

# TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

<b>Report to:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	16 October 2018
<b>Subject:</b>	Development Services Review Action Plan
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Development Services
<b>Corporate Lead:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Lead Member for Built Environment
<b>Number of Appendices:</b>	One

## **Executive Summary:**

The Development Services Review was approved by Council on 25 April 2018. This review was supported by an action plan to help improve the service, make it more efficient and place it in a position to maximise the ability to commercialise the service in the future. The action plan is a dynamic document, which is being used as a tool to help manage the service improvement, and follows the same format as the regular tracker of performance that is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. This report demonstrates the progress made and provides a context for future work and projects in line with the overall aims and objectives of the Development Services review.

## **Recommendation:**

**To CONSIDER the progress against the Development Services Review Action Plan.**

## **Reasons for Recommendation:**

To comply with the Council's decision for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to monitor the Development Services Review Action Plan.

## **Resource Implications:**

None as a direct result of this report.

## **Legal Implications:**

None as a direct result of this report.

## **Risk Management Implications:**

None as a direct result of this report.

**Performance Management Follow-up:**

Performance on a number of key performance indicators is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a matter of course. Following presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 October 2018, the Action Plan will be revised with a new updated version being presented in six months time.

**Environmental Implications:**

None as a direct result of this report.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** The Development Services Review was approved by Council on 25 April 2018. This review was supported by an action plan to help improve the service, make it more efficient and place it in a position to be able to commercialise, should there be a future business case. The action plan is a dynamic document which is being used as a tool to help manage improvements in the service. It follows the same format as the regular tracker of performance which is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 1.2** Members will be aware that performance of the planning service against statutory key indicators is positive with the team exceeding national targets and meeting the stretched local targets. In some quarters, performance on the speed of determination of planning applications can be considered as top quartile. The action plan seeks to sustain this performance. This report demonstrates the early progress already made and provides a context for future work and projects in line with the overall aims and objectives of the Development Services Review.
- 1.3** Whilst early work on the implementation of this review has begun, with a number of actions already completed and targets met, it is a dynamic document which will be continually updated as progress and efficiencies are made. It is envisaged that, once efficiencies are made, further progress focusing on greater transformation and commercialising the service can be made to create a resilient service fit for future purposes.
- 1.4** This is the first report detailing the progress made up to the end of September 2018. Whilst some of the actions will have immediate results, many of the actions are medium term and results may not be seen straight away. It is also important to note that this is not the Development Services Service Plan which details day-to-day operational functions of the service, but a separate document dealing specifically with service improvement, efficiency and transformation projects.

**2.0 MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURE**

- 2.1** Following Council approval in April 2018 the structural changes to the Development Services team, including all necessary consultations with staff, were carried out. The partnership with Gloucester City Council has been implemented, with the appointment of the Technical Planning Manager in June and the appointment of the Business Transformation Manager in August. The Growth and Enterprise Manager was appointed in May and the Hub Navigator in June. Other associated changes in line with management/reporting have also been implemented in line with the Development Services Review.

- 2.2** In relation to further opportunities for sharing of staff across the two local authorities, Tewkesbury Borough Council's Urban Design Officer is undertaking work for Gloucester City Council on a regular basis and officers are also exploring a joint planning enforcement role with Gloucester City to aid service resilience.
- 2.3** The Planning Partnership Management Team (Tewkesbury Borough Council Head of Development Services, Gloucester City Council City Delivery Manager and the two joint Technical Planning Manager and Business Transformation Manager posts) across both Councils is meeting regularly to review issues and opportunities within the two services and will be making better use of management reports as a result of this review to monitor and check progress against targets.
- 2.4** Early work has recognised that there are improvements that can be made to processes and application of IT systems used by both local authorities to avoid duplication and maximise efficiencies, not least for the two officers who are undertaking joint roles. Joint working has allowed the team to recognise good practice across the two authorities but also where each authority can learn from the other and it has also provided resilience in dealing with projects where improvements are needed. To positively assist this a set of joint Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are being devised with common themes across both authorities to ensure projects undertaken by each authority are complementary.

### **3.0 DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT ACTIONS**

- 3.1** The vast majority of the requirements of the action plan are related to the Development Management service and these actions have been a priority over the past few months, particularly since the implementation of the new working arrangements and the arrival of the new Business Transformation Manager.
- 3.2** Many of the projects in the action plan which can aid service improvements have focused around the development and use of IT and maximising the use of Idox and Uniform to facilitate effective performance management. These improvements have enhanced the ability for individual officers to review their own caseloads and to provide the team leaders with a greater level of information and hence improve effective team management.
- 3.3** Another key aspect of the action plan was to enhance officer training to ensure that the teams are able to make effective, consistent recommendations and decisions. In line with this a role out of training workshops in line with the new National Planning Policy Framework and other key policy areas has taken place.
- 3.4** The pre-application service was recognised as an area which required review. To that end, the team is preparing common templates to ensure relevant and succinct information is provided to customers, along with other process improvements to speed up the processing of the pre-application enquiries.
- 3.5** Other key projects to aid the effectiveness of the service have been actioned, including the review of the validation checklists (the information that is required before we can register validate and start working on an application) and a review of standard conditions. Both of these actions will reduce the overall time taken to process applications.
- 3.6** The speed and quality of consultation responses from both internal and external consultees was an area which required review. A standardisation of common responses is being prepared so that efficiencies can be made.

- 3.7** These key projects and others set out in more detail in the action plan tracker, will be incorporated into the procedures manual which will be particularly useful for new starters.
- 3.8** Officers have created a suitable template and are in discussions with an applicant to initiate a Planning Performance Agreement. This affords the Council greater flexibility in setting the fee.
- 3.9** In terms of customer contact, with the help of colleagues in IT, officers are piloting (householders in the first instance with future roll-out to the remainder of applications an electronic method of notifying applicants and agents of the progress on their planning application. The intention is to provide a modern and proactive service which customers expect and should reduce avoidable direct contact to free up case officer resource.
- 3.10** A customer satisfaction questionnaire will be sent out shortly seeking views on key aspects of the service, the results of which should help to inform and monitor the effectiveness of the improvement measures implemented.

#### **4.0 PLANNING POLICY**

- 4.1** Over the last few months work within the Policy team has focused on the preparation of the issues and options stage of the review of the Joint Core Strategy and the preferred options stage of the Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan and this will continue to be a focus of the team over the foreseeable future. The two vacant posts in the team should shortly be filled allowing for a greater focus and capacity on the development of the Statement of Community Involvement. Furthermore, now the Tewkesbury Borough Plan is at its preferred options stage, the incorporation of the maps associated with that Plan into the policy mapping online project can be progressed

#### **5.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT , THE GROWTH HUB AND TOURISM**

- 5.1** The Growth Hub is now open and operational and plans are underway with regard to the formal opening of the Growth Hub this autumn. The integration of the hub as a service within the Council is progressing, allowing the Council to offer a positive 'one stop shop' to businesses across the services we provide. The Growth Hub surgeries, briefing sessions on the Growth Hub and matters effecting business with Council officers, will streamline better communication between the services. The three incubator units have already been let to local businesses. This Growth Hub activity sits alongside the other economic development services the Council provides. A survey of businesses to ascertain our effectiveness will take place following the formal Growth Hub opening.
- 5.2** Officers have had conversations with key partners in terms of delivery of the tourism role. Current uncertainty over future national funding of tourism and the models and governance to be employed in tourism services will be required to be built into any future decisions on the role, scope and scale of the future of the tourism service. This review is a priority for the service over the coming months.

#### **6.0 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

- 6.1** One of the actions in the plan was to hold a 'Place' workshop session with key officers. An initial meeting with the portfolio holders for health and wellbeing and community safety has taken place, the outcome of which was that a Member workshop will be arranged to clarify and define the role of the Place Approach.

#### **7.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1** None.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1** There are various actions within the plan which require consultation, however none required as a direct result of this report.

## **9.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES**

- 9.1** Joint Core Strategy Submission Document [www.gct-ics.org/](http://www.gct-ics.org/)

## **10.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

- 10.1** National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance – Updated July 2018 <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

## **11.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)**

- 11.1** None as a direct result of this report albeit projects individually may require new or re-scoped resources to effectively deliver the benefits of service improvements.

## **12.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)**

- 12.1** None as a direct result of this report.

## **13.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)**

- 13.1** None as a direct result of this report.

## **14.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS**

- 14.1** Council Plan approved by Council 25 April 2018 and Development Services Review approved by Council 25 April 2018.

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**Background Papers:** None

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1 – Action Plan