

To: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 8th October 2018

Report of: Head of Planning, Sustainable Development & Regulatory Services

Title of Report: Update report on progress with the Planning and Regulatory Service Improvement Plan

Summary

Purpose of report: To provide an annual update to the Scrutiny Committee on progress with the Planning and Regulatory Service improvements that were started in 2016

Key Decision: No

Executive Lead member: Cllr Hollingsworth

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

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan

Appendices to this report:

- Appendix A: Planning and Regulatory Service Improvement Plan actions 2016 with updates from 2017 and 2018
- Appendix B – Development Management Performance overview
- Appendix C – Planning Enforcement Activities 2017 - 18

Background

- 1 Scrutiny Committee received reports in June 2016 and 2017 on the Planning and Regulatory Service and implementation of various improvements that had taken place over that period. This report provides further feedback on progress with service improvements over the last 12 months, tracked against previous reporting.

Planning and Regulatory Service Overview

- 2 The Planning and Regulatory Service (P&R) includes a range of statutory and discretionary frontline services, some are dictated by mandatory national legislative requirements and performance targets whereas others are discretionary and locally set.
- 3 The service supports the delivery of the council's growth, place and low carbon agendas and help to ensure the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors. The service was restructured in 2016 and comprises the following teams (functions summarised below). From April 2017 the service was expanded to include the Sustainable Development team becoming Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services.
- 4 A departmental restructure took place in early 2016 with the aim of addressing 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.
- 5 The original 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 since 2016

- 6 The 2016 to 2017 service improvement plan has helped focus the service on the actions that were needed to deliver desired change and improvement. The 2018 'update' column in the table at Appendix A provides a picture of progress across a range of agreed actions in the last 12 months and which were endorsed by Scrutiny Committee last year.
- 7 Overall significant progress has been made in the delivery and implementation of the service improvement plan over the last two and a half years. In summary there has been:
 - Implementation of the service restructure and changes at management level and with leadership
 - Significant recruitment of permanent staff into key posts, reduction in the use of agency staff and stabilisation of teams in a number of critical service areas has been achieved,
 - The Best in Class ambition has been a focus for the service and staff
 - Performance has improved in key areas such as development management and enforcement. DM performance has and continues to improve meeting and exceeding government performance targets
 - The new Oxford Local Plan 2036 is on programme
 - ISO9001 and Customer Service Excellent accreditations were awarded in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018
 - 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
 - Member development has been provided each year with a programme in place in 2017/2018
 - A new contract for the Oxford Design Review Panel has been awarded
 - Measures to improve recruitment and retention have been introduced, 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
 - Nine Apprentice posts have been created in the service since October 2016. Five of the nine apprentices have completed their apprenticeships and become permanent members staff in the service
 - The reputation of Oxford City Council as an employer of choice for staff has being strengthened
 - The combined enforcement and public sector safety team gives greater support and resilience for our enforcement function, the back log of enforcement work has been significantly reduced and a more responsive approach to planning enforcement is in place.

- 8 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 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.
- 9 Arrangements for the replacement of the current Head of Service have been agreed. Acting-up arrangements will be in place for the next six months, provided by staff from within the service.
- 10 Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the update report and to provide any feedback.

Name and contact details of author:

Name: Patsy Dell

Job title: Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services

Service Area / Department: Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services

Tel: 01865 252356 e-mail: pdell@oxford.gov.uk

Appendix A: Service Improvement Plan Update 2018

Service Improvement Area	Service Improvement Action 2016	Action, Targets or Milestones	Team and Action Owner	Notes on progress at May 2017	Notes on progress September 2018
277	Service Restructure Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection process for Service Managers against revised job descriptions April 2016. Revised Job descriptions for Team Leaders and other roles and recruitment to vacancies 	Head of Service - Patsy Dell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Head of Service in post from Dec 2015 All Service Managers in post with new job descriptions Team Leaders in post in Development Management, Recruitment to take place for Design, Heritage and Trees Sustainable Development part of wider service from April 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current Head of Service leaving on 18/10/18 Interim Head of Planning Services confirmed, hand over happening from September onwards. Planning Policy and Place Manager recruited 6th September Regulatory Services recruited to a vacant Team Manager post and dealt with a Team Manager's absence due to long term sickness Design and Heritage manager in post, maternity cover arranged Sustainable Development Team integrated as part of the Department and cross floor work is now well integrated
	Best in Class (BiC) service ambition and direction of travel	<p>All Service teams developing team improvement plans setting out what BiC looks like for that service area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External BiC service providers will be identified and comparative benchmarking undertaken; Teams to audit themselves against BiC and identify actions to move teams to BiC Team plans to be in place by 1 September 2016 	Patsy Dell and Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service restructure, service plan and service improvement plan implemented and in place. Significant permanent recruitment has taken place across the service Best in Class ambition communicated to all staff and engagement on delivery of that ambition is in place ISO9001 and Customer Service Excellent accreditations awarded in 2015 and 2016 New customer user groups set 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Management performance has and continues to improve, meeting and exceeding government performance targets – Appendix B demonstrates New contract for ODRP set up and to be reviewed. Member training undertaken with all members. Further focused training events are planned from March 2019. Also, advisory notes will be added to the planning committee papers. Outstanding recruitment has been

Service Improvement Area	Service Improvement Action 2016	Action, Targets or Milestones	Team and Action Owner	Notes on progress at May 2017	Notes on progress September 2018
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake proactive service feedback approaches using focus groups and direct survey each year. Review operation of the Development Management User Group (DMUG) with participants through focus groups. July 2016 Implement new customer feedback process for all planning applications and pre-application discussions Actions from Planning and Environmental Health ISO9001 and Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditations to be implemented, as a priority review of all existing Standard Operating Procedures (SPO's) to ensure all Development Management and enforcement activities are as lean and efficient as possible by December 2016 Reduce the number of complaints received regarding customer service 		<p>up in planning – Planning Service User Group and Planning Agents Forum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New contract for ODRP being negotiated Member development provided 2016, new programme set up for 2017 Improvement actions and changes in Development Management (DM) including ICT have been delivered, DM performance has and continues to improve meeting and exceeding government performance targets – Appendix B demonstrates 	<p>undertaken and temporary staff taken on to cover maternity cover. Additional capacity is being sort to give resilience to the teams.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ISO accreditation retained following external audit in December 2017 HIA Service commended by Foundations in national award ceremony in 2018 Benchmarking with Nearest Neighbours carried out as part of Fundamental Service Review indicates that all Regulatory Services are low cost and high output The Benchmarking shows that Environmental Health services are 77% funded from income compared to our nearest neighbours who range from 25-56% funded from income Private Rented Sector enforcement activity is comparable to the highest performing London Boroughs Service planning and service improvement is on-going, a new end to end review of DM process is about to take place. This will focus on customer contact, improving the Service user groups operating New ODRP contract in place Member development and training

Service Improvement Area	Service Improvement Action 2016	Action, Targets or Milestones	Team and Action Owner	Notes on progress at May 2017	Notes on progress September 2018
279		<p>matters by 25% pa – 2015/16 taken as the baseline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting high quality development: enhance urban design skills and capacity across the planning service Review operation of the current Oxford Design Review Panel/CaBE contract, seek feedback from members/service users and others and pick up and implement any actions arising from the review – July 2016 Agreed programme of member and officer development - on-going 			<p>taking place, more being arranged in 2018/19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invalid planning application numbers are still too high at the point of submission and the validation strategy is being implemented to reduce the number
	Recruitment and retention of permanent staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambition for the service and its future direction of travel now clear. Recent period of uncertainty and change now settling down. New service management structure agreed, new manager for Development Management being recruited through a national campaign 	<p>Patsy Dell and Service Managers</p> <p>Patsy Dell and new task and finish group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment successful in a number of key areas across the service. Current vacancies for Design, Heritage and Trees Team Leader and Building Control posts. Career Grades in place. Five Apprentice posts created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of staff across the service are permanent, supplemented by a small number of agency staff Recruitment remains challenging in Planning and Building control areas though and a review of further retention and recruitment activities that could be introduced is underway.

Service Improvement Area	Service Improvement Action 2016	Action, Targets or Milestones	Team and Action Owner	Notes on progress at May 2017	Notes on progress September 2018
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All current staff vacancies to be recruited to or filled by permanent staff by September 2016 Establish career grades across the service on a priority basis to improve recruitment and retention, work with staff and Human Resources to develop a new career grade scheme for implementation by August 2016 Establish and recruit to new Apprentice posts in Planning and Building Control, begin process of 'growing own staff' in service areas where recruitment and retention is an issue. Thereafter use apprentices/career grades/staff development and workforce planning to improve the supply of newly qualified staff available to the service. 	<p>from across the service</p> <p>Patsy Dell and Service Managers</p>	<p>(four graduate planner apprentice posts set up) and recruited to October 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reputation of Oxford City Council as an employer of choice being strengthened by restructure actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career grades have been implemented within planning and Building Control and a number of officers have successfully progressed to more senior roles <p>Apprentices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 2016 – 2018 cohort of planning and building control apprentices have all successfully completed their apprenticeships and all five have been appointed to permanent roles within the wider service. Four new apprentices/graduate trainee planners have been recruited for the 2018 – 2020 period and start in September. The Building Control apprentice has successfully completed his apprenticeship and has now been recruited into a permanent Assistant Building Control surveyor role.
	Review service income targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of income targets and potential in areas where income targets have not 	Patsy Dell and Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income targets resolved in 17/18 budget working cycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income targets are reviewed each year as part of the budget cycle and reflect the demands upon service

Service Improvement Area	Service Improvement Action 2016	Action, Targets or Milestones	Team and Action Owner	Notes on progress at May 2017	Notes on progress September 2018
281		been met to be discussed with Finance team ahead of the start of 2017/2018 budget working paper process (by July 2016)			<p>capacity and council priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning fees are set nationally but fees and charges for services such as pre-application advice are reviewed annually.
	Service funding and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop model working approach using Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) and contracts for enhanced planning service/directly funded posts by July 2016. Ensure full cost recovery for pre-application and other charges. 	Patsy Dell and Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPA in place with Network Rail PPA's being negotiated with a number of other organisations to address specific resourcing pressures and appetite for enhanced service offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The additional income from the increase in planning fees in January 2018 has been ring-fenced to planning services. Additional recruitment to aid resilience given increasing pressures on the service has also been agreed. Planning Performance Agreements are in use extensively and support the ability to deploy additional resources for strategic and major planning applications being handled by the service.
Implement Team moves and agreed new line management changes	Building Control (BC) team management under Environmental Health Service Manager responsibility following restructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing the Resilience of the Building Control Service through undertaking service review and developing a BC improvement plan by August 2016 (including full review of service costs, charges and recharges, recruitment to vacancies and market analysis). Improvement plan to be implemented once actions and timescales 	Patsy Dell, Environmental Health Service Manager (Ian Wright) and BC Team Leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building Control is struggling with appointing permanent staff and good quality contractors are also becoming more difficult to secure. Long term sickness absence has impacted upon progress in moving the desired service changes forward Service resilience is closely related to permanent recruitment and that will be the focus over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment has remained a challenge in Building Control despite the implementation of a career grade and market Supplements. New Assistant Building Control Surveyor position created to retain Apprentice. Income for current year on target driven by applications from the University and museums and

Service Improvement Area	Service Improvement Action 2016	Action, Targets or Milestones	Team and Action Owner	Notes on progress at May 2017	Notes on progress September 2018
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> agreed with Board Member. External marketing of BC service to increase, improved opportunities for working across the council on OCC construction activities with Direct Services to be pursued Establish a customer/Service User feedback Forum – by August 2016, to meet twice yearly as a minimum 		coming months	successful bids for work e.g. secondary fit outs at the Westgate as well as a significant number of regularisation applications from landlords resulting from HMO enforcement work.
	Planning Enforcement responsibilities moving to a combined enforcement team with the Private Sector Safety Team (PSST) in Regulatory Services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Enforcement activities to be integrated in a combined enforcement team Team improvement plan and standard operating practices for the planning investigations to be developed, Recruitment to all vacancies by September 2016. Improvement plan to be implemented once agreed. Develop an enforcement policy and review of service standards for planning enforcement by December 2016 	Patsy Dell, Environmental Health Service Manager (Ian Wright) and PSST Team Leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New team set up, greater support and resilience for enforcement function secured back log of work had been reduced, more responsive approach in place Senior Planning Enforcement Officer recruitment successful. Planning Apprentice post set up in enforcement team New enforcement service standards and operating procedures approved by Executive Councillor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning Enforcement resource increased by 1FTE due to successful bid for government funding. Enforcement action performance has improved with 28 notices served in 2017-18 and 18 so far in 2018-19. The team is more focussed on tackling the priorities first.
Improved Management information and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Management Building Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current use of access reports for management information and investigate alternatives with greater 	Service Managers and Team Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New ICT systems being procured in regulatory service area - Rock time Enterprise workflow has been 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The planning system (Idox) improvement plan has been agreed and is on the ICT work programme for implementation in 2018/19

Service Improvement Area	Service Improvement Action 2016	Action, Targets or Milestones	Team and Action Owner	Notes on progress at May 2017	Notes on progress September 2018
and exploration of Digital/mobile working capabilities across the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food safety Private Sector Safety HMO Enforcement 	<p>functionality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teams to investigate available mobile/digital solutions in use by others across these service areas by December 2016 Appraisal of costs and benefits and any business cases for investment in new technology upgrades to be produced by March 2017 		implemented in Development Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rocktime currently being tested prior to going live in April 2019. This system supports the HMO licensing service.

Appendix B – Development Management Performance Overview: major and non-major planning applications 2017 – 2018

(target is for 65 % of major applications to be determined within 13 weeks or as agreed in a Planning Performance agreement or by Extension of Time), non-major applications, the target is for 70 % to be decided within 8 weeks or as agreed in a Planning Performance agreement or by Extension of Time).

	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18	Aug-18	Last 2 years
Maj inc PPA & EOT														
Total maj received	2	3	4	3	4	2	1	2	2	3	3	1	1	
Total maj decided	5	2	1	0	4	5	3	7	1	3	0	3	5	87
Total Maj decided in time	5	2	1	0	4	5	3	7	1	3	0	3	5	82
% Maj decided in time	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	94%
Tot maj withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Non-majors inc PPA & EOT														
Total n-m received	86	50	112	87	91	97	106	90	71	77	99	92	66	
Total n-m decided	96	96	89	100	94	97	77	112	78	101	87	96	114	2470
Total n-m decided in time	90	94	85	99	90	94	71	105	72	87	71	87	107	2179
% n-m decided in time	94	98	96	99	96	97	92	94	92	86	82	91	94	88%
Tot n-m withdrawn	17	7	1	15	8	13	13	0	4	1	16	15	28	
Others (LBC and ADV) inc PPA & EOT														
Total other received	16	8	17	10	19	7	18	16	12	8	12	13	7	
Total others decided	12	23	19	13	13	23	18	11	14	18	16	9	13	404
Total others decided in time	12	23	16	13	13	22	15	8	13	16	13	8	11	359
% others decided in time	100	100	84	100	100	96	83	73	93	89	81	89	85	89%
Tot others withdrawn	3	4	0	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	5	2	

Appendix C – Planning Enforcement Activities 2016 - 18

Planning Enforcement Activity 2016 - 2018	Service Requests Received	Cases Closed	Formal Notices Served
2018			
January	23	56	4
February	29	17	2
March	27	44	6
2017			
January	26	31	0
February	43	29	0
March	36	72	0
April	53	24	4
May	46	29	0
June	35	36	0
July	37	28	4
August	32	27	1
September	20	39	2
October	31	44	0
November	28	33	3
December	27	22	2
2016			
June	23	7	0
July	30	27	0
August	37	8	0
September	47	15	0
October	65	21	0
November	45	4	0
December	29	47	0
Totals	769	660	28

