

Development Service

Visioning Programme

November 2024

Introduction

In May 2022 the Council brought together the following services to establish a new Development Department. It was the first time in some 15 years that the various planning responsibilities reported to a single Head of Service.

- Building Control
- CIL and S106 Administration
- Conservation
- Economic Development and Tourism
- Housing Policy and Development
- Land Charges
- Landscape and Trees
- Planning and Building Control Administration
- Planning Applications
- Planning Enforcement
- Planning Policy

Doing so created an opportunity to explore how the various development functions of the Council could work better and more effectively together to deliver improved outcomes. This exists of course in a changing context, including a desire to better align with wider corporate objectives and capitalise on the benefits and opportunities of the emerging digital agenda.

The Department Visioning programme brings all of these opportunities together to set out a plan for change. Importantly, the visioning programme is not a one-off event, it is an ongoing journey. The journey began with the commissioning of a Planning Peer Challenge and has then incorporated transformational performance techniques, undertaken with [KBA Solutions](#), resulting in a series of key actions that are being implemented to achieve our Departmental goals and vision.

The Vision Programme will be reviewed regularly, and this document and accompanying action plan will be updated accordingly.



Transformational Change

Transformational change within an organisation typically takes around 18 months. The diagram below shows the various steps within the change journey.

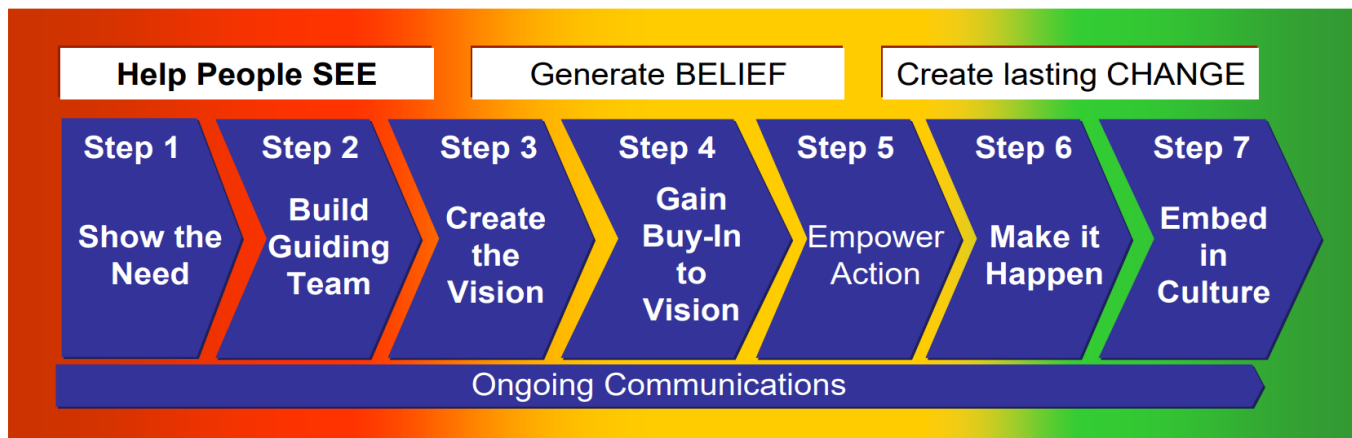
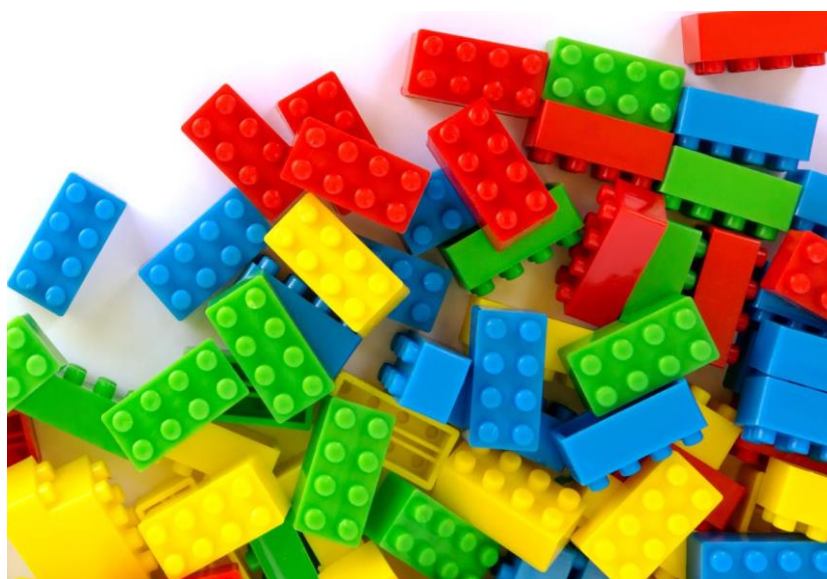


Image Credit: KBA Solutions Ltd

There are various building blocks to embedding change into a culture.

Purpose	The reason why the department exists
Vision	The guiding principles for everything we do
Themes	A distinct component of the vision
Goals	Specific measurable aims to help us achieve the vision
Success Measures	Indicators that allow us to monitor the goals
Key Projects	Series of manageable tasks to deliver each goal



Our Purpose

The following statement sets out our purpose as a department; the reason why the department exists:

Our purpose is to enable the growth of sustainable, attractive, and safe places for both existing and future communities, whilst preserving and enhancing the natural environment and valuable heritage of our District.

Our Vision

The following statement sets out our vision as a department. These are our guiding principles for everything we do. We will live by this vision.

Our vision is to be a service that delivers the development that the district needs; prepares for and responds to climate change and other environmental challenges; and balances competing demands from the plan-making stage through to decision making and implementation. We will facilitate effective participation with all our stakeholders.

We will provide an outstanding and innovative service and act with integrity, care and consistency with a commitment to continuous improvement.

We will be a service where staff feel valued, trusted and empowered to make decisions and manage change in the best public interest.

Our Goals

We have identified four distinct but interrelated components or themes to the vision. To help us achieve our vision, we have established a goal for each theme.

Thriving Culture & Leadership

By 2026 the Development Service will be renowned for being a positive, supportive, and professional team to be part of.

Continuous Improvement

By 2026 through engagement with staff and key stakeholders, the Development Service will have embedded a culture of continuous improvement, utilising Information Technology that is fit for purpose.

Positive Engagement

By 2026, together with our partners we will have identified and improved our engagement techniques to enable active and effective participation by all our stakeholders.

Excellence in Decision Making

By 2026 we will have consistently made transparent and high-quality decisions

Success Measures

The Department has a good track record in the performance of its various functions:

- Strong 5-year housing land supply
- Improved performance in land charges searches
- Very high customer satisfaction in building control
- Record levels of affordable housing
- Successful grant awards for UK Shared Prosperity Funding
- Strong planning appeal performance

The Visioning programme is about building on these successes, maintaining this excellent performance whilst at the same time improving the delivery of outcomes for all of our customers, be they businesses, residents or applicants.

As such, the visioning programme is a journey of continuous improvement. Different aspects of the programme will come on stream at different times. By regularly reviewing progress against our Key Projects and monitoring our Goals, we will demonstrate change through our actions.

For each goal we have devised series of *success measures* to enable us to monitor our performance. These are set out below:

Thriving Culture & Leadership

By 2026 the Development Service will be renowned for being a positive, supportive, and professional team to be part of.

1. *Management and leadership teams will achieve positive results in staff surveys and 360 feedback.*
2. *To maintain our excellent record of staff retention, and where appropriate, attracting back staff who have left. This will be achieved through recording and benchmarking staffing retention against other LPAs.*
3. *Reduced number of applications going to committee. This will demonstrate support for the professional judgements of staff.*

Continuous Improvement

By 2026 through engagement with staff and key stakeholders, the Development Service will have embedded a culture of continuous improvement, utilising Information Technology that is fit for purpose.

1. *To demonstrate our continuous improvement, we will have delivered our key projects and implemented our quick wins in line with the work programme.*

Positive Engagement

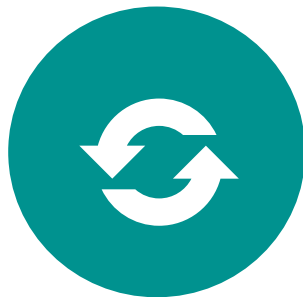
By 2026, together with our partners we will have identified and improved our engagement techniques to enable active and effective participation by all our stakeholders.

1. *Increased awareness of consultations and increased number of responses to consultations. This will be measured using social media data and measured against previous relevant consultations.*
2. *Consultation feedback surveys to show positive results in respect of effectiveness of consultation.*

Excellence in Decision Making

By 2026 we will have consistently made transparent and high-quality decisions.

1. For planning, the quality of our decisions will be measured through outcomes for residents and appeals benchmarking.
2. For building control, this will be measured by the increased size of our market share.



Key Projects @ November 2024

To further help us achieve the vision, each goal into more manageable key projects to establish a work programme or action plan for the Department. The key projects are listed below by theme and the detailed Work Programme is included at **Appendix 1**.

The key projects are envisaged to be 'live' and the work programme will be updated regularly, including adding new key projects as they emerge.

To ensure delivery and buy-in across the Department, a departmental manager has been appointed as the project lead for each project, and each group includes staff from across the department. All staff are involved in at least one project group. Strategic oversight and ownership of each theme is provided by a senior departmental managers.

Stakeholders

A key part of the programme will be improving the relationship with our stakeholders. We already have a strong relationship with SDC members through the officer-led member training and briefing sessions, and this approach can be rolled-out to developers and parishes.

It is proposed to establish a **Developer Forum** to engender regular two-way engagement including plan-making updates, briefings and discussions on new Government initiatives and how they will operate, and feedback from the industry regarding improvements. We will also utilise the newly established **Parish Forum** to achieve similar outcomes with our community representatives.



Thriving Culture & Leadership

TC.1	Review Scheme of Delegation to Planning Committee
TC.2	Review Scheme of Delegation to Regulatory Committee
TC.3	Departmental Meetings – in person and every 4 months
TC.4	Introduce de-briefs for council committees
TC.5	Remove physical barriers in the office
TC.6	4 monthly department-wide manager & team leaders meeting
TC.7	Team building opportunities
TC.8	Greater oversight of infrastructure

Continuous Improvement

CI.1	Review Training Needs
CI.2	Review and scope internal and external surveys
CI.3	Support applications for professional Membership
CI.4	Benchmark against other local authorities
CI.5	Publish a correspondence / communications charter / standards
CI.6	Provide structure and clarity in respect of complaints

Positive Engagement

PE.1	Application notification consistency
PE.2	Improve communications on decisions / outcomes
PE.3	Encourage applicants to undertake community consultation
PE.4	Engagement resources, tools and techniques
PE.5	Closer partnership working with Warwickshire County Council

Excellence in Decision Making

ED.1	Monitoring and publicising success
ED.2	Bench marking the quality of decisions and the IT systems used to support them
ED.3	Review the pre-application process
ED.4	Review the application amendments procedure

Planning Peer Challenge

In early summer 2023 the [Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service](#) (PAS) was invited to undertake a [Peer Challenge](#). A Peer Challenge is an in-depth look at a local planning service by a group of fellow planners and elected members. It provides a critical friend's view and advice, identifying strengths or good practice as well as opportunities for improvement, including how well different elements of the planning service work together and with the rest of the council to deliver the council's strategic, spatial, and place-based objectives.

The PAS Challenge Team visited the council for 3 days between 10th and 13th October 2024 and the final report was received in January 2024.

The key outcome of the Peer Challenge is a report containing a conclusion and series of recommendations as to where the Council may want to look at further improvements. The findings are based on conversations with staff, Members, partner organisations and users of the SDC planning service.

In summary, the Peer Challenge Team noted:

“The Planning Service, as a whole, is regarded as a well-performing one; attributed to its excellent performance on meeting national measures on decision-making and a strong track record in plan-making.”

“We did not find any critical systemic issues and the recommendations for improvement are refinements and should be viewed in this context.”

“These recommendations are designed to assist the Council in further improving its service delivery.”

The Peer Challenge provides a snapshot view of the planning service at a point in time. The recommendations are set out in **Appendix 2** along with the Council’s initial response to each recommendation and a progress/status update.

The following matrix shows how the PAS recommendations are covered by the key projects. Although not covered by a key project, recommendation 18 is already complete.

		PAS Recommendations																				
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Visioning Programme Key Projects	VP	✓	✓			✓	✓															
	TC.1												✓									
	TC.2		✓										✓				✓					
	TC.3																					
	TC.4															✓						
	TC.5																					
	TC.6		✓																			
	TC.7		✓		✓																	
	TC.8																				✓	
	CI.1				✓				✓						✓							
	CI.2																					
	CI.3				✓																	
	CI.4													✓				✓				
	CI.5		✓								✓											
	CI.6																					
	PE.1									✓												
	PE.2		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓				
	PE.3									✓												
	PE.4		✓					✓	✓						✓							
	PE.5											✓										
	ED.1														✓	✓						
ED.2																				✓		
ED.3							✓														✓	
ED.4							✓														✓	

The PAS report itself is attached at **Appendix 3**. It provides a useful snapshot and critical friend assessment of the planning service which has informed and been superseded the wider visioning programme and key projects.

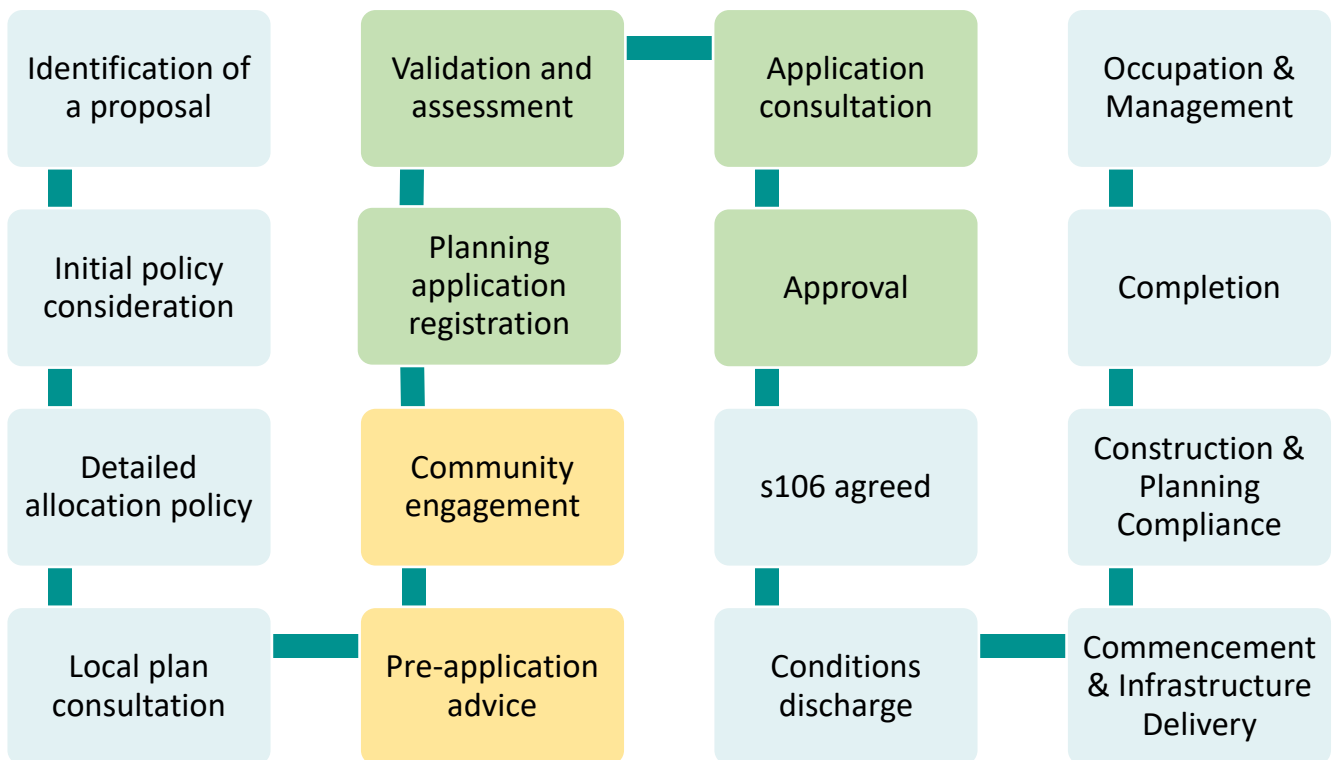
Implementation

The Department is continuing to implement the Key Projects and progress on the Visioning Programme will reported to SDC Members on a regular basis. As the work proceeds and evolves, additional key projects may be added to the Work Programme.

Bringing the various components of the Department together highlights the various points at which the Department interacts with the different phases of the development process, as shown below, including for example, Building Control during the construction phase and Land Charges at the Completion and Occupation phases.

START

FINISH



It is fair to say that arguably, the focus of the development process is on the formal planning application stages (highlighted green above). This is not untypical. However, this neglects the proactive role of the Department in place-shaping as well as the monitoring role that the Council has in ensuring that development and infrastructure is properly delivered.

As such, two key areas of focus for the Visioning Programme are firstly to embed earlier department involvement and community engagement into proposals, including through encouraging applicants to undertake pre-application advice (highlighted yellow), and secondly, to provide dedicated resources to proactively ensure compliance with planning consents and monitor the delivery of associated infrastructure during the post application stages.

Therefore, to deliver this more holistic and stakeholder driven approach to place-shaping, the Council is looking to re-enforce the management and organisation of the Department with additional resources. This Visioning Programme Document will be reviewed and updated regularly to set out how the improvements are being made and to monitor progress on achievement of the vision.

Implementation of the Work Programme is being undertaken alongside the continued day-to-day operation of the Department and the Head of Service would like to thank all staff for their ongoing and continued participation and support for the Visioning Programme; KBA Solutions and the Peer Challenge Team for their input; and all stakeholders who participated in the Peer Challenge workshops.

Appendix 1: Work Programme

Key to Complexity / Risk Columns

High
Medium-High
Low-Medium
Low

Key to Status Column

Complete
Ongoing / Good progress
On track
Little or no progress to date
Not progressed

Key Projects		Outcome (The Why?)	External Dependencies	Dept. Dependencies	Timescale	High-Level Benefit v Feasibility Assessment	PAS	Key Project Inter-relationships	Complexity (H/M/L)	Risks	Status (@ Nov 24)	Commentary
TC.1	Review Scheme of Delegation to Planning Committee (with a view to implement change)	Empowerment and build officer self- confidence.	Parish Councils Ward Members Committee Services.	DM, HoS	Feb 25	Improved use of resource and self- confidence of officers Vs increased pressure for managers dealing with repercussions of changes and reliant upon gaining member buy in	12, 16, 7, 8	Positive engagement	H	Lack of support from Members and parish councils	Ongoing*	Exploring amendments to constitution to exclude reports where parish councils do not attend and TPOs. *Relationship to proposed national scheme of delegation
TC.2	Review Scheme of Delegation to Regulatory Committee (with a view to implement change)	Empowerment and build officer self-confidence.	Parish Councils Ward Members Committee Services.	DM, Enf, HoS	Feb 25	Improved use of resource and self- confidence of officers Vs Increased pressure for managers dealing with repercussions of changes and reliant upon gaining member buy in	12, 16, 7, 8	Positive engagement	H	Lack of support from Members.	On Track	Discussions ongoing with Head of Paid Service, Head of Law & Governance and Chair of Regulatory Committee. Proposal to standardise scheme of delegation and update reports to go to OSC. Focus on Regulatory Committee should be decisions on direct action.
TC.3	Departmental Meetings – in person and every 4 months	One team togetherness approach	n/a	HoS, PA, Staff	Nov 24	Benefit for officers vs Need to set a clear agenda so that it is seen as a beneficial use of time. Also requires sufficient desk availability	1, 2, 3, 15		L	Agenda items, venue costs given size of dept	Complete	Sessions an opportunity for whole dept to come together – more than just a corporate / dept debrief. Invite guest speakers. Next session early Dec.
TC.4	Introduce de-briefs for council committees	Build Officer knowledge, confidence, self- awareness, reflective and create a “one team” mentality	n/a	Policy, DM and the relevant Planning Committee Manager	Oct 24	Benefits similar to outcome, few feasibility concerns due to being an “informal meeting”	4, 15		L	None identified	Complete	Sessions being diarised and open to all staff. Opportunity to reflect on questions asked, the members debate and any procedural points and learning outcomes.
TC.5	Remove physical barriers in the office	Creates a “one team” togetherness approach and mentality	Premises Officers, Transformation PM		Nov 24	Benefit similar to outcome Vs Logistical issues with relocating tamber units and relevant documents contained within	2		L	Relationship to wider corporate WoW project	On Track	Relationship to wider corporate WOW project and refurbishment of Elizabeth House.
TC.6	4 monthly department-wide manager & team leaders meeting	Creates a “one team” togetherness approach and mentality	n/a	DMT, HoS, PA	Sept 24	Creates a “one team” togetherness approach and mentality	1,2, 3, 15		L	Diary availability and non-attendance owing to competing priorities.	Complete	DMT currently meeting more regularly as part of Vision Programme
TC.7	Team building opportunities	Creates a “one team” togetherness approach and mentality	n/a	DMT, staff	Feb 25	Creates a “one team” togetherness approach and mentality		ED.1, PE.2	L	Poor turnout.	Ongoing	TBAG committee formed! Suggestions being followed up including office-based Christmas party and departmental newsletter.
TC.8	Greater oversight of infrastructure	To better manage infrastructure delivery to support new development	WCC, Infrastructure Providers, RSLs, Developers, MT	DM, CIL & S106 Admin, Policy	Feb 25	More proactive, co-ordinated, joined-up approach with better outcomes and less reliance on reactive enforcement.	19		MH	Expectation and limited ability to influence outcomes.	On Track	Separate PAS CIL&S106 Review completed (CIL enforcement regime cited as excellent). Need for oversight of infrastructure issue and bringing disparate officers together.
CI.1	Review Training Needs	To maximise staff development and therefore retention which in turn leads to a better service	HR Professional organisations, training bodies	DMT	Feb 25	Maximising the potential of staff to maximise the quality of service and staff retention. Budget issue as to whether SDC can support additional training needs.	4, 5, 6, 20		L	Budgets	Ongoing	Anonymised feedback from appraisals, although hard to find common themes. Expertise already in the dept – will get most learning from each other. Renewed focus on new starters. Mentoring underway. Relationship to corporate staff strategy.
CI.2	Review and scope internal and external surveys	Invite service improvement suggestions	ICT, Insight & Consultation, customers & stakeholders	All dept services	Nov 24	Data driven approach to inform continuous improvement. Need to manage process to ensure collected data is utilised.	3, 5, 20	PE.6	L	Unable to implement suggestions.	On Track	NB: may not be progressed as standalone project as need for surveys related to other individual projects.
CI.3	Support applications for professional Membership	To increase the No. of staff per department with professional membership and encourage apprenticeships schemes and sponsorship of staff.	HR, Finance, professional organisations, training bodies	HoS	Feb 25	Maximising the potential of staff to maximise the quality of service and staff retention. Budget issue.	4, 6	CI.1	L	Budgets	On Track	Dependent on budgets: • Multiple memberships? • Time to prepare applications? • Fund application itself? Relationship to corporate Staff Strategy.
CI.4	Benchmark against other local authorities	To contextualise our operation and performance and inform improvements	Other Authorities	All dept services	Nov 24	Data driven approach to inform continuous improvement. Need to manage process to ensure collected data is utilised.	7, 20	PE.6 ED.2	LM	Unable to obtain data or data not comparable	On Track	Significant overlap with number of other projects. Focus on qualitative benchmarking and digital functionality of other councils. Review AMR. Link to corporate Digital Strategy.

Key Projects		Outcome (The Why?)	External Dependencies	Dept. Dependencies	Timescale	High-Level Benefit v Feasibility Assessment	PAS	Key Project Inter-relationships	Complexity (H/M/L)	Risks	Status (@ Nov 24)	Commentary
CI.5	Publish a correspondence / communications charter / standards	To provide certainty and consistency to both officers and customers	MT Customers ICT	HoS, DSM, DMT	Oct 24	Certainty for customers as to the level of service they can expect. Need to ensure standards are achievable and can be maintained.	2, 7, 16, 17,	ED.2	L	Unintended consequences of setting unachievable standards	Ongoing	Examples sourced and vary greatly both in detail and length. Proposal for short and punchy but need to ensure propose approach is achievable.
CI.6	Provide structure and clarity in respect of complaints	To provide certainty and consistency to both officers and customers	MT Customers	HoS, DSM, DMT	Sept 24	Certainty for customers as to the level of service they can expect. Need to ensure standards are achievable and can be maintained	2, 3, 7,	ED.2	L	None identified	Complete	Amended text on website. Will be kept under review.
PE.1	Application notification consistency	To provide certainty and consistency to both officers and customers	Customers	DM, Dev Support, Case Officers	Dec 24	To ensure clarity and consistency To ensure no upheld complaints in relation to publicity / consultations	7		L	None identified	Ongoing	Systems Admin Team producing report to assist with comparison.
PE.2	Improve communications on decisions / outcomes	Better awareness and understanding of planning decisions/ownership	local press, ICT, Comms	DMT	Dec 24	Better public understanding of the planning process from beginning to end Clarity and transparency in the planning process	7, 10	ED.1	LM	Resources	On Track	Focus on social media and website – single dept latest news page, how to videos, reduce jargon on website, quarterly dept infographics to be published. Link to corporate Communications Strategy.
PE.3	Encourage applicants to undertake community consultation	To improve quality of proposals, speed of decision making and community engagement in the process	Key external consultees/com munity	DM	Dec 24	Better quality and timely decisions to meet national targets	7, 8	ED.3	LM	Lack of take up by developers	Ongoing	Benchmarking completed and wording for website to promote community engagement drafted alongside form for applicants to submit to demonstrate what community engagement has been undertaken. Feeds into review of pre-app and potential need for review to local list and SCI.
PE.4	Engagement resources, tools and techniques	To improve how we engage, benefitting both officers and customers	Other Local Authorities ICT Finance	DMT	Nov 24	To gain an understanding of stakeholder requirements, create a better engaged Development Service / more efficient working and better-quality decisions	7, 8, 10, 20	PE.3	MH	Skills and resources	On Track	Scoping work has identified significant breadth to project. Focus on parish councils and front loading of whole planning process. Also identified wider corporate issues with planning being to touch point. Need to manage expectations. Engagement not helped by changes and communication at parish councils.
PE.5	Closer partnership working with Warwickshire County Council	To improve place-based outcomes	WCC Officers WCC Members SDC Members	HoS DMT	Feb 25	Better understanding of roles of both councils and how better and better aligned place-based outcomes can be achieved. Requires buy-in from WCC.	11		MH	Buy-in from Members and WCC	On Track	Mapping of WCC structures underway and types of interactions. Arranging meeting with WCC to share SDC structures and vision programme and understand WCC perspectives and what WCC want from SDC. Potential concern with WCC use of standing advice.
ED.1	Monitoring and publicising success	More positive view of Dev Services Better relationships with stakeholders Better education and understanding of all parties	Local newspapers, social media, business Support agencies, LABC, Internal comms, Members	DMT	Nov 24	Smoother planning process and engaged communities who better understand why decisions are made. Given number of parishes and changes to PC composition, could be resource intensive.	2, 3, 6, 8, 20, 21	Thriving Culture & Leadership, Positive Engagement Esp PE2 + PE.4	MH	Resources, need Members to act as advocate of department	On Track	Need to define success. Should focus be on internal success sharing? Need to consider how we manage misinformation. Each team to have comms lead? Relationship to corporate Communications Strategy.
ED.2	Bench marking the quality of decisions and the IT systems used to support them	To ensure we're giving value to all our stakeholders and achieve continuous improvement	Other Councils Govt data ICT Performance and Insight Team	Uniform Policy (through the AMR)	Feb 25	Efficiency and effectiveness improvements allowing staff to focus on more important aspects of work inc relationships with members, customers and parishes VS costs and disruption of acquiring systems.	3, 7, 20	Continuous improvement	MH	Resources for new ICT systems	On Track	Proving challenging to obtain qualitative data. New focus on GIS and EDMS and the quality of these processes. Relationship with corporate Digital Strategy.
ED.3	Review the pre-application process	To encourage take-up of the service, leading to better outcomes.	WCC, Developers, other SDC teams	DM	Dec 24	Better outcomes and performance. Opportunity for commercialisation.	21	Continuous improvement	MH	Resourcing the new approach, buy-in from developers, customer up-take	On Track	Service not particularly user friendly with complex fees. Exploring tiered approach and inclusion of householder pre-app and same day appraisal.
ED.4	Review the application amendments procedure	To provide certainty, further improve performance and encourage pre-application advice.	Developers	DM	Dec 24	Better outcomes and performance. Opportunity for commercialisation. Impact on customer satisfaction.	21	Continuous improvement	MH	Increased complaints	On Track	Reverted back to published amendment procedure. Benchmarking underway.

Appendix 2: Peer Challenge Recommendations Status

	Complete
	Ongoing / Good progress
	On track
	Little or no progress to date
	Not progressed

	PAS Recommendation	Initial Response	Status Update	
Vision & Leadership	1	<p>Establish a clear and compelling vision via the Council Plan and the development of an action plan for the Planning Service to provide the direction of travel for the Planning Service. Strengthen the 'golden thread' describing how the outcomes achieved through development management and the local plan take forward priorities in the Council Plan</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>Will need clarity from Members to ensure alignment of the departmental vision with the Council Plan. Important link to SWLP.</p>	<p>Complete.</p> <p>Visioning programme established including purpose, vision, goals and key projects.</p>
	2	<p>Develop a shared understanding among officers regarding the enabling function of Planning in delivering the Council's strategic priorities and improve communication around expectations and priorities for service delivery</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>There are two aspects to this recommendation,</p> <p>The first relating to the Department's enabling function and the second in respect of communication in respect of expectations around service delivery. In respect of the former, this is directly related to Recommendation 1 and the need to have finalised the new Council Plan.</p>	<p>Visioning programme established including purpose, vision, goals and key projects.</p>
			<p>It is acknowledged that communication needs to flow from the Head of Service downwards. Will need to carefully manage expectations of Members especially regarding the limitations of the Planning System itself.</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

	PAS Recommendation	Initial Response	Status Update	
Performance	3	<p>Include further indicators measuring planning and development management outcomes in the corporate performance reporting and monitoring arrangements, to help link planning outcomes to corporate priorities and build greater ownership of corporate priorities within the Planning service and of planning priorities across the wider council.</p>	<p>Noted.</p> <p>In principle, the indicators should relate to corporate priorities, but they need to be meaningful, informative, useful and easy to collate. May be a case that SDC needs to promote its achievements more widely.</p>	<p>Review AMR to identify what indicators are already monitored and how these now relate to the Council Plan. Review how the AMR is shared with Members and publicised more widely.</p>
	4	<p>Provide consistent career development and training opportunities for officers.</p>	<p>Noted although query this recommendation.</p> <p>There are two aspects to this recommendation.</p> <p>We have a very strong track record of both “growing our own” and retaining staff and that is a testament to the nurturing culture in the Department. There have been 30 promotions in the last 6 years. However, it is acknowledged that officers are not routinely exposed to a broader experience.</p> <p>Training opportunities are available and each member of staff can discuss their individual training needs at their appraisals with their manager. Clearly, there is a need to ensure that training opportunities are taken, including on the job training.</p>	<p>Explore means of routinely giving officers broader experience.</p>
	5	<p>Prioritise resources and align resources with priorities for the Planning Service including</p>	<p>Accepted.</p>	<p>Urban Design Officer appointed recently pre-empting this recommendation to some degree. Primary focus is conservation,</p>

PAS Recommendation		Initial Response	Status Update
	specialist skills resource and capitalise on the expertise within the teams.	This is directly related to Recommendation 1 and the need to have finalised the new Council Plan. Also dependent upon the outcome of the Process Review (Recommendation 7). The need for greater sharing of specialist skills between DM, Enforcement and Policy is acknowledged and was one of the rationales for establishing a single Development Department. Ultimately a funding issue with current resources focused on statutory responsibilities. However, the resources can only be determined once the priorities and processes are finalised.	landscaping and tree officers. Skills Audit also required to see what specialisms staff have and how these can better be deployed. Funding earmarked with Change Programme Budget confirmed at Cabinet 3rd June.
6	Reflect on the structure, resources and skills needed to enhance career development and build resilience.	Noted	To follow once vision established and resources needed to deliver vision identified
7	Enhance the consistency of service delivery and undertake a DM process review. Improve decision-making processes and create a Development Management manual. Implement an annual review of decisions and appeal outcomes.	Noted. There are three aspects to this recommendation. It is accepted that process reviews should be carried out periodically to ensure that the service operates as effectively as possible.	Need to identify resources and capacity to undertake a process review. Work underway looking at Extensions of Time and Amendments Procedure.
		We already have DM guidance for officers to ensure consistency in our decision-making. PAS did not find any evidence of inconsistency in our decisions, and this is testament to the hard work of managers to ensure robust decisions particularly in a District with such a high number of applications. It is acknowledged, however, that there is inconsistency in the customer experience related to amendments.	Complete. DM manual already exists.
		Reviews happen on a regular basis at the fortnightly Managers meetings. Agree that it would be beneficial to more formally ensure that learning is captured (see Recommendation 15).	Appeal briefings already run for Members. Appeals database/spreadsheet to be prepared to facilitate analysis.

	PAS Recommendation		Initial Response	Status Update
Engagement	8	Foster regular engagement with town and parish councils, potentially linked to the Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC).	Accepted. Area based parish forums were established for the SWLP but have not been run recently. It is acknowledged that these need to be held regularly and could cover SWLP, appeal outcomes, national changes, procedural advice and training. There are some practical complexities given the very high number of parishes spread over a dispersed rural geography.	Regarding training, suggested that external trainers are used to ensure degree of independence. Process should be managed through WALC with possible corporate alignment. Inception meeting with WALC to understand how to best achieve outcome.
	9	Reintroduce the developer/agent forum.	Accepted. A forum was established for the SWLP but has not been run recently. It needs to be held regularly and could cover SWLP, appeal outcomes, national changes, and procedural advice. Such a forum would also be a good opportunity to set out our expectations from applicants in respect of the quality of applications.	ToR to be drafted and a mix of DM and Policy topics on set agendas.
	10	Review the engagement strategy for the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) to ensure meaningful stakeholder involvement.	Noted. There hasn't been any recent engagement because of the stage the SWLP is at but we have good examples of previous engagement.	Workplan has been prepared and engagement will restart as progress towards Preferred Options is underway.
	11	Seek a stronger working relationship with the County Council to help ensure the delivery of place-making priorities.	Noted. However, this is a two-way activity and required at both the corporate and political levels of both organisations. SDC can only seek to influence WCC in respect of how it aligns its objectives with SDC's place-shaping agenda and responsibilities.	First meeting with LLFA held 22nd May. Meeting with Highways held 6th June. Both to be diarised regularly. Actions to be followed up.
Committee	12	Review the scheme of delegation and reduce the number of items going to committee	Accepted. This will need Member support.	Requires Member input. New chair of Regulatory Committee. Wider review of Constitution by Head of Law & Governance.

	PAS Recommendation		Initial Response	Status Update
	13	Find ways to better manage speaking time	Accepted. This will need Member support.	Engagement with PH & Committee Chairs to be undertaken.
	14	Deliver recap training sessions or other development initiatives for new members and expand this to parish and town councils.	Noted. Decision was taken previously by Members to exclude parishes. Parish forums (see Recommendation 8) could be more appropriate forum for parish training.	Separate sessions for SDC Members and Parishes. Latter to be co-ordinated through WALC. Inception meeting with WALC to understand how to best achieve outcome.
	15	Arrange informal meetings to review decisions, appeal outcomes, and progress against the Local Plan.	Noted. Decision was taken previously by Members to exclude parishes. Parish forums (see Recommendation 8) could be more appropriate forum for parish training.	Suggested focus on planning committee members. Tied into SWLP updates.
Outcomes	16	Review the Enforcement policy, procedures, prioritisation, and delegation	Accepted. A review of the LEP was already scheduled for 2024. Amending delegation in particular will need Member support.	Already scheduled for 2024/25. Liaison with Portfolio Holder and new Chair of Regulatory Committee, now been confirmed.
	17	Communicate the potential of the Enforcement service and involve councillors to increase understanding of the art of the possible.	Accepted. Related to Recommendation 16 and Parish Forum could be a useful medium for communication (Recommendation 16).	See 16 above. Email to all Members re Enforcement Service sent 24 May 24 (JC)
	18	Conduct independent scrutiny on Custom & Self Build and be proactive in communicating the Council's approach.	Partly accepted and underway internally. Query extent to which further external assistance needs to be sought.	Complete. Internal review of current process underway with new briefing note and approach finalised. Member briefing held 19th June.
	19	Take a corporate approach to infrastructure issues, focusing on delivery.	Accepted.	Separate PAS review of S106 and CIL procedures completed. Internal process mapping underway. Revised Open Space SPD adopted 8th June 24. S106 & CIL

	PAS Recommendation		Initial Response	Status Update
			The need for reviewing infrastructure processes was already recognised by Mgmt and initial work is already underway. Political priority.	Compliance Officer post created and officer recruited. Green Spaces Officer post being recruited for.
	20	Initiate digital transformation in the service	Accepted. The need for digital transformation was already recognised by Mgmt and initial work is already underway	SDC Digital Strategy being finalised and corporate approach to systems review being initiated.
	21	Promote commercialisation, particularly regarding the pre-application and Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) offer.	Accepted. Also being driven by proposed Government changes to use of planning application extensions of time agreements.	Dept mgmt team exploring new approaches to pre-application advice.