

MID KENT AUDIT

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT AUDIT RECOMMENDATION PROGRESS REPORT

September 2017

Report To:	Audit Committee	Audit Manager	Frankie Smith
Original findings report issued	October 2016	Head of Audit	Rich Clarke



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Introduction and Background

This report follows the Audit Committee meeting on 21 June 2017. At that meeting, the Deputy Head of Audit Partnership, as part of the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion 2016/17, provided Members with an update on the recommendations raised in the 'weak' assurance rate report on Planning Enforcement, which was originally issued in October 2016. During the meeting, Members asked the Deputy Head of Audit Partnership for a further update to be presented at the next Audit Committee meeting on 13 September 2017. The following report provides an update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Planning Enforcement audit.

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Progress So Far

The following table provides an update on each of the recommendations arising from the Planning Enforcement audit. This update is based on the findings from our Quarter 1 (2017/18) follow up exercise, which considered all recommendations due for implementation on or before 30 June 2017.

Recommendation	Current Status
R1: Planning Enforcement complaint files (High priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R2: Evidence of enforcement action taken and compliance achieved (High priority)	This recommendation was originally due to be implemented by 30 June 2017. However, we have agreed to defer this recommendation
R3: Logging of complaints on Uniform (Medium Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R4: Planning enforcement performance indicators (Medium Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R5: Performance data (Medium Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R6: Management and reporting of aged cases (Medium Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R7: Quality assurance (Medium Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R8: Procedures manual (Low Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R9: Diarising compliance effective date (Low Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented
R10: Information to complainants (Low Priority)	Recommendation fully implemented

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Further details on outstanding recommendation

The table below provides more detailed information about the outstanding recommendation **R2. Evidence of enforcement action taken and compliance achieved:**

Recommendation (from original report)	Management response, officer and date (from original report)	Progress to date and revised implementation date
<p>R2. Evidence of enforcement action taken and compliance achieved (High priority)</p> <p>Follow-up the outcomes of enforcement notices issued and ensure evidence is maintained to demonstrate compliance action has been taken</p>	<p>Agreed. Management instruction will be sent to the Planning Enforcement Officers setting out expectations in terms of completing and evidencing follow ups on enforcement notices issued. These expectations will also be incorporated into the revised Planning Enforcement Procedures manual.</p> <p>Andy Jeffers 30 June 2017</p>	<p>Our follow up testing has established that the Planning Enforcement Team has been given clear instructions on the recording and evidencing of follow ups on enforcement notices issued and that this expectation has been clearly described in the new Planning Enforcement procedures manual.</p> <p>We have also established that the Development Manager is now completing monthly management checks on a sample of Planning Enforcement case files, including those where enforcement notices have been issued to ensure the expected standards of records are being maintained.</p> <p>However, our follow up testing completed in July 2017, on a sample of enforcement notices issued since 01 March 2017, identified deficiencies in the information recorded on case files to evidence that follow up visits have been completed after the 'comply by' date or that further enforcement action has been taken where needed.</p> <p>We do not currently consider this recommendation to be fully implemented and have therefore accepted a revised implementation date of 31 October 2017. This date allows for the new Planning Enforcement Team structure to be embedded and resourced.</p>

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Next Steps & Conclusions

We are pleased with the progress that has been made to implement 9 of 10 recommendations arising from the Planning Enforcement audit review. We have reassessed the assurance rating to **SOUND**.

We are satisfied that good progress is being made to address the one remaining recommendation and that the reason for the delay in fully implementing this recommendation is justified.

The one remaining recommendation has been deferred until 31 October 2017 to allow sufficient time for the new staff structure to be embedded and vacant posts to be filled.

This recommendation will be revisited in November 2017 and a further update will be verbally communicated to Audit Committee on 29 November 2017.

We thank Members, and Senior Management, for keeping the focus on this area to ensure improvements occur to strengthen the Planning Enforcement service.

Management response - Head of Planning Services

The team have worked hard over the past nine months to comply with the recommended actions arising from the original Audit review last October. I acknowledge the need to further review R2 given the ongoing omissions identified, although I am satisfied that significant improvement has taken place in ensuring electronic files are kept up to date with progress information and that there are quality checks made by the Development Manager to pick up on ongoing issues.