



**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW  
AND SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE: 2 September 2021**

**PLANNING COMMITTEE: 9 September 2021**

**CABINET: 14 September 2021**

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**Report of: Corporate Director of Place & Community**

**Relevant Portfolio Holder: Cllr D Evans**

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**SUBJECT: PLANNING SERVICES REVIEW UPDATE REPORT**

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Wards Affected: Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To outline the proposed actions and update members on progress with implementing the recommendations of the planning services review.

## **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 Update Report be passed to Cabinet for their consideration.

## **3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

3.1 That Cabinet note the Summary Level Project Plan, attached at appendix 1

3.2 That the costs outlined at 8.1 be agreed to create a new Team Leader post as outlined at 6.7 to create capacity within the service to deal with demands and assist in taking forward the recommendations.

## **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.
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## **5.0 BACKGROUND**

- 5.1 In June 2021, Cabinet agreed to the implementation of the recommendations from the Planning Services Review Report.
- 5.2 A working group was 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.
- 5.3 It was also agreed that Red Quadrant would continue to be involved in taking forward a number of the recommendations to create capacity and drive forward implementation.
- 5.4 Throughout June and July 2021, the working group reviewed all the recommendations made by Red Quadrant. Each recommendation was grouped according to the following themes; the steps required to accomplish each of the recommendations were then outlined and documented:
- Enforcement
  - Pre-application Process
  - Interface with Business Support
  - Complaint Handling
  - Customer Self-Service
  - Workforce Planning

These themes are dependent on the outcome of the Planning white paper, financial constraints, and staff resources. At the heart of each theme will be the use of technology to both make processes more efficient and enable customers to self-serve, improving communication and engagement and delivering a range of training for officers and members.

## **6.0 CURRENT POSITION**

- 6.1 Due to the complexity of the project and the 81 recommendations that require implementation, the working group have chosen a particular project methodology that will consist of a series of cycles, comprised of short 2-4-week sprints, where a selected number of tasks will be delivered. This approach will focus on delivery of completed tasks and allow for flexibility in

the project team resource, whilst maintaining momentum throughout the project life cycle.

- 6.2 The project implementation will officially commence mid-September, with the initial focus being on the quick win actions. These will include the introduction of an appointment booking system for members, along with a review and update of all the documentation on the web portal. Following this, the first cycle will look at the Enforcement process, development of an Enforcement Charter and implementation. Dependent on the resources available, cycle 2, the Pre-App process, may run concurrently with cycle 1.
- 6.3 The Summary Level Project Plan at Appendix 1 provides a breakdown of the recommendations and identified tasks that will form the basis for the project.
- 6.4 Each action has been prioritised, an approximate timescale of short/medium and long term for delivery attached to each action and although not detailed in the summary level project plan an officer has been assigned responsibility for delivery of each recommendation.
- 6.5 For each theme a process will be followed where the existing customer journey will be mapped, the new process determined, relevant people engaged, changes implemented and communicated.
- 6.6 The working group will continue to meet on a regular basis and monitor the delivery of the actions. Progress will also be reported into the Our Future; Our People Transformation Programme Board and Cabinet as appropriate.
- 6.7 In reviewing the structure of the Planning Service it has been determined that additional capacity is needed to create some capacity within the Planning Service to be able to manage the daily workload (including backlog of work) and deliver the recommendations of the review, a Planning Team Leader post is proposed. This will create capacity at management level to help address the delays in the approval process for applications and enforcement cases and provide additional capacity to take forward the review.

## **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 costs associated with implementing a Team Leader post as outlined at 6.7 are £50,000. This can be funded through existing budgets by using underspends from the Environmental Services budgets.

## **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 If additional staff resources are not provided to manage the daily workloads, backlog of cases and the recommendations of the review, the quantity of work could have a direct impact on the health and wellbeing of the current staff. The addition of a team leader post will help to create some capacity to manage this work moving forward.
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### **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 Summary Level Project Plan

Appendix 2 – Minute of Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 2 Sept 2021 (to follow)

Appendix 3 – Minute of Planning Committee – 9 Sept 2021 (to follow)