

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	9 April 2019
Subject:	Development Services Review Action Plan
Report of:	Head of Development Services
Corporate Lead:	Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Built Environment
Number of Appendices:	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 improvements 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 made 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 in relation to planning specifically is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a matter of course. Following presentation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9 April 2019, 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** Considerable progress has been made on the Action Plan, with the majority of actions completed and targets met. The Plan 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 second report detailing the progress made up to the end of March 2019. 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** The previous update report detailed that all the Development Services team structural changes and the partnership with Gloucester City Council have been implemented.
- 2.2** Tewkesbury Borough Council's Urban Design Officer continues to undertake work for Gloucester City Council on a regular basis and the opportunities for further joint working with Gloucester City to aid service resilience and efficiencies will continue to be explored. Both councils have benefited from joint working, sharing expertise and processes in a learning from each other model.

- 2.3** Good practice and procedures continue to be shared across both councils. Gloucester City Council is currently undergoing in a process review for all of its planning activities and Tewkesbury Borough Council Officers are participating in the workshops. The intention is that, where appropriate, revised processes will be common to both councils.

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. Progress on individual projects is set out in the action plan attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.2** There continues to be progress on actions to maximise the functionality of existing IT systems for planning application/enforcement case management, performance management and more efficient ways of working. Following the consideration of the Methods Digital review, the business case for further investment in IT will be explored.
- 3.3** To measure service delivery and to track the effectiveness of the interventions that have been made to date, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for planning have been agreed and reported previously to this Committee and will be implemented in April 2019.
- 3.4** The pre-application service was recognised as an area which required review. A customer satisfaction questionnaire has been sent with all pre-application response letters since January 2019 and will assist with the identification of improvements required for the existing service. The intention is that customer satisfaction questionnaire will be sent to applicants for planning permission, once it has been fully tested. The results of the questionnaires will feed into the review of the effectiveness of measures already implemented and further service improvements that are required.
- 3.5** Revised validation checklists have been published and improve opportunities for customers to self-serve to identify the plans and documents required to support a planning application.
- 3.6** Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's) have been implemented for two planning applications and discussions are ongoing in relation to a number of other potential PPA's. These assist with fee income projections, resource and case management while providing additional income for the Council.
- 3.7** Due to other corporate IT priorities, the "tracker" for householder planning applications has been delayed but it is anticipated that will be ready for a pilot implementation in summer 2019. The provision of more user-friendly enforcement information for Members has been delayed to allow for the new Senior Planning and Enforcement Officer to lead on this project. 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.
- 3.8** Through the implementation of the Development Services Action Plan, a number of further small scale proposals to improve service delivery, manage costs and improve capacity for income generation have arisen. These have been incorporated into a more detailed operational action plan to ensure a continued focus on transforming the planning service with a view to commercialising elements of the service.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1** Over the last few months, work within the Planning Policy team has focused on collating and responding to 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 given the importance of these two documents to the Borough's growth strategy. The two vacant posts in the team have been 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 and work has been undertaken to progress this without significant outlay or resource through utilising existing software.

5.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT , THE GROWTH HUB AND TOURISM

- 5.1** The Growth Hub is now open and operational and, following its formal opening last autumn, it is going from strength to strength. 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 affecting business with Council Officers, is allowing better communication between the services. The three incubator units have been let to local businesses. This Growth Hub activity sits alongside the other economic development services the Council provides.
- 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. Similarly, the use and grant restrictions on the Hat Shop have meant that options for use of the building have to be carefully considered. This review is a priority for the service over the coming months and a working group has been set-up to take this forward.

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 Lead Members for Health and Wellbeing and Community has taken place and a Member Workshop has been held to clarify and define the role of the Place Approach. This is now being implemented.

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/

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.

Background Papers: None

Contact Officer: Head of Development Services
01684 272095 Annette.Roberts@teWKesbury.gov.uk

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Development Services Review Action Plan