

UPDATE ON THE PLANNING MODERNISATION PLAN - PROGRESS AGAINST REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

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| Workstream: | Restructure and Resource | |
| Workstream Lead: | Jane Gowing & David Malcolm | |
| Date: | October 2023 | |
| Key Areas | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review structure (including capacity and service costs) • Recruitment and retention • HR process • Career development • Customer Engagement and Performance team | | |
| Modernisation Plan Recommendation | | |
| 1 | Review staff roles, the staff structure, and pay grades. | Good Progress |
| 2 | Support career progression. | Good Progress |
| 6 | Recruitment. | Good Progress |
| 10 | Establish new Team Leader Major Projects role and Principal Planner Major Projects role. | Complete |
| 14.1 | Recruit to the vacant Enforcement and Compliance Officer role with immediate effect. | Complete |
| 14.2 | Dedicate the borough-wide compliance role to proactive monitoring of approved plans and planning conditions and prioritise residential developments. | Good Progress |
| 17.4 | Using job adverts as a promotional tool to showcase the borough as an attractive place to live visit and work. | Complete |
| 19 | Consider establishing, through the restructure, a 'Planning Transformation, Customer Engagement and Performance' team. | Good Progress |

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| Workstream: | Systems and Processes | |
| Workstream Lead: | Peter Hooley | |
| Date: | October 2023 | |
| Key Areas | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New IT system implementation • Validation Action Plan • Recruitment Frameworks • Document, website and letters review • Consultee processes review • Workflow, process review • Section 106 review | | |

| Modernisation Plan Recommendation | | |
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| 11 | Use alternative recruitment frameworks when posts can't be filled via Comensura. | Started |
| 14 | Adopt a proactive enforcement monitoring and compliance approach: | Good Progress |
| 14.4 | Ward Councillors and residents to be updated in writing throughout residential development construction. | To be commenced |
| 15 | Write to major housebuilders operating in the borough to advise that development conditions and approved plans will be proactively monitored in future. | To be commenced |
| 22 | Business Continuity Risks - identify and address potential problems early and escalate risks. | Complete |
| 23 | Risk Registers - ensure business continuity risks feature in the service, directorate, and corporate risk registers as appropriate. | Good Progress |
| 25 | In support of a one council approach - Elected Members and officers should work together to resolve service problems. | Good Progress |
| 26.1 | Work with other in-house council teams, such as Communications officers, Democratic Services, Regeneration, and the Legal Team: | Good Progress |
| 26.6 | Review the government's digitalisation agenda. | Started |
| 29 | Establish a triage system. | Good Progress |
| 30 | Managing enforcement complaints - introduce a process for keeping ward Members and complainants up to date regarding alleged breaches of planning control. | Started |
| 31 | GDPR Compliance - immediately review and update procedures and processes to ensure compliance. | Good Progress |
| 32 | IT Systems Project - review governance, risks, capacity, and managerial responsibility for the IT Systems project as a matter of urgency. | Good Progress |
| 33 | Preparing decision reports - update the list of standard planning conditions to help with more efficient decision making. | Good Progress |
| 34 | Improve the quality of planning submissions - establish and review protocols. | Started |
| 35 | Signing off planning decisions - review and implement an improved planning application sign off procedure. | To be commenced |
| 36 | Member involvement in the planning process. | Good Progress |
| 37 | Improve links between planning and the contact centre. | Good Progress |

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| 38 | Reduce the number of site visits - appoint one FTE officer for a fixed-term to secure photographic and video information for DM and other specialist officers. | Complete |
| 39 | Re-introduce a full pre-planning application service - including use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) once the backlog of applications has been cleared. | Started |
| 41 | Avoid duplication across multiple services - reiterate to applicants and agents that contact should not be made with consultees, and they should wait until the application is allocated to a planning officer. | Complete |
| 46 | Encourage staff who validate applications to seek advice and support from DM officers and specialist staff. | Good Progress |
| 50 | Reduce the number of doorways into the service by actively promoting the use of the DM planning enquiry mailbox. | Good Progress |
| 51 | Update site notices and neighbour notification letters so that customers are directed to the mailbox only. | Started |
| 55 | Re-introduce a planning help desk service. | Started |
| 58 | Proactively seek customer feedback via a dedicated mailbox. | To be commenced |
| 61 | Ensure clear and consistent protocols across the DM service for consulting on amended plans. | Complete |
| 62 | Review the timescales for elected member 'Call In' and align with neighbour consultation timescales as far as practically possible. | Started |
| 67 | Committee Chairs and officers to review the planning committee protocols together. | Started |
| 69 | Establish a Member / Officer group to take forward a more detailed review of issues relating to process of S106 planning obligations. | Complete |
| 75.3 | Officers and Planning Committee Chairs to review committee proceedings with officers and Planning Committee Chairs to minimise duplication and time and make better use of staff resources. | Good progress |

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| Workstream: | Customer Experience and Comms | |
| Workstream Lead: | Jane Gowing | |
| Date: | October 2023 | |
| Key Areas | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Plan • Website- customer information • Complaints and complaint pilot • Correspondence –standard letters update • Celebrating the Service • Promoting Cheshire East • Contact Points | | |
| Modernisation Plan Recommendation | | |
| 14.3 | Issue a press release promoting the Enforcement and Compliance role. | Started |
| 16 | Improve the relationship with all housebuilders operating in the Borough, working with them to resolve local issues. | To be commenced |
| 17 | Improve the image of the Service internally and externally by: | |
| 17.1 | Celebrating individual and team successes. | Started |
| 17.2 | Developing a Communications Plan for the Planning Service. | Good Progress |
| 17.3 | Further promote the work of the planning enforcement team and use media to raise awareness of what the team can and cannot enforce. | Good Progress |
| 17.5 | Highlight how the planning service helps facilitate economic, health and sustainability benefits for residents, businesses, and visitors. | Started |
| 18 | Utilise staff connections with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and LGA. | Started |
| 49 | Establish and maintain a clear, transparent, customer focus which effectively manages customer complaints. | Good Progress |
| 53 | Design an interactive 'Day in the Life of an Application' tool. | To be commenced |
| 54 | Work with corporate communications to update the website and planning application acknowledgement letters to better explain the backlog issues. | Complete |
| 56 | Review the messages and information provided to customers post validation and pre planning officer allocation. | Good Progress |
| 59 | Work with the Contact Centre to review the potential for using webchat. | To be commenced |
| 60 | Establish a 'one point of contact' for Ward Councillor, Parish and Town Council and MP enquiries. | Started |
| 68 | Establish a clearly laid out planning application process for engaging with committee Members, ward Councillors, Parish, and Town councils. | Started |
| 73 | Seek feedback from Councillors, Parish and Town Councils on the format, frequency, and content of the planning newsletters. | Started |

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| 75.2 | Officers to engage Members in the decision process earlier, including at pre application stage to help alignment with the Corporate Plan and Local Plan Strategy. | Started |
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| Workstream: | Performance and Governance | |
| Workstream Lead: | David Malcolm | |
| Date: | October 2023 | |
| Key Areas | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application Backlog • Performance Scorecard • Robust performance management systems • S106 / CIL • Short term capacity needs • Decision making review and analysis • Best practice and Benchmarking | | |
| Modernisation Plan Recommendation | | |
| 5 | Consider introducing a lead Planning Transformation, Customer Engagement and Performance role. | Started |
| 7 | Short-term capacity needs. | Complete |
| 8 | Appoint 2 x 0.5 FTE fixed-term officers to erect site notices. | Complete |
| 9 | Review the Ringway Jacobs contract - to provide additional specialist flood risk and drainage advice to the service. | Complete |
| 26.2 | Maximise networking opportunities with other council planning teams. | Good Progress |
| 26.3 | Set up a Cheshire & Warrington Chief Planner's Forum in consultation with subregional colleagues. | Started |
| 26.4 | Learn from LGA Peer Challenges and independent reviews of other LPA's. | Started |
| 26.5 | Observe and learn from other Councils' online planning committee meetings. | To be commenced |
| 26.8 | Consider the role of champions in the transformation board and modernisation plan. | Complete |
| 26.9 | Identify another LPA which has introduced the same IT System as that currently being implemented at CEC. | Good Progress |
| 40 | Quality of decisions - undertake an analysis of why appeals have been allowed by the Planning Inspectorate and learn from these decisions – both officers and elected Members. | Started |
| 42 | Establish a robust performance management process to Monitor, measure, and report: | Good Progress |
| 42.1 | The number of Extensions of Time's applied verses number of decisions in that period (broken down by application type). | Started |
| 42.2 | The percentage of applications dealt with under delegated powers to officers. | Started |

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| 42.3 | Number of appeals made to the Secretary of State percentage allowed by Planning Inspectors (including percentages where committee decision was made contrary to officer recommendation). | Started |
| 42.4 | The number of enforcement complaints received, investigated, and found to be non-compliant. | Started |
| 42.5 | Customer satisfaction data (Brighter Futures Customer Experience Project Manager to help identify performance measures). | Started |
| 42.6 | Number of applications determined invalid upon receipt by the planning support team. | Started |
| 42.7 | Number of applications determined invalid upon receipt by the planning officer. | Started |
| 42.8 | Applications over 26 weeks. | Started |
| 42.9 | All S106 decisions and spend on a quarterly basis. | Started |
| 43 | Develop and publish a list of accredited agents to drive up quality of planning application submissions. | To be commenced |
| 44 | Pilot a 'fast track' validation service so it is ready to launch once the planning backlog has been reduced. | To be commenced |
| 45 | Monitor performance of planning applications validations. | Started |
| 52 | Establish a Cheshire East Planning Partnership (Stakeholder Forum). | To be commenced |
| 76 | Develop the Modernisation Plan. | Good Progress |
| 77 | Establish a Planning Service Transformation Board. | Complete |
| 78 | Temporary Planning Services Review Lead to continue to support the modernisation process reporting directly to the Executive Director of Place. | Complete |

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| Workstream: | Training and Development |
| Workstream Lead: | Tom Evans |
| Date: | October 2023 |
| Key Areas | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and Development Plan • Staff Development • Member Training • Joint staff and member training • External training (e.g. Town and Parish Council) • CEC cross cutting strategies and plans training (e.g. EDI Strategy) | |

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| 3 | Develop and grow staff; establish a Built Environment Talent Academy. | To be commenced |
| 4 | Learning sessions facilitated by specialist staff - specialist subjects. | Started |
| 12.1 | Consider how and where is best to create an environment of on-the-job training and learning. | Started |
| 12.2 | Think about how and where is best to support colleagues with tricky or challenging conversations with applicants, agents, and objectors. | Started |
| 13 | Join in with corporate team conversation toolkits at team meeting level. | Good Progress |
| 26 | Embrace and welcome a culture of collaborative learning and working: | Good Progress |
| 28 | The service to work with the RTPi Women's Network to support a culture of inclusivity and diversity. | To be commenced |
| 48 | Provide training including shadowing planning officers, urban design and conservation staff for staff validating planning applications. | Good Progress |
| 57 | Ensure all staff receive the corporate customer care training. | Started |
| 63 | Ensure Members are aware of the way central government monitor the quality of decisions and the consequences to the council if the numbers exceed the parameters acceptable to central government. | Good Progress |
| 64 | Provide training for members on the Councillors Planning Code of Conduct as set out in CEC Constitution Chapter 4 Part 4. | Complete |
| 65 | Review the enforcement policy together, via joint Officer / Member group. | Started |
| 66 | Officers and Members work together to establish a common understanding of the Local Plan Strategy and the government's future planning reforms. | Good Progress |
| 70 | Improve training for Members, Parish, and Town Councils. | Good Progress |
| 71 | Enforce mandatory planning training for Councillors who determine planning applications. | Complete |
| 72 | Planning Committee Members to observe other council planning committees. | To be commenced |
| 74 | Establish new and refresher training programme for Councillors including the following topics, to be facilitated by external providers where necessary and to include case studies: | Started |
| 74.1 | Principles of planning law, material considerations, planning conditions, legal agreements, probity in planning, pre-applications, lobbying, bias, pre-determination and pre-disposition, understanding of different roles and decisions (eg. Council as landowner and project sponsor V that of the LPA). | Complete |
| 74.2 | Key policies of the Local Plan Strategy, explaining what they relate to. | Started |

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| 74.3 | Development Management – follow the journey of a planning application, planning enforcement. | Started |
| 74.4 | Encourage peer networking opportunities for Members, such as through the LGA. | To be commenced |
| 75 | Improve the effectiveness of planning committees as decision-making forums, this could be helped by: | Started |
| 75.1 | · Workshops and mentoring to improve Councillors' understanding of their role in the planning process. | Started |

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| Workstream: | Culture and Leadership | |
| Workstream Lead: | Tom Evans & David Malcolm | |
| Date: | October 2023 | |
| Key Areas | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align culture and leadership with Corporate Plan Clear vision for the service Customer focussed Business Plan and Service Delivery Collaborative working across all teams and services Clearly designated officer responsibility and accountability Hybrid working practices | | |
| Modernisation Plan Recommendation | | |
| 12 | Review the business needs of the service in the context of the corporate approach hybrid working. | Good Progress |
| 12.3 | Consider how to get a 'happy medium' between home / office working in the interests of the business needs and the customer. | Good Progress |
| 12.4 | Be consistent across comparable teams. | Good Progress |
| 20 | Ensure strong leadership and vision for the planning services. | Good Progress |
| 21 | The Service Director and Head of Planning to take ownership and accountability. | Complete |
| 24 | Customer Focus - ensure a culture of customer-focused service delivery. | Good Progress |
| 26.7 | Identify additional Brighter Futures Champions from the service. | Started |
| 27 | Adopt a 'one-team' approach across the planning services to resolving challenges. | Started |
| 47 | Improve links between planning support, DM, and environmental planning teams. | Good Progress |