
REPORT TO:	ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 10
DATE OF MEETING:	28 FEBRUARY 2019	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (SERVICE DELIVERY)	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	TONY SYLVESTER PLANNING SERVICES MANAGER	DOC:
SUBJECT:	PLANNING SERVICES REVIEW UPDATE	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM05

1.0 Recommendations

1.1 The Committee endorses the progress of the Review.

2.0 Purpose of Report

2.1 In May last year both this and the Finance and Management Committee (F&M) sanctioned changes to the Planning Service following a Service review incorporating a change to the staff structure to bring about improvements to the service. Further in July the F&M also approved £100,000 from earmarked reserves to fund the implementation of new planning and land charges software in accordance with the principles set out in the Business Case. This report updates the Committee on progress of the implementation of the review and the software.

3.0 Executive Summary

3.1 The implementation of the review of the service has been methodical and has included staff in pursuit of the various improvements which are now underway. The implementation follows the Target Operating Model which culminates in an improvement Plan as proposed by the consultants. It follows the themes and suggests timescales for delivery. As measured against the consultant's report the process shows good progress.

4.0 Detail

4.1 Integral to the Service review were a number of improvement projects. These included:

- a) Implementation of new planning software
 - Initial process changes linked to implementation of new software
 - New GIS system
- b) Improvements to the planning validation process
- c) Full implementation of the Section 106 system and process changes
- d) Document migration and improved storage
- e) Improvement to the public register and communications
- f) Dual monitors for officers
- g) Improvements to IT user hardware
- h) Organisational restructure
 - Additional resources
 - Additional staff training
 - Development of performance management framework
 - Additional training for members.

- 4.2 a) The new software contract has now been awarded to Arcus Global and early testing has started with a view to going live in the summer of 2019. A new GIS system has been rolled out across the Council and is available to the public via the website which is being improved and enhanced regularly. Its integration with the Planning software will be worked on as the system progresses towards live functionality.
- b) This requires a focus on the process itself, a change to the deployment of staff resources and the successful installation of the new software. Under the staff restructure, a new Planning Technician was recruited and two Technical Assistants upgraded. Training is on-going and the improvements to procedures are progressing alongside the new software.
- c) As part of the new staff structure, the responsibility of S106 monitoring and management now falls to the Planning Policy Team Leader who, although new in post, has overseen the commissioning of the new software package and is busy refining procedures (a recent audit of S106 agreements found only minor issues with the current procedures).
- d) this aspect is being worked on as part of the new planning software system which will introduce a new document management system.
- e) The public register is shown as part of the planning pages on the Council website where planning applications can be searched. Recent enhancements include the publishing of case officer reports which clearly explain how a decision was reached alongside the application documents and any S106 agreements. The new planning software system will enable further improvements with more information on application progress and consultee responses.
- f) All officers were issued with dual monitors as the first initiative of the project.
- g) It is understood that a hardware review is underway across the Council which should result in suitable new devices being deployed.
- h) As set out in the report to F&M last year, staff have been reorganised and new posts filled. The implementation date of 1 September was achieved and staff are getting used to the new team structure which appears to be working well. Further staff training has commenced although much more will be required when the new software system goes live. In the

meantime new procedures for various parts of the process are being written and rolled out. Better more accurate monitoring of performance against targets will be enabled through the new planning software which incorporates live case management integrated with full document management. Enhanced member training to cover the use of an enhanced website is also being considered for the next round in May 2019 depending on progress with the software installation.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 To date it appears that the agreed budget enhancements are sufficient to roll out the implementation of the review.
- 5.2 Other opportunities for fee earning activity will be examined next year and will be subject to further analysis and a separate report to the Committee at a later date.

6.0 Employee Implications

- 6.1 All new post holders are in place and no redundancies were required.

7.0 Corporate Implications

- 7.1 The approved review is allowing the Planning Services functions to be delivered in alignment with the priority actions within the Council's Corporate Plan. The new structure will therefore have a direct positive impact on the Council's ability to deliver actions against the key objectives of:
- Progress
 - Place
 - People

8.0 Community Impact

- 8.1 **Consultation:** None
- 8.2 **Equality and Diversity Impact:** The more efficient and economic delivery of the service will assist in meeting the diverse needs of all established and future residents and non-residents across the District. Certain elements of proposed improvements to public information are intended to address existing gaps and shortfalls in provision and will thus assist in achieving greater equality.
- 8.3 **Social Value Impact:** Enhancement of the Service will assist in securing investment, thus assisting in maintaining and attracting employment; the provision and enhancement of sustainable development will enhance public health and well-being.
- 8.4 **Environmental Sustainability:** Better performance management will contribute toward the achievement of economic, social and environmental objectives.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Towards the end of last year, a review of the Planning Service was implemented based on advice from independent consultants. The proposals set out to create capacity within the Service to ensure that greater resources are directed towards more efficient working, greater public engagement and the continued management of Section 106 contributions. A period of phased implementation will result in a number of enhancements and improvements to take the Service forward over the next five years. The report highlights progress with the rollout of the implementation programme and identifies early successes.
- 9.2 The report also identifies possible future opportunities for the generation of additional income to help meet the cost of new posts and offer a more comprehensive advice service to customers.