

COMMITTEE	COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE	7 December 2017
TITLE	UPDATE ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWING A SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION INTO PLANNING
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr. Dafydd Meurig
PURPOSE	Provide and up-date following the Investigation report published in March 2017

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A Planning Scrutiny Investigation Report was published in March 2017. This was as a result of meetings between Members who were a part of the Investigation with the Cabinet Member and the Senior Planning Manager to agree upon the specific fields of the investigation implemented over four meetings. The specific field were divided into the five sections referred to in the table below.

2. MAIN FINDINGS OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 2.1 The main findings of the Investigation are noted below with a note of the evidence behind that finding and then the recommendation subsequently made by the Investigation along with an update on the situation.

2.2 STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

THE SERVICE'S PERFORMANCE: The planning process must operate within a statutory framework as well as within the Unitary Development Plan (Local Development Plan in 2017). Consequently, the system is quite restrictive.

Evidence:

- Primary Legislation
- Subordinate Legislation
- Relevant planning policies and guidelines
- Unitary Development Plan.

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member: It is recommended that the Cabinet Member ensure the Council regularly monitors the impact of the Local Development Plan (once it has been approved). Furthermore, training must be secured for Members and members of town and community councils to raise awareness and understanding of planning matters, giving consideration, where relevant, to input from external sources.

Update: The monitoring framework for the Plan has been identified and approved by the Planning Inspector. It is used annually to consider the impact of the Plan's policies. The framework will provide the foundation to the Monitoring Report submitted to the Council before the end of October every year.

An awareness raising session about the content of the Plan was held for all Council Members at the beginning of July 2017. An awareness raising session about the Plan was held for all Planning Committee Members during November 2017. Arrangements are being made to take advantage of a proposal from Planning Aid Wales to hold a second series of workshops for town and community Councils on planning matters early in 2018.

2.3 THE SERVICE'S PERFORMANCE

Findings: The service performs well in general, with an increasing number of applications being submitted. Following the discussions, it was concluded that there was a clear interconnection between the work of the Council's planning service and building control service.

Evidence

- 2015-16 performance report
- Observations on the difficulty in achieving the aim when contacting through Galw Gwynedd

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member: The Cabinet Member is recommended to review Ffordd Gwynedd to ensure that the public receives the best possible service when trying to contact an officer, and to review the interconnection between planning and building control to ensure a full and streamlined service for the public.

Update: Both Units commenced the Ffordd Gwynedd Exercise, but due to matters such as the long-term sickness of some Team members and the impact of that on the Unit's capacity, it was resolved to defer the Exercise and to review the situation at the beginning of 2018.

2.4 CONSIDERATION FOR THE ECONOMY

Findings: The Council does not pay due attention to economic matters when determining planning applications in accordance with the Unitary Development Plan.

Evidence

- Gwynedd Unitary Development Plan (Part 2) and policies relevant to that section
- Evidence in the investigation that the economy had been given due attention when making decisions

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member: A recommendation is made to the Cabinet Member to ensure that matters related to economy receive due and specific attention in the report in order to ensure that Members understand the impact on the economy e.g. a separate heading for the economy so that it does not become overwhelmed by the "principle of the development".

Update: Matters relating to the economy receive due and prominent attention as part of the reports on planning applications.

2.5 THE DELEGATION SCHEME

Findings: Gwynedd Delegation Scheme thresholds seem low in comparison to other organisations and this is highlighted in the number of applications referred to the Planning Committee

Evidence:

- Comparative performance of Wales in 2015-16

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member: The Cabinet Member is recommended to amend the thresholds of the Delegation Scheme as noted in Appendix 3.

Update: This work and the recommendations to amend the thresholds further has received the support of Planning Committee Members and it is intended to proceed to formalise the amendments through the appropriate procedure.

2.6 **USER EXPERIENCE**

Findings: Arrangements for providing advice to prospective developers is appreciated and provides developers with options to amend an application as required.

Evidence:

- 2015-16 Satisfaction questionnaires.

Recommendation to the Cabinet Member: The Cabinet Member is recommended to continue with the good work and that the Cabinet Member receives a regular update of the lessons learnt from the process.

Update: The good work is continuing and the situation is monitored regularly including reporting to the Scrutiny Committee.