



**Challenge and
Improvement Committee**

22nd May 2018

Subject: Planning Enforcement Benchmarking

Report by:

Executive Director Operations
Mark Sturgess

Contact Officer:

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Housing and Environmental Enforcement
Manager

Purpose / Summary:

To provide elected members with an overview of
the current performance position within the
planning enforcement work area.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

Elected Members are asked to:

- a) Note the current position in regards to performance within the work are and the positive steps being taken to ensure performance is enhanced in the future.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:
None noted

Financial:
None noted

Staffing:
None noted

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:
None noted

Risk Assessment:
None noted

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:
None noted

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

No

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

No

1. Introduction

- 1.1. On the 20th February 2018 Challenge and Improvement Committee received a draft of the revised Local Enforcement Plan (Planning Enforcement) prior to it being approved at Prosperous Communities Committee.
- 1.2. At this meeting, members of C & I requested additional information in regards to case timescales as it has been noted previously within Progress and Delivery that the performance within this area was not satisfactory and reassurances were sought in regards to future performance.
- 1.3. This report sets out some of the contextual performance information and in doing so seeks to provide assurance in regards to future performance timescales.

2. Current Position

- 2.1. The revised Local Enforcement Plan came into effect in March 2018 and is the policy framework within which decisions relating to planning enforcement will be made.
- 2.2. In January 2018 an additional full time resource was allocated to the work area to provide a permanent staffing solution. Previously temporary measures had been in place and these were not effective in the long term due to the ongoing demand being place on the service. There are 2 FTEs working within this area, previously there has been 1 to 1.5 FTE intermittently.
- 2.3. The audit carried out in 2017 raised a number of points which were covered within the committee reports and the service has set out how it intends to make the necessary improvements.
- 2.4. A variety of measures relating to these points are provided within the Progress and Delivery reporting process.

3. Revised Policy Position

- 3.1. It has been agreed that the following timescales (Table 1) will be adhered to within the revised policy. Internal systems are currently being updated to reflect this and to enable the relevant monitoring to occur.

Table 1: Local Enforcement Plan Timescales

Task	Impact		
	High	Medium	Low
Register and Review	Immediately	Within 3 working days	Within 5 working days
Site Visit	Within 24 hour (excluding weekends)	Within 7 working days (only if necessary)	Within 15 working days (only if necessary)
Customer informed of course of action	Within 2 working days	Within 20 working days	Within 20 working days

3.2. It should be noted that many cases will take longer to resolve than the above timescales and the revised performance measures will seek to ensure that long standing cases, where the timescales are out of the Council's and the officers' control, are separated. This will provide a more accurate picture of the day to day workings of the work area and reflect the different types of work that occur.

3.3. Within the measures below, that show previous years' performance, all cases are included. This can make the data available less informative for various reasons. For example, if a case is open and a notice is served, which is subsequently appealed, the timescales for the appeal are not within the Council's control. This could mean that the case stays open for a much longer period and when closed, the number of days will be significantly higher than the average. The audit report approves this approach to monitoring.

4. Previous Performance

4.1. The information shown in appendix 1 sets out how the service has performed over the previous years.

4.2. Since January 2018, satisfaction surveys have been piloted within the Council for cases which are closed on the system. During this period, 16 surveys have been returned in relation to planning enforcement and 64% of customers were satisfied with the initial contact. Further recording of this measure will help the service to improve.

4.3. During 17/18 there were 19 complaints logged regarding planning enforcement and 10 of these were upheld. The vast majority of upheld complaints relate to the timescales in which it has taken the Council to make a decision or progress the matter reported by the customer. The revised policy and timescale commit to address this issue. The performance in regards to complaints in this work area is in line with the overall corporate position.

5. Moving Forward

- 5.1. 18/19 will be used to review and improve the overall delivery within the service area. This will include review and improvement of the internal processes and in turn an improvement of the timescales achieved for the non-complex case work.
- 5.2. In turn, we would expect to see an improvement in the overall customer service provided and will be able to demonstrate how the initial acknowledgement and handling of cases has performed. This will not be comparable to previous years as it has not been recorded previously.
- 5.3. As the additional officer within the team becomes more competent and confident, we would expect the long standing and more formal cases to be progressed in a quicker fashion. This information will also be recorded as part of the overall review of measures.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. It has been requested that information be provided in regards to the overall performance within the work area, this report contains this information and provides an overall context to the demand and activity within it.
- 6.2. Qualitative and quantitative information is now available within the work area, which will be expanded upon in 18/19. This, combined with the revised policy approach and additional resources within the work area, should provide assurance that performance will move in a positive direction.
- 6.3. It is hoped that elected members welcome this change in delivery and the response to the audit observations and support the policy and its approach moving forward.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1. Elected Members are asked to;

Note the current position in regards to performance within the work are and the positive steps being taken to ensure performance is enhanced in the future.

Appendix 1 - Planning Enforcement Performance Information

Measure	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Open Cases						
Average number of open planning enforcement cases		84	97	151	129	133
Number of open priority 1 cases					16	
Number of open priority 2 cases					35	
Number of open priority 3 cases					63	
Number of open priority 4 cases					14	
Demand						
Number of planning enforcement requests received	231	267	248	223	231	
highest volume of open cases		74	122	154	160	
Timescales						
Average no. of days taken to determine all planning enforcement requests closed during this month		58	130	196	184	
Average no. of days taken to determine all planning enforcement requests closed in the year to date	102	62	73	186	185	
Closure Reasons						
No breach identified					84	
Breach rectified					45	
Planning application submitted or conditions discharged					20	
Not Expedient					35	
Outcomes						
Volume of notices served	21	7	4	11	12	
Successful appeals against the service of a planning enforcement notice	0	0	0	0	0	
Percentage of cases closed where WLDC action has resulted in compliance					33%	