

Annual assurance report on planning decision making and enforcement arrangements

Date: 23 September 2024

Report of: Chief Planning Officer

Report to: Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- An annual assurance report, providing assurances in relation to planning decision making and enforcement arrangements is required by the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.
- Using the cycle of internal control framework, Members will be provided with assurance to the adequacy of policies and practices, measures in place to ensure that the framework is clearly communicated, embedded and monitored with appropriate escalation processes in place and is reviewed and refined to ensure continuous improvement and assurance for the period April 2023 to March 2024.
- A number of process and systems changes have been made during the reporting period as a result of the ongoing budget and resourcing pressures faced by the service and proposed Government planning reforms around the speed and quality of decision making. All the changes which have been made retain the assurance of delivering quality outcomes within a robust governance framework.
- The planning services' decision-making framework sets out systems and processes which ensure information is shared in a clear and consistent fashion. The decision-making framework seeks to ensure that the service is open, honest and trusted.

Recommendations

- a) Members are requested to consider and note the positive assurances provided in this report and future steps to provide additional assurance in the process.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The Chief Planning Officer has responsibility to ensure that the Council's arrangements for dealing with and determining planning and enforcement matters are up to date, fit for purpose, effectively communicated, routinely complied with and monitored and has internal arrangements in place to provide assurance in the decision-making process and to mitigate any potential risk of challenge on the grounds of partiality or bias.
- 2 Attached as Appendix 1 is the annual assurance report for Development Management and Planning Enforcement functions of the Council for the period April 2023 to March 2024. The report outlines the key internal controls and processes in place to mitigate risks and to provide

assurance that systems and processes for decision making on planning decision and enforcement activity are in place.

- 3 Actions suggested by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman have been put into place where the service is found at fault. Such remedies seek to further strengthen an already robust governance process and as such they pose little or no risk to the Council, however, further work has been carried out to provide greater consistency, transparency and assurance in the planning process.
- 4 Other actions have taken place throughout the reporting period to amend or improve the governance systems and processes within the service, which are described in the report.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 5 Members will be guided through the report using the cycle of internal control framework, which will provide the assurance to the adequacy of policies and practices, measures to ensure that the framework is clearly communicated, embedded and monitored with appropriate escalation processes in place and is reviewed and refined to ensure continuous improvement and assurance. This framework ensures enforcement with statutory and other guidance.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 6 This information is presented for information and comment

What are the resource implications?

- 7 The systems and processes in place to meet the requirements of the decision-making framework do so from within existing resources. Given the assurances made by the Chief Planning Officer it is considered that the systems and processes in place continue to represent an appropriate use of resources and good value for money.

What are the legal implications?

- 8 There are no legal implications arising from the report. The Council's framework for planning meets the statutory requirements in relation to decision making, and regular monitoring and update of protocols and processes ensures continued enforcement. There are no implications for access to information; all of the procedures and protocols are already or can be available for public inspection.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 9 The positive assurances set out in this report show that the development management and enforcement decision making processes are fit for purpose, embedded and routinely complied with and so there are no risks identified by this report.

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

10 The Development Management service contributes to all of the Council's Best City Priorities either directly or indirectly through the delivery of high-quality homes and through sustainable place-making to deliver safe, strong communities. For example, its work in delivering policy compliant planning permissions for social housing and assisted living accommodation, as well as for new schools, supports the Council to meet its ambitions. Through working with other Council services, Development Management also facilitates, through the legal agreement process, employment opportunities for local people. The planning process is closely tied with the health and wellbeing and climate change agendas through the implementation of the policies in the Core Strategy. Whilst there are no specific issues arising from this report, it should be emphasised however, that through the Local Plan Update, Policies to tackle the scale and urgency of the Climate Emergency are being updated and refreshed.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

11 Not applicable

How will success be measured?

12 Not applicable

What is the timetable for implementation?

13 Not applicable

Appendices

14 The annual assurance report for Development Management and Planning Enforcement functions

Background papers

15 Not applicable