

Report to Planning Scrutiny Panel

Date of meeting: 14 April 2015

**Subject: Progress Report Electronic Information and Systems
Progress Plan – Development Management**

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Committee Secretary:



To consider and note a report on Electronic Information and Systems Progress Plan 2015 – 2016, Development Management

Summary

The following report outlines the Electronic Information and Systems Progress Plan 2015 – 2016, Development Management as shown on Appendix One and forms an Appendix of the Governance Directorate Business Plan. Each of the paragraphs in the following report corresponds with the number sequence in the left column in Appendix One attached.

Report:

1. Development Management is heavily dependent on the smooth operation of its primary planning database Northgate M3 for both Development Control (DC) and Building Control (BC). Linked to this is Information@work, the information management software where all plans, maps, photographs and documents are stored. The restructure of the Planning Support Team was agreed on 29th October 2014 and a Senior Technical Officer Electronic Information and a Technical Officer Applications Systems have since been appointed. The key focus for the newly restructured team will be to implement business process improvements in the use of both Northgate M3 and Information@work.
2. Crystal Reports is a powerful performance management tool that will help in creating new and faster business processes within Development Management. Development of Crystal Reports has been identified as a key area where significant business process improvements should take place. Developing Crystal Reports during 2015/16 will help provide better quality performance management information.
3. There is a need to improve and develop payment processes in Development Management. One of the barriers to the provision of quality Planning and Building Control services is our inability to accept payments online by card for both DC and BC. We currently have this facility available as part of the electronic Planning Portal process where over 50% of all planning applications are processed. However Building Control at this time does not have this facility and currently rely on the limited Submit a Plan process which does not include a payment option. An integrated payment solution for BC may be resolved once Northgate rollout online BC applications and/or if the Planning Portal provides a BC application service.
4. Ongoing support for improvements to both iPlan and Development Management EFDC Website pages will continue during 2015/16 including the provision of specialist web mapping information. The introduction of Web Mapping on the EFDC website linked to planning and building control information is scheduled to be rolled out in 2015/16.
5. Work will continue in the scanning of large site, conservation and contaminated land files. Significant progress has already been made in scanning some large site files. There is a high level of public interest in these files and once completed this information will be available to all officers across the council who in turn will be able to make this information more readily available to members of the public.

6. Significant progress has been made in the in the electronic conversion of historical microfiche planning records. It is estimated that the total of planning microfiche including an additional previous project that by December 2015 we will have converted 93 000 jackets comprising of nearly five million historical planning images to electronic format.
7. Work will continue in 2015/16 to scan Building Control paper files. This is required as there is a need to reduce Building Control's dependence on paper records as existing storage space has reached maximum capacity. The conversion of Building Control Paper Records to electronic format is part of the modernisation of Building Control and will support flexible and mobile working.
8. The roll out of tablets for flexible working for DC, Trees and BC is a key element in making progress towards mobile and flexible working. However ICT are leading on this and further development is subject to planning/building control officers being able to access the full range of database information whilst on site and/or at home.

Reason for recommendation/decision:

This progress report forms part of the Work Programme for Planning Scrutiny and Appendix One of the Governance Directorate's Business Plan forms the basis for Electronic Information Improvement.

Consultation undertaken:

ICT (SB)

Resource implications:

Resource requirements for some actions to achieve specific key objectives for 2014/15 are still to be agreed by Finance as part of the budget process.

Background papers:

Appendix One - Electronic Information and Systems Progress Plan 2015 – 2016, Development Management (attached)

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:

There are no specific implication implications arising from the recommendations of this report. However steps are being taken as part of the Improvement Plan for Electronic Information Systems to decrease paper usage and to encourage Epping Forest residents to make use of iPlan and associated website information which are climate and environmentally friendly measures in line with the carbon reduction objectives of the council.