

Recommendations and Action Plan arising from Peer Challenge 13-15 February 2018

Area	Recommendations	Actions	By	Change to Constitution?	Timescale
1. Customer Experience	Agree a Service Level Agreement with the County Council to improve the consultation process.	To be developed in conjunction with Planning Advisory Service/LGA external support and consider national best practice.	JN/JA	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Utilise customer services to deal with standard enquiries to free up professional officer time.	To be developed in conjunction with Planning Advisory Service/LGA external support and consider national best practice. The key objective is ensuring the most efficient use of staff resources to best serve the customer either through a planning support team or corporate customer services.	JN/JA/BS	No	This will be considered corporately as part of the current review of the Customer contact centre.
	Evaluate the potential for a more comprehensive approach to pre-application advice	To be developed in conjunction with Planning Advisory Service/LGA external support and consider national best practice. Planning officers to review the current approach to pre-application advice and charging. A report to cabinet will be prepared setting out recommendation in 2018/19.	JN/JA	Pre-application process not currently set out in constitution. Assessment to be made as to whether this is necessary.	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Consider whether a charge for all pre-application advice would improve effectiveness.	Refer above.	JN/JA	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update...
2. Local Plan	Make the Local Plan Advisory Committee a formal decision making body	<p>Assessment to be made of the appropriate functions to be delegated to the reformed committee and the legal structure of it. Assessment to be supported by legal advice.</p> <p>Monitoring Officer to make constitutional changes in relation to the Local Plan Advisory Committee with a view to implementation from the new civic year in May 2018.</p> <p>Independent remuneration committee to be convened to determine whether a Chair's allowance is payable.</p>	EW	Yes	Some changes addressed in this report. Terms of Reference to May Council meeting

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	Make clearer references to the Local Plan policies in all Planning Committee reports	Planning officers to make clearer references to the Local Plan policies in all Planning Committee reports with immediate effect. Review of existing reports in conjunction with Planning Advisory Service/LGA external support and consider national best practice.	JN/CE	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Ensure that the content and significance of the Local Plan is addressed in all future training for members.	Training programme to be developed in conjunction with Planning Advisory Service/LGA external support and consider national best practice.	JN/CE	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
3. Neighbourhood Plans, CIL, Section 106s	Consider how a proactive stance on NDPs may help with community engagement and delivering council priorities	Planning officers to consider and evaluate approach to NDPs. To be developed in conjunction with Planning Advisory Service/LGA external support and consider national best practice.	JN/IN	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Understand the need for resources if more NDPs are undertaken	Tbc on completion of above	JN/IN	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Publish comprehensive details of S106s on website for greater transparency	Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JA/JN	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Explore options for further work on S106 processes.	Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JA/JN	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Revisit decisions on CIL to assess whether it is desirable and effective.	Planning Officers to revisit decisions on CIL to assess whether it is desirable and effective and incorporate and consider at part of the Local Plan Review	JA/JN	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
4. Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships	Ensure that all Members and officers receive immediate training on member and officer/member protocols	Training programme to be developed in conjunction with Planning Advisory Service/LGA external support and consider national best practice.	EW	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update.
	Enable more structured engagement with group spokespersons	Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JN/CE	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Senior Members to create a culture of calling out poor behaviour	Group leaders to address member behaviour within their groups with immediate effect Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice. Member training programme to be developed.	GL	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Improve the Committee procedures and operation to support the Chairman in running the Committee well.	Democratic Services, Legal Services and Planning Services to meet and agree a consistent approach in the operation and procedures relating to Planning Committee.	SO, ML, CE	Yes	With immediate effect and any additional advice

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		Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.			incorporated from PAS/LGA 2018.
5. Planning Committee	Change the timing and nature of the Planning Committee briefing (not necessarily on the same day)	Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JN/JA/CE	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Consider whether site visits are necessary for every application and how they are conducted	Improved equipment at committee to enable better presentation on sites and proposals to be put in place e.g. google map photographs Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JN/JA/CE	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Encourage group leaders to ensure seating is not on group lines	Group leaders to speak with their members on Planning Committee and Democratic Services to relocate name plates with implementation from the new civic year in May 2018 – Alphabetical order of seating will be introduced.	GL/ML	No	From May 2018
	Change seating layout of the meeting and improve the visual presentations	Democratic Services to review the layout of the Planning Committee meeting and liaise with IT about the purchase and positioning of additional screens.	ML	No	Awaiting quotes for new screens to be installed ASAP.
	Review officer roles at committee	Advice to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JA	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Officers to be given more opportunity to respond to public and members' comments	Planning Officers to agree to introduce an opportunity in the meeting for responding to public and members' comments for implementation from the new civic year in May 2018. Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JN/JA/CE	No – subject to not changing rules of debate	May 2018 and any additional advice incorporated from PAS/LGA 2018
	Increase size and quality of presentations and use of technology such as google maps	Planning Officers increase size and quality of presentations with immediate effect.	JN/CE	No	New projector in place. Changes to be implemented with immediate effect.
	Ensure consistent application of the public speaking rules	Democratic Services, Legal Services and Planning Services to ensure that the public speaking rules are treated with consistency. Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	SO, ML, CE	No	With immediate effect and any additional advice incorporated from PAS/LGA 2018.
	Review the requirement for motions at the start of the debate	Monitoring Officer to make constitutional changes in relation to motions at Planning Committee with a view to implementation from the new civic year in	EW	Yes	Report to Council in May 2018

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		May 2018. Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.			
	Refresh the Membership of Committee	Consideration of leaders and members at May full council	Leaders		Report to Council in May 2018
	Reduce size of the committee and allow a pool of substitutes	Democratic Services Team Manager to calculate consequential proportionality changes by reducing the size of the Planning Committee with a view to implementation from the start of the new civic year in May 2018.	ML	Yes	Completed – details in this report for approval
		Monitoring Officer to review the Substitution Scheme to allow for a pool of substitute members on the Planning Committee.	EW	Yes	Report to Council in May 2018
	Consider not allowing a ward member to sit on Planning Committee when an application in their ward is being considered.	Planning Services and Legal Services to liaise to enable the Monitoring Officer to make constitutional changes in relation to ward members not sitting on the Planning Committee during consideration of an item in their ward, with a view to implementation from the new civic year in May 2018	JA/JN/SO/ EW	Yes	Report to Council in May 2018
	Think about how you could be more transparent e.g. webcasting	Democratic Services Team Manager to investigate webcasting options and prepare a costings report by the end of March 2018.	ML	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Ensure that all members of the Planning Committee receive compulsory up to date training	Planning Officers to ensure that all members of the Planning Committee have received up to date training with the first compulsory training session being held no later than the date of the first Planning Committee following annual council in May 2018. Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice. Training programme to be prepared.	JN/CE	Yes	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
		To be formally recognized in Council's constitution with compulsory attendance required and members who fail to attend training not permitted to sit on committee and having to be replaced by a substitute.	EW		

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6. Reports, Minutes and Updates	Officers to be more confident in decisions and justifications	Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice.	JN/CE	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Carry out best practice review of structure and layout of reports and include plans	Advice/external support to be sought from Planning Advisory Service/LGA and consider national best practice and Plain English guidance.	JN/CE	No	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Consider reducing the level of detail in the minutes	Democratic Services to reduce the detail contained in the minutes and continue to record the meeting to capture the detail with immediate effect.	ML	No	With immediate effect
7. Call-In	Introduce a single stage process – 28 days following the issue of consultation notices.	Legal Services and Planning Services look at a review of the call in processes for planning applications with a view to any changes, constitutional or otherwise, being implemented from the new civic year in May 2018.	JA/JN/EW/SO	Yes	Report to Council in May 2018
	Members to give strong planning reasons for any call-in	As above. Guidance to be developed with support from Planning Advisory Service/LGA.	JA/JN/EW/SO	Yes	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Members'/Officers' Relatives applications only go to Committee if officers are minded to approve	As above	JA/JN/EW/SO	Yes	Council in May 2018 in action plan update
	Consider a constitutional trigger only for serving members and officers	As above	JA/JN/EW/SO	Yes	Council in May 2018 in action plan update

Abbreviations	
JN	Jim Newton, Head of Planning and Infrastructure
CE	Chris Elston, Planning and Development Team Manager
EW	Elizabeth Warhurst, Monitoring Officer
IN	Ian Nelson, Planning Policy and Business Focus Manager
JA	James Arnold, Strategic Director of Place
ML	Melanie Long, Democratic Services Team Manager
GL	Group Leaders
SO	Sima Odedra, Planning Solicitor