

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the **Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration**
held on Monday, 7th October, 2013 in Committee Suite 1 & 2, Westfields,
Middlewich Road, Sandbach CW11 1HZ

PRESENT

Councillor D Stockton.

Councillors in attendance:

Councillor B Livesley and A Thwaite.

Officers in attendance:

I Bunn – Building Control Manager

C Foreman – Democratic Services Officer

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Groves.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Stockton declared that he had been Cabinet Support Member at the time of the review.

6 PUBLIC SPEAKING TIME/OPEN SESSION

No members of the public were present.

7 REVIEW OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT - TASK AND FINISH GROUP FINAL REPORT

A report submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee on 14 June 2012 had recommended a number of management actions following the internal audit report into the "Waste Transfer Station" (Lyme Green). As part of that report action B7 recommended that a task and finish group on Planning Enforcement be established, with the Environment & Prosperity Scrutiny Committee subsequently agreeing the terms of reference for the group. That review had now been completed; the report highlighted the work undertaken and sought the agreement of the Portfolio Holder to its recommendations.

The review group considered that the recommendations now made would contribute to the provision of a clear, organised approach to the planning enforcement service, aiding all those involved in the making of accurate and effective decisions. They included the development of a new policy that would lead to the development of a suitable management framework providing transparency in the decision making process, allow consistency and fairness whilst helping members to monitor decisions taken.

The review group considered that tackling the key issues of performance management, public relations and working practices would build a proactive enforcement service that would be a key component in an effective planning function.

RESOLVED

That support be given to the recommendations laid down within Section 2 of the Environment and Prosperity Policy Development Group Planning Enforcement Review report, as shown below: -

1. That a revised planning enforcement policy/protocol be developed and implemented. This policy/protocol shall reduce the current 4 priorities to a more relevant 3 which shall include the following;
 - **High Priority cases**
Initial Assessment should be made the same day
 - **Medium Priority cases**
Initial Assessment should be made within 5 working days
 - **Low Priority cases**
Initial Assessment should be within 15 working days
2. The service should be encouraged and designed to operate as a single team working across the whole region, thereby creating a culture of case management within the enforcement team, bringing together the responsibility for enforcement with the professional officers of the team. A structure should be developed to provide clear decision making processes, with appropriate delegation to a single lead officer.
3. Relationships with other services should be further developed to enhance service delivery, with particular emphasis on the development of a service level agreement between the planning enforcement function and the legal services functions. To embrace this approach consideration should also be made to the facility of sharing database information directly between services and providing opportunities for members of the enforcement team to comment on the proposed planning conditions.
4. New performance reporting measures as detailed within the appendix shall be included within normal day to day practices, with a summary report provided to Council half yearly.
5. Improved customer interactions through the website as indicated within the appendix table reference per.005.
6. The provision of technical support staff to support the planning enforcement team should be made available.
7. The service should be encouraged to improve the use of technology, moving towards a paperless environment where possible and working to adopted operations procedures.

8. The inclusion within the corporate calendar for regular training and briefing sessions for all elected members relating to the planning enforcement function.
9. The service lead will require the development of a service culture, improving customer relationships.
10. The initial performance target of 8 weeks should be considered as a business ambition when dealing with complaints.
11. Progress of complaints should be reported or made available to members at key stages of the investigation.
12. Consideration to any ICT issues should be treated as a matter of priority.

Measures considered appropriate to the achievement of the above were highlighted within the table of the appendix to the Task and Finish Group report.

The meeting commenced at 10.30 am and concluded at 10.40 am