



Planning Reimagined - Outcomes from Members Working Group

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to set out the actions Members have identified during a series of Planning workshops (Planning Reimagined).

Forward Plan

2. This report appears on the District Executive Forward Plan for presentation in January 2021 but has been brought forward one month early.

Public Interest

3. The report sets out the actions agreed in a cross-party Members working group (Planning Reimagined) to improve the planning service.

Recommendations

4. The District Executive are asked to:
 - a. note the contents of the report.
 - b. agree to an update on the implementation of the actions agreed by the Planning Reimagined working group (listed in Appendix A) to come forward to District Executive in 6 month's time.

Background

5. We are clear that the Planning Service is still not in the place we want it to be and that many of the benefits of Transformation felt in other services have yet to be embedded in and benefit the Planning Service. This is no reflection on the hard work and dedication of the staff of the service.
6. We are determined to ensure we have a Planning Service that delivers and meets the requirements of the District. This means that we need to consider all elements of the service, and as part of this a cross-party Members working group (Planning Reimagined) was put in place.



Report Detail

7. As outlined above, a cross-party working group was set up to support improvements within the Planning Service. The group consisted of 7 Liberal Democrats, 4 Conservatives and 1 Independent. All sessions were well attended by Members and officers, and were facilitated by an independent person to provide challenge and focus.
8. The aim of the workshops was to review the entire end to end planning process, including current working practices, and to produce an action plan to achieve the following outcomes:
 - Deliver the aims and objectives of the Council Plan and the Local Plan
 - Deliver good outcomes for our communities
 - Speed and efficiency that meets Government targets without relying on Extensions of Time
 - Delivers all the above with the resources allocated to the service
 - Achieve good customer service and establish a well-respected service.
9. There were ten sessions, which focussed on the following topics
 - Pre-Application Process
 - Validation
 - Consultation
 - Negotiation Strategy
 - Reports and Legal Instructions
 - Scheme of Delegation
 - Planning Committees
 - Planning Enforcement
 - Conservation
 - Future Changes and conclusions
10. The output from the sessions has been the production of an action plan with a series of tasks which will assist with improvements across the service. This action plan is shared at Appendix A. All Members from the working group have reviewed and agreed the actions within the plan.
11. Some of the changes agreed by the working group are operational and will require no further approval or agreement from Members. However, there are some proposed changes that will require approval from Full Council, and these will be brought forward in January 2021.

Financial Implications

12. If we fail to make improvements to the service it is likely we will see a reduction in income.



South Somerset

District Council

Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

13. None

Risk Matrix

14. Not applicable at the current time as the report is for information only.

Council Plan Implications

15. Council Plan 2020-2024

Places where we live:-

Ensure development which is sustainable, where people want to live and communities can thrive

Enable sufficient housing in appropriate places to meet community needs

Maximised the number of affordable homes including providing more affordable homes to support rural economies and communities

Protecting Core Services

Delivering a high quality, effective and timely service to our customers and communities

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

16. Not applicable this report is for information only.

Equality and Diversity Implications

17. Not applicable this report is for information only.

Privacy Impact Assessment

18. Not applicable this report is for information only.

Background Papers

None