

**Performance:**

**1. What do the measures in the Service Plan tell you about the performance of the service at this point in the year?**

The service area is continuing to perform at a high level with regard to planning application performance with the number of planning applications determined within the statutory time scale remaining at over 90%. There also continues to be significant schemes submitted resulting in sustained high levels of fee income.

The proportion of planning applications submitted electronically continues at a high level approaching 90% and this has contributed towards the Council retaining the '*Smarter Planning Champion*' status.

The number of successful appeals against officer decisions remains at a consistent low level, together with the number of successful appeals against decisions where members have overturned officer's recommendations. This data is now included as a standing item on the planning committee agenda as an information and learning tool for officers and members.

The number of enforcement cases on hand throughout the year has increased from approximately 120 to 140 open investigations. This is partly as a result of staffing changes however it is anticipated that this number will continue to reduce over the coming weeks as the team beds down again.

A key area of work that has been undertaken within the last 6 months is the review and establishment of revised procedures to monitor section 106 agreement and contributions. This is essential to ensure that requirements and contributions are secured and undertaken/spent in an appropriate and timely manner. As a result an extensive spreadsheet which is publically available on the District Council's website has been prepared and is in use.

Whilst this remains a key area of work in progress, the benefits of this transparent and detailed approach to monitoring those requirements is already becoming clear.

Another significant project that is being undertaken is the introduction of a pre-application charging regime, the trialling of which will begin this autumn. To support this, we have started a free drop-in session to provide advice to members of the public who may wish to have some guidance on domestic

alterations before undertaking the costs of employing an agent and submitting an application.

The number of full land charge searches received in the year continues to be at a lower level than was previously the case, predominantly because more people are having personal searches done as they are quicker and cheaper. The Government is pressing ahead with proposals to move land charges to become the responsibility of the Land Registry in the next few years.

Building Control is now part of a joint service with Rugby and Daventry Councils. The cases across the joint service are remaining at a fairly constant level, which with strong competition from Approved Inspectors is positive. The scale and nature of the cases has marginally reduced, which has affected income, although figures to date do still demonstrate a profit due to the sharing of our resources. Building Control continues to receive positive feedback from clients responding to the customer satisfaction questionnaire, with a very high level of satisfaction, currently over 95% of our customers expressing that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the service. More performance data is now available covering Rugby and Daventry which enables us to monitor the whole new service better.

For Economic Development, market conditions have continued to improve and the vacant units we have reflect that condition. A number of lettings have been made recently which involve rent free periods to allow the tenant to upgrade the buildings. Retail occupiers in tertiary properties may be more vulnerable to changes and therefore there a risk of continued churn in certain properties. The 15/16 budget was overstated due to a number of voids, rent free periods and some changes. The projected income may vary by £70k, which has already been reported to Executive.

The Draft Local Plan was submitted for Inspection in January 2015. Following the hearings in May 2015 the Inspector concluded that the Plan would be found unsound and should be withdrawn. The Council has now agreed to write to the Inspector asking him to agree to a suspension of the Examination until March 2016, thereby allowing us time to address the concerns he has raised.

Regular portfolio holder reviews of the Contracts & Risk Register are undertaken with the Head of Development Services and management team.

Development Services also has a part time officer working solely on HS2, ensuring that the authority is fully engaged with the process, including petitioning, assisting areas that are significantly affected by HS2 to present their case. The Project Officer has been working closely with the Member Lead and Portfolio Holder on all matters arising from the proposals.

## **2. What actions do you intend to take based on the measures?**

Performance on planning applications and enforcement continues to be regularly discussed in team meetings. Although monitoring monthly data is important, longer term trend data provides useful information and we are continuing to build on and use this information. Officers have taken more responsibility for their case load and performance of the service. As said earlier, a mechanism for learning from appeal decisions continues. Pre-application charging is key to providing a good service for pre-application advice. The current approach is poor and under-resourced, causing more problems than it helps. The charging mechanism will provide additional staff to support this.

We have learnt that we need to regularly survey all our customers, ie. Committee, applicants and neighbours to developments, users of building control and estates.

We have reviewed the land charges service in terms of the cost of searches, as we are significantly more expensive than other authorities in the sub-region, and the number of personal searches are increasing (which is inevitable as they are cheaper and quicker). We are continuing to move towards a more streamlined electronic system of searches which will enable customers to undertake their own search on-line and are close to commencing the use of a self-service land charges kiosk in the Riverside House reception area. We will be one of a small number of authorities that has achieved this. Our fees have now been reduced in line with the actual cost of the service and as a result are as competitive as all other authorities in the sub-region.

On the Local Plan we have:

- Proposed a revised Local Plan timetable seeking to persuade the Inspector to agree to a period of suspension rather than withdrawal
- Reviewed the housing requirement evidence to ensure alignment with employment forecasts
- Worked closely with partner authorities in Housing Market Area to work towards a new Duty to Cooperate agreements
- Reviewed our approach to windfalls allowance
- Reviewed the 5 year housing land supply calculation
- Commenced site assessment work to enable additional sites to be allocated to ensure the housing requirement is met in full
- Reviewed the Infrastructure Delivery and have agreed to report on this to scrutiny every six months

The continued learning from Estates Management has resulted in improved working with Housing and Property Services on carrying out dilapidations surveys on our properties – these have reduced the cost of maintaining the non-operational estate. A number of systems are being reviewed to enhance the electronic performance of the service.

26 Hamilton Terrace showed the value of leveraging in external funding to assist in refurbishment and therefore letting of quality properties – particularly those that support sectors that WDC is interested in.

The service has learnt that we need to better articulate the expectation of flux in the level of income from the non-operational estate. There will always be changes in occupiers and rent levels depending on the state of the market and because of the nature of these changes (eg: 5 year leases), they are locked in for a period of time. This has the potential to create “dips” or peaks in income that cannot be immediately recovered/maintained.

As indicated above, the permanent arrangement for the joint service for Building Control is now in place and this will provide the resilience of the service needed in the future. As we continue to develop the joint service, we will have a consistent approach to performance management, and we will continue to explore opportunities for other work that can provide additional income such as fire risk assessments, structural surveys, EPC ratings etc.

The further embedding of the Risk Management process has resulted in improved & earlier identification of issues and their ramifications.

## **Risks**

### **3. Highlight any significant changes to the risks in your Service Plan and any actions that you intend to take to address the revised risks**

**Budget:** Officers have been involved in additional finance training throughout the year to ensure that there is a better understanding of the code of Financial Practice and that this is adhered to. This has resulted in better day to day budget monitoring, and an appreciation of the important of raising orders correctly and prior to invoices being received, an area that we previously performed poorly on.

**Procurement:** As part of the training stated above, officers are working closely with the Procurement team to ensure that procedures are improved, and there is a clear audit of how goods and services are procured. This is also a quarterly standing agenda item on the team meetings.

**Contract management:** this has been a challenging area for us as the information has not been held centrally until recently. Through a significant amount of work and scrutiny of the Contracts Register for the service area by Finance and Audit, the data held is now much clearer and has helped us as a service area understand what needs to be included in the Contracts Register. Again, this is a quarterly standing item on our team meetings.

Audits: We have had a number of recent audits which have all had a satisfactory rating. From the audit plans, officers are ensuring that these are implemented. Section 106 contributions will be having a further audit to ensure that the database is in place. Building Control will be part of an audit that will be looking at the shared service later in the year.

Risk Register: This is regularly reviewed for the service area and will be part of the Finance and Audit Scrutiny process at the end of September 2015. This is also a standing item on our team meetings.

## **Workforce Planning**

### **4. Highlight any significant changes to your Workforce Planning and any actions that you intend to take to address the revised plan**

Succession Planning: Historically, Development Services have had some difficult experiences with the lack of succession planning severely impacting on the service, and therefore we are trying to ensure that we have plans in place. Of course, we cannot plan for the unexpected, but recently there have been some good examples where the Principal Conservation Officer planned with officers a retirement programme, that allowed us to ensure that we had a continuous resource for this important area of work.

We are also training and developing staff to assist in their career development so that we will have staff able to step into more senior roles when they become available. As part of this, we have also started to change job descriptions so that officers are in more generic roles, for example planning officers become more flexible and are able to move between development management and planning policy, enabling us to move resource to where the need is most.

Skills, Training and Competency Needs: Officers are developing a service area training plan following on from staff appraisals, which will provide generic planning training as well as specialist planning training. However, budgets for training need to be better aligned to the requirements to develop staff to ensure that officers have the skills to do their job well. Basic awareness on child safeguarding is also identified for the service area.

Service changes: There are two service area reviews taking place over the coming months. This includes Building Control due to the need to revise the structure for the joint service. Whilst the three authorities have merged together, the structure needs adjusting to provide a more business focused and commercially aware service that can be competitive with the private sector. The other area is Economic Development and Regeneration and work has been progressing on assessing what our priorities are and how we manage all the other requirements and demands on this team, particularly where we are overlapping with other organisations.

## **Budget**

### **5. Highlight any significant changes to the budget pressures highlighted in the Service Plan and any actions required to address these changes**

Within the service plan, there are four budget pressures highlighted that are or need to be addressed during the year. First, the requirement to meet the reduction in the discretionary spend over a four year period has been challenging. This has now been identified but has resulted in stripping back all small budgets that provide basic provisions for the service, with Economic Development being the hardest area hit due to the non-statutory nature of some of the work. Any further reductions may result in the service area losing staff and will start to affect service delivery.

Secondly, the cost of defending appeals is very high as a result of the number and scale of the appeals. We have had a significantly high number of public inquiries on major proposals, two of which (The Asps and Gallows Hill) will have cost in the region of £50 – 80K each to defend, assuming there is no award of costs against the authority. Of course, many of the appeals are a direct consequence of not having a local plan in place. There is a direct correlation to the increased number of applications and fee income, which helps to offset some of the additional cost.

Thirdly, the additional work required due to the position with the local plan will require the Planning Reserves being topped up. There will be a need to carry out some short pieces of work to strengthen our evidence if the local plan continues to progress on the examination. Of course, if the Inspector decides not to agree to a suspension of the local plan and requires us to withdraw, the additional cost to refresh the work will be more significant.

Fourthly, we need to consider ways of retaining our current Building Control staff, who are often being approached by the private sector, due to the lack of qualified people in the industry. This will be part of the re-structure and review of the joint service which is commencing in September 2015.

The service area has recently taken on a consultant to assist in sourcing grant funding for projects, not just for development services, but for the whole organisation. This is in recognition of the reduction in financial resources in local government, and to explore opportunities to enable projects to be progressed and delivered. This resource is on a temporary basis to measure the output and ensure that it provides value for money. The budget allocated was £50K.

## Planned changes, work streams and projects

6. Highlight any work streams/projects that have been completed at this point and any significant changes or new work streams/projects expected during the year.

Project Name	Progress	Original Milestones	New Milestones
<b>Building Control</b>			
Establishing a permanent arrangement for the shared service	Complete	Implemented April 1 <sup>st</sup> .2015	
Establishing a new staffing structure for the shared service	Initial work underway	February 2016	
<b>Planning policy</b>			
Development of draft Local Plan	Submission January 2015	Submission originally to Council August 2014	Dependent on Inspector's response
Development of Warwick AAP	Policies now subsumed in Local Plan.  AAP abandoned	N/A	

Support Neighbourhood Plans	<p>9 neighbourhood plan areas have been designated</p> <p>1 (Whitnash) has completed its examination and is progressing towards referendum. 1 (Barford) is being examined.</p> <p>The remainder are under preparation</p>	On-going	First plans to be adopted by end of 2015?
Develop CIL Scheme	Draft CIL scheme prepared		Submission imminent if Local Plan examination continues
Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations	Revised proposals being prepared in line with report to Executive in July 2015	Submission draft to Council in early 2015 (not achieved)	Potential for submission draft by end of 2015 subject to availability of preferred sites
HS2	Support being provided in terms of planning (officer now in post)	On-going	



Leamington AAP	Initial work commenced	Early 2015 (not achieved due to Local Plan delays)	Work to commence on AAP in early 2016
<b>Development Management</b>			
Develop pre-application charging service	Executive have agreed to progress the scheme following public consultation	Initial report to December 14 Executive	Implement scheme September 2015
Monitoring performance of determining planning applications	On-going	N/A	N/A
Customer satisfaction surveys	Work has progressed in some areas of the service	June 13	November 15
Review validation checklist	Work has progressed but further work is required.	July 13	December 15
Monitor S106 contributions including levy at 3% and provision of a database	In place – although set at 1% up to max of £30K	April 13	In place
Develop and implement training plan	Training plan being developed	June 13	Ongoing
Review the use of ICT systems	This is to improve the way we deliver services and to make us more	April 13 – this work is continuous	

	effective and efficient		
<b>Economic Development &amp; Regeneration</b>			
Review of Events Intervention and how it can be enhanced	Opportunity to review	Mar 15	In place
Development of Prosperity Plan	Prosperity Agenda taken to Executive to set out framework for action	To report	Review on-going with
Review, Development and delivery of town centre action plans	Renewed Progress made on Warwick and Kenilworth	On-going	N/A
Tourism Strategy Implementation	DMO launched Oct 13  Destination Management Plan launched May 2015	Adopted April 2015	In place  Implementation of DMP underway
Community Right to Bid	Procedures put in place to deal with bids.	Feb 15	Reviewed to assess best practice and case law. On-going
Update of Property Systems	Streamlining of procedures and electronic systems to increase	Sept 15	Delivery by 2016

	resilience		
Business Satisfaction Survey	To be done annually	October 2015	