



**REPORT of
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP**

to
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24 JANUARY 2023

REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORKPLAN ITEM - PLANNING DECISION-MAKING

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To present to the Committee the Working Group's further report together with recommended courses of action for the Committee to consider or scrutinise in further detail should it be considered necessary.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee considers the interim response and recommendations of the Working Group for report back to the Council or reference to another Committee as appropriate, or defining the scope for actual scrutiny and engaging the Working Group if any further work is felt to be required.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 This scrutiny workplan item derives from a Motion by Councillor A S Fluker which was referred by Council to this Committee. An associated reference from Council in July 2022 on Planning Decision-Making was added to the workplan item.
- 3.2 At the last meeting of the Committee in October, an outline response from the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group (O&S) was received and the Committee accepted the Working Group's initial findings/conclusions and asked for this to be worked up in greater detail by the Working Group, for interim consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December 2022. It was felt that the Committee would then be in a better position to assess how near it was to being able to conclude making a response and any recommendations either to Council or the relevant Committee, with the aim of a final report to a meeting of the Committee in February or March 2023. Members of the Committee were updated as to the on-going deliberations of the Working Group with a view to a meeting being held in January 2023 to tie in with a target date set by the Committee for a response on another workplan item.
- 3.3 The Working Group's further report on the issues raised by the motion and associated reference from the Council is at **APPENDIX A**. Building on the earlier initial conclusions, a clear set of recommended initiatives and courses of action is now presented for the Committee's consideration. These are as follows:
- Constitutional intervention or break upon overturn of Planning Officer's recommendation – alternative pathways.
 - Planning Appeals Protocol refresh with strengthening of Member involvement.

- Member Training – improved opportunities for bespoke and specialised training with a single planning committee. (Although the focus for this was around Member Training, the recent decision of the Council in relation to Area Planning Committee structure is noted).
- Officer reports on planning applications – review of format and introduction of technical presentations.
- New protocol on planning decision making.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 In line with the agreed process for reviewing Overview and Scrutiny workplan items, the feedback and recommendations from the recent Overview and Scrutiny Working Group meetings are presented for the Committee's consideration.

5. IMPACT ON STRATEGIC THEMES

- 5.1 Robust overview and scrutiny work and learning from what comes out of it contributes to the performance and value theme of the Corporate Plan.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Seeking to strike a better balance between the speed of decision making and the quality of decisions will have a positive impact on applicants for planning permission as users of the service, and also Council tax payers in general in contributing to the overall costs of the service.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – A move towards improved quality through more objective and evidence-based decision making will potentially reduce the risk of the award of costs against the Authority.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – None.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None.
- (vii) **Impact on Strengthening Communities** – None.

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