

Notes

OF AN INFORMAL MEETING OF



Listening Learning Leading

Scrutiny Committee Members

HELD ON MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 6.00 PM
THIS WILL BE A VIRTUAL, ONLINE MEETING.

This meeting was held virtually and broadcasted live. You can watch the recording here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08ZUKwg2AOw>

Present

Councillors: Ian White (Chair), Mocky Khan (Vice chair), Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Stefan Gawrysiak, Kate Gregory, Alexandrine Kantor, George Levy, Jane Murphy

Cabinet member: Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson (Planning)

Officers: Adrian Duffield, Suzanne Malcolm, Candida Mckelvey, Emma Turner

21 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Anna Badcock and David Turner. Councillors Jane Murphy and Kate Gregory were present as substitute members, respectively.

22 Declarations of interest

None.

23 Urgent business and chair's announcements

Minutes of the last meeting were for noting, as this was an informal meeting.

Chair updated the committee on the pollution and sewerage task and finish group, which had been decided as a joint group with Vale of White Horse. Chair expected this group to be established shortly.

Information requested on the process for planning appeals. Progress is on track, as agreed with Councillors Simpson and Powell. Chair reminded committee to not comment on this publicly whilst the report is being produced and the ongoing court case.

Affordable housing report – this had been moved to be in line with the updating of the Supplementary planning document on affordable housing. The work was on track for April / May 2022 before going out to consultation.

Councillors were asked to note the new Joint Scrutiny meeting on 31 January to discuss future waste services. Car park fees and charges had been moved to February.

24 Work schedule and dates for all South scrutiny meetings

No changes requested.

25 Minutes

Committee were asked to note the notes for information.

26 Public participation

None.

27 Joint Planning Enforcement Statement

Cabinet member for planning, Councillor Anne-Marie Simpson, introduced the report. Officers Emma Turner and Adrian Duffield were also present to help answer any queries. The review of process for planning enforcement had led to an updated planning enforcement statement, which was last reviewed in 2016. The SODC planning enforcement team was in the top 4% by volume in the country.

The priorities were to increase the efficiency of the team and manage workload, which had built up during the pandemic. This new approach should reduce the backlog. There should be more proactive and focussed work on developments as they are being built, and cases that were shown to be more harmful. GDPR legislation compliance had been addressed as part of this review.

There was a councillor briefing that was successful, and there will be a packet of information provided to keep councillors up to date, and so that members may brief and communicate to their wards. There will be communications around the statement – website updates, improved application form and FAQs. The timeliness and clarity this brings was beneficial to residents and allows better use of officer resource.

Committee considered the report and statement, and overall considered the content to be clear. There was discussion around workload and following procedure, with a member suggesting that this could be a green light for non-compliance if less prioritised cases were not followed up on. These points were made for officer and cabinet member to note, but the committee overall was content that this new process would be reviewed each year (the triage form and process), with the aim to review outcomes of this new process in 6 months' time.

A committee member suggested that some residents find the process secretive. Officers explained that the new planning enforcement statement brought clarity to the process. Previously, there had been false information / beliefs about what power enforcement had. Planning harm and proportionality had to be considered. This will bring about timeliness, with the backlog cleared, (later confirmed to be by June 2022), and with 2-day acknowledgement, and a 6-week response time (action to be taken), case dependent.

Councillors can get more information, but we must comply with GDPR. Officers may help councillors to provide GDPR compliant updates to residents. It was important to ensure that residents understand what enforcement can and can't do, and what the limitations are,

and the fact that it was a non-statutory function. Being in the top 4% for English planning enforcement, officers were doing a great job, and this new process should keep the service as high performing.

Discussion was had regarding traffic management – there was ongoing frustration about this, however a lot of cases were County (OCC) responsibility. The management plans tended to be broadly worded and don't meet the 6 tests of conditions for enforceability. Officers were already talking to County to improve communications to help influence the plans. Emma Turner updated the committee on recent conversations that were had to increase enforceability. Council had jurisdiction on development sites.

It was confirmed that comments made by councillors would be taken into account and will be incorporated into the FAQs.

Focus on unacceptable planning harm and major site breaches was expected from this new process. Committee were concerned about communicating updates to Parishes. They were reminded that that reporters will receive acknowledgement within 2 days, and a decision in 6 weeks, as to whether it will be pursued further or not taken further. The next stage, if unhappy, would be to complain to the council. Updates needed to be GDPR compliant, so less detail given, however the reporters will be updated at relevant stages.

Committee considered that planning conditions needed to be enforceable and should not be included if not enforceable.

Resolved:

Committee considered the content of the report including the new approach to triaging and fed back their observations to the Cabinet Member for Planning.

The meeting closed at 7.19 pm

Chair

Date

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