

<b>PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM 8</b>
<b>3 JULY 2018</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Cabinet Members responsible:	Councillor Hiller - Cabinet Member for Growth, Planning, Housing and Economic Development	
Contact Officer:	Nick Harding (Head of Planning)	Tel. 07920 160161

## REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE OF THE SHARED PLANNING SERVICE WITH FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATIONS	
<b>FROM</b> : Director of Growth and Regeneration	<b>Deadline date</b> : June May 2018
That Committee notes past performance and outcomes.	

### 1. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

Under the terms of the shared service arrangement there is the requirement to periodically review its performance and operation. Such a review can be undertaken (in accordance with the constitution) by either the Growth Environment & Resources Scrutiny Committee or the Planning & Environmental Protection Committee (PEPC). This report is therefore presented under the terms of the Council's constitution Part 3, Delegations Section 2 para 2.6.1.6.

### 2. TIMESCALE.

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	<b>n/a</b>
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### 3.0 Background

3.1 In October 2015 ,Peterborough City Council, under a Cabinet Member Decision Notice, agreed to join a Shared Planning Service arrangement with Fenland District Council. The proposal was built on the following key aims:

- To deliver efficiencies for both authorities.
- To support the ambitious growth agenda of both Councils.
- To maintain service delivery standards, and to improve them where possible and appropriate.

- To maintain individual ‘sovereignty’ for both Councils over planning delivery; with no perception of a ‘take over’ in such a sensitive service area.
  - To ensure visibility to Members and customers of key staff.
  - To be scalable – a trading model to deliver services to other Councils in the country that makes the partnership a ‘fee earner’ and treats the service as a business.
  - To provide fairness of opportunities for staff in both authorities.
  - To maintain individual Council Planning Committees.
  - To ensure that the end users of the planning service see only an improvement in service delivery (i.e. not a reduction).
- 3.2 The Shared Service was identified as having a target income / income generation of £175,000 for Peterborough City Council. This has been achieved.
- 3.3 For democratic oversight of the partnership, it was also agreed that the respective Portfolio Holders will meet quarterly with the two Lead Officers (for FDC, the Corporate Director responsible for planning) and the Shared Head of Planning to monitor performance and service delivery, oversight of the financial and savings delivery and directing the trading opportunities of the partnership. This group is the Shared Planning Board.
- 3.4 The shared service formally went live on 1st January 2016. Under the terms of the shared service, the Shared Service Board has met each quarter to consider performance and key operational matters. In addition, the terms require that yearly the performance of the shared service is reported to the respective authorities.
- 3.5 The rest of this report sets out the key milestones, achievements and performance of the shared service arrangement and what plans are in place for the future.

#### **4.0 Scope of the Shared Service**

- 4.1 The shared service arrangement comprises of the following:
- Sharing a single Head of Planning between both Councils
  - Sharing a Technical Support Manager between both Councils
  - The ability to buy and sell services between the two Councils
- 4.2 In respect of the latter, the following has taken place to date:
- Fenland has sold to PCC planning policy officer time
  - Peterborough has sold to Fenland: planning policy / neighbourhood planning officer time, development management officer time, technical support officer time, ecology officer time, Section 106 Management & development viability officer time.
- 4.3 It should be noted that each Council has their own:
- Development management teams

- Enforcement / compliance teams
- Technical support teams

4.4 Based in their respective Council offices i.e. there is no co-location and officers do not have both Fenland cases and Peterborough cases to deal with at the same time.

## 5.0 Development Management Performance

### 5.1 Speed of Validation

Table 1 - % of validation checks completed in 5 working days

FDC				PCC			
2014/5	2015/6	2016/7	2017/18	2014/5	2015/6	2016/7	2017/18
73%	73%	65%	83%	94%	83%	59%	45%

2017/18 saw a significant increase in performance at FDC which was mainly as a result of fewer days being lost to IT outages. At PCC, performance has continued to be weaker than desirable and this has been a result of difficulties in recruiting to the vacant posts. The job role was subject to re-evaluation and the vacancies were re-advertised. There is now a full complement of staff and performance is much improved over the average for the year.

### 5.2 Pre-applications

Table 2 - Response rate (within target) to pre-application enquiries

	FDC – 15 day min/oth target, 30 day target for majors		PCC – 30 day target	
	2016/17	2017/18	2016/17	2017/18
<b>No of pre-application enquires</b>	171	189	144	182
<b>% responded to within target</b>	75%	57%	90%	81%

The pre application service at FDC is more popular than that at PCC (proportionally given the levels of applications submitted to each authority) and the reason for this unable to be identified. The response times at FDC have been weaker than desirable and work needs to be undertaken to performance manage these more effectively. Notwithstanding this, priority has to be given the processing of planning applications.

### 5.3 Number of Planning Applications Submitted

Both Authorities have seen as a general trend a gradual increase in the number of applications being submitted which must be seen against an increase in the types of development that can take place without the need for planning permission. This demonstrates continued economic confidence in the area. Slightly fewer applications were

received in Fenland in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17 but the fall is modest. It should be noted that although FDC received slightly fewer applications the value was greater, partly as a result in the 20% increase in planning fees being introduced by Government in January 2018.

In 2017, a Planning Inspector ruled at Appeal that Fenland Council no longer had a 5 year land supply. The implications of this meant that when considering planning applications not all of the planning policies within the Local Plan could be given the weight they were given previously. It is pleasing to report, as Members are aware through the circulation of an all Member Briefing note, that the Council has regained its 5 year land supply and all Local Plan policies are now active.

Table 3 - Planning applications

<b>No of Applications Received</b>	<b>FDC</b>	<b>PCC</b>
<b>2014-15</b>	1256	2145
<b>2015-16</b>	1338	2300
<b>2016/17</b>	1400	2427
<b>2017/18</b>	1372	2470

#### 5.4 Planning Fee Income

In real terms the planning application fee income at PCC has fallen slightly if the 20 % increase in fee charges introduced at the beginning of the year is discounted. Even taking into account the fee increase, the fee income at FDC has increased. It continues to be challenging to produce accurate forecasts regarding fee income and new development proposals coming forward as the market is generally reserved about sharing its activity plans and when they do they cannot always be relied upon. However it can be reported that Planning fee income at FDC for April 2018 was £137,000 - £100k higher than April 2017 with 8 Major Applications received.

Table 4 - Planning Fee Income

	<b>FDC</b>				<b>PCC</b>			
	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>
<b>Planning Application Income</b>	£0.755	£0.743	£0.702	£0.806	£0.944m	£1.154m	£1.348m	£1.348m tbc
<b>Pre-app Fee Income</b>	n/a	n/a	£44k	£57k	£57k	£93.2k	£66k	£53k tbc

The pre-application service at FDC has proved to be exceptionally popular, more so than at PCC and the income at the former has outstripped the latter. The fee rates for the preapplication service are the same for both Councils and these are going to increase as a consequence of the national increase in planning fee rates.

## 5.5 Speed of Decision Making on Applications

Both Councils have maintained consistently good performance over the last 4 years. The Government targets for performance are being comfortably exceeded and neither authority is close to designation for weak performance.

Table 5 – Speed of Planning Applications Decision Making

Performance Measure	FDC				PCC			
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Major Applications decided in 13 weeks (or within extension of time agreement)	89%	91%	90%	97%	86%	96%	98%	95%
Minor applications decided in 8 weeks (or within extension of time agreement)	85%	85%	86%	93%	84%	90%	93%	97%
Other applications decided in 8 weeks (or within extension of time agreement)	93%	96%	97%	98%	92%)	93%)	96%	96%

## 5.6 Planning Appeals

Appeals performance has fluctuated over the last 3 years at both authorities. However, the number of appeals is modest and so consequently each appeal decision accounts for a significant percentage. Both Councils easily exceed new national performance standards so it can be said with confidence that the quality of decision making at each authority is good.

Table 6 - Appeals Performance

	FDC				PCC			
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2014/15	2015/16	2017/18	2017/18
% Appeals Dismissed	88%	74%	70%	64%	70%	48%	82%	73%
No of allowed appeals that were committee over turns (total number of allowed appeals in brackets)	1 (2)	0 (5)	1 (6)	1(5)	2 (12)	4 (11)	0 (3)	0 (0)
Award of costs against LPA	0	2	2	1	0	0	1	0

## 5.7 Planning Compliance

Table 7 - Planning Compliance Activity

	FDC				PCC			
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
No of Service Requests	336	289	363	330	530	505	619	511
No of cases closed	291	369	357	359	590	552	575	501

The number of service requests at FDC fell slightly compared to the previous year and case closer rates remained at a consistent level. Similarly the number of requests at PCC fell (but by a much larger amount) but there was a significant dip in case closure rates. This has been as a consequence of long term sickness in the team.

## 6.0 **Budget Savings**

6.1 As part of the shared service proposals it was a key objective for the Councils to make financial savings. The targeted savings have been successfully achieved as planned through:

- The sharing of the cost of the Head of Planning and the Technical Team Manager
- A restructure of the service at Fenland District Council which was implemented prior to the start of the shared service.

6.2 Due to a number of staffing changes during the year and the difficulty in recruiting to posts, Fenland have continued to employ agency staff to assist in providing the service. Peterborough have also had to employ agency staff to cover for the increase in applications over the last two years and also long term sickness in the planning compliance team. At FDC this reliance is diminishing as there has been successful recruitment of staff across Planning and Enforcement. At PCC, following a recent restructure the recruitment process is about to commence.

## 7.0 **The Future of the Shared Planning Service**

7.1 Over the next 12 months the Head of Planning will continue to ensure that the planning teams in both councils continue to improve and meet the performance indicators set out within in each organisation.

7.2 The project to develop a co-location arrangement for the two technical teams has drawn to a close as a result of corporate ICT decisions at Peterborough which mean that a technical solution was not possible. In addition Peterborough has its agile working agenda and Fenland has had its accommodation review. Notwithstanding, it would be worth revisiting the project in the future

7.3 The Shared Planning Board will also continue to look for further trading and income generation opportunities to support each Councils financial challenges particularly in the area of planning performance agreements

7.4 FDC has committed to undertaking a Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review of its part of the service and this will commence in July. It is not considered necessary to have a sister review at PCC.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

8.1 The shared service has operated successfully in terms of:

- Performance against key indicators
- The delivery of targeted savings
- The trading of services between the two authorities
- Improving the resilience of each authority's planning teams

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