

Define and Document

Planning policy and procedures

The framework for decision making in relation to planning matters in England and Wales is plan-led and is legislated by Acts of Parliament and Statutory Instruments. This requires the Local Planning Authority to prepare plans, that set out what can be built and where, as well as addressing a range of local issues through Planning Policies. All decisions on applications for planning permission should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Leeds adopted Local Plan sets out the council's vision and strategy for planning the area until 2028 and sets the housing target until 2033. Planning Policy is compliant with all relevant legislation. Development Management activity is guided by legislation, the main legislation being The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and supported by the (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 which sets the legal framework for determining planning applications. Additionally, documented systems and processes exist which ensures that the decision making is lawful and compliant, open and transparent.

The Table below describes the planning policy hierarchy and the underpinning planning procedures and guidance used to determine planning applications in Leeds.

The Leeds Local Plan and associated Leeds Policy Guidance:

- Core Strategy 2014 (amended by Selective Review in 2019)
- Site Allocations Plan (SAP)
- Aire Valley Area Action Plan
- Natural Resources and Waste Local Plan
- Saved Unitary Development Plan Review policies
 - Neighbourhood Plans
 - Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance (SPD and SPG)
 - Conservation Area Appraisals

Planning Procedure and Guidance:

- Chief Planning Officer's delegation Scheme
- Chief Planning Officers' Sub- Delegation Scheme
- Plans Panel Terms of Reference
- Planning Code of Good Practice
- Protocol for Public Speaking at Plans Panels
- National Planning Policy Framework

- Area Design Statements
- Local Enforcement Plan

A High Court challenge to the Site Allocations Plan (SAP) was made in 2020 and subsequent High Court Order (August 2020) was issued requiring that 37 sites (including one mixed use allocation) which immediately before the adoption of the SAP were in the green belt be treated as not adopted and be referred back to the Secretary of State for further examination by the Planning Inspectorate, against up-to-date evidence and national and local policy. The Examination in Public commenced on 14 September 2021.

In terms of planning enforcement, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied; it is also the framework for decision making in relation to enforcement matters. The NPPF states:

"They [LPA] should consider publishing a local enforcement plan to manage enforcement proactively, in a way that is appropriate to their area. This should set out how they will monitor the implementation of planning permissions, investigate alleged cases of unauthorised development and take action where appropriate."

The Chair of this Committee at the meeting on 23 November 2020 invited the Chief Planning Officer to draft a protocol for enforcement of breaches of planning control on Council land and property. Benchmarking with other Local Planning Authorities was undertaken to identify any good practice in this area; however, the benchmarking process identified that other authorities do not have such protocols and instead take enforcement action in line with their adopted Local Enforcement Plan. Advice was sought from Legal Services, who determined that as the Council has only one legal personality, it cannot take legal action against itself. Consequently, the protocol was drafted to be compliant with the Local Enforcement Plan but goes further, putting appropriate escalation processes in place in the event of the responsible Directorate not taking appropriate action to resolve issues. This approach and the draft protocol was endorsed by the Corporate Leadership Team at its meeting on 9 February 2021. The protocol was shared with the Chair of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee and Committee members in April 2021 and is now operational.

Roles and responsibilities

Full Council approved arrangements for the appointment to Committees and the delegation of council functions to officers for the 2021-22 municipal year at the meeting of 6 May 2021, including approval of the Chief Planning Officer's Delegation scheme. Council delegations are made by exception to the Chief Planning Officer, permitting them to exercise all relevant functions save where there is an express exemption within the scheme.

Plans Panel decision making

In accordance with the Officer Scheme of Delegation (Council Functions) for the Chief Planning Officer, all planning applications are determined by the Chief Planning Officer under the officer delegation scheme, unless they fall into defined categories of exceptions.

Such exceptions facilitate Members' right to request that an application is referred to the Plans Panel for determination, and part 1a of the Officer Delegation Scheme (Council (non-executive) Functions) - Chief Planning Officer, 'Exceptions' section sets out the circumstances when this is applicable. In November 2019 this Committee reviewed these arrangements and made recommendations about the member referral to Plans Panel process. As a result of the committee's work, a range of documents including a flowchart and material considerations have been circulated to members and can also be accessed via the [Member Planning SharePoint site](#)

All planning applications are delegated to the Chief Planning Officer under the officer delegation scheme, unless they fall into defined categories of exceptions which were detailed in a previous report in November 2019 to this Committee.

Such exceptions facilitate Members' right to request that an application comes to the Plans Panel for determination, and part 1a of the Officer Delegation Scheme (Council (non-executive) Functions) - Chief Planning Officer, 'Exceptions' section, sets out the circumstances when this is applicable.

Following recommendations from this Committee in November 2019 (regarding the member referral process to Plans Panel), a range of explanatory documents (including a flowchart and material considerations), have been circulated to members and can also be accessed via the [Member Planning SharePoint site](#)

Officer decision making

The sub-delegation scheme sets out which functions have been sub-delegated by the Chief Planning Officer to other officers and any terms and conditions attached to the authority sub-delegated by the Chief Planning Officer. The Sub Delegation Scheme was last published in May 2021.

The Chief Planning Officer's sub-delegation scheme ensures that decision making is undertaken at the appropriate level of seniority and experience. For example, only officers at planning team leader level and above have the authority to determine major applications. Other applications can only be signed off by officers at PO4 level and above. No officer can 'sign off' applications they have been working on and therefore an appropriate level of external scrutiny is brought to bear on each proposal before it is finally determined.

A total of 4,541 decisions were made in 2020-21 by the Local Planning Authority, in comparison with 4,550 in 2019-20. In line with best practice and in accordance with the officer delegation scheme, in 2020-21, officers made 98.9% of the decisions.

The Chief Planning Officer is authorised to determine all planning enforcement matters in accordance with the Officer Delegation scheme and has sub-delegated this authority to appropriate officers. The Local Planning Authority is required to have regard to the NPPF, in particular paragraph 59 which states, *"Effective enforcement is important to maintain public confidence in the planning system. Enforcement action is discretionary, and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control."*

The service has in place a conflicts of interest register, whereby if an officer is allocated an application or enforcement case but has an interest, or is known to the applicant, or their representative or complainant or property owner being complained about, then officers are required to declare that interest and the application is reallocated to another officer in the interests of transparency. Continuous monitoring takes place and there have been no reports of conflicts of interest made in 2020-21.

Compliance matters

The service has a duty to investigate all enforcement matters it receives. Enforcement matters are allocated to case officers within the service who conduct site visits, investigative and carry out meetings as appropriate. Officers then make recommendations as to the course of action to pursue; this recommendation will have due regard to the NPPF and NPPG and the Council's Enforcement Plan (As encouraged by the guidance, enforcement activity will almost always seek to resolve issues first by negotiation and by working with developers/ owners to address any problems). On a small number of cases, a breach may be identified, and a decision taken that it is not expedient to pursue further. These decisions would only generally be made when the breach is very minor and causes no identified planning harm, in accordance with relevant guidance. Where no further action is recommended due to a lack of expediency, the case will fully be appraised and documented for approval by a senior officer. The CPO's sub-delegation scheme ensures that decision making is undertaken at the appropriate level of seniority

and experience. No Officer can decide their own cases and therefore, an appropriate level of external scrutiny is brought to bear on each case before it is finally determined.

Democratic Oversight

There exist several opportunities for democratic oversight of the development management and compliance processes:

Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate	Regular briefing meetings on Planning matters, pertaining to the portfolio holders' responsibilities.
Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs meetings	Informal briefings on matters relating to applications generally, process issues and strategic planning and compliance matters and provides an effective two-way communication mechanism between members and the service. Held monthly, and have continued throughout the lockdown period, thus providing the continuous but informal democratic oversight during a challenging and ever evolving situation.
Plans Panel Chairs Briefings	Regular briefings with the respective Plans Panel and Development Plan Panel Chairs.
Plans Panels	Formally constituted committees to determine planning applications in accordance with terms of reference. Arrangements enable individual members to refer planning applications to panel in certain circumstances.
Joint Meeting of Plans Panel (JPP)	<p>This is an informal meeting of members of the three formally appointed Plans Panels and Development Plan Panel. In the past this meeting has been treated as a formally constituted Council meeting, however it has no formal terms of reference. The original purpose of JPP as an informal service meeting was revisited and updated terms of reference have now been approved This was undertaken in consultation with The Leader and the Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and the first meeting under these new arrangements was held in November 2020.</p> <p>Half yearly performance reports describing the work and performance of the development management and compliance service; other reports are also brought to this meeting detailing arising issues or latest developments and</p>

	legislative changes. This ensures that members are kept as up to date as possible with events and activities which may have an impact on decision making.
Full Council	Report of the Plans Panel and the Development Plan Panel is prepared for full Council each year detailing the work and activities of the Panels. The last report was considered by full Council on 13 January 2021.
Development Plan Panel	Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations to both the Executive and Council regarding the Authority's Local Plan.
Corporate Governance and Audit Committee	Oversight of system of internal control in relation to development control and enforcement. Robust reporting arrangements have been put in place to monitor and measure the number of type of member referrals to Panel, details of which will be regularly shared with the Plans Panel Chairs for monitoring purposes. Arrangements have been put in place to review any compliance activity more robustly on Council owned land.
Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth)	Focusing on development and infrastructure functions and services to monitor progress in relation to transport and planning, regeneration and housing growth
Compliance Ward Member meetings	Key cases list with updates on priority cases within each area
Compliance Town and Parish Council engagement	Key cases list with updates on priority cases within each area

Clearly Communicate

In addition to the Council’s constitution and documented processes and systems, which are described in the table in the *Review and Refine* section below, the decision-making framework is communicated to Members and officers through a combination of training, guidance and leadership. Together these ensure the communication of both the rules and processes required in decision making to ensure that decisions are lawful and compliant.

The service places emphasis on ensuring that planning officers and Plans Panel members are up to date with current legislation, best practice and Government’s planning reform agenda. This ensures the decision-making process is based on the most current and accurate information possible and is embedded thus:

	Officers	Members
Training	<p>Officers attendance at member training sessions</p> <p>Internal training and update sessions from internal specialist consultees e.g. on biodiversity, landscape, practice notes and advice from Legal Services.</p>	<p>Part 2 Article 8.2.2 of the Council’s Constitution, states that Members of the Plans Panels must complete all compulsory training.</p> <p>All Plans Panel members and substitute Plans Panel members in 2020-21 have undertaken the prescribed compulsory training.</p> <p>A programme of discretionary member training produced for 2020-21. Sessions were made available to all members of the Council and two sessions were offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees and the planning process, and • Access and Inclusion in planning <p>Training materials have been made available on the Member Development SharePoint site</p>

<p>Guidance</p>	<p>Learning materials from the sessions on the service SharePoint site which is accessible to all staff in the service areas.</p> <p>Learning objectives are set and monitored as part of the Personal Development Review process</p>	<p>The learning materials arising from the sessions are available to members on a dedicated Planning member development SharePoint site, which also contains planning guidance, FAQs and supporting information for members in the area of Planning.</p>
<p>Leadership</p>	<p>Planning Services Team Leaders Meeting: Head of Development chairs a monthly meeting of managers and team leaders discuss current or new issues and agree actions. Ensures common understanding agreement of consistent approach across teams.</p> <p>Case officer meetings: the Head of Development Management provides an update of government reforms and changes that will impact on the way officers work. Guest speakers provide information on planning and planning related information including those from the Policy team to ensure officers are kept up to date with regard to new, emerging or amended planning policy, including the latest position on the Site Allocations Plan and Core Strategy Review.</p> <p>Team Meetings: Team Leaders hold regular meetings with staff to disseminate information and identify team related issues or queries to feed back to senior managers</p> <p>Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) endorsed the approach in the draft Enforcement Protocol on Council owned land and property and this has been cascaded to all services.</p>	<p>The Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans panel Chairs were consulted in preparing the programme of member training to ensure that topics covered were relevant and meaningful for members.</p>

Effectively Embed

The planning response to the COVID 19 pandemic has been at a national level through the changes in the Business and Planning Act and locally through reviewing and refining local policies and procedures. This has enabled the efficient determination of planning applications to continue safely, whilst still operating within an environment of procedural controls, ensuring statutory requirements are met and high quality, robust and consistent decision making is maintained. Further, a number of process and system changes have been made to respond positively to the challenge of reduced resource capacity and high workloads, again, whilst ensuring that a robust governance framework is in place. Work particularly with stakeholders in this regard is evidence, that the planning decision making processes are effectively embedded and can be demonstrated in the example case studies below.

Case study	Challenges	Clear systems and process in place	Stakeholder engagement	Outcomes
Householder application protocol	Increasing workloads, reduction in the staffing establishment due to a number of staff leaving on the Early Leavers Initiative. High volume of this type of application, approximately 45% of total workload, but can take a disproportionate amount of resource in comparison with the fee, which does not represent value for money for the Council.	Process for handling household applications has been developed to take a more efficient transactional approach, which was further refined in 2020 through the production of a protocol which has been shared with customers. The protocol clearly sets out the service to be provided in the interests of transparency	A digital leaflet campaign took place with frequent users of the service for householder applications and was further communicated and embedded through communications to applicants acknowledging their application.	It is still quite early days to assess the full impact of this new process, anecdotally, officers report that the quality of initial planning applications has improved and that workloads are easier to manage, which will contribute to applications being determined in time, whilst maintaining high quality planning decisions. This facilitates greater confidence and assurance in the planning process for applicants.
Case study	Challenges	Clear systems and process in place	Stakeholder engagement	Outcomes

Solutions to enable pre-application engagement during lockdown	The lockdown meant no face-to-face conversations or meetings could take place. An important part of the work of the service is in working creatively and positively with applicants, particularly of major schemes and this has in the past required face to face meetings.	Systems and protocols were established alongside technological solutions to enable pre application discussions and workshops to continue through the lockdown. The processes were communicated with staff and routinely complied with to ensure clarity of process and consistency of service.	Applicants and developers have taken advantage of the pre application offer during the lockdown period, with 105 major pre application enquires received in the time period (compared with 173 in 2019-20).	The revised system and process for engaging with developers at the pre application stage has enabled applications to continue to be developed, providing certainty and confidence in the planning process for developers and investors to Leeds. The remote meetings will continue to be used as they represent excellent value for money for the Council, reducing travel time and promoting increased accessibility
Case study	Challenges	Clear systems and process in place	Stakeholder engagement	Outcomes
Remote Plans Panel meetings	Due to the initial COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, the City Council cancelled all non-essential face to face Council meetings. The Coronavirus Act 2020 enabled decision making via remote meetings and the associated Regulations set out how Council meetings could be held remotely.	A Plans Panel Remote Meeting Protocol was developed which covered all aspects and stages of the process, including conducting of site visits, presentations and provided a robust framework for the service to enable the operation and integrity of the planning process during that challenging period	All members, the Executive were engaged in the development of the protocol to replicate as far as possible the existing format of Plans Panel to ensure business continuity.	The protocol enabled the service to make decisions that could not be delegated as part of the Council's delegation scheme, providing continued appropriate democratic accountability. It provided a transparent and effective decision-making process, consistent with the Council's constitution and legal requirements. Certainty was provided for communities and investors and third-party involvement in the Plans Panel process was maintained. 51 applications were determined by the Plans Panel in the reporting period through remote Panel meetings.
Case study	Challenges	Clear systems and process in place	Stakeholder engagement	Outcomes

<p>Consultation on Section 106 fee increases</p>	<p>As part of the Council's 2020-21 budget review the Section 106 monitoring fees were increased. This was in accordance with an amendment to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (Regulation 122). The fees now more closely reflect the true costs of monitoring, managing and reporting.</p>	<p>Legal Services instructed their outsourcing partners of the revised changes and web content was amended to reflect the changes.</p>	<p>Consultation was undertaken in March 2021 with regular service users, particularly developers of larger schemes as Section 106 is only applicable to some major schemes.</p>	<p>Shared understanding of the reasons for the increase in fee and the fee was increased in May 2021. Revised fees are now operational.</p>
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Additionally, assurance that the processes are effectively embedded is demonstrated through the services' performance information. Two indicators measure the quality of decision making- number of upheld complaints and numbers of appeals upheld.

Complaints

Complaints about service quality or not following correct processes are investigated by the service's Complaints Team rather than planning or enforcement officers, therefore there is a degree of independence in considering the issues. In terms of upheld complaints, 28 or 16% of total complaints were upheld under the Council's complaint process or by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO), this compares with 10% upheld in 2019-20. The increase was largely due to the delays in service delivery because of the COVID19 restrictions. Process changes are being developed in response to recommended actions from the LGO, where they found fault in the Council's processes; the first is developing a more robust process for receiving and recording member request for referring items to Panel and the second is the introduction of shared and monitored inboxes for members to send requests and information to the team. These changes are proposed to ensure requests and information is not overlooked and will minimise the risk the issues reoccurring as well as providing a better documented and transparent process.

Appeals

For appeals, the rate of dismissed appeals for 2020-21 is high at 77.9%, meaning only 22.1% of appealed applications are upheld, this is in comparison with the national average where 24.5% of appeals are upheld¹.

Members will be aware of the Government's 'special measures' regime, where local planning authorities can be designated as "Poorly-Performing", if they fail to meet criteria for quality of decision-making, allowing developers to submit applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate. Any authority that has more than 10% of either major or non-major applications overturned at appeal over a specified two-year period is at risk of this designation. In December 2020 the Government confirmed that the special measures regime would continue until at least 2022 and that the next official assessment period will cover April 2018 to March 2020. The latest published² figures covering six of the eight quarters over which councils are due to be assessed before the 2021 special measures designations and show that Leeds performance stands at 1.7% for major and 0.7% of non-major applications overturned at appeal, well below the 10% threshold above which special measures would apply.

Concerns were raised at Corporate Governance and Audit Committee at its meeting in September 2020 regarding two developments that were at that time being considered as part of the Authority's planning process. Internal Audit carried out an investigation on the two applications and concluded that there is a high level of compliance with local policies and decision protocols.

Meaningfully Monitor

There are a number of ways the service can demonstrate that meaningful and robust monitoring takes place and this exists on several levels; it is a statutory requirement to collect and publish performance information as well as monitoring and evaluation which takes place at a local service level. Benchmarking takes place to ensure there is a perspective about how well the service performs compared to other peer authorities which helps to identify performance gaps and areas for improvement. The monitoring framework is described below:

¹ [Percentage of planning appeals dismissed - Quarterly in England | LG Inform \(local.gov.uk\)](#)

² [Live tables on planning application statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Activity	Process	Oversight	Escalation	Risks & Resolution
		sits in the upper quartile for quality of decision making		<p>Inspectorate for determination. This risks application not being dealt with locally, potentially bypassing local democratic processes, reducing application income and causing significant reputational damage.</p> <p>Planning appeals and quality of decision making, where performance drops below the expected level, the service will examine appeal decisions and take corrective action, or attach different weight, as appropriate where a change of stance is perhaps required in light of recurring upheld appeals.</p>
Service reporting	<p>The service collects a range of information and data to monitor its own performance and to take corrective action wherever necessary.</p> <p>This enables identification of high-risk areas where corrective action can be taken as appropriate, for example examining speed of decision making where there has been a downturn in performance.</p> <p>No statutory targets for enforcement decision making, however the quality of decision making can be seen in the same way as the quality of planning decision making by the consideration of</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring in service of individual officer caseloads as well as overall service performance allows for swift resolution of issues early on and use of escalation processes as appropriate.</p> <p>Customer complaints information is recorded and a quarterly report is presented to the Leadership Team.</p> <p>Performance data is reported on a quarterly basis to the Senior Management Team for review and to identify trends or issues. Based on</p>	<p>Senior manager review</p> <p>In service escalation to identify appropriate corrective action</p>	<p>Areas for improvement identified through trends of complaints are shared with the planning team to reduce the risk of reoccurrence in similar subjects</p> <p>As above.</p>

Activity	Process	Oversight	Escalation	Risks & Resolution
	<p>enforcement appeals which are subsequently upheld at appeal</p> <p>In line with the Enforcement Protocol on Council owned Land and Properties, information is fed back to the owning service for remedy</p>	<p>the latest data available⁵ it is noted that LCC compares very favourably with the appeal rate of the Core Cities.</p> <p>Political oversight is provided through twice yearly reports on performance to the Joint Plans Panels.</p>	<p>Where action to remedy planning breaches has not taken place on Council owned land or property or has not resolved the issue, is escalated to the appropriate Chief Officer.</p>	<p>Some potential reputational risk, however, the Council cannot take legal action against itself</p>
Benchmarking	<p>Core Cities benchmarking to ensure that performance is comparable with similar authorities which helps to highlight any service anomalies or emerging trends; this assists the service to highlight risks and take action as appropriate.</p> <p>In developing the Enforcement protocol on Council owned land or properties, benchmarking with the Core Cities was undertaken.</p>	<p>The Government⁶ publishes determination of planning applications and quality of decision-making data</p>	<p>Head of Development Management to take corrective action as appropriate</p>	<p>It is important for Leeds' performance to be comparable to peer authorities, e.g. Core Cites. When performance is significantly different an investigation into the issues can be initiated</p>

⁵ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiZjkwMGUyZDctMmZlZS00ZmE2LWFKMTEtN2E4ZDc2Zjc3YjhkcliwidCI6ImMzQ2ODEwLTljN2QtNDNkZS1hODcyLTl0YTJiM5OTVhOCJ9>

⁶ <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiZjkwMGUyZDctMmZlZS00ZmE2LWFKMTEtN2E4ZDc2Zjc3YjhkcliwidCI6ImMzQ2ODEwLTljN2QtNDNkZS1hODcyLTl0YTJiM5OTVhOCJ9>

Refine and Review

Two main drivers have had a significant impact on the work of the service in 2020-21, the Council budget challenge and the associated COVID impacts resulting in a significant loss of planning staff and in ability to move applications forward. These drivers have led for the need to rethink, review and refine service delivery and processes to ensure that there is a proportionate approach, deploying resources at the correct level in the interest of efficiency and value for money as well as being responsive to service, legislative, budget and other challenges; this is particularly important given that application workload increased by 37% in the first six months of 2021. It has been recognised that while statutory targets are being maintained, largely through the use of extension of time agreements, the speed of delivering decisions has dropped, which has led to service complaints. Additionally, the number of enforcement notices being served in 2020-21, is the lowest it has been for nine years. This figure reflects the initial 'stay at home message' from the Government and the inability to undertake site visits to assess alleged breaches of planning control and subsequent social distancing measures that limited the ability of officers to access and fully engage with owners on site. Leeds activity reflects the national picture, where there has been a drop of nearly a quarter of enforcement notices issued from the previous year and the lowest figure recorded since the data was first collected in 1997⁷.

Following the move to Step 4 of the Government's COVID Road Map, it is anticipated that applications can now be moved forward and for enforcement, unannounced site visits will return. Additionally, temporary staff are shortly to be recruited using allocated COVID relief funds to address these issues and it is anticipated that performance and customer service will improve quickly.

Additionally, the Government's Planning White Paper, published in August 2020 set out a radical programme of reforms for planning, which since then has been somewhat moderated. The Government's agenda is now becoming a little clearer mainly due to a speech given by the Secretary of State to the LGA in July 2021 which follows a Select Committee Report on the White Paper proposals, whereby the reforms may not be as radical, nor as wide ranging as first thought with a focus on "improving the current planning system" as opposed to "tearing it down". Notwithstanding this, there are significant changes proposed including proposals which were trailed as national standards which now may be more locally-led such as the infrastructure levy set to replace S106 and setting of housing requirements, the intent to speed up plan-making (to a maximum of 30 months), determination timescales for certain applications reduced from 13 to 10 weeks for majors, timescales for implementing those permissions, and frontloading the planning system to give clarity to local people through a zonal-style system. There

⁷ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/996136/Table_P127__Final_.ods

is a great deal of uncertainty therefore in undertaking any further structural or organisational reviews until the Planning Reform Bill is published later this year; once the details are known the service will be better placed to further review and refine service delivery, systems and processes.

Benchmarking against the Core Cities has been undertaken for many process and systems changes including pre application fees, s106 monitoring fees, enforcement processes, elements of the service review work on decision making as well as performance outputs. It is recognised that each Local Planning Authority is configured differently and has different priorities and agendas, however Benchmarking will continue to form an important part of refining and reviewing processes to ensure best practice is being adopted and to ascertain Leeds performance and systems in comparison with peer authorities.

A suite of documentations exists to embed and communicate systems, processes and control in place within the planning service to ensure that statutory requirements are met and to ensure there is high quality consistent decision making in Leeds those systems and processes. As part of the service responsiveness to change, these documents are subject a programme for systematic review to ensure that they remain an accurate reflection of arrangements and are up to date and fit for purpose. Several new documents were introduced in 2020-21 in response to COVID19 for decision making by the Plans Panels and for officer decision making under the delegation scheme, ensuring decision were consistent, transparent and robust, which are detailed below. Additionally, following the review for the 2019-20 Assurance report, several documents were identified for review in 2020-21, the position against these actions is also detailed below:

Document	Purpose	Monitored	Review date	Review	Accountability and oversight
Officer Delegation Scheme (Council Functions)	Sets out authority for Chief Planning Officer to discharge council functions	Corporately	May 2021	Reviewed by service in consultation with the Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs	Full Council

Document	Purpose	Monitored	Review date	Review	Accountability and oversight
Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive Functions)	Sets out authority for Chief Planning Officer to discharge executive functions	Corporately	May 2021	Reviewed annually with executive arrangements.	Leader of Council
Chief Planning Officer sub-delegation scheme	Sets out authority for officers of suitable experience and seniority to discharge council and executive functions. The CPO has sub-delegated some or all of those functions to officers of suitable experience and seniority.	Corporately	May 2021	Refreshed annually following renewal of delegations at annual council meeting.	Chief Planning Officer
Plans Panel terms of reference	Sets out authority and remit for Area Plans Panels, the City Plans Panel and Development Plans Panels	Corporately Plans Panel decisions are made in accordance with the terms of reference of each Panel.	Annual	As part of the Annual Meeting of Council	Full Council
Local Plan	Sets out a vision and a framework for the future development of an area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure.	The Local Plan is kept up to date by reviewing the policies within it to see if they need to be updated.	A review of existing policies is undertaken every 5 years		Development Plans Panel, Full Council

Document	Purpose	Monitored	Review date	Review	Accountability and oversight
	<p>Guides decisions about individual development proposals.</p> <p>The Authority Monitoring Report monitors the implementation of planning policies in terms of planning decisions</p> <p>Site Allocations Plan and Aire Valley AAP identifies sites for housing, employment, retail and greenspace to ensure that enough land is available in appropriate locations to meet the growth targets set out in the Core Strategy.</p>	<p>Annually and reported to Council and Government</p> <p>A legal challenge was made to the High Court and judgement was handed down in June 2020, allowing the claim on 3 grounds. All interested parties were invited to propose remedies in light of the judgement</p>	<p>from adoption.</p> <p>A SAP remittal process is now underway. In response to the outcome, hearing commenced on 14 September 2021</p>		
<p>Planning Code of Good Practice, part 5(g) of the Constitution</p>	<p>Aimed at Plans Panel Members and the emphasis of it is to provide practical supportive advice to Members when dealing with planning matters, keeping decisions safe and mitigating the risk of possible challenge.</p>	<p>There have been no reported complaints or issues in relation to the operation of the Code in this reporting period.</p>	<p>Last reviewed and amended May 2018</p>	<p>To be reviewed 2021-22</p>	<p>The Chief Planning Officer is authorised to approve the Code in consultation with the Joint meeting of Plans Panels.</p>

Document	Purpose	Monitored	Review date	Review	Accountability and oversight
					The Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs will also be consulted.
Public speaking protocol, part 5(h) of the Council's Constitution	Protocol provides the framework for allowing opportunities for public speaking on applications at the Panel meetings and at the pre application and position statement stages	Continuous monitoring to ensure compliance with the protocol and where Chair's discretion is used, this information is recorded	August 2021	Currently being reviewed as part of the Officer Member Communications protocol	The Chief Planning Officer is authorised to amend the Protocol in consultation with the Joint meeting of the Plans Panels
Pre application presentation guide	This document guides the principles for pre applications presentations to the Plans Panel meetings	Continuous monitoring to ensure compliance with the protocol and where Chair's discretion is used, this information is recorded	July 2019	Reviewed for currency and readability and a number of changes were made in the interests of Plain English.	Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs Joint meeting of the Plans Panels
Member Officer Communication Protocol	Document describing the consistent approaches to officer- member communication about planning applications	Possible changes now required arising from a number of drivers: technological developments, learning from the outcomes of complaints, reduced resource base and need for clearly documented process	October2021	Currently with the Executive Board Member for comment. The draft document has been renamed Development Management, Enforcement and Member	Chief Planning Officer in Consultation with Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs

Document	Purpose	Monitored	Review date	Review	Accountability and oversight
		as exemplified in the recent Liverpool Council Best Value Review document		Communication Protocol	
Leeds Enforcement Plan	The plan outlines the key considerations for the planning enforcement service in Leeds and sets out the main procedures and principles the service will adopt to regulate development and its priorities for investigation.	Continuous monitoring to ensure compliance, performance information reported twice yearly	Spring 2022	Terms of reference relate to Government guidance, corporate priorities, and the statutory development plan	Chief Planning Officer in Consultation with Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs
Householder Protocol	Setting out the level of service that applicants can expect and clearly describes the planning process the application will go through	Inservice	April 2022	Introduced in 2021, subject to annual light touch review	Chief Planning Officer in Consultation with Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs
Protocol for enforcement on Council owner land or property	Describing the proportionate escalation process for dealing with potential breaches on Council owned property and land	Inservice Introduced in April 2021	April 2022	Introduced in 2021, subject to annual light touch review	Chief Planning Officer in Consultation with Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs

Document	Purpose	Monitored	Review date	Review	Accountability and oversight
Safe working practices for Planning & Sustainable Development	Provide a safe but consistent decision-making framework for all officers to have regard to throughout the lockdown period and beyond	Monitored in line with Government's COVID Roadmap, Step 4	September 2021		Chief Planning Officer in Consultation with Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate and Plans Panel Chairs
Plans Panel Remote Meeting Protocol (City, South & West and North & East) and Development Plan Panels)	Providing a framework enabling decision making to be carried out remotely (enabled by the Coronavirus Act 2020), as part of the Council's wider democratic accountability process.	In service	No longer operational due to revocation of statutory power	Not applicable	