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| Committee: | Cabinet | Date: Thursday, 10 February 2022 |
| Title: | Planning Service Implementation Plan | |
| Portfolio Holder: | Councillor John Evans, Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Local Plan | |
| Report Author: | Jeanette Walsh Interim Planning Transformation Lead | Key Decision: No |

Background

1. On 19/10/21 Cabinet agreed all of the recommendations contained in the PEER Review report about planning that it had commissioned from the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA).
2. The Scrutiny Committee considered the report prior to that at the meeting of Thursday 07/10/21. At that time Cllr Evans agreed to provide a brief outline implementation plan for Scrutiny for 18 November committee and a comprehensive update would be produced in time for Scrutiny in February 2022. This would represent a progress update at the completion of the first four months of the project. That plan is attached at Appendix 1 and is to be considered at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 3 February 2022.
3. The initial estimate of the time that would be taken to implement all of the actions was six months. That timeline remains achievable and is the reason why the project final milestone is 31/03/2022. This will be altered if necessary through ongoing monitoring.
4. The original seven (7) pathways have been reduced to five (5). Members will recall that there was a Local Plan pathway which is not relevant for this piece of work and is being progressed separately. Member Development and Planning Committee have been merged. Similarly, Development Management and Development Management Operational Transformation Plan have been merged. The Enforcement and s106 Enforcement and s106 remain This is a sensible approach given the number of crossover actions.

Recommendations

5. Note progress with the actions on each of the Pathways at Appendix 1.

Financial Implications

6. Expenditure already agreed as part of the growth bid for budget year 2021-22 is continuing to be relied on for the rest of this financial year. That expenditure is £240,000 for the planning service and £140,000 for legal services. This growth is for new posts. The identified posts are two Lawyers in Legal Services, two Principal Planning Officers in Development Management, one Urban Design Officer, one Project Officer, and one

Enforcement Officer for 12 months. Progress with filling these posts is noted later in this report.

7. Vacant posts within the service are being advertised and filled as soon as they are vacant in order to minimise the expenditure on agency staff and impact on the service. Costs are agreed as part of existing budgets.

A Growth Bid for financial year 2022/2023 has been submitted in association with delivering the s106 pathway. The bid (£33,745.00 ex VAT) is agreed in principle but must be agreed as part of overall budget setting before any order can be raised. Time slots and training slots are currently being negotiated and agreed in advance of the orders being issued.

8. Most of the required actions relate to management practice, procedural changes and leadership. These are in hand and costs are being managed within existing budgets.

Background Papers

9. East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) PEER Review, Fit for Purpose Local Planning Authority and Development Management Improvement Plan.

Situation

10. Responsibility for ensuring progress and completion of the pathways to improvement rests with the Interim Director of Planning and Building Control in consultation with the portfolio holder for Planning. This will transfer to the permanent Director of Planning once recruitment is completed. The role is currently being advertised and closes on 13/02/22.
11. All of the relevant working groups and responsibilities have been established. The responsibilities have been allocated and progress is being made. Resourcing the service is a cross cutting issue and significant progress has been made with filling vacant posts, progressing immediately to advertise a role if it becomes vacant and to reduce reliance on agency staff.
12. Of the roles created, the Urban Design role is filled. One of the two Principal Planner Officer roles is filled. An offer has been made on the second Principal Planning Officer role and accepted. Pre-employment checks are under way. The Project Officer role has been filled. The temporary Enforcement Officer role (12 months) has been offered and accepted. The person is due to commence in February. The two roles created in legal have been filled temporarily whilst a second round of recruitment is underway.
13. A long vacant Team Leader (South) role which has been filled through the use of an agency person has been advertised twice since October 2021. The role was advertised in November and again over the Christmas period and into the new year. No applicants were attracted to the role. Consideration is now being given to what the options might be moving forward.

- 14 There are highlight actions to draw to members attention. For instance in Customer Interface we have now launched a six week pilot free appointment system for residents. This means direct access to a short appointment with an officer to get some on the spot advice about small schemes. For the s106 pathway the growth bid has been successful. This will allow us to set up public access to information about s106 monies. In the meantime the service has published its first Infrastructure Funding Statement which sets out the activity and expenditure on s106 across a 12 month period. Members are progressing with training and recommending changes to the constitution as they relate to the management of planning committee and the delegations. This is happening through the work of the now established Planning Committee member Working group. Data cleansing is nearing completion for the whole service and training has either taken place or is programmed to take place
- 15 Service changes and improvements are being communicated through the Member Bulletin which is issued weekly, the Parish Newsletter and by through the use of press releases as necessary.

Risk Analysis

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigating actions |
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| That the pathways as identified in the EELGA report may not be implemented | 1 | 4 | <p>All recommendations and pathways agreed on 19 October by Cabinet</p> <p>Interim Planning Transformation lead appointed in late August</p> <p>Interim Director of Planning and Building Control appointed 01/11/21.</p> <p>Recruitment for a permanent Director of Planning has commenced. Closing date is 13/02/22</p> |

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| <p>That there may be too many competing priorities for the service to action at once</p> <p>Failed recruitment for the Team Leader (South) role may have an impact on progress.</p> | <p>1</p> | <p>4</p> | <p>Work on all pathways has commenced and progress is satisfactory.</p> <p>Priority and timing for each pathway will be agreed with Interim Director of Planning and Building Control in consultation with Portfolio holder for Planning</p> <p>Options being scoped by Interim Director of Planning</p> |
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1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.