

PLANNING REVIEW ACTION PLAN

DATE: JULY 2021

PURPOSE OF PAPER:

To provide Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of the development of and progress of the improvement plan arising from the externally commissioned review for the Planning Service.

The table below provides an overview of the action, progress to date and anticipated completion date of the action. This has been split into actions that are within the scope of the officers (i.e. improvements to the Planning service) and those that include Member engagement (i.e. engagement with the Planning Committee).

Please note that the Action Numbers are referenced back to the initial report provided by Cratus, in Annex 1.

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS:

Action No.	Action	Progress	Expected Completion Date
Officer Programme – Operation of Planning Service			
11.	Develop a tailored and targeted member training programme which addresses specific concerns and in particular addresses issues raised around application of planning policy in decision making, the framework and appropriate use of conditions, and the key stages in determination of a larger planning application.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Audit of the training which has taken place. 2. Review training for gaps and examine training process for committee members. 3. Future training needs identified and a draft schedule developed to support ongoing development of the planning service. <p>Training schedule in place until February 2022.</p>	Complete
12.	A series of workshops in relation to Local Plan “ownership” and future revisions. This is likely to be an ongoing piece of engagement with elected members.	<p>Programme of training to be constructed and shared as per Recommendation 11.</p> <p>Early delivery includes Sessions on 27th January and 24th February on Local Plan housing/environmental policies and the draft Design SPD.</p> <p>Future sessions to be incorporate as part of the ongoing training programme.</p>	Complete – February 2021 (with ongoing action)
13.	More training for officers on best practices when presenting to the planning committee.	The newly appointed Director for Growth and Culture to oversee the delivery of this action . The sessions to be delivered with support of Chair and Vice Chair of planning committee in attendance.	August 2021
17.	Quarterly reporting of Section 106 income and expenditure, and enforcement matters should be scrutinised by the monitoring officer and reported to committee.	Publication of the Infrastructure Funding Statement and Associated documents to MHCLG. Regular quarterly briefings for Planning Committee in place.	Complete - December 2020 (with ongoing action)
18.	The Enforcement policy should be reviewed and appropriately resourced.	<p>Additional Planning Enforcement budget approved for 2021/22 and recruitment activity was undertaken, however an appointment was not made.</p> <p>A further recruitment process is underway that is anticipated to be complete on 19 July 2021.</p> <p>Work to refine the Enforcement Policy will take place alongside the new Assistant Director for Planning as a priority – it will then be presented to Planning Committee.</p>	<p>Resourcing - September 2021</p> <p>Policy – December 2021</p>
21.	Implement a system of regular Directorate Team meetings between the Director and the Heads of Service to provide leadership, direction and focus to the service.	Agreed and meetings scheduled with Interim Head of Development Management. Weekly Team Leaders meetings and 1-2-1s in place. Item to be reviewed with the new Assistant Director of Planning.	To be reviewed in September 2021
22.	Linked to resolving issues of structure and permanence within the officer core, establish a culture of collaborative and strong leadership including regular opportunities for engagement between officers, Heads of Service and Directors.	Create channels for junior staff to receive regular communications and seek support from Leadership. Ensure engagements from 1-2-1's are meaningful and support the development of officers.	Complete
23.	Establish a system of performance indicators which are easily understood by members and officers and hold regular feedback sessions for teams and individuals.	Service Plan developed and approved in April 2021. Delivery against objectives and implementation to continue.	Complete
24.	Develop in-house experience within the planning team by aligning Special Projects, the Local Plan, and Development Management teams under a single head of planning service and exercise greater restraint over the use of external consultants.	Review Structure aligned to Assistant Director role and implemented (May-June 2021). Item achieved within current structures. Senior Planning Officer's started in May 2021 / Enforcement Officer August / recruitment in place for Principle Conservation officer and Assistant Director of Planning appointed to join in September 2021.	Complete
25.	Fully exploit the opportunity of technology investment.	Audit of functionality across systems complete. Implementation plan in development working with the South Kesteven ICT service to provide training and appropriate solutions across the service.	July 2021 – Implementation Plan

			Roll-out Ongoing – expected completion date September 2021
26.	Revise the validation process to be a back of house function.	Engagement and workshop conducted with individual teams and jointly. A resource analysis has been completed to understand the required resource to absorb validation requirements. Transfer of activity to commence in July 2021.	August 2021
27.	Ensure clarity within the Council on who holds responsibility for the delivery of the IT strategy, updates, and training of staff.	Included within Item 25 once current upgrades have been implemented.	September 2021
28.	The conditions for permanence within the staffing structure and review recruitment proposition to ensure the Council can attract and retain high quality personnel. This will enable clear leadership, structure and lines of engagement between officers.	Review Structure aligned to Assistant Director role and confirm timescales for implementation.	July 2021
5.	Senior staff advice including legal advice, should routinely be available to committee members at the committee	This has been agreed and implemented.	Complete
Officer and Member Programme – Engagement with Planning Committee and Other Processes			
1.	Consider whether the present Committee arrangements are fit for purpose	The committee arrangements are being considered as part of a wider review of protocols and processes, which are referenced in the actions outlined below.	External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.
2.	Clarify the protocols for representations to the Planning Committee, ensuring consistency and equity in those for and against an application. Adhere strictly to the time limits.	Current speaking arrangements and protocols for representations are appropriately clear. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee are responsible for ensuring that these protocols are adhered to.	External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council. Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.
3.	Ensure the new protocols are published and readily understood by all participants at each planning committee and that prospective speakers are reminded of them before the meeting.	Existing protocols to be clearly communicated to participants and reviewed once any changes to protocols and scheme of delegations are in place. Informal engagement with Members to support the development of new protocols alongside the committee and to support familiarisation with any new proposals. Any revisions to the protocols to be considered by relevant committees (I.e. Constitution Committee).	External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by

			<p>relevant committees in the Council.</p> <p>Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.</p>
6.	The Council changes its procedures to ensure applications are only refused at Committee where members have voted to do so based on clear and cogent planning grounds.	Annual Refresher training delivered on 26 th May alongside regular scheduled training in regard to local policies.	Complete with ongoing training plan in place.
7.	Agree a revised Scheme of Delegation collaboratively with elected members for adoption by the Council and ensure any deviation can only be agreed on an exceptional basis by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.	<p>An external review (undertaken by Cratus) has developed a suggested scheme of delegations.</p> <p>These initial drafts will be discussed and developed informally alongside Members during July 2021 and beyond prior to the formal presentation of proposals to relevant committees (i.e. Constitution Committee).</p>	<p>External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council.</p> <p>Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.</p>
8.	Agree a revised Call-In protocol which permits members to call-in applications within their wards, on submission of a request containing a sound planning reason. This should be adjudicated by a senior manager, ideally the Service Director.	<p>An external review (undertaken by Cratus) has developed suggested call-in protocols.</p> <p>These initial drafts will be discussed and developed informally alongside Members during July 2021 and beyond prior to the formal presentation of proposals to relevant committees (i.e. Constitution Committee).</p>	<p>External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council.</p> <p>Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.</p>
9.	The creation of a criteria for when an application justifies a site visit will help provide greater clarity and confidence in the planning system.	<p>An external review (undertaken by Cratus) has developed suggested criteria for site visits.</p> <p>These initial drafts will be discussed and developed informally alongside Members during July 2021 and beyond prior to the formal presentation of proposals to relevant committees (i.e. Constitution Committee).</p>	<p>External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council.</p> <p>Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.</p>

10.	Further, a Code of Conduct for members when attending site visits will help protect the council and members from any vexatious or otherwise pre-determination and other legal challenges.	An external review (undertaken by Cratus) has developed suggested code of conduct Members on site visits. These initial drafts will be discussed and developed informally alongside Members during July 2021 and beyond prior to the formal presentation of proposals to relevant committees (i.e. Constitution Committee).	External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council. Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.
14.	The Council should revise the expectations of elected members who serve on the Planning Committee to ensure the highest standards of transparency and openness in relation to other tiers of Government in the District.	An external review (undertaken by Cratus) has developed suggested expectations of Members. These initial drafts will be discussed and developed informally alongside Members during July 2021 and beyond prior to the formal presentation of proposals to relevant committees (i.e. Constitution Committee).	External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council. Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.
15.	Create a clearly defined pre-application process which distinguishes between strategic and minor applications, and between corporate discussions in relation to growth and investment versus technical input from the planning service.	An external review (undertaken by Cratus) has developed a suggested approach to the pre-application process. These initial drafts will be discussed and developed informally alongside Members during July 2021 and beyond prior to the formal presentation of proposals to relevant committees (i.e. Constitution Committee).	External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council. Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.
16.	The Council should replace the existing 'Design Pad' with full briefings for all members of the Committee on major applications.	Following internal discussion the recommendation to replace the 'Design Pad' has been removed. However, following the external review (undertaken by Cratus) a suggested approach has been taken to clarify the remit of the 'Design Pad' and the role of officers and Members.	External review complete – ongoing engagement with Members to support the development of new proposals to be considered by relevant committees in the Council.

			Likely completion date for any changes is November 2021.
19.	Use the opportunity of a revised planning and development structure to revisit member and officer relationships through the lifecycle of an application to ensure value added and appropriate interaction. This could be achieved through internal and external training and support - and must be undertaken collaboratively.	The new Assistant Director for Planning to lead a process with Members and Officers to ensure that roles and engagement are clear and optimised during the entire lifecycle of a planning application.	March 2022
20	Outlines the clear roles and responsibilities of elected members and officers in the determination of planning applications.	To be communicated and clarified as part of any process involving revisions to delegations and processes. Informal engagement with Members through July prior to the development of any formal proposals to be considered by relevant committees (i.e. Constitution Committee).	November 2021
29.	Establish clear pathways for engagement with the Council at strategic and operational levels in respect of planning consents and development proposals. For example: Developers to meet with Leader and Chief Executive or Director only. No members of the planning committee should be meeting with developers.	Following an external review (by Cratus) a suggested pathway has been developed with clear roles in engaging with developers (i.e. who should/should not communicate with developers at different stages). These will be discussed at informal Member briefing sessions, but does not require formal approval because it is an informal process and therefore can be applied with immediate effect. However, it will form part of the papers to Constitution Committee.	August 2021
4.	Specific training for Chair and Vice-Chair on running procedures and Chairing of meetings.	To be examined and provided in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee alongside the Director of Growth and Culture and newly appointed Assistant Director for Planning.	September 2021