



**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
25 OCTOBER 2022**

**SUBJECT: MORAY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2027- BUSINESS NEEDS
AND WOODLAND STRATEGY PROCUREMENT REQUIREMENT**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to approve the appointment of external consultants to carry out a Business Needs Survey and a Woodland Strategy, which will both be used to inform the Evidence Report stage of the new Local Development Plan (LDP) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (E) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the Review and Preparation of Strategic and Local Plans.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agrees the appointment of external consultants to undertake a Business Needs Survey and a Woodland Strategy for Moray.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Early work has started on project and engagement planning for the Moray LDP 2027. This will inform the annual Development Plan Scheme and Participation Statement which will be reported to the meeting of this Committee in December and will represent the formal beginning of the review process.
- 3.2 The new planning system will be set out through the final version of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Development Planning Regulations. Officers understand that the final version of NPF4 will be laid before Scottish Parliament in Autumn 2022 with adoption anticipated in late 2022 with the final version of the Development Plan Regulations following thereafter. The draft NPF4 and Development Plan Regulations were considered at a meeting of this Committee on 1 March 2022 (paras 9 and 10 of minute refers).

3.3 In advance of the Development Plan Scheme report in December there is a need to progress with the work on Business Needs Study and Woodland Strategy using existing revenue budget allocation this financial year.

4. PROPOSALS

4.1 It is proposed to use a Quick Quote process for the following studies;

- Business Needs Study- this will be used to set out current and projected future demand for commercial land and buildings including a review of property market data and survey of businesses and agencies working in the commercial property sector, to identify market gaps and highlight market failures. The Study is estimated to cost in the region of £20,000. The outcomes of the study will inform the Evidence Report for the new LDP, the Regional Spatial Strategy and provide narrative on issues encountered by businesses.
- Woodland Strategy- this will be used to identify future woodland planting opportunities, balanced with other land use issues such as food growing, open habitat and land for development. This will explore the economic, environmental and social importance of Moray's woodlands for employment, tree nurseries, supply chain, tourism and recreation and their biodiversity value. The cost is estimated to be £45,000 and will be shared between Council, Scottish Forestry and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

4.2 The studies will form part of the Evidence Report, which replaces the Main Issues Report stage of preparing the LDP. The Woodland Strategy will also inform the RSS which is a new strategic planning tool introduced through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

4.3 In line with section 6.2.1 of the Moray Council Procurement Procedures (v19 December 2021) where a cost of appointing an external consultant exceeds £15,000 committee approval is required.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The studies will contribute towards achieving the corporate plan priority to promote economic development and growth, and growing a sustainable economy.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Planning (Scotland) Act and the draft Development Planning Regulations set out the new procedure for preparing local development plans, with the first key step being production of an Evidence Report.

(c) Financial implications

The cost of appointing external consultants for these studies will be met from the existing Local Development Plan revenue budget.

A financial contribution from HIE and Scottish Forestry towards the Woodland Strategy work has been secured.

(d) Risk Implications

There is a risk that if this work is not carried out then the evidence base would be insufficient and the Evidence Report would fail to progress through the new Gatecheck procedure, where Scottish Ministers will appoint an independent person (Reporter) to scrutinise the Evidence Report.

(e) Staffing Implications

Officers from Strategic Planning and Development will manage the consultancy work with input from other services as the work progresses including Procurement, Estates and Transportation.

(f) Property

The Business Needs Survey will include engagement with colleagues in Estates regarding the Council's industrial property portfolio and local commercial property market conditions. The Woodland Strategy will cover all of Moray, including Council owned land.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

None arising from this report.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

No impacts arising directly from the Business Needs Survey, however there will be impacts arising from how the survey results are addressed and these will be assessed and detailed when reporting on the Local Development Plan.

The Woodland Strategy will have climate change and biodiversity impacts as it will need to balance woodland expansion opportunities with other land uses, as well as consider carbon, biodiversity and biosecurity issues, local employment and local timber supply. A climate change officer within Strategic Planning and Development will be part of the Steering Group managing this work.

(i) Consultations

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Economic Growth & Development, Head of Financial Services, Asset Manager (Commercial Buildings), Assistant Manager Procurement, Legal Services Manager, Sophie Ward (Climate Change Officer), Equal Opportunities Officer and Tracey Sutherland (Committee Services Officer).

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report sets out the requirement for external consultancy appointments to undertake a Business Needs Survey and Woodland Strategy to support the Evidence Report stage of the new LDP and the RSS.

6.2 The report asks the Committee to approve the procurement requirement and allow officers to progress with a Quick Quote process.

Author of Report: Gary Templeton, Strategic Planning and Development Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: