

ARA Information Sheet – Planning Enforcement – Follow up review.

1. In 2021/22 Internal Audit completed a review of key service components for Planning Enforcement. Internal Audit raised five High and eight Medium Priority recommendations. The report was presented to the Audit and Standards Committee at their meeting in November 2021.
2. The scope of this follow up review, is to assess whether the recommendations have been successfully implemented, or whether arrangements are in place for future introduction.
3. Two of the recommendations focused on the process for staff, Member and stakeholder involvement for the adoption of the Operational Protocol which is operating from 1st January 2023. The evidence reviewed, verified that the above process was effectively put in place, and these recommendations have been implemented.
4. For two recommendations, Internal Audit consultancy and project input for new ways of Planning Enforcement working, during the testing of the Enterprise system for future implementation were requested. Internal Audit have provided relevant consultancy and project input integrating the Operational Protocol with the Enterprise software. These recommendations have been implemented.
5. One recommendation centred on providing staff training, Member and stakeholder improved awareness with understanding of the Operational Protocol. The evidence reviewed, confirms this recommendation has been implemented.
6. A recommendation was raised to consider re-evaluating pre-determined tolerances in managing the Planning Enforcement process. This has been implemented. As a result of the introduction of the Operational Protocol and Enterprise IT:
 - Procedures, alerts, and controls will be prioritised into three bands red, amber, and green, which will be time dependent where complaints are in the workflow; and
 - The workflow queue will document each staff allocated case and their stratified priority level.
7. A recommendation was made for the performance management framework to be reviewed as a result of the introduction of the Operational Protocol. In the Protocol the performance standards are clearly defined such as:
 - Triage complaint within five business days of receipt;
 - Where a planning breach has been identified, the initial site visit to be completed within 10 business days of allocation to an Enforcement Officer;
 - Keeping the complainant updated on open cases, no longer than 30 business days apart; and

Paul Jones, Senior Internal Auditor
Ext: 4118
Email: paul.jones@stroud.gov.uk

- The Enterprise IT task parameters have been set up to match the Protocol, to implement the recommendation.
8. A recommendation was made to review and implement the communication arrangements for the Operational Protocol which was introduced in January 2023. This has been implemented. Section five of the report to the 15th November 2022 Development Control Committee (DCC), details the range of consultation with the Council's stakeholders and the relevant feedback was reported. Updates to the draft Protocol were made. The Protocol was approved at the DCC meeting on 15th November 2022. A copy of the Operational Protocol is accessible on the Council's website.
9. A recommendation was made to consider as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, how the Planning Enforcement service could flexibly adapt to these environmental circumstances. This has been implemented. Audit enquiries confirmed that:
- Laptops have access to Microsoft 365 and staff can conduct their business remotely, with the objective of mitigating against the residual risk of contracting Coronavirus;
 - The laptops have the facility to access the Uniform and Enterprise system remotely, so staff are able to view their time dependent work flow activity; and
 - Procedure notes will facilitate staff completing the various Enterprise tasks, if they are working from home.
10. Due to Planning Enforcement staff prioritising their available time on service activity, Internal Audit were unable to confirm the recommendation implementation process for four recommendations, as follows:
- Completion of a service delivery resourcing assessment and business case for change;
 - Additional corporate financial resource support to deliver the Business Improvement Plan;
 - Service challenges such as increased demand of complaints, are met by financial resource approvals to hire experienced staff; and
 - Complete a staff time and task analysis for a limited period, which can be used to inform the staff resource needs for the service.
11. Internal Audit will continue to review the status of the above four recommendations. Once concluded, the outcomes will be reported to Audit and Standards Committee.

Paul Jones, Senior Internal Auditor
Ext: 4118
Email: paul.jones@stroud.gov.uk