



**REPORT of
THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & GOVERNANCE**

**to
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
30 July 2026**

REFERENCE FROM SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM – DM Peer Review Action Plan

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to receive and consider a request on a matter referred to the Committee by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

2. RECOMMENDATION

- That the Committee:
- 2.1 **considers** the referral from SLT in the light of the information set out in this report, and
- 2.1.1 **adds** the Development Management Service Action Plan is to the current workplan and for the working group to feedback to Officers its comments a summary of which will be bought back to the next meeting of this committee.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Council appointed the Planning Officer's Society Enterprises (POSe) to carry out a Peer Review of the Development Management (DM) Service in May 2026.
- 3.2 The Peer Review was informed through interviews with Officers and Members of the Council as well as a review of national published data.
- 3.3 The Peer Review made 37 recommendations which were categorised into three areas:
- Urgent Improvements: that can be delivered relatively easily and have a high impact,
 - Universal Improvements: comprehensively fixing the service so that it is fit for purpose, and
 - Structural Improvements: those changes that relate to or are best addressed through Local Government Reorganisation.
- 3.4 The Peer Review was undertaken by two experienced planners. The review is their perception of the issues facing the DM service at a snapshot in time. The 37 recommendations are a very helpful way to start the shaping of an Actions Plan. Their recommendations probably fall within three categories:
- Recommendations we fully agree with,
 - Recommendations we may support in principle, but have a better solution, and
 - Recommendations we may disagree with.

- 3.5 Following the completion of the Peer Review an Action Plan is being produced to implement the recommendations of the report.
- 3.6 The Peer Review contains personal data and information from which individual members of staff could be identified. In accordance with the Council's obligations under data protection legislation and to protect the privacy of those individuals, the full report has not been circulated with this agenda report.
- 3.7 A full copy of the Peer Review, together with the associated Action Plan, will be provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group for detailed consideration.
- 3.8 The Action Plan is scheduled to be discussed at the Working Group meeting on 4 August 2026, following which any recommendations arising will be reported back to this Committee
- 3.9 It must be recognised that creating an exemplary service will not be entirely dependent on completing each of the improvements or actions set out in the Action Plan. Aspects of the Action Plan can be grouped together as projects and in some cases, there will be overlaps.
- 3.10 The legal changes to the size and decision making of Planning Committees set out in the Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026 will require a review of the format and function of the Planning Committees. As part of this work the recommendations of the Peer Review will be incorporated into the new Planning Committee structure and operation. These changes will be placed before the Council in October 2026.
- 3.11 Some actions are being taken including the reintroduction of the Duty Planner service at the Council Offices to householders on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning's between 10am and 1pm. The service will start 1 August 2026. This will be monitored to establish if this meets the needs of customers.
- 3.12 Whilst work on each of the actions will commence, it must be recognised that these changes also represent a cultural change to working practices to transform it into more of a customer focused enabling service. The actions will be the building blocks for cultural change but these changes cannot happen overnight.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 A review of the draft Action Plan will provide additional scrutiny to ensure that all matters are addressed to take positive action to improve the Council's DM Service and customer experience.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027

5.1 Provide good quality services.

- 5.1.1 Thorough scrutiny processes support improved performance and efficiency which in turn will contribute to the quality of services provided, and functions undertaken by the Council.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The successful implementation of the Action Plan will .
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – Equalities are considered as part of the reporting on review work undertaken by Officers.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including fraud implications)** – Scrutiny reviews enable potential Corporate Risks to the organisation and their mitigation to be identified.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of financial impact to the organisation. The Council agreed a budget of £25,000 in its February 2026 budget to complete this review. The cost of the Peer Development Review has cost £17,100.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – Scrutiny reviews offer the potential for an assessment of any resource impact to the organisation.

Background Papers:

Enquiries to:

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