

Subject:	Planning Advisory Service Peer Review Report		
Date of Meeting:	22 September 2016		
Report of:	Executive Director Economy, Environment & Culture		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to note the actions that have taken place so far and to agree the approach to the outstanding work.
- 1.2 The response to the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) report is important in its own right and to secure ongoing sustainable improvements to the delivery of the Planning Service

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Committee is asked to note the actions that have taken place so far in responding to the findings of the PAS report (Actions 1/2/5/6/7/10)
- 2.2 The Committee is asked to agree the outstanding schedule of work and the approach set out to tackle medium and longer term issues (Actions 3/4/8/9/11/12/13).

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The PAS report was received in May 2016. It followed a request from the Council to have a Peer Review of the Planning Service. The report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 The key issue is that of development management performance. Many of the 'quick wins' have been employed and performance has improved significantly.
- 3.3 The Planning Advisory Service was invited to review the Planning Service, based on a sustained period of under-performance on minor and other applications. The Review was also asked to look into issues around the culture of the service in general and its engagement with the development industry in particular. Within this wider context there was a clear view that the service needed to be fit for purpose for the delivery of the wider regeneration of the city.

- 3.4 The various actions have been overseen by the Planning Services Modernisation Board as part of a co-ordinated programme which aims to modernise the service over the next 18 months. The Modernisation Programme was set up to develop a sustainable future for the service, with improved customer service, in the context of reducing council budgets and an increase in customer demand. Existing projects were consolidated into a programme framework alongside new projects to create a long-term delivery plan for the service, incorporating the four year budget savings proposals. The workstreams within the modernisation programme include:
- Performance improvement – with a focus upon minor and other applications
 - A Digital First approach to service delivery – with the introduction of new ICT platform.
 - Developing new revenue streams – through the introduction of Planning Performance Agreements and charging for pre-application advice
 - City Plan Part 2 – to streamline planning policy
 - Business process improvement and cultural change – to drive efficiency and customer focused approach.
- 3.5 There have been several key achievements and successes since the receipt of the PAS report. The most important are set out below.
- 3.6 There has been a significant and sustainable improvement in the processing of minor and other applications. Appendix 3 sets out a detailed analysis of the improvement in performance together with the associated decrease in the earlier application backlog. In recent months, application performance has been at national best practice level at close to 100% of applications being determined in time or with an agreed extension of time. The service is on target to have determined 60% of minor and other applications within time or with an extension of time in the rolling 24 month period that ends on 30 September 2016. This is the critical period against which the Government will make an assessment of the extent to which this and other Councils are performing to appropriate standards. The Committee will be given an update on progress on this matter at the meeting.
- 3.7 There has also been substantial progress on the implementation of the new planning registration and performance management system which is key to digitalising the service. On 5 September 2016 the service successfully migrated to Uniform/IDOX. This represents a state of the art system that will allow the service to work more efficiently and to streamline its business processes. These arrangements have been secured without any disruption to service delivery. The development industry has been kept fully informed around the implementation issues and timetable. Decisions have already been issued on applications that have been registered using this new system.
- 3.8 The introduction of this new ICT system is important in its own right. It is also critical to the ability of the service to move successfully to Hove Town Hall and to adopt flexible and remote working arrangements. These impending measures will assist significantly in the modernisation and efficiency of the service.

- 3.9 The PAS report also raised several issues around the effective operation of the Planning Committee. Detailed changes have already been made to committee procedures so that it is more streamlined and customer-focussed. The Planning Committee Member Working Group has also debated recommended changes in the PAS report to arrangements for handling circumstances where members want to proceed contrary to officer recommendation. New arrangements were in place at the Committee meeting on 14 September.2016.
- 3.10 The service has taken a positive approach to the range of recommendations in the PAS report about planning policy and associated community benefits. Detailed consultation has now commenced on a scoping report for Part 2 of the City Plan. Plainly, this will provide an important component of the framework for future investment in the city. Detailed work has been carried out on setting up a Community Infrastructure Levy. There is a separate report on the agenda on this matter.
- 3.11 The service has also responded positively to the issue around providing appropriate and timely advice to the development industry. A protocol is now in place for the delivery of Planning Performance Agreements and for the delivery of chargeable pre-application advice on major planning applications. An equivalent charging regime for minor and other applications will be rolled out in January 2017. These mechanisms are important in their own right, in delivering a more pro-active engagement strategy with the development industry and in securing appropriate income.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Appendix 2 sets out a recommended series of actions that stem from the recommendations.
- 4.2 Plainly it is within the gift of the Council not to accept some or all of these recommendations. Nevertheless, they are fundamental to the delivery of a modern and efficient planning service in the City.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The findings of the report have already been relayed internally to senior officers and members.
- 5.2 The report has been published on the website, and a meeting of the Professionals Forum has discussed its key findings. There is widespread support amongst the development industry to work with your officers to improve the delivery of the service.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The future delivery of a strong and stable Planning Service will be at the heart of economic growth and the future prosperity of the City.

6.2 The implementation of the PAS report findings will assist greatly in this matter.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 It is anticipated that the cost of actions highlighted in the outstanding schedule of work will be funded from existing and approved budgets within the Planning and other service areas where appropriate. Any financial implications associated with the actions identified will be assessed within relevant reports or business cases to seek appropriate approval where required.
- 7.2 The achievement of various actions identified will contribute towards improved service efficiency and effectiveness, and will facilitate the achievement of savings proposals identified within the Service and Financial Plans approved by Budget Council. The recurring financial impact of the actions will be reflected within the service revenue budget and reviewed as part of the council's budget monitoring process.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Steven Bedford Date: 01/09/16

7.3 Legal Implications:

The service delivery improvements detailed in the Response and Improvement Plan should assist the local planning authority in achieving the statutory time limits for the determination of planning applications and in making unchallengeable planning decisions.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Hilary Woodward Date: 01/09/16

7.4 Equalities Implications:

There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

7.5 Sustainability Implications:

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

7.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The service has actively managed the risks that arise from a high profile and on-going improvement programme. The Modernisation Programme Board has overseen several of the key components. The Planning Service's Management Team regularly monitors progress against the action plans set out at Appendix 2. Plainly, the risks will need to be managed in the medium to long term as some of the broader, cultural and organisational issues are addressed.

7.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The PAS report and the Council's response to its findings will be critical to the on-going regeneration agenda. In particular, a modern and efficient planning

service will provide confidence to the development industry and will actively promote new developments through the City Plan Part 2.

7.8 Any Other Significant Implications:

There are no other significant implications arising from this report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. PAS Report
2. Actions
3. Performance details

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None
2. None

Background Documents

1. None
2. None