

Epsom and Ewell Planning Improvement Action Plan 2017

Key Theme	Objectives	Responsibility	Completion	Resources	Progress	Priority H/M/L	RAG
Overall: Agreeing key accountabilities – Service, corporate and committee level.	Adopt this Improvement Plan	MB	13.11.17	MB with support from LT, Dem. Serv's, engagement with staff and members beforehand.	Committee meeting scheduled for 13.11.17 Report prepared and draft improvement plan drafted 31.10.17	Critical	
	Secure all necessary resource to deliver this action plan	KB/MB	30.11.17	KB with support from LT and PAS. Identify additional short-term assistance for MB in delivery.	KB/SY/MB discussion 23.10.17 Confirmed that current temporary resource can be sustained until 20% fee uplift confirmed 24.10.17	Critical	
	Secure and carry a productivity and resource review of DM	KB/MB	Subject to availability	Possibly PAS supported by EEBC Officers. MB to identify options and agree with KB.		High	
1. Procedural changes to the DM process	Develop template for PPA-style project plan for all major applications.	AC	09.11.17	AC with support from MB		Critical	
	Start using template for all major applications setting out key dates and charting progress against them.	AC	From 13.11.17	DM Team to maintain and share with Chair/Vice Chair fortnightly		Critical	
	Investing more in the pre-app advice stage – Recruit additional Support Officer for DM.	MB	November 2017	Secure additional DM capacity initially through recruiting additional agency support using additional 20% fee income until the Productivity and Resource Review is completed.	Temporary resource agreed until Christmas.	Critical	
	Weekly DM team triage /surgery between DM team members and Head of Place Development to prioritise work, having regard to financial considerations, and other factors	MB/AC	From 13.11.17	Achieved through re-prioritisation of time.		Critical	
	Review call-in and delegation procedures to support strategic role of Committee.	AC with support from SY	14.12.17	Report to Planning Committee. Additional assistance from Legal and Democratic Services esp. following SY's departure.		Medium	
	Managing appeals – project plan / project teams , based on timetable for the appeal	AC	Triggered by next appeal	Template to be created. Project team to include all relevant officers (i.e. anyone undertaking any tasks in connection with the appeal – usually the case officer, manager, maybe legal (especially where inquiry or s106 will be involved), and maybe customer services.		High	

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	Managing of major appeals – Management to vet all evidence to be submitted beforehand.	AC	From next major appeal.	AC with Case Officers		High	
	Inform relevant members and officers when appeals are received as well as when they are determined. Produced in time for fortnightly Chairman's briefing.	AC	From 01.11.17	AC using available sources – possibly on a shared drive and use of VIT.		Critical	
	Promote use of Planning Performance agreements on major applications.	MB and DM Team	Immediately	Use additional income from PPAs to supplement resources as required. Speak to RAC Club.		High	
	Pre-app service that is properly resourced and involves appropriate stakeholders and Members.	AC and DM Team	From November 2017	Secure additional DM capacity initially through recruiting additional agency support using additional 20% fee income until the Productivity and Resource Review is completed.	Temporary resource agreed until Christmas	Critical	
	Re-assess unit cost for minor/other applications and use information to inform the design of the application process and prioritisation of work.	MB	Feb/March 2018			High	
2. Tighter management of the Planning Committee process	Member Training Sessions to promote the highest levels of governance and efficiency in decision-making.	MB/FC	Jan/Feb 2018	PAS support – re-run previous training with adjustments?		High	
	Bring forward Chairman's call-over to between the draft and final stages of report preparation.	MB with support from Democratic Services and Chair/Vice Chair	Discuss timing with SD and agree implementation date. Trial in December and then from January Committee – following revised Member protocol below.	Simply re-schedule.		High	

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	Revised Planning Member protocol to reflect the procedural and cultural changes in this plan and current best practice.	SY with support from AC	Report to December Planning Committee?	SY before he goes		High	
	Advise Members to seek support from officers in framing potential grounds for refusal Early engagement - ask for advice in advance (where possible) on legality enforceability and reasonableness	SY with Chair	From December Committee	Monitoring Officer to instigate. Chair of Planning to reinforce. PAS support and internal officers' input to training. Head of Place Dev to sustain.		High	
	Implement "cooling-off" period by deferral of potential Member overturns.	Chair/Vice Chair	Immediately	Close liaison between Chair and lead planning and legal professionals at Committee. Already in operation but needs to be maintained.		Critical	
	Review public speaking protocol to ensure fairness and equality to applicants and objectors. – Min 48-hour's-notice?	SY/Dem Serv's	Report to Planning Committee in December?	Dem Serv's officers and report		High	
	Reduce front-led presentation at Committee but ensure that Officers exude confidence and authority and are united and that plans photos are available.	MB with support from AC	From November Committee	Training session with Officers on 1 November 2017. Use of Nicci Bonifanti for more professional training.		high	
	Send e-mail reminding members to treat expert advisers with respect	Chair	Before November Planning Committee	Chair		High	
	Discuss timing of committees with members and consider ways to achieve shorter meetings and whether to change start time.	MB with Chair/Vice Chair	Report to December Planning Committee	Dem Serv's and Member's time. Potential saving in time.		Medium	
	Officers post Committee briefing meetings on Friday morning.	MB/AC/SD	From November Planning meeting	Relevant Officers with support from Dem Serv's.		High	

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	Ensure that deadlines are met for submission of reports to Legal and Democratic Services	MB/AC	From November Planning Committee	Additional DM support mentioned above will help to add resilience and ensure that this is achieved. Productivity and Resource Review which will require some internal resource even if PAS		Critical	
	Investigate use of ModGov for planning to assist with above.	AC with support from Democratic Services	Before December Planning Committee	Assistance from colleagues in Democratic Services. Cooperation and input from Planning case officers. Period of transition will then need to be agreed if it is feasible.		High	
3. Front-loading of the DM process to include Members earlier	Schedule fortnightly Chair/Vice-Chair briefing.	MB in consultation with Chair	From early November	Officer time and Chair/Vice/Chair		Critical	
	Bespoke Ward member briefing on major planning applications to which all Committee members are invited.	AC and Case Officer	From November 2017	Requires additional support in DM funded from 20% up-lift in planning fees.	Temporary resource agreed until Christmas	High	
	Involve members in Pre-app meetings.	AC and Case Officer	From November 2017	Requires additional support in DM funded from 20% up-lift in planning fees.	Additional resource agreed temporarily until Christmas.	High	
4. Policy changes and delivery	Introduce regular briefings so that the Leadership Team can better own and support the Local Plan Review.	MB/KB	Immediately	Already scheduled.		Critical	
	Consider adopting interim policy on Affordable Housing on 10 units or less.	KJ		Interim policy written but subject to minor adjustments. Report to L&PPC		Critical	
	Agree resource plan to back up agreed Local Plan Programme	KJ with support from MB	By end of November	Plan already well advanced. Will need input from LT and formal approval from Committee.		Critical	
	Strong and transparent project management	KJ with support from MB		Regular meetings with Chair and Vice-Chair of L&PPC and briefings with LT mentioned above.		High	
	Secure high quality design: Design guidance SPD and expertise.	KJ	April 2018?	Will need concerted effort from MB/KJ with support from Urban design expertise		Medium	
	Review Height and Density Policies in 2015 DM Policies document.	KJ	April 2018?	Policy Team		Medium	

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	Re-advertise vacant heritage officer post	MB	January 2018	Re-evaluate existing vacant P/T post and, subject to the outcome of that, re-advertise using funds from 20% uplift in planning fee income.		High	
	Developing a stronger corporate narrative around need for growth through a series of Member Briefing evenings.	MB/KJ	On-going	Sustained series of Members' Briefing evenings and already embarked on the journey		Critical	
5. Cultural changes for Members and Officers	Workshop with DM team and key colleagues from other services to discuss how DM can be more integrated corporately.	MB	February 2018	Internal – AC and MB and officers from other services. Workshop with DM Team first and then with colleagues. Actions to be included within this plan.		High	
	Joint Member/Officer training to reinforce collaborative working and strengthen trust	MB	April 2018	PAS? Internal?		Medium	
	Officer Training on front-loading the DM process	MB	1 November	Internal as part of officer training session mentioned above	Officer Training session held. Need to follow-through and	Critical	
	Decision-making following principles of sound decision-making and acting in the interests of the whole Borough.	MB with support from FC/SD	Jan/Feb 2018	PAS?/Internal. Training – see below.		High	
6. Specific training needs	A well-balanced training plan including Member training on viability and making sound planning decisions and national/local trends. Learning from appeals.	MB with support from FC	December 2017	MB and Dem Serv's with PAS support		Critical	
	Substitute Members to receive induction training.	MB with support from FC	January 2018 onwards.	MB to do internal training following introduction of revised protocol.		Medium	
	In the interim inform members that only those so-trained may sub on the Planning Committee	Chair and Head of Legal	From November Planning Committee	FC and Chair		High	
	Annual appeals review – "Planning Tour"	MB and Chair	April 2018	Needs preparation by planning officers in consultation with Chair/Vice Chair. May require Saturday attendance and coach hire		Low	

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	Implement appeals review as a regular Committee agenda item.	AC with support from SD	From December Committee meeting	Ac and Dem Serv's time		Medium	
	Training Members to avoiding pre-determination and making sure that Members adhere to good practice.	MB with support from Monitoring Officer	Members training session – when?	Monitoring Officer's oversight. E-mail and from Chair linked to above-mentioned revised member protocol PAS support and internal officers' input to training.		High	
	Members to receive training regarding professional advice and explaining their rebalancing of material considerations where minded to go against it.	MB with support from Monitoring Officer	Jan/Feb	PAS support and internal officers' input to training.		High	
7. Better performance information	Introduce regular report to Planning Committee on appeal decisions (especially with regard to the two-year rolling period and quality indicator)	MB	From January 2018	Already produced for LT. Need to share more widely.		Critical	
	Regular information on new appeals to key officers and members.	AC	From January 2018	Make available in shared drive for members and officers to access.		Medium	
	Consider end-to-end performance of DM process with DM Team and then review key performance indicators to monitor.	MB/AC	By end of November 2017	DM team		Critical	
	In light of the above, review all current planning performance reporting templates and adjust standard reports as appropriate.	MB	Implement from January 2018	Support from ICT/ Access database expertise and G McT's team		Medium	
8. IT Issues	Meeting between DM team and ICT team to identify actions. Identified actions to form part of this plan as it evolves and/or feed into BPR process.	MB/PW	Identify issues November 2017 and develop action plan in January 2018	Support from ICT. Timing/funding to implement any identified actions.		Medium	