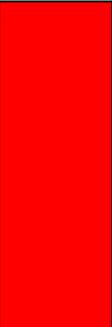


Appendix 2: Lichfield District Council Development Management Service Improvement Plan- updates

See comments section for more recent updates. RAG colour status unaltered due to dates already being passed

| Issue/Theme | Action | Progress | By when | RAG | Comments |
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| 1. There needs to be a clear protocol introduced that allows councillors to engage with/report issues to the planning service. | <p>i. Update protocols for Members & non-members of planning committee.</p> <p>ii. Clarification of roles/responsibilities and lines of reporting- shared with all councillors.</p> <p>iii. Communication through Portfolio holder & chairman of planning committee- set up regular/monthly meeting to discuss relevant issues between PDM & Portfolio Member including staffing matters or engagement issues on regular basis.</p> <p>iv. Planning Training for Members</p> | <p>Protocols updated and planning webpages updated accordingly. Members notified.</p> <p>Set up with Cllr Lax and on-going</p> <p>Quarterly sessions take place.</p> | <p>Apr 21</p> <p>Mar 21</p> <p>Jan 21</p> | | <p>Complete.</p> <p>Revised and updated protocols published and circulated.</p> <p>Good communication in place between PDM and Cabinet Member and Planning Committee Chair.</p> <p>Member training undertaken & on-going</p> |
| 2. The Council's Member code of conduct needs to be reviewed and obligations around 'civility' and 'bullying and harassment' added (as identified in the LGA's model code). The code should then be enforced robustly if subsequent breaches occur. | <p>i. Role of Monitoring officer to reinforce – could consider further addition for engagement with planners to be included within Planning Committee & Non-committee Members' protocol; as referred to above.</p> <p>ii. Clear reporting process to be put in place and all planning officers made aware of this, so all issues are reported and highlighted as soon as is possible and can be dealt with respectively by PDM and Monitoring Officer.</p> | <p>Report on revised Code of Conduct considered by Audit and Standards Committee on 22nd July 2021. Resolved to consult on the revised version whilst awaiting outcome of a review by the Committee on Standards on Public Life.</p> | <p>Apr 21</p> | | <p>Complete- Protocols updated.</p> <p>Regular discussions held with Cabinet Member to reiterate importance of members treating officers with respect and understanding- good support provided in this regard.</p> <p>MO has intervened on occasions where they see fit to do so. Officers beginning to feel better supported.</p> |

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| <p>3. Mentoring or similar support should be made available to the PDM.</p> | <p>Secure necessary resource to support the development of the managers as regards their leadership skills.</p> <p>PDM needs more support on dealing with difficult issues within the team, so these can be resolved quicker going forward- with support from other managers.</p> | <p>PDM Mentor appointed & regular meetings undertaken with mentor.</p> <p>Business Support & Performance Officer being set up with coaching through West Midlands Employers coaching & Mentoring hub</p> | <p>Feb 21</p> |  | <p>Most completed- issues outside team/council ability remaining to progress.</p> <p>PDM had mentor support/now concluded Dec 2021.</p> <p>2x Team Leaders & PDM completed management training programme.</p> <p>Outstanding –coaching hub have limited availability so proving difficult to progress re BSPO.</p> |
| <p>4. Managers need to work with Planning Officers to ensure that officers receive greater emotional support and that their work is seen to be valued.</p> | <p>Stability and possibly additional resource needed within the team leader level, so greater officer support and development can be provided- review work responsibilities of the Principal team leader level within the existing structure against identified needs review (see also Recommendation 5 below).</p> <p>Number of development needs in the team to be addressed and more time set aside to assist and support more junior/inexperienced officers.</p> <p>Measures to be put in place to celebrate successes across the team.</p> <p>Review of PDRs and the process needed and greater/more regular 1 to 1 support put in place for officers by team leaders.</p> | <p>New Principal Planning Officer/Team Leader started April 21</p> <p>121s set up with TLs and regular/monthly full team meetings in place</p> <p>Smart phones & lone working APP in place.</p> <p>Advised LDC are updating their lone working policy corporately at this time – now completed.</p> <p>Some in house training undertaken (conditions & reports) and further training to be scheduled.</p> <p>Regular 121s are in place and clear communication of this continuing with new TL</p> <p>Additional team leader resource proposed within DM review so less reportees per manager to</p> | <p>Apr 21</p> |  | <p>Part complete/ ongoing:</p> <p>Application Team Leader/Principal Planning Officer for case officers in post 12 months, provides good support to team members and PDM. Staff morale improved as a consequence.</p> <p>PPO has however needed to take on caseload of applications due to resource shortages/staff changes and workload levels across team. Also some members of team have a high need for support due to progression with roles- recruitment process to fill vacancies & new posts progressing to ensure right level of management support in place within the team. New team leader role for enforcement & householder team due to be filled by new appointee Mid-May 2022</p> <p>In house training being provided and encouragement to all to attend external training sessions to meet CPD needs. Also POS training session undertaken for all planning officers regarding committee presentation skills end March.</p> <p>1 member of team on 2nd year of a day-release University course to gain a planning qualification/due to complete in June.</p> <p>2 x new Planning Assistants scheduled to undertake post graduate training course from Sept 2022.</p> |

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| | | <p>help with the support to team members.</p> <p>All of DM team members have had a completed PDR by end of Sept 2021.</p> | | | <p>Structure agreed & includes this additional resources at team leader level. New TL appointed and to take up post mid-May.</p> <p>All members of the team had PDR by end of Sept 2021.</p> <p>Regular 121s undertaken for members of the team with their line managers to provide necessary support and development.</p> |
| <p>5. A review of management responsibilities within the team should be undertaken to ensure that the PDM has capacity to perform their leadership role and adequate management resource available to support the more junior staff.</p> | <p>Confirmation of understanding of current sign-off protocols needed by all team members.</p> <p>Review of resource at principal/team leader level needed required to understand workloads, responsibilities and whether resource inputs are correct.</p> <p>Identify suitable management development opportunities for managers.</p> | <p>Salary benchmarking commissioned and completed- findings and recommendations fed into a structural review for DM approved at September Cabinet. ELG have also considered and agreed this. Posts to include from 1.10.21</p> <p>Interim Planning Officer resource brought in inc 1 PO & 1 PPO interim to remain, further resource needed to cover vacancies however and interim support have proved difficult to find at Senior level</p> <p>In place- PDM & 2x PPO/TLs on the in-house management training course.</p> | <p>ASAP</p> <p>Apr 21</p> <p>Mar 21</p> | | <p>Complete</p> <p>Post Cabinet agreeing investment in service, MS added to relevant posts from Oct 2021 and 2 temporary posts made permanent.</p> <p>See 4 above. New TL post filled and appointee to take up post from mid-May. Majors Projects post/TL not yet filled on permanent basis but further recruitment options being explored.</p> <p>PDM & 2 TLs completed in house management course.</p> |
| <p>6. There needs to be improvement in mechanisms to keep customers (and councillors) up to date with the progress of applications as well as the</p> | <p>Reiterate to officers within the service the need to keep applicants, members and other interested parties abreast of the</p> | <p>Need to keep customers abreast of progress with applications reinforced at team meetings and</p> | <p>End Feb 21</p> | | <p>Part complete/ongoing as regular service review.</p> <p>Emerging evidence of cultural change within the DM service following training and engagement from</p> |

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| <p>introduction of regular developer/agent forums where performance issues raised can be explored and professional relationships enhanced.</p> | <p>progress of planning applications. Need for consistent approach by all in this regard.</p> <p>Ensure members clear who and how to contact officers dealing with applications on the basis of the previously agreed approach (i.e. where the name of a case officer is known then contact that officer, where not known contact either the Planning Application TL, PDM or the Business Support and Performance Officer (also see Recommendation 2 above).</p> <p>Re-introduce Developer/Agent forums and use these to share information and make service improvements.</p> | <p>messaging from team leaders and PDM.</p> <p>Identified top list of agents in terms poor quality submissions- to be targeted direct- First Agents Forum held 14.7.21 to continue on a quarterly basis/next programmed for Oct 21. Positive/constructive feedback session; well received by all involved; though 6 agents of 16 invited attended.</p> | <p>Apr 21 and every 3 months</p> | | <p>PDM & other managers. Officers seeking to keep residents and members up to date on applications/ case progression. Also, seek to respond to e-mails in good time; workloads allowing.</p> <p>Notes added to standard email and website to inform customers of high workloads and delays that may be experienced at this time.</p> <p>Agents Forum undertaken in August but only 2 people were due to attend Forum in October so this had to be cancelled due to lack of interest- newsletter to be sent instead in replacement and views sought on form of engagement preferred with agents.</p> <p>Improved communications and relationships between the service and agents. Recognition of the pressures on the service and greater understanding, equally on the part of officers' acknowledgment of the issues faced by agents/applicants from receiving a poor service.</p> <p>Service contacts details updated on website.</p> <p>Work on use of robots for automated updates being undertaken as part of Being a Better Council project.</p> <p>QR codes added to Site Notices & acknowledgement letters to speed access to information for the customer.</p> <p>Council-wide Customer Centric training to be undertaken by all May-Aug 2022.</p> |
| <p>7. Staff training around customer responsiveness should be provided to ensure that this is embedded as a fundamental part of a Planning Officer's role.</p> | <p>Build upon the previous training and development sessions led by the Council's HR function in this area.</p> <p>Roll out of final Customer Charter for DM & ensure all new team</p> | <p>Customer Charter adopted, circulated & on website</p> <p>Key messages around customer care and</p> | <p>Apr 21</p> <p>Mar 21</p> | | <p>Work ongoing and progressing well:</p> <p>PDM undertook training for the team on customer responsiveness as reminder of customer charter targets and need to keep customers informed of any delays/ better customer responsiveness</p> |

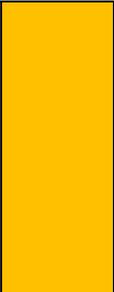
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| | <p>members are clear on the expectations for customer engagement so consistent approach across the team adopted.</p> <p>Importance of customer care to be embedded within team and also training on dealing with difficult customers needed- with support from HR training and development officer.</p> | <p>customer service ethos shared at team meetings and through training sessions with officers. Reinforced as part of regular team meeting agendas.</p> | <p>Mar 21</p> | | <p>Officers regularly updated at Team Meetings of importance of good customer responsiveness.</p> <p>Officers are acknowledging more the importance of maintaining a good relationship with applicants and agents as well as those parties who may be commenting on proposals in their locality.</p> <p>See above re Agents Forum- undertaken and Customer Charter highlighted as part of this.</p> <p>Council-wide Customer Centric training to be undertaken by all members of the team May-Aug 2022.</p> |
| <p>8. Options for greater career progression should be explored including wider use of career grades and a review of Planning Officer salaries.</p> | <p>Commission a piece of work from the West Midlands Employers to assess salary levels for planning officer roles at comparable Council's and review the results. As part of this work include reference to career progression and associated pay grades at other local authorities and review LDC model in light of this.</p> <p>Review Planning Development Manager Salary level + Market Supplement</p> | <p>Salary benchmarking exercise by HR consultant & results fed into review of DM structure and pay levels. Approved structure now includes reduced career-bandings for planning assistant roles and Market Supplements attached to PPO posts.</p> <p>Cabinet approval for revised structure Sept 2021. MS notified to ELG. Review completed and MS increased May 2021.</p> | <p>Sep 21</p> | | <p>Complete</p> <p>Following benchmarking exercise and Cabinet approval. JD/PS updated; closed planning assistant career posts; market supplements added to PPO posts from Oct 2021</p> <p>Advertising new and vacant posts – await to see response from the market.</p> |
| <p>9. The Planning Enforcement Plan should be reviewed, then communicated to Councillors to be fully aware/manage expectations.</p> | <p>Review the current Enforcement Plan and ensure service standards are up to date.</p> <p>Publicise the new Enforcement Plan to officers, members and wider stakeholders including local residents.</p> | <p>Ongoing work on this. Additional enforcement capacity and restructured team included in DM service proposals approved by Cabinet Sept. Recruitment to new/revised posts due to</p> | <p>Mar 21</p> | | <p>Complete</p> <p>Member training on Planning Enforcement held December 2021</p> <p>Enforcement Plan updated and adopted by Planning Committee 5.4.2022 and published on website.</p> |

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| | Fill the existing vacant Principal Planning Enforcement Officer post and review level/nature of resource in the wider team pending the planned retirement of the current Enforcement Assistant in 2021/22. | <p>commence shortly. Contracts for interims extended.</p> <p>Enforcement Plan being reviewed.</p> <p>Revised structure introduced to increase Enforcement officer resource by 1 post.</p> | | | TL post for enforcement & householder team filled and post-holder due to start mid-May. Also 2 x Senior Enforcement Officers in post from end of April. |
| 10. A light touch review of the validation checklist should be undertaken, and greater clarity provided for both Business Support staff and Planning Officers around expectations and where responsibilities lie in agreeing the information necessary to support applications. | <p>Complete the review of the business support validation function and implement the proposals arising out of this – this should clarify responsibilities between the business support team and the roles of planning officers and provide the necessary capacity and capabilities within the business support team to effectively carry out the required work.</p> <p>The Validation Checklist is programmed to be updated, as is required every 2 years.</p> | <p>Light touch review of LV guidance completed Feb 2021- TS team training being undertaken.</p> <p>Feedback from Agents forum on validation to be taken on board.</p> <p>All TSO posts now filled and team operating better with training and development advancing well. Validation targets now being met.</p> | <p>Apr 21</p> <p>Feb 21</p> | | <p>Complete</p> <p>Validation guidance updated. Team restructuring has gone well with new appointments settling in to their roles. Team seem motivated and there is clear evidence of improved performance with validation & registration of applications meeting the charter target.</p> <p>Agents Forum updated of validation requirements.</p> <p>Validation Customer Charter targets being met.</p> |
| 11. Improvements to the office accommodation to enhance staff working conditions and to portray a better image to visitors. This should include ideas to make the Council Chamber less intimidating for presenting officers. | <p>Pending corporate decisions for the DCH, some changes have been undertaken to the facilities available to staff e.g. provision of new kitchen facilities. In addition the planning offices are due to have a repaint shortly and be re-configured to accommodate returning staff post Covid lockdowns.</p> <p>Re. Council Chamber it is proposed to review the present meeting</p> | <p>Main planning office painted & new tech kit and lighting. Ceiling works undertaken. Declutter of offices also undertaken and ongoing. Proposed corporate changes re. NWOW will likely have impact.</p> <p>Chair of Committee preferred to be at a physically raised level.</p> | Mid 21 | | <p>Complete</p> <p>Offices updated as part of corporate plans- all officers working hybrid including in new open plan offices.</p> <p>Planning Committee continues to be held in the Council Chamber due to space needed and no alternative option- but operating fine on this basis.</p> |

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| | <p>arrangements and see how improvements can be made to help staff, the committee and members of the public.</p> <p>Re-consider seating arrangements in discussion with Chairman of Committee when in office Council Chamber meetings resume- this could include moving chairman and officers to same level as rest of the audience and members rather than at the current raised position. As Chamber is a listed building and no other large room available alternative accommodation not possible at this time.</p> | <p>No further progress possible at this time- requires input from other departments' inc facilities management.</p> | | | |
| <p>12. A review of the effectiveness of S106 processes should be undertaken with particular emphasis on how the legal input might be improved and speeded up.</p> | <p>Review the legal arrangements surrounding S106 arrangements and if necessary raise with the Partnership Board.</p> | <p>Resource in SS legal and Governance team causing issues for team. SS legal slow to progress still. Matters discussed with legal/SS especially with regard to time involved in processing Unilateral Undertakings</p> <p>Temporary dedicated planning resource brought in to the SS legal service and proposals to increase planning capacity in new structure (subject to approval and increased financial contributions from partners).</p> <p>Process slow; clarification of roles/responsibilities needed between in house governance team & SS</p> | <p>May 21</p> | | <p>In progress:</p> <p>Relies on the Southern Staffordshire Legal Partnership arrangements and resources.</p> <p>Some work with in house process for dealing with legal agreements needs further work in conjunction with SSL and Governance team- lead legal officer at SSL reviewing in respect of UU agreements.</p> <p>Need for extra sign-off by HoS before legal agreements can be completed adds delays. Need to streamline.</p> <p>Changes in Habitats Legislation/Cannock Chase SAC mitigation has created more work in this area.</p> |

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| | | legal. Once new legal team in place more work could continue on this. Within the DM team the message about clear instructions to legal has been reiterated. | | | |
| 13. Review IT challenges facing the service | DM service requires robust and resilient ICT to function properly. Problems have been identified as regards the stability of network, access issues to key programmes, mobile technologies not working. These issues need rectifying particularly with the introduction of agile working and communications being a vital component of service delivery. Meetings held with HoS and IT Manager to identify issues and agreement to IT Manager investigating the basis for the problems flagged up. | <p>Meetings taking place with IT in terms of looking at the issues. Some areas of improvement have started to be looked at recently.</p> <p>IT has resolved some of the issues raised with them and investigating the causes of and possible solutions to others. On-going dialogue between IT and DM.</p> | Dec 21 | | <p>In progress/ongoing :</p> <p>Key issue of priority/focus is support from IT and having the right software & hardware in place for the team.</p> <p>DM colleagues are reporting all problems as soon as they occur, but ongoing issues still occurring for members of the team.</p> <p>Uniform & other IDOX upgrades have occurred which has made tasks and work easier.</p> <p>Tablet devices rolled out to members of team to aid use of Mobile App and streamline tasks for officers.</p> <p>Back scanned files now uploaded to the teams DMS making some information more accessible.</p> <p>Further digitisation due to be complete by Mid-2022.</p> <p>Work on aligning enforcement digital case management and process as per planning applications case management due to be completed end of May 2022.</p> |
| 14. Review relationship between Development Management Service and Customer Services to identify where pressures can be reduced on the former together with other service improvements. | There is scope to reduce pressures on planning officers and technical support staff in DM with customer services fielding enquiries and assisting in communicating progress with planning applications, the latter based on IT systems. | <p>Officer appointed in Corporate Services to review processes and identify potential new ways of working.</p> <p>Work stream under way examining nature of</p> | Dec 21 | | <p>In progress/ongoing:</p> <p>Working group set up – led by Head of Customer Services to see how customer services can support the DM meetings being undertaken.</p> |

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| | | enquiries received by Customer Services and consideration as to how these could be addressed at first point of contact going forward. As part of this work also looking at how IT systems or standard FAQs can help inform responses to questions about progress of planning applications. | | | Regular meetings undertaken between member of DM (Business Support & Performance Officer) and Customer Services manager. |
| 15. Identify scope for providing more information to customers on the expected DM experience to aid understanding | Need to improve the quality of information on planning webpages and keep these up to date, as well as looking at other potential mediums. Such information would also assist in managing expectations and hence pressures on the service. | Initial audit undertaken of website and now that TSO team at full complement further work on this can now be progressed. See comments re 14 above- working with others to see what information can be presented on the website. Additional contact details have been added to website. | Dec 21 | | In progress/ongoing: Part of the above/see point 14 Customer satisfaction surveys sent out with all decision notice since end of March 2022. |
| 16. Linked to 9. above, explore options for boosting interim enforcement capacity | Council currently is reliant on some interim resources to help deliver enforcement, pending recruitment to the recently approved revised structure. Even with this resource there is pressure on the service with a significant caseload. There is an opportunity here to see if additional temporary resource could be brought into the service to complement and bring the number of outstanding cases down. | Have interim enforcement officers supporting the team including 1 PPO (approx. 32 hours) level and 1 SPO (approx. 8 hours) doing site visits. Caseload is coming down and old cases are steadily starting to be cleared but some cases/sites are taking up a lot of resource & time due to the complexity and/or high customer engagement needed. | Dec 21 | | Complete See 9 above. All posts filled including TL and 2x Senior Enforcement Officers and in post from mid-May 2022. |

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| <p>17. Identify scope to utilise dedicated temporary resources to reduce application caseloads</p> | <p>Caseloads for individual planning officers is high. The DM service would benefit if temporary resource could be brought in to reduce caseloads by dealing with specific kinds of application.</p> | <p>Team is down by approx. 1.5 posts currently even with interim support. Proving difficult to source suitable interim senior support, as shortage with consultants at this level. Exploring alternative options.</p> | <p>Dec 21</p> |  | <p>In progress/ongoing:</p> <p>Interim support in place to support on majors applications and to fill some vacancies. But caseloads still remain high due to number of major and complex applications.</p> |
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