

London Borough of Enfield

Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Panel

17th March 2021

Subject: Planning Service Improvement Plan
Cabinet Member: Cllr Caliskan and Cllr Savva
Executive Director: Sarah Cary

Key Decision: No

Purpose of Report

1. To introduce a plan that is being developed to improve the Planning Service and to seek input from members of the Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Panel on the scope and themes of the Improvement Plan. Please also see the slides provided as an appendix.

Proposal(s)

2. An Improvement Plan is at the early stages of being developed for the Planning Service and the views and input of members of the Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Panel are sought to assist officers further develop this plan.
3. Team members from across the Planning Service will also be engaged in production of the plan and officers from other Council services will also be involved.
4. The Improvement Plan will cover all of the functions of the Planning Service including: Operational Support; Land Charges; Building Control; Planning Decisions; Planning Enforcement and Commercial Nuisance; Plan Making (planning policy and guidance); Infrastructure planning; S106 and CIL and design and heritage services.
5. The Improvement Plan will be developed over the next three months (by June 2021) and will be an internal service document agreed with the Executive Director for Place.
6. Proposed key themes identified to guide the development of the Improvement Plan:
 - Communications – outward looking, joined up, engaging and responsive
 - Culture and morale – positive, proactive collaborative
 - Resources and capacity – team strength
 - Team structure – clear and consistent
 - Policies and processes - efficient and effective
 - Performance management – getting the best out of people
 - Learning and development – investing in our teams
 - Technology – making the best use of tools
 - Customer journey – joined up and easy to access
 - Commercialisation – reducing costs/ generating income

Reason for Proposal(s)

7. To meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities that lie ahead (for instance delivering growth, hitting housing targets, enhancing infrastructure, responding to climate change) Enfield Council requires a high performing Planning Service.
8. Enfield Council's Planning Service was created in 2018 – bringing together the previously separate Development Management and Strategic Planning and Design Services.
9. Good progress has been made since 2018 in establishing the service, building team capacity, addressing priorities around development management performance on determination of planning applications and progressing the Local Plan; however an Improvement Plan is required now to ensure a trajectory of continuous improvement to address issues and challenges (some of which have arisen more recently such as those generated by COVID 19) and exploit opportunities.
10. The recently published Housing Delivery Test (HDT) results illustrate the scale of the challenge facing Enfield to deliver more homes. Although delivery of homes is not solely in the gift of the Planning Service, the HDT results have highlighted the need for a positive, proactive and collaborative planning process in order to enable good growth that will not help delivery of targets but ensure that growth is sustainable and delivers multiple benefits to the community.
11. Whilst performance in some areas of the Planning Service has significantly improved since 2018 (e.g. determination of planning applications) other areas that will be critical for sustained continuous improvement have not seen sufficient improvement (e.g. performance on pre-applications and customer service).
12. Also, despite progress on service improvement since 2018, some perceptions of the Planning Service remain poor which can have an impact on community and investor trust and confidence.

Relevance to the Council Plan

4. The performance of the Planning Service is critical to delivery of most of the themes contained in the Council Plan including those focused on the delivery of homes in well connected neighbourhoods.

Background

5. The Planning Service was created in 2018 bringing together what were previously two separate services: Development Management and Strategic Planning and Design.

The core teams and functions of the Planning Service are as follows:

Strategic Planning and Design

- Plan Making Team – developing and maintaining Enfield's spatial planning / planning policy framework including producing and up-to-date Local Plan

- S106 and CIL Infrastructure – developing and maintaining Enfield’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan and overseeing collection, monitoring and allocation of S106 and CIL
- Urban Design and Heritage – providing specialist design and heritage advice and services including managing the Design Review Panel

Development Management

- Planning Decisions Teams – managing proposals for development through planning pre-application, application, determination, discharge of conditions and appeal stages
- Planning Enforcement and Commercial Nuisance – managing enforcement and commercial nuisance complaints
- Building Control – provide Building Control services (building regulations compliance) to clients in competition with the market (Approved Inspectors)
- Land Charges – managing local land charges searches in Enfield
- Operational Support – registration and validation of applications and technical support

Main Considerations for the Council

6. A high performing Planning Service is critical to the delivery of the Council Plan and to the delivery of good growth, hitting housing targets, enhancing infrastructure, responding to climate change and enhancing Enfield as a place.

Safeguarding Implications

7. None

Public Health Implications

8. Well planned places and development enhance wellbeing. A high performing Planning Service should have a positive impact on public health.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

9. A high performing Planning Service should have a positive impact on equalities.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

10. A high performing Planning Service will place environmental and climate change considerations at the heart of its work.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

13. Risks

- Reputational damage for the Planning Service and Enfield Council
- Poor perceptions of service amongst local residents and businesses

- Impact on investment and development in the Borough – knock on effect on housing delivery and economic investment
- Recruitment and retention issues leading to insufficient capacity to deliver services
- Poor quality development
- Costs to the Council associated with processes that could be more efficient and effective
- Costs associated with poor quality development
- Budget pressures within the Planning Service

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

14. Risks

- Raised expectations regarding pace and scale of improvement. This will be mitigated through regular monitoring and progress reporting
- Externalities such as further Government changes to Planning and Building Control. This will be mitigated through regular monitoring and progress reporting

Financial Implications

13. None

Legal Implications

14. None

Workforce Implications

15. None currently as this is an emerging piece of work. It will be used to inform Service Planning moving forward.

Property Implications

16. None

Other Implications

17. None

Options Considered

18. The following options have been considered;

- Continue making improvements to teams and services but without an overarching Improvement Plan
- Continue delivering services as they are with no improvements

Conclusions

19. Members of the Regeneration and Economic Development Scrutiny Panel are invited to input in to the early stages of developing the Improvement Plan.

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Appendices

Background Papers