

DEVELOPMENT, REGENERATION AND SKILLS

A record of decisions made by the Executive Member with responsibility for Development, Regeneration and Skills on:-

TUESDAY 30TH NOVEMBER, 2010

following consideration of the matters detailed below in the presence of:-

Councillor Ibrahim	Executive Member for Development, Regeneration and Skills
Councillor Cox	Major Opposition Spokesperson
Councillor Mrs. Ronson	Minor Opposition Spokesperson
Mr. K. Davies	Director of Development and Regeneration
Mr. T. Hill	Chief Planning Officer
Mr. P. Green	Strategic Development Manager
Mrs. V. Ridge	Principal Democratic Services Officer

27. PLANNING AND BUILDINGS DIVISION POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report which provided details in relation to the outcome of a post implementation review on the progress and delivery of the Planning and Buildings Division review which was approved in February, 2010.

The Executive Member was reminded that implementation of the savings and efficiency review was the subject of industrial action by UNISON and this was concluded with a formal agreement between the Council and UNISON on 30th April, 2010. This included an agreement to conduct a formal post implementation review (PIR) to ensure that the levels of service demand and workload would be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure there was adequate capacity in the new service to

deliver the anticipated efficiencies and benefits of the service change. Consequently the report set out the conclusions of the PIR including details of the context for the review; service performance and feedback from staff, customers and UNISON.

The report also stated that alongside the restructuring it was proposed to streamline business operations to deliver crisp and strategic services which emphasised value for money and outcomes for customers. Details of the work streams which were set up to deliver the changes to business processes were also outlined in the report.

With regard to the financial situation, the Executive Member was advised that financial management within the Division was effective and budgets were being managed to generate an under spend. However, post recession, development activity in the Borough remained extremely low, particular for larger schemes, which reflected slower than forecasted economic recovery at a national level. It was stated that together with the loss of major projects such as Building Schools for the Future, this meant that targets for fee income in planning control and land charges would be missed by a considerable margin. In addition, the Division had also been hit by the unexpected loss of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant which had been budgeted at £240,000 for the current financial year.

As a result of the above and due to the worsening financial position, divisional overspend this year was projected to be nearer to £850,000.

In terms of the views of UNISON, a formal response to the review was circulated to members and it was stated that the three main areas where they considered further action and focus was required were as follows:-

- Vacancies and capacity;
- Electronic working; and
- Planning Committee papers.

In conclusion, the Executive Member was advised that the PIR had demonstrated the services offered by the Division were

being maintained with no significant loss of quality or customer satisfaction within the reduced resources available. As these new ways of working continued to be rolled out and adjusted the aim would be to build upon the good progress so far. Furthermore, it was explained that whilst vacancies were being held in accordance with the corporate approach, the Divisional structure as implemented was always seen as one that had the capability of being adjusted to increase capacity should levels of demand increase significantly in future years to such an extent as to generate sufficient income to support such an increase. Finally, it was stated that the Divisional Management Team were committed to continuing to work with staff to develop solutions to the matters raised, including the use of pilots, particularly around e-working and Planning Committee.

The Executive Member ENDORSED –

- (i) The conclusions of the post implementation review of the Planning and Buildings Division as detailed in the report; and NOTED -**
- (ii) The concerns of UNISON in relation to electronic working and requested the Director of Development and Regeneration to continue to address the issues identified.**