



Committee and Date

Council

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Item

7

Public

PORTFOLIO HOLDER ANNUAL REPORT FOR PLANNING, HOUSING, REGULATORY SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT

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1. STRATEGIC PLANNING

1.1 Local Plan

Work on the Local Plan review has commenced with the completion of the Full Objectively Assessed Housing Need which sets the base level of housing need for the next Local Plan period 2016 -2036. Alongside this, work has commenced on the Economic Development Needs Assessment to ascertain a commensurate requirement for employment land allocations and jobs growth/labour force. It is anticipated that a public consultation concerning strategic options for new development will be undertaken in January / February 2017. Other critical evidence base work to support the review will commence later this year or alongside the publication of strategic options, including a review of Green Belt boundaries, a 'call for sites' to update the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and a Development Viability Study.

1.2 Appeals

Since the adoption of SAMDev in December 2015 the Planning Policy team has taken a key role in Planning Appeals to ensure SAMDev policies are interpreted correctly and upheld by Planning Inspectors. Central to this is the continued defence of the Council's 5 Year Housing Land Supply position in the face of persistent challenge from the development industry; the latest assessment published by the Council in August indicates that we have a supply of 5.97 years.

1.3 Neighbourhood Plans/Community Led Plans

The Neighbourhood Plan process is active across Shropshire, the Shifnal Neighbourhood Plan was overwhelmingly supported in a local referendum which took place on the 15th September. Other Neighbourhood Plans are under way in Market Drayton and Stoke –upon-Tern whilst a cross-border Plan is being prepared with Malvern Hills District Council for Burford/Tenbury Wells. The Community Led Planning process has also resulted in plans from Underdale/Monkmoor/Abbey wards in Shrewsbury and Hodnet Parish being brought forward for adoption by the Council. Consultation on the proposed designation of Pontesbury as a Neighbourhood Plan area is taking place in November/December.

2. STRATEGIC HOUSING

2.1 Enabling & Development

The House building sector in Shropshire continues to recover with 1,347 completions for 2015/16 compared with a low of 724 in 2011/12. This is due to a number of factors including the gradual recovery in the construction industry, lenders being more prepared to lend and progress on some of Shropshire's larger housing sites identified and brought forward through the development of the local plan.

Though encouraging, the Council recognises the wider economic benefits of helping stalled or unviable sites to come forward and has a continuing proactive and pragmatic approach to renegotiating obligations where viability issues are apparent.

The Council helps mitigate one of the principal viability issues by having an annually adjusted affordable housing target rate (10%, 15% & 20%), a rate(s) that reflect the current economic difficulties for developers and landowners and responds to the housing markets movement.

Housing completions are rewarded by Government via the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and Shropshire Council's 15/16 award was again in the top 28 of all English Councils.

As well as monitoring and continuing dialogue with developers, landowners, Registered Providers (RP's) and other building professionals relating to over 500 sites, the Enabling team also administer the highly popular and nationally acclaimed single plot exception site policy that seeks to offer those with a degree of housing need, a strong local connection and a need to remain in a rural community, the opportunity to build a home there. These homes have a restricted value, are secured for the community in perpetuity and fundamentally contribute to the continued sustainability of rural communities and contribute to about 10% of affordable housing delivery in Shropshire.

2.2 Affordable Housing Contributions

Since April 2010, Shropshire Council has required that all planning permissions for an open market dwelling contribute to affordable housing through the provision on site (depending on the site density and prevailing target rate), and/or the generation of a capital receipt (Affordable Housing Contribution – AHC). These have proved to

be a vital source of funding for affordable housing schemes in Shropshire (see Housing Capital Schemes).

As of the 31st March 2016, this policy requirement has accumulated a potential affordable housing capital pot of nearly £14.2m based upon approved implemented/unimplemented planning permissions, ring fenced for local affordable housing projects. There is a time lag before these sums are received and available for use by the Council, as it is only payable by the developer after work has begun on site.

On the 28th Nov 2014, in a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) Brandon Lewis MP stated that Councils should not seek affordable housing or other tariff type burdensome contributions from developments of 10 or less houses (5 or less in some rural protected areas). This would affect over 90% of planning applications in Shropshire and therefore our ability to deliver affordable housing on site or secure an AHC. Though this WMS was found to be unlawful and removed in July 2015, the Court of Appeal overturned that judgement and the WMS was reinstated as national policy. The Council's current position is that we can no longer automatically seek AHC on all house building planning applications.

2.3 Housing Capital Schemes

Since the Local Government Review in April 2009, Shropshire Council has been proactive in using land, capital and developer contributions collected through historic and current AHC s106 agreements to help fund Registered Providers and the private sector to develop additional affordable housing. To date, the Council has spent £6.4m to help deliver 426 new affordable homes, and allocated further funds to deliver a 122 affordable homes currently on site. Additionally a number of other schemes are under negotiation. Not only is this a much needed addition to the stock of local needs housing, it is also important to note that the total construction value of these schemes amounts to more than £62.0m of much needed investment into the local economy as well as the wider economic stimulus construction sites generate locally. The construction business sector estimates that for every £1 pound directly spent on construction, a further £3 to £4 pounds is brought into the local economy.

2.4 Community Led Housing

Following on from the Sept 2012 Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) award of £1.3m to the Shropshire Council and Marches umbrella community land trust partnership, to develop 68 homes on 5 sites across the Marches, Shropshire Council continued to support and encourage similar initiative and new development opportunities through a New Homes Bonus funded grant initiative to RP's (Providers Grant) and host local parishes (Housing Parish Grant).

The Shropshire Community-Led Housing Providers Grant recognises the additional project costs that providers of affordable housing may experience when partnering on Community-Led schemes. Developing schemes in a genuinely collaborative and engaging way is simply more time consuming than more traditional developer led approaches. The Council is also of the view that rural schemes generally cost more to deliver in terms of high-quality design, materials, service infrastructure and a lack

of opportunity for economies of scale and as such specific additional financial assistance is proposed for schemes demonstrating true community-led credentials. The Shropshire Community-Led Housing Parish Grant acknowledges the fact that as the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) applies only to open market housing, there is no direct financial “reward” to communities that have actively supported and shaped new community-led affordable housing. Plainly the principal benefit is affordable housing to meet local housing need, but the grant provides some financial reward to these communities for promoting and actively engaging with a “Community-Led” project.

The funding for these grants began in 2012/13 and continued until March 2015. Currently a budget exists for 2016/17 and a decision on funding for additional years will be considered in due course.

To date, £2.4m has been spent & allocated to fund an additional 184 homes on contracts worth over £20m. As stated before, these construction schemes add significantly to the local economy (note - these figures are inclusive to those within Housing Capital Schemes above).

2.5 Self-Build

Work continues to progress on this exciting opportunity to bring forward an identified piece of Council owned land adjacent to London Road in Shrewsbury to be developed for up to 48 self build homes. Site investigations and Highway negotiations are complete and an outline application is due for submission in September 2016 following further consultation.

Shropshire Council were one of 12 LA’s nationally to be chosen as Custom and Self Build “Vanguard” authorities by DCLG to pilot and develop a database of those keen to self-build and then seek to bring forward a site such as London Road. The feedback from the Vanguard authorities helped shape the recent Government legislation that seeks to increase this house building sector nationally from 5% to 15% of total delivery.

Shropshire Council has a budget sourced from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) to provide the necessary infrastructure and services and then sell the plots to selfbuilders. The intention is that this scheme encapsulates the complete range of self build, from the aspirational to the affordable. There is a great deal to consider in such a scheme but there are very exciting opportunities to develop this innovative market.

2.6 Challenges for 2016 - 2017

- **Right to Buy** – Right to Buy (RTB) presents a number of significant challenges for the Council, principally being the loss of affordable homes and the inability for the received receipt to provide a replacement home, particularly in rural areas. Latest industry figures indicate for every 8 homes sold through RTB only 1 is replaced. Currently the maximum “discount” a Shropshire tenant could receive is £77,000.00, this discount increases annually in line with inflation (CPI). On a rent of £90.00/week the maximum discount equates to nearly 17 years of rent paid.

The Government has through legislation extended the RTB to tenants of Housing Associations (HA). This has caused considerable concern for these private companies and registered charities as they have business, improvement and development plans based upon long term financial borrowings, borrowed against their asset base (the homes they own), clearly an initiative that diminishes that asset base and at a rate they cannot control, adds considerable uncertainty and nervousness into long term investment plans.

This is of particular concern to the Council as we have to compensate the HA in full for having to sell at a discount. This is done by having to sell the Councils own higher value housing (managed by ST&RH – ALMO) when vacant/void. At present the full methodology is undetermined.

- **Affordable Housing Contributions** – The Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP issued a Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) on 28th November announcing that Local Authorities should not request affordable housing contributions on sites of 10 units or less (and which have a maximum combined gross floor space of 1,000 m²), or 5 units or less in designated protected rural areas, the aim being to boost housing supply on smaller sites by removing “burdensome obligations”.

The scale of impacts due to the rural nature of Shropshire are profound, sites of 11 or more dwellings are the exception rather than the rule, an analysis of submitted applications between Jan 2012 and Dec 2014 (1001 applications) demonstrated that 92% (928) were on sites of 10 or less and 85% (851) on 5 or less.

- **Rent reduction** – The 1% reduction for 4 years in Council/HA rent levels has taken hundreds of millions of pounds out of local HA/ALMO development plans over the medium and long term, resulting in much curtailed development programmes.
- **Starter Homes** – The Housing and Planning Bill has introduced “starter homes” (SH) as an affordable home. There are houses to be sold at 80% of the open market value (OMV) up to max of £250k, and to first time buyers under the age of 40yrs old. The intention is that ALL sites of 10 or more houses must have 20% of the houses as SH’s. The implication of that for Shropshire is that all of our affordable housing policy requirement on a site is taken by SH’s at the expense of affordable rented. The Bill is passed, the details by regulations is not due out until Oct/Nov.
- **Affordable/Social Rent homes** – No longer funded by the Government as the funding concentrates on starter homes and shared ownership and likely to be replaced on development sites by these new initiatives.
- **Welfare Reforms** – Significant reductions in Universal Credit and Housing Benefit (HB) for families that will impact upon their ability to pay the rent. The reductions for single people under 35, means the HB is insufficient for a one bed dwelling. These factors have significance for HA’s and the Council.

3. REGULATORY SERVICES

3.1 Background

The transition of Business Support and Regulatory Service back to Shropshire Council from ip&e has resulted in the regulatory functions which include Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing moving to the Public Health Directorate from 8th July 2016. These services have a shared focus on improved outcomes for the health and wellbeing of people in Shropshire.

Officers and support staff have worked incredibly hard over the past 12 months to maintain service quality levels with a reduced resource base and increases in service demand. Savings of almost £300,000 were delivered through a redesign of the service.

3.2 Significant Service Achievements

- The team continues to respond to a high demand (over 1,300 service requests in 2015/16) for investigation into complaints of domestic nuisance, many of which are highly complex. This work links into the anti-social behaviour function which continues to be a central part of our role, working with partners to raise confidence and protect people from harm.
- The team has actively worked with partners to protect communities. An example is our contribution to the achievement of the Purple Flag status for Shrewsbury which aims to raise the standard and broaden the appeal of the town after 6pm. The Purple Flag assessors commented on a very robust partnership approach and specifically highlighted the regulatory services joint night time patrols as very good. Further work is underway with partners to address the potential tensions between the planning and licensing regime through the development of Night Time Economy Planning Guidance.
- Building on our partnership working, Integrated Community Management (ICM) is being rolled out to the Shifnal and Wem areas of Shropshire. ICM is a new approach to multi-agency working around the safer communities agenda. ICM aims to enhance partnership working around local issues and needs whilst working with communities to enable them to self-help and become less reliant on public services.
- A more robust Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy was implemented on 1st April 2015 to improve safeguarding provisions. As a result of the enhanced focus on public safety there has been an increased workload due more detailed checks being undertaken and significant time spent defending our decisions to refuse or revoke licences when challenged by unsuccessful applicants through the Magistrates and Crown Courts. A programme of safeguarding awareness training for taxi/private hire drivers has also commenced and a successful prosecution was taken against a Private Hire Operator who used an unlicensed vehicle which therefore meant he did not have the necessary insurance.
- The service continues to focus activities based on risk and evidence. As a result of that work we have prosecuted a farmer for animal welfare issues and a failure to remove carcasses in accordance with animal by-product requirements which

resulted in a suspended 18 week custodial sentence and a disqualification from keeping sheep for 10 years.

- We continue to focus on those members of the community who are most at risk from harm or exploitation. As a result we have identified and supported chronic scam victims who have not only lost large sums of money, over £100,000 in one case, as a result of being repeatedly scammed but have also suffered a detrimental impact to their health.
- The work officers carry out with food business in Shropshire (of which there are more than 3000) has resulted in a reduction in the number of complaints from members of the public regarding the standards in food businesses and an increase in the number of premises which meet the Food Standards Agency's criteria of "Broadly Compliant" with food safety legislation.

There has been a significant positive impact as a result of our work to bring empty properties back into use. The most recent high profile example is the Red Lyon pub in Whitchurch which has been transformed from an eyesore on the High Street into 11 new affordable homes and 2 new retail units. The building which has been renamed as the Victoria Hotel will be managed by Shropshire Housing Alliance (SHA) in partnership with the landlord.

4. HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICES

In the first 2 quarters of 2016/17 there were 1,093 homelessness applications of which 901 decisions were completed. Of the 901 decisions, 253 had full duty accepted and 148 had their duty discharged.

The main reasons for presenting as homeless during this period was as follows:

- 198 Parental evictions
- 150 Notice to quits
- 143 Non violent relationship breakdowns
- 133 Fleeing domestic violence
- 118 Asked to leave by other relatives or friends.

During the same 2 quarter period there have been:

- 299 households accommodated in temporary accommodation – of which 202 were accommodated in bed and breakfasts.
- 578 households contacted Housing with a need for advice and assistance – all were under threat of homelessness.
- 2233 households contacted Housing with a need for advice and assistance of those we prevented homelessness in 495 cases.

Improvements in working practices have seen a dramatic reduction in the number of households who have been in priority banding on Shropshire HomePoint for a period longer than 6 months. Ongoing joint work with registered providers as well as changes to in house practice is ongoing.

A pilot to ensure quicker throughput of households in B&B has proved to be a success with a reduction of 42 households to 27 in the first week. A dedicated officer will continue to work alongside a support worker to assist and advise these households with the aim of reducing the use of B&B to zero.

Work is ongoing to improve the 'Housing Solutions Wizard', an online self-help tool enabling clients to access personalized advice about their housing options, to produce a tailored action plan specific to their circumstances.

Housing have been involved in the peer reviews of both Staffordshire Borough Council and Stoke City Council and work has already started to prepare Shropshire Housing Services for its own peer review in 2017 and from there work to obtain Gold Standard through the 10 local challenges.

The Housing Service is now centralised in one office base on the fourth floor in Shirehall. This is in response to reduction in staff numbers to ensure Officers can work together more efficiently in a supportive environment and also reduces the need for office space and associated costs elsewhere around the county. Officers originally located outside of Shrewsbury continue to provide face to face customer appointments as required from hub locations in the County market towns to ensure continuity of service for the public throughout the county.

In partnership with Advance Housing, My Safe Home and Wrekin Housing Trust the first HOLD (Home Ownership for People with long-term Disability) property has been completed in the county. Work continues to imbed this model of work into both Housing and Adult Social Care to promote the model amongst services users. Buy in from all the major registered providers in the County has ensured this model will continue to grow.

Housing Services are currently in the process of developing responses for the DCLG's trailblazer and rough sleeper funding bids. Final entries have to be submitted by 28th Nov 2016. The hope is to be able to expand on current rough sleeper partnership working as well as enable the team to have a more prevention focused aim.

4.1 Private Sector Housing

The service is seeing a significant increase in reports of owner occupied properties which are in serious disrepair and exhibit a high number of Category 1 hazards (Housing Health and Safety Rating System). In many of these cases there are issues of hoarding which is seen as a significant contributor to poor and hazardous home environments. Housing is working closely with Public Protection, Health, Community Mental Health and Social Care services to address this issue through partnered approaches. A joint protocol is being developed for both in-house processes and those with partnering agencies.

Shropshire HeatSavers has been developed as a partnership between Shropshire Council's Private Sector Housing Team, Public Health, NHS, Age UK and Mears PLC, to identify and respond to fuel poverty, the absence of suitable forms of heating in properties occupied by vulnerable people. The Private Sector Housing team host the Shropshire HeatSavers referral hub. HeatSavers receives referrals from health professionals and trained volunteers across the county. The scheme delivers significant savings to Shropshire Council, in particular Adult Social Care as well as Health Services. The team continue to supply radiators to vulnerable clients in need during the winter months. In 2016 Shropshire HeatSavers was shortlisted for 2 Local Government Association awards.

A number of energy efficiency roadshows were undertaken throughout the county using the data collated from the County's market towns. This will lead to more in-depth work prior to the next winter period.

4.2 Disabled Adaptations

By the end of October 2016 the total number of DFG (Disabled Facility Grant) referrals received by Private Sector Housing was 182. Of these there have been 122 approvals and of those 99 completions. Spend to date is £816,957.

The Occupational Therapist's (OTs) and DFG officers continue to work closely together for the benefit of service users. Work is ongoing regarding end-to-end monitoring of the DFG process to include the processes undertaken by Occupational Therapists, Private Sector Housing and Mears (Home Improvement Agency). The aim is to work together as one team to improve the service and journey of the client.

The Home Improvement Agency, HandyPerson Service and Independent Living Centre contracts have been contracted on a 2 plus 1 basis as of 1st September 2016. The team look forward to more collaborative working.

4.3 Housing Support & Contracts

Community Housing Services has successfully appointed new contracts for the Home Improvement Agency, HandyPerson Service, Independent Living Centre, Rough Sleepers Outreach Service and Shropshire Housing Advice and Prevention Scheme. This has resulted in significant savings for Shropshire Council and improved service design and delivery.

A detailed business case has been submitted for the retention of Accommodation-Based and Floating Support funding which expires in April 2017. The aim is to re commission these contracts and Housing Service is continuing to work closely with the two consortia (Shropshire Support Partnership and Sustain Consortium) to ensure ongoing partnership working and future development of the service.

Housing Services are working closely with Children's Services to redesign accommodation for young people in the county. It is hoped this will be completed by the end of 2016. An ideas workshop is taking place at the end of November with guest presentations from agencies outside of Shropshire as well as in house data analysis of current trends.

A new Telecare and Assistive Technology Pilot is being developed in conjunction with Adult Social Care. The aim is to tie in the work undertaken through Adult Social Care, Housing and Occupational Therapists to develop an institution of assistive technology.

4.4 Shropshire HomePoint

Shropshire HomePoint, the county's choice-based lettings scheme provides a one stop customer focused solution to meet the increasing needs and high aspirations of the people of Shropshire. Responsible primarily for operating the county's Housing Register, Property Register and Mutual Exchange Register, the Service is recognised as one of the most effective and efficient in the country, with record performance and largely same day / next day processing of workloads.

Shropshire HomePoint is currently developing an innovative real-time automated Dashboard and ScoreBoard Performance and Data Management System.

In 2015/16 over 1,696 applicants and their families were rehoused through Shropshire HomePoint and many more were helped to find alternative housing solutions.

5. WASTE MANAGEMENT

Shropshire Councils waste management services are provided through a 27 year PFI Integrated Contract with Veolia Environmental Services Shropshire which covers collection, transport, treatment and disposal of municipal waste. The contract began in 2007.

5.1 Collections

The collection service is in three parts, refuse, dry recycling (paper, glass, metals and plastics), and compostable waste. With approximately 135,000 properties in the county and each waste stream being collected once per fortnight, this means over 10.5 million collections per year. In terms of performance under the contract, results have generally been good. The number of missed collections has been consistently low. The figure for the recycling and composting rate for 2015/16 is yet to be finalised but will be around 51%.

In April 2016 Veolia and the Council reached agreement over a package of changes aimed at increasing the recycling rate and reducing the overall cost of the waste service. The package included three key changes to the kerbside collection service.

The first was an extension of the existing food waste collection service to cover the Shrewsbury area. This was implemented in June 2016, and enables Shrewsbury area residents to add food waste to their garden waste bins as happens in the North and South Shropshire areas. Leaflets explaining how to use the service were delivered to each household, along with a kitchen caddy and starter roll of caddy liners. The food waste and garden waste mixture is sent for In-Vessel Composting at the Agripost facility near Ford. The food waste collections will be extended into the Bridgnorth and Oswestry areas after the construction of an IVC facility which will be the final piece of infrastructure built under the PFI contract with Veolia.

The other changes to the collection service are both associated with dry kerbside recycling and will be rolled out across the county in 5 phases from October 2016. Cardboard will be added to the list of materials that are accepted, and this will be collected with paper in a 75 litre reusable sack, and the other recyclable materials (glass, plastics, and metal containers) will be collected together in boxes, mixed in whatever way the residents find convenient. The rollout timetable for this new service is given below.

Area	Start Service
South Shropshire	5 December 2016
Oswestry	6 February 2017
Bridgnorth	27 February 2017

5.2 Household Recycling Centres (HRC's)

Veolia operate 5 HRCs in the county where residents can bring their household waste for recycling or disposal. These can be found in Shrewsbury, Whitchurch, Oswestry, Bridgnorth, and Craven Arms and together they have received around 35,000 tonnes of waste in the last year. They also act as transfer stations for the waste brought in by the collection service as well as litter and road sweepings from the Councils Street Cleansing contractor Ringway. Over 30 different waste streams are segregated for recycling at each site with an average 54% recycling and composting rate for last financial year, excluding soil and rubble. This shows an improvement on the 52% for the 2014/15 year.

Work on an extension to the Shrewsbury HRC was completed in March as part of the Energy Recovery Facility development. The extension has increased the overall size of the site by around 50% and has enabled some material streams to be moved to a more appropriate position outside the covered area, including asbestos, plasterboard, soil and rubble. This has in turn freed up more space in the indoor section of the site for other materials.

5.3 Battlefield Energy Recovery Facility

On September 10th 2016 the Battlefield ERF will have completed its first full year as an operational contract facility. The main outputs from the plant are electricity, sufficient to power 10,000 homes via the national grid, and ash, which is recycled via use as an aggregate in the construction industry.

The first planned maintenance shutdown was carried out in January 2016 and was completed in 11 days against an expected 15 days. Fine tuning of various processes was completed during this time and this has resulted in the plant exceeding targets for availability and electricity output.

Emissions from the plant are monitored continually by Veolia and the Environment Agency. The information is also publicly available at

<http://www.veolia.co.uk/shropshire/facilities-services/facilities-services/energywaste/battlefield-emissions-air-data>

6. PLANNING SERVICES

Planning Services

The Planning Service has experienced a number of key changes in the last 12 months. These include structural changes arising from the return to Shropshire Council from secondment to IP&E, and the disaggregation of the former Business Support & Regulatory Services from June this year. As a consequence Planning Services are now separate from Public Protection regulatory functions and sit within the Places & Enterprise Directorate alongside Strategic Planning, Economic Growth, Broadband and Property functions. The service will report through to Gemma Davies

the new Head of Economic Growth who will start her role with Shropshire Council in the new year.

The Planning Services functions include Development Management, Building Control, Natural & Historic Environment Teams, Land Charges, Street Naming & Numbering, Local Land & Property Gazeteer and Planning Obligations Monitoring.

Development Management

A thorough internal review of the Development Management function was undertaken early in 2016. The process of delivering sustainable development across the County can be challenging and controversial, it is time sensitive and involves a wide range of stakeholders who may have different objectives, it also lies at the heart of the council's broader aspiration to deliver sustainable economic growth. The review acknowledged that planning performance had been impacted by a perfect storm of circumstances, downward pressure on resources and public sector cuts coinciding with economic recovery and a significant number of speculative planning applications prior to the adoption of the SAMDev site allocation plan in December 2015. Temporary additional resource continues to support the team and a series of recommendations and learning points from the review have been identified. These have been prioritised for action and are being addressed through an implementation plan.

Planning processes are time sensitive and the Government has aligned its performance measures with those adopted by Shropshire a number of years ago, with the primary focus on measuring the percentage of applications determined in a time frame agreed with the applicant. This measure is qualitative in that it is a reflection of the requirement established in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 187 to work proactively with applicants to secure positive outcomes where possible.

Planning performance had suffered through the first two quarters of 2015/16 but with additional resource improved significantly in the first quarter of 2016/17 with over 80% of major planning applications, 84% of minor applications and 94% of other applications being determined in an agreed time frame. Overall 92% of planning applications are approved reflecting the effort placed on resolving issues prior to determination of an application.

Another measure of success is the Council's performance with planning appeals. Government figures confirm that Shropshire received the third highest number of planning appeals nationally in 2015/16, much of this due to speculative planning applications for sites outside the SAMDev Plan and yet the Council was successful in 82% cases over this period. The number of appeals has increased from 64 in 2013/14 to 155 cases in 15/16 and over 100 appeals received to date for 2016/17. The number and complexity of planning appeals places significant resource demands on the service.

The Council has put resource into challenging planning appeals where it is considered that an Inspector's decision is flawed and might undermine key principles of the plan. On 20th October Mrs Justice Lang heard the Council's challenge to the

Secretary of State's decision to grant planning permission at appeal for 68 dwellings on land at Teal Drive Ellesmere. The judgment handed down granted the Council's application to quash the appeal decision.

A member led Task and Finish Group is now looking at planning processes and the strategic question of how Development Management can contribute to sustainable economic growth across the County.

Building Control

Building Control provides statutory regulation, advice and added value services on behalf of the council. For Building Control this year has been one of responding to the joint pressures of continuing growth in the construction industry and operating in an increasingly competitive environment. Pressures are significant in a highly competitive environment and although income to the service has stabilised a number of staff have left due to more attractive offers from the private sector leaving the establishment team in a borderline viable position. A business case to redesign the team for future resilience has been approved and vacant posts are now being recruited to.

The building control team has this year played a key role in managing the resolution to a number of high profile cases involving dangerous structures, a statutory function of the Council including a fire damaged hotel in Alveley and a listed building near Hinstock significantly damaged by a heavy goods vehicle. As a consequence training and development for officers across the council has been provided to assist with a broader understanding of dealing with dangerous structures.

Natural & Historic Environment

This team includes building conservation, archaeology and arboricultural functions. The team has continued to process statutory functions within service standards throughout this year for works to protected trees and hedgerows as well as proposals for listed building consent and development affecting conservation areas. Officers have been proactively involved in targeted action to safeguard historic buildings and sites, projects to deliver regeneration such as Shrewsbury Flax Mill now granted planning permission, Brogyntyn Hall in Oswestry and in helping to bring forward projects where there are buildings at risk such as the Grade I listed Pitchford Hall near Acton Burnell. The team are also involved in the redevelopment of key opportunity sites in historically sensitive areas where conservation led regeneration will be a key driver for economic growth.

Land Charges

The Land Charges team operates in a competitive environment and generates fee income on a cost recovery basis for the processing of land and property searches. For 15/16 the team exceeded its income target which suggests that the property transaction market is buoyant. Notwithstanding this there is strong competition from the private sector and the resilience of the team has been stretched throughout the year.

Work is by the Land Registry to transfer statutory responsibility for the local land charges register. It remains to be seen what the impact will be for land charges provision within Local Authorities.

Street Naming & Numbering /LLPG

Street naming and Numbering is a statutory function delivered by a small team within the service. The Local Land and property Gazeteer function is responsible for address matching and positional accuracy. The figures we are monitored against by Geoplace are currently: -

VOA Council Tax	99.99% matched
VOA NDR	99.98% matched
Royal Mail postal address file	99.8% matched.

Geoplace validation for August 2016 reported no recurring errors in the Shropshire and LLPG reporting Shropshire Council LLPG as Gold standard.

Planning Obligations Monitoring

As part of the changes to team structures the Planning Obligations Monitoring team is now part of the Planning Service. It is responsible for collecting and monitoring financial and non-financial planning obligations. The current position is that £3.1M of funds have been collected in 2015/16 in respect of financial obligations associated with planning applications and £22.8M is currently outstanding. This position will however change as a result of the Governments Written Ministerial Statement advising that contributions should not be sought for sites of 5 or less houses in designated rural areas. As a consequence applicants are now seeking to vary planning applications so as not to pay the affordable housing contribution.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)
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Mal Price – Planning, Housing Regulatory Services and Environment

Local Member

All Members

Appendices

none
