



Purpose: For Noting

Committee report

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION
Date	5 JANUARY 2023
Title	UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER REVIEW INTO PLANNING SERVICES
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 committed to holding a review of Planning Services. This was independently undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) in May 2022.
2. The Planning Services Improvement Steering Group has been established, with agreed terms of reference, to drive the improvements that need to be implemented in response to the report recommendations.
3. The work thus far has been encapsulated in a working document called Route Map to Delivering Improvements document (please see Appendix 1). This document is not a finished piece of work, but it was considered appropriate to share it with the Committee to demonstrate progress and the intended direction of travel for this work.
4. Steering Group has identified four key work areas to prioritise action. These are:
 - Progressing the local plan
 - Improving our pre-application advice offer
 - Improving our Development Management function
 - Improving our Enforcement function
5. The Steering Group is very clear that there should be an overarching core principle of improving trust, learning and customer service that should be at the heart of how the four key work areas are tackled.
6. The Steering Group will continue its work on the route map document and then the Improvement Delivery Plan, and to continue to deliver on the identified actions.

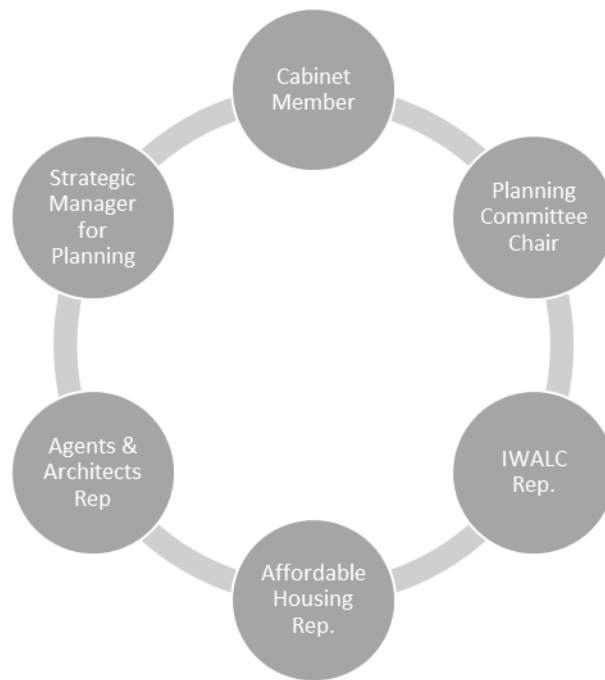
Progress will continue to be publicly shared, with regular updates to Councillors through this Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

BACKGROUND

7. The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 committed to holding a review of Planning Services. This was independently undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) in May 2022.
8. The Peer Review report made six recommendations and identified a wide range of actions and outcomes linked to those recommendations.
9. A page dedicated to the Peer Review has been added to Planning Services webpages, <https://beta.iow.gov.uk/planning/lga-peer-review/peer-review-report/>, where the Peer Review report itself is publicly available.
10. The then interim Chief Executive and Council Leader directed the Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement and Planning Services itself to drive the changes and improvements from within.

PROGRESS TO DATE

11. 56 individual actions, objectives or outcomes were identified by officers within the LGA Peer Review Group's report. Confirmation of these was sought from all Councillors and the internal and external stakeholders who were involved in the Peer Review interviews that the actions, objectives or outcomes had been properly captured to be addressed.
12. The Planning Services Improvement Steering Group has been established, with agreed terms of reference, to drive the improvements that need to be implemented in response to the report recommendations. The Steering Group provides an opportunity to bring together a diverse group of people to gain consensus about the changes that are needed. The Steering Group consists of Councillors, Planning Staff and external stakeholders to ensure a wide range of views.
13. There are six members, as set out on the following page, and the Steering Group is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Planning and Enforcement.
14. The Steering Group will provide leadership and set the agenda for change. It will provide oversight of progress against the agreed Improvement Delivery Plan for improvements in relation to the Peer Review findings.
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16. The Steering Group will make recommendations, but will not make decisions. All decisions will follow the normal decision-making route within the Council. A range of decisions may need to be made by the Strategic Manager for Planning & Infrastructure Delivery; the Director for Regeneration; the Planning and Enforcement Portfolio holder; the Cabinet or the Full Council in accordance with the Council's constitution and scheme of delegation.
17. The Steering Group has already begun meeting (and has diarised meetings at six weekly intervals) and has identified key work areas to prioritise actions.
18. The work thus far has been encapsulated in a working document called Route Map to Delivering Improvements document (please see Appendix 1). This document is not a finished piece of work, but it was considered appropriate to share it with the Committee to demonstrate progress and the intended direction of travel for this work. Once finalised the route map document will be publicly available.
19. As set out in the route map document the Steering Group has identified four key work areas to prioritise action. These are:
 - Progressing the local plan
 - Improving our pre-application advice offer
 - Improving our Development Management function
 - Improving our Enforcement function
20. The Steering Group is very clear that there should be an overarching core principle of improving trust, learning and customer service that should be at the heart of how the four key work areas are tackled.
21. Following on the road map document an Improvement Delivery Plan (IDP) will be prepared, which will clearer about what, if any, further funding and/or resources will be required to deliver the intended changes and improvements.

22. Without further funding and/or resources the pace of change is unlikely to be as fast as many would like, and the current situation may not immediately improve. Therefore, how the change is sequenced and managed will be critical and it will have an impact on both the providers and the range of different users of Planning Services.
23. It is unlikely that Planning Services will be able to deliver all the changes and improvements from within. It is likely to be dependent on others, both in the Council and outside. If, for example, new IT software is required, it will either have to be bought in from a specialist provider or 'bid' for time and resource from colleagues in IT.
24. The Steering Group will take the strategic oversight for delivering change across the spectrum of planning work undertaken by Planning Services. It will major on workstreams arising from the recommendations from the Peer Review Group. There are already some specific workstreams and mechanisms established to undertake some of this work, and the Steering Group does not want to duplicate the time and effort already being undertaken. The route map document sets out the anticipated relationship between the Steering Group and the other groups in more detail.

NEXT STEPS

25. For the Steering Group to continue its work on the route map document and then the Improvement Delivery Plan, and to continue to deliver on the identified actions. Progress will continue to be publicly shared, with regular updates to Councillors through this Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.

APPENDICES ATTACHED

26. Appendix 1 – Route Map for Delivering Improvement

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