

Audit Findings & Management Action Plan – March 2024

Finding 1.	Action		
<p><u>The current KPI's do not measure performance metrics aligned with manager requirement.</u></p> <p>The Council have KPI's (key performance indicators) in place which are reported quarterly within the Council's dashboard. These KPI's are performance indicators led by Government requirement assigned to all local authorities. Therefore, the current KPI's are not specific to the Council and Planning Enforcement service so do not provide a clear measurement of good performance.</p> <p>The Council and Planning Enforcement service do not use the reported-on statistics at the moment, though available within the dashboard. The service currently has no agreed statistics or measurements to support with identifying good performance or underperformance. There is no clear guidance to highlight to the team what good performance looks like, leading to sub-teams adopting independent definitions and subsequently working to those specifications. Ultimately, sub-teams work against different interpretations of good performance meaning the enforcement service is inconsistent in performance recognition.</p> <p>The Planning Enforcement service require a clear definition of good performance to enable sufficient reporting and team management. Regular whole team statistics reporting should be utilised to manage performance.</p>	<p>Planning Enforcement Management will identify key process and end points which they identify as performance metrics relevant to the service. Regular data extraction and reporting should be agreed to support in target and performance management.</p>		
	<p>Priority</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>SWAP Reference</p> <p>AP#3724</p>
	<p>Responsible Officer</p>	<p>Service Mgr for Development Mgt & Enf</p>	
	<p>Timescale</p>	<p>31 May 2024</p>	

Finding 2.

There is an inconsistent approach between teams for daily tasks and when subsequently updating Mastergov.

There are currently three sub-teams within Planning Enforcement allocated responsibility by geographical location. Enforcement cases are automatically filtered into two team email inboxes’ and assigned from this point. However, two of these teams collaborate closely (enabling a single inbox); working together on a daily basis and are able to effectively manage workload and case allocation. The remaining team works independently and tends to utilise a different approach to daily tasks.

Testing found that there is not a consistent approach to case allocation, decision, and subsequent recording on Mastergov. Specific functions were not utilised effectively within Mastergov, such as case status and the site visit section, although sufficient detail to appropriate this was available within the individual case. Further results found that other teams, such as Tree and Conservation who use Mastergov when supporting/assuming responsibility of a case, are not completing the required sections with relevant information. This includes out-dated case statuses, with one example showing it at the planning application stage but still assigned to an enforcement officer.

To ensure a consistent and standardised approach, service-wide training should be completed aligned with agreed processes for case allocation and subsequent recording on Mastergov. Increased communication and collaboration between wider teams (Planning, Tree and Conservation) is recommended, along with the joining of the three sub-teams to one single team to promote a joint approach.

Action

The Planning Enforcement service will introduce updated processes, Mastergov system training, and joint team working to ensure a consistent approach between teams.

Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#3791
Responsible Officer	Planning Enforcement Manager		
Timescale	31 August 2024		

Finding 3.

Underutilisation of available data due to limited case recording in Mastergov.

The Planning Enforcement team have an online form which they require to be filled out by the complainant to highlight a possible enforcement issue. The form currently filters into the email box of the specific sub-team depending on location of the enforcement complaint. On a weekly basis, each team reviews their inbox and determines whether there is sufficient evidence to escalate to a planning enforcement issue. If a case is established, the information will then be recorded onto Mastergov and assigned to an officer. If an enforcement complaint does not have satisfactory evidence that warrants further investigation, the team will respond with a rejection letter and the process will be terminated; unless additional evidence is provided that substantiates escalation. These rejections are stored within an email folder.

As these rejections are not recorded within the Mastergov system, there is a lost opportunity of utilising this data to analyse capacity and resources. The data could also provide information on learning opportunities by highlighting inconsistencies across the team. Automating this process to enable Mastergov to populate cases directly from the online portal will support in time-management, service monitoring, and reporting.

Action

The Planning Enforcement team will consider manually inputting rejected cases onto Mastergov before the automation of cases onto the system.

Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#3788
Responsible Officer	Planning Enforcement Manager		
Timescale	31 August 2024		

Action

The Planning Transformation Team will link the online form to Mastergov so that it automatically populates into the system.

Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#3728
Responsible Officer	Planning Enforcement Manager		
Timescale	30 April 2025		

Finding 4.	Action												
<p><u>The Development Management Planning Enforcement Plan requires updating to align with LGSCO recommendations and audit findings.</u></p> <p>The Planning Enforcement team use their internal Development Management Planning Enforcement Plan as the foundation of managing enforcement complaints. Currently, the policy has minimal guidance, was last updated in March 2019, and the information provided is generic. The current policy does not outline communication frequency or timescales, detail on what constitutes the priority ratings, and protocol for how to manage complaints retrieved not via the online portal.</p> <p>Formal complaints testing was conducted to compare common reasons against the available policy. The general consensus found a dissatisfaction with customer service and the quality of such, specifically related to a lack of communication from officers. The revised policy could incorporate clear touch points and timescales with complainants to ensure expectations are pre-defined to prevent further formal complaints of a similar nature. The policy would also benefit from establishing priority ratings and accompanying reasons to ensure a standardised and consistent approach to case management; proportionate to the established timescales.</p> <p>Whilst enforcement complaints can be received through multiple methods including the online portal, letters, and direct email, the service promotes the use of the online portal as the primary contact method. However, the current policy does not clearly outline this, and testing found complaints are received through all discussed methods. Though there are processes demonstrated to manage these, full assurance cannot be given that complaints not submitted via the online portal do not circumvent current controls. The policy could include clearer communication to outline that the online portal is to be used as the primary enforcement complaints method, with accompanying narrative explaining the management of complaints received by the other available methods.</p> <p>These additions would provide essential guidance to both internal and external stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Planning Enforcement Manager will update the Development Management Planning Enforcement Plan in line with the LGSCO recommendations. Further additions should be incorporated to establish clearer process guidelines for stakeholders.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1131 1129 2119 1276"> <tr> <td data-bbox="1131 1129 1384 1177">Priority</td> <td data-bbox="1384 1129 1630 1177">3</td> <td data-bbox="1630 1129 1863 1177">SWAP Reference</td> <td data-bbox="1863 1129 2119 1177">AP#3790</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1131 1177 1384 1225">Responsible Officer</td> <td colspan="3" data-bbox="1384 1177 2119 1225">Planning Enforcement Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="1131 1225 1384 1276">Timescale</td> <td colspan="3" data-bbox="1384 1225 2119 1276">30 June 2024</td> </tr> </table>	Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#3790	Responsible Officer	Planning Enforcement Manager			Timescale	30 June 2024		
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Timescale	30 June 2024												

<p>Finding 5.</p> <p><u>Outstanding legacy cases have had minimal or no progress for over a year.</u></p> <p>There are currently 78 enforcement cases within Mastergov that pre-date Dorset Council (2009 - 2019). Though these cases are already allocated and reviewed as part of case reviews by the Planning Enforcement Manager and officer, testing found limited progress made on such cases for over a year.</p> <p>It is recommended that consideration is given to the management of these legacy cases, to ensure a timely decision is made and can subsequently be removed from the existing workload. Managing this backlog would provide officers with increased capacity to better manage recent enforcement cases.</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>The Planning Enforcement Manager will explore ways of reducing legacy cases in a timely manner.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1137 443 2119 606"> <tr> <td>Priority</td> <td>3</td> <td>SWAP Reference</td> <td>AP#3814</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Responsible Officer</td> <td colspan="3">Planning Enforcement Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Timescale</td> <td colspan="3">31 August 2024</td> </tr> </table>	Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#3814	Responsible Officer	Planning Enforcement Manager			Timescale	31 August 2024		
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<p>Finding 6.</p> <p><u>The Enforcement Register is not readily accessible to all.</u></p> <p>The Council currently maintain a hard copy of the Enforcement Register within County Hall. Access to the public is restricted to Monday to Friday, 08:30am to 17:00pm and requires individuals to physically attend the location. The Planning Enforcement assistant has to also update this hard copy manually, by attending County Hall when an enforcement notice has been served or to retrieve requested information. As per Section 188 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Councils should maintain a register that shall be available for inspection by the public at all reasonable hours.</p> <p>The Council recognise that the current process for accessing the Enforcement Register is limiting and results in accessibility issues. Ongoing work by the Transformation Team is actively underway to provide an online version to the public.</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>The service will continue work to ensure the Enforcement Register is accessible by means of an online version.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1137 978 2119 1141"> <tr> <td>Priority</td> <td>3</td> <td>SWAP Reference</td> <td>AP#3789</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Responsible Officer</td> <td colspan="3">Planning Enforcement Manager</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Timescale</td> <td colspan="3">31 December 2024</td> </tr> </table>	Priority	3	SWAP Reference	AP#3789	Responsible Officer	Planning Enforcement Manager			Timescale	31 December 2024		
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<p>Finding 7.</p> <p><u>Officers do not routinely update the Road Map function with their completed training.</u></p> <p>The service currently offers the Planning Enforcement team with a multitude of training opportunities including webinars, subject matter expert speakers, professional courses such as Ivy Legal, and both in-house and external training. Whilst this additional training is not mandatory, attendance is encouraged by managers. Testing found that whilst such training is not recorded on officers Road Maps, managers actively utilise 1-2-1's to discuss development options with the team members. However, Council assigned mandatory training via Boxphish automatically records in individual Road Maps.</p> <p>Better recording of completed training within the Road Map function would further support with 1-2-1's and the ongoing development of the team.</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>Planning Enforcement managers will encourage officers to routinely update the Road Map function with completed training and review this during 1-2-1's.</p>												
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<p>Finding 8.</p> <p><u>Current Mastergov templates are from legacy Councils and require updating.</u></p> <p>The Planning Enforcement officers currently use satisfactory templates for communication purposes to stakeholders and the completed versions are located within Mastergov on the specific case. However, testing found that these templates are not available in one general location resulting in officers having to manually retrieve templates from local drives and folders.</p> <p>The service recognises that the current process is time-consuming, and the templates require revision. Ongoing work by the Training & Development Officer is actively underway to provide updated templates and to load these onto a general location within Mastergov.</p>	<p>Action</p> <p>The Planning Enforcement service will update all templates and ensure the revisions are added onto Mastergov.</p>												
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