

REVIEW OF THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLICISING AND DETERMINING PLANNING APPLICATIONS - UPDATE REPORT

Report of the:	Head of Place Development
Contact:	Mark Berry
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Annexes/Appendices (attached):	Annexe 1 – Progress Schedule January 2017
Other available papers (not attached):	Report of the Scrutiny Review Task Group on the Administrative Arrangements for Publicising and Determining Planning Applications – April 2016.

Report Summary

This report updates Members on the progress made to-date in implementing the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review Task Group on the Administrative Arrangements for Publicising and Determining Planning Applications. It shows that good progress has been made and that nearly all actions have been completed. The Committee is recommended to note the report, to refer the telecommunications masts policy to the Head of Property to finalise and to undertake a customer satisfaction survey as and when resources allow.

Recommendation (s)

- (1) That the achievements on the outstanding items referred from the April 2017 meeting be noted.**
- (2) That the review of the Council's policy on telecommunications masts sited on Council land, be taken forward by the Head of Property and reported to the appropriate Committee in due course.**

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1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 An effective planning system supports all of the key priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Review and its recommendations therefore support delivery of that plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Audit, Crime & Disorder and Scrutiny Committee held on 5 February 2015, the Committee agreed that it wished to undertake a review of the administrative arrangements associated with the publication and determination of planning applications during 2015/16.
- 2.2 The Committee agreed the scope of its review in April 2015. It agreed that the investigation should focus on planning administrative processes which supported the publication and determination of validated planning applications, particular reference to be paid to public holiday periods such as Easter and Christmas. Applications concerning telecommunications were included within the scope of the review. Actual planning decisions made or impending were excluded from the review.
- 2.3 The Committee agreed that a task group should be appointed to undertake the investigation. Three Members were appointed in June 2015. Investigation work commenced in October 2015 and a report relaying the results of the investigation was presented to the Committee in April 2016.
- 2.4 That Committee approved that report and noted that a progress update on the implementation of the recommendations contained within the Task Group's report would be presented to a future meeting.
- 2.5 The first update was taken to the 11 April 2017 committee meeting when it was noted that many of the recommendations had been implemented. A further update was requested on the remaining items and this report does that.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 **Annexe 1** shows those items that had been completed in April 2017 and those which have been completed since. Pending the outcome of the Planning Committee meeting on 18 January 2018, the only outstanding items relate to the Council's policy on siting telecommunications masts on Council land and a customer satisfaction survey respectively.

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- 3.2 The telecommunications mast policy relates to the prohibition of new masts on Council land within exclusion zones around recreational areas and schools. The policy has been little used since its inception in 2006. The origins of it were around a proposed controversial installation on Court Recreation Ground and the then Telecommunications Sub-Committee resolved to adopt the policy in the light of the objections received at that time.
- 3.3 Reviewing the policy has not been prioritized following the departure of the Planning Improvement Manager. There has been no real issue in recent years as the number of proposals for new telecommunications masts has declined markedly and a lot of pre-consultation takes place under the Code of Best Practice on Mobile Network Development in England. The only site that has caused controversy in recent times is one on Salisbury Road next to Auriol Park. Otherwise, no issues have arisen.
- 3.4 It is recommended that the policy is reviewed by the Head of Property and that a report is made to the relevant Committee in due course.
- 3.5 The customer satisfaction survey has not yet been undertaken. However, the Peer Review in September 2017 engaged with many internal and external customers and stakeholders. It would be appropriate to undertake the customer satisfaction survey later in 2018, subject to the necessary resources being available.

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 The completion of nearly all the recommendations emerging from the review has been done within existing budgets. The remaining item on telecommunications masts can also be done without any additional resource. The customer satisfaction survey can be undertaken once resources allow.
- 4.2 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

5 Legal Implications (including implications for matters relating to equality)

- 5.1 The revised Member protocol for Planning and the associated training will be important in enabling the Local Planning Authority to demonstrate that it continues to have proper procedures in place to administer the planning process lawfully and in accordance with the Council's Corporate Values.
- 5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 There are no sustainability or community safety implications arising from this report.

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7 Partnerships

- 7.1 The Local Planning Authority's engagement with its partners is intrinsic to a successful planning process. Implementation of the Scrutiny Review Task Group's recommendations will support this.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 There are no significant risks associated with this report.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 The Scrutiny Review Task Group's recommendations of April 2016 have mostly been implemented. The planning service has been improved in consequence. The only remaining items are the review of the telecommunications mast exclusion policy and the implementation of a customer satisfaction survey. The former can be referred to the Head of Property to review and report to the relevant committee as necessary. The survey can be implemented as resources allow.

Ward(s) Affected: (All Wards);