

Environment and Growth Scrutiny Committee

Task and Finish Group Planning Services Review

25 April 2016v2

1 Background

A review of the Planning Service, primarily Development Management, was undertaken between February and March 2016. The outline scope, purpose and methodology for the review was presented to Environment and Growth Scrutiny Committee on 17 March. Elements of the review touched on the operation of planning committees and the respective role of Members and officers who make planning decisions on behalf of the Council. Although these issues have been considered by a task and finish group on two previous occasions in 2013 and 2015, the second review concluded with a recommendation to look again at planning committee options 6 months following the adoption of the SAMDev plan (December 2015). That time is now and the Enterprise & Growth Scrutiny committee considered that it would be useful to review these elements through the creation of a Task and Finish Group and this paper described the suggested Terms of Reference for that Task and Finish Group.

2 Task and Finish Group Objectives

1. To consider the findings of the review with respect the operation of the current Planning Committee system and to review the areas for improvement suggested in the report with particular regard to a reduction in the number of planning committees from 3 to 2.
2. To review other findings emerging from the planning review identified in Table 1 and make recommendations having regard also to the findings and recommendations of the review reported to Enterprise & Growth Scrutiny in June 2015.

3 Suggested Methodology

To review the findings and recommendations from the review of development management as detailed in Table 1 and ensure solutions are effectively implemented within the proposed timescales for the wider review improvement and implementation plan.

Table 1

Theme	Finding	Recommendation	How?	Lead Officer	When?
Planning Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ General agreement that one committee would be unworkable but two could work with effective management of change ➤ Greater clarity on delegation ➤ Greater consistency in approach needed across localities with key role of chairs/vice chairs in managing business with officers ➤ More consistent and straightforward reports for committee would help understanding and reduce resource required to produce these ➤ Site visits can be time consuming and some add little value – reserve for more complex applications and look at technological alternatives to site visits e.g. Google Earth ➤ Programme of regular learning and development activity to strengthen the relationship Members and officers 	<p>Opportunities for improving the operation of the planning committee system should be considered in the round alongside specific recommendations from the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group and the specific issues highlighted in this section are considered with a view to their effective resolution.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Head of Service should finalise the Terms of Reference with the Enterprise and Growth Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group to address the issues raised by Members in the review report. 2. The outcome of the work and any further recommendations can then be implemented by the Head of Service as necessary. 	IK with T&F Chair	See project timetable