



Recommendation	Action	Who	When
Urgent Recommendations			
IT Systems			
1. Carry out a comprehensive review of IT Support/Back-Office systems and procedures, draft an improvement plan and implement the changes needed as quickly as possible	Carry out a comprehensive review of IT Support/Back-Office systems and procedures	HoS, Manager, Team Leaders and Tech Services Team Leader, plus IT	31 October 2026
	Draft an Improvement Plan and	HoS, Manager, Team Leaders and Tech Services Team Leader, plus IT	TBC
	Implement the changes in line with the Improvement Plan	Various	TBC
2. As the IT systems come online and new procedures are put in place, make sure that the use of spreadsheet workarounds cease	Look to minimise the need to spreadsheets (both service wide and individual) Will depend on development of IT, introduction of 'Enterprise' and Power BI support May not be possible to remove use of all spreadsheets	HoS, Manager, Team Leaders and Tech Services Team Leader, plus IT	30 November 2026

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
3. Identify the post within the structure that is the Systems Lead ('Super User') and management to ensure that the person discharges those responsibilities	The service will require multiple super users who can drive forward the development of the Uniform system to ensure it delivers what the service needs. This provides shared knowledge, learning and resilience.	HoS, Manager, Team Leaders and Tech Services Team Leader, plus IT	TBC
Procedures			
4. Compile a comprehensive procedures manual for all DM processes.	Work with Brentwood and Chelmsford to understand whether there are some quick wins by beginning to align procedures ahead of LGR.	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	31 December 2026
5. Update the Local Validation List and ensure that it is drafted in a way that communicates the purpose of requirements to avoid narrow interpretation.	The Government have indicated in a recent consultation that they would wish to scale back Local Validation Lists. In the meantime, work with Brentwood and Chelmsford to understand whether there is an opportunity to align a new Local Validation List ahead of LGR	HoS, Manager, Team Leaders and Validation Officers	To be reviewed following the publication of the new NPPF. This is expected Autumn 2026
6. Review delegation arrangements that allows sign-off lower down the management hierarchy and stop the procedures that encourage last-day sign off	To be considered following the recruitment campaign (Summer 2026)	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Autumn 2026
	Trial of basis sign off of things like NMAs and DET to Principal Planners in the absence of the Team Leaders to ensure resilience	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	TBC

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
Management			
7. Examine the caseload of managers to ensure that they have the capacity to manage and ensure, moving forward, that they do.	Workloads should always be discussed at 1:1s, Case Reviews and Appraisals <i>[Note: similar to Recommendation 19]</i>	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Now
8. Review the performance monitoring process for major applications to ensure that directorate and service priorities are regularly monitored at the appropriate level and to the right timescales.	1. A central spreadsheet of major applications to provide sight of what we have on the books with timescales. Useful also to look at committee scheduling	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Now
	2. TBC	TBC	TBC
9. Regularly report the key performance indicators to planning committee members, with the focus on major applications.	1. Monthly DM Performance data reported to Director of Place Planning and Growth.	HoS	Ongoing
	2. Data reported to SLT through normal reporting process.	HoS	Now
	3. Regularly report the key performance indicators to Performance Governance and Audit Committee	HoS	Now
	4. Six monthly updates to the Planning Policy Working Group on the quality of planning decisions (Government performance indicators) and key lessons from major planning appeals	HoS	Now

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
10. Introduce monthly 1:1s, short weekly team meetings and a monthly planning service meeting – all such meetings to have a clear agenda	1:1s required every six weeks minimum	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Now
	Annual and mid-year appraisals	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Now
	Weekly team meetings	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Now
	Monthly service meetings with clear agenda and agreed actions	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Now
11. Establish a suggestions procedure that enables staff to make suggestions for improvements but also compels management to respond	Spreadsheet that tracks suggestions and responses/actions, to be reviewed at service management meetings and team meetings.	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	September 2026
Universal Recommendations			
Members: Planning Committee			
12. Alter the sequence of Officer's presentations at Planning Committee so that they are split with the scheme being presented before public speaking and the issues being presented after	Needs careful consideration – can be considered as part of the changes required to implement the National Scheme of Delegation (NSD)	Planning, Legal and Committee Services	Prior to 31 October 2026
13. Provide training to Officers presenting at committee so that a consistent succinct but comprehensive approach is deployed where the main determinative issues are the focus	Link to discussions with PAS about compulsory Member training linked to the NSD.	HoS	Prior to 31 October 2026
14. Change the committee's procedures for when it is minded to not support the Officer recommendation, as set out in the Peer Review report.	Will be introduced as part of the changes introduced to the new Planning Committee process being implemented as a result of the NSD	Director of Place, Planning & Growth / Director of Law & Governance	Prior to 31 October 2026 (Council 22 October 26)

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
15. Implement a consistent approach to the Planning Committee Update Report, as set out in the Peer Review report	Move from 'Planning Committee Update' Report to an 'Addendum'	Committee Services	31 July 2026
16. Provide member training following the implementation of the NSD, as set out in this report.	Member training needs to take place before the first Planning Committee under the new system under the NSD. A Training Schedule for the municipal year to be agreed for all Planning Committee Members (and substitutions)	Director of Place, Planning & Growth / Director of Law & Governance	Prior to 31 October 2026
17. Update standard letters to incorporate the NSD procedures.	1. Update standard letters to incorporate the NSD procedures	HoS	Prior to 31 October 2026
Legal and Democratic Services to ensure full Committee member attendance as required by Constitution Procedure Rule 13(1).	2. Legal and Democratic Services to ensure full Committee Member attendance as required by Constitution Procedure Rule 13(1)	TBC	Prior to 31 October 2026
Members: Communication			
18. That the Pre-Application Committee Briefing procedures be improved, as set out in this report	Could be rolled out as part of the preparation for the new planning committee processes which will be introduced as a result of the NSD	TBC	TBC (31 October 2026)
Management: Staff Development			

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
19. Look at workloads of staff who are in training to ensure that they have the capacity to learn and ensure that the training and development needs of all staff are identified as part of their 1:1 management and delivered as appropriate.	Workloads should always be discussed at 1:1s, Case Reviews and Appraisals <i>[Note: similar to Recommendation 7]</i>	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	Now
20. Consider existing cross-working good practice (DM/Enforcement and DM/Technical Support) and look to expand it as part of training and development responsibilities.	Needs proper consideration	TBC	TBC
21. Once efficiencies are delivered and workloads are more manageable, look at the areas where staff are covering other functions and consider where they should best be dealt with	TBC	TBC	Medium terms
Management: Staff Development			
22. Ensure that each Team Leader has appropriate deputies so that the management of the teams are not impacted when they are not there	To be reviewed following current recruitment campaign (Summer 2026)	HoS	Autumn 2026
Staffing			
23. Fill the vacant Urban Design post as quickly as possible and ensure that good urban design procedures and practices are implemented across the service by the postholder.	Needs proper consideration, including considering approaches in Brentwood and Chelmsford	TBC	TBC

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
24. Consider expanding the use of career grade posts to optimise the attractiveness of working for the DM service and to address anomalies in the enforcement team	Not a critical issue at the moment as the relevant posts are filled	DM & HR	TBC
Working Practices: Workspace			
25. Reconsider the Office 'offer' in the context of greater attendance and design it to meet the wide range of needs that the service has	On going process	TBC	TBC
Working Practices: Review Procedures			
26. Review the way that representations from the public are handled in Technical Support so that the current workload is reduced	Review current process and look at options	DM, Technical Support	TBC
	2 – Consider Business Case for move document management system from Civica to IDOX	IT / SLT	Autumn / Winter 2026
27. Reintroduce a pre-app service and look to charge for a Duty Planning Officer service to manage demand	1 Introduce a free Duty Planner service on Tue, Wed and Thurs mornings 10.00 to 13:00	Development Management Team Leader	1 August 2026
	2 Re introduce Pre-Application service (asap)	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	TBC
	3 Introduce a formal approach for Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs)	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	TBC

APPENDIX 2

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
28. Put in place clear procedures that are designed to reduce the use of Extensions of Time and insert an element of management control to govern when they are used	Introduce a new Extension of Time Protocol	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	31 September 2026
	Managed through regular case reviews, 121s and performance monitoring	HoS, Manager and Team Leaders	31 September 2026
29. Issue staff with mobile phones and look at tablets for site visits.	Roll out mobile phones to all DM and Planning Enforcement team who do site visits	IT / Grant / MAJA	By end of July 2026 (this has been completed)
	Roll out of tablets to coincide with the introduction of the mobile app on Uniform	IT / Grant / MAJA	Autumn 2026
30. Secure use of a fleet of Council cars for site visits where staff do not want to use their own vehicle	Planning Enforcement is investigating this	Planning Enforcement Manager	TBC
Working Practices: Strategic Development			
31. Introduce programme and project management for PPA applications to ensure that they are properly handled and progressed	Under review now	HoS, Manager & Team Leaders	30 September 2026 – but hopefully sooner
32. Put in place effective consultation protocols with the Strategy and Improvement Directorate.	Agree protocols with Strategy & Improvement	Strategy and Improvement and Development Management team	30 September 2026
Working Practices: Communication			
33. Design a regular update publication that is automatically emailed to members (and others) covering all aspects of the service	TBC Could / should cover both development management and planning policy	HoS, Planning Policy Manager and Comms team	31 December 2026
34. Instigate a Developers' / Agents'	Proposed an Agents' Forum to cover both	HoS and Planning	30 September

Recommendation	Action	Who	When
Forum to ensure systematic communication with the main agents and developers who use the service	development management and planning policy	Policy Manager	2026
Structural Recommendations			
35. Look at pay rates with nearby LPAs and address areas where they are below comparative levels	TBC	HR	TBC
36. Work with Brentwood and Chelmsford to find a solution to the poor performance of statutory consultees in this part of Essex	Review SLA with ECC, performance targets and KPIs	HoS	Initial review with SLA with ECC in July 2026
	Explore options with Brentwood and Chelmsford with view of transition to Mid Essex	HoS	Autumn 2026
37. Look to introduce CIL as part of the LGR process, but in the interim period produce an up-to-date IDP, update it annually and introduce a process that proactively spends S106 money and delivers the necessary infrastructure	Commission an update of the IDP to inform DM decisions, and support work on a new Local Plan Step 1: write brief and request expressions of interest	Planning Policy team	Draft IDP Brief written: 31 August 2026
	PPWG considered report on CIL in Spring 2026. Need to commission business case to decide whether to take CIL forward	Planning Policy team	Autumn 2026
	Appoint a S106 Officer	Planning Policy team	Autumn 2026

Key:

CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
DET	An application to agree details pursuant to a planning condition
DM	Development Management
ECC	Essex County Council
HoS	Head of Service: Development Management
HR	Human Resources
IDP	Infrastructure Delivery Plan
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LGR	Local Government Reorganisation
NMAs	Non-Material Amendments

NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NSD	National Scheme of Delegation
PAS	Planning Advisory Service
POSe	Planning Officers Society Enterprises
Power BI	Microsoft Power BI - a business intelligence and data visualisation platform
PPAs	Planning Performance Agreements
S106	Section 106 Legal Agreement
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TBC	To be confirmed