

To: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 12 June 2017
Report of: Head of Planning, Sustainable Development & Regulatory Services
Title of Report: Update report on progress with Planning and Regulatory Service Plan and Improvement Plan 2016/17

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the Scrutiny Committee on progress with the 2016/17 Service Plan and Service Improvement Plans for Planning and Regulatory Services
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning & Regulatory
Corporate Priority:	An efficient and effective Council
Policy Framework:	Corporate Plan
Recommendation(s): That the Scrutiny Committee resolves to:	
1. Note and comment on the report	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Planning and Regulatory Service Improvement Plan 2016 – 2017
Appendix 2	Development Management Performance overview

Introduction and background

1. Scrutiny Committee received a report in June 2016 on the new Planning and Regulatory Service Plan 2016. A service improvement plan had also been developed and this report provides feedback on progress with service improvements over the last 12 months.

Planning and Regulatory Service Overview

- 2 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.

- 3 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.
- 4 The service was restructured in 2016 and comprises the following teams (functions summarised here):
- 5 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.
- 6 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Enforcement Team - helps to manage and improve the health, safety and welfare of residents living in HMOs.
- 7 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.
- 8 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.
- 9 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.
- 10 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.
- 11 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.
- 12 The Planning and Regulatory Service departmental restructure that took place in 2016 was looking to address a number of key issues and drivers for change and to put in place changes needed to move the service forward to meet the council’s ambition for it to be a national best in class performer. The service improvement plan priorities flowed from these drivers for change and ambitions.
- 13 The drivers for change were identified 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 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;
- 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

Progress on implementation of the Service Improvement Plan

- 14 The 2016 service improvement plan has helped focus the service on the actions that were needed to deliver desired change and improvement. The final 'update' column in the table at Appendix A provides a picture of progress across a range of agreed actions that were endorsed by Scrutiny Committee last year. Overall significant progress has been made in the delivery and implementation of the service improvement plan. In summary there has been:
- Implementation of the service restructure
 - Significant recruitment of permanent staff into key posts, reduction in use of use of agency staff and stabilisation of teams in a number of critical service areas
 - The Best in Class ambition has been communicated to all staff and engagement on delivery of that ambition is in place
 - ISO9001 and Customer Service Excellent accreditations were awarded in 2015 and 2016
 - Focus group feedback sessions were held with members, service users and staff in summer 2016
 - New customer/service user groups have been set up in planning – the Planning Service User Group and Planning Agents Forum
 - Member development was provided 2016, new member training and development programme in place in 2017
 - A new contract for the Oxford Design Review Panel is under negotiation
 - Improvement actions and changes in Development Management (DM) have been delivered, DM performance has and continues to improve meeting and exceeding government performance targets – Appendix B shows performance over the last 12 months

- Career Grades have been developed and are in place in a number of service teams, enabling progression for staff as they gain experience within the council, supporting improved staff retention
- Five Apprentice posts have been created in the service (including four graduate planner apprentice posts) and recruited to in October 2016
- The reputation of Oxford City Council as an employer of choice for staff has being strengthened
- Service Income targets have been resolved in the 17/18 budget working cycle
- New combined enforcement and public sector safety team has been created, greater support and resilience for enforcement function has been secured, the back log of enforcement work has been reduced and a more responsive approach to planning enforcement is in place. The new Senior Planning Enforcement Officer recruitment was successful
- New planning enforcement service standards and operating procedures have been approved by the Executive Councillor
- New ICT systems are being procured in the regulatory service area - Rock time and Enterprise workflow has been implemented in Development Management

- 15 The area where progress has been slower is with Building Control and the service has struggled with recruitment in this area. There is a very competitive market for building control staff at the moment and appointing permanent staff and good quality contractors is has been difficult. Long term sickness absence has also impacted upon progress in moving the desired service changes forward. Permanent recruitment of staff to the service will be the focus over coming months.
- 16 The 2016 – 17 service plan and draft service improvement plan were structured around delivering the key outcomes expected from the service and its restructure. This years’ service plan builds on that progress and the next steps in the journey to delivering the councils ambition for a best in class service.
- 17 Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the update report and to provide any feedback.

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Background Papers: None