TO: PLANNING & REGULATORY COMMITTEE   **DATE: 6 January 2016**

BY: DOMINIQUE STEPHENS (CHANGE CONSULTANT, ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE)

PURPOSE: FOR INFORMATION

TITLE: **PLANNING REVIEW CLOSE REPORT**

SUMMARY REPORT

This closure report is the final document produced for the Planning Review and is to be used by senior management to assess the success of the project, identify best practices for future projects, resolve all open issues, and formally close the project. This report is being taken to Planning and Regulatory Committee for information to set out the outcomes from the review.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning and Regulatory Committee note:

1.   The content of the report and the outcomes of the review.

2.   That there will be an annual high level review led by the Planning & Development Group Manager to ensure the Planning Service remains fit for purpose.

3.   That the Planning Service will continue to deliver the outcomes from the review, incorporating them into their business as usual activities.

INTRODUCTION

4.   Surrey County Council's (SCC) Planning Service is recognised as a good planning service. It is responsible for determining planning applications for minerals, waste and council owned developments such as schools and libraries. The service has a statutory duty and is empowered by law to exercise legislative town planning functions as defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

5.   The Planning Service has recently undergone a review which aimed to ensure the service was fit for purpose in the face of ever growing expectations for speedy, transparent and judicious decision making processes and that it provides an enhanced experience for all users.

6.   The Planning Service has been facing several challenges which include:

   • **Legislative changes** -Government introduced two new measures of performance, any breach of which may cause the Secretary of State to 'designate' an authority and determine planning applications that would normally have been made to that authority.

   • **Increasing demand on the team –** At the start of the review there was a demand for 18,000 new school places over the following five years, therefore generating additional planning applications for permanent, temporary & internal adaptations school expansions. That pressure remains with the ongoing need for additional school places continuing through to 2021.

- **Financial and cost savings required** – Ongoing pressure to remain within current budget despite the increase in workload and challenges faced

- **Contributing to Surrey's corporate priorities -** Planning plays a critical role in delivering three of SCC's priorities – Supporting the Economy, Delivering School Places and Delivering Waste Solutions.

7.   The Planning Review was therefore carried out to ensure the service was able to meet these challenges and to ensure that the Planning Service is as effective and efficient as possible.

APPROACH/DELIVERY

8.   To facilitate the Planning Review, two complimentary measures were undertaken, an internal review and a Peer Challenge. The internal review was led by a project manager and supported by an external consultant who provided both planning and review expertise along with an independent perspective. It focused on the detail of the development management process looking at the end to end process for planning applications relating to minerals, waste and Reg 3 developments.

9.   The Peer Challenge was a three day event which took place from the 8th-10th May 2013. This was facilitated by the Local Government Association (and funded by the Planning Advisory Service) and took a more strategic look at the Planning Service with peers from other local authorities providing a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge to identify areas of good practice and areas for improvement.

10.   In delivering the Planning Review several methods were used to identify good practice and areas for consideration. A large engagement programme of interviews and workshops was undertaken with stakeholders. These included internal stakeholders such as; Legal, Education, Property, Highways, Heritage, Transport Development Planning and Countryside services and external stakeholders which included: residents, parish councils, statutory consultees, applicants, agents and districts and boroughs. In addition to the workshops and interviews a stakeholder survey/questionnaire was distributed and the results analysed to feed into the review.

11.   The Planning Service itself has also been fully engaged throughout the Planning Review process. A working group of key officers from within the service was set up and officers have been involved in a series of workshops, update sessions and in progressing the quick win actions. A staff survey was also undertaken.

12.   A key stage of the review was the process mapping of the "as is" model. This enabled the team to identify issues and non-valued added activities at each stage of the development management process and to identify areas for improvement which were then developed as part of the "to be" process model. Benchmarking activities were also undertaken, with visits to East Sussex, Hampshire and Devon County Councils and a benchmarking survey.

OUTCOMES

13.   Outcomes from the analysis and engagement led to the identification of service strengths and good practice which included the teams restoration work, its strong policy base, partnership working and the skill and commitment of staff.

14.   In terms of areas for improvement, the Peer Challenge identified 18 recommendations in total and the internal review put forward a number of additional recommendations. The recommendations from both elements of the review were then combined into one implementation plan to take forward.

15. Table 1 below shows a summary of the identified recommendations, with peer review recommendations highlighted in bold.

	Completed Recommendations/ Actions	*In progress*
IT	• Upgrade to Windows 7 • Upgrade to Planning System (Master Gov) • Implement a new Document Management System (DMS) • Able to view applications via our website • Planning Portal. • Improve GIS functionality	• Start using Enforcement module. • Electronic Payments
Pre-App	• **Introduce Charging for pre-app**	
Validation	• Validation Officer role • New Validation process (target of 3 days). • **Recording of why applications are not valid.** • **Training for applicants and agents (internal & external)**	
Performance management	• **Introduce Timesheeting** • **Define and set performance targets / time frames for achieving certain objectives / milestones.** • Establish standard protocols and guidance for each stage in the process • Implement PPA (Planning Performance Agreements for complex cases when required	• Implement project plan standard template. • Implement resource management plan (using data from project plans to plan resource allocations). • Establish regime of management information reporting
Structure	• **Integrate heritage/archaeological, arboriculture, landscape & ecology resources into the planning service** • Recruitment of additional resources • Implement monitoring of Reg 3 • Implement renovation of Planning corridor • Filing	
Partnership Working	• **Investigate wider partnership opportunities with districts and boroughs and other local authorities.** • Provide a structure chart of SCC's Planning service for D&Bs. • **Work with d&bs and parish/town councils in the planned review of the Statement of Community Involvement.** • Improved working arrangements between planning, education and property in relation to the school places programme.	
Raising the profile of Planning and Good Practice	• **Establish both a political and officer planning "Champion".** • **LGA to write up a case study of Surrey's restoration work.** • **Highlight planning's role in the delivery of school place programme.** • Ensure planning is included in directorate priorities. • All Members and senior officers receive planning awareness	
Improved Communication with stakeholders	• **Review and amend the SCI.** • **Ensure as part of the current review of the Annual Monitoring Report that it is made more user friendly.** • **Develop a monitoring & enforcement protocols.** • Improve information provided on website (both SCC & D&B) and to the contact centre including clarity of roles.	

Increased levels of delegation	• **Revise the delegation scheme**	
Improvements to Committee Process	• Establish cut off point for final amendments to Committee reports. • **Review use of the web cam at Planning & Regulatory Committee & how this can be improved.** • Case officers to present to committee. • Change process for peer review of committee reports.	• Training for officers and members. • Amendments and review of committee reports
Improvements to Consultation Process	• Reduce from 28 day period to 21 day period for consultation • Cease issuing consultation notes	

PERFORMANCE AGAINST OUTPUTS

16. As can be seen from Table 1, the Planning Review involved a large number of actions. Many of these were considered to be major and complex changes which required significant investment in terms of resources, equipment, time, finance, willingness to change or in some cases elements of all of these. It is therefore a huge achievement that all of the major actions have now been implemented.

Project Highlights and best practices

17. Whilst all of the implemented actions can be seen as achievements, there are some particular successes that are of note:

   a) **Level of delegation** – this was one of the first recommendations implemented and marks a major change to how applications are determined. Before the review 48% of all applications were determined by the Planning & Regulatory Committee.

   Benchmarking information indicates that this proportion of applications going to Committee was much higher than at other authorities where on average approx 25% of applications are determined by Committee.   Following the review, the scheme of delegation was revised so that more routine, less controversial planning applications are delegated to officers. This has resulted in the number of applications determined by Committee reducing down to 30% in 2014/15, bringing SCC more in line with other authorities.

   b) **Partnership working** – The Planning Service were already commended for their good partnership working as part of the Peer Challenge but following the review have continued to improve their working relationship with partners such as districts and boroughs. One particular action has been to share the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) resource with districts and boroughs which has generated an income of £11,500 in 2014/15 and an expected income of £20,000 for 2015/16.

   bi) Other key partnership work has involved improving working arrangements between Planning, Education and Property in relation to the Schools Expansion Programme. Several workshops have been held with the Property Team to improve the quality of application submitted; the consistency of advice given by Planning has been improved and a Planning tracker has been set up to monitor applications throughout each stage of the planning process.

c) **Validation process** – several improvements have been made to the validation process. A dedicated Validation Officer has been appointed and a validation checklist developed, therefore ensuring that the validation process has been streamlined. This has resulted in the average time taken to validate an application reducing from 26 days (3 months prior to review) to 7 days (May-July 2015). It is expected that these timescales will continue to reduce down to a target of validating an application within 3 days as the new process and Validation Officer post become fully embedded. A record of non-valid applications is now being kept so that feedback can be given to applicants about mistakes that are being made, thereby helping them to improve the quality of their submissions.

d) **Planning Corridor refurbishment** – the existing accommodation the team occupied was not fit for purpose. It provided a poor and old fashioned working environment with no space for teams to be collocated and no space for essential growth. This led to inconsistent and inefficient work practices, poor team morale/well-being and reputational damage – providing a negative perception of the service to external visitors.

di) The refurbishment has totally transformed the working environment for the team as can be seen from the before and after images below. Teams now have plenty of space to be co-located and the space is an open and welcoming area with new furniture, lighting and decor.

Figures 1 & 2: Planning corridor - Before
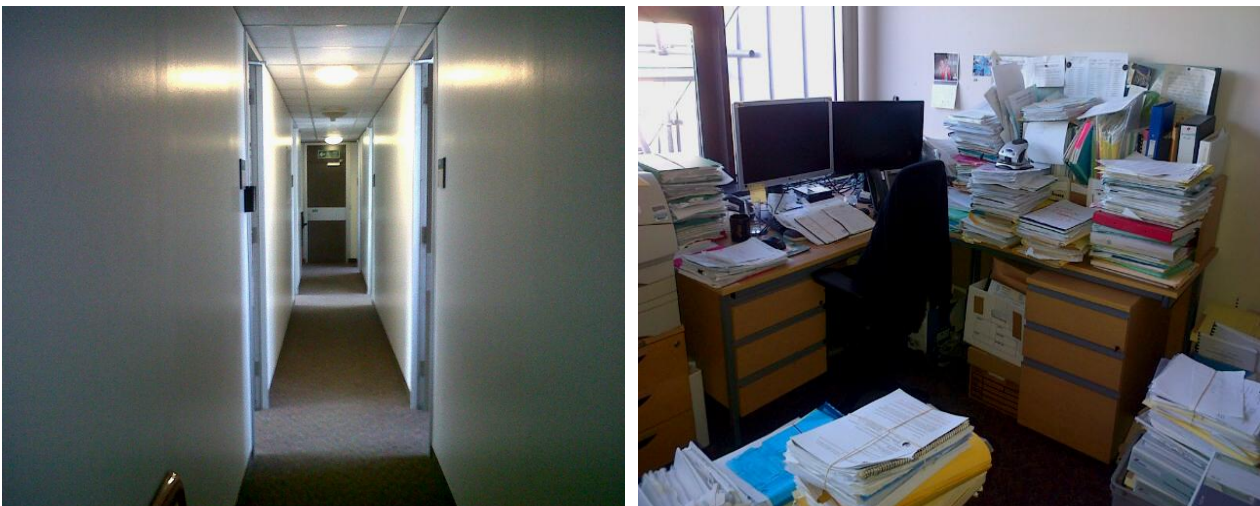
Figures 3 &4: Planning Corridor - After

e) **Monitoring & Enforcement Protocol –** a draft Monitoring and Enforcement Protocol was written over 15 years ago yet it was never implemented and published. The Planning Review has provided the focus and resource needed to update and improve the protocol and a final version has now been approved by the Planning & Regulatory Committee (who gave positive feedback) and published on the SCC website.

f) **Go live of Planning Portal** – previously SCC was one of only two authorities in England who did not enable electronic submission of applications through the Planning Portal. The Planning Review has since facilitated the numerous IT improvements that were necessary to enable applications to be received electronically, and the team have now been receiving applications via the Planning Portal since May 2015. This move to an electronic way of working has been of particular benefit to applicants, many of whom have provided positive feedback.

g) **Quick wins**: Several quick wins were also implemented early on in the Planning Review. These included: dual screens; structure chart for D&Bs; Timesheeting; roll out of Windows 7; promotion of good practice and review of the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

Recommendations not taken forward

18. Of the 18 recommendations put forward by the Peer Challenge only two have not been taken forward and delivered. These are:

   a) *Evaluate the opportunities for joint procurement of the Master Gov system*
   b) *The role of scrutiny in relation to planning should be developed and used as an important resource to support planning improvement.*

19. The first of these was investigated, however due to SCC's unique IT infrastructure it was not possible to join up procurement of upgrades to the Master Gov system as SCC has different requirements to other authorities such as Hampshire who use the same system. This is however something that can be considered in the future and which will continue to be reviewed, as now that SCC's system has been upgraded it should be on a par with other authorities making it possible for joint procurement of any new features that may come to market.

20. The second recommendation not taken forward was also discussed. However, Senior Management and Members felt that this was not appropriate or necessary at this current time as there are sufficient measures in place to review the role of the Planning & Regulatory Committee.

PERFORMANCE AGAINST SCHEDULE

21. **Milestones met**
   The Planning Review was divided into distinct phases which included: project planning; issue identification; options development; implementation and project close/handover. The first three of these phases, which formed the 'project' element of the review were all delivered on time and within the 6 month timescale (March – August 2013) set out at the project outset. Specific examples of milestones met include:

   a) **Delivery of the Peer Challenge** – Timescales for the Peer Challenge were determined by the LGA who were facilitating the review. As a result the Peer Challenge was set for May 2013 giving the project team just six weeks to prepare for the event instead of the usual six months that other authorities normally have.   Whilst preparing the engagement sessions and agenda for the Peer Challenge in such a short time frame was demanding, the three day event was a remarkable success, being delivered on target with the project team

praised by the peer team for the great organisation, number of stakeholders involved and smooth running of the event.

b) **Peer Challenge Improvement Day** - This was scheduled in August 2013 with the aim of progressing the recommendations into deliverable actions to take forward and to get the contribution and buy in from staff and members. Those members of the Peer team who returned for this event were impressed to see how much had been progressed in the few short weeks since the Peer Challenge took place and were delighted to see that not only had actions been developed but that some quick wins had already been implemented. They also felt it was refreshing to see very senior Members and officers in attendance on the day.

22. **Milestones not met**

At project outset the implementation period for the review was estimated to be six months, from September 2013- Feb 2014. However, due to the scale of improvements needed and a number of unavoidable delays on the critical path, implementation actually took 18 months longer than anticipated. This was mainly due to two reasons:

a) **IT infrastructure** – Some of the biggest and most crucial improvements needed related to upgrading IT equipment and software. These improvements such as upgrading to Windows 7, providing an electronic document management system and enhancing the Planning data software were all on the critical path and so many other actions could not be completed until these improvements were in place. Unfortunately, due to Surrey's unique IT infrastructure, these improvements proved to be difficult and therefore time-consuming to implement. Measures were put in place to ensure these actions were a priority which included escalating issues to the E&I Tech Board, Cabinet member and senior managers as appropriate and having dedicated fortnightly meetings with IMT colleagues to check progress. Whilst these measures did help progress, some delays were still inevitable.

b) **Resistance to change** – The Planning Service have been working the same way for 20 years or more, and so many of the team were resistant to the improvements and change being implemented. This negative outlook meant that actions tasked to the team were not delivered on time. The project team tried several methods to resolve this issue including: large number of workshops for team to put forward their ideas and get involved in delivery; a working group with key members of the team leading on different workstreams and positive encouragement from the project lead and group manager.

23.   The delays caused by these two issues have meant that a couple of actions from the review are still in progress and cannot yet be signed off as complete. These issues relating to performance management, Committee improvements and IT can be seen in the right hand column of Table 1 and are now being taken forward by members of the team as part of the handover process for the review. A summary of the overall Planning review timescales can be seen in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Planning Review Timescales
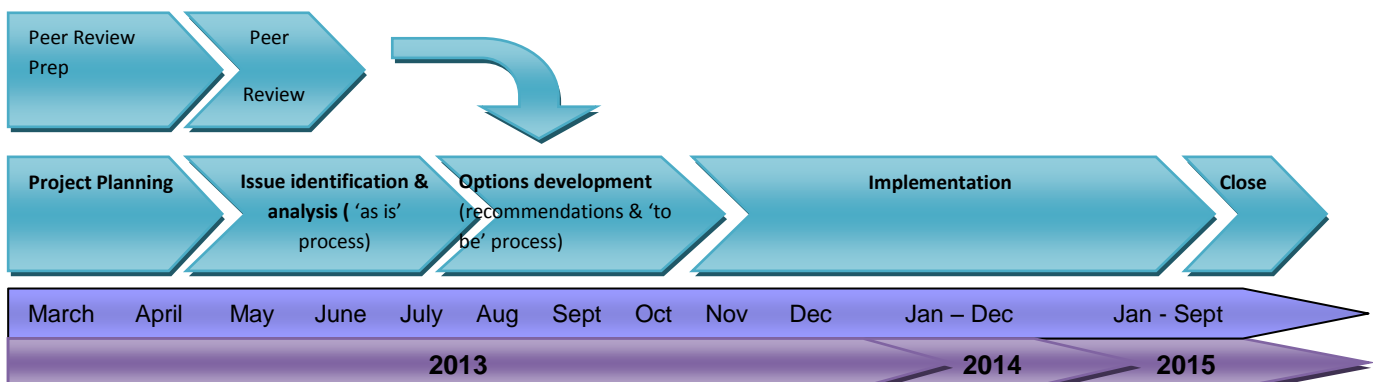
PERFORMANCE AGAINST BUDGET

Costs of the Review

Table 2. One off project costs	Estimated	Actual	Difference
Master Gov improvements & add ons	£20,000	£15,378	£4,622
Additional IT equipment	£20,000	£9,000	£11,000
Website functionality	£5,000	£0	£5,000
Planning corridor	£60,000	£69,765	-£9,765
Consultant costs	£20,000	£33,004	-£13,004
Total	**£125,000**	**£127,147**	**-£2,147**

24. As can be seen from Table 2 above, savings were made against the budgeted cost for the IT improvements. Costs for the consultant and refurbishment of the planning corridor did go slightly over budget but overall the total overspend was only £2k. Whilst the final estimated budget for the refurbishment of the corridor was £60k, this was a huge saving on the original quote of £600k. This saving was made by approaching the contractors directly rather than going through a consultant. The total spend of £127k is being funded with windfall income secured by the Planning and Development Group (TRICS) so will not affect the overall Planning budget.

Annual costs

25. At the beginning of the review it was estimated that an annual investment of approx £85k would be required from the Planning budget for changes resulting from the Planning Review. This was to facilitate two extra posts – the Validation Officer and the Regulation 3 (Schools) Monitoring Officer along with some minor changes to job profiles. In practice, this cost was only £68k therefore coming under budget by approx £17k (see Table 3). Whilst funding for these posts will be from the Planning budget, they will be funded by the additional income received from planning fees, partnership working and pre application charges and so the overall Planning budget will remain unchanged.

26. Further posts were also needed to deal with the increasing demand from the Schools Expansion Programme. Five additional fixed term posts were therefore created in the Regulation 3 team, (three of which have been appointed to) which are being funded by the schools programme.

Table 3. annual costs	Estimated	Actual	Difference	Funded by
Validation Officer post	£40,000	£33,077	£6,923	Planning budget (additional income)
Reg 3 Monitoring officer post	£40,000	£33,077	£6,923	
Review of job profiles	£5,000	£1,506.75	£3,493.25	
Sub Total	**£85,000**	**£67,661**	**£17,339**	
Principle Planning Officer (Reg 3)	£45,000	£42,503	£2,497	Schools Programme funding
Senior Planning Officer (Reg 3)	£40,000	£38,015	£1,985	
Planning Officer (Reg 3)	£30,000	£26,798	£3,202	
Planning Officer (Reg 3)*	£30,000	N/A	£30,000	
Planning Officer (Reg 3)*	£30,000	N/A	£30,000	
Sub total	**£175,000**	**£107,316**	**£67,684**	
Total	**£260,000**	**£174,977**	**£85,023**	

*two Planning Officer Posts are current vacant

Income and efficiencies

Partnership working

27. One of the successes of the Planning Review has been the sharing of SCC's EIA resources with district and boroughs and the income generated from it. It was estimated this would bring in approx £10k per annum, but so far is exceeding these expectations, with £11.5k received in 2014/15 and £20k expected for 2015/16.

Table 4. Partnership working income		
2013/14	2014/15	2015/16 (expected)
£4,850	£11,500	£20,000k

Fees from applications

28. Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 the number of minerals and waste applications received increased by an average of 16% each year. At the commencement of the review it was expected that this growth would continue –with the potential introduction of fracking and recent growth in the economy being supportive of this trend going forward. The Regulation 3 team also expected a large increase in applications due to the schools expansion programme with 18,000 additional schools places needed between 2013/14 – 2018/19 generating additional planning applications relating to permanent school expansions, temporary expansions & internal adaptations.

29. Despite the evidence behind these projections, the type and size of applications received each year can vary considerably (as shown in Table 5) and so it can be difficult to extrapolate a correlation between application numbers, resource required and income generated without looking over a number of years. This is common in a County Planning authority who deal with a smaller number of complex applications compared with districts and boroughs who deal with large numbers of less complex, smaller applications.

30. As can be seen in Table 5 below the increase in income that was expected occurred in 2013/14 however dropped away in 2014/15. The reason for this drop in 2014/15 is that no major applications have been received, however pre planning has continued on proposed major mineral, waste and school proposals which are due to be submitted in the coming months so income levels will rise again.

Table 5.No of applications and income generated	2012/13		2013/14		2014/15	
	No of applications	Income	No of applications	Income	No of applications	Income
M&W Full application	51		37		43	
M&W Details Pursuant	49	£158,840	36	£181,611	15	£37,074
Reg 3 Full application	68		69		61	
Reg 3 Details Pursuant	9	£80,207	22	£174,838	26	£110,380
Total		**£239,047**		**£356,449**		**£147,454**

Income from pre applications

31. One of the improvements introduced as part of the Planning Review was to introduce charging for pre application advice. Since charging was implemented, £792 of income has been received. This is lower than expected but benchmarking information indicates that other authorities such as Hampshire also experienced slow take up following the introduction of charges. This is due to changing the culture of the applicant-from having free advice over many years to having to pay.

32. A review of charging was undertaken 6 months after implementation to investigate the causes of the low uptake. The review concluded that:

   a) Officers were following the charging protocol correctly
   b) Majority of applications received since the introduction of charging were for minor applications, therefore chargeable advice was not needed
   c) Complaints from one or two applicants about charging but applications for chargeable advice starting to come in
   d) A further review of the effectiveness of pre application charging be undertaken by the team in January 2016

Efficiencies

33. One of the major benefits of the improvements put forward by the review was that they would make the planning process as efficient as possible, therefore eliminating non-value added activities. In the absence of time recording data prior to the review, estimates of the expected time savings that would result from the successful implementation of the planning review actions have been prepared. These can be seen in the table below along with estimates of what savings have actually been achieved.

Table 6. Estimated efficiencies from the Planning Review

Improvements		Estimated Saving (FTE)	Saving achieved?(yes/ no/in progress)	Approx Savings achieved to date
Management	Performance management	-0.40	N/A	
	Project management	0.65	No	
Windows 7	PC response times	0.42	Yes	0.42
Master Gov	Officer report compilation	0.42	In progress	0.10
	Enforcement records	0.12	No	
Website	Receipt of comments, objections etc online	0.45	In progress	0.10
DMS	Electronic case files	0.65	In progress	0.30
GIS	Constraints checks	0.11	Yes	0.11
	Plotting site boundary	-0.12	N/A	N/A
Pre application	Pre ap record management etc	0.19	Yes	0.19
Validation	3 day target, validation checklist & validation officer	0.95	Yes	0.95
	Receipt of aps online via Planning portal	0.11	Yes	0.11
Consultation	Ceasing neighbour & consultee notification notes	0.30	In progress	0.15
	Reduction of consultation period	0.34	In progress	0.15
Total		4.19 FTE		2.58 FTE

34. As can be seen from the table above not all savings have been fully realised. This is due to the prolonged delivery of the IT solutions as a result of the difficulties around SCC's IT infrastructure. This has resulted in a number of the solutions only recently being delivered or still to be delivered and it is too early to see the full benefits of these improvements.

35. The efficiencies identified above were required to offset the projected increase in workload for minerals and waste. Whilst this hasn't necessarily materialised in number of applications it has in terms of increasing complexity and challenges. For example, Bury Hill wood - an application for temporary permission for oil exploration went through the following complex procedure which required planning input throughout:

a) Planning Officer recommendation to approve
b) Planning & Regulatory Committee refused application
c) Applicant appeals Planning & Regulatory Committee decision
d) Planning & Regulatory Committee decision upheld at planning appeal by planning inspector
e) Applicant appeals planning inspector decision in High Court
f) High Court overturns inspectors decision
g) Local resident action group appeals High Court decision to Supreme Court
h) Supreme Court upholds High Court decision and refers matter back to planning appeal
i) New planning inspector hears appeal and grants planning permission

LESSONS LEARNT

36. A lessons learnt and handover workshop was held in September 2015 to conclude the Planning Review and to hand over any remaining actions to the Planning Service to be delivered as part of their business as usual activities. A summary of the lessons learnt from what worked well and what could have been improved in terms of both project delivery and outputs from the review are summarised in the tables below.

Table 7. What went well - project delivery

Project Delivery		
What went well?	**Why?**	**Lesson learnt**
Project management	• External to planning so provided the focus needed along with an objective viewpoint but worked with Planning colleagues to gain their buy in and expertise.	• Dedicated project resource from outside of team is beneficial • Change can be good and we need to challenge
Peer Review and benchmarking	• Seeing how others do things and gives an impartial view. Helped to identify what could be done better and what is done well	• Worth the extra effort to get an external view and learn from other authorities
Met Project objectives	• Carefully managed, good leadership, resources, support	• Be realistic & clear about what you want to achieve
Access to participation	• Opportunities to contribute – e.g workshops, working groups	• Good engagement achieves buy in and helps achieve objectives
Office move logistics	• Organisation	• Good planning makes a difference
Review by ourselves	• Put off for years, provided time & discipline	• Democratic rather than just managers – is best • Left it too long
Things have actually happened – delivery, not just telling	• Buy-in & resource provided	• Team are willing to change (for the better!)
Working groups	• Allows for more inclusive discussion	• Important for buy in and to delegate responsibilities to more staff

Table 8. What went well - outcomes

Outcomes		
What went well	**Why?**	**Lessons learnt**
Planning corridor refurbishment	• Project manager persevered to ensure a positive and cost effective outcome was achieved. • Provides better working environment- encourages communication, better interaction and a nice place to work with more space.	• Have to be prepared to invest. • Have to have an open mind to changes • Don't say it can't be done
IT Improvement	• Easier to use and improved efficiency day to day for officer & external users	• Importance of having the right tools. • Having an escalation path and champion to push for changes needed.
Partnership working	• Improved relationships with partners and opportunities for income	• Worth investing the time to develop relationships
Process maps	• Provide consistency & focus for new & existing staff	• Worth investing the time to get the process right
Validation process & validation officer post	• Provides consistency and speeds up the process. Achieved improvement in Reg3 validation process	• Benefits of selective delivery / sharing of work. • A good business case can get you a long way

Enforcement protocol	• Definitive guidance for internal and external	• Need to persevere!
Raising profile of Planning's role in the Schools programme	• Showed importance of planning & education	• Communications and having Planning Champions is important
Increased level of delegation	• More efficient process enabling officers to deal with more minor applications	• Increased delegation is effective

## Table 9. What could have gone better - project delivery

Project Delivery		
What could have been better?	Why?	How would you improve this/lesson learnt?
Timescale for the review	• Underestimated the number and scale of improvements that would result from the review therefore delivery of improvements took a lot longer than expected. • Resistance to change from team and IT issues caused major delays	• Add contingency into timescales • Divide project outputs into delivery phases. • Involvement and willingness to change from team is critical for delivery. • Escalation route for issues with items on critical path
Raising profile of planning with stakeholders (e.g other SCC services / function)	• Message does not always get across first time.	• Use champions and better communication • Ongoing not a one off action.
Communicating overview of the review	• Challenging range of issues being tackled so some members of the team did not always feel fully informed.	• More frequent updates. • Potential use of central platform • Emphasise importance of team attending update sessions and workshops provided for them.
Benchmarking information	• Needed to be shared more widely with the team	• Ensure benchmarking info is shared to generate buy in-include in handover process

Table 10. What could have been better - outcomes

Outcomes		
What could have been better?	Why?	How would you improve this/lesson learnt?
IT improvements	• Took too long to deliver	• Escalation process • Regular meetings with IMT from beginning of the process
Too technical focus	• Missed things like social team building	• Non process related activities are also important
Charging for pre ap	• Has not yet generated the income expected	• Takes time to fully embed this type of change • Review needed in January 2016 to review progress • Income can vary year on year depending in type of applications received

BENEFITS REALISATION

Figure 6. Financial impact of the review 2014/15
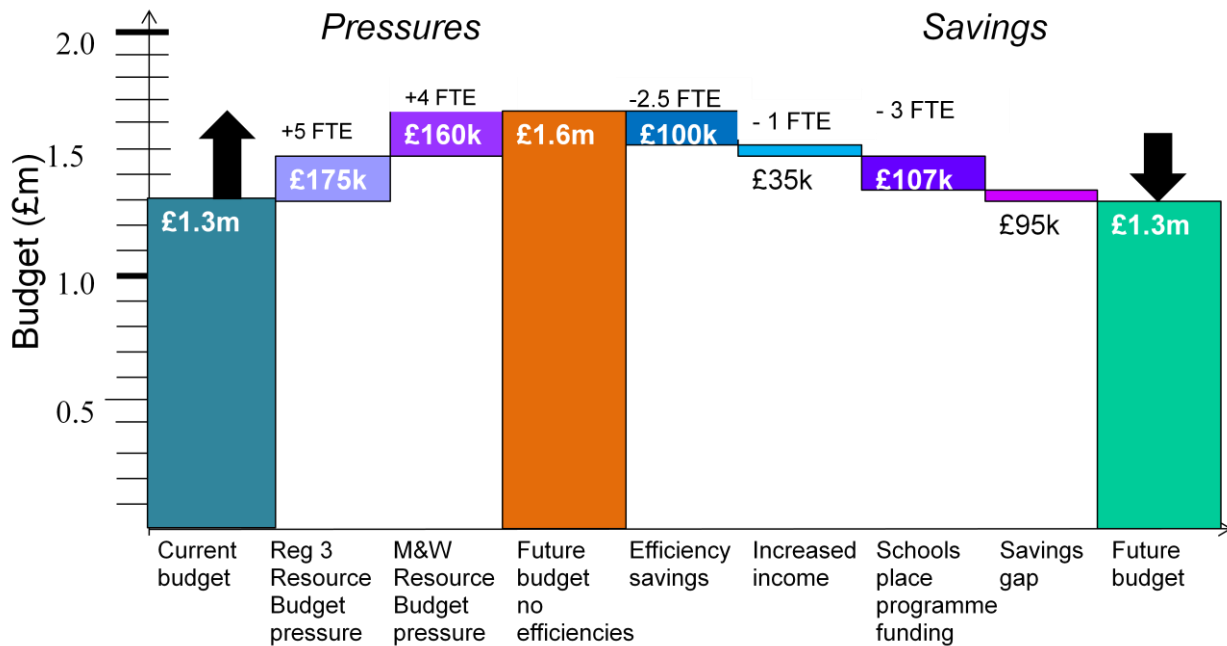
37. Figure 6 above provides a worst case scenario for the financial impact of the outputs from the review and the additional planning resources needed to deal with the additional pressures from the schools expansion programme. It shows that whilst the additional resources provide a budget pressure, the efficiency savings and increased income reduce this pressure leaving a funding gap of just £95k. This funding gap is expected to be eliminated in future years (there was actually a funding surplus of £117k in 2013/14) however has occurred in 2014/15 for two reasons. Firstly, there has been a lower number of large scale applications in 2014/15 which has reduced the level of income for this year (seen in Table 5) and secondly, some of the improvements have only been implemented recently and so have not yet had time to become fully embedded to realise their full efficiencies/income that is expected.

38. It is a huge positive that the Planning budget is remaining unchanged despite the number of improvements and benefits that have been achieved and so continues to represent value for money. Other benefits (aside from income and efficiencies) that have been achieved by the review include:

a) Reduced time taken to validate applications (from an average of 26 days down to 7 with a further reduction expected)
b) Reduction in number of applications being determined by Committee (from 48% down to 30%), therefore, increased capacity of the Committee to deal with increasing number of applications
c) Improved satisfaction from applicants and agents being able submit applications electronically
d) Improved resident/consultee satisfaction from viewing applications online
e) Improved perception of planning as a service (internally & externally)
f) Improved well-being and morale for the team leading to greater productivity
g) Improved working environment (improved IT, work space etc)
h) Efficiencies from Planning and TDP using the same Planning IT system

39. Once all improvements are fully embedded it is also expected that there will be an increased percentage of applications determined within the 13 week period and that the quality of applications submitted will be improved therefore increasing the percentage of applications valid on receipt. A further benefits realisation study will be undertaken in 2016 by the Planning and Development Group Manager to ensure these benefits are achieved.

CLOSURE ACTIVITIES

40. In order to ensure that the Planning Review can be concluded, the Project Manager has ensured that the following closure activities have been delivered:
    a) Review of project achievements and successes
    b) Benefits realisation
    c) Identification and sharing of lessons learnt from the project
    d) Owners for outstanding tasks have been agreed and actions handed over to be delivered as business as usual.
    e) Records management – any live or important project documents have been moved to the teams folder on the I drive so they are accessible to all. Remaining project documents will be archived.
    f) Any remaining risks have been highlighted to the Planning and Development Group Manager who will continue to monitor outputs and their continued delivery.

CONCLUSIONS:

41. The Planning Review has delivered a huge number of improvements to the Planning Service, enabling it to operate as a modern, effective and efficient service that is now a role model for other authorities. The Service is now better placed to support delivery of corporate priorities.

42. The successful outcome of this complex review has been made possible through the support and guidance of external peers, the consultant and internal project management resource. This has also demonstrated the need for and benefits of the project management resource continuing beyond the initial review outcomes and supporting the implementation of the review.

Financial and value for money implications

43. The one-off cost of carrying out the review was £127k against a budget of £125k. This was funded with windfall income secured by the Planning and Development Group (TRICS) so has not affected the overall Planning or SCC budget.   The annual Planning budget going forward will remain the same as a result of the outcomes of the review despite an increase in workload and challenges faced by the service. Full financial breakdown is set out in paragraphs 24 to 35.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

44. The current Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) template and guidance was considered and there are no significant equality or diversity implications

Risk Management Implications

Risks were appropriately identified and have been satisfactorily mitigated

CONTACT: Dominique Stephens, Change Consultant, Directorate Programme Group

CONTACT DETAILS: 0208 541 7651 dominique.stephens@surreycc.gov.uk

---

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None