

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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| Report to: | Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 22 October 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 look at ways to develop the service in the future including opportunities for future commercialisation. The action plan is a dynamic document, which is being used as a tool to help manage the service improvements. It follows the same format as the regular tracker of performance that is reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This report demonstrates the progress made in line with the overall aims and objectives of the Development Services Review. The action plan does not detail the work programme of each team - for example, it does not deal with the day-to-day operations of each team such as the production of the Joint Core Strategy or the processing of Planning applications - rather the actions are focused on specific projects over and above the day-to-day operational roles of the teams.

Recommendation:

- 1. To CONSIDER the progress made against the actions within the plan.**
- 2. To NOTE that the remaining actions will all be completed by March 2020; should that not be the case, a further report will be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

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.

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. 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 against the targets. 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 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 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.

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. Those actions that were reported as complete at last Committee have now been removed from this report.
- 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 including trialling paperless householder applications. Following 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 to this Committee.
- 3.4** 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.
- 3.5** Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's) have been implemented for a number of 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. The PPA process has also allowed a number of procedures to be implemented.
- 3.6** 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 late 2019. The provision of more user-friendly enforcement information for Members has been delayed to allow for the new Enforcement Officers to bed in to their new roles and to focus on priority cases. The intention remains to provide a modern and proactive service which customers expect and should reduce avoidable direct contact to free up case officer resource. A number of high profile cases have been progressed over the past months which had previously stalled.
- 3.7** 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 Planning Transformation Plan which sits as an operational plan below this action plan. This had been led by the Business Transformation Manager, supported by the Business Transformation Officer, in consultation and engagement with the Lead Member for the Built Environment. In addition to the above, a planning customer satisfaction questionnaire will be launched November 2019 and customer service standards are being prepared. The Duty Planner Service has been changed to improve the customer experience and a number of processes are being revised to improve the speed of service for customers. Alongside this, structural changes to the Technical Administration Team in the Planning Service has led to the realignment of resource to create a Transformation Officer post to support key projects.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 Over the past quarter, work within the Planning Policy Team has focused on progressing the Joint Core Strategy review and the Pre-Submission stage of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan. Given the importance of these two documents to the Borough's Growth Strategy they will be the priority for the team. Once these documents have progressed, greater focus and capacity on the development of the Statement of Community Involvement can be resourced. The team is currently holding one vacancy. In relation to the online mapping, 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 has now been operational for a year and continues to go from strength to strength. The integration of the Hub as a service within the Council is thriving, allowing the Council to offer a positive 'one stop shop' to businesses across the services we provide. A number of positive testimonials have been provided on the work we are undertaking. A video will be presented at the meeting showcasing one of these. 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. Officers continue to engage at a strategic level with Cotswold Tourism to ensure the Borough is represented. This review remains a priority for the service.

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. Individual 'Place workshops' have subsequently been hosted by the Community and Place Development Officers with Members in their place areas. Their purpose is to consider the priorities and issues for that area which will lead to an individual place action plan for each area and an overall place strategy. The relationship with Place and Health as priority is being recognised and this will be a priority for the team moving forward with partners.

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

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Development Services Review Action Plan – October 2019