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**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON  
15 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**SUBJECT: INDICATIVE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY FOR MORAY**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

- 1.1 This report asks the Committee to agree the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (iRSS) for Moray to be submitted to the Scottish Government and to note the next steps in preparing the Strategy.
- 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;
- (i) note the requirement and deadline for preparing an indicative Regional Spatial Strategy;
  - (ii) agree the indicative Regional Spatial Strategy in Appendix 1; and
  - (iii) agree the next steps and timescales for preparing the final Regional Spatial Strategy.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduces a new requirement for RSS to be prepared. Authorities can decide whether they want to do this individually and or with other authorities. The strategies are intended to be a long term vision to 2050 and to identify the outcomes, need, priorities and proposed locations of strategic development.
- 3.2 A Call for Ideas to inform National Planning Framework 4 was reported to the meeting of this Committee on 25 February 2020 (para 12 of minute refers). A Position Statement on NPF4 will be published in Autumn 2020 and to assist this process the Scottish Government has requested planning authorities to

provide indicative RSS by Friday 18 September 2020. NPF4 will have enhanced status as part of the statutory development plan guiding spatial development, aligning infrastructure investment, setting national planning priorities, designating national development and highlighting regional spatial strategies

- 3.3 There is no formal description of what an iRSS must comprise, however discussions suggest that it would consist of an illustrative diagram accompanied by some brief supporting narrative.
- 3.4 Planning authorities have been encouraged to work together and form regional groupings, however, many authorities are developing their own. It is essential that cross boundary issues are recognised and the aim of the iRSS is to look ahead to 2050 and consider what the key strategic land use challenges are.
- 3.5 The Scottish Government has held a number of events for planning authorities to assist development of iRSS which officers have participated in. Officers have also attended recent workshops hosted by Highland Council to inform the Highland iRSS. Events planned for the end of March 2020 to develop the Moray iRSS were cancelled due to Covid-19. The absence of a reliable stakeholder engagement software platform delayed and has limited workshops with key stakeholders to events held on 17 and 24 August 2020.
- 3.6 NPF4 will be laid before Parliament in September 2021. The duty to produce RSS has still to be enacted through guidance/ regulation which is programmed over the next 12 to 18 months. The iRSS in **Appendix 1** should be seen as a “starter for 10” highlighting strategic issues to be followed by much greater stakeholder engagement to inform the final RSS.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

- 4.1 The basis for the iRSS comes from the existing Spatial Strategy in the new Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) 2020, with additional thinking around the Council’s response to addressing and adapting to Climate Change, addressing infrastructure needs, economy recovery and future growth and recognising the role Moray plays in the bigger national and international context. A number of candidate National Developments have been identified for the Scottish Government to consider including in NPF4.
- 4.2 Some of the key issues identified are;
  - Planned and future infrastructure requirements such as trunk road and rail improvements.
  - Moray’s key role in national defence through the significant investment at RAF Lossiemouth and the long term role of Kinloss Barracks.
  - The opportunities for significant new employment land sites at Mosstodloch; Burnside of Birnie, Elgin and at the Moray Aerospace Campus, adjacent to RAF Lossiemouth.

- The importance of addressing the future of our Town Centres and an action programme on Carbon Conscious Towns, including greening and Town Centre regeneration.
- The opportunities the Moray Growth Deal projects bring in terms of employment, skills, investment and innovation with key Growth Deal projects highlighted.
- The importance of Moray as a food growing area.
- The importance of Moray's environment in terms of biodiversity and also in attracting tourism through proposals for a Natural Heritage Coastal Park to safeguard Moray's incredibly diverse coast, manage and promote for tourism and take a strategic approach to tourist infrastructure and visitor management..
- The importance of the Spey and Findhorn river corridors as key gateways between the Coast and Cairngorms National Park.
- The need to decarbonise the distilling industry and the opportunities for solar energy and hydrogen.
- The contribution Moray's woodlands and deep peat make to carbon reduction and in supporting biodiversity.
- Opportunities to regenerate areas and improve local environments and life chances with targeted actions to address areas with the greatest inequalities.

4.3 The iRSS has been shaped with input from a limited number of stakeholders given the time available. The next steps following publication of guidance/regulations on RSS requirements will be to develop the RSS through workshops with members, neighbouring authorities, key stakeholders including community councils, businesses and the general public. A timetable for preparing the RSS will be included in the annual Development Plan Scheme report to this Committee in early 2021. In the short term discussion with neighbouring authorities on alignment will continue.

4.4 The RSS will take the form of a spatial diagram and supporting text, but will also be produced in GIS storyboard format, an interactive method of allowing users to zoom in and find out more information about proposals within the Strategy.

## 5. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The RSS will help take a long term strategic view of a wide range of social, economic and environmental issues which need to be addressed and which will highlight and support Corporate and Community Planning objectives.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

The preparation of RSS is a statutory requirement under the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, however it is still to be enacted and there is currently limited guidance to inform content at this stage.

### **(c) Financial implications**

None

**(d) Risk Implications**

None.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

Preparation of the iRSS is a new legal requirement and has been particularly challenging given other priority workloads. Staff resources will need to be reviewed when the full extent of the new legislative changes are known.

**(f) Property**

None.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no equalities issues arising from this report. An EIA will be carried out for the RSS when the legislative requirement has been enacted.

**(h) Consultations**

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Legal Services Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer), the Senior Engineer Transportation and Debra O'Shea (Principal Accountant) have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

**6. CONCLUSION**

**6.1 Preparation of RSS is a new statutory requirement introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The Scottish Government has asked regional groupings to submit iRSS by 18 September to inform a Position Statement on NPF4.**

**6.2 RSS offer an opportunity for long term strategic planning around infrastructure and climate change and an opportunity to align objectives between community planning partners and other organisations.**

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Background Papers:

Ref: