

CABINET

DATE OF MEETING: 3 DECEMBER 2020

TITLE OF REPORT: DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE ACTION PLAN

Report of: Head of Place

Cabinet member: Cllr Graham Cockarill, Portfolio for Place

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To agree the Development Management Service Action Plan (appended to this report).

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Cabinet approves the Development Management Service Action Plan as set out in Appendix A and that Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to regularly monitor the implementation of the Action Plan.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council appointed the Planning Officer's Society Enterprises (POSe) to carry out a Peer Review of the Development Management (DM) Service in November 2019.

3.2 An initial Action Plan which was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (O&S) in July 2020 and agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group of O&S Members to work to shape the Action Plan. In addition, Planning Committee created its own Working Party to consider those recommendations which specifically related to the work of the Planning Committee.

3.2 The Planning Committee endorsed a number of actions relating to work of Planning Committee at its meeting on 17th August 2020. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered an updated Action Plan on 17th November 2020 and recommended that Cabinet approve it.

4 CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The Peer Review highlights a number of Actions that the Review Team recommended that the Council consider implementing in order to turn the Service from a Good to Great Service.

4.2 The various improvements set out in the draft Action Plan have been allocated into one of three categories; short, medium and long term. These dates are when the actions will be completed. These are explained below:

<p>Short Term (S) Expected completion by 31st March 2021</p>
<p>These are either urgent matters or where significant improvements can be achieved in the short term with limited work and input. Some of these improvements are already underway with a number already completed.</p>

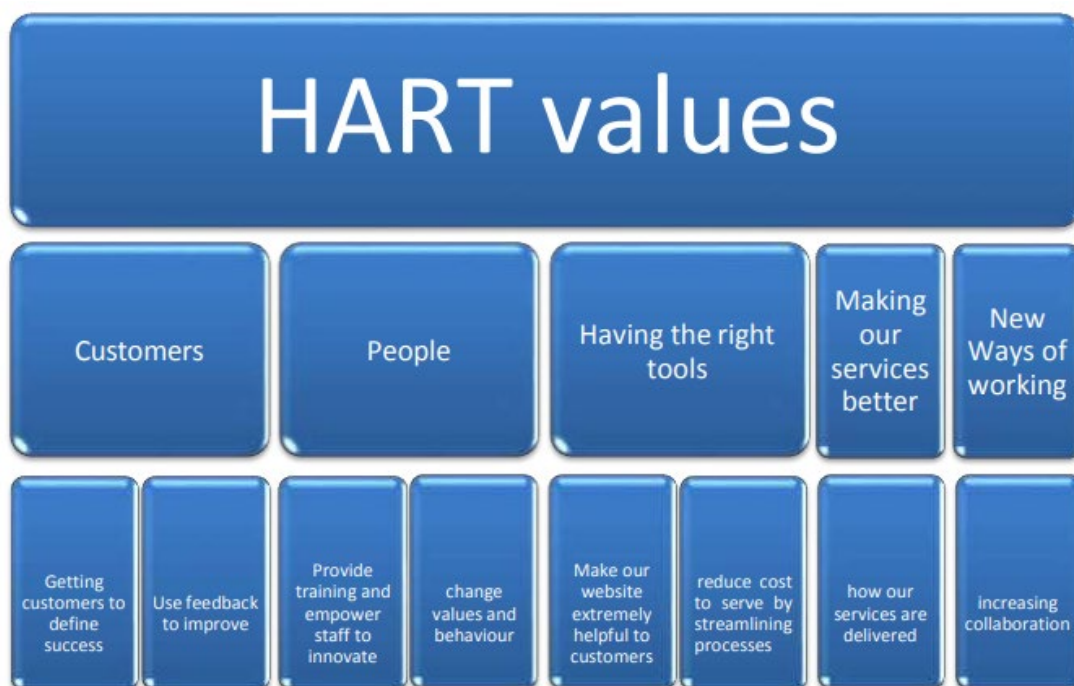
<p>Medium Term (M) Expected completion by 31st December 2021</p>
<p>These are matters that need further time to be developed or they are relatively wider projects where separate timetables will need to be developed</p>

<p>Long Term (L) Expected completion by 30th June 2022</p>
<p>These are longer term matters which in some case will be dependent on work in other categories or by the Council as a whole e.g. aspects relating to IT are dependent on the Council's Digitalisation Strategy.</p>

- 4.3 It must be recognised that creating an exemplary service will not be entirely dependent on completing each of the improvements or actions set out in the Action Plan. Aspects of the Action Plan can be grouped together as projects and in some cases there will be overlaps. For example, delivering Excellent Customer Service for example links into a number of different Actions but also into the wider Corporate Aims as set out in the Corporate Plan. The Service will need to consider how to deliver more for less whilst looking at the use of Information Technology to improve efficiency and ease of access to information for residents. Whilst there are improvements that could be made to the Council's website for example these need to be linked to the overall Corporate Digitalisation Strategy.
- 4.4 It is important that consideration is also given to other potential improvements that may not be explicitly identified in the Action Plan. For example, there is currently an audit of our Planning Database been carried out where the suppliers are reviewing how we are currently using the system compared to how it could be used. This is to assist training but also to ensure that our systems are used as efficiently as possible.
- 4.5 Whilst work on each of the actions will commence, it must be recognised that they cannot be dealt with in isolation and that there still needs to be a strategic and holistic review of the Service – to transform it into more of a customer focused enabling service. The actions will be the building blocks for bigger changes although it should be recognised that cultural change cannot happen overnight.

5 RELEVANCE TO THE CORPORATE PLAN AND/OR THE HART VISION 2040

- 5.1 Whilst planning affects or influences many of the priorities set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan, the Service Improvements specifically link to the Strategic Priority of delivering an efficient and effective Council. Many of the improvements will also cross reference to the new operating model that the Council wishes to create in order to deliver the Hart Vision 2040.
- 5.2 ‘The Hart Values - Our operating model that guides how we design and deliver services’ includes the following table, which encapsulates what we are seeking to do with the DM Service Action Plan.



- 5.3 The Corporate Plan states that as a Council it is committed to ensuring that the following values are embedded in all that it does:
- Putting our residents first
 - Providing real opportunities for engagement with residents and other stakeholders
 - Being open to change
 - Taking responsibility for our actions
 - Being fair, open and transparent

5.4 The intention is to embed these values as a golden thread running through the Action Plan.

6 Service Plan

Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan?	Yes
Is the proposal being funded from current budgets?	Yes
Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal?	Yes

7 ACTION

That Cabinet agrees to approve the Development Management Service Action Plan attached at Appendix A.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: Development Management Service Action Plan

Development Management Service Action Plan

Completed

Items where the actions have already been completed

Short Term (S)

Expected completion by 31st March 2021

These are either urgent matters or where significant improvements can be achieved in the short term with limited work and input. Some of these improvements are already underway with a number already completed

Medium Term (M)

Expected completion by 31st December 2021

These are matters that need further time to be developed or they are relatively wider projects where separate timetables will need to be developed

Long Term (L)

Expected completion by 30th June 2022

These are longer term matters which in some case will be dependent on work in other categories or by the Council as a whole e.g. aspects relating to IT are dependent on the Council's Digitalisation Strategy

COMPLETED ACTIONS

No.	Recommendation summary	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS
17	Confirm a process for signing off decision notices	Good to Great	Completed
21	Improve policy support for DM	One Council	Regular DM/Policy meetings set up to discuss issues, Policy support provided in relation to planning applications
25	Cease the practise at Committee of the Chairman proposing the motion to accept the officer recommendation prior to the debate	Good to Great	October Planning Committee adopted a new procedure
27	Allow officers to introduce their own cases at Committee	Good to Great	Implemented
28	Reconsider whether it is appropriate for Committee members to ask questions to speakers	One Council	October Planning Committee agreed to retain the ability to ask speakers questions
30	Review the continued need for a Major Sites Sub-Committee	One Council	October Planning Committee resolved to retain the use of the Major Sites Sub-Committee ensuring that any application s referred to it from Planning Committee had clear terms of reference

SHORT TERM ACTIONS

No	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
1	Prepare Improvement Action Plan, in consultation with the staff	Jan-20	75%	Good to Great Best in Class	Cabinet November for final adoption
2	Establish clear service objectives with priorities, targets and performance indicators	Winter 2020		One Council Income generation	Key Performance indicators will be reviewed. Other internal performance indicators will be adopted and kept under review and adapted accordingly
4	Establish objectives and targets agreed by Members as part of a performance management framework	Winter 2020		Good to Great	As above
5	Set performance criteria to align with MHCLG structure	Winter 2020		Best in Class Good to Great	As above
7	Set targets for reducing the average length of time taken to determine applications (and reduce reliance on Extensions of Time)	Winter 2020		Good to Great	
8	Introduce a protocol for Extensions of Time	Oct-20	50%	Good to Great Best in Class	Protocol is drafted

No	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
9	Report performance monthly to Service Management Team <i>(cross ref. DM Audit report – Risk 3 & 5)</i>	Autumn 2020		Good to Great Best in Class	Content of monthly Service Management Team report to evolve in line with work pressures/above actions re service priorities/performance indicators
10	Report performance quarterly to Planning Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Autumn 2020		Good to Great Best in Class	Quarterly reports to Planning Committee to resume on Planning Application performance, Appeal performance and Enforcement O&S - need input re what needs to be reported/updating KPIs (cross link to 1/2/4)
12	Provide more detailed and regular validation training for BSU staff <i>(cross ref. DM Audit report – Risk 1 & 4)</i>	Dec-19	ongoing	One Council Good to Great	Validation Training held December 2019 Validation Surgery Sessions are held regularly Further training will take place on the new Validation requirements once adopted (November 2020)
14	Review the application allocation process to consider a “triage” approach and possibly self-allocation for householder cases	Summer 2020	50%	Good to Great	Self-Allocation was trialled following the lean review of DM however it led to unbalanced caseloads and sometimes prevented career development Triaging of cases will be reviewed
15	Adopt a 3-week consultation period for parishes (with flexibility in certain cases)	Autumn 2020		Good to Great GOLD	

No	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
16	Cease posting of site notices except where required by statute	Spring 2020	50%	GOLD	Already completed in response to the Covid-19 restrictions Council's SCI has been amended as a temporary measure; Cabinet will need to agree permanent changes
20	Report appeal decisions on a regular basis to officers and Members.	Autumn 2020	50%	Good to Great	Quarterly reports to resume on appeal decisions Key Decisions will be reported separately to Councillors Officers already get regular updates All Councillors and Planning Officers are informed of decisions when they are received
23	Review the roles of the Conservation Team, aiming for a policy driven approach and acting as consultee for DM, rather than case officers	Spring 2020	50%	One Council	Conservation Officers have ceased being case officers
26	Introduce a simpler Committee report format with a more consistent and structured approach	Autumn 2020		Good to Great Best in Class	Discussed at Planning Working Party and Officers are starting work on this
37	Establish an Officer group to review service training needs and opportunities	Autumn 2020		Good to Great	Started

No	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS ON PROGRESS
38	Ensure all new staff are trained on IT systems immediately after they arrive	Autumn 2020	ongoing (as and when we have new starters)	Digitalisation	
40	Regularly review training and development requirements, and arrange training and other CPD opportunities through the PDR process	Summer 2020	ongoing	Good to Great	

MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS

No.	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS
3	Consider measures to increase the management capacity in DM as a priority	Winter 2020		GOLD Best in Class	May have wider implications for budgets/resources
11	Review pre-application advice process for major applications to include consultees, local community and Members <i>(cross ref. DM Audit report – Risk 2 and Review of Pre-App advice)</i>	Spring 2021		Customer Focused Good to Great	Needs own project plan to review existing service and establish new service
13	Create a validation guidance manual for BSU	Spring 2021		One Council Good to Great	
18	Provide additional training on planning appeals for Officers, Members and Parish & Town Councils			Best in Class	Link to 31 (Member training)
22	Improve liaison between the Legal Team and Enforcement with set timescales and milestones for processing enforcement cases	Autumn 2020		Good to Great One Council	Peer Review of Enforcement has commenced

No.	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS
24	Review process of Ward Members being able to request site visits, and review timing of site visits to try to improve attendance by Members	Summer 2020	25%	One Council	Planning Working Party has already started looking at this Officers to draft options to trial with the Committee.
29	Review the continued need for an Enforcement Sub-Committee	Summer 2020		One Council	Link to 22 (Peer Review of Enforcement)
31	Review the content of Member training and consider updates for parish/town councils	Summer 2020		One Council	Covid-19 has meant delivering training differently Will continue to review content for annual training and consider setting up a Parish Forum
32	Re-instate the Enforcement and Householder Team Leader as solely responsible for enforcement	Winter 2020		GOLD	Link to wider management/staffing/resource review and Enforcement Peer Review
33	Introduce an additional Team Leader in DM and review the functions of the two DM teams	Winter 2020		GOLD	Link to 3 (Increase Management Capacity)
34	Consider further delegation of signing off applications	Spring 2021		Customer Focused	Flows from review of Management capacity and potential additional team leader posts (3, 32 and 33)

No.	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS
35	Improve communications in DM through a more formalised approach to Planning Forum meetings, an increased emphasis on performance management, and completing Personal Development Review (PDR) actions	Autumn 2020	Ongoing	One Council	Commencing with mid-year PDR reviews
36	Review the location and reporting lines for the Conservation Team	Spring 2021		One Council	Already changed reporting lines but it needs a proper review linked to overall review of management structure of the service (see recommendation 3)
39	Review current split of functions and processes of validation within BSU to deliver a more streamlined process	Spring 2021		Good to Great	
41	Examine level and nature of complaints received in last few years to identify any common causes or areas of concern	Winter/Spring 2021		Customer Focused Good to Great	Process for handling complaints has been reviewed and amended – commence November 2020 Part of a wider review of complaints process in Place Services
42	Encourage a culture of customer care throughout DM at all levels	Autumn 2020		Customer Focused Best in Class	

No.	Recommendation summary	Expected Start Date	% Completed	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS
45	Review the current duty planner arrangements	Spring 2021		Customer Focused	Linked to the review of the pre-application advice service
46	Commence training for case officers and enforcement on the Enterprise programme (once its future use is confirmed)	Winter 2020		Digitalisation GOLD	Idox audit commenced November 2020, training on Uniform and Enterprise will follow

LONG TERM ACTIONS

No.	Recommendation summary	Service Plan Theme	COMMENTS
6	Establish ambitious, but realistic, local targets with the aim to reach national upper quartile performance in 3 years	Best in Class	Needs to link to Service performance measures and be reviewed over 3 years to ensure movement towards upper quartile
19	Consider introducing annual tour of completed developments for Members and officers, when resources permit	Good to Great	On hold due to Covid-19
43	A telephone hunt group should be set up for the case officers	Customer Focused	Link to Corporate IT/Digitalisation Strategy for Council, esp the new telephony system and the call centre
44	Obtain and analyse telephone answering statistics so Team Leaders can address any issues	Customer Focused	Link to Corporate IT/Digitalisation Strategy for Council, esp the new telephony system and the call centre
47	Ensure the IT hardware is upgraded to ensure fast and efficient access to the systems (Uniform and Enterprise)	Digitalisation GOLD	Link to Corporate IT/Digitalisation Strategy for Council New laptops and phones have been rolled out in response to Covid-19 lockdown
48	Any investment in IT hardware and development of software needs to factor in new working practices when budgeting and procurement occurs	Digitalisation GOLD	Link to Corporate IT/Digitalisation Strategy for Council New laptops and phones have been rolled out in response to Covid-19 lockdown Link to Revitalise Hart

