



**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 27 May 2021**

CABINET: 8 June 2021

PLANNING COMMITTEE: 17 June 2021

Report of: Corporate Director of Place & Community

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Cllr D Evans

**Contact for further information: Heidi McDougall (Extn. 5191)
(Heidi.mcdougall@westlancs.gov.uk)**

SUBJECT: PLANNING SERVICES REVIEW

Wards Affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the outcome of the planning services review and agree that the recommendations are taken forward and implemented.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 2.1 That the Committee consider the report and that the agreed comments of the Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Planning Services Review Report be passed to Cabinet for their consideration.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

- 3.1 That Cabinet note the findings in the Red Quadrant report and agree to delegate the decision to the Corporate Director Place and Community, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to take forward the recommendations following consideration of the agreed comments of Planning Committee.
- 3.2 That the costs outlined at 6.2 be noted and agreed.
- 3.3 That an update on progress be brought back to Cabinet in Spring 2022.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 4.1 That the agreed comments of Planning Committee be forwarded to the Corporate Director Place and Community for consideration in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
-

5.0 BACKGROUND

- 5.1 In November 2019, feedback received from Members and some Parish Councils suggested that a review of the planning service would be useful.
- 5.2 In July 2019, Council approved the implementation of the SORP recommendations including a number of service reviews. As a result of the feedback, the planning service review was included in the SORP service reviews and overseen by the Our Future Board.
- 5.3 A brief was produced and quotes obtained from various consultants to undertake the review. During this time the Government announced a major review of the planning system and released the Planning for the Future consultation. In light of this the brief was revisited and revised to focus more on the interface with customer services and planning support, the enforcement service, pre-planning application service, consultation, use of IT and the structure, considering that the White Paper is proposing significant change to the planning process itself. The Our Future Board agreed to appoint Red Quadrant to undertake this work and the review commenced in October 2020.
- 5.4 The first stage of the review started with the initiation and discovery phase involving research and document review. The second stage involved the analysis of all the areas outlined in 3.3 above. The final stage involved the production of a report with recommendations, staff feedback workshop and a change management training session.

6.0 CURRENT POSITION

- 6.1 The review has now been concluded and the final report produced by Red Quadrant available at Appendix 1. Overall 81 recommendations have been made covering a number of areas:
- Planning Enforcement and the resources to deliver the service
 - Pre-application advice service
 - Dealing with complaints
 - Stakeholder engagement and consultation
 - Neighbourhood planning
 - Organisational structures

- Business Support and Customer Services
- IT technology infrastructure

6.2 Cabinet are asked to approve the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Red Quadrant report. A working group has been established, made up of representatives from across the council including the planning service, the business intelligence team, IT, the communication and digital team and planning support, led by the Corporate Director of Place and Community to drive forward the implementation of the recommendations. It is also recommended that Red Quadrant continue to be involved in taking forward a number of the recommendations to create capacity and drive forward change at a cost of £25,000.

6.3 The working group will meet regularly to, prioritise the implementation of the key recommendations, review resources and involve, as necessary additional services from across the council, setting defined timescales with clear milestones and outcomes. Progress on taking the recommendations forward will be reported to a future Cabinet in spring 2022.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The recommendations look to modernise and make the service more efficient whilst maximising income opportunities and providing a clear offer for customers making the service more sustainable and improving customer satisfaction.

7.2 This report has no significant impacts upon crime and disorder.

8.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The help drive forward the changes and improve the service it is recommended that Red Quadrant continue to provide support to the review by undertaking process mapping, producing a Planning Charter, facilitating workshops, producing service level agreements and any other actions considered appropriate in delivering the recommendations.

8.2 The costs incurred of facilitating this work as outlined at 6.2 can be covered by existing budgets. There may be an opportunity to fund this cost from capital monies given the flexibility afforded to council arrangements for transformation costs.

9.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 The risk of not taking forward the recommendations will continue to impact on service delivery, providing identified by virtue of this report.

10.0 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

There is no direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders by virtue of this report. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Planning Service Review Final Report