



NOTICE OF MEETING

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date and Time:	Tuesday, 16 February 2016 at 7.00 pm
Place:	Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Fleet
Telephone Enquiries to:	01252 774141 (Mrs G Chapman) gill.chapman@hart.gov.uk
Members:	Axam, Bailey (Chairman), Clarke, Crisp, Dickens, Gray, Harward, Renshaw, Makepeace-Browne, Wheale, Woods

Joint Chief Executive

CIVIC OFFICES, HARLINGTON WAY
FLEET, HAMPSHIRE GU51 4AE

AGENDA

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1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2016 are attached to be confirmed and signed as a correct record. **Paper A**

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare disclosable pecuniary, and any other, interests.

5 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

Anyone wishing to put a question or statement to the Committee should contact the Committee Services Officer by phone or email (see front page of this Agenda) at least two clear working days prior to the meeting. Further information can be found at https://www.hart.gov.uk/sites/default/files/4_The_Council/Council_meetings/Public%20Participation%20leaflet%202015%20A4.pdf

6 EDUCATION PROVISION

Presentation by Mark Saunders, Strategic Planning Unit, Hampshire County Council, accompanied by Richard Vaughan, Deputy Head of Strategic Development, HCC.

7 FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE BOARDS

8 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

In June 2015 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee amended the work programme to include a review on *Planning performance, what are the development control procedures and the way we engage with customers*. Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report of a review carried out into the development control service.

Paper B

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 That the Development Control Review be endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2 That the action table shown in Appendix 2 be approved and brought back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2016 to update members on progress against the recommendations.

9 2015-16 BUDGET MONITORING – TO END OF DECEMBER

To advise Members of the position on revenue and capital as at the end of December. Cabinet will consider this report at its meeting on 3 March 2016. **Paper C**

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 To comment on the revised projections and reasons for the main variations shown in Appendix 1 and Paragraph 4.
- 2 To comment on the current spending position on the Capital Programme shown on Appendix 2.
- 3 To consider any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet.

10 QUARTER 3 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – 2015/16

To update Members on the Council's key performance indicator results in the third quarter of 2015/16 (1 October 2015 – 31 December 2015) as found in Appendix I.
Paper D

RECOMMENDATION

- I That for any areas of concern, Members either:
 - I.1 Make recommendation on any action considered necessary to Cabinet, or
 - I.2 Make recommendation to the relevant Service Board and/or Performance Improvement Board (PIB) for action
- 2 That Members continue to feedback to the Joint Chief Executive any amendments or new information they wish to see included in these Performance Reports.

11 UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

12 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme is attached for information. **Paper E**

13 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme is attached for consideration and amendment. **Paper F**

Date of Despatch: 9 February 2016

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: 19 January 2016 at 7pm

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Fleet

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Bailey (Chairman)

Axam, Clarke, Crisp, Dickens, Gray, Renshaw, Makepeace-Browne

In attendance: Councillors Kennett, Parker, Burchfield, Forster, Billings and Radley JR

Officers:

Patricia Hughes	Joint Chief Executive
John Elson	Head of Environment and Technical Services
Tony Higgins	Head of Finance
Phil Turner	Head of Housing

74 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 15 December 2015 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

75 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Harward and Woods

76 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman raised the suggestion that Overview and Scrutiny may wish to scrutinise the processes around the recent Refined Housing Options Paper; looking at options for learning for future consultations (not to include substantive elements or contents of the consultation itself).

The Chairman circulated a proposed terms of reference (see Appendix 1). The Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the terms of reference subject to the addition of the following within the scope: To recommend improvements in process.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman would chair this piece of work, and that all Members of Overview and Scrutiny would be invited to take part.

The Committee agreed that the Chairman would establish a schedule for this work to be completed, with an anticipated report to Overview and Scrutiny in February 2016, whilst noting that this was a challenging timeline to achieve.

It was also noted that this should be added to the O&S work programme

It was noted that there may be further work as a result of recommendations, with regard to the content of future consultations and how this engages the public.

77 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

78 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

A member of the public raised concern regarding the terminology used with regard to the now closed consultation in particular with regard to use of the words 'stopped' and 'withdrawn'.

A member of the public asked that the SHMAA was due to be released mid February, what was the efficacy of timing the new consultation before the evidence from this was available. The Chairman confirmed that this fell outside the work identified in item 76 above.

Phil Gower (Fleet and Church Crookham Society) reflected on the complexity of the consultation, which had meant it was a difficult consultation to fill in. A lot of residents had filled this consultation in and we need to ensure we help them have their feedback included in the new consultation.

- The Leader confirmed that the Council was ensuring that suitable arrangements for the new consultation was being put in place. The Council would be contacting all those who had provided their contact details, as part of their response and if they confirm that their response has not changed, having reflected on the new consultation, that their previous response would be included.

79 FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE BOARDS

No issues were highlighted by the Committee.

80 PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Councillor Kennett updated members on his Regulatory Services Portfolio which includes Planning (Development Control), Community Safety, Environmental Health, Dog Warden Services, Licensing and Building Control. There have been challenges around recruitment in particular to the Planning Team.

Councillor Kennett answered questions regarding the recent review of pest control, the review of development control and food and hygiene inspections as well as our continued relationship with community safety through the partnership.

81 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS (RIPA) – QUARTERLY UPDATE

There had been no further use of the RIPA provisions (Covert Surveillance Policy) since the report to Overview and Scrutiny in April 2013.

82 MANAGEMENT OF THE JOINT WASTE CONTRACT 2018 ONWARDS

Members were updated on the options for extending / retendering of the joint Basingstoke/Hart Waste Contract before consideration by Cabinet.

RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet

- 1 That work be commenced on retendering the joint waste contract, and that this proceeds in accordance with the outline programme attached at appendix B, subject to the Council not receiving (prior to July 2016) much improved terms for extension of the existing contract.
- 2 That £50k is allocated in the 16/17 waste budget to provide initial match funding for the procurement process with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.
3. That the following comments be past to Cabinet when considering the approach moving forward;
 - that there may be wider economies of scale if we were to work with other local authorities
 - that the Council may wish to consider the opportunities with regard to the existing depot, if this were to be excluded from the specification moving forward.

83 IMPLICATIONS OF GOVERNMENT CHANGES ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

The report outlined the impact of the government's Emergency Budget announcement regarding Registered Providers reducing rents by 1% a year and associated implications for affordable housing in Hart.

RESOLVED to note:

- 1 That the Council continues to seek 40% affordable housing on new development sites, as set out in Hart's existing Affordable Housing Policy (see Appendix 1) and to maintain an appropriate mix of units (65% rented and 35% shared ownership as specified in earlier Strategic Housing Market Assessments); however
- 2 That, in doing so the Council takes account of the impacts of the 1% rent reduction by adopting a framework that operates within the existing policy to facilitate a more flexible approach to be applied on a site by site basis, subject to viability assessments and with regard to recent views expressed by the Housing Minister, where the existing approach to Affordable Housing Policy is challenged on viability grounds.

**84 THE PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT:
ENGLAND 2016 TO 2017 AND FUTURE YEARS**

Members were informed of the likely broader financial position, to enable the budget report to be considered within this context.

RESOLVED

That the information be noted.

85 DRAFT BUDGET 2016-17

The Committee was provided with a summary of the revenue and capital budget proposals for 2016/17 to enable the Committee to forward its recommendations on the budget and Council Tax levels to Cabinet on 4 February 2016. The report also included the statutory statement of the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) to Council on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.

RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet

- 1 That the growth and savings set out in Appendix A is approved subject to clarification which Members will raise on any individual budget lines directly with the Head of Finance.
- 2 That Overview and Scrutiny supports the principle that Cabinet consider an increase in the Council Tax for 2016/17 and that should it do so, the Council ensures effective communication with residents of Hart to explain that most of any other increases are applied by other precepting authorities.
- 3 That the summary revenue budget for 2016/17 as set out (in Paragraph 12 of this report) be approved subject to clarification which Members will raise on any individual budget lines directly with the Head of Finance.
- 4 That the revised capital programme for 2015/16 and 2016/17 as detailed in Appendix B be approved.
- 5 That the Council could investigate its decision not to implement the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.
- 6 That the Section 151 Officer's statutory report regarding the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of reserves detailed in paragraph 13 is noted.

86 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The following item's appendices contained confidential information. Members considered whether the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded during the discussion of the matters referred to, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in the respective paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

87 JOINT PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES

The Committee was consulted and comments sought on the report being submitted to Cabinet, regarding the potential commissioning of a range of services, including both 'soft services' including revenues and benefits and a range of 'back office services' (Lot 1) and 'hard services' such as Facilities Management, Property and Car Parks (Lot 2).

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the issues and agreed to forward any additional comments to Cabinet to help in their broader consideration of the procurement of these processes as follows:

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the contents of the report which would be considered by Cabinet and agreed to forward comments as detailed below;

- That terms of reference for the Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee be amended to recognise that the appointment of Members to that Committee would be from Members of the Hart Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

87 UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

No update.

88 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered.

89 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was considered and amended to reflect the work item identified in item 76.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm

Scrutiny of the Decision Making Process around the Refined Housing Options Consultation

In accordance with its terms of reference, it is the role of Overview and Scrutiny to:

- 6.2.1 review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions
- 6.2.2 make reports and/or recommendations to the full Council and/or the Executive and/or any policy, joint or area Committee in connection with the discharge of any functions
- 6.2.3 consider any matter affecting the area or its inhabitants; and
- 6.2.4 exercise the right to call-in, for reconsideration, decisions made but not yet implemented by the Executive and/or any policy or area Committees.

It has been suggested that Overview and Scrutiny Committee would wish to review and scrutinise the decisions made and actions taken in connection with the recent consultation regarding the Refined Housing Options.

In particular, the scope that Overview and Scrutiny wish to include are:

- a How decisions are made to approve and authorise the Refined housing Options consultation going 'live' in November 2015
- b How decisions were made to alter consultation documents part way through the consultation process
- c On what basis and rationale were decisions taken to withdraw the consultation.
- d Identify actions that the Council should take with regards to future consultation exercises.

Need to confirm timescales and Chairmanship.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 16 FEBRUARY 2016

TITLE OF REPORT: REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Report of: Head of Regulatory Services

Cabinet Member: Councillor Kennett, Regulatory Services

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

In June 2015 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee amended the work programme to include a review on *Planning performance, what are the development control procedures and the way we engage with customers.*

The report shown in Appendix 1 is the culmination of a review carried out into the development control service.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

That the development control review is endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

That the action table shown in Appendix 2 be approved and brought back to Overview & Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2016 to update members on progress against the recommendations.

3 CONSIDERATIONS

The scope of the review was:

- To review the customer focused performance of the service, covering quality and consistency;
- review development control/development management procedures with a view to improving efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with the customer;
- Undertake a high level assessment of management, staff structures and resources to ensure that the authority gets the most effective results from any procedural changes and specification.

The review report identifies 21 recommendations produced following dialogue with key stakeholders and staff selected at random. The author also observed the Planning Committee and Sub-Committee proceedings. The 21 recommendations have been compiled into the action table shown in Appendix 2. Comments have been placed alongside each recommendation and, where applicable, a notional date for addressing each recommendation has been included. It is intended that a further report to Overview & Scrutiny will be forthcoming to update members on the progress against these recommendations in Late 2016.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The timescales placed on the table in Appendix 2 are indicative. The service is currently under-resourced and is struggling to recruit new staff to key vacant posts. To compound the lack of staff resource further, two additional Planning Officers leave us in March and April resulting in 6 of the 11 planning posts being vacant (the vacant posts will consist of 1 Planning Team Leader, 1 Principal Planner, 2 Senior Planners, 1 Planning Officer and 1 Planning Assistant post which has now been deleted). The implementation of the majority of the action plan will require staff resource and may not be possible to deliver whilst there is a shortage of staff and an inability to recruit. Members also need to be mindful that the resource implication may outweigh any benefit or that the action may not be achievable whilst some or all of these vacancies exist.

Contact: Nick Steevens, Head of Regulatory Services, nick.steevens@hart.gov.uk

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – Review of Planning Service

Appendix 2 – Review Action Table

Review of Planning Service

Hart District Council

January 2016

Patrick Burridge

DRAFT

Introduction & Scope

In July 2015 Hart District Council commissioned a review of development control at the request of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The scope of the review was:

- To review the customer focused performance of the service, covering quality and consistency;
- review development control/development management procedures with a view to improving efficiency and effectiveness in dealing with the customer;
- Undertake a high level assessment of management, staff structures and resources to ensure that the authority gets the most effective results from any procedural changes and specification.

The review included interviews with a random cross-section of the service's customers ranging from planning agents to Parish and District Councillors. Planning staff from within Development Control were also interviewed, and to assess the development management function in its entirety Committee meetings were also attended in order to observe committee proceedings and the non-delegated decision making process.

This report provides a summary of the findings from the interviews with stakeholders, staff and observations from Planning Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

Agents

I spoke to a cross section of Agents, all of whom dealt fairly frequently with HDC. They ranged from national companies, through to self employed plan drawers. Generally speaking the smaller Agents were less demanding and reasonably happy with the service they were getting from the department. By contrast, the bigger Agents were far less happy, and in a couple of cases notably scathing about the service they received from Planning Authorities in general and some aspects of the service provided by HDC's Planning Department in particular - which I shall discuss in more detail below.

To try and set a datum point, I asked all the Agents I spoke with how many Authorities they dealt with on a regular basis and to rank the product they purchased from HDC amongst that basket of Authorities. Typically, each Agent had relevant experience of 8 to 10 Authorities and in every case, HDC ranked somewhere in the middle.

Nearly all the Agents I spoke to attend the Agents' Forum

Agents Forum

The one thing that each Agent without exception, agreed upon, was that the Agents Forum was a positive initiative. They welcomed it and would like to see it continue as a six monthly event. It was very well attended by a good cross section of Agents who appreciated the mix of formal and informal sessions with the presence of a cross section of Planning Officers with whom they deal on a regular basis and with whom they were later able to hold informal conversations.

Agents were however, surprised to find no Planning Members represented at the Forum. They would wish to have seen the Chairman of the Planning Committee present.

Recommendation

- AF1 Hold an Agents Forum every six months. It should include a formal section covering items such as: important changes in Planning Policy, changes in personnel, important initiatives, a general question and answer session and also an informal session where Agents are able to talk informally with Planning Officers and fellow Agents.**
- AF2 Invite both the Planning Committee Chairman and Planning Portfolio Holder to all future Agents Forums and a Deputy if they are unable to attend.**

I will not to repeat the points raised at the Agents' Forum. These were minuted and are no doubt being considered currently. Pre-Application advice however, was

laboured at the Forum and brought up again and again when I spoke to the Agents. The following points were raised in my discussions with Agents.

Pre – Application(pre-ap) Advice

I know of no other Authority which publishes pre-ap advice on the web for the world at large to peruse. As previously mentioned, this is naturally popular with elected Members of HDC and their Parishes alike. It is unpopular with Agents and their customers who made the following points:

- Having paid for the service, Agents expect to the information given, and advice purchased, to be in commercial confidence. The situation as it exists currently allows sensitive information to be available, free of charge, to competitors.
- Some inquiries are purely speculative and may well never reach fruition. Publishing precise details for public consumption can lead to unwarranted public alarm.
- The charge made for pre-ap advice bears no relation to the cost in providing it and is too high. The charge made should be a simple per hour cost.
- It takes too long to get an answer
- The amount of information required by HDC for pre-ap advice is so voluminous that it more or less equates with the amount required for a full Application. This begs the question: why bother with pre-ap advice at all; why not save the money spent and go straight to a full Application?
- Some Agents felt that their Planning Applications were being “judged” on the basis of the pre-ap advice given, rather than on the merits of the Application itself tested against Planning Policy.
- Agents would like to enjoy a facility to meet Planners on site and talk ideas through, whilst seeing how the ground lies, but without the requirement to pre-provide extensive documentation which is time consuming and expensive to produce.
- Generally, Agents would like to be able to receive pre-ap advice on a more informal, or hypothetical basis.

A pre-ap advice facility is highly desirable not just to Applicants and Agents wanting a steer, but particularly to HDC in receiving good quality, well researched, appropriately accompanied Planning Applications which can then be decided in a timely manner. Successfully achieved, this should foster good customer relations, help HDC achieve government set targets and provide a useful income stream to the Authority.

It is quite clear to me that the pre-ap advice service offered by HDC is not well appreciated by Agents. As a consequence there is no doubt that some pre-ap advise opportunities are being lost. One larger Agent in particular, was so unhappy with the pre-ap service offered that they specifically recommended to all their clients

not to use it. It is difficult to quantify how many opportunities are being lost, but all are I suspect that it is less than 10 per cent. Commercially speaking, I doubt this is significant, but may well reflect on the quality of the Applications that result. Further, I am left wondering if some Planning irregularities are left unresolved because potential Applicants are unwilling to discuss situations with Planners which might then be openly published.

Recommendations

- PA1 Explore ways to offer a confidential pre-ap service in appropriate situations**
- PA2 Consider how the pre-ap service could be simplified, reducing the administration necessary for the customer and helping the department to provide more timely advice.**
- PA3 Review the pre-ap charging regime with the aim of providing transparent value and protecting the income stream**

Validation Requirements

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes a “National List” (NL) of supporting documents which could be required from Applicants, by Planning Authorities, to support a particular type of Planning Application. The NPPF requires that Authorities use proportionality when applying the NL. Conversely, the NPPF also allows Planning Authorities to create a “Local List” (LL) which they may apply as they see fit.

In common with many other Authorities, HDC are criticised for applying both the NL and the LL far too vigorously. Indeed, in some cases when it was inappropriate to do so. It was felt by Agents, that this was more noticeable when they were dealing with less experienced Planning Officers. It was putting Agents, and thus their customers, to great expense and in some extreme cases, where seasonality for example, was relevant, taking considerable extra and unnecessary time.

Agents generally felt it had become merely a tick box exercise and wish to see Planning Officers exercise common sense confidently.

A specialised list, e.g. “Doors and Windows” as an addendum to the LL and applied with common sense, would however be welcomed

It was suggested that HDC could prune or even do away with the current LL altogether and rely merely on the NL - the discretion to require, being exercised with proportionality as suggested in the NPPF.

Recommendation

- VR1 HDC's should re-evaluate whether the inclusion of a Local List adds value. Could it be truncated or deleted altogether in favour of the National List and a Specialised List?**
- VR2 Planning Officers should be confident to exercise proportionality when stipulating the need for supporting documents to accompany an Application, which can be expensive and time consuming to produce.**

Consistency of Approach

Agents naturally have their favourite Planning Officers, the Officers who they meet and speak to regularly and who have an innate feel for the Agents' strengths and weaknesses. They value these relationships highly as they are very helpful in putting together good Planning Applications.

The consistency of approach exhibited by Planning Officers throughout the industry is considered by Agents to be variable in most Authorities. It was discussed with me that consistency at HDC is no better or worse than any other Authority, but as the intention of this report is to aid HDC in its strive for excellence, it is worthy of inclusion.

As a good example of something inconsistently applied Agents pointed out the validation requirements discussed above. They are understandably reluctant to be personnel specific for the sake of the ongoing professional relationships with Planning Officers, but consider that the recent change of departmental head is an ideal opportunity to improve consistency - although they make no suggestions as to how this could be achieved.

Recommendation

- CA1 Consider how management techniques within the department could be improved to achieve an even consistency of approach throughout the life of a Planning Application. Particular regard should be given to validation requirements, timely communications, application of conditions and requirements for additional information. (see also recommendation PO1)**

Feedback on Submitted Planning Applications

Considering Planning Authorities generally, this is probably the most widespread cause of unhappiness among Agents and Applicants alike, yet amongst the Agents I spoke to using HDC's Planning service it is not as big a problem at HDC as it is at other Authorities. The scenario where an Applicant submitted a minor Planning Application and routinely waited for seven and a half weeks before being asked to amend it, is not commonplace at HDC.

HDC is not perfect however, and it seems that again the more experienced Officers cope better. In common with many Authorities, HDC will sometimes ask for amendments or further studies. Agents understand that this may not be an unreasonable request, but what they find intolerable is when the request is made late in the Application's life when it could and should have been made at an early stage. This can waste many valuable weeks.

It is understood that in most cases these requests are thrown up during the consultation process, and I made this point clearly when questioning Agents. The Agents countered by requesting HDC to be quite rigid about the consultation period allowed. If Consultees are reasonably requested to make the responses within 21 days, that should be the strict cut-off point beyond which no response can be taken into account. Agents felt the consultation periods had been extended, and extended again to the point that there was effectively no end date. Once again they made the point that Planning Officers need to be firm and confident in applying dates, and this could be made quite clear in the consultation initiation communication e.g. "any correspondence received after 5:00 p.m. on 17th July 2016 will be disregarded".

Recommendation

- FS1 Case Officers should study a new Planning Application immediately upon receipt, giving sufficient thought to then decide whether any amendments or further studies are needed from the Applicant. If they are, the Applicant or Agent should be contacted immediately. If there are uncertain, they should seek immediate advice from an appropriate source.**
- FS2 HDC should consider how long a consultation period they wish to give, in particular is there any good reason to give a longer time than that provided within government advice. Documentation should then make the consultation period absolutely clear by stating the time and date after which no consultation response will be considered. This should be rigidly applied to all statutory and non statutory Consultees. Should the consultation responses give light to the need for further studies or similar, the Applicants and or Agent should be requested to provide such without delay, say within 24 hours.**

Pre-Application Consultation with the Community

There is now a requirement for potential Applicants to consult with the community prior to a major Application being submitted, the exact form of the consultation will be dictated within the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) as part of the HDC Local Plan.

When questioned, responses from Agents about community consultation were predictably varied. Some welcomed the comments and ideas that could come

forward and be incorporated into plans whilst others found the exercise to be simply a further non-productive use of time and money in an already over-bureaucratic system. Perhaps cynically, they all found it to be just another tick box exercise.

The reality is that the community at large prefer to consider something tangible, in particular a map with boundaries and features that they can relate to. The economics of the development industry dictates that most significant decisions have already been made and there is little room for discussion.

It is difficult to see how the situation can be improved. Publicly at least Agents will do what is required of them, but any changes brought about by the community consultation are likely to be little more than tinkering at the edges.

Legal Services

In the on-going environment of government astringency HDC has striven to make efficiencies and entered into a partnership with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) to provide legal services for the Authorities.

Legal agreements, in particular section 106 legal agreements are commonplace in the Planning system and Agents consider it important that they are completed correctly, quickly, and cost effectively. The service now provided is the single largest cause of unhappiness in my discussions with Agents.

Agents have made the following points:

- The staff used are not in the main, qualified solicitors.
- Although some Agents employ their own legal departments who are very capable of drawing up suitable legal agreements, they are effectively forced to use HDC's Service.
- The cost to Agents of even the simplest legal agreement, which could be plagiarised and easily adapted from other simple legal agreement is ridiculously expensive and simply unjustifiable.
- The time taken to draw up a legal agreement is too long.
- Agents understand the need to make efficiencies and recognise that a jointly commissioned service can cut costs. They would prefer to have seen HDC enter into a partnership with an Authority which they consider exhibits good practice, e.g. Rushmoor Borough Council.

There is real unhappiness with HDC's legal service, more than with any other aspect of the Planning service provided. If there is no possibility of a change then Agents will in reality, be forced to go on using the service as it exists now, but this is a good opportunity to improve the customer experience.

Recommendation

- LS1 Consider the service level agreement under which the arrangement for providing legal advice via the jointly commissioned service with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council currently operates and consider two points:
Is it currently being met? Can it be improved to meet and exceed the expectations of customers?
Take appropriate action.**
- LS2 Re-evaluate the charges made by Legal Services for drawing up section 106 documentation, are they fair? Take appropriate action.**
- LS3 Reinstate regular meetings between the Head of Legal Services and the Head of the Planning Department**

Agents Perceptions of the Planning Committee

In common with most Planning Authorities only a small percentage of Planning Applications are decided by the formal Planning Committee, most decisions being delegated to Officers to make. This is considered by the government to be best practice and indeed is highly desirable by all concerned, as Planning Committees are expensive to convene and involve everyone concerned in a great deal of extra bureaucracy. Consequently, only the largest and the most controversial Applications are decided at committee.

Many of the smaller Agents, in particular the self employed professionals, deal almost exclusively with small householder Applications: extensions, minor Listed Building Applications etc, which only reach the Planning Committee rarely. As a consequence it is only the larger Agents who have relevant and regular experience of the Planning Committee.

It is recognised that Councillors on the Planning Committee are not usually professionally qualified and so one would expect Agents to be sceptical about their largest Applications being decided by non professionals. And so it was. One Agent in particular singled out the Planning Committee at Hart as being the “worst” on any Authority they dealt with. Members displayed “a complete disregard for Planning Policy and Expert opinions”.

I shall make recommendations with regard to the Planning Committee elsewhere in this report.

Other Points

The following points were all expressed to me by Agents:

- The recent change of Departmental Manager is welcome
- Site notices need to be erected by HDC not the Agent
- The Planning website can be hard to navigate

My Experience of “The Planning Committee Experience” as an Observer

Pre-Committee

The experience starts in the foyer of the HDC Council Offices in Fleet where one is professionally greeted, badged and directed to the purpose built Council Chamber. Within the Council Chamber one finds comfortable seating, good visual aids and sound amplification –which is also suitable for those using a hearing aid.

A paperwork pack is available to everyone which includes instructions on how to make the best of the experience and a very complete agenda with a detailed report from a case Officer justifying the recommendation within. The Chairman commences the meeting with safety and building evacuation instructions. The experience is slick and reassuring.

I attended a total of four Planning Committee meetings and prior to the meetings starting, observed the following behaviour.

For about half an hour prior to the committee starting, observers would arrive and take their places. Among the audience one could make out supporters and opponents for and against a particular Application. Each side tended to sit together, but apart from the other, and generally to polarise. Planning Councillors clearly recognised and enjoyed a friendly relationship with some of them, typically one side or the other. This was expressed by some Members leaving the Members’ benches, walking into the audience and greeting them with handshakes, warm welcomes and friendly banter. The impression I might have gained as an impartial observer was that they were there to support one side or the other’s particular point of view. The body language exhibited by the opposing party suggested that they thought just this. I also overheard whispered comments which were deeply cynical!

Recommendation who

PC1 At Planning Committees Members should maintain a clear separation from the audience to avoid giving the impression that they favour or maintain an over friendly relationship with partisan members of the audience. Members might even consider not entering the Council Chamber until immediately before the committee start time

Public Speaking and Probity

HDC provides for a system of public speaking by interested parties at Planning Committees. Three minutes each to address the Committee is provided on behalf of: the Applicant, the local residents and the local Parish Council.

This part of the system seems to work well and all the speeches I heard were well prepared and delivered and even though some speeches contained comments

which were not strictly material Planning matters, this was entirely understandable from those without the benefit of Planning training. They were pertinent to the matter at hand.

The public speakers are then asked questions by Members of the Committee, if they have any. If the questions posed had been of a simple factual nature, e.g. where do you currently park your cars?, the answers might have been valuable. The majority of questions I witnessed however, were more barbed and clearly designed to achieve a particular answer or magnify a point already made. I had the impression in one case that the questioner had teed up the speaker to receive it beforehand. It suggested pre-determination to me and the experience left me questioning the value of this provision.

Still concerning questions to public speakers, and the first meeting I attended, one of the Members questioned at what stage in the proceedings the process should occur. The Chairman, who was brand new to the role, was unsure and asked the Officers to guide him. Neither the Planning Officers, nor the committee clerk nor the legal representatives were able to help him. It was a small and probably an unimportant point; nevertheless, it dented the audience's confidence in the proceedings and spoiled an otherwise polished start to the committee experience.

During the debate I witnessed varying levels of ability amongst the Councillors. Most of them were clearly well versed in basic Planning Policy, asking pertinent questions to the Officers and exhibiting a high level of understanding. This did not extend to the entire Planning Committee however, and one or two Members seemed out of their depth. This was quite apparent from the questions they asked Officers.

On one occasion during debate I heard an experienced Member of the committee say. "I could never support this". It is the type of comment that should be avoided at all times when speaking at a Planning Committee.

I am aware that before Councillors sit on an HDC Planning Committee they must have attended and completed extensive training including probity matters. Yet I have a concern that occasionally some Councillors on the Planning Committee at HDC leave themselves open to accusations of impartiality despite holding the highest standards.

It is long been an observation of mine that Planning Applicants would be more likely to achieve a favourable result by submitting controversial Planning Applications well away from election time. This refers to the entire industry not one particular Authority or another. Some Councils hold elections just once in every four years, others like Hart District Council, annually. HDC is never far away from an election – and overall control of the Authority has been finely balanced for many years. Planning Committees are usually well attended by the press and public alike, and thus a good opportunity for Councillors' performance to be noted by voting residents.

I witnessed the debate on a handful of mildly controversial Applications during the course of which, the Case Officer, amplified by the Planning Manager and even on occasions the Chief Executive presented Members with strong and clear advice. Frequently, many Members chose not to heed it. Members are fully empowered to do this, nevertheless, I cannot recall hearing such clear and strong advice overruled by Members at committee.

The Planning Officers employed by HDC are highly qualified. Many of them have earned degrees, postgraduate qualifications, and all are Members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) in addition to owning countless years' experience of Planning. When, in the face of clear and unequivocal advice from such Officers, Members opt for a contrary action, they do so at the peril of the Authority's good reputation. They must have very good Planning reasons for doing so.

The only real measure of the success of "committee overturns" is their rate of success at appeal. Over the past two years HDC's appeal success is as follows:

- Overall rate of success at appeal: 70%
- Rate of success at appeal of committee decisions only - Members and Officers agree: 50%
- Rate of success at appeal of committee decisions only - Member overturns: 30%

Recommendation

PT1 All Councillors who already sit, or are likely to sit on a Planning Committee should receive further training on probity issues. This training should be regularly repeated and updated as necessary. This would also be a good time to cover the issues raised in recommendation PC1.

PT2 All Councillors who already sit, or are likely to sit on a Planning Committee should have received a training course in the principles of the English Planning system. The course should include fundamental Planning Policy training and advice on the role of Planning Officers, Expert contributors, and the Planning Inspectorate. It will need to be upgraded frequently to include changes to the Planning system and the introduction of the new local plan etc. Attendance on these courses should be mandatory before any Member is allowed to sit on the Planning Committee.

PT3 Special training, should also be given to any Member who is appointed Chairman or Vice-Chairman –or is likely to be appointed Chairman of Vice-Chairman of a Planning Committee, which should include

familiarity with standing orders relating to that committee and the role of a Chairman.

PT4 Care should be taken by Officers to ensure that there is at least one Officer present at a Planning Committee familiar with the Standing Orders of the committee, such that the Officer corps as an entity can give confident guidance when questioned.

Parish Councils

To get a good balance of Parish Council views I spoke to a wide cross section of them - Town Councils and rural Parishes, large and small, those with big development pressures and those with less.

Importantly, I must report that HDC clearly has a good rapport with its Parish Councils, and the relationship is appreciated. As one could expect, they can be very disappointed when HDC grant a Planning decision which the Parish had specifically objected to, but they fell short of criticising HDC for “ignoring” them. In terms of relationship there is a significant difference between not agreeing with, and ignoring, a point of view.

Website

One area which virtually all Parishes agreed needed work is the Planning Website, in particular the indexing of Consultees' comments.

When a Parish Council is preparing a response for HDC it is quite normal for individual Planning Parish Councillors to research the Application on their own, making extensive use of the website and of course, attending on the ground. One of the things they would all like to see is, how the Expert Consultees' have commented. So they need to look them up on the website. Unfortunately, the Expert Consultees' comments are not individually referenced or indexed but filed under the general catch-all category of Consultees' comments. Accordingly, every single Consultee's comments must be trawled through in order to find the pertinent ones. It can take several seconds to open each individual file, and as a large Application could have 50 or even 100 comments registered this can take a considerable time. Multiply this by the number of Parish Councillors contributing to each Application and it is easy to see how several man hours could be lost.

This is the biggest problem reported by Parish Councillors with the website, but there were others. It was difficult for me to assess whether some of these inadequacies were still current or had already been upgraded, opinions seem to vary. As the Parish Councils and Councillors of Hart District could be considered power users of the HDC Planning website, I felt it would be well worthwhile creating a small working party of perhaps 2 or 3 Parish Councillors to work with HDC to fine tune the Planning

area of the website. Cllr David Jackson of Crookham Village Parish Council was notably experienced and familiar with the HDC Planning website.

Recommendation

PW 1 That minor changes be made to the Planning website to incorporate the separate indexing of Expert Consultees' comments so they may be recognisable instantly as such.

PW2 That a small working party including 2 or 3 Parish Councillors be convened in order to identify and improve upon current weaknesses in the HDC Planning website with the aim of making it more useful and easier to navigate.

Planning Training For Parishes

Concerning the Parish Councillors I spoke to, their commitment and dedication was very apparent, yet it was clear to me that further Planning training would help them improve their focus. Parish Councillors too agreed that they would like further training opportunities. In the past this seems to have been provided by the Hampshire Association of Town and Parish Councils (HAPTC) although few had attended. I further understand that training has been available from HDC, yet none of the Parish Councillors I spoke to had attended and were barely aware of the facility.

There is little doubt that Planning training would help Parish Councils to spotlight the real nitty gritty material Planning matters which they need to highlight in the responses to HDC. It would also help them to understand why HDC have to make decisions which appear to fly in the face of Parish Council comments. It necessarily follows that HDC decisions could be more broadly based, helping at appeal cases for example.

Recommendation

TP1 Planning training should be provided by HDC annually for Parish Councillors and Clerks. It should be provided as soon as it is practically possible after Parish elections. In addition to the normal basic Planning training which should include training on practicalities e.g., the need to make timely comments. It would be best to advertise this training by personal email to Parish Councillors rather than simply contacting the Clerk.

The following points also came up during my discussions with Parish Councillors

- The lack of an up to date Local Plan is causing huge difficulties
- Parish Councils and should be notified of Planning Applications for tree preservation orders and Certificates of Lawfulness

- It would be helpful to become involved in section 106 negotiations at a much earlier stage
- It would be appreciated if a Senior Planner could attend a Parish Council meeting as a guest speaker and to take questions. When this has happened in the past, it has been highly appreciated by the Parish Councillors and audience
- HDC Planning Officers do not take enough account of the value of historic heritage and landscapes
- The Conservation Officers lack passion, however conservation advice quality and consistency has improved recently
- Communication with Parishes is a strong point of HDC
- Communication between Parishes and local District Council Members is excellent
- The publication of pre-ap advice on the web is highly valued
- Case Officers should pay more attention to design details in sensitive areas, particularly Conservation Areas
- The quality of Planning Application registrations is variable e.g. Is a north arrow needed or not needed on all submitted maps?
- Neighbourhood notification saturation is patchy
- During the course of deliberating a Planning Application, HDC is overly concerned about what might happen at an appeal
- Specialist policies are needed e.g. wind farms or solar farms
- The Conservation Areas need further review

District Councillors

It is clear to me from my discussions with District Councillors that despite the fine balance of overall political control of the Authority, Party Politics have no part to play in the making of Planning decisions at HDC. This is creditable. It is also worth mentioning that Members never meet in private prior to Planning meetings, to discuss how they might work towards a particular conclusion.

Obviously Members are well versed with the regulations on probity. In applying them however, I suggest that Members take note of the comments made earlier in my report (see Recommendation PC1). Whilst it is only natural, indeed desirable, that Members are well acquainted with a wide cross section of the community who they represent, keeping a healthy separation at formal meetings such as a Planning Committee would be prudent. Although I was unable to attend any Planning site visits during the period of my observations (there weren't any) from past experience, these comments could apply equally. This is particularly so, as by very nature of a Planning site visit there is no formal venue and casual conversations are

commonplace on site, with Planning Committee Members often being targeted by members of the public for questioning.

It was clear during my discussions with Members that they have a very positive relationship with the Parish Councils in their wards, this is further borne out by my conversations with Parish Councils. HDC Members raised the same point as the Parish Councils concerning the indexing of Consultees comments on the website (see Recommendation PW 1). They too were very positive about the publication of pre-Application discussions on the website, but were unaware of the angst this causes amongst Agents. Members also asked whether is it recorded on the website, post decision, once conditions are discharged.

With one exception, the HDC Councillors I spoke to were either full Members or substitutes Members of the Planning Committee and could therefore reasonably be considered to be the Authorities most knowledgeable Councillors on Planning matters. When faced with a controversial Application in their wards, Members often engaged in discussions with the case Officer, and valued the facility to do so highly. Time constraints aside, Planning Officers too, welcome this dialogue.

Other than the recommendations made earlier in the report, my discussions with Members have thrown up no additional recommendations.

Planning Officers

At the time of research the Officers' team was short of two Senior Planners. Recognising the on-going increasing workload, Authority had been received to recruit a third. In common with other Planning Authorities locally HDC was struggling to offer the positions due to lack of suitable candidates.

Being one of the smaller Planning Authorities, with a good deal of work out-sourced, it might well be that potential Applicants view career opportunities at HDC as being limited, particularly among the technical or specialist grades. It could also be considered that the opportunities for varied Planning experience at HDC are limited by the very nature of its geography: an expensive and wealthy Southeast England district. Without drastic changes in the provision of Planning Services, way beyond the scope of this report, e.g. commissioning a joint Planning Service with another Authority, HDC management will have to continue to seek further ways to make Hart District Council an attractive place to join.

I spoke to many of the Planning Officers who variously raised the following points:

- There are currently resources issues within the HDC's Planning department, in particular for design advice and training – this was borne out by comments from Planning Agents.

- Advice given to Applicants, both pre-ap and post-ap is lacking inconsistency, Planning Officer to Planning Officer. Once again this is reflected in the comments made by Planning Agents (see Recommendation CA 1).
- There is a lack of standardisation of systems by Planning Officers, which needs to be addressed by the new Departmental Manager. In part, this was considered to be due to a lack of understanding of the IT system, e.g., When should the “short input” procedure be used. Procedure notes would be helpful.
- Planning Officers need to be more flexible in their discussions with Applicants.
- The development management function needs to dovetail better with the enforcement function.
- The time taken to arrive at a decision is too long and could be shorter with better management.
- The Department has made significant advances in communication with Applicants, Agents and Parish Councils over the past year or more.
- Planning Officers would like to improve their communications with Parish Councils still further and include training to help them be more proactive, particularly in the production of Neighbourhood Plans.
- There have been issues in the recent past with the Business Support function. In particular, with neighbour notifications, and messages taken for Planners have failed to reach them. Great strides have been made to improve the situation, which needs on-going monitoring. A general preference was expressed to be able to use voicemail systems.
- Planning Officers are aware of some issues with Legal Services, although my discussions with Agents would indicate they are not aware of the really high level of dissatisfaction at the service. Planning Officers would like to reinstate regular meetings with the Head of Legal Services as soon as possible.
- Case Officers would appreciate more dialogue with local Members when preparing reports for individual Planning Applications. They felt the need to be more proactive in contacting Members.
- Planning Officers would welcome opportunities for further training for themselves, particularly update training.
- Planning Officers are dealing with very high case load numbers, way above the national average in most cases and naturally efficiency is suffering. Morale seems high though, indeed one Principal Planner reported that he could cope with more if necessary. It is clear nevertheless, that the vacancies will need to be filled to maintain or improve service .
- Opinions about caseload meetings varied from Officer to Officer, however in general, Planning Officers would welcome a regular meeting with their line Manager to discuss case loads.
- Planners really miss regular contact with Building Control Officers who regularly attended site and would report back anything of note.

Quite clearly the department needs to be brought to full strength as a matter of importance and this work is ongoing.

The comments made by Officers amplified by the comments made by Agents make it clear that consistency is an issue within the department: notably the inconsistencies with Application validation, process methodology, communications with Applicants, the delivery of pre-Application advice and the use of the IT system. It was a point commonly made to me that the approach from the new Departmental Manager was more enlightened and a golden opportunity for change.

Recommendation

PO1 HDC Senior Management need to consider how the problem of inconsistency can be achieved. In the immediate term, Planning Officers need regular case meetings with the Departmental Manager who can give uniform guidance. In the longer term however, standards and guidance which are clear to all, need to be set.

PO2 A Planning training budget should be allocated to cater for the professional training requirements of Planning Officers

Members Of The Public

During my research, I attempted to interview Members of the public who had attended Planning Committees. Specifically I tried to speak to neighbours and to those affected by a particular Planning outcome but who had had no part in its submission of decision. I was unable to persuade them to enter into long discussions with me but did manage to snatch short conversations in Committee Rooms at the Council's offices, either during or after the committee.

In every case it was their first time to attend a Planning Committee and on the whole, the committee experience for them, had been positive. Most of them were there because they had received letters from HDC or had seen site notices. All were happy with the communication they had received from HDC and the only negative comment received concerned the lack of a current local plan, the responsibility for which was laid clearly at the feet of the Council.

Customer Feedback

It was reported to me that periodic customer feedback surveys were regularly commissioned by HDC, yet nobody I spoke to could remember seeing the survey results. The situation needs addressing.

The limiting factor in the results displayed from Planning surveys is that the people who got what they wanted tend to be satisfied and those who didn't, are not. Nevertheless, if enough people are surveyed, a pattern will emerge and meaningful results can be derived. The key in getting people to respond to surveys is to make it

easy to do so. Telephone surveys are expensive to commission but web or e-mail based surveys are relatively simple and inexpensive. The custodians of HDC's website should easily be able to set it up. There are scores of websites on Google giving sound and free advice on the dos and don'ts of customer satisfaction surveys. Once the page has been created and made visible on the web site into use should be encouraged by clear links on all relevant e-mail communications. Every notification of receipt of Planning Application, every neighbour notification, every decision notice etc should all contain links to the satisfaction survey. The results should be regularly reviewed by Management and Members.

Conclusion

HDC's planning service is generally good, but it could be excellent.

Strong points include:

- Good communications, with customers, Parishes, neighbours and Councillors.
- An excellent relationship between Parish Councils and their Local District Councillors
- A transparent approach to pre-application discussions
- A professional and polished Planning Committee process
- The establishment of a Planning Agents Forum

Weak points include:

- A generally inconsistent approach when dealing with Planning Applications and enquiries
- A poorly received and expensive Legal Service
- A Pre-application Advice Service that is ill - suited to the people who will actually use it
- Website indexing of Consultees comments
- Planning Councillors apparent willingness to override expert advice
- The short term lack of the Local Plan
- Departmental management processes need improvement
- The general lack of an "enabling" attitude as required by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Summary of Recommendations

AF1 Hold an Agents Forum every six months. It should include a formal section covering items such as: important changes in Planning Policy, changes in personnel, important initiatives, a general question and answer session and also an informal session where Agents are able to talk informally with Planning Officers and fellow Agents.

- AF2 Invite both the Planning Committee Chairman and Planning Portfolio Holder to all future Agents Forums and a Deputy if they are unable to attend.**
- PA1 Explore ways to offer a confidential pre-ap service in appropriate situations**
- PA2 Consider how the pre-ap service could be simplified, reducing the administration necessary for the customer and helping the department to provide more timely advice.**
- PA3 Review the pre-ap charging regime with the aim of providing transparent value and protecting the income stream**
- VR1 HDC's should re-evaluate whether the inclusion of a Local List adds value. Could it be truncated or deleted altogether in favour of the National List and a Specialised List?**
- VR2 Planning Officers should be confident to exercise proportionality when stipulating the need for supporting documents to accompany an Application, which can be expensive and time consuming to produce.**
- CA1 Consider how management techniques within the department could be improved to achieve an even consistency of approach throughout the life of a Planning Application. Particular regard should be given to validation requirements, timely communications, application of conditions and requirements for additional information. (see also recommendation PO1)**
- FS1 Case Officers should study a new Planning Application immediately upon receipt, giving sufficient thought to then decide whether any amendments or further studies are needed from the Applicant. If they are, the Applicant or Agent should be contacted immediately. If there are uncertain, they should seek immediate advice from an appropriate source.**
- FS2 HDC should consider how long a consultation period they wish to give, in particular is there any good reason to give a longer time than that provided within government advice. Documentation should then make the consultation period absolutely clear by stating the time and date after which no consultation response will be considered. This should be rigidly applied to all statutory and non statutory Consultees. Should the consultation responses give light to the need for further studies or similar, the Applicants and or Agent should be requested to provide such without delay, say within 24 hours.**

- LS1** Consider the service level agreement under which the arrangement for providing legal advice via the jointly commissioned service with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council currently operates and consider two points:
Is it currently being met? Can it be improved to meet and exceed the expectations of customers?
Take appropriate action.
- LS2** Re-evaluate the charges made by Legal Services for drawing up section 106 documentation, are they fair? Take appropriate action.
- LS3** Reinstate regular meetings between the Head of Legal Services and the Head of the Planning Department
- PC1** At Planning Committees Members should maintain a clear separation from the audience to avoid giving the impression that they favour or maintain an over friendly relationship with partisan members of the audience. Members might even consider not entering the Council Chamber until immediately before the committee start time
- PT1** All Councillors who already sit, or are likely to sit on a Planning Committee should receive further training on probity issues. This training should be regularly repeated and updated as necessary. This would also be a good time to cover the issues raised in recommendation PC1.
- PT2** All Councillors who already sit, or are likely to sit on a Planning Committee should have received a training course in the principles of the English Planning system. The course should include fundamental Planning Policy training and advice on the role of Planning Officers, Expert contributors, and the Planning Inspectorate. It will need to be upgraded frequently to include changes to the Planning system and the introduction of the new local plan etc. Attendance on these courses should be mandatory before any Member is allowed to sit on the Planning Committee.
- PT3** Special training, should also be given to any Member who is appointed Chairman or Vice-Chairman –or is likely to be appointed Chairman or Vice-Chairman of a Planning Committee, which should include familiarity with standing orders relating to that committee and the role of a Chairman.
- PT4** Care should be taken by Officers to ensure that there is at least one Officer present at a Planning Committee familiar with the Standing Orders of the committee, such that the Officer corps as an entity can give confident guidance when questioned.

- PW 1** That minor changes be made to the Planning website to incorporate the separate indexing of Expert Consultees' comments so they may be recognisable instantly as such.
- PW2** That a small working party including 2 or 3 Parish Councillors be convened in order to identify and improve upon current weaknesses in the HDC Planning website with the aim of making it more useful and easier to navigate.
- TP1** Planning training should be provided by HDC annually for Parish Councillors and Clerks. It should be provided as soon as it is practically possible after Parish elections. In addition to the normal basic Planning training which should include training on practicalities e.g., the need to make timely comments. It would be best to advertise this training by personal email to Parish Councillors rather than simply contacting the Clerk.
- PO1** HDC Senior Management need to consider how the problem of inconsistency can be achieved. In the immediate term, Planning Officers need regular case meetings with the Departmental Manager who can give uniform guidance. In the longer term however, standards and guidance which are clear to all, need to be set.
- PO2** A Planning training budget should be allocated to cater for the professional training requirements of Planning Officers

Development Control Review

Development Control Action

Item	Recommendation	Comments	Timescale
1	Hold an Agents Forum every six months. It should include a formal section covering items such as: important changes in Planning Policy, changes in personnel, important initiatives, a general question and answer session and also an informal session where Agents are able to talk informally with Planning Officers and fellow Agents.	The first agents forum was held in October 2015 with a second agents forum is scheduled for late March. Invites will be sent to all regular planning agents week commencing 8 th February 2016	Ongoing
2	Invite both the Planning Committee Chairman and Planning Portfolio Holder to all future Agents Forums and a Deputy if they are unable to attend.	Both Chairman and Portfolio holder will be invited to the agents forums.	Ongoing
3	Explore ways to offer a confidential pre-application advice service in appropriate situations	This will be a matter for debate at the next planning forum and Planning working party. Members and staff are comfortable with the open and transparent nature of the pre-application service, but this conflicts with the views expressed by agents.	To be considered at Planning Forum & Working Party
4	Consider how the pre-application service could be simplified, reducing the administration necessary for the customer and helping the department to provide more timely advice.	There is a conflict between simplification and value which will need to be considered by the Planning Working Party	To be considered at Planning Working Party
5	Review the pre-application charging regime with the aim of providing transparent value and protecting the income stream	The charging regime has been amended for the 2016/17 financial year to clarify the fees.	Complete
6	HDC's should re-evaluate whether the inclusion of a Local List adds value. Could it be truncated or deleted altogether in favour of the National List and a Specialised List?	A review of the local lists is required by April 2016	April 2016
7	Planning Officers should be confident to exercise proportionality when stipulating the need for supporting documents to accompany an Application, which can be expensive and time consuming to produce.	Officers are already proportionate when considering what supporting information is required to determine an application. Additional consistency monitoring will take place in the next financial year subject to staffing resource.	September 2016

8	Consider how management techniques within the department could be improved to achieve an even consistency of approach throughout the life of a Planning Application. Particular regard should be given to validation requirements, timely communications, application of conditions and requirements for additional information.	Regular dialogue as a service and during one to one meetings with managers does take place. With the absence of a Planning Team Leader and other key posts being vacant the ability to carry out a more thorough consistency exercise and training is not currently possible.	Ongoing
9	Case Officers should study a new Planning Application immediately upon receipt, giving sufficient thought to then decide whether any amendments or further studies are needed from the Applicant. If they are, the Applicant or Agent should be contacted immediately. If there are uncertain, they should seek immediate advice from an appropriate source.	Validation of a new application occurs as soon as possible in all instances, however due to current caseloads being high and with a low staff compliment, it is not always possible to meet customer expectations. An assessment of the time between receipt, validation and customer contact will be carried out to assess if the perceived issue is factual.	May 2016
10	HDC should consider how long a consultation period they wish to give, in particular is there any good reason to give a longer time than that provided within government advice. Documentation should then make the consultation period absolutely clear by stating the time and date after which no consultation response will be considered. This should be rigidly applied to all statutory and non statutory Consultees. Should the consultation responses give light to the need for further studies or similar, the Applicants and or Agent should be requested to provide such without delay, say within 24 hours.	Officers already take a pragmatic approach to all elements of a planning application, however it is important to balance the desire for an extended consultation period with the government's drive to speed up the planning process.	To be considered at Planning Working Party
11	Reinstate regular meetings between the Head of Legal Services and the Head of the Planning Department	Regular meetings with the Local Government and Litigation Team Leader have been timetabled. The meetings had lapsed due to staff turnover in the shared legal service.	Complete
12	Care should be taken by Officers to ensure that there is at least one Officer present at a Planning Committee familiar with the Standing Orders of the committee, such that the Officer corps as an entity can give confident guidance when questioned.	Ongoing training need which will be considered as part of the annual appraisal process.	April 2016
13	Planning training should be provided by HDC annually for Parish Councillors and Clerks. It should be provided as soon as it is practically possible after Parish elections. In addition to the normal basic Planning	Parish Council training has been scheduled for July 2016. Further training will be offered for District and Parish Councillors in the new financial year.	July 2016

	training which should include training on practicalities e.g., the need to make timely comments. It would be best to advertise this training by personal email to Parish Councillors rather than simply contacting the Clerk.		
14	HDC Senior Management need to consider how the problem of inconsistency can be achieved. In the immediate term, Planning Officers need regular case meetings with the Departmental Manager who can give uniform guidance. In the longer term however, standards and guidance which are clear to all, need to be set.	It is disputed that there is any significant inconsistency amongst planning staff. Where individual matters of inconsistency are noted, these are addressed with the officer. Also see (8) above	

Corporate Action

Item	Recommendation	Comments	
1	Consider the service level agreement under which the arrangement for providing legal advice via the jointly commissioned service with Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council currently operates and consider two points: Is it currently being met? Can it be improved to meet and exceed the expectations of customers? Take appropriate action.	The shared legal service (SLS) deed is currently under review. Feedback on the deed and general level of service provided by the SLS has been given on behalf of the planning service.	Ongoing
2	Re-evaluate the charges made by Legal Services for drawing up section 106 documentation, are they fair? Take appropriate action.	The interim Local Government and Litigation Team Leader has been requested to demonstrate that the charges are fair and reasonable and carry out a revised benchmarking exercise. Previous benchmarking was carried out and found to be comparable with other authorities.	TBC

Planning Committee Action

Item	Recommendation	Comments	
1	All Councillors who already sit, or are likely to sit on a Planning Committee should receive further training on probity issues. This training should be regularly repeated and updated as necessary. This would also be a good time to cover the issues raised in recommendation PC1	Training is scheduled for 1 st June for all Committee Members. Further more detailed training is intended for later in 2016.	June 2016 & September 2016

2	All Councillors who already sit, or are likely to sit on a Planning Committee should have received a training course in the principles of the English Planning system. The course should include fundamental Planning Policy training and advice on the role of Planning Officers, Expert contributors, and the Planning Inspectorate. It will need to be upgraded frequently to include changes to the Planning system and the introduction of the new local plan etc. Attendance on these courses should be mandatory before any Member is allowed to sit on the Planning Committee.	As above. This level of training is already in place and mandatory. It is intended to offer a more comprehensive training course later in 2016.	June 2016 & September 2016
3	Special training, should also be given to any Member who is appointed Chairman or Vice-Chairman –or is likely to be appointed Chairman of Vice-Chairman of a Planning Committee, which should include familiarity with standing orders relating to that committee and the role of a Chairman.	To be debated at Planning Working Party	June/July 2016

Administrative Action

Item	Recommendation	Comments	
1	That minor changes be made to the Planning website to incorporate the separate indexing of Expert Consultees' comments so they may be recognisable instantly as such.	This has repeatedly been identified as a 'request for change' with the developer by several local authorities including Hart. Despite reassurances by the provider this has not occurred but is intended for the next version.	No date given by provider
2	That a small working party including 2 or 3 Parish Councillors be convened in order to identify and improve upon current weaknesses in the HDC Planning website with the aim of making it more useful and easier to navigate.	For debate by O&S/Planning Working Party. There is also an opportunity for a newly formed customer panel to examine the entire HDC website for accessibility.	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 16 FEBRUARY 2016

TITLE OF REPORT: 2015-16 BUDGET MONITORING – TO END OF DECEMBER

Report of: Head of Finance

Cabinet Member: Councillor Ken Crookes, Economic Development and Corporate Finance

I PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Members of the position on revenue and capital as at the end of December. The Cabinet will consider this report at its meeting on 3 March 2016.
- 1.2 At its meeting on 17 February 2015, the Committee agreed to receive monitoring reports from the Head of Finance which highlight any areas of particular concern for Members' attention (a "traffic light" system). Full details of variances to the end of December are shown in the attached appendix and the particular ones which members are asked to consider are detailed in paragraph 4. None are considered to be of undue concern – (a red traffic light).

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To comment on the revised projections and reasons for the main variations shown in Appendix 1 and Paragraph 4 below.
- 2.2 To comment on the current spending position on the Capital Programme shown on Appendix 2.
- 2.3 To consider any comments it wishes to make to Cabinet.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report covers the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2015.
- 3.2 It is important that regular monitoring of budgets is undertaken to ensure financial targets being set by the Council are being met and to make any necessary changes to approved budgets.

4 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING

- 4.1 The revenue budget for 2015/16 was approved allowing for a contribution to reserves of £125k. Based on the figures currently available it is projected a contribution from reserves of £96k will be needed. This is an improved position from that reported to this Committee in January when an over spend of £300k was projected. The main reasons for this change are:

- Car park income is higher than previously forecast.
- Certain leisure budgets are no longer required with the transfer of Leisure Centre management to Everyone Active from 1 February 2016.
- The budget for the employment of Apprentices will not all be spent.
- Some saving on recruitment costs.

5 CAPITAL EXPENDITURE MONITORING

- 5.1 The Capital budget attached is largely dominated by the provision for the new Leisure Centre and the refurbishment at Frogmore Leisure centre. In the case of the new building the timetable is being met and expenditure is very much in line with expected cashflows.

6 MANAGEMENT OF RISK

- 6.1 The monthly budget monitoring process examines all income and expenditure against budgets in order that significant variances are highlighted immediately and to identify areas where expenditure is being incurred but where insufficient or no budgetary provision exists. This allows officers to take corrective action to maintain overall expenditure within budgets.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The budget will slightly overspend as against a small transfer to reserves forecast when it was originally set.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Revenue Monitoring
Appendix 2 Capital Monitoring

REVENUE BUDGET OUTTURN 2015 / 2016 PERIOD 9 DECEMBER					
	Controlable Current Budget	Year to Date Controlable Actuals	Controlable Full Year Forecast Outturn	Projected Year End Variance	Commentary
COMMUNITY SAFETY					
Community Safety - Shared Service	235,050	107,828	235,050	0	
	<u>235,050</u>	<u>107,828</u>	<u>235,050</u>	<u>0</u>	
CORPORATE SERVICES					
Civic Function & Chairman	20,300	12,486	18,616	-1,684	
Corporate - Apprentices	59,050	13,450	18,268	-40,782	Vacancy Saving
Corporate Communication	120,230	50,488	122,439	2,209	
Leadership Team	542,026	512,675	611,665	69,639	CAB Actuary Fees and Exit Deficit £55k, Corporate Strategy Staffing £14k.
Corporate Performance Team	56,500	42,009	58,389	1,889	
External Audit	93,400	34,230	67,560	-25,840	Auditor fees agreed lower than budget
Non Distributed Costs	468,300	309,568	467,300	-1,000	
Climate Change	13,300	-725	13,300	0	
Business Support Unit	370,313	351,938	419,202	48,889	New Post - Business Change Officer £39k. Un budgeted pensions costs from new appointments £5k. Staff Re-grading £7k.
Business Support Non Staff	160,000	156,894	154,010	-5,990	
Hart Development	80,610	66,635	76,872	-3,738	Enterprise MS £7,500, Leader Programme £12,400. Vacancy Saving, Economic Development Officer £19k
Customer Services Contract	285,820	177,004	325,260	39,440	Initial set up costs for Basingstoke Contract, Staff Training, Xmas Cover £6k
IT Contract	413,400	227,529	331,000	-82,400	Budget set to high £9k, saving on IT contract £46K, 3rd party contracts and GIS saving £27k,
HR Contract	105,120	68,938	103,759	-1,361	
Internal Audit	93,170	41,594	84,941	-8,229	Saving staffing v's contract with Basingstoke and Dean
Legal Services	226,960	256,806	269,754	42,794	Legal Fee Income revised down and adj to allow for a prior year income, £11k transferred to S106 Income
Customer Services Client	38,400	34,261	51,642	13,242	Franking Machine Rental unbudgeted £4k and prior year adjustments £8k
IT Client	328,646	310,395	377,800	49,154	£15k Consultants, £16k Rental of Lines B&D Contact Centre, £10k new Mobiles, Licences £8k
HR Client	68,810	33,758	61,266	-7,544	In year Contract reduction in price.
Print Room & Photocopying	39,750	37,673	38,985	-765	
Local Land Charges	-73,360	-64,899	-81,222	-7,862	Search Fee Income higher than Budget
Planning Policy	451,957	215,149	484,393	32,436	New works with Capita in 15-16 on Local Plan scoping and work. There will also be some contract specification slip in Local Plan Consultancy into 2016/17 financial year
Admin Bldgs - R & M	369,182	299,042	382,475	13,293	Civic Office Refurbishments and Maintenance (£20k) and Unbudgeted staff costs (£11K) have been off set by savings in utilities (£15k) and Rents (£6k).
	<u>4,331,884</u>	<u>3,186,898</u>	<u>4,457,674</u>	<u>125,790</u>	

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

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Rechargeable Elections	0	-8,450	-1	-1	
Register Of Electors	117,650	75,284	122,161	4,511	
Election Expenses	166,318	105,031	159,524	-6,794	Saving due to print costs less than initial estimates. Postal vote increases prior to election less than expected.
Support To Elected Bodies	232,975	164,573	223,495	-9,480	Savings in Member Allowances.
	<u>516,943</u>	<u>336,438</u>	<u>505,179</u>	<u>-11,764</u>	
FINANCE					
Revs & Bens Contractor Costs	1,206,120	867,316	1,196,074	-10,046	Saving from Budget Inflation higher than actual inflation
Council Tax / NNDR	-318,563	-143,065	-306,718	11,845	Unbudgeted Licence Fees
Housing/Council Tax Benefits	7,228	-525,469	5,194	-2,034	
Meals On Wheels	8,000	0	5,000	-3,000	
Housing Act & Housing Ass. Adv	0	0	0	0	
Bank Charges	48,500	45,544	61,000	12,500	Increase to Merchant Services standard charge
Finance Client	76,440	56,652	83,934	7,494	Treasury Advice
Finance Contract	470,740	307,120	460,680	-10,060	Contract inflation less than budgeted
	<u>1,498,465</u>	<u>608,098</u>	<u>1,505,164</u>	<u>6,699</u>	
HOUSING SERVICES					
Private Sector Housing	164,700	113,490	159,412	-5,288	
Strategic Housing Services	106,240	83,799	110,922	4,682	Unbudgeted staffing costs
Housing Needs Service	481,944	321,263	479,748	-2,196	Rent Deposits pressure of £14k. Off set by additional B&B Income £7k, Rent Deposit Officer Posts budgeted 1.4 fte, actual 1.1fte saving £8k and DCLG Right to Move Grant £3k
Help for Single Homelessness	0	169,808	0	0	
Domestic Abuse	0	395,940	0	0	
	<u>752,884</u>	<u>1,084,300</u>	<u>750,082</u>	<u>-2,802</u>	
LEISURE & ENV PROMOTION					
Land Repossessions	4,480	3,646	3,646	-834	
Leisure Centre Maintenance	90,000	30,772	87,000	-3,000	Saving due to transfer to Leisure Centre in Jan 2016
Leisure Strategy	106,120	76,531	93,642	-12,478	Savings on Consultants, £12k and Equipment £4k.
Fleet Pond	62,782	58,442	58,262	-4,520	Unbudgeted pension contributions £3k
Commons	57,219	35,995	52,647	-4,572	
Odiham Common	50,077	29,136	48,935	-1,142	
Elvetham Heath Nature Reserve	42,628	29,736	42,336	-292	
Hart Leisure Centre (Client)	-190,658	-120,253	21,294	211,952	Income - 10 Month budget shortfall in income should have been £342k but shortfall in income is forecast to be £403k, £89k overspent. This is made up of £71k payment to EA and £18k various other income variances. Expenditure - 10 Month budget saving should have been £282k but outturn is forecasting a saving of £190k, £92k overspent. This is made up of £52k staffing and £32k freelance instructors and £8k various other ad hoc variances.

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Frogmore LC (Client)	29,388	121,819	163,664	134,276	Income - 10 Month budget shortfall in income should have been £128k but the shortfall in income is forecast to be £238k, £110k overspent. This is made up of £28k payment to EA, £36k reduction in Leisure Card Income, £18k shortfall on the all weather pitch income, £12k shortfall in facilities Income and £16k various other ad hoc incom variances. Expenditure - 10 Month budget saving should have been £132k but outturn is forecast to be saving £104k, £28k overspent. This is made up of £40k variance in extra Powerplay licences and £11k various other other ad hoc variances, off set by savings in Staffing £23k.
Parks/Play Areas Outside Fleet	50,580	50,504	50,504	-76	
Edenbrook Country Park	72,215	44,238	58,396	-13,819	Underspend on staffing (£4k), Equipment (£4k), Consultants (£5k) and Publicity Budgets (£2k) off set by unbudgeted contractor spend (£2k). Site is not fully functioning.
QE II Fields	7,176	5,304	11,250	4,074	Fully funded from SANG s106
Biodiversity	28,100	16,660	26,315	-1,785	
Landscape & Conservation	57,493	42,458	56,620	-873	
Environmental Promotion - Stra	153,915	79,923	151,347	-2,568	
Tree Preservation Orders	88,563	55,955	79,154	-9,409	Tree Technician vacancy to August
	<u>710,077</u>	<u>560,866</u>	<u>1,005,012</u>	<u>294,935</u>	
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES					
Dog Warden	56,870	45,700	59,980	3,110	
Pest Control	2,620	-538	533	-2,087	
Env Health Pollution	0	194	0	0	
Env Health Commercial	130,270	117,101	165,731	35,461	Consultancy cover for vacant post £26k. One of unbudgeted legal fees £11k.
Environmental Protection	212,230	138,072	158,097	-54,133	Unbudgeted income saving represents actual received to date £9k. Environmental Protection Officer Vacancy £33k, various other savings £12k
Churchyards	7,000	1,930	3,930	-3,070	
Env Health Public	0	0	0	0	
Out Of Hours Noise Service	25,210	14,004	20,619	-4,591	
Health & Safety	35,180	42,603	33,011	-2,169	
Licences	-20,070	-65,359	-10,446	9,624	Actual income for Gaming Permits lower than budget
Hackney Carriages	-20,750	-67,347	-34,031	-13,281	Additional Licence Income
Health & Policy	21,494	17,131	30,636	9,142	Health and Policy Officer
	<u>450,054</u>	<u>243,491</u>	<u>428,060</u>	<u>-21,994</u>	
PLANNING					
Planning Development	295,160	-136,641	334,299	39,139	Additional budget approved for the use on Consultancy. This budget may now slip into 2016/17
Building Control - Fee Earning	-141,030	-70,605	-74,120	66,910	Contra Non Fee Earning. Additional use of Consultancy to cover vacancies.
Building Control - Non-Fee	119,268	7,315	37,480	-81,788	Contra Non Fee Earning. Additional use of Consultancy to cover vacancies.
Street Naming & Numbering	0	-8,686	-9,855	-9,855	Recovery of costs for Street Naming and Numbering was not budget for.
	<u>273,398</u>	<u>-208,617</u>	<u>287,804</u>	<u>14,406</u>	

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TECHNICAL					
Emergency Planning	35,610	35,289	38,711	3,101	
Waste Income	-667,305	-529,847	-742,581	-75,276	Additional income from garden waste collection, sale of bulk containers, glass collection and recycling credits.
Hart Drainage	59,445	33,025	48,070	-11,375	combination of vacancy saving and a new appointment on a lower grade.
Waste Contract	1,715,440	1,013,511	1,576,103	-139,337	Saving against the budget for the Veolia contract due to differences in estimated and actual inflation rates (£76k). Underspend on budget for Springwell Lane (£63k).
Grounds Mtn Contract	356,920	216,847	364,775	7,855	Overaccrual on the Basingstoke Contract Saving from 2014/15
Street Cleaning	500,970	378,597	511,793	10,823	SLA with Basingstoke, Hire of Mechanical Sweeper
Clinical and Bulky	-6,340	-10,851	-6,340	0	
Basingstoke Waste Contract	0	349,639	0	0	
Street Furniture	8,100	6,699	7,660	-440	
Highways Traffic Management	39,550	61,273	33,054	-6,496	Contributions from HCC higher than budget saving £12k off set by Staff Advertising estimated to be £6k
Highways Agency - Development	-14,200	32,866	-3,712	10,488	Underaccrual of 14/15 Consultants Fees
Estates/Asset Management	50,240	32,818	41,284	-8,956	Small Land sales.
Off Street Enforcement	-401,710	-352,117	-501,718	-100,008	Income higher than budgeted
On Street Enforcement	81,405	69,553	82,331	926	Various road painting works above budget
CCTV	165,910	147,779	164,876	-1,034	
Flood repairs & Maint work	0	1,380	1,380	1,380	
	<u>1,924,035</u>	<u>1,486,459</u>	<u>1,615,686</u>	<u>-308,349</u>	
Grand Total	10,692,790	7,405,762	10,789,711	96,921	

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Appendix 2

	Current Available Budget 2015/16	Actual To Date	Forecast Expenditure 2015/16	Variance 2015/16
Capital resources available as at 1st April 2015				
Receipts in year				
Corporate Services	382	317	624	241
Housing & Customer Services	1,215	414	1,123	(92)
Leisure & Environmental Promotion	24,454	4,124	24,427	(27)
Technical Services	517	217	532	15
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	26,568	5,071	26,706	137
Capital Resources available as at 1st April 2015				

Service Area	Scheme	Current Available Budget	Actual To Date	Forecast Expenditure	Variance
Corporate Services	CCTV-Rushmoor	176	50	176	0
	Telephony System	70	17	63	(7)
	Contact Centre	0	27	27	27
	Civic Office Refurbishment	59	120	120	61
	Rural Broadband	0	23	23	23
	Upgrade to IT infrastructure	58	80	196	138
	Door Entry System	19	0	19	(0)
		382	317	624	241
Housing & Customer Services	Private Sector Renewal - Minor Works Grants(Home trust Loan)	60	11	18	(42)
	Existing Satisfactory Purchase	200	150	150	(50)
	Grant for 13x 4 bed dwellings.	455	105	455	0
	Disabled Facilities Grants	500	149	500	0
		1,215	414	1,123	(92)
Leisure and Environmental promotion	Fleet Pond Project-Restoration	44	17	44	0
	Broadoak Common (District) (S106)	13	3	13	0
	Edenbrook Country Park (S106)	30	0	30	0
	Fleet pond Nature Reserve Visitor Strategy (S106)	40	30	40	0
	Odiham Common (S106)	27	6	27	0
	Fleet Area Football (S106)	180	0	180	0
	Leisure Centre SCAPE project appraisal	90	164	112	22
	Strategic Leisure	26	29	29	3
	Leisure Centre Pre Construction Stage	609	360	758	149
	Hook Football Pitch Drainage Improvements (S106)	29	0	0	(29)
	Countryside Service Vehicles (S106)	50	49	49	(1)
	Cricket Hill Pond (Yateley) (S106)	41	18	41	0
	Boiler Replacements - Frogmoor LC	41	0	44	3
	Odiham Signs	5	0	5	0
	Hook Meadow	6	0	6	0
	S106 Leisure Parish Funded Projects	75	42	75	0
	Frogmore leisure	1,500	1	1,500	0
Leisure Centre Construction	21,550	3,397	21,387	(163)	
Leisure Centre Consultants & Fees	98	9	87	(11)	
		24,454	4,124	24,427	(27)
Technical Services	Fernhill Road, Pedestrian Facilities (S106)	70	0	70	0
	Church Road (Victoria Road) Car Park - Pay on Foot	247	0	247	0
	Phoenix Green, Hartley Wintney	0	4	2	2
	Mill Corner, North Warnborough	0	0	0	0
	Parking Enforcement Vehicles	0	13	13	13
	S106 NEHTS parish	0	0	0	0
	S106 NEHTS Fleet Station Contributions	200	200	200	0
			517	217	532
TOTAL CAPITAL PROGRAMME	26,568	5,071	26,706	137	

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING: 16 FEBRUARY 2016

TITLE OF REPORT: QUARTER 3 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – 2015/16

Report of: Joint Chief Executive

Cabinet member: Councillor Stephen Parker, Leader

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To update Members on the Council’s key performance indicator results in the third quarter of 2015/16 (1 October 2015 – 31 December 2015) as found in Appendix I.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That for any areas of concern, Members either:

2.1.1 Make recommendation on any action considered necessary to Cabinet, or

2.1.2 Make recommendation to the relevant Service Board and/or Performance Improvement Board (PIB) for action

2.2 That Members continue to feedback to the Joint Chief Executive any amendments or new information they wish to see included in these Performance Reports.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Performance Information reports are designed to ensure that performance is managed more effectively within the Council

4 CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 A total of 40 indicators are reported. 33 met the target, with 2 narrowly missing the target and 5 missed their target by over 10%.

4.2 A summary of the indicators which missed their quarterly target is provided in the following table:

Ref	Indicator name and comment on missed target
RB09	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events Q3 figures remain out of target. 8 days is the end of year target – the service is currently slightly behind the expected end of December figure. This has predominantly been caused by the amount and complexity of work received together with software/IT issues. Additional resources are being used to reduce processing times

HS08	% of private sector housing grant budgets actually spent (DFG) (Values are cumulative) Q3 - £187K spent out of £500K budget by Q3. £166K is committed but not yet paid out and a potential £188K at pre-approval stage (25 referrals)
HR13	FTE days missed due to short term absence Balance of long term to short term absence has changed as the number of long term absences has fallen this year. The targets for these may need to be adjusted to reflect this
IT02	% Priority 1 incidents fixed within 4 working hours Hart experience 3 PI incidents. 1 failed which related to network access to the countryside workshop. The link and routers are being upgraded
LS12	% of Tree Preservation works applications determined within eight weeks Q3 89.3%. Missed target of 90% due to staff sickness and difficulties with processing of initial application validations.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None identified.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – 2015/16 Quarter 3 Key Performance Indicator report

2015/16 Quarter 3 Key Performance Indicator report

Audit

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
IA01	Percentage of Audit Plan completed during the year		100%	14%	23%	73%	95%		Green
IA02	Percentage of Audits carried out within time allocation		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		Green
IA04	% of High Risk Audit Recommendations Implemented		100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		Green

Customer Services

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
CS01	Quality of Customer Service Call Handling - % score from monitoring sample	<i>Whilst not all call monitoring could be undertaken due to software issues, those completed were satisfactory</i>	96.29%	92%	92.3%	98.4%	90%		Green
CS02a	% of telephone calls answered by Contact Centre in 20 seconds		78.24%	71.33%	84.33%	91.33%	80%		Green
CS03	% Garden Waste invoices sent out accurately and on time		100%	100%	100%	100%	99%		Green

Environmental & Technical Services

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
ETS01	Number of missed collections – All – (per 100,000)		677	27	19	16	100		Green

Finance, Revs and Bens

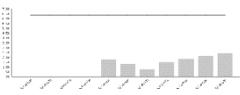
KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
FI06	% of undisputed invoices paid on time (old BVPI8)		95.3%	95.3%	95.7%	94%	97%		Amber
RB01	% of benefit assessments calculated correctly (new and change in circumstances)		98.1%	95.6%	96.4%	96.2%	95%		Green
RB02	% of new benefit claims decided within 14 days		96.6%	93.4%	93.6%	93.1%	90%		Green
RB04	% of council tax collected electronically (DD + Internet)		86.2%	86.1%	86.7%	87.1%	80%		Green
RB05	Percentage of Non-domestic Rates Collected	On target. Currently 82.35% collected against target of 73.88% for December. 98.5% is the end of year target – on course to achieve this by the end of March	98.6%	32.2%	56.2%	82.35%	98.5%		Green
RB06	% of Council Tax collected	On target. Currently 87.37% collected against target of 73.50% for December. 98% is the end of year target – on course to achieve this by the end of March	98.7%	30.3%	58.9%	87.37%	98.0%		Green
RB07	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims.		20.2	24.4	21.0	22.9	23		Green
RB08	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit changes of circumstances.	Q3 figures remain out of target. 8 days is the end of year target – the service is currently slightly behind the expected end of December figure. This has predominantly been caused by the amount and complexity of work received together with software/IT issues. Additional resources are being used to reduce processing times	7.1	15.2	13.6	9.7	8		Red
RB09	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	Q3 not meeting target at 12.66 days against target of 12. 12 days is the end of year target – whilst the year to date figure at the end of December was 12.35 days, the target should be achieved by year end	7.7	16.0	14.2	12.7	12.0		Amber

Housing Services

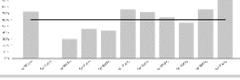
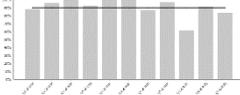
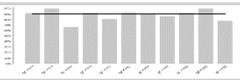
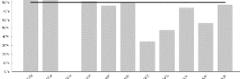
KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
HS01	Average time (in days) taken to decide whether to accept people as homeless	Based on 8 formal homeless decision(s) made this period, the longest case took 28 days, the quickest was 2 days	15	20	16	14	15		Green
HS07	Preventing Homelessness - number of housing advice cases where homelessness prevented		174	36	24	25	144		Green
HS08	% of private sector housing grant budgets actually spent (DFG) (Values are cumulative)	Q3 - £187K spent out of £500K budget by Q3. £166K is committed but not yet paid out and a potential £188K at pre-approval stage (25 referrals)	60%	18%	25%	37%	100%		Red
HS16	Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	2 affordable homes completed in this quarter due to delays on several sites.	150	25	67	69	80		Green

HR

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
HR01	% accuracy in gross and net pay calculations for all payrolls	Above target at end of quarter	99.3%	99.7%	99.3%	100%	98%		Green
HR02	% of cases not dealt with by HR front office and which are not treated as HRP work requests that are dealt with in 3 working days		90.5%	99%	99.7%	100%	95%		Green
HR03	DBS applications sent to the DBS within 1 working day		100%	100%	100%	100%	95%		Green
HR05	% Complex HR queries resolved within 10 working days	Above target at end of quarter	100%	100%	100%	100%	95%		Green

HR12	FTE days missed due to long term absence	No staff on long term sickness during the quarter	2.86	.90	0.10	0.00	6.30		Green
HR13	FTE days missed due to short term absence	Balance of long term to short term absence has changed as the number of long term absences has fallen this year. The targets for these may need to be adjusted to reflect this	5.24	1.80	2.10	2.40	6.30		Red

IT Services

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
IT01	% registered controllable incidents resolved at first point of contact		63.2%	54.7%	75.2%	92.7%	60%		Green
IT02	% Priority 1 incidents fixed within 4 working hours	Hart experience 3 P1 incidents. 1 failed which related to network access to the countryside workshop. The link and routers are being upgraded	95.7%	61.1%	91%	83.3%	90%		Red
IT03	% Priority 2 incidents fixed within 8 working hours		88.1%	92.3%	100%	77.8%	90%		Green
IT04	% Priority 3 incidents fixed within 5 working days		87.5%	92.1%	95.8%	96.3%	85%		Green
IT05	% uptime of key systems		99.7%	98.7%	97.1%	99.8%	99%		Green
IT06	% uptime of Hart DC website		99.75%				98%		Green
IT07	% score for Council employee satisfaction with Capita IT support service		61.6%	73.6%	55.9%	77%	80%		Green

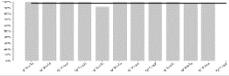
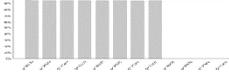
Leisure Services

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
LS05	Summary of Projects status - Number of days ahead / behind project timetable		0	0	0	0	0		Green
LS12	% of Tree Preservation works applications determined within eight weeks	Missed target of 90% due to staff sickness and difficulties with processing of initial application validations	93.25%	97.85%	98.65%	89.3%	90%		Amber

Planning Services

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
PS01	Processing of planning applications: Major applications		65.9%	83.3%	70.0%	89.0%	70.0%		Green
PS02	Processing of planning applications: Minor applications		74%	62%	77%	78%	65%		Green
PS03	Processing of planning applications: Other applications		89.0%	91.2%	90.6%	85%	85.0%		Green

Regulatory Services

KPI	Description	Note	2014/15	Q1 2015/16	Q2 2015/16	Q3 2015/16	Annual Target	Trend	Status
			Value	Value	Value	Value			
RS20	% of key inspections carried out in time		97.78%	100%	97.17%	99.2%	98%		Green
RS21	% of incident responses carried out in prescribed time		98.34%				98%		Green

CABINET

KEY DECISIONS/ WORK PROGRAMME AND EXECUTIVE DECISIONS MADE

March 2016

Cabinet is required to publish its Key Decisions and forward work programme to inform the public of issues on which it intends to make policy or decisions. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also notes the Programme, which is subject to regular revision.

Report Title	Ref (Note 1)	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Key Decision Y?	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)
Installation of Electric vehicle charging points	Nov 15	Consideration of installing charging points in car parks	Feb 16	Mar 16		SF	TS&EM
Corporate Plan	Dec 15	Consultation results and implementation plan.	Feb 16	Mar 16		L	CX
Budget Monitoring	Quarterly	Quarterly Budget Monitoring	Mar 16 Dec 16			KC	F
Home Energy Conservation Act	Feb 16	Action Plan	Mar 16			SG	H
Temporary Accommodation Policy	Feb 16	New policy for approval	Mar 16			SG	H
Waste Concessions	Feb 16	Review	Mar 16			SF	TS&EM
Parking Concessions	Dec 15	Review of current parking concessions	Feb 16	April 16		MM	TS&EM
Service Plans	Annual	Service Plans 2016/17	April 16			BB	All
Car Parking Maintenance Review	Dec 15	Overview of how we are maintaining our car parks and how we effectively make use of our resources	Mar 16	June 16		MM	TS&EM
Pay on Exit parking	May 15	Report from Task and Finish Group with recommendations.	July 15	June 16	Y	MM	TS&EM

Report Title	Ref (Note 1)	Outline/Reason for Report/Comments	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Key Decision Y?	Cabinet Member (Note 2)	Service (Note 3)
Medium Term Financial Forecast	Feb 16	Updated for consideration. To include scenario testing	July 16			KC	F
Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15	Annual	Report on outturn	July 16			KC	F
Treasury Management Outturn	Annual	Report on outturn	July 16			KC	F
Ecology and Countryside Capital Works Programme 2016-2019	Oct 16	For approval	Jan 16	July 16	Y	AC	L&EP
Disabled Blue Badge	Feb 16	Report on issues of blue badge charging	July 16			MM	TS&EM
Leisure Capital Works Programme	Feb 16	Approval for release of funding	July 16		Y	AC	L&EP
Establishment of a Local Housing Company	Oct 15	Update on the formation of a local housing company.	Feb 16	Aug 16		SG	H
SANG: Identifying Provision and Priorities	Dec 15	Report for consideration	Feb 16	Aug 16		SP	PP
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Feb 16	To consider the continuation of the scheme and options for the scheme to inform 2017/18 budget setting	Aug16				
Treasury Management Strategy	Annual	Update	Feb 17			KC	F
2016/17 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax Proposals	Annual	Approval. Recommendation to Council.	Feb 17			KC	F
Odiham Neighbourhood Plan	Nov 15	Response to submission documents	TBC			SP	PP

Notes:

1 Date added to Programme

2 Cabinet Members

L – Leader & Planning Policy (SP)

KC Economic Development

BB Corporate Services

SG Housing

AC Community Welbeing

JK Regulatory Services

SF Environment

MM Town Regeneration

3 Service:

JCX Joint Chief Executive
CS Community Safety
F Finance
SLS Shared Legal Services

HS Housing Services
CCS Corporate & Customer Services
PP Planning Policy
MO Monitoring Officer

RS Regulatory Services
L&EP Leisure and Environmental Promotion
TS &EM Technical Services and Environmental Maintenance

EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

None

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – February 2016

Issue and Description of Topic	Current Position Objective	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Resources Required	Contact
Planning Development Control	Review of Service – Terms of Reference for Task and Finish Group	Oct 15	Feb 16	Report	Head of Regulatory Service
Quarterly Budget Monitoring	Quarterly update	Feb 16 Aug 16 Oct 16		Report	Head of Finance
Performance Information	Quarterly highlight reports.	Feb 16 Aug 16 Dec 16		Report	Performance and Innovation Officer
Education	Mark Saunders from HCC to attend - establishing the County approach to school expansion plans, how they account for growth and how do they fund this with a particular focus on Hart (as October Minutes)	Feb 16			Joint Chief Executive
Refined Housing Options Consultation	Review of the decision making process	Feb 16			Chairman
Parking concessions	Approval for Parking Concessions policy	Feb 16	Mar 16	Report	Environment & Technical Services
Service Plans	Draft Service Plans 2015/16	Mar 16		Report	Joint Chief Executive
Body Worn Video	Annual monitoring	April 16		Report	Environment & Technical Services
Outside Bodies	Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies	April 16		Report	Joint Chief Executive
Annual Review	Review of work and outcomes from past year	April 16		Report	Joint Chief Executive

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – February 2016

Issue and Description of Topic	Current Position Objective	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Resources Required	Contact
RIPA	Quarterly Update	April 16 July 16 Nov 16 Jan 17		Report	Monitoring Officer
Flooding	Notes from twice yearly meeting of Agencies	Apr 16 Oct 16		Minutes	Environmental and Technical Services
Disabled Blue Badge	Report on issues of blue badge charging	Jan 16	June 16	Report	Environment & Technical Services
2015/16 Performance Information – Annual Outturn	Annual update	June 16		Report	Performance and Innovation Officer
Medium Term Financial Forecast	Annual forecast	June 16		Report	Head of Finance
Leisure Capital Works Programme	Consideration of funding release for capital works	June 16		Report	Leisure & Environmental Promotion
Crime and Disorder Scrutiny	Annual meeting	Mar 16	June 16	Report	Community Safety
Nominations to Service Boards	Member nominations	June 16			Chairman O&S Committee
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	To consider continuation and options	July 16		Report	Head of Finance
2014/15 Budget Outturn	Annual	July 16		Report	Head of Finance
Medium Term Financial Outlook	To consider the medium term financial position	Oct 16		Report	Head of Finance

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – February 2016

Issue and Description of Topic	Current Position Objective	Original Due Date	Revised Due Date	Resources Required	Contact
Treasury Management Strategy	Report setting out the treasury management strategy for the council	Annual	Jan 17	Report	Head of Finance
Markets Across Hart	Task and Finish Group - Councillors Makepeace-Browne and Wheale to lead.	TBC			
Procurement Process	Report	TBC			Joint Chief Executive
Ecology and Countryside Capital Works Programme 2016-19	To consider the proposed Capital Works Programme	Dec 15	TBC	Report	Head of Leisure & Environmental Promotion
Portfolio Holders	Councillors to attend: 21 July Stephen Parker 15 September Mike Morris 20 October Stephen Gorys (apols) 17 November Steve Forster 15 December Ken Crookes 19 January 2016 John Kennett 16 February Brian Burchfield (apols) 15 March Anne Crampton				
Draft Budget 2016/17	Report	Annual	Jan 17	Report	Head of Finance

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: 16 February 2016 at 7pm

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, Fleet

Present:

COUNCILLORS

Bailey (Chairman)

Axam, Clarke, Crisp, Dickens, Makepeace-Browne, Renshaw, Wheale (left 8.15pm)

In attendance: Councillor Ambler (left 8.20pm)

Officers:

Tony Higgins	Head of Finance
Nick Steevens	Head of Regulatory Services
Gill Chapman	Committee Services

For item 95:

Mark Saunders	Hampshire County Council
Richard Vaughan	Hampshire County Council

90 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2016 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

91 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillor Gray.

92 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that the working group on the Refined Housing Options consultation would meet after the meeting to finalise the report to the next meeting.

93 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Dickens and Wheale declared a personal interest as they were School Governors in the district.

94 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (ITEMS PERTAINING TO THE AGENDA)

None.

95 EDUCATION PROVISION

Mark Saunders of the Strategic Planning Unit, Hampshire County Council, accompanied by Richard Vaughan, Deputy Head of Strategic Development, HCC, updated members on future education provision in the district, covering school place planning, capacities and surplus, capital programme, new school places, explanations of the forecasting models for primary and secondary places and the proposed extension of Robert Mays school.

Members considered the following issues:

- Government funding for provision of school places and capital maintenance
- Parental preference and degree of flexibility needed
- Academies and free schools
- Basic need projects over the next period eg Tweseldown Infants, Buryfield, Church Crookham Junior, Robert Mays
- The pressures of building around Fleet and the limitations of expansion around Calthorpe and Courtmoor schools
- There is an increase in the primary sector and growth in secondary. Particularly the district's primary sector is still growing when it was expected to be levelling out
- There is a need to create 60 forms of entry across the county, equating to 7 secondary schools
- Financial challenges in providing new school places and capital programmes to expand existing schools
- The effect of private schooling in the area
- The potential housing coming to fruition in the 10 year period
- Importance of working together on S106 agreements

Members were particularly interested in the forecasting of yields from new developments - in Hart and a number of other areas in Hampshire there is evidence emerging of larger development yielding ie for every 2 bed property and above 0.3 children would be expected to come from each property, eg 100 houses built would yield around 30 children. In Hart this yield was proving to be higher, resulting in more school places needed.

Members thanked Mr Saunders and Mr Vaughan for their information, and the explanations of the challenges facing Hampshire in providing school places.

96 FEEDBACK FROM SERVICE BOARDS

Community Wellbeing

- some Members had visited the site of the new leisure centre
- there had been reports of pricing issues at Frogmore
- it was suggested that the Head of Leisure be invited to the next meeting to report on the outsourcing changeover

Regulatory Services

- A report had been received from the Community Safety Manager on the work of the Community Safety department, which would be circulated to all members.

Corporate services

- The 5 Councils project was progressing, with the legalities of the project being ironed out.

97 REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

In June 2015 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee amended the work programme to include a review on *Planning performance, what are the development control procedures and the way we engage with customers*. Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report of a review carried out into the development control service.

Members considered the following issues highlighted in the review:

- The difficulties of recruitment and retention of Planning staff
- Pre-application advice - costs and benefits to the Council and users
- Parish involvement
- Parish training
- Agents' forum and feedback
- Planning Training for Councillors (1st June)
- Planning Working Group

Members asked that notes from the Agents' forum be circulated to enable consideration of the issues of pre-application advice. The report was noted and the proposed Action Plan endorsed.

RESOLVED

- 1 That the Development Control Review be noted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 2 That the action table shown in Appendix 2 be endorsed and brought back to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2016 to update members on progress against the recommendations.

Councillor Wheale left the meeting during this item (8.15pm). Councillor Ambler left the meeting at the end of this item (8.20 pm).

98 2015-16 BUDGET MONITORING – TO END OF DECEMBER

Members were advised of the position on revenue and capital as at the end of December. Cabinet would consider this report at its meeting on 3 March 2016.

Members considered the information and asked for clarification on the business support unit and off street enforcement.

RESOLVED

That the revised projections and reasons for the main variations shown in Appendix 1 and Paragraph 4, and the current spending position on the Capital Programme shown on Appendix 2 be noted.

99 QUARTER 3 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE INFORMATION – 2015/16

Members were updated on the Council's key performance indicator results in the third quarter of 2015/16 (1 October 2015 – 31 December 2015).

Members considered and noted the information.

RESOLVED

That the Corporate Performance information be noted.

100 UPDATE ON TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

None.

101 CABINET WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Work Programme was considered.

102 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was considered and amended as follows:

- The Head of Leisure be invited to the next meeting regarding the launch of the leisure centre outsourcing
- Establishment of local housing company - July
- Report on Refined Housing Options consultation - March

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm