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## Report of the Chief Planning Officer

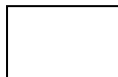
### Scrutiny Board: City Development

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2008

### Subject: UPDATE ON THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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#### Electoral Wards Affected:



Ward Members consulted  
(Referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

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Community Cohesion

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Narrowing the Gap

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## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The report is presented to Scrutiny Board in order that Members can consider and comment on the progress on implementing the solutions within the five improvement themes of the strategic review for Planning and Development Services.

## 2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2006, Executive Board agreed the proposed service improvements and five improvement themes were identified as follows:-

1. *Capacity building and working with the private sector*
2. *Realising a definitive officer view*
3. *Development and support for Plans Panels*
4. *Information and communication technology*
5. *Improved customer services*

- 2.2 The Scrutiny Inquiry report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2007 requested further reporting on a six monthly basis to provide updates on the progress in meeting the work streams identified in each of the themes. A summary of each theme is set out below for the period September to March 2008.

### **3.0 Summary of progress**

#### ***Capacity building and working with the private sector***

- 3.1 Recruitment has taken place to appoint to new posts. 2 additional Principal Planning Officers, 1 Principal Highways Officer and 1 Principal Urban Design Officer have been appointed.
- 3.2 We are continuing to use the Strategic Alliance with Jacobs to progress discrete areas of work and to provide expert witness support, when required, in public inquiries.
- 3.3 We are presently recruiting for a vacant Compliance Officer post, and looking at ways to provide temporary help in the meantime.
- 3.4 The service is to be a pathfinder within the National Process Improvement project, and will be exploring ways to redesign and improve processes that make up service delivery. The initial phase of the project will run to June 2008, with implementation of improved processes thereafter.

#### ***Realising a definitive officer view***

- 3.5 The Design Advisory Panel which was set up to help promote higher and more consistent design standards is working successfully. The Panel now meets on a fortnightly basis.
- 3.6 Appointments have been made to the Design Officer (grade PO3) in the Sustainable Development Unit and the Design Engineer (grade PO4) in highways to deal with increased consultation demands.
- 3.7 A charter for charging for pre application advice for major application as defined by the DCLG has been drafted and is currently being edited. The purpose of which is to recover the costs associated with providing that advice which in turn will help us to sustain and improve the service provided.
- 3.8 A protocol for Strategic and Key Regeneration Projects has been drafted and circulated for internal consultation. The protocol is currently being re-drafted to take into account consultation responses. The protocol recognises that one of the keys to successful delivery of Strategic Developments and Key regeneration projects is to improve communication between the Council, developers and other agencies involved in the development process to minimise delays reduce the possibility of receiving conflicting advice and to maximise certainty in the development process. To achieve this it is intended to utilise the principle of 'Planning Performance Agreements' as advocated by the Department of Communities and Local government. This would in general relate to 'Large Majors' as defined by the DCLG in the consultation paper entitled 'Planning Performance Agreements: a new way to manage large scale major planning applications.
- 3.9 4 design training workshops have taken place one of which involved members. Other member training subjects are programmed for this year focusing in particular on house builders.
- 3.10 Householder Design Guide final draft is expected to go to consultation in April 2008.
- 3.11 Street Design Guide produced by Highways went to public consultation in September 2007 and a report was presented at Scrutiny Board in February 2008. As the concern relating to shared space is a national issue further consultation is required.
- 3.12 The Compliance Team has been re-aligned to be within the line management of Planning Services to maximise opportunities for a more joined up and responsive service.

### ***Development of and support for plans panels***

- 3.13 The Joint Member-Officer working group has now been formally established with a series of 6 meetings scheduled between January and June 2008.
- 3.14 The meetings are working well with workable solutions being found to the arising issues and implementation of the actions is beginning.
- 3.15 Periodic reporting to the Joint Plans Panels on the progress of the working group is planned on a six monthly basis.
- 3.16 A report will go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in early April to update the Board on the moves being made to implement the review of the Plans Panels.

### ***Information and Communication Technology***

- 3.17 The update to the latest version of Public Access was completed 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2007.
- 3.18 E Government Board in place and meeting every two months.
- 3.19 New E-Team established and Head of E Planning appointed. Document imaging pilot still ongoing because of staffing and technical issues. It is now anticipated that this pilot will run to the end of the year. Software upgrade and new scanners to be implemented 2nd Quarter 2008. New scanning posts to be advertised March 2008.
- 3.20 The upgrade to the latest version of CAPS Uniform (7.4) was completed 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2007. Upgrading to new version 7.4.a.1.1 is planned for mid-March 2008 to meet the new requirements for government statistics.
- 3.21 Electronic responses for members of public whom comment on applications electronically is in place.
- 3.22 Benefits continue to be realised from spatial data computer system these include:-
  - Mapping requirements now comply with new Ordnance Survey requirements
  - Additional info added to Panel report templates.
  - Increase in electronic comments for public
  - Implementation of Uniform Local Development Framework module.

### ***Improved Customer Services***

- 3.23 Re-establishment of Householder Agent and Major Agent Forums, meeting on a quarterly basis, feedback from forums has been positive.
- 3.24 Charter Mark for the Development Enquiry Centre (DEC) is progressing well, with submission being planned for October 2008. There has been much consultation with customers about the service provided by DEC, through a customer satisfaction survey and internal customer's interviews.
- 3.25 A partnership between Leeds Library Service and DEC has been entered into to "mystery visit" DEC in May 2008 providing an independent view of the service.
- 3.26 A new scrolling screen displaying information about Planning and Development Services is being installed in March. This screen will provide service, performance and other useful information to customers as they wait in DEC.
- 3.27 Work has started in readiness for Building Control submission for Charter Mark. Although submission is not planned until 2009, there are significant changes starting to be implemented. Process and working arrangements are currently being formulated up which will contribute to

Charter Mark, but more importantly will improve the effectiveness of the way the service is provided.

- 3.28 The complaints section continues to respond efficiently and effectively to customer and Ombudsman complaints within target. Feedback sessions are held weekly and quarterly summary reports are produced to take forward service improvements arising from what has been learnt.
- 3.29 The number of calls received by the Development Enquiry Centre has fallen slightly. However, the percentage of calls answered has increased by 7%. The number answered at first point of contact remains high at 83% and the number of calls answered in 20seconds has risen by 24%.

#### **4.0 Performance**

##### **4.1**

<b><u>Planning Performance</u></b>	<b><u>Quarter 1 cumulative</u></b>	<b><u>Quarter 2 cumulative</u></b>	<b><u>Quarter 3 cumulative</u></b>	<b><u>Quarter 4</u></b>	<b><u>2006/07 Result</u></b>
% major app's determined in 13 wks (60%)	62.50%	66.14%	66.67%	66.37%	61.01%
% minor app's determined in 8 wks (65%)	82.09%	79.02%	80.28%	78.90%	69.89%
% other app's determined in 8 wks (80%)	88.51%	86.56%	87.32%	86.71%	83.68%

- 4.2 Performance targets continue to be achieved, and have indeed been improved upon from the comparative period last year particularly related to major planning applications. However, in achieving this customer satisfaction with our service still remains an area of concern. It is intended to continue to look at this conflict as a priority to achieve a satisfactory balance.

#### **5.0 Conclusion**

- 5.1 The review continues to deliver significant and positive improvements across the range of planning services. The above improvement themes are consistently being moved forward and monitored closely. However priorities for the next six months are:-
- Review the Plans Panel implementation including running a customer satisfaction survey at Plans Panel
  - Readiness for DEC Charter Mark submission – October 2008
  - Charter for pre-application charging finalise and consult
  - Strategic and Key Regeneration protocol – finalise and consult
  - New E Team and ICT
  - Appeals Review

#### **6.0 Recommendation**

- 6.1 Scrutiny Board is invited to note and comment on the report.