

To: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 7 June 2016

Report of: Head of Planning & Regulatory Services

Title of Report: Planning and Regulatory Services: Service Plan and Improvement Plan 2016/17

Summary

Purpose of report: To update the Scrutiny Committee on the Service Plan and draft Service Improvement Plans for Planning and Regulatory Services

Key Decision: No

Executive lead member: Cllr Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning & Regulatory Services

Report author: Patsy Dell, Head of Planning and Regulatory Services

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan

Appendices to this report:

- Appendix A: summary of actions from previous service improvement plans,
- Appendix B: Planning and Regulatory Service Plan 2016 – 2019,
- Appendix C: Planning and Regulatory Service Draft Improvement Plan 2016 - 2017

Background

- 1 The Scrutiny Committee has requested a report to update them on the Planning and Regulatory Service Plan 2016 - 2019. This is attached at Appendix B. The latest working draft of the associated service improvement plan is also attached at Appendix C. The service improvement plan will be further informed by feedback from Member, service user, staff and customer focus group sessions being planned for June and July.

Planning and Regulatory Service Plan and draft Improvement Plan 2016: Service Overview

- 2 The Planning and Regulatory Services department was established in 2015 following the most recent corporate restructure. The new department brings together all of the planning and regulatory functions and was formed from the previous City Development and (Environmental Health part of) Environmental Development departments. A new Head of Planning and Regulatory Services joined the council in December 2015, replacing the two previous service heads that have both left the council. An interim head of service was in post from July to December 2015.
- 3 The two service plans covering the old service areas have now been replaced by a single service plan for planning and regulatory services (attached at Appendix B). This plan is accompanied by a service improvement plan (attached at Appendix C). The improvement plan is still a working document yet to be informed by customer, member and service user feedback from focus groups planned for mid-June.
- 4 The Planning and Regulatory Services (P&R) includes a range of statutory and discretionary frontline services that directly or indirectly contribute to the Council's corporate ambition to make Oxford a world-class city for all its citizens. Some parts of the service are dictated by mandatory national legislative requirements and performance targets whereas others are discretionary and locally set.
- 5 The services help to ensure the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors; the provision of housing, employment, social and recreational facilities to provide a strong and sustainable economy and active communities whilst protecting and improving the natural and built environment of the city.
- 6 The service is being restructured in 2016 which will alter some of the management arrangements but the key components of the service are unaltered. The service teams within Planning and Regulatory Services comprise the following (this is set out in full in the service plan but summarised here):
- 7 **Business Regulation Team** – this team's purpose is to protect public health and the environment through regulation and includes food safety, investigation and control of case of infectious disease; control of noise and other nuisance from commercial premises, regulation of street trading; environmental permitting of nearly 30 polluting industries and processes and coordination of the Oxford City Safety Advisory Group.
- 8 **Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Enforcement Team** - helps to manage and improve the health, safety and welfare of residents living in HMOs.
- 9 **Private Sector Safety and combined Planning and Private Sector Safety Enforcement Team** – the primary role is the protection of the health and

wellbeing of those who live in the private rented sector and the investigation and enforcement of breaches of planning control.

- 10 **Home Improvement Agency** – the maintenance, improvement or adaptation of housing for the over 60s, the disabled and those with long term illnesses through the provision of repairs, minor works, improvement loans, grants and key safe installations.
- 11 **Building Control** – the purpose is to ensure the health and safety of persons in or around buildings, energy conservation and access to buildings for all persons.
- 12 **Planning Policy, Design, Heritage and Trees** – prepares the statutory planning policy framework (new Local Plan) which guides development in Oxford in order that the area’s housing, employment, social needs are met whilst preserving and/or improving the quality, character and appearance of the city. Also provides specialist advice and expertise on urban design, in respect of the historic environment, trees, archaeology. Also implements the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which secures developer contributions towards infrastructure in order to address the needs of new development.
- 13 **Development Management** – implements the Council’s policy set out in the development plan and manages development within the City by assessing and determining a wide variety of planning and other applications and consents.
- 14 The Planning and Regulatory Service departmental restructure is looking to address a number of key issues and drivers for change through the restructure, service plan and service improvement plan. These reflect the needs from the service over the short to medium term as well as the issues that need to be addressed to move the service forward to meet the council’s ambition for it to be a national best in class performer.
- 15 These drivers can be summarised as:
 - To put in place the service structure and leadership to deliver the councils ambition for a top performing, high quality national exemplar planning and regulatory service.
 - To improve the current resilience and sustainability of the Building Control (BC) function, consolidate the business offer and create an agreed and sustainable BC service business model for the future
 - To improve current customer confidence in some key parts of the planning service and deliver customer service excellence in the performance, productivity, resilience, quality, value for money and customer experience of the planning development management function
 - To address current recruitment and retention issues within some key roles,
 - To enhance the specialist skills and experience supporting the planning functions, particularly adding urban design capacity, skills and experience,
 - To improve resilience and capacity in the enforcement functions, developing a single focussed enforcement team across the planning and regulatory service, as part of the Private Sector Safety team

- To increase focus on the delivery of key action plans and specific improvement projects across the service
- To increase service resilience through appropriate external funding models such as direct developer funding and Planning Performance Agreements;

16 The draft service improvement plan at Appendix C is being developed to address these drivers for change.

Other service improvement plans

17 Various actions were identified in previous improvement plans aligned to the planning service. Two such improvement plans remain extant; the first related to the 2013 Independent Review of the planning service in association with the development at Roger Dudman Way (RDW) and the second relates to the Statement of Community Involvement approved in 2015. A summary of actions derived from those improvement plans are attached to this report at Appendix A.

18 The work on the RDW action plan was carried out in 2014/15 with a wide range of actions, grouped under six broad categories, developed and implemented. These have improved the quality, standard and consistency of the planning service and have addressed a number of the issues raised in the Vincent Goodstadt report (the link to the original report is set out below). The majority of the actions have now been embedded into the service but they too, will require on-going monitoring and review to ensure they continue to be relevant and embedded into the service. The 2016 improvement plan provides the opportunity to undertake that monitoring and review.

<http://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/s16562/RDW%20INDEPENDENT%20REVIEW%20FINAL%20REPORT%20140107%2017th%20Jan.pdf>

19 The council's Statement of Community Involvement was updated in 2015 and various actions were identified as needing progressing following that review. The summary table set out in Appendix A below outlines the key actions identified and completed, remaining actions are to be incorporated in the new service improvement plan.

Next steps

19 The service plan and draft service improvement plan have been structured around delivering the key outcomes expected from the service for the coming years but with a primary focus in the next year. They identify the performance indicators and targets that flow from the Corporate Plan and national and agreed local performance standards and indicators. The service plan also identifies a number of key projects that the service is responsible for delivering such as the new local plan for Oxford. The service will use the service plan to monitor and manage its progress against priorities over the coming year. The Executive Board member and Head of Service will monitor progress on the delivery of the service plan.

- 20 The service improvement plan is still being worked upon but also seeks to ensure the ambitions for the service are delivered and that the issues and actions that need to be addressed are picked up. It will be informed by feedback from a wide range of stakeholders and service users. An update on progress will be produced in 12 months and this can be reported back to Scrutiny committee if that would be of interest to members.
- 21 Scrutiny Committee is asked to **note** the report and to **provide any feedback** on the Service Plan and draft Service Improvement plan and identified actions.

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Background papers: None

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