

Cardiff Capital Region Strategic Development Plan Paper: Staff Resources

This report has been prepared to consider how the Cardiff City Region could respond to the regional working agenda in respect of strategic planning services to facilitate the preparation of a Strategic Development Plan (SDP). It sets out various options about how the project could be resourced with staff and recommends a preferred option.

The report has been prepared in consultation with chief planning officers from the Cardiff Capital Region and has been agreed by them.

Background

At present, planning policy in the region is generally undertaken at individual Local Planning Authority level, with a limited degree of collaboration and joint procurement of services at a regional or sub-regional level (undertaken on an informal footing). However, the region benefits from a strong degree of communication in this field through the South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG).

Whilst Local Government Reform has been dismissed in the short term, Welsh Government have made it clear they want to see more collaborative working between Local Authorities and Planning Policy has previously been identified as an area which should be mandated to operate on a regional or sub-regional basis. Welsh Government has the regulatory power to require LPAs to undertake an SDP, Joint LDP or LDP if appropriate.

The previous Minister had invited the preparation of Joint LDPs in the region, which has been rejected by Local Authorities in the region to date for numerous reasons. The preparation of an SDP provides the opportunity for the region to come together at a strategic level to plan for sustainable development in the Cardiff Capital Region. Following this, local authorities may choose to prepare joint LDP 'lite' documents that accord with the SDP strategy.

Matters and Issues

In the Cardiff Capital Region there are 10 Local Planning Authorities with varying status in terms of their development plan status. The following provides a list of Local Development Plan (LDP) Status across region in order of plan expiration / review:

Blaenau Gwent - adopted on 22nd November 2012, Expires 2021; Undertaking plan review.

Bridgend - adopted 18th September 2013, Expires 2021; Undertaking plan review.

Caerphilly - adopted 23rd November 2010, Expires 2021.

Merthyr Tydfil - adopted 25th May 2011, Expires 2021; Undertaking plan review.

Monmouthshire - adopted 27th February 2014, Expires 2021; Undertaking plan review.

Rhondda Cynon Taf - adopted 2nd March 2011, Expires 2021.

Torfaen - adopted 3rd December 2013, Expires 2021; Undertaking plan review.

Cardiff – adopted 28th January 2016, Expires 2026.

Newport – adopted 27th January 2015, Expires 2026.

Vale of Glamorgan – adopted 28th June 2017, Expires 2026.

The availability of staff resources within each Local Planning Authority will depend on the capacity of the team and the level of work being undertaken on other projects outside the SDP such as LDP review, preparation of SPGs, policy support to corporate projects and development management. The table below provides a summary of available resource in planning policy teams in the region at May 2019.

	Core Policy Team	Other	Current Work programme and ability to resource SDP
Blaenau Gwent	1 x Team Manager 1 x Team Leader 1 x Planning Assistant Total - 3 FTE	Service Manager has Policy, DM and Building Control within remit. Central admin support. Minerals provided by Carmarthenshire	Policy team currently working on LDP Review.
Bridgend	1 x Team Manager 1 x Team Leader 2 x Senior Officer (one currently vacant) 2 x Planning assistant (1 FT, 2 PT) Total – 6 FTE	Strategic Transportation function now within wider planning function	Policy team currently working on LDP Review. Currently undergoing re-structure following merger with Strategic Transportation Function Depending on workloads could contribute ad hoc to regional work.
Caerphilly	2 x Team Leaders 2 x Principal Officers 3 x Senior Officers Total - 7 FTE		
Cardiff	3.5 x Policy Planners Plus 3 FTE Officers within Team currently providing	7 Place-making Team Planners covering Design, Master-planning, Projects,	

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	Core Policy Team	Other	Current Work programme and ability to resource SDP
	flexible support as Non-Strategic DM Case Officers Total – 6.5 FTE	Infrastructure, viability, CIL, S106, Heritage & Conservation. Head of Planning, Operational Manager of Strategic DM & Place-making & Operational Manager for Non-Strategic DM.	
Merthyr Tydfil	1x Team leader 2.5 x Policy officers Total – 3.5 FTE	No admin support. Minerals service provided by Carmarthen.	Policy team currently working on 1 st Replacement LDP. Examination June / July 2019. Adoption anticipated Jan 2020. There will be some capacity to assist with SDP work post adoption.
Monmouthshire	1 x Planning Policy Manager 1 x Principal Officer 1.8 x Senior Officer 1 x Research Officer Total – 4.8 FTE	Head of Planning Service (including Development Management, Housing function and BC)	Policy team currently working on LDP Review, alongside current LDP monitoring for AMR and 4x SPG in progress for current LDP. No surplus capacity to assist with SDP, but if colleagues wish to apply for SDP roles and are successful, they would be supported and their posts would be backfilled.
Newport	1 x Planning Policy Manager 1.8 x Senior Policy Officer Total – 2.8 FTE	Planning Systems Officer (pooled resource with DM/BC/Policy)	Newport LDP adopted 2015. Currently working on SPG, plan monitoring and planning consultancy work for DM and internal Council projects. Have some capacity to

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	Core Policy Team	Other	Current Work programme and ability to resource SDP
			assist with specific projects and evidence base.
Rhondda Cynon Taf	<p>1 X Planning Manager (vacant) 1 X Team Leader 2 X Senior Planners 1 X Planner 1 X Planning Assistant (vacant)</p> <p>Total – 6 FTE</p>		This team would primarily be required to prepare any future LDP for Rhondda Cynon Taf. Could offer interaction and sharing of information with the Regional SDP team.
Torfaen	<p>2 x Principal Policy Officers (Joint Team Leaders) 2 x Senior Policy Planners</p> <p>Total – 4 FTE</p>	<p>DM support provided by Central Admin Unit (not dedicated)</p> <p>Forward Planning and Building Regulations teams report directly to Head of Planning and Development who reports directly to Chief Officer Neighbourhoods, Planning & Public Protection</p>	Policy team currently working on LDP Review.
Vale of Glamorgan	<p>1 x team leader 3 x senior planner (1 on secondment at Merthyr) 1 x Assistant planner</p> <p>Total – 5 FTE</p>	<p>1 x Head of Service (Planning & Regeneration), 1 x Operational Manager (Planning & Building Control)</p> <p>Admin support from DM Support Services team as required</p> <p>Minerals provided by Carmarthenshire</p>	<p>VOG LDP adopted 2017. Currently working on SPG, plan monitoring and planning consultancy work for internal Council projects (Housing, Estates etc.)</p> <p>Have capacity available to undertake SDP Responsible Authority role in 2019/20 and 2020/21 before SDP Team set up.</p> <p>Have capacity to assist with specific projects and evidence base work to assist SDP Team.</p>

Options for Delivering SDP

The delivery of the SDP requires focus and commitment and significant staff time. There are several ways in which this could be achieved, which are considered further below.

Option 1 – Informal collaboration with a Lead Authority

Keep existing structures across 10 Local Planning Authorities in the region, identify a ‘Lead Authority’ and divide the workload across existing staff, delegating tasks on an informal collaborative basis reporting to lead authority.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could start immediately • No need for structural re-organisation • Allows flexibility to respond to peaks / troughs in workload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other work distracting from SDP preparation • Reliance on other LPAs to find resource to help out • Participants likely to retain own ‘LA’ bias • Lack of autonomy of ‘Lead Authority’ • Would still require Lead Officer role to be appointed

Option 2 – Procure Consultancy Services

Keep existing structures across 10 Local Planning Authorities in the region, procure consultants to undertake all SDP preparation reporting back to LPAs. Would most likely need a ‘Lead Authority’ to act as commissioning authority and contact.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impartiality • No need for structural re-organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost – likely to be more expensive to but in services • Lack local knowledge / experience • Reliance on LPA officers to check work and steer consultant input • Lack of ‘buy-in’ on a long-term basis • Delays in set-up / procurement which would still require LPA support • Less experience with Member liaison and issues of trust

Option 3 – One or more LPAs prepare the SDP on behalf of the Region

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One or more existing LPA undertake the preparation of the SDP on behalf of the region, using existing resources and recruiting new staff as necessary which could include secondment from other authorities. The body would be responsible for preparation and delivery of the SDP, and potentially SDP review and SDP monitoring. Would require remuneration from other LPAs not participating directly.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No need for structural re-organisation • Cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of resources within existing LPAs to do this • Other work distracting from SDP prep • Participants likely to retain own 'LA' bias • Lack of autonomy of the Authority • Would still require Lead Officer role to be appointed and other staff

Option 4 – Regional SDP team established

Set up a regional SDP team to prepare the SDP who would be responsible for preparation and delivery of the SDP, and potentially SDP review and SDP monitoring.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows true regional approach to SDP – not local parochialism • Provides focus on SDP in isolation from other work • Would draw together the best people for the job • Provides a framework for collaboration at a regional level on land use planning matters • Could be used on a commercial basis to provide expertise / services for strategic planning outside the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs set up cost / time • Liaison / involvement from LPA officers will still be required and resourced

Option 5 – Regional Strategic Planning Re-structure / Merger

A formal restructure incorporating the strategic planning policy function of all 10 Local Planning Authorities in the region into one Regional Strategic Planning Policy Service. This service would be responsible for the delivery of all matters relating to Development Plan preparation, adoption and monitoring across the whole region. It would be a single

organisation with shared terms & conditions and a joint responsibility for delivering this service across the whole region. The body would be responsible for preparation and delivery of the SDP, Joint or single LDP lites, SDP/LDP review, evidence gathering, and Plan monitoring.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows true regional approach to SDP – not local parochialism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs set up cost / time • Operationally impractical given current LDP reviews underway • Employee terms and conditions and trade union impacts • Would still require separation of workload / functions to divide out SDP and LDP work

Preferred Option

Having regard to the benefits and disadvantages of the ways of working set out above, the preferred option is considered to be Option 4 – Regional SDP team established.

In addition to the core team, there is likely to be specific projects that could be undertaken either by consultants or by officers with relevant expertise within the region who could be seconded or tasked to deliver a specific project (e.g. population projections). Secondment from existing local authority teams could result in LPA’s having difficulty in progressing their own LDPs to meet Delivery Agreement timeframes. Any secondments will need to be programmed to ensure that the ability of the affected authorities to deliver their plans, in accordance with their delivery agreements, is not prejudiced.