

Agenda Item 4(b)i

Development Management - External Review Outcome and Resource Request 2025/26

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Committee: | Cabinet |
| Date of Meeting: | 15 May 2025 |
| Report of: | Head of Economic Development and Planning |
| Portfolio: | Economic Development and Planning |

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This update report aims to inform Cabinet on the outcome of the external independent review of the Council's Development Management service and set out next steps.

2 Recommendations

That: -

- 2.1 Cabinet notes the report, the findings of the external review at Appendix 1, and notes the Service Plan and Improvement Plan set out at Appendix 2 and 3.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agree to the resource proposals for Development Management and Planning Enforcement for 2025/26 which will maintain current service delivery whilst the improvement plan is being implemented.
- 2.3 That Cabinet recommends to Council the drawdown of £234,790 from planning/ fee reserves to fund agency staff to maintain service delivery whilst the improvement plan is being implemented and funding for consultancy support to support delivery of the improvement plan. The funding will be in addition to the approved 2025/26 budget.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.4 Development Management is a key statutory service of the Council, and Cabinet have requested an update on the external review of the service.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The Cabinet has received various reports setting out the issues facing the Development Management (DM) service at SBC and has received an overview of the measures being taken by officers to improve performance, tackle backlogs, reduce complaints and increase confidence in the service from key customers.
- 3.2 To address issues with the service and improve performance, the Council has commissioned consultants to undertake an independent review and work to develop an improvement plan for the service, identifying clear actions and resource requirements.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The Development Management service contributes to the delivery of all the Council's corporate priorities.

5 Report Detail

Background

- 5.1 To help address issues within the Council's Development Management service and improve service delivery and value for money, the Council has commissioned an external independent review of the service.
- 5.2 An organisation called Mondrem were appointed in October 2024 to undertake the review. Mondrem are a not-for profit social enterprise whose purpose is to improve public services, and they are based on the Science and Innovation Park at Keele University. Mondrem have worked with more than 30 local authority planning services on a variety of projects, including supporting local planning services with performance challenges to become exemplar and to help good services become better. Many of the reviews they have undertaken have been run alongside corporate transformation initiatives.
- 5.3 The output of the review is an improvement plan for the next 12 months, including clear recommendations, actions, and resource requirements. The review has considered wider transformation options and recommendations for the sharing of SBC and Cannock Chase Council's Development Management Service. Members have been involved in the review, along with key stakeholders and agents/applicants.

The scope of the review

- 5.4 The review has covered all elements of the Development Management service, from pre-application, validation, assessment of applications, determination of applications, appeals, planning enforcement and process/systems.

Review objectives

5.5 The objectives are as follows:

- To help the service meet its statutory requirements
- To help the service play its part in delivering corporate priorities and objectives
- To provide a baseline assessment of performance and service delivery
- To understand the team's workload and capacity to do it now and in the future
- To show how the service can increase productivity
- To show how the service can improve efficiency
- To help make sure that the Council can deliver high performance consistently
- To explore the service's role in promoting economic development in the Borough
- To explore how the service can help attract investment to the Borough
- To explore how the service can offer a solution-focused approach
- To assess the relationship between the Development Management (DM) and planning policy team and developing and delivering the local plan
- To co-design a short-term implementation plan and transformation options assessment that will help you deliver the required short-term improvements and longer-term vision
- To help you and the planning team to connect with, value and want to drive an improvement project based on this plan
- To identify how the Council can deliver its ambition for a great Development Management service in a realistic timeframe
- To help identify a preferred operating model for each element of the service
- To identify the resources and capacity needed to deliver transformation
- To explore how these and other resource needs can be met within the approved budget
- To set out any additional budget and resources that may be needed

Review - findings

5.6 Mondrem held 51 confidential, semi-structured interviews with the team, customers and stakeholders to understand how things are now, what would be better and any barriers there are to making improvements. Thematic qualitative analysis of these interviews, along with quantitative analysis of workload and capacity was delivered first to the Operational Management team in December 2024 and then to the wider planning teams in January 2025.

5.7 The findings of the consultant are set out in a report at **APPENDIX 1**.

- 5.8 High levels of work-in-progress remains a major barrier to making changes happen, despite intense and successful efforts to reduce the number of undetermined applications on hand. Responding to “failure demand” caused by high levels of work in progress requires additional resources and costs the service more money.
- 5.9 Mondrem facilitated workshops with the whole planning service during January 2025, in which the team drafted a purpose statement, a vision statement and co-designed a service plan (Appendix 2 – service plan) to deliver the vision.
- 5.10 The planning service has subsequently spent time working with Mondrem to develop an Improvement Plan (Appendix 3 - improvement plan) to manage the activities from the service plan and to prioritise their time and resource to make improvements.
- 5.11 The service intends in their service and improvement plan to:
- Reduce workloads to healthy levels by setting a stretch target to reduce work in progress i.e. numbers of on-hand planning applications and applications awaiting validation. This will be instigated via ‘Short Interval Management’ which focuses on streamlining processes/procedures and intense management of performance and caseloads with the aim of significantly improving productivity levels of the service.
 - To provide options and recommendations for increasing income from non-statutory services like Planning Performance Agreements for major applications and providing a timely, reliable, paid-for preapplication advice offering for all other application types.
 - Create a trusting and confident culture for the whole planning service.
 - Communicate better with customers.
 - Set new performance metrics.
- 5.12 This work must be supported by the wider Council to deliver success. Leadership Team and the planning team acknowledge the challenging environment that the planning team have been operating in for a sustained period, this has been identified in the feedback from the consultant. The planning team now need to enact their improvement plan and will be supported by Leadership Team to do things differently, learn new skills, and change processes and procedures with the aim of building trust in the service. There will be resources provided to support delivery of the plan but in return there will be accountability for making progress and challenge applied throughout the lifetime of the project.

Next steps

- 5.13 The delivery of the improvement plan requires good governance and project management to ensure that project progress, as well as risks and issues with progress are transparent and that issues can be escalated and resolved as early as possible.
- 5.14 A Project Initiation Document (Appendix 4) has been agreed by Leadership Team and a Project Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive - Place has been established and will meet regularly during the lifetime of the project. The team is fully engaged and bought into the project.
- 5.15 As set out in the report there is the potential that the full benefits of the improvement plan will not be realised, but there is a willingness and desire from the team to move forward improvements to the service and work towards achieving the vision and objectives that are set out in the team's service plan.

Resourcing for 2025/26

- 5.16 Officers have undertaken an assessment of the capacity and skills needed to ensure that the Development Management and Planning Enforcement functions have sufficient resources during 2025/26.

Development Management

- 5.17 The DM service has seen a phased reduction of Agency staff over the last 12 months. A number of appointments have been made to the team at Planning Assistant and Planning Officer level which has filled vacancies, improved capacity and reduced the reliance on agency staff. There is currently 1 agency senior planner providing additional capacity for 30 hours per week.
- 5.18 Despite the recent appointments, there will be a need to continue with some agency staff during 2025/26. It will be necessary to extend the current Agency Team Leader post which is covering the vacant Deputy Development Manager role. It will also be necessary to appoint an agency Senior Planning Officer following the recent resignation of a Senior Planning Officer. To ensure continuity and resilience it is proposed to retain the use of the agency senior planner for 30 hours per week, and the agency team leader for 37 hours per week for a period of 6 months.
- 5.19 The intention is to delete the vacant Deputy Development Manager post and replace this with a third permanent Development Lead role. This will involve a review of the job role and evaluation before the recruitment process can commence. This post is necessary to ensure there is sufficient decision making capacity. The Senior Planning Officer role will also need to be advertised. Any suitable external candidate to these posts is likely to be required to give 2 or 3 months notice, hence the proposal for 6 months agency cover.

- 5.20 The re-introduction of the full pre-application service has the potential to create additional revenue which will help offset the cost of recruitment of additional staff.
- 5.21 Furthermore, as part of the Improvement Plan, the team intends to introduce Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) for larger and more complex applications, these voluntary agreements provide applicants with an enhanced service and are particularly useful for time critical projects. The PPA may cover any part of the development process and is most often used for the pre-application to consent stage. They also provide the Council with the opportunity to generate additional income to fund additional resources to service the PPAs. The Development Manager is currently developing a PPA template and process with the intention of making this service available to applicants in Summer 2025.
- 5.22 To support delivery of the planning improvement plan, Mondrem have been retained to provide additional support to the team in relation to project management, governance, data analysis, process improvement. The cost of this support is £26,000 and will be funded from the additional budget requested which will be funded from planning fee reserve income.

Enforcement

- 5.23 As reported to Cabinet in November 2024, Planning Enforcement is a discretionary service. It is not compulsory for an LPA to act against a breach of planning control or to take further action. However, the service has a high profile and there is an expectation that the Council will investigate potential breaches of planning action and act where it is expedient and deemed to be in the public interest.
- 5.24 The current staffing structure comprises 3 staff, 1 Senior Enforcement Officer and 2 Enforcement Officers, but all 3 posts are currently vacant. There is a challenge for many councils in obtaining and retaining suitable planning enforcement staff - there is a national shortage of experienced planning enforcement staff, and many experienced staff have chosen to work as agency staff due to the significantly higher remuneration.
- 5.25 In January 2025, a temporary planning enforcement provision across SBC and CCDC was introduced utilising 3 x agency Enforcement Officers with supervisory support from a permanent CCDC officer. This arrangement will be in place for at least 12 months, pending the development of a full business case for sharing.

Actions to be taken during 2025/26

- 5.26 Agency Enforcement Officers are expensive, and the current budget is insufficient to fund the existing level of Agency Enforcement officers.
- 5.27 It is proposed during 2025/26 to go out externally to try to recruit 3 x FTE Enforcement Officers. The vacant roles have been reviewed and the salaries are being evaluated to ensure that the scope of role/salary is attractive, with the aim of attracting qualified and experienced candidates to reduce the need for agency Enforcement Officers.
- 5.28 However, to ensure service delivery can be maintained, there will be a need to continue with Agency provision until such time the vacant posts are filled. There is a budget implication of having 3 x FTE agency Enforcement Officers for 2025/26. The worst case financially is that it is not possible to recruit to any of the 3 Enforcement Officer vacancies, and the retention of 3 agency enforcement officers for the full year would cost £152,525 over the budgeted position. This amount will be included within the £234,790 additional budget requested for 25/26.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

The cost of the external review that has already taken place has been funded from a drawdown of funds from the council's planning fee reserve.

The report requests 3 additional agency posts in relation to enforcement at a worse case for 12 months at a cost of £152,525 above the current budget. There is also additional agency costs forecast for planning as set out in paragraph 5.19, the additional cost above the budget is £56,265.00

As set out in paragraph 5.23 it is intended for Mondrem to provide ongoing support during the implementation phase of the recommendations. This will cost £26,000.

The total cost of all of the additional items is £234,790 and this will be met from the planning fee reserve.

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

A risk register will be developed for the Improvement Project. The key risks are identified in the report.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices

None

8 Previous Consideration

Cabinet - 7 November 2024 - Minute No CAB34/24

9 Background Papers

None

Contact Officer: Dean Piper

Telephone Number: 01543 464223

Ward Interest: All

Report Track: Cabinet 15 May 2025 (Only)

Key Decision: N/A



Stafford DM Improvement Project

A summary of the work so far, the opportunities and risks ahead for the Chief Executive and Cabinet.

Publish Date 14-Feb-25

Prepared for Dean Piper, Head of Economic Development & Planning, Stafford & Cannock Councils

Prepared by: Lucy Gibbs, Head of Client Solutions, Mondrem

Contact: lucy.gibbs@mondrem.co.uk

Mondrem Group, Innovation Centre 7, Keele University Science and Innovation Park, Staffordshire, ST5 5NU

talkwithus@mondrem.co.uk

Private and confidential

Not for disclosure to third parties. Exempt under S41 and/or S43 of the FOI Act.

Copyright 2025 Mondrem. All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except under the terms of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 or under the terms of a licence issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency or without the permission in writing of Mondrem, Innovation Centre 7, Keele University Science and Innovation Park, Staffordshire, ST5 5NU



Mondrem Group
www.mondrem.co.uk

Contents

| | |
|--|---|
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| Methodology | 3 |
| Review of the planning service..... | 3 |
| Making plans | 4 |
| Supporting information..... | 4 |
| Case studies..... | 4 |
| A view of the future for Stafford..... | 5 |
| Opportunities | 6 |
| Objectives | 6 |
| Conditions for Success | 6 |
| Risks | 7 |
| Potential for mistakes..... | 7 |
| Conclusion..... | 8 |



Executive Summary

In November 2024 Mondrem reviewed Stafford Borough Council's planning service and found several common goals shared between the service's staff, the leadership team, its customers and stakeholders. These included better turnaround times for planning applications, better communication with customers, elected Members and the public and making the planning service a more professionally rewarding place to work, with a better reputation.

The team has been working to identify objectives and to understand what activity will be needed to achieve their vision for the future built on these shared goals. They have an opportunity to add an extra 35-115% extra capacity by increasing productivity and reducing the number of applications 'on hand'. Changes which will prompt a shift from complaints to compliments and political pain to political calm. The team are also in the process of implementing an attractive and value-for-money preapplication advice service and developing a customer charter with a communications strategy for customers and stakeholders.

The team now need to enact their plan, be held to account for making progress on it in an organised and disciplined way and supported to try new things. They will need to learn new skills and behaviours and unlearn old ones. Some of this will be difficult and none of us is perfect, so they will likely make mistakes along the way. They will need that to be acknowledged and accepted. And to be supported when it happens. Transformation requires trust and investment, can be challenging. It requires strong, consistent leadership and observable change from the teams delivering it. The leadership of the Council, both elected and executive, can make successful outcomes more likely. And equally, has the power to quash the commitment to transformation that is so essential to its success. To do this will mean extending trust where there is none. And being prepared to bear the short-term pain that accompanies transformation efforts and keep the prize in mind. The work so far suggests the prize can be a significant one.

This report outlines what has happened in the last four months and gives an outline of the improvement project to begin building that trust in the service.

Methodology

Review of the planning service

Mondrem held 51 confidential, semi-structured interviews with the team, customers and stakeholders to understand how things are now, what would be better and any barriers there are to making improvements. Thematic qualitative analysis of these interviews, along with quantitative analysis of workload and capacity (Appendix I – feedback presentation) was delivered first to the Operational Management team in December 2024 and then to the wider planning teams in January 2024.

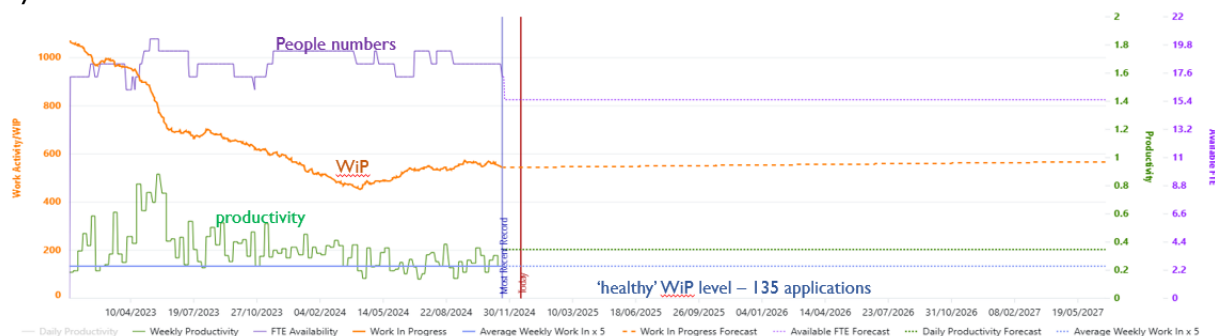
The findings of the report were that there is a cultural issue within Stafford Borough Council, not limited to the planning service, with most interviewees reporting feeling like they were not trusted by, and did not trust, their leaders. Leaders also reported that it was difficult to understand why the DM service has not been clear or convincing that they understand the issues and underperformance, nor how they will make improvements happen. Silos have formed between DM and Forward Planning and between Planning and other services within the Council. Planning budgets have been formed without the input of the Planning Manager and so budget targets are less likely to be delivered. The changes to the current Planning software, that would enable efficiency savings, have not yet been made, because the IT service understands the intention is to replace the system when the shared service is formed



with Cannock. IT also have competing priorities for their time and Planning is not at the top of their priority list.

High levels of work-in-progress remains a major barrier to making changes happen, despite intense and successful efforts to reduce the number of undetermined applications on hand. Responding to “failure demand” caused by high levels of work in progress requires additional resources and costs the service more money.

Figure 1: Total work-in-progress for Stafford Borough Council. Average productivity throughout 2023 and 2024 is 0.36 decisions per person per day. Since Jan 2024 average productivity is 0.28 decisions per person per day.



Making plans

Mondrem facilitated a meeting for the service in January 2025 with the whole planning service, in which the team drafted a purpose statement, a vision statement and began to co-design a service plan to deliver their vision. The project then paused for 3 weeks whilst a shared understanding of expectations was agreed at Stafford. Without the shared understanding of expectations being agreed during this 3 week period, there would have been the strong prospect that the improvement project would fail in the future due to lack of visible support and scrutiny. Mondrem extended the timescales of the project through this pause at no extra cost to the Council.

The team have now developed their service plan (Appendix 2), and with support from Mondrem have drafted an improvement plan (Appendix 3) to outline the tasks and sub-tasks that will be needed to achieve the objectives they have set and allow for resource allocation. The DM Manager and Development Business Manager have also been trained on simple, effective project management and governance tools to ensure that project documentation, support and scrutiny is robustly set up, organised and disciplined.

Supporting information

Case studies

Mondrem have had serial success at helping LPAs to create a professionally rewarding place to work and delight customers and stakeholders with excellent service levels. In all cases, these have been achieved by a combination of protecting the team from ‘failure demand’, trusting that they are dedicated professionals who want to do a good job and creating additional capacity through increasing productivity. Each LPA’s journey has been slightly different, because the problems have been at a different scale, with different causes of depressed productivity, but the Workview charts below illustrate the real WIP reduction achieved by implementing an improvement plan along the principles that Stafford have developed.



Figure 2: A WiP chart for a DM team for a City Council in the North of England. Average productivity at the beginning of recording was 0.3 decisions per person per day, the team's productivity increased to 0.64 decisions throughout 2023 and have maintained this productivity, an increase of 113%



Figure 3: A WiP chart for a DM team in a London borough. Average productivity in 2022 was 0.7 and from 2023 onwards has been maintained at 0.93 decisions per person per day, an increase of 33%



Figure 4: A WiP chart for a DM team for a City Council in Southern England. Productivity in 2023 was 0.44 decisions per person per day and 0.58 for 2024, an increase of 32%



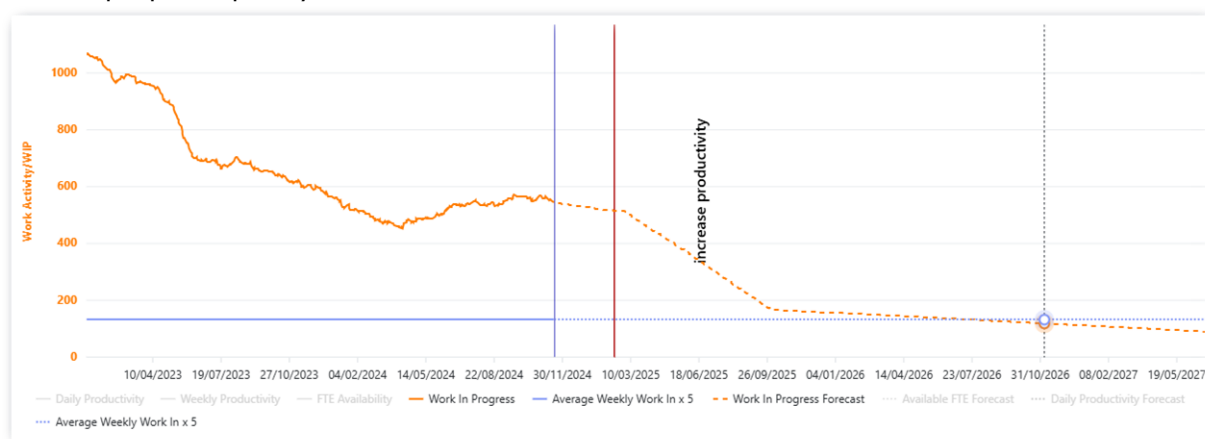
A view of the future for Stafford

If Stafford were to increase productivity to 0.5 decisions per person per day, an increase from the long-term average of 39% then the WiP would be at 'healthy' levels by October 2025:



Mondrem Group
www.mondrem.co.uk

Figure 5: A projection of Stafford's work-in-progress if efforts to increase productivity to an average of 0.5 decisions per person per day are successful.



This would release capacity to further bring income to the service from non-statutory activity and work more closely with forward planning on enabling the Council's corporate objectives.

Opportunities

Objectives

The objectives the team have set themselves by February 2026 are to:

- Communicate better with customers
- Implement a charged-for preapplication advice service that almost every customer wants to use
- Produce options for a new budget for the planning service, including financial and non-financial implications of each option (towards the end of 2025 as next year's budget has already been set) including to bring the DM part of the planning service to as close to cost-neutral for the Council as possible.
- Produce a business case for Cabinet to begin charging an administrative fee for invalid, returned applications
- Make decisions on time
- Make current IT fit-for-purpose
- Communicate clear individual and collective performance metrics
- Get workloads to manageable levels

Conditions for Success

All successful change projects rely on these components working together:

1. A named person who is fully aware of their responsibility for the project and who owns and leads it.
2. An agreed start and end date.
3. A project charter that sets out clearly and unambiguously the essential information about the project.
4. An assessment of the capacity and skills needed to deliver it and allocating the people and time needed to deliver the capacity and skills needed.
5. A project plan that is understood and followed by everyone involved.
6. A regular, formal report of progress against the project plan.
7. Regular monitoring of the project by the team involved in its work.



8. Regular, formal scrutiny of the project by a board that includes people of authority who are not actively involved in the project.
9. An agreed process to resolve and escalate risks and issues.
10. An agreed process to agree changes to the plan.

The team have a proven toolkit and templates, with guidance notes and training, to set these project components up. But your roles to provide support, challenge and scrutiny are essential. You should expect to see weekly highlight reports that set out clearly and concisely how the improvement project is going. And you should expect to see enough detail of the completed improvement plan, including who the lead officers are, and the timescales intended, to give your support to the work.

Risks

If the team do not believe that this improvement plan is welcomed by the Council, then the project will likely not begin at the earliest opportunity.

If the Council leadership do not visibly support the vision or objectives that the team have set for themselves, then the improvements will not be delivered.

If the Council agrees the work in the improvement plan but then does not allow for resources to be allocated to it, either by demanding that current service levels and turnaround time continue or not protecting the team from the failure demand that has built up, then the improvements will not be delivered. This could give the perception of a 'battleground' culture will be given further credence, which would demotivate and demoralise the project team from making changes.

If project meetings that manage risks (including reputational risks), issues, priorities, spend against plan, resource allocation and other things that are important to make the improvement project successful don't happen then the project will likely lose pace.

If the planning service cannot prioritise new preapplication advice requests over existing applications (i.e. non-statutory activity over statutory obligations) then the front-loading essential to speeding up planning will not happen quickly enough for it to be valuable to customers, and they may stop making preapplication advice requests.

Potential for mistakes

It's important to remember that mistakes can still happen. We are human.

When mistakes happen, ask "what can we do to help?" Encourage everyone to report mistakes quickly and transparently. Give opportunities to speak outside formal meetings, so that people can feel more comfortable about reporting mistakes. Encourage everyone to say that they are unsure what to do whenever they are unsure. If we punish people for asking questions or making mistakes, they are likely to conceal problems. That leads to bigger mistakes and failures of trust. People who are unsure what to do and carry on in ignorance are likely to make mistakes too. Being open about mistakes and gaps in understanding encourages learning, builds capability, reduces mistakes, and makes it more likely that we will be successful.





Conclusion

The Planning Manager and Planning team are committed to making changes happen, in a way that feels different to them than anything that has ever been done before at Stafford. Forward planning and planning enforcement have been involved and engaged with shaping the DM improvement work, to make sure the project is joined up between all the elements of planning.

The team now know what they must do. But doing it will be difficult. Your part in extending trust is crucial. Winning the prize on offer will require your visible commitment to supporting the team's vision and your holding the team accountable with constructive challenge. There may be additional resources required, including extra short-term people, further workshops or training to design and embed new tools and processes or new tools, that the team need to deliver lower long-term costs and higher service levels. Endorse any robust business cases for these short-term investments, champion the team's new approach, and you will make progress towards long-term, lasting improvements.



| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|------------------------|---|
| Vision | Stafford's planning service will be a professionally rewarding place to work with happy, motivated staff. It will deliver a trusted, confident service that turns decisions around quickly, provides reliable pre-application advice on nearly all applications and collaborates well with its customers and stakeholders. | |   | | Appendix 2 | | |
| Purpose | To make places better and sustainable for the future. To manage/enable growth in a strategic manner, allow democracy in decision-making through managing development, and to protect heritage, and ecological assets. | | | | | | |
| Area of focus Customer, Financial, Process, Learning and Growth | Objective | Outcome(s) | Outcome Measure(s) | Activity | Activity Measure(s) | Responsible officer(s) | Activity ref number in improvement plan |
| customer | communicate better with customers | customers report a greater certainty in the planning process, customers choose to develop in Stafford. | customer satisfaction rating in % of satisfied or very satisfied customers, % increase in number of applications received, number of returning customers | set up a customer satisfaction survey to go out with every decision notice. Implement regular agents forums as part of a communications strategy and content that includes regular 'you said, we did' type reporting | Number of customer satisfaction surveys responded to per month. Communications strategies in place yes/no | | 2.1 and 4.2 |
| customer | | | | | | | |
| financial | implement a charged-for preapp service that almost every customer wants to use | income generated / costs recovered for the service, applications are quicker to process | % of applications that have had preapp advice, % of pre-app advice that have progressed to application, average time to determine applications that have had pre-app advice on them in days, income from pre-app advice in £, percentage of applications that have been amended | design a new pre-app approach with collaboration from stakeholders/statutory consultees. Agree prioritisation for pre-app advice work. Create a customer charter that sets out SLAs - especially for mid-application amendments. | Agreed preapp process in place yes/no. Customer charters in place yes/no | | 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 |
| financial | produce options for a new budget for the planning service, including financial and non-financial implications of each option. | too late to do now - budget setting is happening - prepare work for 2026 budget setting - will need a wholesale change across the council as the budget holders do not have sight of the budget. | | | | | |
| financial | produce a business case for Cabinet to begin charging an administrative fee for invalid, returned applications | costs are recovered for work that is done to vet/validate an application. | income from returned applications in £, % of applications that are valid on receipt, average time to validate in days | Record the time spent on making invalid applications valid. Measure the number of applications that have stayed as invalid for over X days. | Time recording system is in place yes/no | | 4.2 |
| internal / process | make decisions on time | decisions are made on time (without EOT?) | average time to determine in days, % of applications determined in 8/13 weeks (without EOT?) | Begin Short Interval Management of caseload - the work of which is likely to include introducing shorter, template reports, template conditions, and getting more timely advice from consultees | | | 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 |
| internal / process | make current IT fit-for-purpose | IT enables efficient processes - frequent tasks are quicker to perform. The team own the system, basic changes can be handled from within the service and 'bodes' or extra functionality options can be understood better or changed. | average time to do frequent tasks in minutes/hours, officer hours wasted on downtime | set up time recording system and produce a business case for the time/money that would be saved/generated if IT turned on the functionality that's available in the current version of Uniform (with consultee module switched on, template reports and conditions, and anything else that the current system can be used for that will enable efficiency savings). Make someone responsible for updating conditions once they are in Uniform. | Percentage of decisions that are made using a template report. Number of consultees that have had to be manually contacted per month. Number of conditions used from Uniform per month. | | 4.2 and 4.5 |
| learning and growth | communicate clear individual and collective performance metrics | staff that are motivated to achieve individual and common goals, progress is made towards achieving targets | % of staff that feel motivated | draw together the outcome and activity measures from this service plan into a performance dashboard. Create a new process for monitoring and managing individual and collective performance. | Number of staff questionnaires responded to. Performance dashboards is in place yes/no. | | 5.1 and 5.3 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|-----------------------|
| learning and growth | get workloads to manageable levels | staff report that their workloads are manageable, Workview shows a workload for the service of around 135 applications in the process of being determined and less than 20 applications in the process of being validated (not including invalid ones that are waiting for information from the applicant), percentage of EOT is reduced | % of staff that feel their workload is manageable, WiP measures in numbers of applications in Workview, percentage of applications that have had an EOT | introduce Short Interval Management of caseload (see row 8 above) | Number of issues logged and number of issues fixed on the issue log per month. | | 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|-----------------------|

www.mondrem.co.uk

Project Charter

| | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-------|--|
| Project name | Planning Improvement Plan | | |
| Created by | Vicki Baggaley, John Holmes | Date | 26/03/25 |
| Phone | 01785 619327 | Email | vbaggaley@staffordbc.gov.uk jholmes@staffordbc.gov.uk |
| Version number | 1 | | |

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Root cause | The planning team in Development Management (DM) have sustained high workloads for case officers and validation officers which has led to backlogs, slower processing times and lower productivity (decisions per person, per day). This backlog was caused initially by covid and then vacant posts within the case officer teams. The volume of applications received (work in) during that time also increased and the associated delays in determining applications has led to failure demand - frustrations from agents/applicants and lack of confidence from elected members. DM and Forward Planning (planning policy) have also been working in silo which has lengthened processing time for a small number of applications and made each department's work less reliable/robust. |
| Purpose or goal | To reduce workloads to manageable levels (5 weeks WIP), reintroduce the chargeable pre-app service to lock in higher productivity and higher income, and improve customer, stakeholder and staff satisfaction. |
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To improve staff wellbeing ▪ To improve customer experience ▪ To improve reputation ▪ To increase income - chargeable pre app service/ validation admin fee ▪ To improve efficiency ▪ To improve productivity ▪ To improve performance, especially drawing together forward planning and DM to make more reliable policies and decisions ▪ To reduce reliance on Extension of Time (EOTs) |
| Outcomes or benefits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Better staff wellbeing ▪ Better customer experience ▪ Better reputation ▪ New income ▪ Higher efficiency ▪ Higher productivity ▪ Better performance ▪ Reduction in EOTs |



| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Deliverables or outputs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A recorded proven methodology to reduce workloads/backlogs ▪ A new operational management process ▪ Performance reports ▪ A log of issues that depress productivity and the agreed actions to fix those issues ▪ Financial/budget reports forecasting pre-app income ▪ Staff and Customer survey results | |
| Timescales | Start date: 1-April-25 End date: 31-Oct-25 | |
| Project performance measures | Starting performance | Target performance |
| | On hand 476 applications 2.5 week backlog for householder validation and 5 week backlog validation for other applications 3 pre-apps in progress Staff morale not measured Customer satisfaction not measured | On hand 135 applications All applications validated within 2 days More than 50% of applications have had pre-application advice Measured and improving staff morale Measured and improving customer satisfaction |
| Roles and responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Director: Gregg Stott ▪ Sponsor: Dean Piper ▪ Project lead: John Holmes ▪ Project co-ordinator/administrator Vicki Baggaley ▪ Subject matter experts: Sian Wright, Richard Wood and Alex Yendole | |
| Communication | The project will prioritise a communications plan early on in the work to give regular, formal feedback of progress. | |
| Risks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If the resources needed for this project are spent on servicing failure demand, then the work to make changes will not progress. ▪ If new pre-application requests are not prioritised over in-progress applications then customers will not purchase them and the new income and higher productivity will not be delivered. | |
| Documentation | Highlight reports weekly to the project sponsor, including a snapshot of customer satisfaction, staff morale and Workview charts. Board reports at the beginning, middle and end of the project including snapshots of the project plan and all project performance measures. | |



| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Connections and dependencies | Dependant on the Planning policy team, senior leadership team and IT making resources available. |
| Scope | The project will include the work of the DM team including the planning enforcement team and the collective work of the DM and Planning Policy teams. |
| Decision making process | <p>Decisions regarding the resources required by the DM team will be made by the DM Manager.</p> <p>Decisions regarding the resources required by the Planning Policy team will be made by the Planning Policy Manager.</p> <p>Decisions regarding the Senior Leadership team will be made by the Project Director (escalated to the Chief Executive where required).</p> <p>Any arbitration decisions will be made by the Project Director or Project Sponsor as required.</p> |

