

 Executive –11th December 2013		Agenda Item No. 12
Title	HS2 Liaison Officer	
For further information about this report please contact	Tracy Darke 01926 456501 Tracy.Darke@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	N/A	
Background Papers	Correspondence from the Government regarding the implementation of the HS2 bill.	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	N/A
.	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Deputy Chief Executive		Bill Hunt
Head of Service		Tracy Darke
CMT		Chris Elliott, Andrew Jones, Bill Hunt
Section 151 Officer		Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer		Andrew Jones
Finance		Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)		Cllr John Hammon
Consultation & Community Engagement		
N/A		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1** The report seeks approval for a dedicated part time post (18.5 hours) in Planning Services which will deal with HS2 issues. There is the need for the Authority to have the right level of resource to be able to engage in all the workshops, meetings, consultation exercises and planning issues that are and will continue to arise from the progression of this project.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1** That the Executive authorises the appointment of a part time (18.5 hours) HS2 officer for an initial period of two years. The post will be reviewed after that period with a further report if there is a need to continue with the post. It should be noted that if the Government decides at any time to cease the progression of the project, the post may be terminated.
- 2.2** That the Executive agree that the HS2 Officer post is financed from the Planning Reserve, which is likely to be approx. £20.5K per annum(subject to Hay Panel review).

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1** HS2 is likely to have a significant affect on Warwick District and there is a need to identify the right level of resource to be focused on the work necessary to deal with this impact if the project goes ahead.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1** The Council has adopted a policy position of objecting to the HS2 project. However, it is necessary to ensure that the Council are best represented from commencement to implementation of the bill to achieve the best outcome for the citizens of the district if the project goes ahead.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1** Although there is some funding through a Memorandum of Understanding that sets out compensation to authorities for specific work on HS2, this tends to exclude work where the authority would usually deal with such matters through current legislation, for example planning applications. It may cover some environmental matters, but it is anticipated that there will be limited opportunity to fund much, if any of this part time post.
- 5.2** It is therefore recommended that the planning reserve is used to finance this post. Following a £300k top up from the projected 2013/14 budget surplus (see recommendation 2.5 in the General Fund Base Budgets report elsewhere on this agenda) and after allowing for the £199k Tree Preservation Orders compensation payments approved by the 13th November Executive, the reserve will have an unallocated balance of £99k which will reduce to £78.5k if this report is approved. This reserve is also funding the cost of the S106 Major Sites Monitoring Officer post and will receive contributions from developers over the next three years to offset this cost which will have the effect of increasing the projected unallocated balance to £202k.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED

- 6.1 The authority could choose not to appoint a stand alone post to deal with HS2 matters and absorb the work within current roles. However, there is very little capacity to do this and this will not give the importance to the matter officers feel is necessary.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 It is understood that the first reading of the HS2 bill is to take place later this month. Therefore, early in the new year, officers are of the view that there is a need for additional resource to deal with some of the matters arising from the bill. The second reading is not until April 2014, but the work involved in preparing for the project will increase considerably in the spring and we consider it necessary to have the right resource in place by then. Currently there is no specific person dealing with HS2 and this is adding to some confusion and concern expressed by members that we may miss important stages and deadlines. It should be noted that Gary Fisher is covering this work temporarily since the Sustainability Officer post is vacant.
- 7.2 To date, we have attended a number of seminars and events and have worked with the campaigning groups opposing HS2. Our legal officer at Warwickshire County Council is working on HS2 on our behalf together with other affected authorities. Until recently the work for HS2 has been within the Sustainability Officers post, however, there is no longer capacity for this.
- 7.3 When the bill has been through the first and second readings, we will need to have identified ourselves as a Qualifying Authority (QA). Being a Qualifying Authority essentially means that we will sit on a Planning Forum with other QA's to help co-ordinate expeditious implementation of the planning provisions of the bill, particularly on matters such as heritage, highways and noise.
- 7.4 Furthermore, we will also need to decide as an authority whether we will be petitioning the Parliamentary Select committee on matters of mitigation.
- 7.5 It is understood from our legal officer that the work in connection with HS2 in the near future could potentially be significant, drawing on the experience of others with the Cross-rail bill. Subject to approval, it is hoped that we will have an officer in post early in the New Year.
- 7.6 There is a need for continued legal support and it is anticipated that this will be agreed with the County through the current SLA agreement. A co-ordinated strategic approach with authorities affected by HS2 working together is considered the best way forward.