



Decision maker:	Cabinet member: Infrastructure
Decision date:	21 July 2015
Scrutiny committee call-in date:	Governance Services will insert this. Note: You must allow at least 3 clear working days after the date the Decision is taken.
Date decision may be implemented:	Governance Services will insert this. Note: This is the day after the final scrutiny call-in date OR, if the item is called in, the day after the scrutiny meeting.
Title of report:	Response to task & finish group on development management (planning)
Report by:	Head of development management and environmental health

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To approve the executive's response to the recommendations of the general overview & scrutiny committee review of development management (planning).

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the responses as set out in Appendix A are approved.

Alternative options

- 1 There are no alternative options to consider.

Key considerations

- 2 In September 2014 general overview and scrutiny committee (GOSC) established a task and finish group to review the development management planning service after its restructure in 2013. It was commissioned with the following brief:

“In view of the potential impacts on stakeholder perceptions, this task and finish group will consider whether the current system is fit for purpose to ensure that public confidence in the planning function is maintained and enhanced.”

- 3 The task and finish group interviewed staff, customers, members, parish & town councillors and planning officers from an adjoining council in order to undertake this task. As a consequence, a report was drafted and presented to the GOSC on 10 June 2015. It proposed 26 recommendations.
- 4 The recommendations from the GOSC report are provided in appendix A, together with the proposed executive response. The task and finish group report presented to GOSC on 10 June is provided in appendix B.
- 5 It is considered that the recommendations as accepted in Appendix A will enable the planning service to further improve its performance and in doing improve service delivery.

Community impact

- 6 Through the implementation of the accepted recommendations highlighted in appendix A, the service will be improved to the benefit of the general public, planning agents, architects, developers, parish councils and other service users and stakeholders. This supports achievement of the corporate plan priorities through the positive impact this will have upon the economy.

Equality duty

- 7 No changes have been recommended that would have a negative impact on equality or human rights.
- 8 In considering the recommendations from the GOSC, this report has paid due regard to our public sector equality duty as set out below:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct as prohibited by or under the relevant legislation;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

Financial implications

- 9 The cost of the majority of the accepted recommendations are considered minor, as they entail existing officer time only and different ways of working.

- 10 There will be a small cost associated with the distribution of new ICT tablet hardware to planning officers as well as the software engineering required to enable civic mobile working. Tablet hardware is likely to involve circa 20 planning officers with equipment estimated to be in the region of £500 each, i.e. £10k total. This would be financed from the planning budget arising from income surplus to expenditure from planning services in 2015/16. The cost of software engineering to enable mobile civic working is currently unknown and this will be further scoped and negotiated.
- 11 There will also be a small cost associated with the improvements to the frontage and signage of Blueschool House offices, to entail painting of the window frontage and inclusion of better signage.
- 12 The staffing costs referred to in the recommendations are already accounted for in the planning budget, so this does not add to expenditure.

Legal implications

- 13 The recommendations as accepted and laid out in appendix A will not have any negative legal implications, as their adoption will actually improve the planning service and therefore reduce risk of non-determination, breach of contract and potential challenges arising from this.

Risk management

- 14 The adoption of the accepted recommendations will improve the planning service and therefore reduce the risk of action arising from decisions made by committee contrary to policy, action from applicants in relation to non-determination or breach of contract and any potential ombudsman or judicial review intervention that could arise as a result.
- 15 The recommendations as accepted and laid out in Appendix A should therefore reduce the reputational and legal risk to the council.

Consultees

- 16 The task and finish group took evidence from council officers, planning agents / architects, parish and town councils and planning staff from an adjoining council. The detail of this is included in the task and finish report as presented to the GOSC on 10 June 2015 and attached to this report as appendix B.

Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of recommendations and proposed executive responses

Appendix B – Task and finish group report development management (planning)

Background papers

- None identified.