

PORTFOLIO HOLDER/LEAD MEMBER UPDATE SUMMARY

PORTFOLIO:¹

Planning

CABINET DATE:²

5th October 2021

KEY ACTIVITIES SINCE
THE LAST REPORT:³

There is positive news to report in regard to planning validation backlog. We knew it wasn't going to be an overnight fix but the combination of changes below means we are finally turning a corner.

1. Sheer hard work and determination from all the teams
2. New training and development post that started at the end of July is having a great success in fast tracking training of our new Tech support officers, also in refresher training and building the confidence of existing team members in validation.
3. 7 New officers started since the end of July. (2 temporary posts still to fill.)
4. The reduction in administrative tasks i.e. Neighbour letters, directing to online commenting, means officers have more time for validation.
5. A steadying of applications being received is giving us some breathing space.
6. Following the Purbeck migration in early July it means that more accurate data is coming into the one system and makes life so much easier in regard to stats and proactively monitoring.
7. Stopped using Terra Quest for validation work, which gave us back full control of our applications.

The overall aim is for all the areas to have cleared their backlogs by end of Dec 2021 at the latest.

What this does however mean is the backlog baton will now be passed over to the planning case officers. We

¹ Enter the portfolio area

² Insert the date of the Cabinet meeting to which this summary update is to be reported

³ Provide brief details of the meetings attended, key activities or project milestones completed since the last report

have a number of measures in place to help the planning teams deal with increased caseloads as the validation backlog is cleared, and with the aim of making progress on the decision backlog. We will be keeping this under review over the coming months:

- We have recently successfully recruited a number of planning officers, with our Northern Development Management team now fully staffed, and the Southern/Western team due to be fully staffed by mid-November.
- We have forthcoming vacancies in the Eastern team which we have struggled to recruit to.
- The teams are currently being supported by additional temporary resource (agency planners and TerraQuest) to assist in clearing backlogs.
- The migration of former East Dorset data to the new MasterGov system in early October will mean that all former districts are covered by the single Dorset Council system, helping us to improve efficiency and consistency of process across the three area teams.
- Our new simplified report templates are helping officers to improve efficiency whilst maintaining a focus on the key planning issues.
- We have set up a number of 'surgeries' for specialist input to planning applications, which are helping to ensure that specialist advice is available to planning officers when needed. These surgeries cover legal, flood risk and conservation issues.

DELEGATED DECISIONS
MADE:⁴

⁴ Enter details of any delegated decisions made since the last meeting

ANTICIPATED
ACTIVITIES/MILESTONES
FOR NEXT PERIOD:⁵

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⁵ Provide details of key activities, project milestones or significant meetings anticipated in the next period