
Council



St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Title of Report:	Report by Cllr Clements Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regulation	
Report No:	COU/SE/15/009 [to be completed by Democratic Services]	
Report to and date/s:	Council	24 February 2015
Portfolio includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning (Development Management)• Planning Policy• Building Control• Vision 2031• Environmental Health (excluding Environmental Management)• Licensing	

1. Planning Policy

- 1.1 The Planning Inspector's Report into the examination of the Joint Development Management Policies Document was received on the 21 January 2015. The report concluded that, provided a number of modifications are made to it, the document is sound. The final document is brought forward to tonight's meeting of the Council for adoption, and is being brought to Forest Heath's Council meeting for adoption on 27 February 2015. The adoption of this document will put an essential part of the development plan for the area in place. It will place both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath in a very strong position to provide guidance on the delivery and management of development in West Suffolk.
- 1.2 The West Suffolk Shop Front and Advertisement Design Guidance is also brought forward to tonight's meeting of Council for adoption. Whilst the document in itself will not be a part of the formal development plan, it will inform and be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will provide detailed guidance on the design of new and replacement shop fronts throughout West Suffolk.

2. Building Control

- 2.1 Suffolk District and Borough Councils have been discussing the various possibilities available to begin to solve the challenges we are all experiencing in retaining and recruiting well qualified Building Control Officers. It is believed (although not tested via any business case) that joining up into a Suffolk wide Building Control Partnership will provide a more resilient and stronger service.

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There are also a number of private/public partnerships which are being considered.

- 2.2 The preferred option will be put to members soon. In the meantime, however, we are advertising for staff to replace those who have left and are about to leave. As part of the partnership working we are using services being provided by Mid-Suffolk and Ipswich supported by agency staff to help us maintain our service while we go through the option appraisal.

3. Development Management

- 3.1 The section's performance record was updated at the January meeting of the Joint Performance and Audit Committee and it was very pleasing to note that there has been an improvement in performance with targets for determining applications either being met or being very close to being achieved – this resulted in no failing targets to report for the last quarter. There is still a long way to go in improving and consolidating performance across the board but the section is pleased to start to see the results of their hard work over some very difficult months.
- 3.2 The section is currently undergoing a Business Process Re-Engineering exercise to fine tune their internal processes and better inform how a new piece of software called Enterprise will be used in the future – this is a very helpful piece of kit which is a Task Manager and should improve efficiency and resource management and monitoring.
- 3.3 There was a Joint Member Development Session on 27 January 2015 dealing with the complex issue of recent permitted development changes and prior notification applications – for any Members interested who were not able to attend, the PowerPoint from the workshop and the hand-outs (containing lots of useful information) are available on GOLD.
- 3.4 The software that the public use to access details about planning applications is up and running. This allows people to track individual applications that they are particularly interested in. Notes of how to sign up to this are available in the hand-outs as detailed above from 27 January 2015. Planning staff will be helping to deliver Member training sessions after the elections which will include the Public Access/ICT programme and the usual Development Management sessions.
- 3.5 Finally, the section's new Enforcement team is taking shape – Andy Smith joined at the beginning of February as the Principal Enforcement Officer, Sara Rampley joined as an Enforcement Officer in January and interviews are taking place on 12 February 2015 for the remaining vacant post (Senior Enforcement Officer). Andy is concentrating on getting to grips with the caseload, drawing back cases from the Council's interim consultants and working on the section's Enforcement Plan.

4. Environment Team

4.1 Fuel poverty and affordable warmth

- 4.1.1 With our local authority partners in Suffolk, we have secured £100,000 for an innovative project to improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty in the County, as part of the National Grid Energy Efficiency Innovation Award scheme. The bid was submitted as part of the work done through Suffolk Energy Action Link, the Suffolk local authority consortium, which targets home energy efficiency.
- 4.1.2 The bid was one of only five successful applications to the £400,000 fund to support major innovations to tackle fuel poverty and deliver energy efficiency solutions in disadvantaged communities. The funding will deliver a pilot project that will deliver energy efficiency benefits to a park home site in the Borough, with potential roll-out to other residential park home sites in the County.