

PROGRESS WITH IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES IN DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

CABINET – 21 JULY 2011

Report of the: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Community and Planning.

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report analyses progress with Improvement Initiatives in Development Services, in particular The Cabinet Review of Development Services (2009) (DSR) and the Sevenoaks District Council – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Partnership.

Performance is favourable when measured by the relevant criteria, namely the time taken to determine applications; progress with Local Development Framework preparation; and Value for Money.

It is recommended that subsequent to the changes already made as a result of the Cabinet Review of Development Services (2009) no further changes be considered necessary, but ongoing improvements should be carried out as part of the normal operation of the Development Services. It is also recommended that the Planning Partnership be continued.

Further service improvements will continue as part of the normal operational management of the Service.

This report supports the Key Aim of a Green Environment, protecting the District's open space and built environment and also the Corporate priority to deliver the budget and sound resource management.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. J Davison

Head of Service Head of Development Services – Jim Kehoe.

Recommendations to Cabinet : It be RESOLVED that:

- (a) Subsequent to the changes already made as a result of the Cabinet Review of Development Services (2009) no further changes are considered necessary, but ongoing improvements should be carried out as part of the normal operation of the Development Services;
 - (b) The Sevenoaks District Council – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Partnership be continued until further notice.
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Reason for recommendation: The Development Services Review, and Sevenoaks District Council – Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Planning Partnership have successfully achieved their outcomes.

Introduction

- 1 This report analyses progress with Improvement Initiatives in Development Services, in particular The Cabinet Review of Development Services (2009) (DSR) and the Sevenoaks – Tunbridge Wells Planning Partnership, which commenced in November 2008.
- 2 In brief, performance is favourable when measured by the relevant criteria, namely:- the time taken to determine applications; progress with Local Development Framework preparation; and Value for Money.

Background

- 3 The speed of processing planning applications is measured by National Indicator (NI) 157. This is important to customers of the service. The pattern of performance is set out in Table 1 below. The relevant national comparison is shown to give a benchmark of our performance relative to other Councils.

Percentage of Applications Determined with 8/13 Week Target							
National Indicator		06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	Target: National Top Quartile 2009
NI 157 (13 weeks)	A	55	65	67	86	92	81
NI 157 (8 weeks)	B	66	73	70	82	86	83
NI 157 (8 weeks)	C	82	83	82	91	93	92

- 4 (Notes:- The Top Quartile means the top 25% of Councils. NI157 (A) comprises Major Planning Applications. These are defined nationally as those where 10 or more residential units are to be constructed, (or if the number is not given, the site area is more than 0.5 hectares), and for all other uses where the floor space proposed is 1000 square metres or more, (or the site area is 1 hectare or more). NI157 (B) comprises Minor Planning Applications; 'Minor' applications are those developments which do not meet the criteria for 'Major' developments nor the definitions of Change of Use or Householder Development, for example 1-9 residential units. NI157(C) comprises Other Planning Applications. These relate to those for Change of Use, Householder Developments, Advertisements, Listed Building Consents, Conservation Area Consents and various applications for Certificates of Lawfulness.)

- 5 At the time the DSR was initiated NI performance was in the bottom quartile. As a result of the DSR changes including those to the Constitution, performance has met or exceeded its target on all indicators. The performance for 2009/2010 and 2010/11 is at a much higher level than 2008/09. The most marked improvement is with NI157 (A), the Major applications. Over 86% of these are now determined within the target time period, this is particularly important due to the large scale of investment associated with these applications.
- 6 The Local Development Framework has also shown good progress. The Core Strategy successfully progressed to adoption on 22nd February 2011. Draft plans for Allocations of land for development have already been out to public consultation and we are consulting on the Development Management policies at present.
- 7 The Council's net spending on Development Services has meanwhile reduced from £2,023,122 in 2008/2009 and £1,816,036 in 2009/2010 to a provisional outturn of £1,675,093 in 2010/2011. Future budgets indicate a further reduction in net expenditure to £1,411,426 in 2011/2012 and £1,311,426 thereafter. So good performance has been achieved whilst reducing the net expenditure.
- 8 The Council's Finance Advisory Group considered Development Services Finance in June 2011, including trends on performance and Value for Money. The Group noted the report and congratulated Development Services on their achievements.

Key Implications

Financial

- 9 No implications at this stage.

Community Impact and Outcomes

- 10 No implications at this stage.

Legal, Human Rights etc.

- 11 No implications at this stage.

Resource (non-financial)

- 12 No implications at this stage.

Value For Money and Asset Management

- 13 No implications at this stage.

Equality Impacts

- 14 None at this stage.

Sustainability Checklist

15 No implications at this stage.

Conclusions

16 Performance is favourable when measured by the relevant criteria, namely:- the time taken to determine applications; progress with Local Development Framework preparation and Value for Money.

17 It is recommended that subsequent to the changes already made as a result of the Cabinet Review of Development Services (2009) no further changes be considered necessary, but ongoing improvements should be carried out as part of the normal operation of the Development Services. It is also recommended that the Planning Partnership be continued.

18 Further service improvements will continue as part of the normal operational management of the Service.

Risk Assessment Statement

19 By monitoring progress with changes in the Services, we have reduced risk arising from any unexpected impact of the changes that were made through the DSR or the Planning Partnership.

Background Papers: Council Report – 16/12/2010

Cabinet Report – 28/10/2010

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