

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT – MEMBER ENGAGEMENT PROTOCOL

1. Purpose

1.1 Following the appointment of the Enforcement Specialist (Chris Booty) and in conjunction with the preparation of the Planning Enforcement Plan, it has been recognised that the interaction between Planning Enforcement and Members could be improved. This protocol sets out how Planning Enforcement officers will keep Members up to date with open enforcement cases, and the available channels of communication for Members with the Planning Enforcement officers.

2. Member Engagement Protocol

2.1 The primary communication from Planning Enforcement to Members is the circulation of a report of open enforcement cases on a monthly basis. At present this report is simply a list of open cases sorted by Parish. The use of this report is the most effective and efficient way of providing information to Members, however it is acknowledged that the level of information provided could be improved. Following a review of the information presented, starting in March 2018 this report will be revised to contain the following information:

- The location and nature of alleged breach;
- The date the breach was reported to the Council;
- The priority that has been assigned to the case (Following the guidance within the Enforcement Plan);
- The Officer dealing with the case;
- The current status of the investigation; and
- The report will be sorted by Ward and not by Town/Parish.

2.2 The four main changes to the report are:

- A) The inclusion of the priority given to the case which will indicate the target timescales for dealing with the case that are set out in the Enforcement Plan;
- B) The inclusion of information setting out the current status of the case. This will be a brief indication such as an application has been requested, a notice has been served, an application has been received etc, but will be sufficient to enable Members to see the status of the Investigation;
- C) The inclusion of the case officer assigned to the case; and
- D) Following requests from Members the report will be sorted by Ward.

2.3 The additional information will initially be provided for new cases as they are received with updates added to existing cases as they are actioned.

2.4 It is important that the Council prioritise those cases that cause significant public concern. As such if the report identifies a case which has been given

a Lower Priority but a Local Member is aware that there is significant public concern, the Member should contact the Enforcement Specialist to discuss whether the case could be given a High priority. In order to facilitate early engagement with Members, the revised report will be circulated every two weeks rather than monthly.

- 2.5** Members will continue to be informed when cases are closed, the reasons why the case has been closed and when officers are recommending that Enforcement Notices are served.
- 2.6** The recent drop-in meetings that have taken place between Members and the Enforcement Specialist to review all of the Enforcement cases in the Members Wards have been successful and further dates are being organised for Members who have not, as yet, had a meeting with the Enforcement Specialist. The provision of the additional data within the report to be circulated to Members on a two weekly basis will provide up to date information for Members and should negate the need for regular meetings to be arranged. However, should any Member wish to discuss all of the open cases in their Ward, they can contact the Enforcement Specialist and a meeting will be arranged to take place, if possible within 14 days of the request.
- 2.7** Members have previously raised some concerns regarding the decisions made on a small number of Enforcement Cases. The continued provision of dialogue between Members and the Enforcement Team when a case is closed as set out in 1.5 above will help to explain decisions made. However, if a Ward Member has concerns once a case has been closed, these concerns can be brought to the attention of the Enforcement Specialist to see if there are any learning opportunities arising from the decision.