

Report for:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Item Number:	
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Title:	Overview and Scrutiny update- Community Engagement in Planning
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Report Authorised by:	Lyn Garner, Director of Place & Sustainability Stephen Kelly, Assistant Director for Planning
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Lead Officers:	Stephen Kelly, Assistant Director for Planning
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Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key/Non Key Decisions
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1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 To update the Scrutiny Panel of progress on the actions taken following the response provided to Cabinet on 16th September 2014 to recommendations set out in the Scrutiny Review of Community Engagement in Planning.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 Over the last year the Planning Service has continued to work on the improvement of the service offer and outcomes. Significant progress has been made implementing the provisions of the Development Management Improvement Plan (DMIP or 'Improvement Plan') and on the development of a better dialogue with the community, through face to face meetings between senior officers and a range of community interest groups. The Scrutiny Panel review came at a time of significant changes to the Planning Service. Since it accepted the majority of the recommendations, a significant increase in applications numbers has nevertheless stretched the capacity of the service to implement all of the measures, and in some cases, this has meant that implementation has been delayed. The attached table below nevertheless demonstrates the progress made to date, and highlights the continued



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commitment of officers within the service to deliver the objectives set out by Scrutiny for community engagement and participation.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 For the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the position to previous recommendations made in April 2014, as set out in Appendix 1 below.

4.0 Other options considered

- 4.1 N/A

5. Background Information

- 5.1 Following the April 2014 Overview and Scrutiny report titled 'Community Engagement by the Planning Service', officers responded to the recommendations set out in the report to Cabinet on 16th September 2014.
- 5.2 This report provides an update to actions officers agreed to progress (Appendix 1).

6. Update on the recommendations.

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee made 23 recommendations during the review of Community Engagement in Planning, some of which the Planning Service adopted and some which were partially updated. The recommendations were in regard to capacity building, early involvement and consultation, and new technology.
- 6.2 Over the last year the Planning Service have begun work on a range of the adopted recommendations. A new Planning Protocol was presented to the Regulatory Committee in June 2014. This has been adopted and provides greater clarity to the public about Planning Procedures, and supports the provision to bring forward proposals at an early stage to the Planning Sub Committee.
- 6.3 Under the work stream to improve the pre-application advice service, the Planning Service is reviewing and improving the information available through the website, improving the quality of the early advice and support offered to residents. In the past year the service has also utilised new technologies to enable access to GIS mapping for residents, and uploaded information on protected trees throughout the borough. PPAs are being reviewed and improved under this work stream and a Design Quality Review panel is being established. The new service will be live from the 1st of April 2015. These initiatives will support a number of the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee around supporting early involvement, consultations, capacity building



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and utilising new technology.

- 6.4 The Planning Service adopted the recommendation to update the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), and this work will begin in April 2015, once current consultations on a number of key policy documents are concluded. The review of the SCI sits alongside a commitment (in the Medium Term Financial Strategy) to review all contact channels with the community in order to reduce the significant 160,000 volume of letters sent annually, and to improve ease of access to planning information via new technology – as part of the wider Customer Service Transformation project. These changes will be captured in the new SCI commencing after April 2015.
- 6.5 Further work is underway to organise a community conference in autumn 2015 to support capacity building in the community, enhance pre-application advice services with better information and support for applicants, and to review the SCI. The service will also continue to explore opportunities for funding and additional resources (which have impacted delivery) with our partners to maintain the commitment to improved communication on planning and development proposals.

7. Comments of the Chief Finance Officer and financial implications

- 7.1 The costs of preparing this report can be contained within existing budgets. It is assumed that where recommendations are agreed they can also be contained within the budget provision for future years as agreed by Cabinet and Full Council in February 2015, however if this proves not to be the case then Cabinet agreement to provide additional funding will be required before the related actions can be undertaken.

8. Comments of the Assistant Director of Corporate Governance and legal implications

- 8.1 The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted on the preparation of this report and confirms that there are no immediate legal implications arising from the contents hereof.

9. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

- 9.1 NA

10. Head of Procurement Comments

NA

11. Policy Implication



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NA

12. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Update of Actions



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Appendix 1 – Update of Actions

Scrutiny recommendation	Service response	Was it adopted?	Progress
<p><u>Capacity Building (community)</u></p> <p>That there should be an ongoing programme of information provision for local community groups, residents associations, CAACs and residents to build links, confidence and trust between the planning service and the local community and specifically to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote an understanding of the local planning process; Support their engagement and involvement in the development of planning policy; and Support their input into consultations on planned development; Further encourage the cascading of planning information and awareness within the community 	<p>Re-establish Policy Member Advisory Group for new administration and clarify membership, ToR and the nomination process will be clarified and agreed with the Lead Member.</p> <p>Community Conference for all amenity societies to be held annually. (TM)</p> <p>AD to meet with Conservation Area Advisory Committees and Amenity Groups with PH to a programme (CD to arrange).</p> <p>Web site to continue to be refined to ease access on planning cases, strategic schemes and -frequent updates on Plan-making.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>The service is currently using the Regulatory Committee in place of the Policy Member Advisory group to work with new members.</p> <p>A community conference will be held in the Autumn, dates to be confirmed.</p> <p>Preliminary meetings with Highgate CAAC and Tottenham Civic Society undertaken. Further meeting calendar to be developed.</p> <p>Some website improvements have been made, though there have been delays while the whole council migrates to a new web platform. The range of changes should be in place by the 1st of April for Development Management and Building Control services, and Policy and Enforcement should follow shortly.</p>
<p><u>Capacity Building (community)</u></p>	<p>See above. An annual community conference is proposed and additional</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>This conference will now be held in the autumn.</p>



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Provision of generic training on planning policy issues (e.g. the local Development Plan and local planning guidance) and an update on specific planning policy issues (e.g. new legislations, new local planning policies, and current planning policy consultations).	information to be made available on the website following migration to the new platform.		
<u>Capacity Building (community)</u> Provision on advice and training on the process for considering planning applications (including pre-application engagement, development management fora, the role of the Planning Sub Committee, and advice on making representations about planning policy and development proposals)	See above – Community Conference to identify community leaders and review support needs and capability. Additional information on the role of the Planning Sub Committee has been prepared and is available on the website and at Planning Sub Committee meetings.	Yes	This will be covered by the conference in Autumn. Leaflets on the role of Planning Sub Committee will be available on the website and at sub committees.
<u>Capacity Building (Community)</u> Provision of an information sheet/website detailing all sources of independent planning advice available to local residents, community groups and resident association and guidance on how to get involved	To be web based. To be part of upgraded web page project. (EW)	Yes	We will be updating this information on to the website in preparation for 1 st April 2015 when our new pre-application advice service goes live, as alternative sources of planning advice for those who may not want to pay for pre-application advice.
<u>Capacity Building (community)</u>	Move towards fee based service delivery to	Yes	The Community Conference will go



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As part of the corporate customer transformation projects, consider the potential for planning officers to provide planning surgeries within the community	engage Corporate savings project presents challenge with this objective. Support to communities and discussion with Community Leaders to determine what is feasible.(EW)		some way to liase with community groups. This proposal will be looked at again.
<p><u>Capacity Building (officers)</u></p> <p>Officers should take up the support and training offered by the Planning Advisory Service, including ensuring that consultation programmes are coherent and targeted, make use of new methods and are properly evaluated. This should support the development of their skills/ techniques regarding community engagement and a 'train the trainer' session in order to support community engagement.</p>	Formal training completed by PAS. Need to identify community leaders to roll out second phase "train the trainer" (EW)	Yes	This will take place after the Community Conference in Autumn.
<p>Planning consultations should be seen in the context of wider corporate engagement and should draw upon consultation skills, prior learning and resources available elsewhere in the Council (e.g. parking, regeneration, public health and CYPS)</p> <p>A coordinated approach should taken with other Council consultations, with a view to a common consultation database being used by all services.</p>	<u>Meeting has already taken place between Planning and Communications.</u> Alignment of DPD's and planning outcomes to linked to corporate plan narrative for future comms at key stages of consultation (EW/SN)	Yes	Planning consultations have taken place with the engagement / co-ordination of Housing, Regeneration and Communications. Where possible, planning has sought to use existing channels for communications. However, an issue raised is the need for statutory information to be included in communications, which often is at odds with the media avenue to be used. However, compromise can be



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			<p>reached.</p> <p>It is unlikely that the option of a common database can be progressed, as Planning's database responds to requirements for specific statutory consultees as well as groups, individuals, agents and businesses that have expressly asked to be engaged in planning matters.</p>
<p><u>Feedback</u></p> <p>To improve the feedback given to respondents as part of planning policy consultations as well as respondents to individual planning applications, ensure that the outcomes of the consultation are accurately noted and recorded within final planning decisions / documents.</p>	<p>Consultation outcomes are one of the key pieces of evidence that inform that emerging planning policy documents. Following consultation on draft policy documents, consultation outcomes reports are prepared, and, final reports are put on the website. Additionally, copy of consultation report to be provided to all respondents with an email address. (SN)</p> <p>Planning applications - we currently give feedback to all those who send in comments on individual planning applications in accordance with the SCI. This is under review as all reports and information on applications is now available on our website.</p> <p>Potential for corporate solution (in due course) to provide more tailored</p>		<p>This will happen after the consultations on Policy have taken place.</p>



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	response. AD to investigate scope for a technology support system to engage (possibly as part of wider corporate CRM)		This work is ongoing.
<u>Consultation and Feedback</u> In consultation with the local community and reference groups, the planning service develop brief guidance notes and practical sources of advice to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist the community in commenting on planning applications and contributing to planning policy consultations within the context of what counts as material considerations; Guide and signpost householders with submitting properly validated planning applications. 	Guidance on how to comment on planning applications is provided on all letters sent out on the reverse of all letters to neighbours about planning applications. Signposting is given to the Planning Portal and the Interactive House and validation requirements are included in the validation checklist on the website. A more formalised paid pre- application service for householder applications is being developed. (EW)	Yes	Work is underway to implement our new pre-application planning advice service which will better help to guide householders towards submitting properly validated planning applications. This new service will go live from the 1 st of April 2015.
<u>Consultation and Feedback</u> An additional condition is placed on decision notices when granting planning permission, especially for larger schemes requiring applicants to place a copy of the notice on the site premises during construction so as to facilitate community inspection and monitoring and where necessary,	To be implemented Autumn 2014 (EW)	Yes	This was implemented in February 2015 for large major schemes.



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enforcement.			
<p><u>Early involvement</u></p> <p>Pre-application engagement is embedded within the planning consultation structures to ensure the earliest engagement possible with ward councillors, local residents associations, CAACs, local businesses, traders associations and members of the public (the reference group).</p> <p>For major proposals, in addition to any consultation undertaken by the applicant, the Council should ensure that the Development Management Forum (DMF) is held at the pre-application stage. This should be linked to greater coordination with the considerations of the Design Panel at the pre-application stage.</p> <p>There is a pre-committee call over meeting established, open to all members of the Planning Sub Committee, to provide information to members including details of the planning applications to be</p>	<p>A new Planning Protocol was adopted by the Regulatory Committee in June 2014. This includes the provision for pre application briefings on the larger schemes to the Planning Sub Committee (the first one took place on 28 July 2014)</p> <p>New SCI under development and will be subject to consultation</p> <p>Development Management Forum provisions have changed by new Planning Protocol so that where possible proposals are discussed at the pre-application stage. The Design Review Panel terms of reference under review and will be confirmed in September 2014. (EW)</p> <p>A call over procedure for Planning Sub Committee is now in place from July 2014 (EW)</p>	Yes	Completed



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considered and the planning path taken (e.g. DMF, site visits, consultation).			
<p><u>Early Involvement</u></p> <p>In line with the Localism Act 2011, a revised planning protocol should give greater clarity as to how members can be involved in the pre-application process (including clear and consistent advice on predetermination and predisposition), and in particular how ward councillors for the areas affected by the proposed development can be engaged with. The service may wish to consider the development of a model based on best practice in other local authorities for their Planning Committee to be formally engaged at the pre- application stage (e.g. Hackney, Croydon & Islington).</p>	Completed and a revised Planning Protocol was adopted in June 2014 (EW)	Yes	Completed
<p><u>Early involvement</u></p> <p>Further consideration should be given to the facilitation of provision for community engagement, including some funding within Planning Performance Agreements for complex planning proposals to allow:</p>	<p>PPA protocol under review (EW)</p> <p>To be determined by the PPA</p> <p>Neighbour notification template has been updated to reflect timelines for responses</p>	Yes	These provisions will be included in the new protocol for PPAs, which is being revised following the review of the protocol.



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The identification of key stakeholders; • More time for involvement of local stakeholders (including the reference groups); • The development of clear consultation timelines and planning milestones in the planning process 			
<p><u>Early involvement</u></p> <p>Explore provision within the customer transformation project for residents to provide with email address, so as to facilitate the receipt of notification alerts for planning development/policy in their ward (and or set at a radius of 500m)</p> <p>A local consultation should include as a minimum local councillors, residents, associations, community groups, businesses and traders associations, together with other residents who proactively request inclusion- the reference group</p>	<p>Dependent upon wider corporate CRM and stakeholder management software.</p> <p>How to balance the cost implications of consultation and the developments predicted impact will be considered and reported through the Cabinet Report for the refreshed Statement of Community Involvement. (EW)</p>	<p>Yes – subject to technology</p>	<p>This is still development on available resources to find and implement a new CRM systems.</p> <p>The SCI is programmed to be reviewed following the close of consultation on the Development Management Plans (i.e. April 2015).</p> <p>The updated SCI will pick up on the changes the Council is seeking to implement through the planning application process as well as to recognise new ways of engagement, including increased use in multi-media and social media.</p>
<p><u>Early involvement</u></p>	<p>The weekly list sent to all members of the Council has been retained. Planning Sub</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Completed</p>



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<p>Update the procedure for how members are involved in the planning process for delegated decisions during both the application and consultation stages. This should include the retention of the weekly distribution list of new planning applications, the reporting to Planning Committee of major applications in the pipeline and also recent delegated decisions</p>	<p>Committee has a monthly report on all major applications including those recently granted planning permission.</p> <p>Applications determined under delegated powers are also reported monthly to the Planning Sub Committee. (AA)</p>		
<p><u>Planning Consultations</u> Within planning consultations, processes should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the use of participative methods; • Maximise access to planning officers; • Include an evaluation as standard; • Involve the reference group (e.g. members, residents associations, community groups, business and traders associations). 	<p>Part of ongoing service engagement and development, to be reviewed as part of updating the Statement of community Involvement. Role of reference groups to be determined having regard to appointment process and scheme specific characteristics.</p>	<p>Partly</p>	<p>MTFS proposes a review of consultation process to move contact to online technology and reduce paper notifications. This will take place in 2015/16 through a review of the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). The SCI is programmed to be reviewed following the close of consultation on the Development Management Plans (i.e. April 2015).</p> <p>The updated SCI will pick up on the changes the Council is seeking to implement through the planning application process as well as to recognise new ways of engagement, including increased use in multi-media and social media.</p>



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<p><u>Planning Consultations</u></p> <p>The planning service should reconsider how Area Fora are used for planning consultations particularly in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the reach, participation and involvement of the local community; • links to development management forum at the pre-application stage; • improving the presentation of consultation documents which may support better understanding and engagement at these fora 	<p>Part of a corporate response required. The future of Area Forums and the role of them in consultation, would require potentially greater frequency in some areas and risks duplication with other consultation programmes.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Planning Policy Documents are now regularly presented at each area forum.</p>
<p><u>Improving quality of planning proposals</u></p> <p>Greater use of community consultation events to support the formation of pre-planning advice and information for the top 10 planning issues i.e. to create a detailed checklist of information that's needed and how it is presented (N.B what are the top planning issues for the</p>	<p>A report on design quality is being prepared with associated action plan. (SK)</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>A Quality Review Panel is being established, and the current aim is to implement it for the 1st of April alongside other pre-application advice services.</p>



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community e.g. design, heritage, conservation, enforcement capacity, durability of materials landscaping etc).			
<p><u>Member development</u></p> <p>In recognition of the important roles of the ward councillor and the planning champion, engagement, involvement and 'planning champion' have, there should be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum (Level 1) programme of member training and development for all 57 councillors to further enable them to represent community interests within their wards; • More Councillors given full (Level 2) training in planning so as to increase the pool of Councillors available to sit on Planning Committee; • Further training on planning policy (scope and content of documents as well as timetable for remerging documents); • Bespoke web page(s) providing information, advice and support; • Clarity over key local 	<p>A 2 day training programme has been delivered for all members of the Planning Sub Committee and was offered to all members of the Council</p> <p>Ongoing (level 1) programme of events to be commenced from Autumn 2014 reflecting aspirations for wider engagement and dialogue on planning and related matters.</p>	Yes, Partially	<p>The service has developed a 12 month member engagement programme, including internal training (2 days) for all members of the Committee and a suite of talks/presentations and site visits over the year made available to all members.</p> <p>Member training dependent upon member availability.</p> <p>Targeted training on the emergent Local Plan has been offered to Ward Councillor Groups and to Political parties. Policy briefings have also been scheduled for all area forums.</p> <p>Bespoke Web page not yet developed.</p>



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contacts in the planning process			Statement of Community Involvement (and contact details) under review at present time.
<u>Member development</u> The planning service develop a 'feedback loop' whereby periodically (every 6 months) a review process is undertaken with members to look at development schemes that have been authorised, the purpose being to review development help and ensure that future proposals reflect the views and aspirations of the community and are policy compliant	See above	Yes	Members visited Hale Village and the service has viewed Brook House to view and discuss feedback with developers. Further visits are being organised.
<u>Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)</u> In the updating of the SCI the community is consulted so as to reflect the emerging consultation priorities and processes listed elsewhere within this report: Renewed emphasis on the role of members and the reference group; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance of pre-application discussions and involvement to be given greater status. 	SCI scheduled for review and a short executive summary will be developed as part of an updated SCI. (SN/EW) There is an SCI webpage and the website is regularly updated. .(SN) Importance of pre-application discussions and involvement has been given greater status by the introduction of pre-application briefings to Planning Sub Committee -these are public meetings which are webcast and moving the discussion at Development Management Forums to the pre-application stage	Yes	The SCI is programmed to be reviewed following the close of consultation on the Development Management Plans (i.e. April 2015). The updated SCI will pick up on the changes the Council is seeking to implement through the planning application process as well as to recognise new ways of engagement, including increased use in multi-media and social media. The reason the SCI was not updated earlier, was that it was not felt appropriate to update the document



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A dedicated webpage to be provided for the SCI so as to allow for more frequent updates and the provision of useful links for the community. • That a short executive summary of the SCI be developed and distributed among the reference group. 			<p>either prior to or during one of the most significant consultation stages in preparing the local plan, as consistency with the SCI is a legal compliance requirement.</p>
<p><u>Newtechnology</u> Given the importance of digital processes in conveying information and advice in support of planning processes, it is recommended that the planning service reviews the layout, function and utility of the planning section of the site so as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that GIS technology is fully utilised in planning processes (to enable real location viewing of planning applications (e.g. Wiltshire) and assist in planning notifications; • Ensure that the website can be used to capture 	<p>The layout, function and utility of the planning web pages has been reviewed as part of the DMIP and a new structure is being rolled out as part of the transfer of the Council's website to a new platform. This should bring greater clarity. New GIS officer to be recruited to Council to increase capacity.</p> <p>Information available for public access from the website is being upgraded to include information on planning enforcement history, listed buildings and trees. There is an online planning investigation form for members of the public to report alleged breaches of planning control.</p> <p>Discussion on automatic notification of planning applications through the website</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>GIS maps can be accessed by the Planning website, as can information about protected trees. Work is underway to improve the layout more generally and has been brought under the work stream for the new pre-application advice service work, as a part of the effort to improve information and advice via the website. The new website should be live from the 1st of April 2015.</p> <p>Auto notifications will come in around December 2015.</p>



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<p>and report community intelligence that may assist planning enforcement;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that feedback provided within planning and development proposals is clearly labelled; • Ensure that existing planning notification, consultation and reporting media (e.g. press, posters, letters) are maintained so as to be best utilised to underpin the increasing shift towards web based services 	<p>is underway as part of the Customer Service Transformation programme of migration to self service</p>		
<p><u>New technology</u></p> <p>To improve the accessibility of planning documents it is recommended that the planning service consider the acquisition of 30 modelling software, so as to help the reference group and other interested parties better visualise (and obtain a more accurate representation of)</p>	<p>Cost of model and data for whole Borough to be subject of a business case. Selective areas of greatest change likely to be prioritised</p>	<p>Not at this time</p>	<p>This proposal was part of an unsuccessful bid for funding. The service is currently reviewing how the hardware and software might be secured on a more incremental basis within existing budgets.</p>



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planned major
development and
planning proposals.

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