

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**

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 18th and 20th 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 18th and 20th 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.