

# West Devon Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Agenda</b>										
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Tuesday, 6th September, 2016</b>										
<b>Time:</b>	<b>2.00 pm</b>										
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Chamber - Kilworthy Park</b>										
<b>Full Members:</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Chairman</b> Cllr Musgrave <b>Vice Chairman</b> Cllr Yelland</p> <p><i>Members:</i></p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Cllr Cann OBE</td> <td>Cllr McInnes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Davies</td> <td>Cllr Mott</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Evans</td> <td>Cllr Moyse</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Hockridge</td> <td>Cllr Ridgers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Kimber</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Cann OBE	Cllr McInnes	Cllr Davies	Cllr Mott	Cllr Evans	Cllr Moyse	Cllr Hockridge	Cllr Ridgers	Cllr Kimber	
Cllr Cann OBE	Cllr McInnes										
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Cllr Evans	Cllr Moyse										
Cllr Hockridge	Cllr Ridgers										
Cllr Kimber											
<b>Interests – Declaration and Restriction on Participation:</b>	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.										
<b>Committee administrator:</b>	Member.Services@swdevon.gov.uk										

**1. Apologies for absence**

**2. Confirmation of Minutes**

**1 - 6**

Meeting held on 19 July 2016

**3. Declarations of Interest**

Members are invited to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting.

If Councillors have any questions relating to predetermination, bias or interests in items on this Agenda, then please contact the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

**4. Items Requiring Urgent Attention**

To consider those items which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered by the Meeting as matters of urgency

**5. Public Forum**

**7 - 8**

A period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public

**6. Hub Committee Forward Plan**

If any Member seeks further clarity, or wishes to raise issues regarding any future Hub Committee agenda item, please contact Member Services before **5.00pm on Thursday, 1 September 2016** to ensure that the lead officer(s) are aware of this request in advance of the meeting.

**7. Locality Model Review**

**9 - 22**

Report of the Locality Manager

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>8. Planning Peer Challenge Review 2016/17</b>  | <b>23 - 74</b> |
| Report of the Specialists Manager   |                |
| <b>9. Quarterly Performance Measures</b>  | <b>75 - 88</b> |
| Report of the Specialist – Performance and Intelligence   |                |
| <b>10. Task and Finish Group Updates</b>  |                |
| (a) T18 Programme – Interim Review  |                |
| <b>11. Committee Decisions Log</b>  | <b>89 - 90</b> |
| <b>12. Exclusion of Press and Public</b>  |                |
| <b>13. Five Year Land Supply - Verbal Report</b>  |                |
| <b>14. Re-admittance of Press and Public</b>  |                |
| <b>15. Draft Annual Work Programme 2016/17</b>  | <b>91 - 92</b> |
| An opportunity for Members to suggest potential agenda items for consideration during this Municipal Year |                |
| <b>16. Member Learning and Development Opportunities Arising from this Meeting</b>                        |                |

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# Agenda Item 2

At a Meeting of the **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE** held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Kilworthy Park, Drake Road, **TAVISTOCK** on **TUESDAY** the **19<sup>th</sup>** day of **JULY 2016** at **2.00pm**.

**Present:**

Cllr C R Musgrave – Chairman  
Cllr J Yelland – Vice-Chairman  
Cllr W G Cann OBE                      Cllr M Davies  
Cllr J Evans                                Cllr P Kimber  
Cllr C Mott                                 Cllr D E Moyse  
Cllr P J Ridgers

Head of Paid Service  
Executive Delivery (Service Delivery and  
Commercial Development)  
Group Manager – Support Services  
Group Manager – Business Development  
Section 151 Officer  
Senior Specialist – Democratic Services

**Also in Attendance:**

Cllrs K Ball, D W Cloke, C Edmonds, A F  
Leech, G Parker and P R Sanders

**\*O&S(I) 11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs L J G Hockridge and J R McInnes.

**\*O&S(I) 12 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the Meeting held on 14 June 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**\*O&S(I) 13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members and officers were asked to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of this meeting, but there was none made.

**\*O&S(I) 14 PUBLIC FORUM**

It was noted that no issues had been raised by the general public.

**\*O&S(I) 15 HUB COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

The most recent (published June 2016) Hub Committee Forward Plan was presented for consideration and was duly noted without any issues being raised.

**\*O&S(I) 16 T18 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO END OF MARCH 2016**

A report was presented that set out the revenue position of the T18 Programme at the end of March 2016. It was noted that a version of this report had also been considered at the Hub Committee meeting held on 12 July 2016 (Minute HC 11 refers).

In discussion, the following points were raised-

- (a) With regard to workstream T4: 'Web/Portal', the Committee was advised that this had been extended to include the purchase of a new Council website. It was intended that the new website (that would be funded from within the IT equipment savings budget) would be cloud based and would be quicker and more responsive for its users.

Specifically regarding the number of web pages currently available on the website, it was noted that, as part of the recent transitional resources report, a temporary post was to be filled that would be responsible for reducing and streamlining the content that was published;

- (b) As an update to workstream T5: 'Telephony', officers confirmed that a new telephony system had been purchased. Within the next two weeks, it was also noted that one of the telephone lines would be running on this new system. Once officers were content that the system was set up and working satisfactorily, the handover plan would take effect and all lines would be switched over to the new system over the course of a weekend. When questioned, officers gave an assurance that these changes (once in place) would be advertised and publicised widely as part of a Communications Strategy;
- (c) Officers were invited to provide a detailed explanation of the cost allocations and apportionments of the Programme between the Council and South Hams District Council. The Section 151 Officer explained the processes and confirmed that the Council's new external auditors (KPMG) would also be reviewing the processes and methodology used as part of the annual audit of the Accounts. It was explained that KPMG would report on their findings to the Audit Committee meeting on 27 September 2016;
- (d) In terms of the total expenditure for the Programme, officers confirmed that the figures outlined in the presented agenda report were the final totals. As and when future expenditure was being sought for other potential projects, a business case would be presented to Members for their consideration.

Particularly when considering the extent of the changes, a Member felt that the Senior Leadership Team should be congratulated that the Programme had been delivered for less than the agreed budget. Whilst there were still ongoing difficulties associated with the Programme, the Member was reassured that the Senior Leadership Team had demonstrated its ability to deliver such extensive change.

It was then **RESOLVED** that progress to date on the T18 Transformation Programme be noted.

## \*O&S(I) 17 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES

### (a) T18 Programme – Interim Review: Draft Terms of Reference

The Committee was reminded that the Council approved the following recommendation at its meeting held on 28 June 2016 (Minute CM 21a (iii) refers):

*‘That the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee be requested to undertake an interim review of the T18 Programme, with the Terms of Reference for this Review being agreed by the Executive Director (Strategy and Commissioning), in consultation with the Lead Member for Customer First and the Lead Member for Economy.’*

Since this decision and, in consultation with the relevant lead Members, the Executive Director (Strategy and Commissioning) had drafted a set of proposed Terms of Reference as follows:

*“The Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee is requested to undertake an interim review of the T18 programme. In undertaking the review, the Task and Finish Group is asked to focus on the:*

- *timescales of the programme and the reasons for these;*
- *capacity during transition;*
- *leadership and continuity from 2104 until present;*
- *approach to project management; and*
- *impact on service delivery.*

*The review should be conducted in a way that highlights what went well and what could have been done better, does not allocate blame but provides a report that is based on lessons learnt.”*

During the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- (a) the importance of the terms of reference being appropriate for the review to be effective. In addition, some Members emphasised that the review needed to be robust and challenging;
- (b) the need for swift progress to be made on this review was recognised by all Members;
- (c) an addition to the draft terms of reference. It was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that the following addition should be included at the end of the final sentence in the draft terms of reference:

*‘and how these lessons learnt are being applied.’*

When put to the vote, this addition was declared **CARRIED**.

It was then **RESOLVED** that:

1. The broad terms of reference (as outlined above, subject to inclusion of the addition at discussion point (b)) be approved as the basis for this Review; and
2. Cllrs Davies, Evans, Mott, Musgrave, Ridgers and Yelland be nominated to serve on this Task and Finish Group.

**O&S(I) 18 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP – PROGRESS UPDATE AND INDUCTION REVIEW**

The Committee considered a report that presented a series of recommendations from the Member Development Steering Group.

The Chairman of the Steering Group proceeded to introduce the report and responded to Member questions.

In the subsequent discussion, the following points were raised-

- (a) The Chairman of the Steering Group confirmed that there were no cost implications associated with pursuing the South West Charter Status for Member Development;
- (b) Members endorsed a suggestion whereby a standing agenda item should be included for future Committee meetings that acted as a prompt for any future Member Learning and Development opportunities that arose from each meeting;
- (c) Whilst acknowledging that the Member Induction Programme was a largely generic document, it was noted that the future Member Learning and Development Plan would have the ability to cater for the individual needs of all Members;
- (d) Specifically regarding the revised Induction Programme, a number of Members commended its content and wished to put on record their thanks to the Steering Group and lead officer for taking on board the feedback of the wider membership and for producing such an excellent piece of work.

It was then:

**RESOLVED**

That the Committee:

1. note the progress made by the Steering Group to date; and



2. request a standing agenda item be included for future Committee meetings that acts as a prompt for any future Member Learning and Development opportunities that arose from each meeting.

That the Hub Committee be **RECOMMENDED** to:

3. approve the future Member Induction Programme (as attached at Appendix A of the presented agenda report), subject to delegated authority being granted to the Senior Specialist – Democratic Services, in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group and Group Leaders, to make any necessary minor amendments;
4. approve the principle of a Member Learning and Development Plan, with responsibility for its content and monitoring being delegated to the Senior Specialist – Democratic Services, in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group; and
5. support the pursuing of the South West Charter Status for Member Development accreditation.

**\*O&S(I) 19 COMMITTEE DECISIONS LOG**

The latest version of the Committee decisions log was presented to the meeting and, with no debate or discussion, it was:

**RESOLVED**

That the published Decisions Log be noted.

**\*O&S(I) 20 DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

The Committee took the opportunity to express its views in relation to its 2016/17 Work Programme and proceeded to note the content of the latest draft (as presented in the published agenda papers) without the need for any revisions at this time.

(The meeting terminated at 2.55 pm)

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Chairman

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## **PUBLIC FORUM PROCEDURES**

### **(a) General**

Members of the public may raise issues and ask questions at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This session will last for up to fifteen minutes at the beginning of each meeting.

### **(b) Notice of Questions**

An issue or question may only be raised by a member of the public provided that they have given written notice (which may be by electronic mail) to Darryl White ([darryl.white@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:darryl.white@swdevon.gov.uk)) by 5.00pm on the Thursday, prior to the relevant meeting.

### **(c) Scope of Questions**

An issue may be rejected by the Monitoring Officer if:

- it relates to a matter within the functions of the Planning and Licensing Committee;
- it is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the district;
- it is offensive, frivolous or defamatory;
- it is substantially the same as a question which has previously been put in the past six months; or
- it requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

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# Agenda Item 7

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee**

Date: **6 September 2016**

Title: **LOCALITY MODEL REVIEW**

Portfolio Area: **Customer First**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **N/A**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken:

Any recommendations will be presented to the Hub Committee on 20 September 2016

Author: **Nadine Trout** Role: **Locality Manager**

Contact: **Nadine.Trout@swdevon.gov.uk**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**1. Continue to adopt the locality model pending ongoing monitoring and a further report in 12 months.**

### **1. Executive summary**

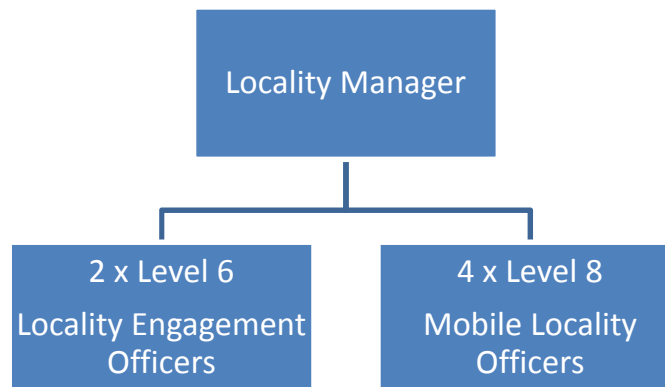
**1.1** The report details how the locality service is currently operating and includes performance figures. The report also details future plans to develop the locality service to continue to meet Council needs.

**1.2** Locality working is a key part of the Council's transformation programme. The service has been in operation for 14 months. It is an evolving service and covers service elements previously covered by a number of departments across the Council. Work delivered to date by this focussed locality team has been well received.

**1.3** In essence the locality service acts as a liaison and support service providing information and support to Members, multi-agency partners, residents and officers on a wide range of resident facing Council services.

## 2. Background

**2.1** The following background information provides an overview of how the locality service is currently working. The locality service is a new service which came into operation in June 2015. The locality service acts as a liaison and support service which undertakes work on behalf of a number of services across the organisation. There are three distinct job roles in the locality service as shown in the diagram below:



### 2.2 Mobile Locality Officers

There are four Mobile Locality Officers who cover designated areas across West Devon - see page 2 of appendix A West Devon Locality Team. These officers are paid a Level 8 salary and are each equipped with a Council vehicle, uniform and iPad. These officers undertake a wide range of routine tasks and have undergone extensive training to help them fulfil their new role. Current IT provision means Mobile Locality Officers are manually issued their workload on a daily basis via email. They receive work requests during the course of their day via iPads.

#### 2.2.1 Mobile Locality Officer Tasks

Types of tasks undertaken by Mobile Locality Officers include:

- a. Regular information gathering (normally the supply of photos or the completion of short forms form) for Assets, Council Tax, Elections, NNDR, Planning Enforcement and Environmental Health and Commercial Services.
- b. Property inspections including toilet checks and fire alarm testing
- c. Abandoned vehicle and fly tipping reports
- d. Dog patrols
- e. Planning notices
- f. Water quality testing
- g. Waste and cleansing issues – meeting with customers to resolve issues and encourage recycling

**2.2.3** It is important to note that many of the tasks undertaken by Level 8 Locality Officers were previously undertaken by a range of specialist officers in the organisation who were paid Level 6 and above. The targeted use of Mobile Locality Officers for these tasks is

therefore much more cost effective. For example, the average hourly rate of a qualified Planning Officer is over £5 more per hour than a Mobile Locality Officer. When one considers approximately 1,000 planning notices are posted over the course of the year the savings soon stack up.

**2.2.4** The workload of Mobile Locality Officers whilst varied is felt to be manageable. Daily recording sheets are in place to ensure individual workload is monitored. Plans are underway to introduce further tasks around proactive service monitoring for street cleansing and grounds maintenance.

### **2.3 Locality Engagement Officers**

There are two Locality Engagement Officers one covering the North of the Borough the other covering the South. These officers are paid a Level 6 salary and are agile workers using their own vehicles for travel, working mainly within their defined community areas. Their role is to provide a locality level, face to face point of contact improving the customer experience by creating a seamless response to customer need.

#### **2.3.1 Locality Engagement Officer Tasks**

Types of tasks undertaken by Locality Engagement Officers include:

- a. Handling the locality inbox – this is the main conduit for all locality communication and work requests. Since go live in June 2015 over 20,000 requests have been handled through this inbox.
- b. Attendance at engagement events and Link Meetings to inform residents of Council services.
- c. Interacting with special interest groups and partners.
- d. First point of contact for Members and communities unsure of how to progress or remedy issues and a point of ownership in resolving issues.
- e. Processing place based cases in W2 and dealing with customer complaints.

### **2.4 Locality Manager**

There is one Locality Manager shared between the two authorities. As well as line managing six West Devon members of staff this role also directly manages a locality team of nine in South Hams. The main purpose of this role is to lead, manage and motivate a team of staff in the localities team and ensure effective deployment of resources.

**2.4.1** A further key part of this role is working with the Extended Leadership Team to develop the locality service and ensure business demand across the organisation is met. This has meant the flexing of locality resources to provide support in areas experiencing exceptionally high workload e.g. Customer First Case Management.

### **3. PERFORMANCE**

**3.1** From June 2015 to April 2016 the West Devon Locality team delivered the following key outputs:

- a. Undertook 420 public toilet inspections
- b. Affixed 700 planning notices
- c. Remedied over 640 residential waste and recycling issues
- d. Dealt with 47 abandoned vehicles
- e. Dealt with 270 fly tips
- f. Undertook 560 dog patrols
- g. Delivered over 3,500 household election forms
- h. Checked over 250 empty homes for Council Tax purposes
- i. Attended over 150 community events engaging with 1,600 residents

**3.2** Since April 2016 the Mobile Locality Officers have continued to undertake the key tasks detailed above they have also carried out Water Quality Tests in over 100 locations.

**3.3** The Locality Engagement Officers since April 2016 have undertaken 8 Joint Local Plan events and engaged with 368 residents to encourage them to have their say. They have also settled over 100 informal complaints since June of last year, successfully preventing them from escalating to stage 1 of our formal complaints procedure.

**3.4** The Locality Team regularly receives praise from residents and officers alike for their can do attitude and efficient turnaround times. See Appendix B. Localities Feedback Examples April – August 2016.

### **4. FUTURE LOCALITY SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS**

#### **4.1 Mobile Locality Officers**

The future focus is to continue to support, develop and monitor the Level 8 Mobile Locality role. We will ensure the introduction and implementation of Civica Mobile software which will allow Mobile Locality Officers to self-serve and considerably reduce time spent by Locality Engagement Officers allocating daily work requests. At present the assignment of workload is labour intensive and causes some double handling. ICT are aware of the need for Civica Mobile to be prioritised and are working with Civica to achieve a workable solution promptly.

#### **4.2 Locality Engagement Officers**

Once Civica Mobile is in place and Customer First Case Management is fully resourced the current workload of Locality Engagement Officers will reduce because they will no longer be settling a backlog of corporate complaints or passing on work requests on behalf of Mobile Locality Officers. It is therefore proposed to adjust these roles to best suit Council need. As the T18 programme continues to be delivered, there is a recognition that the Council's response to



place-based case management issues needs to be strengthened. There will also be a need to strengthen contract management within west Devon with the start of new waste and cleansing service external arrangement.

**4.2.1** Locality Engagement Officer resource is needed to deliver functions such as:

***Commercial Services E.g.***

- a) Support with new housing developments: co-ordinating services to deliver bins; approve cleansing schedules on newly adopted roads, etc.
- b) Place based consultation with householders when new services are introduced or withdrawn
- c) Monitoring and remedying householder repeat service failure issues - reducing Call Centre calls, complaints to Members and improving service consistency
- d) Liaison point for communities wanting to engage on community projects – litter picks, composting schemes, car parking, events, etc.

***Customer Services E.g.***

Support to fulfil the Community priority in the Council's emerging Annual Delivery Plan. It has been identified that a refreshed and streamlined "community offer" is needed. This "offer" would include support to communities on:

- a) Localism Act – the Right to Bid*
- b) Council grants and funding*
- c) Council services*
- d) Asset transfer protocol*
- e) Neighbourhood and Parish Plans*

**4.2.2** This place-based function will provide Members with assistance for community requests and ensure communities are able to progress projects more swiftly than historically has been the case.

**4.2.3** It is envisaged that this approach will ensure good service delivery and practical on the ground solutions tailored to community and Council needs.

**4.2.4** There is a strong skill set and willingness within the Locality Engagement staff to deliver effectively and efficiently in the proposed work areas detailed.

**4.2.5** Locality Engagement Officers are well placed to service this place-based business need. Their time spent to date in making links with communities via meetings and engagement events means they have gained a sound working knowledge of their patch and an appreciation of key issues.

**4.2.6** As well as delivering the work detailed above the Locality Engagement Officers will continue to be used at heavy footfall, high profile events to convey key messages about Council service delivery, e.g. large scale changes to waste collection. In addition they will encourage customers to access Council services online, by helping residents to sign up to the customer portal as opposed to telephoning the Council's Call Centre to access services.

**4.3 Monitoring and Reporting**

It is recognised mechanisms need to be in place to monitor and quantify the value for money of the locality service. Continued work is to be undertaken with the Business Development Team and Finance to produce insightful performance figures. These statistics will be closely monitored and will help inform future service delivery.

**5. Implications**

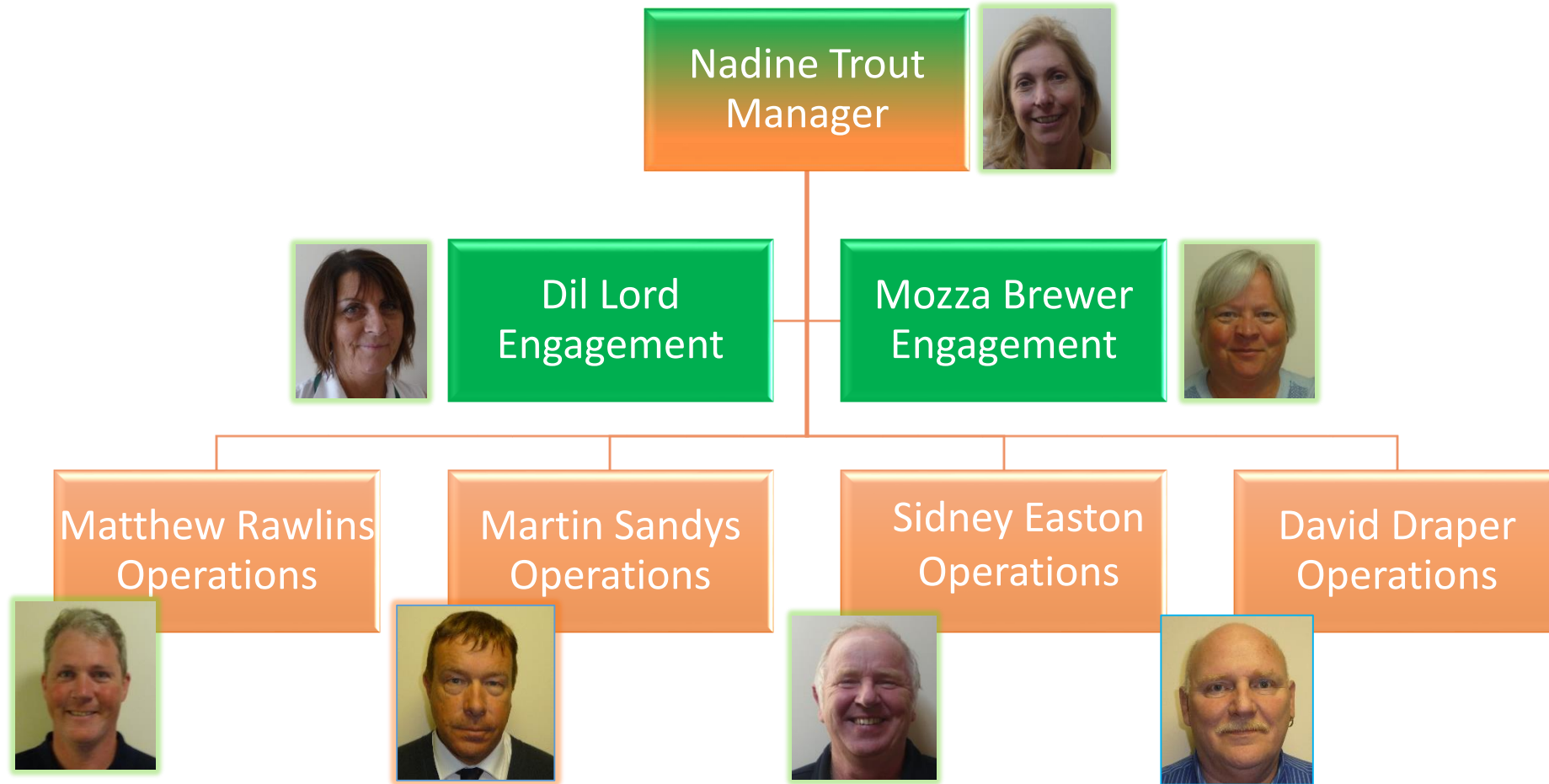
<b>Implications</b>	<b>Relevant to proposals Y/N</b>	<b>Details and proposed measures to address</b>
Legal/Governance	Y	Internal Scrutiny Committee is responsible for considering and scrutinising how the Council is performing as an organisation.
Financial	N	There are no direct financial implications of the contents of the report.
Risk	N	Section 3 of the report shows the service is performing well.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	
Other implications	N	

**Supporting Information**

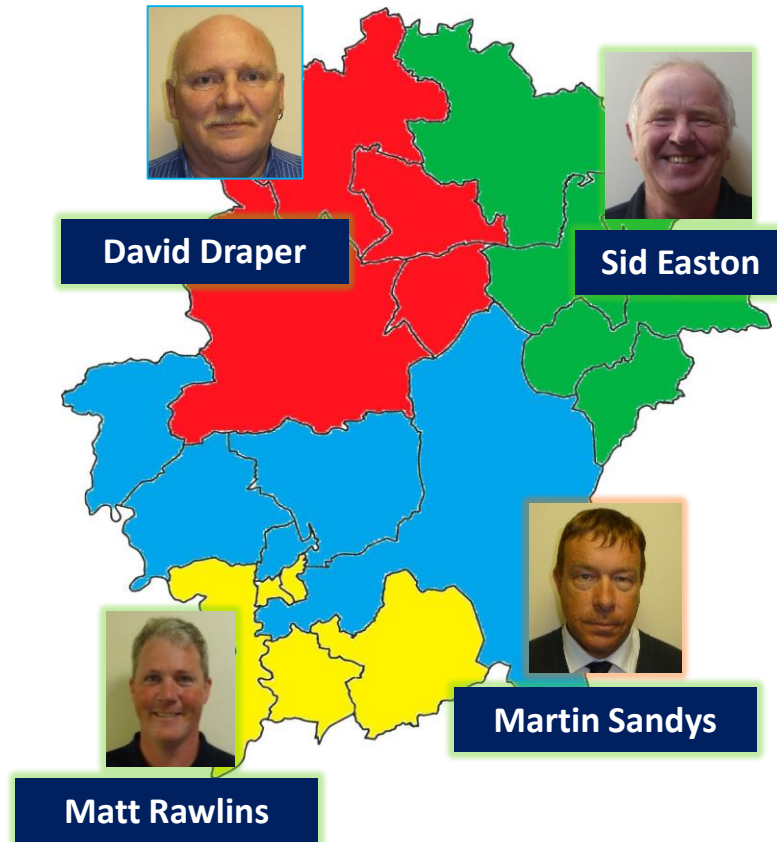
**Appendices:**

- A. West Devon Locality Team
- B. Localities Feedback Examples April – August 2016

# Appendix A. West Devon Locality Team



# West Devon Mobile Locality Areas



- 1. Bridestowe, Hatherleigh and Okehampton**
- 2. Exbourne, South Tawton, Drewsteignton, Chagford and Okehampton**
- 3. Tamarside, Milton Ford, Mary Tavy, Dartmoor and Tavistock**
- 4. Bere Ferrers, Buckland Monachorum, Burrator and Tavistock**



# Mobile Locality Officer Role

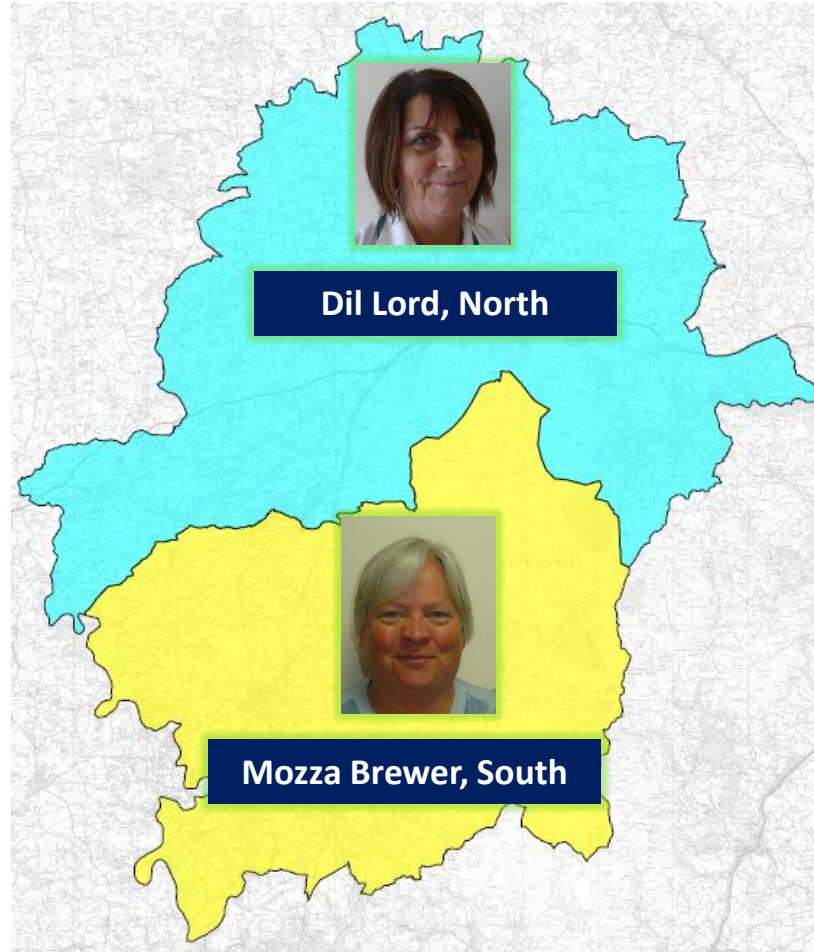
In essence the Mobile Locality Officers act as the eyes and ears of the Authority out in the patch:

- **Check it** – *property monitoring, fire alarm tests, etc.*
- **Report it** - *Abandoned vehicles, fly tipping, graffiti, etc.*
- **Document it** - *Notices, photos for specialists, etc.*
- **Enforce it** - *Dog control orders, etc.*
- **Educate** - Awareness raising to increase self serve

*Note, this is not an exhaustive list. The work of these officers was previously spread across the organisation.*



# Locality Engagement Officer Areas



# Locality Engagement Officer Role

- **Go to person** for Ward Members
- **Reinforcing** Council messages
- **Education** and awareness
- **Visible** to the community
- **Helping** communities/individuals help themselves
- **Linking** with town/parish councils/voluntary and business sector
- **Signposting** to research/grants/funding opportunities
- **Fact finding** and local data gathering to inform future delivery
- **Conduit** of information from Council to community and vice versa

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## APPENDIX B. Localities Feedback Examples April – August 2016

*I wanted to take the time to highlight an excellent response I received from a member of the Localities team, last week. The email was packed full of concise, objective and knowledgeable information, which left me feeling as though I knew exactly what the situation on the ground was.*  
**Email from Environmental Health Specialist 08 August**

*Thank you so much. I really appreciate such a swift response.*  
**Email from Okehampton Resident regarding street cleansing follow up 27 July**

*Congratulations for resolving dog fouling issues in North Tawton*  
**Feedback from a resident about a Locality Officer at an engagement event in Okehampton 27 July**

*Just a quick note to say a big thank you for Localities helping me out with a site clearance issue over the last few months.*  
**Email from Senior Case Manager, Customer First 16 July**

*If I haven't said it before you guys are brilliant!*  
**Email from West Devon Member re waste collection in Tavistock 16 June**

*@WestDevon\_BC thanks for calling round about the cardboard issue, much appreciated*  
**Tavistock resident on Twitter 10 May**

*Splendid work, well done!*  
**Email from West Devon Member, Tavistock 29 April**

*I just wanted to say thank you to you all the hard work, dedication and commitment that ensured this was a success. You outstripped my expectations, thank you.*  
**Email from Strategy & Commissioning Lead Specialist re Waste Review consultation 01 April**

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Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee**

Date: **6 September 2016**

Title: **PLANNING PEER CHALLENGE REVIEW 2016/17**

Portfolio Area: **Customer First – Cllr J Moody**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **N/A**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **N/A**

Author: **Drew Powell** Role: **Specialist Manager**

Contact: **Ext 1240 [drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk](mailto:drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk)**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **That the Panel:**

- 1. Note that the Planning and Licensing Committee has accepted the Planning Peer Challenge report (Appendix 2 refers),**
- 2. note the content of the revised Action Plan 2016/17 (Appendix 3 refers); and**
- 3. receive, on a quarterly basis, key performance data as part of the Performance Indicator report.**

## **1. Executive summary**

1.1 The report presents the Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan that has been developed to implement the recommendations contained within the Report, arising from the Planning Improvement Peer Challenge visit conducted between 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

1.2 Effective Development Management supports the Councils priorities and objectives and also supports the local economy.

1.3 Failure to deliver the service in line with National Performance Measures may result in the Council being 'designated'. Designation could have adverse impacts in terms of reputation and also financially.

## **2. Background**

2.1 Stability, and by association performance, within the Planning Service, and in the new Community of Practice of Development Management evolving within the new operating model, has adversely been affected by a number of internal and external factors over a number of years.

2.2 There has been a clear improvement in terms of the time taken to determine planning applications as a result of targeted and robust performance management measures over the last six months.

2.3 This improvement is, however, only part of the picture and in order to take a wider, objective view of the function, the Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to undertake a planning improvement peer challenge.

2.4 In advance of the challenge a Position Statement (see Appendix 1) was prepared. This statement set the scene for the challenge team which was made up of experienced officers and members with the necessary skill set to cover the agreed scope of the challenge.

2.5 The challenge took place during between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April and many Members will have had input to the process. In addition staff, Parish and Town Councils, Developers, Agents and other Stakeholders were engaged. The resulting, comprehensive Report (see Appendix 2) has been circulated to all members and comments have been collated.

## **3. Outcomes/outputs**

3.1 The Peer Challenge Report provides a comprehensive assessment of the Councils planning function and identifies both the strengths and areas for improvement.

3.2 The development, implementation and ongoing monitoring of a robust Action Plan by the Planning and Licensing Committee in order to address the findings and key recommendations of the Report will ensure that improvements are delivered.

## **4. Proposed Way Forward**

4.1 The Report identifies a number of key areas where improvements can be made. These are summarised in fourteen key recommendations on Pages 5-6.

4.2 A draft Action plan has been developed (see Appendix 3) to address these issues. In some areas, substantial progress has already been made and this is included within the Plan which includes actions, timescales and responsible officers.

4.4 Planning and Licensing Committee Members views on the Plan have been sought and Members will note that, following consideration at the Planning and Licensing Committee meeting held on 26 July 2016, an additional (fifteenth) recommendation is now included in the Action Plan. In addition, there will be consultation events with Agents, Developers, Parish and Town Councils and other stakeholders to ensure that the Plan reflects the inclusive process that was followed through the Peer Challenge itself.

4.5 It is proposed that the Action Plan is owned and developed by the Planning and Licensing Committee and that key performance data is made available to them on a monthly basis.

4.6 In addition performance against the Plan will be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee on a quarterly basis.

## 5. Summary and Conclusions

5.1 The Planning Peer Challenge Report made a number of key recommendations in order to improve performance across the wider planning function. As a result a detailed Action Plan has been developed which will enable improvement to be monitored.

## 8. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The provision of a high performing planning service will support effective decision making within the Planning and Licensing Committee. The development, implementation and monitoring of the proposed action plan will support this provision.
Financial	Y	There are risks associated with being 'designated' through poor performance including a potential reduction in income from application fees. Whilst it is not possible to predict this at this early stage,

		the experience from the regime covering major applications is that the financial risk is very low.
Risk	Y	In addition to the risks associated with being 'designated' (paragraph 1.4 and section 6 above refer), there are well rehearsed reputational risks associated with the performance of the Development Management Service. Whilst there have been a number of factors that have had an adverse impact on the service, performance is improving and the action plan is proposed in order to deliver wider, sustainable improvement.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	There are no equality and diversity implications directly related to this report.
Safeguarding	N	There are no safeguarding implications directly related to this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	There are no community safety or crime and disorder implications directly related to this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	There are no health, safety and wellbeing implications directly related to this report.
Other implications	N	N/A

## **Supporting Information**

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Position Statement

Appendix 2: Planning Peer Challenge Final Report 28 June 2016

Appendix 3: Peer Challenge Action Plan 2016-17

### **Background Papers:**

None.

# South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council



## Planning Peer Challenge April 18-20<sup>th</sup> 2016 Position Statement

Final Version  
13 April 2016

*Working together*



South Hams  
District Council



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

## Contents

1. Introduction and the Challenge
2. Vision and Leadership
3. The Development Management (Planning) Service
4. Governance and Delegation
5. Performance
6. Local Plan and Policy Making
7. Appendices A-G



## Section 1 - Introduction and the challenge

1.1 This Position Statement provides the context for the Peer Challenge of Development Management and Strategic Planning delivered by the shared services of South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council. The review is due to take place between 18 and 20 April 2016.

1.2 The statement outlines the context within which the councils now deliver their services, the fundamental and innovative changes that have taken place over the last year as part of the Transformation 2018 (T18) Programme and a summary of present performance.

1.3 The Members and Senior Leadership Team understand the key role that effective planning and decision making plays in forming, supporting and delivering the vision, corporate values and statutory functions of the councils and the impact this has on the community.

1.4 The primary focus of the review has been scoped, with support from the Planning Advisory Service and the Local Government Association, and is as follows although it is envisaged that other areas of interest and future development are likely to arise as the review progresses;

The aims of the peer challenge are to:

- Assess whether the new ways of case management working that have been introduced across the integrated service and which are the foundation of the shared service is (or will) contribute to the delivery of desired outcomes in relation to the consideration of planning proposals and delivery of high quality development across the area.
- Investigate whether there remain inconsistencies in governance arrangements in relation to planning between the two LPA and assess what if any impact the lack of harmonisation has on the efficiency of the service and the experience of the customer.
- Review the Council's corporate priorities for sustainable development and economic growth: consider the existing planning policies and services offered to customers to evaluate whether the councils are considered to be positive by local businesses and supportive of economic growth in the area.
- Consider the effectiveness of the respective roles of officers and members in developing planning strategies, particularly in the context of the proposed joint local plan.
- Review the mechanisms for community involvement, including relationships with town and parish councils, customer access to planning services and the means for engaging communities in consideration of development proposals and the development of policies to guide development in the future

- Review rates of planning appeals and judgements on judicial reviews and appraise the extent to which local and national planning policy is taken into account by both officers and members when making decisions on planning proposals and whether this fosters good outcomes through the determination process
- Review and comment on the efficiency and effectiveness of decision making arrangements at planning committees, including governance arrangements, committee practice, role of members, speaking rights and training for members.
- Identify any learning opportunities that will help the councils to move forward and achieve their ambitions including through the proposals for commissioning effective planning services in the future.

1.5 In addition to the agreed scope above, the Councils are interested in;

- developing a vision for 'planning decision making'
- looking forward, being bold and innovative in its ambition,
- developing a high performing planning service, that is scaleable and attractive to potential markets in the future.



## Section 2 - Vision and leadership

2.1 South Hams and West Devon Councils began their shared service journey in 2007 with the appointment of a shared Chief Executive. Since then through a range of iterative processes including the creation of a shared leadership and then wider management team, the depth of sharing has increased. Governance and Democratic process has remained separate with each Authority retaining its own decision making powers and identity.

2.2 Whilst substantial savings and efficiencies have been achieved by the development of the shared service the impending financial crisis facing most Councils demanded a more fundamental look at how the relationship worked. Both Councils were facing funding gaps over the next four years of between £2.2million and £2.5 million (28%). With between 65%-75% of revenue expenditure on staff costs, responding to the financial challenge meant reducing staff numbers whilst maintaining frontline services.

2.3 In 2013/14 the Councils engaged with leSE and Ignite to explore how a new Operating Model, similar to that being implemented in Eastbourne, may offer a more radical and sustainable option for future delivery as opposed to continued organic development of the shared service. As a result Transformation 2018 (T18) was born. The South Hams Committee Reports at Appendix A and B outline the original future operating model and business case and the latest monitoring update, respectively.

2.4 The Business Case for the programme included an investment of £4.61million from South Hams and £2.83million from West Devon, with predicted annual recurring savings of £3.37million and £1.64 million, respectively.

2.5 The decision to take on such a fundamental, innovative and high risk change programme reflects the vision of the Leaders and Members of both Councils. The decision has been backed up by unwavering commitment to see the programme through and to realise the benefits to the local communities.

2.6 The T18 programme is based on a number of key principles;

- Centred around the citizen not the Council
- Removal of service silos
- Enabled by technology
- Driven by behaviours

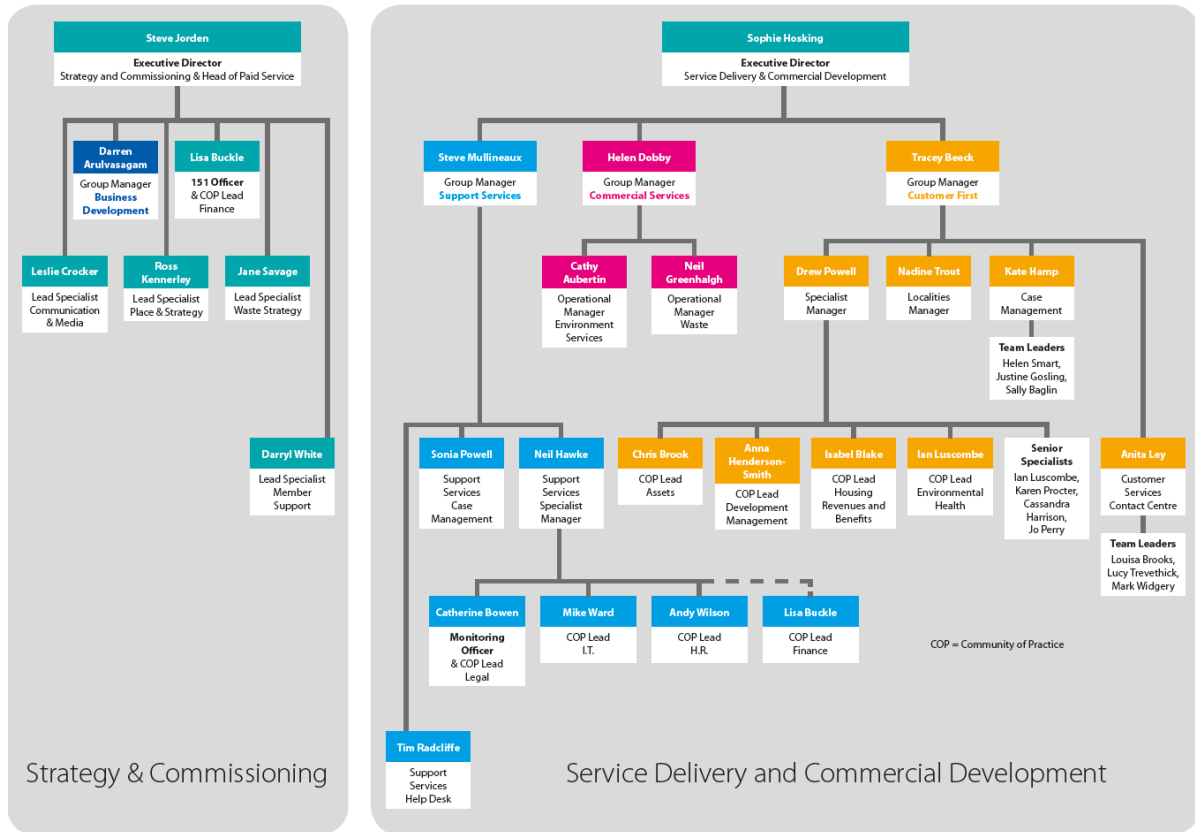
More details on the T18 programme are available upon request and will form part of the introduction on Day one of the Challenge.

2.7 Over the last 12 months the Councils have;

- re-engineered over 400 processes (60 linked to Planning/Development Management)- redesigned, mapped, scripted and tested
- Implemented new systems, the smarter use of technology and an emphasis on channel shift and efficiency

- totally redesigned structures on a case management and specialist model – removed all service silos
- reduced staff numbers by 30% (approx. 100 FTE's)

## 2.8 The new Structure



The chart above outlines the new operating model in terms of organisational structure. At present as the new ways of working develop, there is a 'soft split' between Strategy and Commissioning on the left and Service Delivery and Commercial Development on the right. The Councils are presently scoping options to increase their ability to trade and become more financially sustainable. One of the options includes transferring the right hand side, 'the delivery', into a Local Authority Controlled Company.

## Vision and Priorities – Our Plan

2.9 Our Plan: South Hams/West Devon will be the single strategic plans that set out the vision, objectives and activities of each Council. It brings together all strategies and plans and sets out a comprehensive story of what the council wants to achieve through two blended and interrelated elements;

- The corporate plan establishing the Councils vision, objectives, priorities, actions and delivery approaches and
- The Local Plan establishing land use planning policies and allocations

2.10 At a local level WDBC, SHDC and Plymouth City Council are embarking on a Joint Local Plan. A draft of the Collaboration Agreement is being finalised at this time and officer time and funding has been committed.

2.11 Under the regional devolution bid *Place* features as a key element- in particular accelerated growth in the Plymouth area and collaborative Local Planning. See the prospectus at <http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/sites/default/files/user-1889/Heart%20of%20the%20South%20West%20Devolution%20Prospectus.pdf>

2.12 In terms of sub-regional planning and Duty to Co-operate both Councils are signatories to the Devon wide DTC agreement (available upon request).

2.13 See Section 6 for details and links to Our Plan and its development.

## Section 3 - The Development Management (Planning) Service

3.1 The Planning, or Development Management, Service within the Councils have moved more slowly towards being truly shared when compared with other frontline services. The reasons for this are not clear but factors include the existence of different polices and decision making, geographical challenges around delivery and a different management approach.

3.2 Stability within the Planning Service, and in the new Community of Practice of Development Management evolving within the new operating model, has been affected by a number of internal and external factors over a number of years.

3.3 The national shortage of suitably qualified Planning Specialists, combined with the loss of experienced knowledgeable officers through the T18 recruitment process, resulted in a reduced resource to deliver the service. Recruitment in advance of T18 was very difficult as there was no job security in view of the 'at risk' nature of the majority of posts. Posts have been back-filled with Agency staff which does not, generally, offer the same continuity and stability as establishment staff.

3.4 Delivery of the new operating model and the associated future efficiencies has required the migration of all planning records into new software from the established M3 system across to Civica's APP as part of the corporate solution. During the transition period, it was essential to operate both the old and the new software systems in order to maintain our statutory duties and minimise any risk to the council.

3.5 There has been extensive demand on key officers to support the transition and additional time spent training Case Managers and Specialists on use of the new systems. The impact of the above has been an increase in the backlog of applications waiting to be determined, delays in validating new applications and reduced levels of customer satisfaction.

3.6 The migration of data from the old M3 software into the APP (Civica) solution took place in November/December 2015. This included a programmed period of downtime of a week. There was an ongoing programme of updates as records/documents that extended to a number of weeks in entirety. Full migration of all records from M3 and therefore visibility is now 95% complete but the time taken, which was longer than expected, has had an impact on both performance and reputation. Notwithstanding these issues, applications are now being managed within the new APP system and some of the predicted efficiencies are beginning to have an impact. It is important to stress that these will take time to be fully realised.

3.7 The main benefit of the transition to date is that all applications received through the National Planning Portal are being automatically uploaded to the new APP system thereby removing the need for manual input and onward delay in processing the applications.

3.8 There have been some issues relating to uploading and viewing applications on the planning website which have now mainly been resolved. The website is now far more stable and increased functionality to improve the customer experience will be delivered in the near future.

3.9 Transition into the new way of working using Civica's W2 system is currently being trialled and once established will deliver a number of benefits including;

- Increased visibility of the progress of an application – Customer Advisers and Applicants will be able to follow progress of an application
- Applications will be managed and performance driven by Case Managers rather than being held by Specialists (formerly Planning Officers)
- Automatic updates through preferred method of contact (SMS, email, letter)
- Fully paperless capability

3.10 There have been a number of changes made to the service as a result of the transition and a new management approach, these include;

- Embedding performance management within the service
- Single IT platform, APP, for both Councils
- Fully shared Specialists and Case Managers – operating across both Councils depending on demand
- Use of Mobile Locality Officers to erect site notices and take photos to allow Case Managers and Specialists to reduce travel time on lower risk applications
- Review of Duty Planning system with the introduction of appointments for face to face and telephone calls.
- The retention of a charged pre-app service across both Councils

Section 5 on Planning Performance outlines the measures that have been taken to reduce the back log of applications and performance issues highlighted in 3.5 above.



## Section 4 - Governance and Delegation

4.1 The two Councils retain separate and different Governance arrangements.

### South Hams DC

4.2 The outcome of the Boundary review was to reduce the number of elected Members in SHDC from 40 to 31 in May 2015, each serving a four year term. The Council operates an Executive form of governance and has adopted the 'Strong Leader' model – Leader appointed for a 4 year term and able to appoint their own Deputy. The Leader is also the Chairman of the Executive, with their Deputy being the Vice-Chair.

4.3 Each of the 31 Members serves on one of either the Executive (6 Members), Overview and Scrutiny Panel (13 Members) or the Development Management Committee (12 Members). Each Executive Member has an allocated area of responsibility (a 'portfolio' area).

4.4 A key objective with regard to the make-up of the Development Management Committee was to ensure that it was both politically and geographically balanced as far as was practically possible.

### West Devon BC

4.5 The Council operates with 31 elected Members each serving a four year term and is a fourth Option Council, with a 'Single Committee' (Hub Committee) form of governance. All appointments (including Leader and Civic Mayor) are appointed by the Council at its annual meeting each May.

4.6 Each of the 31 Members has a role on one of either the Hub Committee (9 Members) or the Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) and (External) Committees (11 Members on each). Each Hub Committee Member has an allocated area of responsibility.

4.7 Planning and Licensing Committee is made up of 10 Members presently, 7 Conservative and 3 Independent, which reflects political and geographical across the Borough.

A visual representation of the Council structures is at Appendix C.

### Delegation

4.8 At present the schemes of delegation differ for the two Councils. Work is on-going to re-align the two schemes so that there are less differences and at the same time the schemes have been re-assessed to ensure that they are appropriate to enable decisions to be made within an appropriate time framework. Copies of the Committee Report and Scheme of Delegation for West Devon, which was agreed by the Planning and Licensing Committee on 29 March 2016, and considered at the Council meeting on 5 April, are attached at Appendix D and E, respectively.

4.9 The proposed scheme of delegation for South Hams, which is closely aligned to the West Devon scheme is also attached (see Appendix F), this is to be considered at the Development Management Committee on the 13 April which will then make a recommendation to the meeting of the Full Council on the 19 May.

4.10 Essentially the proposal allows for officer delegation to either approve or refuse applications where no comments have been received from consultees or members of the public that are contrary to the officer recommendation. If a contrary comment has been received a delegated decision can only be made with the agreement of the Ward Member(s) and in the case of South Hams the Ward member(s) and Chair of the Development Management Committee.

4.11 The majority of applications that require consultation with members are still dealt with through delegation and it is not considered that the overall number of applications called to committee for determination is at an unacceptable level.

#### Delegation Data

<b>SOUTH HAMS</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16 (to 23/3/16)</b>
<b>Committee</b>	3.38%	4.65%	3.47%
<b>Member delegated</b>	17.76%	19.28%	21.08%
<b>Officer delegated</b>	78.85%	76.07%	75.45%

<b>WEST DEVON</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16 (to 23/3/16)</b>
<b>Committee</b>	6.45%	4.91%	3.57%
<b>Member delegated</b>	Information not collected – shown as “officer delegated”		5.12%
<b>Officer delegated</b>	93.54%	95.09%	91.30%



## Section 5 - Performance Data

### Performance

5.1 Planning performance is monitored through service leads, management teams, portfolio holder briefings, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Appeal decisions are reported to all Councillors and to the Development Management Committee or Planning and Licensing Committee, whichever is relevant.

5.2 The following tables give a snapshot of the performance of the planning services over the last three years:

#### Major applications

% on target	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (to 23/3/16)
SH	88.46%	81.5%	95.5%
WD	62.5%	92.3%	91.7%

5.3 Major applications has been given a high profile for several years and the performance results in this area show a high percentage determined within agreed timescales. Whilst every Development Management Specialist can have a Major application there is a team approach to these applications with one of the Senior Specialists having an overview of the Major applications, who chairs a fortnightly meeting with internal and external consultees regarding current applications and pre-applications.

#### Minor applications

% on target	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (to 23/3/2016)
SH	55.5%	50.88%	50.84%
WD	56.19%	52.27%	43.46%

#### Other applications

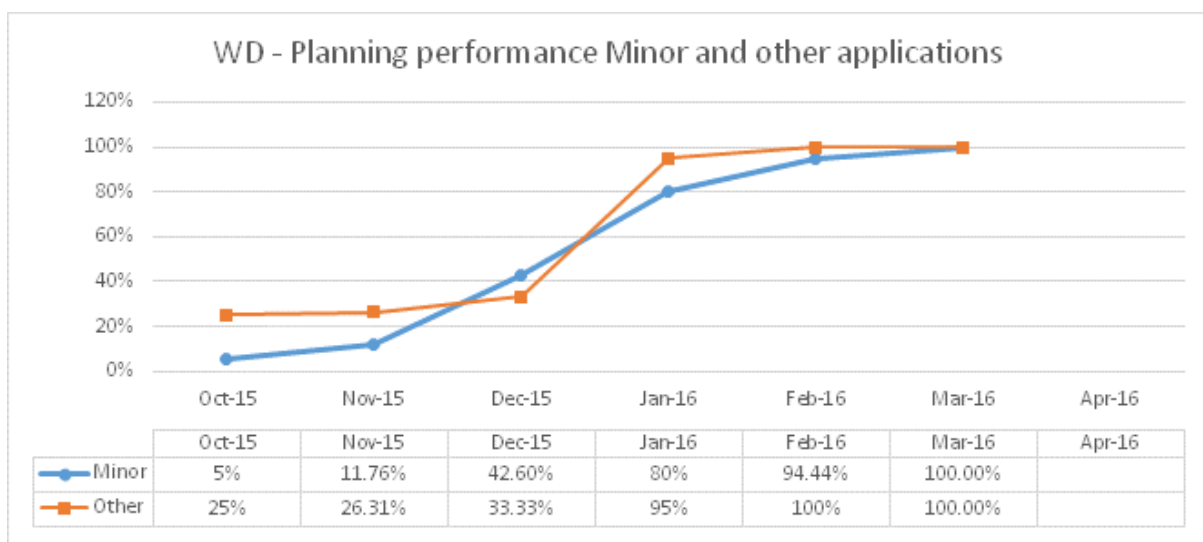
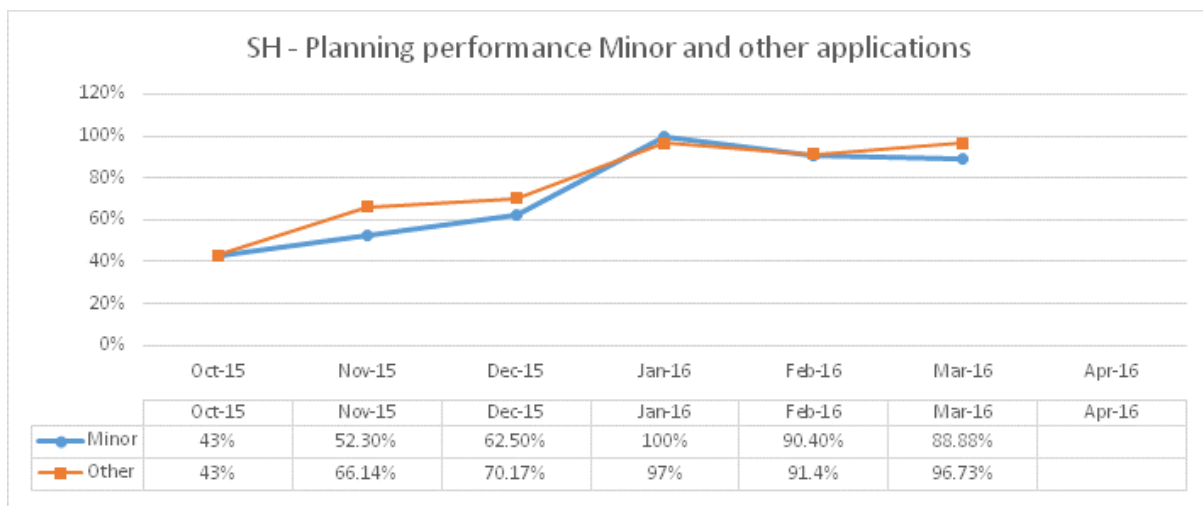
% on target (or with PPA/ Extension of Time) Target 60%	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (to 23/3/16)
SH	76.02%	64.47%	63.53%
WD	72.2%	83.08%	47.9%

5.4 Recent years have proved very challenging for Minor applications. Delays in determination have occurred due to a number of factors, including the transition process that has been undertaken, staffing levels and the processes that were in place to ensure that performance was at an acceptable level.

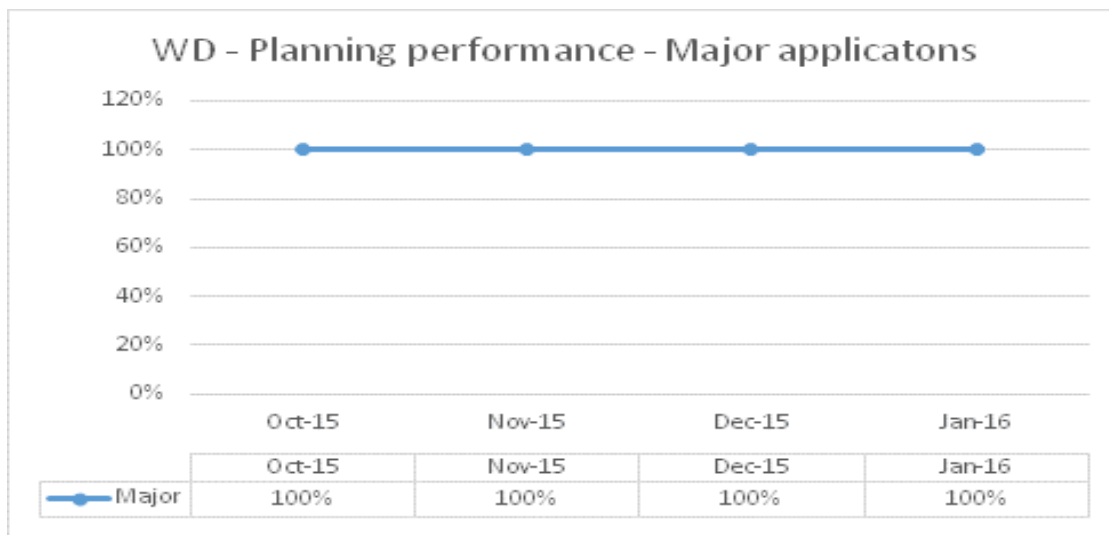
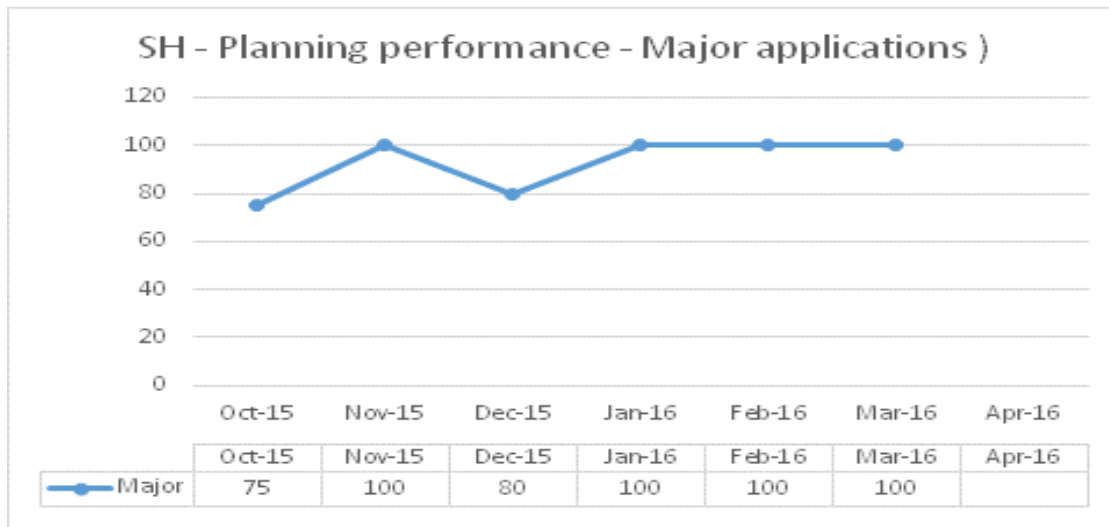
## Present Performance

5.5 The transition process that has been undertaken does provide for a new way of working that has and will continue to improve the efficiency of the planning process, together with a more stable and committed body of staff has provided a dramatic increase in performance in this calendar year. Actions have been also been undertaken to improve performance management to keep performance as a key priority.

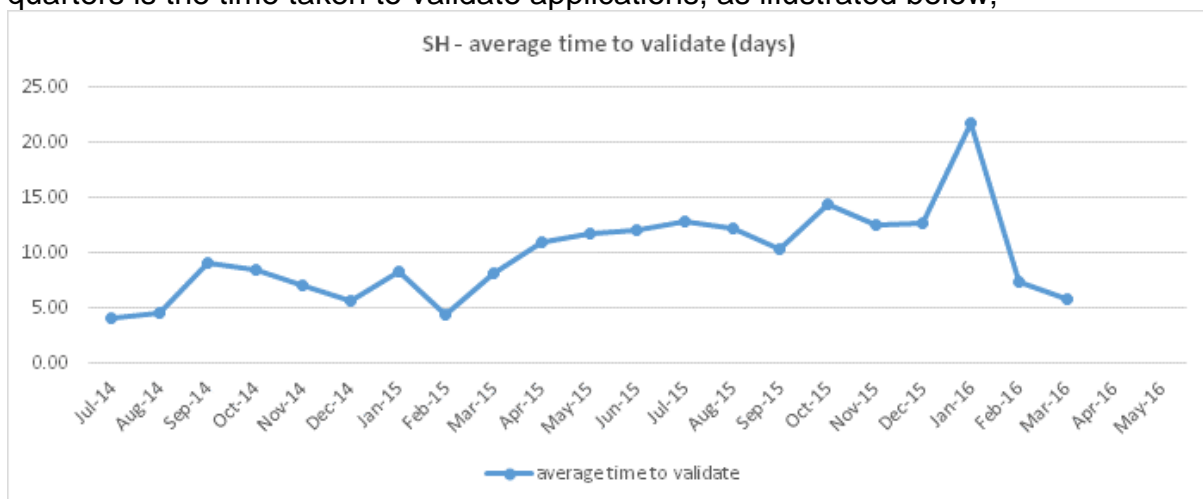
## Minors and Others

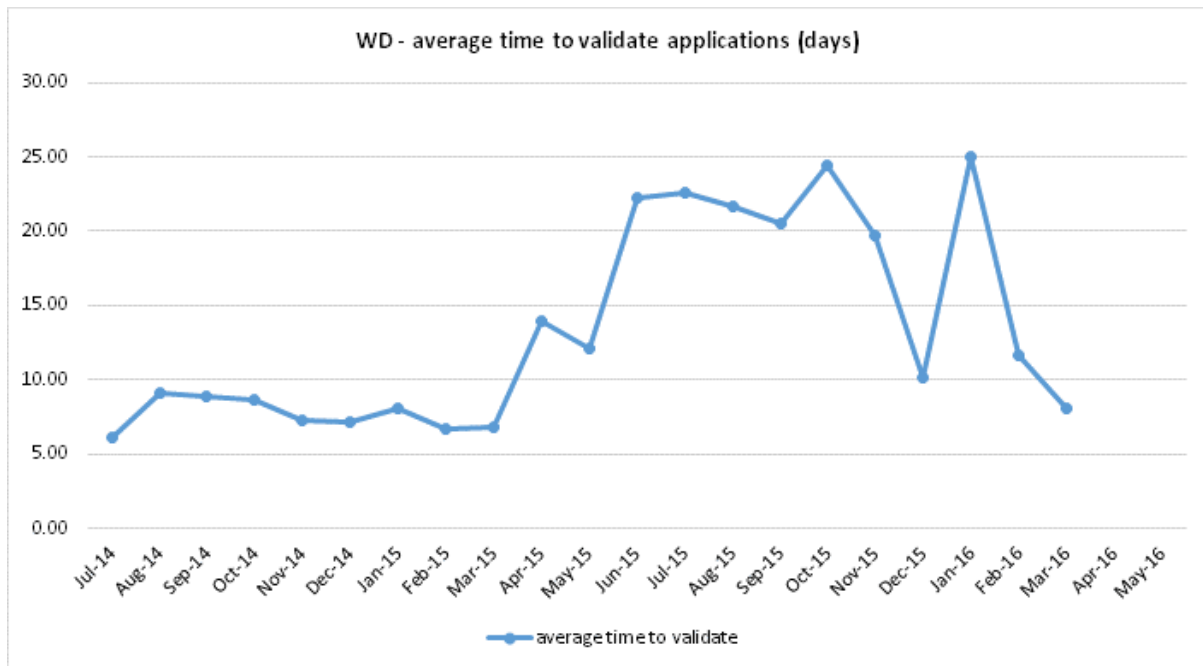


## Majors



5.6 A key factor that has affected determination performance over the last three quarters is the time taken to validate applications, as illustrated below;





## Appeals

South Hams	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (as at 23/3)
Total appeal decisions	35	32	30
Total won	24	19	20
Total Lost	11	13	10

West Devon	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (as at 23/3)
Total appeal decisions	25	24	29
Total won	12	14	14
Total Lost	13	10	15

## Major Appeals:

South Hams	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (as at 23/3)
Total appeal decisions	1	4	1
Total won	0	3	0
Total Lost	1	1	1

West Devon	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (as at 23/3)
Total appeal decisions	3	0	2
Total won	0	0	1
Total Lost	3	0	1

5.7 The number of appeals received remains broadly similar each year over the last three years. In terms of overall performance, it is considered that the ration of appeals allowed/dismissed within the South Hams area is broadly consistent to national average. It is acknowledged that the ration of allowed appeals is slightly higher within the West Devon Area and we need to undertake some work to identify any particular trends and lessons to be learnt to improve this ratio.

## Pre-application submissions

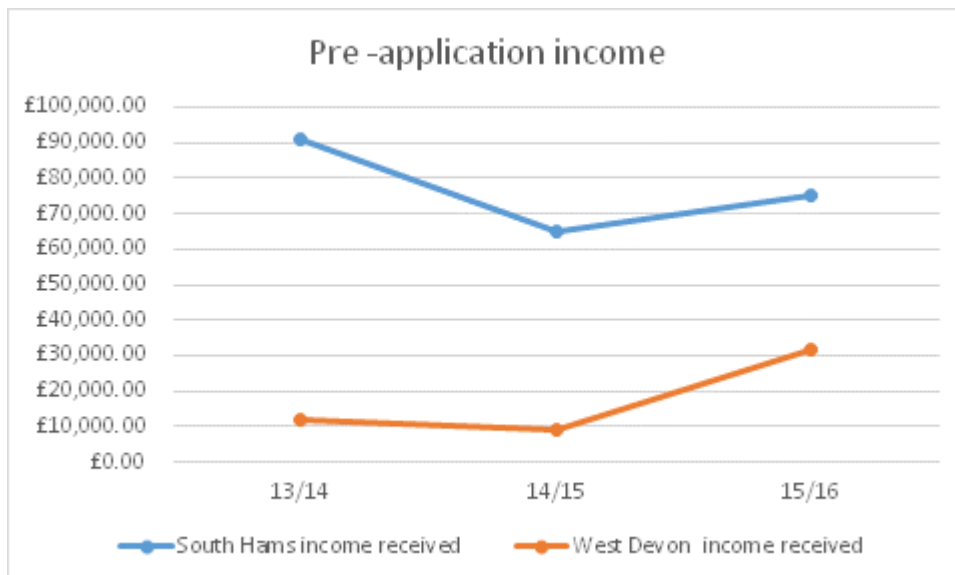
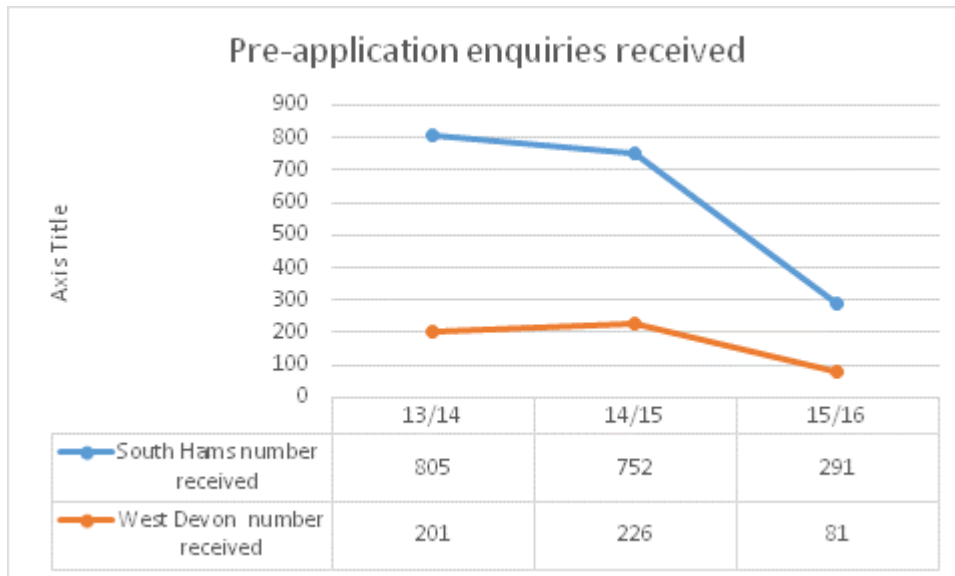
5.8 Formalised pre-application was introduced in South Hams in 2009 and West Devon in 2012. The following table gives details of volumes over time;

### Pre-apps received

	Total	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Total</b>	4,165	2	522	623	523	894	1,061	487	53
<b>South Hams Planning</b>	3,657	2	522	623	521	740	834	371	44
<b>West Devon Planning</b>	508	0	0	0	2	154	227	116	9

5.9 The Councils provide a specific pre-application service that is set out on the website with a form to complete and forward to the Council. This will normally provide sufficient detail along with associated plans/design and access detail to enable officers to give guidance as to whether a scheme will receive support at application stage or if further amendments are required.

5.9 On receipt, each pre-application submission is given a unique file number and a dedicated case officer. Officers will facilitate meetings to discuss the pre-application, a charge is made for this service.



## Section 6 - Local Plan and Policy Making

6.1 Both SHDC and WDBC have a clear basis for strategic planning and have adopted Local Plans.

6.2 For SHDC there are a suite of documents adopted under the Local Development Framework including

- Core Strategy 2006
- Development Policies Development Plan Document 2010
- Sherford New Community Area Action Plan 2007
- Rural Areas Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011
- Dartmouth Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011
- Ivybridge Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011
- Kingsbridge Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011
- Totnes Site Allocations Development Plan Document 2011

6.3 These documents provide a planning context to 2016 with phased allocations beyond 2016. The documents and supporting information are held at <http://shdcweb.swdevon.lan/article/3234/The-Development-Plan>

6.4 The Council has undertaken limited monitoring of implementation since 2011/12 but has, most recently, issued a Housing Position Statement which reflects a significant deficiency in supply when set against the 5 year land supply target. Details at <http://shdcweb.swdevon.lan/article/1886/Monitoring-Our-Progress-on-Strategic-Plans>

The most recent position statement is attached at Appendix B.

6.5 WDBC also has a suite of adopted documents running through to 2026. These include

- Local Plan Review (as amended by Core Strategy) 2011
- Local Development Framework Core Strategy. 2011
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2010

6.6 Details are available at <http://westdevon.gov.uk/article/3237/The-Current-Development-Plan>

6.7 WDBC has also undertaken monitoring and details are at <http://westdevon.gov.uk/article/2408/Monitoring>

6.8 In 2014 both Councils embarked upon a process of a Joint Local Plan under the title of “Our Plan” – a document that was also intended to encompass the full range of Council activities within a single corporate plan. This work went out on initial “Regulation 18” consultation. With details at

<http://westdevon.gov.uk/ourplan> and <http://southhams.gov.uk/ourplan>

6.9 Following this WDBC decided to embark on submission of a formal “Our Plan” Local Plan for just West Devon. This formal “Regulation 19” version was published in February 2015 and has been through formal consultation. Details are at <http://westdevon.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=12825&p=0>. South Hams didn’t progress to a Regulation 19 stage.

6.10 By autumn 2015 it was clear that the context for Local Plans was shifting markedly – with a particular emphasis on planning across Housing Market Areas. In light of this both SHDC and WDBC agreed to undertake a joint Local Plan with Plymouth City Council (PCC). This was agreed by SHDC in December 2015 (details at <http://southhams.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=16950&p=0> ) and by WDBC in February 2016 (details at <http://mg.swdevon.gov.uk/documents/s377/Our%20Plan%20-%20Local%20Plan%20Arrangements.pdf> )

6.11 PCC simultaneously agreed to the Joint Local Plan process and a Collaboration Agreement is in preparation alongside joint governance arrangements and shared staff and resources. The timetable anticipates submission in autumn/winter 2016 and is explained further in the Our Plan Newsletter at <http://southhams.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=17137&p=0>

6.12 Both Councils have offered strong commitment to the Neighbourhood Plan process with 35 plans currently in preparation. None have yet reached examination and there is a building tension between the advancement of Neighbourhood Plans and the lack of an adopted Local Plan.







Planning Improvement Peer Challenge

**South Hams and West Devon Councils**

On site April 18 - 20 2016

Final Report June 28 2016

*Working together*



## 1.0 Background and scope of the peer challenge

1.1 This report is a summary of the findings of a planning improvement peer challenge organised by the Local Government Association (LGA) in cooperation with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and carried out by its trained peers. Peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector. They are improvement orientated and are tailored to meet individual councils' need. Indeed they are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. They help planning services review what they are trying to achieve; how they are going about it; what they are achieving; and what they need to improve.

1.2 The peer challenge involves an assessment against a framework for a local authority planning function which explores:

- **Vision and leadership** - how the authority demonstrates high quality leadership to integrate spatial planning within corporate working to support delivery of corporate objectives;
- **Community engagement** – how the authority understands its community leadership role and community aspirations. Then how the authority uses spatial planning to deliver community aspirations;
- **Management** - the effective use of skills and resources to achieve value for money, accounting for workload demands, ensuring capacity and managing the associated risks to deliver the authority's spatial vision;
- **Partnership engagement** – how the authority has planned its work with partners to balance priorities and resources to deliver agreed priorities; and
- **Achieving outcomes** - how the authority and other partners are delivering sustainable development outcomes for their area.

1.3 As part of the above five themes the Council also asked the peer team to look at the following areas:

- Case Management System (T18);
- Governance and Planning Committees;
- Service support to corporate priorities;
- Planning policy;
- Customer and Community Access; and
- Development Management Performance.

1.4 Peers were:

- **Jack Hegarty** – *Managing Director Wychavon and Chief Executive Malvern Hills District Councils*
- **Cllr Andrew Proctor** *Leader, Broadland District Council.*
- **Alan Gomm** *Local Development Framework Manager – Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council*

- **Mark Cawood** *Planning and Building Control Manager, North East Lincolnshire Council/ ENGIE*
- **Phillipa Silcock** *Principal Consultant - Planning Advisory Service.*
- **Robert Hathaway** *Peer Challenge Manager, LGA Associate,*

**1.6** PAS where possible will support councils with implementing the recommendations as part of the Council's improvement programme. It is recommended that the council discuss ongoing PAS support, including the cost of it, with Alice Lester, Programme Manager at [alice.lester@local.gov.uk](mailto:alice.lester@local.gov.uk). The LGA is currently discussing support with the Councils in relation to officer/member training. A range of other support from the LGA – some of this might be at no cost, some subsidised and some fully charged <http://www.local.gov.uk/> is available. For more information contact Andy Bates, Principal Adviser [andy.bates@local.gov.uk](mailto:andy.bates@local.gov.uk). Additional support direct from PAS, including the subscription offer is at <http://www.pas.gov.uk/documents/332612/1102169/PAS+flyer+final+version/21115b48-e7dd-4d25-9e64-2298cfeaeadab>

**1.7** As part of the peer challenge impact assessment and its evaluation, PAS or the LGA may get in touch in 6-12 months to find out how the Council is implementing the recommendations and what beneficial impact there has been.

**1.8** The team appreciated the welcome and hospitality provided by South Hams and West Devon Councils and partners and the openness in which discussions were held. The team would like to thank everybody they met during the process for their time and contribution.

## 2. Executive Summary

2.1 South Hams and West Devon's ambitious Transformational 2018 (T18) programme has been successful in delivering significant financial savings on schedule. Driven by four key principles, including services 'centred around the citizen' and easier access 'enabled by technology', the new operating model offers clear potential for delivery of modern planning services. In the last year both Councils have totally changed the way they deliver their services with re-engineered internal processes, moving from departments to cohorts of case managers and specialist officers from all services and 30 per cent (100 full time equivalents) less staff.

2.2 The Councils recognise that their planning services have been slow in being truly shared compared to the progress of other frontline services. While other front line services have more easily made the transition to T18, delivery of the development management (DM) service in particular has suffered from significant customer concerns and local reputational damage. The Councils are generally aware of the reasons for this and internal reports have detailed factors such as a loss of experienced staff, difficulties in recruitment and problems with information technology (IT), most notably the front end customer interface.

2.3 Significant corporate management focus is invested on improving the planning service which is recognised as vitally important to supporting the delivery of corporate priorities and ensuring that appropriate development provides a stronger economic base. On-going reviews of sufficient capacity in the T18 model to deliver the DM service and weekly discussions with the IT partner are examples of this. The peer team's recommendations are designed to support the on-going improvement drive. We consider that a sharply focussed DM service improvement plan, with strong corporate officer/councillor ownership and accountability, offers significant potential for further improvement. Paramount among these is the need for substantial improvement in the DM websites, sufficient staff resources, improved ability for customers to contact the planning service and improvements to the quality of pre application advice.

2.4 Despite the very high level of customer and stakeholder dissatisfaction with the DM service we believe there are prospects for improvement. Corporate oversight, managerial leadership and councillor and officer trust is high and these are crucial to a successful outcome. The Planning Committee at South Hams and the Planning and Licensing Committee at West Devon (the Committees) are generally sound and speed of decision making is generally good and improving. Preparation of the South West Joint Local Plan between both Councils and Plymouth offers a good platform for the spatial expression of the 'Our Plan' single strategic plans that set out the vision, objectives and activities of each Council. We would encourage both councillors and officers make it a priority to ensure they quickly 'fix' the fundamentals of the DM processes and recapture the visionary and place shaping nature of planning to serve existing and future generations.

2.5 The political leaders of both Councils recognise that "customers have had a hard time" and residents deserve "a quality service to meet their expectations". Given that most local issues coming in front of ward members are about planning, councillors want to see a planning service that both supports them in their community leadership role and is one they can be proud of in upholding the reputation of their Council.

### **3. Recommendations**

1. Develop and embed the T18 model to respond more specifically to the context and challenges of the DM service. Specifically consider issues relating to how the T18 model can deal with the whole end to end processes of negotiating and determining proposals, to achieve better accountability, increased capacity and a greater customer focus.
2. Act on the findings of resource reviews, especially at the case manager level, so as to ensure that sufficient capacity to deliver an effective and customer facing DM service. This should include developing a strategy for dealing with applications more efficiently within the time limits without the need for excessive recourse to extension of time agreements, and also to ensure that applicants and the public have a single point of contact.
3. Work with the IT partner to ensure that the recognised IT problems, especially in relation to the planning constraints and history, and the labelling of plans, are tackled as a matter of urgency. In doing this, ensure that the web site is easy to use and learn from currently high performing customer focussed planning services.
4. Urgently reinstate regular local agent's forums.
5. Facilitate engagement with Town and Parish Council representatives to develop appropriate protocols to ensure that the concerns of these stakeholders are fully taken into account, and that feedback is given to them where a recommendation that differs to their views is reached. Also engage with the town and parish councils on expectations around support for neighbourhood plans.
6. Ensure timely processes and mechanisms for adoption of a Local Development Scheme as part of the rapid progression of the South West Devon Joint Local Plan to adoption.
7. Keep the communities, planning agents and stakeholders regularly informed of and involved in the South West Devon Joint Local Plan's progress recognising the benefits of maintaining an expeditious timeline for adoption
8. Engender strong leadership of the Planning Committees through regular training and appropriate updates on planning policy (including on the 5 year land supply for housing). General planning training should be made available to help non-planning committee members to be more effective local community leaders.
9. Report a suite of performance indicators directly to the Planning Committees and where necessary Cabinet and Hub, including productivity and performance of

Planning Committee itself. KPIs including quality, value and customer focus and land supply, should be reported via a performance dashboard to demonstrate the Service's contribution to wider corporate objectives.

10. Ensure there are adequate resources to focus on economic growth and affordable housing. This should include reviewing the approach of viability assessments paid for by planning applicants, and developing a pool of knowledge about comparables including values and build rates across the relevant market areas.
11. Review in 12 months' time the operation of the Schemes of Delegation to examine whether even greater harmonisation would be beneficial.
12. Further evaluate the risks at this time of moving to a Local Authority Controlled Company.
13. Ensure sufficient focus, capacity and consistency in delivering a high quality pre application service to provide greater certainty to customers and allow more time for helping shape development to meet community needs. Enhanced pre application engagement should also include delivering informal pre planning briefings to members of the Committees on significant major developments.
14. Review Committee site visit protocols to ensure planning decision making is as efficient as possible.

## **4. Case Management Working in T18**

4.1 The peer team were impressed with the boldness and high level ambition of the two councils to deliver substantial financial savings through the T18 programme. Senior managers have clearly focused their energies on supporting members on the transformational journey. Significant investment of £4.61 million from South Hams Council and £2.83 million from West Devon have ensured that predicted annual savings of £5 million, between the Councils, are on schedule. We met the senior members and managers from both Councils where it was clear that senior leadership is committed to driving through successful implementation despite the obvious challenges and difficulties in implementing a significantly different operating model. However, not all councillors had the same level of understanding and awareness of the implications of the T18 programme and many did not fully foresee the truly radical nature of delivery. More could be done to support all councillors to fully understand the new processes. Be that as it may, we found good political support that is clearly intent on seeing the T18 through.

4.2 We agree with the Councils' assessment that attempts to create a truly joined up planning service across both Councils has been slow to develop. The Councils are also

very aware that the DM service is at the very early stages of introducing the T18 model due to issues with workload, staff capacity and difficulties with IT that we discuss more fully later in the report. Officers have taken reports on the DM service and T18 and IT to Overview and Scrutiny Panels at both Councils and the significant issues are therefore well known and reported in the Councils. The timing of the peer challenge has obviously heavily influenced our findings in that we are unable to critically assess how the T18 was actually working in anything like a finished process in relation to the planning service..

4.3 Based on our extensive interviews and understanding of how the Councils plan to use the case management model in T18 the peer team considers that the Councils will have to very carefully manage potential risks with the new ways of case management working in DM. In particular we consider that there needs to be greater clarity among councillors, staff, customers and consultees in relation to the interrelated themes of accountability, ownership and customer focus. For example we consider that there needs to be a shared common understanding of the responsibilities of the case manager who is managing the progression of a planning application and the responsibilities of the specialist who is leading on determining the application. This is obviously important to all who need to know who to contact to discuss a planning application in terms of customer service.

4.4 Given the highly democratic nature of the planning process –accountability is vital. The high degree of democratic input into planning decisions on some controversial or major applications makes planning somewhat different from most other council services. Given the need for qualitative and value judgements at many stages of the decision making process, and the statutory nature of stakeholder engagement, it is vital that the T18 model ensures clear accountability for decision making to respond to the unique needs of the DM service. Continuity in relation to accountability is also vital as for example work on a major application proposal requires not just a decision at the end, but a series of processes, negotiations and balancing decisions along the way to a decision right from early pre-application discussions. This can occur over an extended timeframe but the integration of pre-app advice into consideration of the application is critical to achieving satisfaction from customers.

4.5 Some councillors, staff, planning agents and some Town and Parish councillors told us they were very confused by role titles such as case manager, specialist and community of practice lead and consequently were unsure who to talk to about addressing issues during the process. We also found generally low levels of confidence among staff that the case management model would work in delivering the high quality DM service that the two Councils aspire to. Our recommendation is for the Councils to further develop the application of the case management element of the T18 model in relation to the DM service.

4.6 Several staff, managers and planning agents told us that capacity at case manager and specialist level is severely stretched and is contributing to the slow start of the T18 model in DM. This was evidenced by agents' reports of long delays and last minute requests for extensions of time. Some staff reported that they and colleagues are under

significant and unrelenting work pressure. We understand that the present numbers of case managers and specialists was derived from an 'end state' resourcing model. This took account of the need for less staff once channel shift, through fully enabled IT, had occurred and also when staff were working efficiently following training and successful bedding down period. When we spoke to specialists who are internal consultees to the planning process, such as Environmental Health and Wellbeing, Drainage, Landscaping and Biodiversity, they confirmed that resourcing issues at case manager level were slowing the speed at which they received requests for consultation advice. They also reported that the reduction in the numbers of specialists had meant that higher workloads weakened their ability to provide effective and timely responses to some planning applications.

4.7 Senior managers told us that they were aware of these concerns and had already commissioned a review of case manager capacity. It will be important for the Councils to act on the outcome of this review. If, given the high volumes and demand, the review finds that more resources are required, then we consider that the Councils should give serious consideration to at least additional temporary capacity to allow the DM service to settle to a steady state. Community of practice leads also need to keep the number of planning specialists and supporting expert specialists under review to maintain the high quality of planning decision making.

4.8 The Councils have recently received the results of a staff survey and while we did not have the opportunity to discuss this in any specific detail we understand that it highlights that staff morale is generally low. The peer team considers that responding positively to the staff survey will provide a good platform to address key issues to ensure staff ownership of an evolved T18 model and a positive upswing in morale confidence following a period of significant corporate transformation.

## **5. Governance and Planning Committees**

5.1 Judged by dismissed planning appeals the quality of the Committees' decisions appear generally sound (see later section for performance figure). The sizes of the Committees at 12 members at South Hams and 10 at West Devon appears appropriate for the numbers and types of applications.

5.2 The proportion of applications (less than 4 per cent) coming before Committee is low at both Councils and this supports efficient decision making. We noted the proportionately higher percentage of member delegated decisions at South Hams (21 per cent) when compared with West Devon (5 per cent). Both Councils have recently adopted new schemes of delegation as a means of ensuring that there are fewer differences between the two, to enable greater consistency and to promote efficient decision making. The member working group set up to review the schemes tried to harmonise the individual Schemes of Delegation but this has not proved possible. Differences remain in terms of the involvement of the Chairs of Committee. The peer team consider that the Councils should, in 12 months, review the operation of the Schemes of Delegation to examine



whether even greater harmonisation would be beneficial and achievable. It would be more efficient for the joint officer team to be working to one joint scheme and of course easier for planning agents and customers who work across both Council areas.

5.3 We visited both the South Hams Planning Committee and the West Devon Planning and Licensing Committee and found that both display a number of key strengths. Both Committees promote high levels of public engagement through appropriate public speaking opportunities, accessible locations with good room layout and audibility. Both rooms contained good IT facilities to project plans and photographs to aid debate. We saw for ourselves the level of public engagement by high attendances of both planning applicants, agents, objectors and non-planning committee councillors.

5.4 The peer team considered that the Chairs of both Committees kept the meetings in good order and helpfully defined the stages in considering the applications. Debate was good natured and there appeared generally to be good levels of trust and confidence between Committee members and officers. Committee members at both Councils showed a good level of technical and general planning knowledge and had obviously kept up to date on local appeal results. It was clear that the community of practice lead (effectively the head of DM) was well respected. Both Committees are supported by specialists including planning, environmental health, legal, democratic services and highway officers (from Devon County Council). However, on one particular occasion we felt that the Chair of the West Devon Committee could have been better supported by officers when a matter of normal procedure was overlooked in relation to a declaration of interest. In this, and in other professional/technical issues, the Chair of both Committees need to receive the highest standards of advice to help them discharge their duties.

5.5 The Chairs of the Committees ensured that the tone and atmosphere of their meetings was inclusive. We were told by some Planning Committee members, other councillors and some planning agents that they felt that some meetings were over long. The South Hams Planning Committee we attended was four –five hours in duration. Committee members can play an active part to support the Chair in the efficient running of to make the meetings efficient by:

- ensuring that they have a full grasp of the officer's report;
- by asking questions before the meeting;
- by avoiding repetitious points, and;
- by ensuring that they only ask relevant planning related questions in the meeting.

5.6 Chairs obviously have a role to play to; graciously but firmly, keeping a good pace to the debate and stepping in where necessary. And the importance of planning committee as the 'front door' of the planning services business can be enforced at members' training which has its part to play how members operate at the meeting. Members will also have an

important role to determine how reports are presented, their written format and how their views are taken account of on any particular application.

5.7 Both political Leaders want to see strong and highly effective Committees. To support this and to continue to improve on the performance at both Councils, the peer team have a number of additional areas for focus - as discussed below.

5.8 Committee members ward councillors and planning agents told us that they would value earlier political engagement at the pre application stage. This would allow councillors, officers and the applicant/agent to be better sighted of the opportunities and challenges to development and for earlier involvement of Councillors in their community leadership and place shaping roles. It also provides some elements of greater certainty for applicants and agents in helping them to 'de risk' their projects.

5.9 For some major or controversial applications we also recommend the Councils consider the use of informal pre planning briefings to members of the Committees. This would need to take place before officer reports on planning applications are published, allowing all members of the Committees to engage with planning and other technical officers at an earlier stage. Such a pre planning briefing has the clear potential to encourage Councillors and officers to be better informed about a proposal, to discuss issues and to point out areas of concern in an informal setting. It will also aid officers in understanding what issues they may need to provide more information and advice on.

5.10 In order to aid efficiency in decision making the peer team recommend a review of the site visit protocols at both Councils. By way of context, we understand that at one recent West Devon Planning Committee meeting all three items were deferred for site visits. Deferrals for site visits introduces delay, additional costs and continued uncertainty for applicants. Site visits are an important part of the decision making process where appropriate and the Councils could consider their use before Committee with the Chair and community of practice lead discussing a forward agenda list of items that includes the recommending of site visits. The ward councillor(s) could also be invited on these visits, provided they are made aware that it isn't a lobbying opportunity or the place for a debate of the proposal.

5.11 We consider that the Committees should take more accountability for and be better aware of relevant planning performance. This is particularly important given the possibility of designation by Government for poor performance on the speed of determining applications, quality of decisions (as measured by overturns on appeal), and local plan preparation. We are aware that the Councils' Overview and Scrutiny Committees receive planning performance information. However, we consider that relevant key performance indicators, including updates on the Councils' five year land supply, should be reported to the Committees to build their greater ownership, to enhance understanding of critical local decision making issues and to enable members to be more strongly engaged in performance management. Given the importance of the planning system in delivering on the Councils' vision in Our Plan, and in supporting financial stability through appropriate

growth, we also feel that Cabinet at South Hams and the Hub Committee at West Devon should be advised on key data trends.

5.12 Committee members told us that they complete mandatory training before sitting on Committee. Some members felt that there would value more in-depth and stronger bespoke mandatory induction training to support their decision making role. They also told us that helpful training updates were also offered but that attendance was mixed. The peer team also believe that Committee members could benefit from additional training and support including:

- the weight to be attached to technical evidence, especially highways, in planning decisions and learning from the Planning Inspectorate and relevant appeals;
- members receiving earlier information about submitted appeals to support their earlier involvement and community leadership role; and
- managing the tension between acting as ward councillor and serving as a Committee member where decisions are plan and policy led unless material considerations determine otherwise.

## **6. Support to Corporate Priorities**

6.1 We found that Planning Committee members had a good grasp of the emerging corporate priorities and annual priorities of sustainable development along with the need to focus and deliver on enhanced economic growth. Both Councils are developing single strategic plans that set out their vision, objectives and activities for their areas. 'Our Plan: South Hams/West Devon' aims to bring together the Corporate Plan and Local Plan into a strategic overarching document together with land use policies and allocations.

6.2 Both Councils' future strategic approach to economic growth and housing is emerging as part of the 'Our Plan' discussions and consultations. Both Councils have issued annual local priorities for 2015/6 that are essentially interim positions pending adoption of Our Plan: South Hams/West Devon.

6.3 The peer team found that while there was a growing appreciation of the role of planning to shape local communities, more could be done to support all councillors to appreciate their place shaping roles and the importance of development for sustainable growth. In order for Planning Committee members to ensure that planning maximises its ability to deliver local priorities in 'Our Plan' it is important that they recognise their role as community leaders - as opposed to their ward councillor roles - when taking individual planning decisions. This is particularly the case in relation to housing and employment proposals, where local public opposition and resistant to change can be high. We were advised of at least some recent instances at Kingsbridge and Salcombe where local interests seemed to trump appropriate economic development opportunities.

6.4 It is vital for the growth of sustainable communities, especially in relation to affordable housing and local jobs, for Committee members to take a Council-wide strategic view. It is

also important for Committee members to be aware of the economic benefits that can flow from development and officers and planning agents need to furnish members with appropriate information on this so that the on-going economic benefits of development can be taken into account.

6.5 In addition, growth in business rates, council tax and New Homes Bonus will be vital to sustain local government delivery of services given the decline in Government grant and the increasing reliance on local sources of revenue for councils. Although not a material consideration in planning decision making 'per se' it will be an important strategic objective for the Councils and will inform future income generation strategies.

6.6 We were told by planning agents that there is a growing recognition among the planning specialists of the need to place weight on the benefits of development in economic terms along with a stronger recognition of the need to demonstrate that the councils are 'open for business'. The Director leadership in supporting the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) for the site adjoining the longstanding major strategic economic growth area at Langage, to the north of the A38 on the Plymouth fringe, has been welcomed as a tangible example of the Council supporting business growth.

6.7 However, both Councils, and especially West Devon, recognise that there remain weaknesses in their own capacity and focus on the necessary business and economic regeneration required to improve job and wage creation in the local economy. We were told for example that despite a report in 2014 on 'Facilitating Economic Growth in South Hams and West Devon' – progress on taking this issue forward has been slow.

6.8 The peer team feel that in order to deliver the emerging corporate priority of economic growth, a clearer vision, strategy and distinctive local priorities are required, backed by adequate capacity and resources to supplement the existing asset management resource. We do not want to promote the reintroduction of the traditional economic development officer approach, focusing on inward investment, but suggest additional capacity of officers with a strong commercial sense and acumen who could work with relevant growth sectors and emerging industries. Additional officer capacity could also support developing and stretching the existing asset base of the Councils, especially at South Hams which has an asset portfolio value of some £75 million.

6.9 We were encouraged by the recent progress on developing an Asset Plan and Income Generation proposals, to develop land and buildings through changes of use, new build and refurbishment. Additional capacity in this area could also support the time consuming work of building strong and flourishing partnerships with land owners, developers and investors and produce an income stream for the Councils. This would also allow a stronger focus for securing Growth Fund money through the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership. The role for the Committees and supporting community of practice lead and specialists will be to influence the spatial direction of any emerging vision and strategy and to deliver quality and timely planning advice and determination when developments are presented.

6.10. Given high ratio of house prices to incomes in both areas plus high second home ownership, with inconsistent success in securing additional affordable homes through the planning system, more needs to be done to consistently secure affordable housing in the area. The ratio of house price to incomes in both Councils is high - South Hams is 13.9 and in West Devon it is 9.9. On top of this, the Councils estimate that approximately 15 per cent of houses in South Hams are second homes while at West Devon the figure is approximately 8 per cent although there are areas such as Salcombe with a much higher figure. In 2014/5, 52 per cent (92/177) of houses built in South Hams were affordable while for the same period West Devon recorded figures of 48 per cent (56/116). This is commendable. However, in 2015/6, 24 per cent of houses built in South Hams were affordable (figures for West Devon are not available). This delivery is against an existing Local Development Plan target of 55 per cent of affordable houses on qualifying sites.

6.11 The reasons given for the planning system not meeting its targets for affordable housing were mainly applicant/developer challenges on the grounds of viability. It will be vital through the emerging South West Devon Joint Local Plan (see further section) and the adoption of supporting supplementary planning guidance that appropriate and realistic affordable housing requirements are set, based on the Strategic Housing Market Assessments and other relevant viability data to satisfy Planning Inspectorate requirements at 'examination' stage. The Councils will also need to be mindful of the recently adopted Housing and Planning Act 2016, in particular the Government's priority of starter homes and the implications of this for affordable housing. In due course the Councils may consider that a joint housing strategy to operate alongside the Local Plan would be beneficial to set out housing requirements, including affordable housing, and delivery mechanisms to achieve objectives.

6.12 The peer team were surprised to be told that the Councils bears the costs of viability analysis where developers do not agree to provide a policy compliant level of affordable housing. The cost to the Councils, in 2015/6, was in the range of £60-£70,000. Many Councils, ensure that developers who are promoting a development which does not comply with local policy, request a viability analysis to be paid for by the developer. This is entirely appropriate and we recommend this as an immediate action.

6.13 We are aware that at a corporate level the Councils are at the early stages of exploring a Local Authority Controlled Company and asked for our advice. While this was not the focus of our work it is relevant given its potential impact upon the effective delivery of the planning service and its move to a new delivery model. We offer the initial view that, at this time, divestment of services to such a company should only take place if there was no detriment to the Councils ability to deliver services to its own communities and that there are clear potential and actual opportunities identified. It would also be important for there to be sufficient capacity within the Councils to implement further change within proposed timescales; at present we would question whether all of these conditions exist.

## 7. Planning Policy

7.1 The peer team support collaboration with neighbouring Plymouth City Council over the development of a South West Devon Joint Local Plan. The important potential advantage will be that the three Councils will have more scope to spatially plan economic growth and housing over a larger geographical area. Given the importance of Plymouth to the sub regional area in terms of housing, economy, infrastructure and leisure, joint working on long term spatial strategies makes sense. Development of a new up to date Local Plan will overcome current weaknesses at South Hams, where the existing Local Plan extends to 2016 only, while earlier work on updating West Devon's Local Plan was suspended in 2015. Effective monitoring at both Councils was also challenging.

7.2 The Director's leadership, backed by clear political support at South Hams/West Devon was vital to securing agreement with Plymouth City Council in relation to the agreement to produce a South West Devon Joint Local Plan. Plymouth and other stakeholders felt that progress in achieving commitment and agreement to the Plan was in marked contrast to the previously slow and cumbersome experience in joint strategic planning working between the three authorities.

7.3 The terms of the Joint Collaboration Agreement provide robust joint governance arrangements with two councillors from both South Hams and West Devon appointed to the Joint Steering Group, alongside two councillors from Plymouth. The fact that the Member Steering Group is supported by a Joint Officer team, comprising the Policy Units of all three councils, means that both South Hams and West Devon will benefit from additional capacity and expertise. We feel that this is important given the relatively small policy planning team currently covering South Hams and West Devon. This will support monitoring of the Joint Local Plan which has been an issue for both Councils, especially at South Hams.

7.4 Formal joint working with neighbouring authorities also helps fulfil the statutory requirement of the Duty to Co-operate (Localism Act 2012). This helps ensure the Plan takes account of the wider area and supports a focus on issues across local government boundaries. Even though Dartmoor National Park is not a signatory to the Joint Local Plan Agreement, the Parks Authority will be engaged through the Duty to Co-operate. Given the fact that some Council's Local Plans have failed at Examination on the Duty to Co-operate grounds, formal joint working should assist the Councils to demonstrate that this requirement has been met.

7.5 The peer team consider that the Councils have set a very 'aggressive' Joint Local Plan preparation timetable which aims to approve a draft Joint Local Plan for public consultation in July 2016 with a submission to independent examination by the Planning Inspectorate in autumn/winter 2016. Part of the urgency is the need to ensure that a Local Plan is at the submission stage as quickly as possible to prevent Government intervention due to the lack of an adopted and compliant Local Plan. It is vital that the Councils work speedily to

adopt, publish and publicise a Local Development Scheme to set out clear milestones and targets to support the ambitious timescales.

7.6 The additional capacity and expertise from working with Plymouth, supported by the commissioning of private sector consultants for specialist areas, provides additional support to meet this timescale. However, with such a timetable there are significant risks for all three Councils if they do not deliver what they intend and promise. Full officer and member capacity needs to be in place and assured by management and political leaders to ensure all this work can be completed on time.

7.7 The peer team feel that in order to meet the aims of getting the Joint Plan to submission stage and to build stronger awareness and ownership of the emerging Joint Local Plan, it is vital that South Hams and West Devon improve their communication with all councillors, Parish and Town Councils, statutory consultees and planning agents. Despite efforts by the Councils to communicate this, we found that some councillors, most Town and Parish Councils and agents were unaware of the agreement to produce a Joint Local Plan; and especially the urgent timetable to achieve this. It is important for the Councils to update information on their websites, especially under the 'Our Plan' newsletters as we found that information in relation to the Joint Local Plan did not reflect the up to date situation.

7.8 In developing the Joint Local Plan it is vital that all South Hams and West Devon Councillors are regularly engaged to ensure the widest political ownership of hard choices about the location and pattern of growth, supporting infrastructure and areas of environmental protection. For example, it will be important for adequate debate and realistic expectations to be set in relation to challenging local housing issues such as affordable housing, second homes and retirement demographics. We feel that similarly high levels of political engagement are required so that Councillors may fulfil their roles as community champions of the Plan to encourage and build local interest and involvement. Ensuring that Town and Parish Councils and local organisations are supported in playing a full part in the Plan's development is important to build local credibility. Both Councils have existing processes to engage with Town and Parish Councils and these should be built on to meet the needs and timescales for Local Plan production. Other opportunities may include 'themed parish conferences' which have worked well in other Council areas.

7.9 We are aware that both Councils have offered strong commitment to 35 Town and Parish councils to support the progress of Neighbourhood Plans with a number at an advanced draft stage. However, expertise has been lost in recent staff changes and Town and Parish Councils told us that this is holding back progress which in some instances is denting local confidence in the process. Some South Hams and West Devon Councillors and some Town and Parish Councils also told us about a building tension between progress of Neighbourhood Plans and development of the new South West Devon Joint Local Plan. As part of improved engagement with Town and Parish Councils realistic discussions need to take place about the priority and capacity that can be provided to support Neighbourhood Plans in the light of tight timescales and resources required by the

Joint Local Plan. Improved engagement can also assist in achieving clarity of understanding on the relative roles of neighbourhood and strategic policies in the light of the emerging Joint Local Plan.

## **8. Customer and Community Access**

8.1 The peer team recognise that the main drivers of the T18 programme include improving customer, community and public access to the planning service. We found that the main transformational principles of citizen centred delivery, easier public/customer access and self-service set out a clear statement of customer focus in strategy and delivery. These ambitions are backed by clear strategic intent in the form of a Customer First Strategy and IT Strategy with a single IT platform across both councils that offers clear potential for improvement in DM service delivery. For example, the new ways of working aim to deliver benefits including:

- increased visibility of the progress of a planning application – customer advisers, applicants and planning agents will be able to follow progress of an application electronically;
- applicants or planning agents will be able to receive automatic updates through a preferred method of contact (text messages, e mail, letter); and
- fully paperless capability.

8.2 The Councils' officer structure to deliver T18 demonstrates a good focus on customer access at a senior managerial level. In order to provide political oversight, South Hams has aligned Cabinet member responsibilities to T18 while at West Devon a member lead for Customer First is championing channel shift, to provide easier and more efficient customer access. We were encouraged to see that members and officers are willing to find solutions that respond to customer needs. For example, the piloting of the reinstatement of a duty planner service at Okehampton.

8.3 The peer team met with a range of group managers, community of practice leads, specialists and case managers and witnessed a developing team approach. This is encouraging and offers the potential to the Councils to realise the wider non-financial benefits of T18, such as service delivery 'centred on the citizen' and 'removal of service silos'. Understandably, in light of shift to an entirely new operating model, when speaking to a range of staff we found varying levels of commitment and enthusiasm for T18; although we consider that the vast majority of staff we met are committed to making the new operating model work.

8.4 Staff told us that the Councils' investment in technology has significantly enhanced their ability to work agilely and has improved their on-site efficiency. Many also felt they benefitted from working from home and that they were more productive. Staff valued the



ability to work more flexibly and this provides potential for working closer to communities as the Councils' Customer Service approach matures.

8.5 However, despite these emerging strengths the Councils are aware that the effect of implementing the T18 transformation project has had an adverse impact on the customer service element of DM. We consistently heard messages from planning agents, Planning Committee members, other Councillors and Town and Parish Councils of poor customer service which has undoubtedly damaged the service's reputation and standing. Internal staff and senior managers are acutely aware of this feedback and concerns about IT progress and Customer Services in DM have been reported to Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The main concerns appear to be :

- an inability of customers to obtain easy access to a member of staff who can speak to them about the progress of their application;
- slow validation and processing times;
- a loss of experienced and expert staff and a large quick exit of planning knowledge under the T18 rationalisation;
- a lack of ongoing and regular engagement with planning agents and a limited understanding and appreciation of the costs to their business of poor customer service;
- the sharing of only limited information to Town and Parish Councils about the significant changes to DM operational delivery and lack of feedback when officers recommend against their comments; and
- a poor digital interface and quality of information on the websites including limited self-service and poor labelling of plans.

8.6 In order to rebuild trust and confidence it is vital that directors and senior managers, political leaders, portfolio holders and other senior members provide strong, clear and effective leadership to a time limited DM improvement plan with a strong focus on customer services. Paramount among key priorities include working with the IT partner to deliver urgent and essential improvements to the web sites. We are aware that matters have escalated to the need for the Head of Paid Service to have weekly phone calls with the IT partner in an attempt to trouble shoot and gain assurance of improvement actions and timescales.

8.7 We understand that the IT partner is due to attend a joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee in late May 2016 and we suggest that early engagement between the Director, senior staff and senior politicians and the IT partner would be beneficial in reaching some positive outcomes. We feel there may be benefits to the involvement of customers and stakeholders in an appropriately managed setting to help the contractors more appreciate the actual needs of customers, so these can be better reflected in the design of the customer interfaces.

8.8 'Failure demand', currently puts excessive pressure on staff and managers and creates significant frustration for planning agents, applicants and stakeholders. Providing better opportunities for users of the DM service to speak more easily to staff would provide reassurance and rebuild trust. The peer team recognise that this would mean a financial adjustment but we consider that a slightly longer payback time on investment on T18 is worthwhile to deliver increased customer satisfaction and an improved local reputation.

8.9 Planning agents told us that there had been little or no formal group communication since the last agent's forum in October 2015. Since then T18 has commenced and there has been a significant escalation of customer concerns. We would recommend that the reintroduction of an early planning agents meeting is another priority with thought given to the agenda and management of the meeting to ensure constructive dialogue. These forums should then meet on a regular basis thereafter – probably quarterly. A quick win may be advising planning agents of the revised Schemes of Delegation which they appeared to be unaware of.

## **9. Development Management Performance**

9.1 The peer team noted a mixed but improving picture in performance on the speed of deciding planning applications. We appreciate that this is a single measure but as the Government can designate Councils, where speed on certain planning applications falls below set thresholds, it is an important consideration for the DM service and Planning Committees. Both Councils have benefitted from a clearer performance management and team focus on deciding the most important major applications and performance at both councils, but especially West Devon, has improved. With both councils approving well over 90 per cent of major applications in agreed timescales in 2015/16, performance in this area is much improved.

9.2 Recent monthly performance figures for deciding non major applications are improving significantly following a period of very poor performance. This period of poor performance was partly linked to a consequence of consistently high workloads coupled with the initial implementation of T18 that saw a significant churn in staff at different levels, IT downtime and slow validation.

9.3 It is important that this recent performance uplift in speed of processing is sustained, especially when additional resources to support validation rates are withdrawn. The service has responded to the poor performance levels and consequent risk of designation by deploying more focussed performance management, more stable staff resources and improving capacity and process, including using additional resources to speed up validation. It has also used the tool of extension of time agreements to ensure that targets are met. However, there is increased resistance to this from agents and long term reliance on time extensions risks further erosion of trust and working relationships with developers. Given the reduction in staff resources to deliver the DM service under T18, plus major concerns about customer focus, we recommend that the director and community of

practice lead, working with the Portfolio Holder and Hub lead, continue to monitor resources and performance closely.

9.4 Overall, planning appeal results for the last three years for both Councils remain relatively static in terms of appeals successfully defended and appeal costs against the Councils are low. South Hams' appeal performance hovers round 66 per cent of appeals successfully defended which is consistent with the national average. However, performance at West Devon has tended to be lower and in 2015/16 the Council lost just over half of planning appeals made against its decisions. We did not have time to examine in detail the appeal decisions but the DM service is aware that joint working with West Devon Planning and Licensing Committee members needs to identify any trends and lessons to improve on these results. Earlier we recommended more detailed reporting of performance statistics and appeal results and relevant learning from experience needs to form part of this.

9.5 The peer team recognise that the T18 model offers the potential for specialists to more clearly focus on matters of significance and judgement and that silo working between the professions has started to break down which has performance benefits. However, at the present time, we found that officer and managerial attention was focussed on dealing with the T18 process to the detriment of being able to focus on vision, outcome and added value. While we recognise the vital need to embed the T18 model and to tackle existing IT and customer care issues, it is important that the very process of dealing with planning applications does not overwhelm the capacity for planning to add value to developments and deliver outcomes that are consistent with the corporate objectives. To achieve this we recommend that as part of performance reporting for DM, a balanced score card/performance dashboard approach is used encompass quality, value/productivity and customer care as three important themes. In order to make the performance information as helpful and understandable to a wide audience a range of presentation techniques, such as strong pictorial content and charts as opposed to long narrative should be explored.

9.6 The Councils are aware of a very significant decline in the take up of their paid for pre application offer. The total number of requests between both Councils peaked at 1061 in 2014 declining to under half of that (487) in 2015; with the more acute fall at South Hams. Planning agents told us that their lack of confidence in the pre application service including slow responses, inconsistent advice and poor value for money had caused them to significantly scale back their use of the service. Planning agents advised that in place of submitting requests for pre application advice, they would submit planning applications, often expecting to get a refusal and then use the officer's report and the reasons for refusal as the pre application advice to submit a second application that sought to tackle the initial reasons for refusal. This "work-around" by agents adds significantly to workload and costs. Moreover, councillors have expressed a desire to have the opportunity to be involved in managed pre-applications as part of their community leadership role.

9.7 The peer team consider pre application advice as an essential part of a good quality DM service and the steep decline in usage reduces the opportunity of the Councils to influence both development and associated community benefits where major schemes are involved. A worthwhile pre-applications service will provide a supplementary income stream to cover its cost. On top of this, we strongly recommend, as part of any early meeting with Planning Agents and as part of an improvement priority, that the Councils redefine and actively promote and deliver improved and more targeted pre application offer to their customers.

## 10. Further Support

PAS would be happy to discuss with South Hams and West Devon on developing a package of further support (paid for at cost). Specifically, we recommend exploring PAS support around:

- Mentoring for the Committee Chair
- Training for the Planning Committee
- Critical friend review of the emerging plan and NPPF compatibility of the suite of DPDs

There are also tools and materials available on the [PAS website](#) which can be downloaded and used for free. Some of these are listed here.

**DM tools:** PAS has produced a suite of materials which should help with various aspects of the DM process. The councils have already had access to support for their DM service from PAS, particularly in relation to the DM challenge kit. The resources below are available to download and use.

- 
- [Pre-app processes](#): PAS has a number of pre-application resources available to download and use.
- [Conditions](#): PAS has produced a best practice not on applying and discharging conditions
- [Project managing major applications](#): PAS has produced a new note about handling major applications
- [Using S106s – standard templates etc](#)



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## Planning Peer Challenge – Action Plan

The following plan outlines the specific actions that will be taken to respond to the Peer Challenges recommendations. Reporting back on delivery against the actions will include the outcome/outputs of the action.

Overall monitoring of performance improvement will be through the new suite of key performance indicators detailed in Recommendation 9 and through delivery of the Joint Local Plan

Peer Challenge Recommendation	Comments/Actions completed	Proposed Action	Timescale	Lead Officer(s)
<p><b>1. Develop and embed the T18 model to respond more specifically to the context and challenges of the DM service. Specifically consider issues relating to how the T18 model can deal with the whole end to end processes of negotiating and determining proposals, to achieve better accountability, increased capacity and a greater customer focus.</b></p>	<p>1.1 The model is being developed and implemented within Development Management to reflect these recommendations.</p> <p>1.2 Under present trials L6 Senior Case Managers ('Junior planners') handle lower level householder apps from cradle to grave. The majority of other cases will be managed by Case Managers (CM) – ie they will push the application through the process and ensure that dates are met, consultations gathered, applicants/neighbours kept informed of progress etc. The Specialist will be accountable and responsible for the decision having assessed the application. Accountability will be clear; we will effectively have a CM managing the application and a Specialist determining the application.</p>	<p>A1. Extend trial to all CM/Specialists dealing with planning applications.</p>	<p>September 2016</p>	<p>Drew Powell Kate Hamp</p>

	<p>1.3 The Community of Practice Lead will be responsible for ensuring that the DM process is delivered efficiently and lawfully.</p> <p>1.4 The weekly list for Parish and Town Councils has now been amended to identify the relevant Case Manager and Specialist (if relevant).</p> <p>1.5 The need for an accountable officer to be contactable by agents, applicants, Parish's etc is fully recognised.</p>			
<p><b>2. Act on the findings of resource reviews, especially at the case manager level, so as to ensure that sufficient capacity to deliver an effective and customer facing DM service.</b></p> <p><b>This should include developing a strategy for dealing with applications more efficiently within the time limits without the need for excessive</b></p>	<p>2.1 Recent reports to West Devon Hub Committee (minute) and South Hams Executive (minute) detail the resources at Case Manager level already identified to support transition.</p> <p>2.2 There has been an initial focus on securing a marked improvement in determination performance (with extension of time agreements) in order to minimise the risk to the Councils from new performance measures proposed within the Housing and Planning Bill.</p> <p>2.3 See 1.4 and 1.5 above</p>	<p>A2. Review staffing levels during transition to ensure post transition levels will be sufficient to sustain performance</p> <p>A.3 As part of the new approach to performance management (see also 9.1) we will also be measuring determination performance in line with the relevant 8</p>	<p>February 2017</p> <p>August 2016</p>	<p>Drew Powell Kate Hamp</p> <p>Drew Powell</p>

<p>recourse to extension of time agreements, and also to ensure that applicants and the public have a single point of contact.</p>		<p>and 13 week statutory targets.</p>		
<p><b>3. Work with the IT partner to ensure that the recognised IT problems, especially in relation to the planning constraints and history, and the labelling of plans, are tackled as a matter of urgency. In doing this ensure that the web site is easy to use and learn from currently high performing customer focussed planning services.</b></p>	<p>3.1 Since the visit there have been major improvements in terms of functionality in relation to planning history and constraints. There remains issues with the stability and functionality of the website and it is accepted that further development/improvement is necessary.</p>	<p>A.4 Review present action plan to develop the website in line with best practice and to facilitate self-serve and channel shift in line with operating model principles.</p>	<p>September 2016</p>	<p>Mike Ward</p>
<p><b>4. Urgently reinstate regular local agent's forums.</b></p>	<p>4.1 The frequency of forums has reduced during transition but the need for an active dialogue is fully recognised by officers.</p>	<p>A.5 A joint Developer/Agent forum will take place w/c 22 August 2016 at the Watermark Centre in Ivybridge.</p>	<p>August 2016</p>	<p>Pat Whymer</p>

		<p>A.6 Training on how agents can self-serve using new software will be given at future forums.</p> <p>A.7 Specialists and Senior Case Managers will attend the Forums to facilitate and build closer working relationships</p>		
<p>5. Facilitate engagement with Town and Parish Council representatives to develop appropriate protocols to ensure that the concerns of these stakeholders are fully taken into account, and that feedback is given to them where a recommendation that differs to their views is reached.</p>	<p>5.1 The current consultation on the Joint Local Plan has specifically targeted workshops with all town and parish councils. Responses from town and parish councils will be addressed and responded to as the Joint Local Plan progresses. Further engagement will be planned and set out in the Joint Local Plan Engagement Strategy.</p>	<p>A.8 Consult Town and Parish Councils and establish direct liaison during current and future consultation phases.</p> <p>A.9 Provide clear summary of Town and Parish Council comments and an explanation of any divergence from their comments in the officer report. A copy of the report to be provided to T/P</p>	<p>In line with JLP programme</p> <p>October 2016</p>	<p>Tom Jones Lesley Crocker</p> <p>Pat Whymer</p>



Also engage with the town and parish councils on expectations around support for neighbourhood plans.	5.2 Councils have dedicated staff resource focussed on Neighbourhood Plans and targeted support package. Current JLP consultation raises following for consideration	Councils with the decision notice	November 2016	Pat Whymer
		A.10 Offer direct planning training sessions T/P Councils either individually or by cluster		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the emerging Networks in West Devon and South Hams.</li> <li>Entering into a Neighbourhood Plan Agreement with each group to clearly establish the intended purpose of the Plan, the relationship to the Joint Local Plan and roles &amp; responsibilities of those involved.</li> </ul>	A.11 Establish liaison arrangements in JLP Engagement Strategy	September 2016
6. Ensure timely processes and mechanisms for adoption of a Local Development Scheme	6.1 Local Development Scheme is under current review by the Joint Local Plan (JLP) Member Steering Group.	A.12 Update Neighbourhood Plan Protocol to incorporate updated support package and clarify support level to NP networks and individual NP groups.	October 2016	Tom Jones
		A.13 Maintain as standing item for JLP Member Steering	In line with JLP programme	Tom Jones

<p>(LDS) as part of the rapid progression of the South West Devon Joint Local Plan to adoption.</p>	<p>6.2 Currently under watching brief to take into account any impacts on work programme in response to economic uncertainties</p> <p>6.3 Adoption of LDS already delegated to senior officers in consultation with lead members – allowing for speedy adoption once timing is clarified.</p>	<p>Group and issue as soon as reasonable.</p>		
<p>7. Keep the communities, planning agents and stakeholders regularly informed of and involved in the South West Devon Joint Local Plan’s progress recognising the benefits of maintaining an expeditious timeline for adoption</p>	<p>7.1 Current and future consultations to be undertaken in line with Engagement Strategy adopted by all three Local Planning Authorities (SH, WD, Plymouth). This includes involvement of all stakeholders.</p>	<p>A.14 Implement JLP Engagement Strategy. Review and update as necessary.</p>	<p>In line with JLP Programme</p>	<p>Lesley Crocker</p>
<p>8. Engender strong leadership of the Planning Committees through regular training and appropriate updates on planning policy (including on the 5 year land supply</p>	<p>8.1 All Members receive training on Planning matters as part of their induction. Additional training is undertaken in advance of becoming a DM/P&amp;L Committee Member, and offered to other Members subject to availability.</p>	<p>A.15 Review and, where necessary, develop and implement a new training programme for planning committee members with wider</p>	<p>March 2017</p>	<p>Pat Whymer Darryl White</p>

<p>for housing). General planning training should be made available to help non-planning committee members to be more effective local community leaders.</p>	<p>8.2 The Planning Advisory Service were engaged to deliver Member training during 2015/16.</p>	<p>membership invited and supported.</p>		
<p>9. Report a suite of performance indicators directly to the Planning Committees and where necessary Cabinet and Hub, including productivity and performance of Planning Committee itself. KPIs including quality, value and customer focus and land supply, should be reported via a performance dashboard to demonstrate the Service's contribution to wider corporate objectives.</p>	<p>9.1 A range of KPIs have been reported through to different Committees in the past, most recently through O&amp;S (Internal) at WD and O&amp;S at SH.</p>	<p>A.16 A suite of KPIs, covering the suggested areas, will be developed and reported to Development Management/Planning and Licensing Committee on a monthly basis. The KPI's will provide trends over time and be supported by narrative by exception.</p>	<p>September 2016</p>	<p>Drew Powell</p>

<p><b>10. Ensure there are adequate resources to focus on economic growth and affordable housing. This should include reviewing the approach of viability assessments paid for by planning applicants, and developing a pool of knowledge about comparables including values and build rates across the relevant market areas.</b></p>	<p>10.1 It is considered that there is suitable in-house resource to manage affordable housing issues although there will be the need to engage external support on occasions.</p> <p>10.2 A Member working group has now been set up with responsibility for economic growth. The outcomes arising from this group will determine future resource provision.</p> <p>10.3 An initial assessment of how viability assessments are commissioned has been undertaken and harmonisation of approach between the two councils is being considered.</p> <p>10.4 An identified gap in in-house knowledge with regard to viability has been addressed during the recruitment of a Specialist into the Assets Community of Practice – an example of utilising transferable skills across the organisation in line with the key principles of the new operating model.</p>	<p>A.17 A review of our approach to viability and how we can ensure consistency and efficiency – in terms of cost and timeliness – will be undertaken</p>	<p>December 2016</p>	<p>Alex Rehaag</p>
<p><b>11. Review in 12 months' time the operation of the Schemes of Delegation to examine whether even greater harmonisation would be beneficial.</b></p>		<p>A.18 A review of the Scheme of Delegation will be undertaken in conjunction with the Chairs of Committee</p>	<p>July 2017</p>	<p>Pat Whymer</p>

12. Further evaluate the risks at this time of moving to a Local Authority Controlled Company.	12.1 Since publication of the Report, the councils have received the Price Waterhouse Cooper Report evaluating the risks. Proposals are presently being reported to Members through Hub and Executive.	Pending decision by Members	TBC	TBC
13. Ensure sufficient focus, capacity and consistency in delivering a high quality pre application service to provide greater certainty to customers and allow more time for helping shape development to meet community needs. Enhanced pre application engagement should also include delivering informal pre planning briefings to members of the Committees on significant major developments.	13.1 There has been a reduction in performance with regard to turn around times for pre-applications during transition. This has resulted in a reduction in volume.	A.19 Review pre-application process and charges.	October 2016	Pat Whymer
	13.2 SHDC negotiated and agreed its first Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) in June 2016. PPA's offer a mutually beneficial way for applicants and the councils to secure timely development.	A.20 Develop a Planning Performance Agreement protocol to include standard agreement template and charging policy.	November 2016	Tom Jones
	A.21 Develop a protocol to ensure early engagement of Members on major developments.	November 2016	Pat Whymer	
14. Review Committee site visit protocols to ensure		A.22 Undertake a review of site visit protocols in	September 2016	Pat Whymer

<p>planning decision making is as efficient as possible.</p>		<p>conjunction with relevant Committees</p>		
<p>15. Review the Council's governance and decision-making processes related to the planning function.</p>	<p>15.1 This recommendation was added to the Action Plan at the request of the Planning and Licensing Committee meeting held on 26 July 2016.</p>	<p>A. 23 That the Political Structures Working Group be tasked with giving consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- changing the name of the Planning and Licensing Committee to the Development Management Committee; and</li> <li>- establishing a separate stand-alone Licensing Committee.</li> </ul> <p>With the Group then making its recommendations to the Council.</p>	<p>Annual Council meeting in May 2017</p>	<p>Pat Whymer / Darryl White</p>

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny (Internal) Committee**

Date: **6 September 2016**

Title: **PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

Portfolio Area: **N/A**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Any recommendations will be presented to the Hub Committee meeting on 20 September

Author: **Jim Davis** Role: **Specialist – Performance & Intelligence**

Contact: EXT:1493  
Email: jim.davis@swdevon.gov.uk

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## **Recommendations:**

- 1. That Members note the performance levels against target communicated in the Balanced Scorecard and the performance figures supplied in the background and the exception report.**
- 2. That the Committee makes any recommendation as it sees fit to the Hub Committee in relation to the given information and level of performance.**

## **1. Executive summary**

Performance measures for Quarter 1 have stayed relatively consistent with the previous quarter. During the quarter, performance was below target for average call answer time and the end to end time for processing new benefits claims. More detail about these measures can be found in the exception report, Appendix B.

A new solution for benefits claims has been implemented and we are already seeing performance back above target levels.

## **2. Background**

The Balanced Scorecard has suffered from scope creep over the years where some measures were reported to Committee for interest rather than to fulfil a scrutinising role and generated questions rather than help to provide answers.

A review of the balanced scorecard and performance measures provided to members was undertaken in 2015 by a joint task & finish group. The review by the Task & Finish group was interpreted as being 'light' on data at the previous O&S but the T&F group made their recommendations with the awareness that there would be additional information forthcoming with the introduction of Dashboards.

The Council's new workflow system (Workflow360) will enable Members to access live information on current service levels and volumetric data, via a web based performance dashboard.

### **3. Outcomes/outputs**

**Appendix A** is the balanced scorecard – this contains the high level targeted performance information.

**Appendix B** is an information and exception report. This contains the data only performance information for context and the detail of the targeted measures which have fallen below target in the quarter being reviewed.

**Appendix C** contains the description of the targets chosen for the Balanced Scorecard

Preliminary dashboards are now built and are available for members to access. These will be iteratively improved based on feedback, in terms of usefulness and complexity, providing Members, Managers and the Senior Leadership Team with useful live information.

### **4. Options available and consideration of risk**

Dashboards can be tailored by type, interest or area. Ward data has now been loaded into Workflow360 so information could be grouped at this level. However, increased personalisation for Members will take more time to implement and the benefit will need to be balanced against other tasks that the Performance & Intelligence Team will be engaged with.

### **5. Proposed Way Forward**

- 1) The Balanced Scorecard and background report as shown in the Appendices are approved.
- 2) In relation to performance, new online benefits software and its integration with W2, is now transforming the way new benefit claims are dealt with and should add significant capability to deal with new claims.
- 3) The first dashboards are now available for managers & team leaders to manage their areas and for Members to view.
- 4) Feedback from Members is encouraged to improve dashboard usability and usefulness to aid Members fulfil their scrutiny role.



- 5) An additional drop-in familiarisation session will be organised for Members in September for training and feedback.

## 6. Implications

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Relevant to proposals Y/N</b>	<b>Details and proposed measures to address</b>
Legal/Governance	N	Whilst there are no statutory performance measures anymore, some are still reported nationally. We collect these in the same format as required to improve consistency. Other measures are to improve efficiency or to understand workload.
Financial	N	N/A
Risk	Y	Poor performance has a risk to the Council's reputation and delivery to our residents. These proposals should give Scrutiny the ability to address performance issues and develop robust responses to variation in delivery
<b>Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications</b>		
Equality and Diversity	N	N/A
Safeguarding	N	N/A
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	N/A
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	N/A
Other implications	N	N/A

## Supporting Information

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix A – Corporate Balanced Scorecard
- Appendix B – Background and Exception Report
- Appendix C – Corporate Balanced Scorecard Targets

### **Background Papers:**

None

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# Corporate Balanced Scorecard

## Community/Customer

Q4	Q1	
		Overall waste recycling rate %
		Residual waste per household
		CST: Average Call Answer Time
		CST: % of enquiries resolved at first point of contact

## Processes

Q4	Q1	% of planning applications determined within time frame
		Major(Statutory):
		Minor:
		Other

Q4	Q1	
		Avg End to End time Benefits New Claims
		Avg End to End time Benefits Change of circumstances

## T18 Programme

Q4	Q1	
		T18: Programme timescales on track
		T18: Performance vs. Budget
		T18: No. of Processes live
		T18: Ratio call/web submissions

## Performance

Q4	Q1	
		<i>EH: % of nuisance complaints resolved at informal stage</i>
		Avg days short term sickness/FTE
		Complaint response speed

## Key

	Below target performance
	Narrowly off target, be aware
	On or above target

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# Information Report

Non-targeted (data-only) performance measures that will be reported every quarter to provide context and background information – not suitable for the Balanced Scorecard page as no targets applicable or relevant.

Performance Measure	Managed By	Q1 15/16	2015/16	Q1 2016/17			16/17	Comment (If Applicable)
			YTD or Total		Total	Avg Time (Days)	YTD or total	
<p><b>All: Complaints received</b></p> <p>Complaints logged against each Service per quarter. Highlights changes over time and the effects of initiatives.</p>	<p>A more in depth breakdown of areas of complaints from April mean previous year figures are less useful. From next quarter we will show the previous quarter details.</p>							<p>This breakdown of area and average time to complete timings is only available for the completed complaints.</p> <p>60 complaints were logged during the quarter, over half of the completed processes (36) were service issues that were dealt with immediately and aren't formal complaints. The remaining 7 uncompleted processes will be a mix between service issues and formal complaints. We will provide this data next quarter and have changed the process to extract this information at the start complaint so it can be reported out whether or not the complaint has completed.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Service Issues – Some issues are logged as complaints as the customer has a justified concern. Often these are simple issues resolved by talking with the customer so don't form part of our formal complaints process but still are captured for improvement and analysis purposes</p> <p>Ombudsman Complaints</p> <p>2 received over the quarter: 1 premature and going through the council complaints procedure, 1 not being investigated by ombudsman (not fulfilling ombudsman's criteria)</p>
		Council Tax	3	10.6	3			
		Customer Services	3	8.4	3			
		Planning	4	29.8	4			
		Waste	2	28.1	2			
		Commercial Services	1	13	1			
		Parking	1	48	1			
		Benefits	1	7.2	1			
		Total	17	24.3	17			
Service Issues	36	14.4	36					



Performance Measure	Managed By	Q1 15/16	2015/16	Q1 2016/17	16/17	Comment (If Applicable)
			YTD or Total		YTD or total	
<b>All: Compliments received</b>  Compliments logged against each Service per quarter. Highlights changes over time and the effects of initiatives.						Compliments were recorded in old system. No process had been built in Workflow360 as not considered a customer critical priority but new process will be implemented during quarter 2
<b>Long term sickness (days)</b>  Number of days lost due to long term sickness	Andy Wilson	76.2	YTD 76.2	52.7	52.7	Equivalent to 0.66days/FTE. Low numbers of staff in WD means that any long term sickness has a disproportionate effect on days/FTE  Avg of 1.8days/FTE per quarter for 2015/16
<b>Short term sickness (days)</b>  Number of days lost due to short term sickness	Andy Wilson	28.2	YTD 28.2	31.1	31.1	Equivalent to 0.39 days/FTE for the quarter.  This figure reflects the reduced number of employees on the Establishment following voluntary redundancies during 2015.  Avg of 0.4days/FTE per quarter for 2015/16
<b>CS: Top 5 call types</b>	Anita Iley			1) CST Elections - SH Electoral register query 2) SH Planning - Planning Officer, current application 3) CST Waste - Place order for recycling sacks 4) SH Benefits - Change of Circumstances 5) CST Waste - 1st Missed Waste	-	Last Qtr 1) Planning - Planning Officer - repeat call 2) Ctax - CT Bill no CTR 3) Ctax - paperless DD 4) Ctax - make a payment over the phone 5) Waste - Missed refuse
<b>CS: Top 5 website views/trend</b>	Kate Hamp		-	1. Planning Search 2. Planning 3. Contact Us 4. Recycling and Waste 5. Recycling Centres	-	<b>Last qtr</b> 6. Planning Search 7. Planning 8. Recycling and Waste 9. Login 10. Contact Us
<b>CS: % of customer contact through online interaction</b> Demonstrating channel shift	Kate Hamp		-	17.8%	Apr 8.7% May 17.42%	The overall numbers for the quarter were affected by a specific web issue that stretched from March into April and affected the early figures. We are now receiving almost 25% of requests via the web with over 10,500 accounts being

Performance Measure	Managed By	Q1 15/16	2015/16	Q1 2016/17	16/17	Comment (If Applicable)
			YTD or Total		YTD or total	
					Jun 22.6%	<p>created and this is still with limited advertising and channel shift efforts. A new simpler registration script and additional functionality will be available soon, building on these figures.</p> <p>An increasing number of W2 processes (fully integrated needing no additional admin) are now available online and the usage should start to increase as the service is advertised. A number of reporting processes that offer improved functionality for the customer to submit online rather than through the call centre have gone live, mostly circumventing case managers to route directly to operational staff to deal with.</p>
<b>CS: Total number of online transactions</b>	Kate Hamp		-	Via Workflow 360: 3611 Goss forms: 285	3,611 285	These numbers are expected to grow as online services are promoted more and residents become more used to reporting online.
<b>CS: % of calls resolved at first point of contact</b>  Percentage of calls which are resolved at initial contact with CST	Anita Ley	65%	65%	55%	55%	<p>Q4 15/16 figure: 54%</p> <p>To give some context the call centre received 83,500 calls over the quarter around 25% higher than the same period last year and 10,000 more than last quarter. Additional comments in exception report</p> <p>This is an internal measure that we count quite strictly. Many other local authorities include additional processes which stretches the definition. This gives a truer impression of the number of cases being dealt with solely by the Customer Service Team.</p> <p>As more Workflow360 processes go live this should improve as they have been designed to enable first point of contact resolution but the simpler processes being available online means the more complex processes remain with the customer service team.</p>

Performance Measure	Managed By	Q1 15/16	2015/16	Q1 2016/17	16/17	Comment (If Applicable)
			YTD or Total		YTD or total	
						The customer service team has also taken on more complex processes that would have gone straight through the switchboard to the back office but now are dealt with to a large extent by customer service team members before passing less work back to the case management team.
<b>Nuisance complaints Received</b>	Ian Luscombe		-	64	64	<p>The nuisance process (covering noise, odours, smoke, etc) has now gone into Workflow360, this has moved the processes into the Customer Service Team and case management with specialist involvement only required later for more complex investigation.</p> <p>It is planned to run antisocial behaviour reporting through the same process in the future.</p> <p>As the process is new in Workflow360 not all have been fully allocated but of the data received so far the nuisance issues break down as follows:</p> <p>General issues: 20%, Noise: 50%, Odour:10%, Rubbish: 20%</p>
<p><b>EH: Average time taken for Disabled Facilities Grants (Fast track) (work days)</b></p> <p>The total time, from when the application was received until the works are approved. Only a small portion of this is under direct control of the Council.</p>	Ian Luscombe		-	4 days	4 days	<p>This is the portion of the process completely under the council's control (from application to approval). Our target is completion within 5 days. Overall, the average through</p> <p>For further context (outside of direct-council control):            Avg No. of Days Enquiry to Application Made = 80 days;            Avg No. of Days Approval to works completion = 60 days;            Avg No. of Days Enquiry to works completion = 163 days.</p>



## Exception Report:

Performance Measure	Managed by	Prev Status	Last Qtr	Apr 2016	May 2016	Jun 2016	Q1 2016/17		Action Response
			Q4	Value	Value	Value	Value	Target	
<b>CS: Average Call Answer Time</b>  <b>The average time in minutes for a call to be answered. This time shows as an average over each month.</b>	Anita Ley		2.27	3.38	3	3	3.1	1 min	<p>Historically a busy quarter (increase of around 15% from last quarter). Over 83,500 calls.</p> <p>This number needs to be compared with the additional processes now dealt with by customer services that previously were passed immediately to the back office. Whilst better for the customer and case management it does place additional strain on the CST with increased call length.</p> <p>As online uptake increases the self-service cases are generally the simpler cases, this leaves the more complex or multi-faceted issues for the contact centre to resolve.</p>
<b>Avg End to End time Benefits New Claims</b>	Allison Lewis		25	25.3	32.5	38.9	32.2	24	<p>July (Q2) figures are already back in target at 21 days.</p> <p>New claims Q1 processing times are high partly because of reduction in staff and channel shift not being completed. The processing time also reflects the length of time it takes the customer to supply all relevant evidences to be able to process their claim.</p> <p>The new IEG4 software solution and integration with Workflow360 will allow us to automate the reminder and subsequent shutdown of processes over 30 days if no response comes from the customer in a timely fashion. This should have a positive effect on this measure and the customer.</p> <p>Implementing the new self-service solution has been phased to improve the front-end experience for the customer quickly and then bring in the back office amendments to improve efficiency over the next few weeks</p>

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**Explanation and value of targets for Balanced Scorecard measures**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Overall waste recycling rate %	58%	A combination of recycling, re-use & composting for household waste. A self-set stretching target based on historic collection rates and current ambitions
Residual waste per household	81kg/qtr	The residual waste left after recycling and re-use. Equivalent to c.12-13kg per fortnightly collection per household
Average Call Answer Time	1 min	Simple statistic to judge overall call answer speed. Can mask the complexity of call answer times but provides useful yardstick for comparing performance over time. If capacity exists in CST then answering calls in 20secs is common and simple. Answering calls consistently around the minute (or any) timeframe occurs only when incoming calls are being matched with the speed calls are being completed. As an example with our avg call and wrap up time of 7 mins this target is passed with only 2 extra calls being received per minute. Each additional extra 2 calls/minute would add another 1 minute wait to all callers wait time.
% of enquiries resolved at first point of contact	60%	In contrast to the measure above, this focuses on when the customer gets through, can CST deal with the issue at hand. Driving increased success in this measure pushes up call times so has a negative impact on call answer speed.
% of Applications determined within time frame Major	60%	Statutory performance measure target
% of Applications determined within time frame Minor	65%	Old statutory performance measure target
% of Applications determined within time frame Other	80%	Old statutory performance measure target
Avg End to End time Benefits New Claims	24 days	Time for processing new claims
Avg End to End time Benefits Change of circumstances	11 days	Time for processing changes to existing claims

% of nuisance complaints resolved at informal stage	90%	Handling nuisance complaints informally saves time and money and often provides a more satisfactory outcome for all involved
Avg days short term sickness/FTE	1.5days/qtr	Private sector average of c.6 days/year, Public sector average of c.8 days has informed this initially stretching target. Agile working has had a very positive impact on sickness as people feeling under the weather have remained at home, working and reduced the likelihood of transfer of communicable infections to colleagues. Better sickness reporting via W2 will increase confidence in this figure and speed of reporting. Will be measured monthly from April onwards.
Complaint response speed	10 days	Time to respond to a Level 1 complaints
T18: Programme timescales on track	Against Plan	Performance against programme timelines. Recently re-baselined following agreement of milestones with Civica
T18: Performance vs. Budget	Under/over spend	Measure to compare the forecast spend on the programme at the end of the period to the actual spend. To judge budget control. Green: Actual spend less than planned Amber: Overspend of less than 5% Red: Overspend greater than 5%
T18: No. of Processes live		Against baselined projection for the month. There is a rolling programme of processes being worked on together by the BDT and the services that is dependent on system fixes and adoption/buy in from the organisation.
T18: Ratio call/web submissions	10% increasing over time	Ratio for customers calling vs self servicing using integrated processes online. Customers currently fill in online forms but this then requires input into our systems. The new integrated approach inputs directly to our system and routes work where needed. Initially requires creation of account before first submission so expectation of slight drop off in ratio to begin with and then increasing as more customers sign up. Communication initiatives will be coordinated at key times during the year, for example, with annual council tax bills to drive sign ups so a stepwise increase in submissions is expected.

# Agenda Item 11



West Devon  
Borough  
Council

## OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE – DECISIONS LOG

Meeting Date	Report Title and Minute Ref.	Decision / Action	Officer / Member	Officer comments
19 July 2016	T18 Budget Monitoring <b>O&amp;S(I) 16</b>	Officers were invited to provide a detailed explanation of the cost allocations and apportionments of the Programme between the Council and South Hams District Council. The S151 Officer explained the processes and also confirmed that the Council's new external auditors (KPMG) would also be reviewing the processes and methodology used, as part of the annual audit of the Accounts. It was explained that KPMG will report on their findings to the Audit Committee meeting on 27 September 2016.	Lisa Buckle	Scheduled on to the Audit Committee agenda accordingly.
19 July 2016	T18 Programme – Interim Review: Draft Terms of Reference <b>O&amp;S(I) 17(a)</b>	The need for swift progress to be made on the Review was recognised by all Members.  That the broad terms of reference (as outlined above, subject to inclusion of the addition at discussion point (b)) be approved as the basis for this Review; and  That Cllrs Davies, Evans, Mott, Musgrave, Ridgers and Yelland be nominated to serve on this Task and Finish Group.	Steve Jordan / Darryl White	First T+F Group meeting arranged to take place on Tuesday, 6 September at 11.30am.
19 July 2016	Member Development Steering Group –	1. That the Committee request a standing agenda item be included for future Committee	Darryl White	

	<p>Progress Update and Induction Review <b>O&amp;S(I) 17(a)</b></p>	<p>meetings that acts as a prompt for any future Member Learning and Development opportunities that arose from each meeting.</p> <p>That the Hub Committee be <b>RECOMMENDED</b> to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. approve the future Member Induction Programme (as attached at Appendix A of the presented agenda report), subject to delegated authority being granted to the Senior Specialist – Democratic Services, in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group and Group Leaders, to make any necessary minor amendments;</li> <li>3. approve the principle of a Member Learning and Development Plan, with responsibility for its content and monitoring being delegated to the Senior Specialist – Democratic Services, in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group; and</li> <li>4. support the pursuing of the South West Charter Status for Member Development accreditation.</li> </ol>	<p>Kathy Trant / Cllr Ball</p>	<p>Work programme updated accordingly</p> <p>Recommendations to be presented to the Hub Committee meeting on 20 September 2016.</p>
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## OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY (INTERNAL) COMMITTEE

### DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME – 2016-17

Date of Meeting	Report	Lead Officer	
8 November 2016	Hub Committee Forward Plan	Kathy Trant	
	Overview of the Website Development	Steve Mullineaux	
	Task and Finish Group Updates (if any)		
	Contact Centre: Progress Update	Anita Ley	
	Transition Resources Update Report	Sophie Hosking	
	Ombudsman Update and Annual Review Letter	Catherine Bowen	
17 January 2017	Joint O+S Draft Budget 2016/17 Consultation	Lisa Buckle	
Page 91	April 2017	Hub Committee Forward Plan	Kathy Trant
		Task and Finish Group Updates (if any)	
		Draft O+S Annual Report	Darryl White

**Other Items:**

Our Plan: Progress Against the Delivery Plan (Tom Jones).

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