

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL REGULATORY COMMITTEE  
TUESDAY, 30 APRIL 2013**

Councillors Basu, Beacham, Brabazon, Christophides, Demirci (Chair), Ejiofor, Mallett, McNamara, Peacock (Vice-Chair) and Schmitz

Apologies Councillor Reid and Scott

MINUTE NO.	SUBJECT/DECISION	ACTION BY
REG90.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Reid and Scott.</p>	
REG91.	<p><b>DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT: IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS TAKEN DECEMBER 2012 - MARCH 2013 AND PROPOSALS FOR 2013-14</b></p> <p>The Committee received an update report, requested at the last meeting, on the Development Management service performance assessment in light of ongoing concerns regarding performance, and within the context of proposed government plans to impose penalties on poor performing Local Planning Authorities. The report included an update on improvement actions taken to date as well as those planned for the future in 2013/14. The Committee's attention was drawn to an error to the table within the report summarising s106 expenditure, where s106 funds agreed for 2011/12 should correctly be listed as £19m and the total £28m.</p> <p>A full review of the Development Management service had been undertaken in 2012 because of concerns about performance and service quality. This service review completed at a time the government began to focus on planning performance within the context of a national reduction seen in the timeliness of the processing of major applications. As a result of this, the government proposed to introduce a special measures penalty to come into force in October 2013.</p> <p>It was advised that at the current time, based on improved performance in determining major applications during the 2011-13 assessment period, it was anticipated that the Council would avoid falling within the special measures category based on current information. A caveat was however provided that government would not finally confirm the final criteria until May/June. Authorities assessed as failing this criteria would be named in October. The Committee noted the implications and penalties imposed on authorities falling within this classification. In the interests of transparency, the Committee requested circulation of a full copy of the review document. The Chair agreed this would be circulated when completed.</p> <p>Following the completion of the review exercise, a service action plan had been developed to address the 14 key areas of improvement identified. Officers advised that the action plan constituted the first step</p>	<p>Marc Dorfman</p>

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of a long term, iterative process of improvement which would adapt over time and in which the Committee had an important role to play. In recognition of this, Members were asked to forward any suggestions or ideas on service improvements to the Chair for discussion with Marc Dorfman.

All to note

The Committee expressed concern that Development Management performance issues had not been explicitly identified to the Committee at an earlier stage as part of their remit in maintaining oversight of performance. Although it was acknowledged that regular performance reports had been provided to the Committee, there was agreement that the performance data set and format reported up to meetings should be reviewed in conjunction with input from members of the Committee to ensure clarity and a focus on key indicators. The Chair agreed to arrange this with Marc Dorfman and advise members of the Committee accordingly. Members also asked for consideration to be given to opportunities for Committee members to play a more interactive role with the service in order to gain greater understanding such as arranging shadowing exercises with Planning Officers etc. The Chair agreed to discuss this further with Marc. Going forward it was agreed that the Cttee would receive regular reports on the DM Review Action Plan in addition to performance statistics.

Marc Dorfman

Marc Dorfman /Chair

Members sought assurances regarding the monitoring arrangements in place for the action plan. It was confirmed that a Development Management Review Action Plan group met fortnightly to oversee implementation and monitor performance. In addition, a bespoke team met on a weekly basis to oversee performance in relation to major applications, regular service performance updates were provided to Director's Group meetings as well as weekly service monitoring meetings held between the Assistant Director, the Director and Cabinet Member. The Chair also confirmed he held monthly meetings with the Director and Cabinet Member and committed to feed back to the Committee as necessary

The Committee emphasised the importance of facilitating a change in culture within the service, with a focus on improving customer satisfaction and getting the basics right, particularly around the handling of smaller planning applications and around which Members received regular complaints from constituents. Officers confirmed that although prudently the initial phase of the action plan had prioritised improving performance in relation to major applications, getting the metrics right and avoiding special measures, facilitating culture change and improving the quality of the service would be a fundamental long term focus. Under the action plan, improvements would be made to processes and systems within the service with the objective of raising customer satisfaction levels. This would include reviewing the functionality of services provided on the Council website to promote channel shift by encouraging self service, evaluating the provision of call handling through the Council call centre, reviewing and improving the complaints handling system and implementing a system to improve the quality of planning applications received through spot checking compliance. In terms of improving quality

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	<p>of work produced by the service, performance management arrangements and the support and training provided for staff would be reviewed.</p> <p>In response to questions regarding pre-application fees charged by the Council, confirmation was provided that an updated fee system had been introduced in 2011/12.</p> <p>It was advised that the recruitment process was nearing completion for the appointment of a permanent Head of Development Management. Marc advised he would send a letter confirming the appointment via the Chair when appropriate.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• That the update be noted.</li></ul>	
<b>REG92.</b>	<b>DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS</b>  The next scheduled Regulatory Committee meeting was on 23 May.	

CLLR ALI DEMIRCI

Chair