

Supplementary Committee Agenda



Planning Services Scrutiny Standing Panel Tuesday, 18th November, 2008

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins - Office of the Chief Executive
Email mjenkins@eppingforestdc.gov.uk Tel: 01992 564607

9. PLANNING DIRECTORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (Pages 3 - 14)

(Director of Planning and Economic Development). Report attached for consideration by the Panel.

This page is intentionally left blank



SCRUTINY



Report to: Planning Services Scrutiny Standing Panel

Date of meeting: 18 November 2008

**Subject: An Improvement Plan for the Directorate of
Planning & Economic Development**

**Officer contact for further information: John Preston, Director of Planning and Economic
Development (01992 56 4111)**

Committee Secretary: Mark Jenkins, Democratic Services Assistant (01992 56 4607)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

**To consider and comment on the proposed Planning and Economic Development
Directorate Improvement Plan.**

Report:

Within the covering report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 November (which principally concerned the completion of the Value for Money exercise on Development Control), it was agreed that the Directorate would produce an Improvement Plan for the next eighteen months.

As the Panel's investigations have shown, there has already been significant change within Planning over the last few years. However, there is scope for further change and improvement. There is a strong commitment to continuous improvement amongst both the Senior Management Team within the Directorate and their teams of staff.

For example the training, roll out and feedback on the Planning computer systems at present, and over the next few months should demonstrate what genuinely innovative, new systems have been developed.

Attached is a draft of an improvement plan, based on that used for other exercises, such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The plan seeks to identify 13 areas of potential improvement based on feedback on current performance and proposes action to address these, alongside the resources required and an indicative timescale.

The Panel's input into the content and scope of the plan is sought. If members of the Panel are in agreement, regular progress reports will be brought to future meetings.

This page is intentionally left blank

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

AREA OF IMPROVEMENT	ACTION(S)	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET FOR COMPLETION	RESOURCES AVAILABLE/ REQUIRED	PROGRESS		
					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>1. Review the measures used within Planning and Economic Development to ensure that Staff are maximising the performance of the Directorate.</p>	<p>1. Implement a Directorate Improvement Plan that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set out actions that are already underway • Set out actions that are now needed. • Include a vision of where the Directorate will be in six months time. • Incorporate Key National Indicator Improvement plans • Review the use of consultants. • Include actions within Planning. • Include actions within EFDC. 	<p>Director of Planning and Directorate Management Team.</p>	<p>By end March 2009</p>	<p>Existing resources refocused.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

<p>2. Develop and promote a set of service standards for Planning and Economic Development, outlining the minimum levels of service that external and internal customers will receive.</p>	<p>Review previous protocols, (e.g. those re DC and Enforcement)</p>	<p>Directorate Business Manager</p>	<p>End Dec 2008</p>	<p>If these are to be adhered to at all times that raises issues about whether they are all to be to QA standards, and how to guarantee to achieve them when staff are absent.</p>	
<p>3. Check the effectiveness of the channels of communication used to ensure that all staff are aware of service priorities and quality standards.</p>	<p>Review the methods used to communicate priorities.</p>	<p>Assistant Directors</p>		<p>None</p>	

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

	ACTION(S)	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET FOR COMPLETION	RESOURCES AVAILABLE/ REQUIRED	PROGRESS		
					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Limited Action
4. Improve the mechanisms for regular on-going feedback from users on the quality of service they have received.	Improve the mechanisms for regular on-going feedback from users on the quality of service they have received.	Directorate Business Manager	End of November 2008	Within existing resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Improve ownership of problems and accountability amongst the Senior Management Team within Planning and Economic Development.	Check this is happening. Remind Senior Managers of what is required, particularly when new appointments are made.	Director of Planning, Assistant Directors Director of Planning	End of November 2008		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

AREA OF IMPROVEMENT	ACTION(S)	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET FOR COMPLETION	RESOURCES AVAILABLE/ REQUIRED	PROGRESS
6. Implement appropriate measures to raise morale and increase staff motivation in achieving service improvements.	Remove sources of criticism. Make more of successes.	Director of Planning	By end April 2009		
7. Develop a systematic approach to workforce planning to address recurring recruitment and retention difficulties.	1. Update the previous Workforce development plan.	1. Reconvene previous team.	By end Dec 2008	Within existing resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fully Achieved <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Achieved <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Action
	2. Review recruitment procedures, so that there is an essentially up to date package of information open to all staff that can be used to quickly commence appropriate recruitment campaigns.	2. Management Assistant	By end Dec 2008	Within existing resources.	

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

<p>8. Improve the standard, content, presentation and consistency of reports to Development Control, Planning Standing Panel and Area Sub Committees.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with the Chairmen and Chairwomen of these. 2. Review the “Standard template” for reports to these. (The review to pay particular attention to whether the local plan is given due prominence, whether extra sections are needed so as to reflect the recently amended Cabinet template, and how to resolve issues associated with “balanced” cases and those where officer advice is not accepted.) 3. Arrange refresher training for all those compiling or agreeing such reports. 	<p>Director of Planning and Assistant Director Development Control (or those acting up)</p>	<p>By end Dec 2008</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	
		<p>All compilers or approvers of such reports.</p>	<p>By end Jan 2009</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

<p>9. Review the Corporate Planning protocol with respect to dealing with applicants, agents, developers and the local business community to ensure that the highest standards of probity and governance are achieved.</p>	<p>The existing Planning Protocol is already intended to remind staff, and to assure the public that officers, and members, have codes of conduct, professional requirements, financial training and various registers of interests. The protocol can be reviewed/amended to pick up any of these points when the points of concern are clear. The points are understood to concern site visits with Members, but there may be other issues.</p>	<p>Director of Planning and Assistant to Chief Executive</p>	<p>By end Apr 2009</p>	<p>Within existing resources.</p>	
--	--	--	------------------------	-----------------------------------	--

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

<p>10. Implement practical measures to improve the public perception and reputation of the Council's Planning Service, particularly with respect to high profile/controversial applications and enforcement action.</p>	<p>Whether to respond to criticism has been considered by CEF/Management Board in the past; the decision being to effectively "let sleeping dogs lie." Planning is a controversial area, and that is unlikely to change. Enforcement performance reporting to Members was improved., and is due back at the Scrutiny Panel shortly.</p>					
---	---	--	--	--	--	--

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

AREA OF IMPROVEMENT	ACTION(S)	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	TARGET FOR COMPLETION	RESOURCES AVAILABLE/ REQUIRED	PROGRESS		
					<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
					Fully Achieved	Partially Achieved	Limited Action
11. Take positive action to raise confidence amongst elected Members of the Council with respect to the performance of the service area.	There needs to be better communication of the successes, such as ICT. This can also be judged by reference to the delivery of outcomes from this plan, and the involvement of members in its creation.				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Routinely review costs for the different elements of the service, set challenging targets for improved performance and implement effective monitoring arrangements.	<p>1. The Scrutiny Panel has considered costs; further more limited one off reviews would be useful.</p> <p>2. Challenging targets already exist and the monitoring of these has been audited and found to be acceptable.</p>	<p>Director of Planning, Assistant Directors, Other SCOs.</p> <p>Director of Planning and Principal Accountant</p>			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN (OCTOBER 2008 – APRIL 2010)

<p>13. Ensure that there is a clear focus on the actions contained within the improvement plan by all senior staff within Planning and Economic Development and that priority is given to delivery.</p>	<p>See 1 above.</p>	<p>Director of Planning and Senior staff.</p>				
---	---------------------	---	--	--	--	--

This page is intentionally left blank