

O&S REVIEW PLAN: PERFORMANCE REVIEW



About performance reviews

The objective of a performance review is to examine the reasons for apparent under-performance of a council service, to assess prospects for improvement, and to make recommendations to Cabinet where appropriate. The output of a policy review is always a report to Cabinet. Typical questions for this type of review are:

- Is this service genuinely under-performing, and if so why?
- Are there plans and systems in place which will help it improve?
- What more needs to be done?

The review needs to be tightly focused on a single service area which appears to be under-performing against performance indicators, planned actions, customer satisfaction or budget management. A performance review could also be conducted on a service run by one of the council's partners, but in this case the committee will need to be clear that it has sufficient powers to review the service and make recommendations for improvements – if it does not, then the issue should be treated as an information item.

Part 1: Business Case

Subject:	Development Management
Proposed by:	Scrutiny Committee
Length:	Expected to take a year from start to finish once review has begun in earnest

Objective

- To review the effectiveness of Swale Borough Council's development management function;
- As necessary, to make recommendations to Cabinet.

Justification

The purpose of this review is to review a range of elements within the development management function which has concerned Members. These include:

- the usefulness of reports received from statutory consultees (eg. Kent County Council Highways; Highways England; Environment Agency);
- the role of parish and town councils in the development management process;
- the proportion of decisions before the Planning Committee, delegated decisions and impact on cost and performance;
- Member involvement in planning applications and Section 106 agreements – including the online tools available to help Members gain information on specific applications in their Wards;
- adoption of parcels of land on developments; and
- planning appeals.

The review is **not** concerned with the delays in processing planning applications, a backlog of casework and poor service to customers which resulted from the

implementation of the shared planning support service with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils.

Evidence and information to be gathered

The following evidence and information will be sought:

- the protocols statutory partners operate when submitting representations on planning applications;
- what tools are available to Members to gain information on planning applications in their Wards, and to have greater input to Section 106 agreements;
- how Swale BC's system of deciding whether planning applications come before the Planning Committee or are delegated to officers compares with neighbouring councils – and what the implications are for cost and performance;
- the role of parish and town councils in the development management process and how this role can be further developed;
- the role of officers, Planning Committee Members and statutory consultees in the defence of planning appeals against the Council; and
- case studies on instances where small parcels of land on housing developments had created problems in relation to adoption and ongoing maintenance.

Sources of information and evidence

<i>Individual or organisation</i>	<i>Committee session</i>	<i>Task and finish panel, site visit, correspondence, or other method</i>	<i>To be decided</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Gerry Lewin, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning; • James Freeman, Head of Planning Services. 	√	X	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member involvement in planning applications and S.106 agreements 	X	√	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with statutory consultees on the representations they make on planning applications 	X	√	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with parish and town councils 	X	√	X
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observing how the Planning Committees and Development Management systems of other councils operate 	X	√	X

• Adoption of parcels of land on developments	X	√	X
Organisation(s) to be reviewed	If partners' activities are to be reviewed, what powers or influence does the committee have?		
SBC only.			
Partner organisation only.	Many of the partners the Committee will want to seek information from are statutory consultees on planning applications.		
X SBC working in partnership.			
Timing constraints	There are no timing constraints as such, but it would be useful for the Committee to report as soon as possible so that any recommended changes for improved practices that are accepted by Cabinet can be implemented quickly.		
Part 2: Review Plan			
Review team			
Lead review member:	Councillor Andy Booth		
Other review members:	Cllrs Cameron Beart, Lloyd Bowen, Derek Conway, Mike Henderson and Ken Ingleton.		
O&S support officer:	Bob Pullen, Policy and Performance Officer		
SBC service liaison officer:	James Freeman, Head of Planning Services		
Key dates			
Date to begin evidence gathering:	13 January 2016		
Date(s) of committee sessions (if any):	Initial 'sounding' meeting held on 13 January 2016.		
Date for draft report to be presented to committee:	To be decided.		
Note: Dates of committee session(s) and for the report to be presented to committee must be added to the committee forward plan.			