

Audit Commission – Planning Services Review

Action Plan

Recommendation R1	Maximise opportunities to engage and learn from existing/new stakeholders.			
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. The recommendation reflects ongoing and planned work, especially on the LDF and the Civica project.			
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress
Remodelling of Agent's Forum	DC Manager	Sept 09	Greater understanding. Engagement by agents	
Securing feedback from public attendees at Committee	DC Manager	Oct 09	Greater customer focus to meetings	
Revised arrangements for working with the business community	HOP&T/DC Manager	Oct 09	Swifter processing of applications and tailored pre-application advice	
Workshops with community groups, town and parish councils on delivering an electronic planning information system	HOP&T/DC Manager	Nov 09	Understandable and simple-to-use system	

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Recommendation R2	Exploit potential for learning from appeals and other challenges in a training and development setting				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Training for all Development Control officers on lessons learnt from appeals/challenges	HOP&T/DC Manager	Sept 09	Understanding of areas where Inspectorate does not support Council decisions		
Training event for all Members on lessons learnt from appeals/challenges	HOP&T/DC Manager	Oct 09	Understanding of Inspectorate decision		
Preparation of detailed notes for affected ward members on cases referred to in the Audit Commission report	DC Manager	Nov 09	Understanding of Inspectorate decision		
Preparation of new protocol for reporting appeal decisions to committee(s)	HOP&T/DC Manager	Dependant on revised committee structures	Informed debate on appeal decisions		
Preparation of and delivery of training event(s) for town/parish councils on the wider system and any changes made	HOP&T/DC Manager	Sept/Oct 09	Wider understanding of the system		

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Recommendation R3	Develop a full understanding of the impact of external challenges on capacity and reputation				
Cabinet Response	Accepted.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of detailed protocol with Communications Team	HOP&T	Oct 09	Preparation of appropriate and timely releases of information to the press and public		
Recommendation R4	Review the planning delegation scheme.				
Cabinet Response	Accepted. A new system should reflect good practice and be in an accessible format.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of revised scheme of delegation on planning matters.	HOP&T/DC Manager	Relates to revised Committee Structures (R5) Oct 09	Clear and transparent system		
Circulation of revised scheme of delegation to all members and clerks of town/parish councils	DC Manager	Relates to revised Committee Structures (R5) Oct 09	Clear and transparent system		

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Recommendation R5	Review and amend the planning decision-making process				
Cabinet Response	Accepted.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Detailed meetings with all political groups.	Cabinet Member (E&SH)	July 09	Full debate on the issue	Conservative Group Liberal Democrat Group Independent Group	
Discussion of options with Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member (E&SH)	June 09	Feedback on Group discussions		
Preparation of Report on Options to Full Council	Cabinet Member (E&SH)/ HOP&T	Oct 09	Agreement of revised structures	Referral of options to Constitutional Review working party	
Recommendation R6	Clarify procedures for conduct of planning committee(s)				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of protocol for officer presentations to Committee	HOP&T	Sept 09	Consistent and clear reporting		
Preparation of protocol for Members role at Committee	HOP&T	Sept 09	Agreed levels of input and comments		
Preparation of revised guidance notes for members of the public attending/speaking at the Committee	HOP&T	Sept 09	Better understanding by the public of Committee proceedings		

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Recommendation R7	Improved documentation on call-ins, site visits, and amendments/overtuns to proposals				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of revised protocols and procedures on these matters	DC Manager	Sept 09	Greater clarity and consistency		
Incorporation of these matters into Member training event (see R1)	HOP&T	Oct 09	Member training on revised arrangements		

Recommendation R8	Reinforce the importance of preparedness, impartiality, open-mindedness and policy planning for members.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. There are clear links to R4 and R5.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Organisation of training event for Members with an ongoing development control function. (Delivered by external facilitators)	HOP&T	Oct 09	Operation of new committee(s) to national best practice		

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Recommendation R9	Ensure greater separation between role of local ward Member and the planning decision maker				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This overlaps with the action plan on R5.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Organisation of training event for Members without a seat on a development control committee in the new structure.	HOP&T	Sept 09	Understanding of revised roles and flexibilities		
Recommendation R10	Continue to build commitment to and ownership of the UDP and the emerging county-wide planning policy framework.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This reflects ongoing work				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Preparation of detailed timetable for Member engagement in the LDF.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	Member engagement in LDF process		
Preparation of detailed engagement for key stakeholder groups.	Forward Planning Manager	Sept 09	To secure stakeholder engagement in this important document		
Recommendation R11	Reinforce the need for all Councillors to make a balanced and consistent contribution to debates on planning applications at Committee				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
See responses to R7 and R 8					

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Recommendation R12	Make induction and regular specific training mandatory for all Councillors involved in the planning decision making process.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Amend constitution to make induction and on-going training mandatory for all members with a development control function.	HOP&T/ Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic)	Sept 09	To ensure full and appropriate training		
Recommendation R13	Set out planning competencies and future training and development opportunities for all councillors involved in the planning decision-making process.				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Establish members planning and skills framework	HOP&T	May 2010	Member competencies to be assessed against national benchmarks		
Preparation of annual training and development package for members with a development control function	HOP&T	Nov 09 (for 2010)	Training geared to ongoing development needs		

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Recommendation R14	Continue to explore good practice, and share experiences with other planning authorities				
Cabinet's Response	Accepted. This builds on existing practices.				
Action	Owner	By When	Target/Success Criteria	Progress	
Benchmarking processes with similar councils	DC Manager	Ongoing	Exposure to national/developing best practice		
Visits to other authorities with similar committee models to those adopted in the County pursuant to R5.	DC Manager	Oct 09 onwards	Learning issues around system operation		