

TO: THE EXECUTIVE
8 MAY 2018

PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL TRANSFORMATION REVIEW
Director of Environment, Culture and Communities

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to approve the implementation of the new vision and strategy for the Planning and Building Control service following the transformation review.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 As a result of the financial pressures on the Council, it was agreed to establish a Transformation Programme in which fundamental reviews of all the Council's services will be conducted over three years. The programme's methodology follows the four phase commissioning cycle: Analyse, Plan, Do and Review. One of the reviews in the second year of the programme is the Planning & Building Control Review which began in April 2017.
- 2.2 The results of the analyse phase were included in a detailed review report which was considered by members at the first Gateway Review in September 2017. Members considered a number of options for achieving £200k of financial savings and endorsed six recommendations to be taken forward for further investigation in the Plan Phase.
- 2.3 At the end of the Plan Phase, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission conducted a Gateway Review on 14 March 2018. The Gateway Review, which was open to all members, reviewed the findings to date and provided advice on a number of recommendations proposed for implementation during the next stage of the review.
- 2.4 The recommendations centred around a core strategic option of income generation and efficiency. The future vision of the service centres around improving and enhancing the customer journey through the service and the way in which we work with members and our staff.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Executive agree the future vision for the service and to the implementation of the recommendations and associated savings emanating from the Transformation Review of the Planning & Building Control Service as detailed in Annex A and Annex B.**

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 Implementation of these recommendations will ensure that the savings target attributed to this review is met with effect from 2018/19 and will ensure that the service remains sustainable whilst also improving the customer experience where possible.

- 4.2 Adopting a more commercial approach within the service will ensure that the services we are offering are packaged and marketed appropriately to increase take-up and raise awareness of what the teams can offer. The creation of a business development plan will help to support the team in carrying out this work.
- 4.3 Implementing a re-design of the service will ensure a smooth and efficient customer journey through the service resulting in reduced decision making time, an increase in customer self-service and an increase in stakeholder satisfaction. This workstream also aims to deliver an improvement in collaborative working between the teams in scope and internal stakeholders.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Alternative sourcing options were considered such as sharing or outsourcing services. There has previously been limited appetite from members for sharing or outsourcing large parts of the service, however there are opportunities for sharing or buying in certain smaller elements of the service and these opportunities will be pursued as and when they arise.
- 5.2 A set of seven recommendations were presented to members at the Gateway Review; three of these were not endorsed by members to be taken forward to implementation and as such will not be pursued further. The recommendations that the members were not minded to support are as follows:
- Members discuss the concept of a Local Development Order for Bracknell Forest and support further consultation with members with a view to the creation of an LDO in 2019.
 - Members discuss and agree the concept of increasing the threshold to 10 objections for automatic referral to Planning Committee.
 - Members agree that Committee site visits be undertaken during office hours as opposed to on a Saturday.
- 5.3 Primary Authority was raised by members at the Gateway Review meeting. Primary Authority is a means for businesses to receive assured and tailored advice on meeting environmental health, trading standards or fire safety regulations through a single point of contact. This ensures start-ups get it right at the outset and enables all businesses to invest with confidence in products, practices and procedures, knowing that the resources they devote to compliance are well spent. It is not relevant to Building Control Services so cannot be pursued in the next phase.

6 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 6.1 The Planning and Building Control review is led by the Chief Officer: Planning, Transport & Countryside, supported by a Transformation Project Manager, and a Project Board involving managers with specialist advice being provided on an ad hoc basis by Activist.
- 6.2 The project has reviewed the Council's approach to service provision within the borough, its financial position and has gathered the views and opinions of staff and members as well as users of the service. The project considered the following aims:

- Achieve substantial savings of at least £200k in 2018/19 and future years.
- Examine current structures and look to streamline processes and procedures
- Focus on digital solutions with a view to make savings and improve the customer experience
- Explore opportunities for income generation and commercialisation
- Look at areas of work that can be reduced or that the council does not need to continue delivering
- Consider options for alternative service delivery models.

6.3 The Plan Phase of the review looked in more detail at:

- The gap between the current arrangements and the outcomes being sought;
- The potential future options for design and operation of the service;
- The practicalities of achieving the vision and the savings, with clear options for the future; and
- The views of the members, staff and service users on the preferred option by running workshops and feedback sessions.

6.4 The new strategic vision and resulting recommendations for the Planning and Building Control service has been reviewed by members at the recent Gateway Review and has been endorsed by the Transformation Board. The savings envisaged through the implementation of the recommendations are summarised in the table in Annex A. The full plan phase report which provides full details on all of the recommendations and alternative options considered has already been provided to members as part of the Gateway Review Process. Should members wish to obtain a further copy of this report they should make contact with the Transformation Programme Office.

6.5 The SPA facilitation fees income initiative required a full public consultation and the creation of a new supplementary planning document. The Executive agreed to adopt the new document on 10 April 2018.

7 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

7.1 Legal support will be provided to ensure income generation initiatives satisfy statutory requirements around charging and trading set out in the Localism Act 2011. The Legal and Planning teams are currently working together to identify process efficiencies in the commissioning of legal support in relation to Planning and Highways agreements which are intended to improve allocation of resources in both teams and to improve the management of demand in these areas.

Borough Treasurer

7.2 Savings from the Transformation Programme underpin the Council's medium term financial position.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.3 An Equalities screening is attached at Annex C.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.4 Key project risks and mitigating actions can be found in the plan phase report.

8 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 8.1 Staff, members and regular users of the service have been consulted in both the analyse and plan phases of this review, and a summary of the feedback received can be found within the plan phase report.

Method of Consultation

- 8.2 Surveys, workshops and feedback sessions have been held with various stakeholders to inform the recommendations arising from this review. A full public consultation on the Special Protection Area Supplementary Planning Document was held during January and February with the final document being presented to the Executive on 11 April 2018 for adoption.

Background Papers

Planning & Building Control Analyse Phase Report
Planning & Building Control Plan Phase Report

Contact for further information

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