

STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

14 March 2017

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

Yes

Planning Service Review Update

Final Decision-Maker	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee
Lead Head of Service	Rob Jarman
Lead Officer and Report Author	Rob Jarman
Classification	Public
Wards affected	

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That the Committee notes the update on the review of the Planning service.

This report relates to the following corporate priorities:

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all – An exemplar planning service is integral to this objective, by maintaining and enhancing the built environment and public realm.
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough – An exemplar planning service will ensure developers will choose Maidstone as a location in which to invest.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee	14 March 2017
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee	8 November 2016

Planning Service Review Update

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report outlines the Planning review to date and sets out the next stages.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1A report was brought to the committee on 8th November 2016 by William Cornall, Director of Regeneration & Place for the committee to note the scope of the planning service review. This report outlined the reason for the review as:

A review of the Planning Service is required as a mechanism for continuous improvement for the Department, and also to ensure that the service provides ongoing value for money to the Council and the end user, as well as to ensure that customer expectations are met.

2.2The report also outlined the drivers for change, desired outcomes and the areas within the service that were in scope and those that were outside of the scope of the review. As per the scope outlined in November as well as the resolution of Policy and Resources in February the Planning Enforcement service will be looked at as part of the review.

2.3 In December the council invited tenders for the work and following interviews with those who submitted proposals the decision was made to appoint iESE. iESE is a not for profit social enterprise which has an excellent record of working with Local Authorities to improve their services.

2.4Members of the iESE team started work on the review on 1 February and have been at Maidstone House since 13 February. They are due to present their findings and recommendations to the project steering group on in May 2017. Below is a list of the team that are involved in this high level review.

- Lesley Kragt (iESE Project Lead)
- Debbie Bird (iESE Operational Lead)
- Heather Lumby (iESE team)
- Leanne Mills (iESE team)
- Carrie Burton (iESE team)
- Teresa Skinner (iESE team)
- Tom Starling (iESE team)

The work is also supported by the Transformation team. Tay Arnold, Planning and Development Business Manager, has also been seconded to the project 2 days a week for 6 months.

2.5. iESE's methodology is systems thinking, this means that all of their analysis is from a customer's perspective. The purpose of the review is 3 fold:

- To ensure an improved customer experience
- To Increase the capacity for staff to do more value work

- To ensure more efficient processes and service

2.6 iESE will seek to understand what works well and what gets in the way from a customers' perspective. They will also identify what helps and what hinders staff and will work closely with staff to identify good practice and better ways of working, as well as risks and issues.

- Customer demand
- Current processes
- Blockages
- Waste and impact in the system
- Customer experience
- Stakeholder engagement
- True cost of current processes

2.7 Since being on site iESE have met with managers and staff within the Planning Service and Mid-Kent Planning support to understand the work of the service and demand on the service. They have also started meeting with staff from other services and support services to understand their interactions with Planning. The next stage is to engage with stakeholders and customers including Members, parishes, other services, local authority partners and customers of the service to understand what they think about the Planning services and the opportunities for improvement.

2.8 Engagement with Members is a key area of their work. It is intended to hold a session with Members during the review. This is anticipated to occur 5th April. The proposed list of Members to be involved are:

- 5 Group Leaders
- Members of Planning Committee including substitutes
- Members of Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee including substitutes
- Members of Planning Referral Committee including substitutes

Questions have been received from Members requesting clarification on any areas of work that have either been impacted or had their timescales changed due to the ongoing review. iESE are sensitive to the timescales officers need to work to and have scheduled their interviews with staff to reflect this. Where any planning staff recruitments have been placed on hold in 16/17, the reason has always been purely budgetary. i.e. there was a significant overspend in DM which was apparent from Q1, and so selected recruitments have been delayed wherever possible, so as to help offset this overspend. To that end, there are no staff appointments or projects that have been held up as a result of the Review, with the possible exception of the exploration of a transport operators group, which SPS&T asked to be factored into the review (back in November 2016).

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 Option 1: That the Committee notes the progress of the review so far.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Option 1

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The Chairs and Vice Chairs of the two planning committees, the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive were consulted prior to the scope for the review being brought to Members for noting in November.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

6.1 All Committee Members, as outlined above, will be involved in the engagement event

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The best possible Planning service will underpin all the Corporate objectives and of course the delivery of the emerging Local Plan.	Chief Executive. Alison Broom
Risk Management	No risks identified, however if any are identified they will be compiled by the Business Improvement Team and escalated to the Director for Regeneration and Place, as project sponsor	William Cornall, Director for Regeneration and Place
Financial	The service review will evidence best practice in getting value for money and could identify opportunities for efficiencies within the service.	Director of Finance & Business Improvement
Staffing	Staff will continue to receive regular updates on the progress of the review and HR have been engaged with	Rob Jarman Head of Planning and Development
Legal	No specific issues have been identified. Legal will be engaged with as stakeholder	Legal Team
Equality Impact Needs Assessment	No specific issues have been identified.	Policy & Information Manager
Environmental/Sustainable	No specific issues have been	Rob Jarman

Development	identified.	Head of Planning and Development
Community Safety	No specific issues have been identified.	Rob Jarman Head of Planning and Development
Human Rights Act	No specific issues have been identified.	Rob Jarman Head of Planning and Development
Procurement	The external consultant was procured in accordance with MBCs policies	Section 151 Officer. Mark Green
Asset Management	No specific issues have been identified.	Rob Jarman Head of Planning and Development

8. REPORT APPENDICES

None

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None