the Head of the JDU and two part-time Project Officers; 50% of the costs of LPA officers working on the SUEs; input from the highway authority (3 days per week dedicated officer); and consultancy input including viability, legal and design advice.
- 2.4 The staff structure of the JDU is shown below.

**Figure 2 – Current JDU Staff Structure**



- 2.5 The JDU and JDC work alongside the well-established joint planning arrangements. The Joint Planning Unit (JPU) was established in 2004 to support the Joint Planning Committee (JPC) in preparing the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and related development documents. Its current staff structure is shown in Figure 1 below.
- 2.6 The JPU's role has evolved over time to support the partner local planning authorities (LPAs) by preparing a joint evidence base and annual monitoring report, providing urban design advice, coordinating infrastructure planning, and securing external resources. The JPU has extensive knowledge of the SUEs, having worked closely with the local planning authorities, site promoters, housebuilders and other stakeholders over the past decade.
- 2.7 The work programme and resourcing of the JPU is determined by a monthly Steering Group comprising the Chief Planning Officers of the partner councils. A 'Wider Team' of policy officers also meets monthly with the JPU to share experience/ best practice and to coordinate work programmes.
- 2.8 The JPU ensures that cross boundary planning issues are addressed (satisfying the duty to co-operate), provides cost savings (joint procurement and minimising duplication), assists in securing external funding, and shares expertise and good practice between the LPAs. It has been identified as national good practice.
- 2.9 The new JCS (part 1 Local Plan) was adopted in July 2016 and a review is not scheduled until 2019. The Councils wish to maintain expertise and knowledge within the JPU but have shifted resources towards implementation of JCS policies and preparation of part 2 Local Plans. The JPU policy team has been reduced and its budget is now 50% core funded by the partners and 50% funded through commissioned work. Commissioned work in 2016/17 has included the Deenethorpe Airfield Garden Village project; work on the BCW part 2 Local Plan; funding bids on behalf of the JDU; and pilot registers of brownfield land (with CLG funding). The JPU has a full work programme and a sustainable budget for at least the next two years.

**Figure 1 – Current JPU Staff Structure**



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### **3. FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.1 Future funding prospects for the JDU are uncertain. A bid has been submitted for further support from the DCLG Large Sites and Housing Zones Capacity Fund (outcome awaited), but any award is only likely to cover 2017/18. Partly as a result of this uncertainty, the Head of JDU and one of the Project Officers moved to new jobs in November 2016. The NCC Highway Officer originally attached for 3 days per week to the JDU has also moved on and alternative cover is being arranged. Recent meetings of the JDC and Stakeholder Group have been postponed and the remaining Project Officer is being hosted by the JPU, which has also picked up areas of urgent JDU work, including the DCLG funding bid. There is a danger of JDU work stalling, or the JPU work programme being derailed, if new arrangements for the JDU are not put in place.
- 3.2 This report seeks agreement on broad principles for the future arrangements for the JDU. This will allow details to be finalised by the JDU Steering Group once the extent of DCLG funding is known. It is proposed that the new arrangements should be put in place for 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.
- 3.3 The JDU was originally established as a separate entity to the JPU because of its time-limited DCLG funding and discrete work programme, reporting to a separate joint committee. This was at a time when the JPU was fully occupied with completing the JCS. The departure of the Head of JDU and one of the two part-time Project Officers, together with the changing workload of the JPU (see paragraph 1.10) provides the opportunity to reconsider the structure of the JDU.
- 3.4 In its first year, the JDU has made significant progress on a number of the priorities identified in the Garden Communities Delivery Plan and has supported the development management work of the LPAs. The Garden Communities Steering Group considers that there continue to be important roles for the JDU in serving the JDC; engaging with delivery stakeholders; sharing expertise/best practice across the LPAs; procuring consultancy support; attracting external funding; and in programme management to demonstrate progress to Government. Based on the experience of the first year, the Steering Group considers that the JDU needs a good understanding of SUE delivery profiles and issues, but should not get drawn into detailed development management issues, which the LPAs will deal with. In other words, it is not necessary for the JDU to provide a centralised source of development management experience/expertise, but rather to concentrate on supporting and advising the SUE development management officers within the LPAs and providing opportunities to share experience and expertise across North Northamptonshire.
- 3.5 In view of the above, and the financial imperative to avoid duplication and share resources, the Garden Communities Steering Group recommends that the JDU should be combined with the JPU to form a single Joint Planning and Delivery Unit (JPDU) reporting to the two Joint Committees. This would cut out duplication (e.g. two steering groups); share resources (e.g. office space, admin support, consultancy input); and make full use of existing knowledge and expertise regarding the SUEs. It would also build on the JPU's long-established working relations with the LPAs, stakeholders and members.

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3.6 Although the finer details of the operational arrangements for a combined JPDU will need to be agreed through the JDU Steering Group, if the Joint Delivery Committee agrees to the recommendation of this report it is envisaged that they may include for example:

- Core team located in single location – initially at the current JPU offices;
- A review of existing staff roles to introduce additional capacity and an increased focus on delivery;
- Monthly meetings of JPDU Steering Group, reporting on to Chief Executives when necessary;
- Monthly meetings to include staff from the LPAs and NCC working on the delivery of the SUEs;
- Programme of training/site visits for officers/members involved in delivering the SUEs;
- Procurement of panel of consultants to support LPAs – viability, legal, EIA etc;
- Quarterly Stakeholder and JDC Meetings.

3.7 As set out above, the JPU already has a full work programme and reasonably secure budget. The JDU roles and responsibilities must be accompanied by appropriate resources to avoid impacting adversely on the existing successful JPU arrangements. Furthermore, arrangements should allow a de-coupling of the JPU and JDU in the event that funding for delivery arrangements dries up. Any new posts/consultancy contracts or changes to existing job descriptions/working hours should therefore be for a 12 month period (or for as long as funding will last).

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

The Garden Communities Steering Group recommends that, rather than reappointing to vacant posts, the Joint Delivery Committee agrees to the JDU being combined with the JPU to create a single JPDU. The detailed arrangements will be considered by the Steering Group once the extent of various capacity funds are known. This will be formalised through a new Memorandum of Intent between the LPAs.

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Background Papers:       None  
Title  
Date                           16.11.16  
Contact Officer            J Bell