



Committee report

Committee	POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND REGENERATION
Date	7 JULY 2022
Title	PLANNING PEER REVIEW
Report of	CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

Background

1. At the meeting of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration on 5th May 2022 consideration was given the forthcoming Planning Peer Review scheduled to take place between 17th-19th May 2022.
2. The committee noted that following receipt of the peer review report and its recommendations, it was intended to implement an action plan to set out how the Council would achieve its recommendations and requested the findings of the review and any supporting action plan be submitted to a future meeting.

Update

3. The review was carried out by an experienced team from the Local Government Association who over the 3 days carried out interviews and workshops with both internal and external stakeholders as well as reviewing relevant documentation and attending council meetings including the council AGM which took place during their visit.
4. The visit culminated in a brief presentation of their initial findings to those who had attended the interviews and workshops (both internal and external) with a full report to be provided in approximately 4-6 weeks.
5. The LGA report was received on the 21st June and is attached as Appendix 1. The report was made available on the council web site on 27th June (link below)
<https://www.iow.gov.uk/documentlibrary/view/planning-peer-review>
6. The recommendations contained in the report are:
7. **Urgently review the constitution and procedural rules to effectively deliver the Council's democratic function.** The existing Constitution is comprehensive in its scope but requires a refresh, in particular a review of the Code of Practice for Councillors and officers should be undertaken as a matter of urgency. A review of protocols would benefit from a joint input from both Councillors and officers.

8. **Support this through member and officer training and development opportunities on both the democratic function and planning matters.** Support more useful and appropriate Councillor behaviours through on-going training, development and learning opportunities to embed behaviours to create a sustainable culture.
9. **There is a need to rebuild trust between Councillors, officers and the Community.** The planning function, which includes both Councillors and officers, is dealing with a number of issues that cause it to function sub-optimally. There was evidence from different sources outlining how it doesn't work and causes unexpected outcomes.
10. **Urgently finalise and adopt the Island Plan.** The Local Plan provides a degree of certainty for communities, businesses and investors, and a framework for guiding decisions on individual planning applications. Without one it is possible for the submission and acceptance of developments that are deemed not in the public interest and outside of the needs and priorities of local people, as outlined in a Local Plan.
11. **Improve communication.** Presently there is a lack of effective communication between Councillors and Officers, and those in the Planning Service, other stakeholders and the public at large. This needs to change. Better communication will improve understanding, build relationships and ultimately improve outcomes.
12. **Need for Improvements in Planning outcomes.** The Planning Service needs to embark upon a programme of improvement. This includes both Councillors and officers at all levels in the service. This work will have several aspects to it that the detailed recommendations in this report cover in greater detail from page 11 onwards.

Next Steps

13. The council has previously committed to develop an action plan to deliver the recommendations of the peer review and it is proposed that this will be overseen by a working group of members and officers led by the Cabinet Member for Planning together with the Chairman of the Planning Committee and the Strategic Manager for Planning and Infrastructure. It is proposed that the working group will comprise both external and internal representation.
14. This committee is requested to note the LGA Peer Review report, the establishment of the working group to consider its finding and that the working group will report back to future meetings of this committee on the development and delivery of the action plan.

Appendix 1 – Planning Peer Challenge Report - Isle of Wight Council 17 to 19 May 2022

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