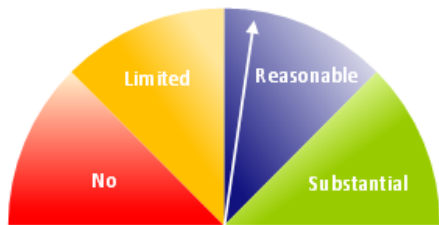


Audit Objective

To provide assurance that the Planning Enforcement service is following relevant policy and legislation and is proportionately investigating all breaches of planning control received to ensure a consistent approach by the Council.

Executive Summary



Assurance Opinion

There is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited.

Management Actions

Priority 1	0
Priority 2	1
Priority 3	8
Total	9

Organisational Risk Assessment

Low

Our audit work includes areas that we consider have a low organisational risk and potential impact.

We believe the key audit conclusions and any resulting outcomes still merit attention, but could be addressed by service management in their area of responsibility.

Key Conclusions



Whilst current KPI's (key performance indicators) are reported in line with statutory Government requirements, the Planning Enforcement service does not have a clear definition of good performance or processes to identify this which has led to sub-teams working inconsistently in performance recognition. Identification of key processes and end points across the service should assist with implementation of specific KPI's together with regular whole team reporting and team management.



There is an inconsistent approach between teams for daily tasks and when inputting data into Mastergov. Cases not escalated for investigation are not sufficiently stored and monitored to provide insight for capacity management. Further review of team processes is recommended, along with targeted training, to ensure a standardised approach.



The Development Management Planning Enforcement Plan currently has minimal guidance for both internal and external stakeholders on how a case is managed. Aligned with LGSCO (Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman) recommendations, the policy should be updated to incorporate defined processes.



Testing carried out on legacy enforcement cases found minimal progress for an extended period of time. The service should explore ways of reducing legacy cases in a timely manner, to alleviate existing caseload pressures.



A compliant process to managing enforcement cases is in place aligned with internal policies and applicable regulations, though consideration should be given to structuring sub-teams to enhance a joint approach and standardisation of case management. Service management is proactive in identifying opportunities for improvement and are currently implementing new processes to ensure the Enforcement Register is available online and actively revising legacy enforcement templates.

Audit Scope

The audit reviewed the following:

- How the Planning Enforcement policy is followed and applied.
- The decision-making process for review of complaints/cases, including the amount of formal action taken as a result and efficiency of service response.
- How performance of the service is monitored and reported, including the review of working practices.
- The effectiveness of governance arrangements, such as oversight by senior managers, in ensuring consistency across the Enforcement service sub-teams.
- Benchmarking exercise with other Local Authorities.

Data analysis on Planning Enforcement cases was conducted and can be viewed in Appendix 1. This specifically highlights case status's, time frames of completion and remaining legacy cases.

Other Relevant Information

Analysis was conducted from the supplied Planning Enforcement data, as shown in Appendix 1. A further exercise was also undertaken to benchmark the Planning Enforcement service against other local authorities, with collated responses available within Appendix 2 and Appendix 3.

The actions outlined in the Findings & Action Plan will be followed-up in line with their allocated timescales.