

Regulatory Portfolio

Portfolio	Regulatory
Ward(s) Affected:	All

Purpose

To provide a progress report on the Regulatory Services Portfolio

1. Background

- 1.1 The Regulatory Portfolio comprises a wide range of services and a summary of the key issues arising in 2017/18 for each of these is set out below.

2. Planning Policy and Conservation

- 2.1 The key work area for this team is the production of the local plan review. The Issues and Options document has progressed through the Working Group and will be presented to Executive in May 2017 for approval for public consultation.
- 2.2 The team produces an Annual Monitoring Report which records, amongst other data, housing completion rates in the Borough. In the last 5 years overall housing completion rates have been as follows.

Year	Net completions	Objectively Assessed Housing Need Target
2011/2012	179	191 (Core Strategy figure)
2012/2013	217	191
2013/2014	127	191
2014/2015	187	191
2015/2016	305	191
2016/2017	226	382 (2016 SHMA figure)

- 2.3 For affordable housing the completion rates have been below target overall.

Year	Affordable Housing Completions	Target
2012 - 13	20	65
2013 - 14	0	65
2014 - 15	6	65
2015 - 16	21	65
2016 - 17	74	65

- 2.4 The main reason for failure to provide affordable housing relates to viability. All viability assessments provided by developers are independently checked before any agreement over a reduction in contributions is reached. Commuted payments have been taken in lieu

in some cases but the sum collected to date of £1.5m for alternative provision will fund only a small proportion of the shortfall.

- 2.5 One of the key roles of the team has been to secure valuable funding for infrastructure to support redevelopment. The team has been taking forward bids to government for funding and in 2017 secured the £3.5m grant from the EM3 Local Enterprise Partnership for improvements to the High Street, Princess Way and other parts of Camberley Town Centre. The team have also now secured the second phase of funding of £280,000 from One Public Estate for work to release surplus public sector assets in the Borough. Work will shortly commence on supporting Surrey County Council with the submission of the business case to the EM3 LEP for £3.5m of funding for improvements to the London Road (A30) in Camberley town centre.
- 2.6 The Planning Policy and Technical Support Manager retires at the end of April and the Planning Policy Manager will be on maternity leave from the end of April onward. The team will struggle to carry forward many of the initiatives outlined above as to date, it has not been possible to recruit replacements.

3. Private Sector Housing Enforcement

- 3.1 The housing stock within the Borough is generally in good condition and there have been no prosecutions this year. There are, however, a number of cases ongoing. Where concerns about the quality of a property arise, the Council always seeks to find the quickest way to resolve issues for tenants and landlords. While every complaint could potentially lead to prosecution, officers have a strong track record of securing the best outcome without using the ultimate sanction of prosecution. Threat of prosecution is, however, a useful incentive for landlords who are reluctant to fulfil their obligations.
- 3.2 There have been no clearances of housing due to hoarding. The team have undertaken 180 housing inspections in 2017.

4. Disabled Facilities Grant

- 4.1 The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Team took over Disabled Facilities Grants/ Housing Improvement Agency work in Autumn 2016 and is now coming to the end of the first full year of running this service. So far in 2017/18 the team has agreed 100 grants with a few more still waiting to be agreed before year end.
- 4.2 Types of works agreed include stair lifts, shower rooms/bathroom adaptations, access issues (e.g. doors, ramps, etc.), scooter stores and vehicular access.
- 4.3 The team is seeking to adopt a more sustainable approach to grants provision and as part of the work now looks to move people rather than fund major adaptations for homes that are clearly unsuitable. In

2017/18 they have moved two households to more suitable homes as their current homes could not be adapted in a practical or affordable way. For a third household, they are looking at putting adaptations into a new house at build stage for a cost effective and personalised response to that resident's needs. This new approach reflects the approach to case work being sought through the restructure of Housing to become a Housing Hub, working across disciplines to find the right housing solution for residents in need.

- 4.4 The team is also looking to closer joint working with SCC to provide dedicated occupational therapy support that offers more appropriate advice and working with Community Services to support their work around adaptations for elderly people such as key safes, this includes the reintroduction of the Home Handyman Service.

5. Housing and Homelessness

- 5.1 In 2017/18 to date the team has received 76 homeless applications of which 44 were found to be owed the full housing duty. The total number for whom the team prevented homelessness was 88 through early intervention.
- 5.2 The primary cause of homelessness over the last two years has been the ending of a private sector tenancy through no fault of the tenants and difficulty in securing alternative housing. Difficulty in securing housing often reflects ability to pay, a snapshot of rents in Camberley is set out below.

Snapshot of average rents in Camberley:

Property size	Average rent	Local housing allowance
1 bedroom	£781	£612
2 bedroom	£1063	£765
3 bedroom	£1370	£913

- 5.3 The team is now commissioning joint floating support with Guildford Borough Council and Surrey County Council to assist with preventing tenancy breakdown and keeping people in their own homes. The impact of Universal Credit on this issue will be closely monitored.
- 5.4 The second main reason is family breakdown, usually parents evicting adult children, who often have children of their own. These reasons demonstrate that homelessness will never be eradicated and that we need to continue our work to reduce its impact on the individuals and families affected.
- 5.5 The team is continuing to maintain low levels of people in B&B with currently 3 households (all rough sleepers under the severe weather provision) in this accommodation. For the same time in previous years there were 12 in B&B in 2014, 11 in 2015, 3 in 2016 and 1 in 2017. The

team has succeeded in minimising the costs of this issue to the Council as compared to costs being experienced by other authorities.

- 5.6 Total cost in Surrey of housing families in temporary accommodation (includes B&B) in 2016/17, before reclaim of grant from is shown below. This gives some idea of the cost implications for authorities that fail to address this issue

Authority	Cost before grant reclaim
Elmbridge	£224,945
Epsom and Ewell	£2,100,000
Guildford	£38,130
Mole Valley	£443,575
Reigate and Banstead	£506,008
Runnymede	£127,575
Spelthorne	£1,300,000
Surrey Heath	£99,753
Tandridge	£2,390
Waverley	£10,273
Woking	£560,825

- 5.7 Other measures to tackle homelessness include 2,331 face to face interviews to provide advice and support with housing and homelessness advice. The Team around the person project provide dedicated support to single homeless individuals and assisted 30 people in securing housing, accessing health services, training and employment. Separately the team commissioned a study to investigate how a service to support, in particular, single homeless persons could be set up. The work with the local community on this issue has led to the setting up of a new charity 'The Hope Hub' which will take this work forward. The Team is now working with the charity to find suitable accommodation in Camberley Town Centre.
- 5.8 In addition the team were successful in securing consultancy support funded and provided by DCLG (with a maximum value of £14,000) for a study of options for providing housing for single homeless people, this study is currently underway.
- 5.9 The above demonstrates the Councils commitment to helping people to avoid homelessness by staying in their own homes or moving in a planned way.
- 5.10 The team is now gearing up for the new responsibilities coming forward from April 2018 onward under the Homelessness Reduction Act. It is important that people facing homelessness continue to have access to the right advice and support. Part of the approach will to shift to work as a multidisciplinary housing hub with all staff involved in addressing needs.

6. Planning Enforcement Policy

- 6.1 The actual policy remains unchanged but the ability to implement policy and undertake action continues to be a cause of concern to councillors and residents.
- 6.2 Since the Scrutiny Committee last year the service has moved forward with providing improvements to the enforcement function. The day to day processing of casework and the investigative element of the function is now provided through the Corporate Enforcement Service. Reports of breaches of planning control are now taken through the Contact Centre and recorded directly into the system or through online forms. New software to improve reporting will be provided as part of a wider upgrade for the planning function.
- 6.3 Cases are now progressing through this part of the process more quickly and what this has highlighted is the lack of dedicated planning officer support for the enforcement function. A new post is being recruited that will take forward the appeals, planning application and planning casework as well as helping the Corporate Enforcement Team to prioritise the casework. This is being funded through the recently announced increase in planning fees.
- 6.4 Looking at caseloads, with outstanding cases rolled forward from 2016 and case reported in 2017 and 2018 a total of 363 compliance/enforcement cases (of which 230 were reported in 2017 and 2018) have been dealt with during 2017/18. These are as follows

Case type/action	Number
No breach found	110
Breach discontinued/ compliance achieved	96
Enforcement Notice served on site	4
Planning permission required and no notice served	9
Planning permission being sought/at appeal	18
Planning permission/ Appeal allowed	9
Still ongoing	117
Not yet checked	0

- 6.5 One particularly large enforcement case is the Swift Lane action, for which the Executive agreed additional funding to support the cost of the work. The inquiry for that enforcement action will begin in April 2018 but in addition so far a Stop Notice has been served and a High Court injunction taken out This has resulted in 10 haulage companies being prosecuted for various environmental offences and breach of the Stop Notice. Those prosecutions are still ongoing and more notices will be issued shortly. In addition weekly site visits are now underway to monitor changes on the site. There is now dedicated administrative support and an external legal consultant for this action, as the workload is significant and is occupying a substantial amount of officer time within the Corporate Enforcement Team.

7. Drainage

- 7.1 This is a one man service responsible for maintenance of Council assets and in addition working with other bodies to address flooding in the Borough. In 2017/18 the Drainage Engineer secured £214,000 of funding from the Environment Agency to pay for flood attenuation measures to be provided as part of the Chobham Water meadows SANGs.
- 7.2 Again in 2017/18 here were no reported incidences of flooding in Chobham Village. In addition work is now underway to again review the potential for providing attenuation measures in the east of the Borough.

8. Land Charges

- 8.1 This service provided 2,100 Land Charges searches a year and most are provided within 24hours, well within the target of 3 days. However, numbers have slightly dropped in 2017/18 as the housing market slows down.
- 8.2 The service will cost the Council £ £119,080 to provide in 2017/18 (including support costs). Income is expected to be £230,000 and thus the service is currently self-funding.
- 8.3 The main challenge facing this service is the continuing roll out of the government project to move delivery of land charges away from local authorities and into the Land Registry as a new online service. Local authorities will, however, be expected to maintain the data needed for the new national service and thus, whilst income will be reduced, the cost of the providing the service will largely be unchanged.

9. Development Management

- 9.1 The numbers of planning applications received in the first 3 quarters of 2017/18 at 873 is slightly higher than previous years for the same time period. The number of major applications received continues to be higher than surrounding boroughs, with such applications being more complex to deal with.
- 9.2 The recent increase in planning application fees will be used to fund the recruitment of an additional major applications planner. In particular, as the development at Princess Royal Barracks and applications are received for each of the phases of the development additional staff resource will be required.
- 9.3 The team has also recently been awarded government funding for 2017/18 (£15,000) and 2018/19 (£70,000) to support its work in improving the quality of design in new development. This will be used to fund new design guidance, more training and employ contracted in-house urban design support this is in addition to the ongoing work with Design South East. This will be particularly useful as the Council

moves forward with work on the redevelopment on the London Road Block in Camberley.

- 9.4 A key challenge for this team remains recruitment and the 20% increase in planning fees will be used to recruit staff. At the moment more experienced staff are being sought to address immediate problems.

10. Family Support

- 10.1 Surrey County Council removed targets for this service in 2017/18 as the work undertaken has changed and payment is no longer based on this outcome. For the purposes of internal monitoring of performance, however, the team continues to have a notional target of 104 families. So far in 2017/18 it has completed working with 88 families (40 in Surrey Heath) these families have moved through intensive support and are now being supported by a nominated lead organisation. The team is currently working with a further 33 families (17 in Surrey Heath).
- 10.2 The team has looked back to 2016/17 to see what happened to those families. Of the 54 worked with from Surrey Heath, 8 were found to have circumstances that required more serious intervention and 3 have now moved into a child protection programme. The remaining 46 have maintained the improvement achieved.
- 10.3 The team has also now moved into work with the new Edge of Care Team at Surrey. This is working with vulnerable children at risk of going into care or coming out of care and needing reintegration back into the family. The Edge of Care Service will offer a Family Therapist to support the Family Support Team. It is estimated that this new approach to working with children in need of care will save SCC up to £140,000 per year, per child in care provision. Members will recall that Surrey Heath/ Runnymede team pioneered working with Family Therapists for the SCC projects some years ago.
- 10.4 The team also provides support for the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. Two families have been accepted by Runnymede and are housing in Council housing stock. No families have been taken in Surrey Heath as finding suitable housing has proved to be a problem. Measures to try to find accommodation include running an advertising campaign on Eagle Radio asking for accommodation, no offers of accommodation were received. Surrey Heath is one of 4 Councils in Surrey that have not taken refugee families, this includes Spelthorne which has not signed up to the scheme
- 10.5 To date we have not sought to use RSL housing stock but it is now clear that this option must be explored and work is now underway with Accent Peerless to reach agreement on an approach.