

Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee 22nd March 2017
Report on the Regulatory Portfolio

The Regulatory Portfolio includes the following functions:

- Development Management
- Drainage
- Land Charges and Technical Support
- Planning Policy & Conservation
- Private Sector Housing Enforcement
- Housing
- Family Support

Development Management

Development Management continues to be one of the Councils most prominent front line services. It deals with around 1200 planning and planning related applications a year. Surrey Heath continues to receive a large number of major planning applications compared with other authorities. The majority of planning applications are determined within target times but ongoing staff vacancies are limiting the ability to improve performance.

The team has also dealt with some 40 appeals, 133 enforcement cases and 420 tree in the last year. The team is now working closely with the Corporate Enforcement Team to deliver extra resource into the Planning enforcement function. The service continues to offer trainee posts and currently has one in post. Work is ongoing with ICT to replace the Acolaid planning software with a new cloud based system using Arcus Salesforce.

Whilst income from planning applications is on target. Budgets used to fund consultants for appeals, viability advice etc and contract staff to cover vacancies are overspent.

Drainage

The Council has one Drainage Engineer. His primary role is to oversee the repairs and maintenance to drainage on the Councils land. He also provides drainage advice to the Development Management Service for housing schemes of less than 50 units, larger sites are the responsibility of Surrey County Council in its role as lead Local Flood Authority.

Land Charges and Technical Support

This team dealt with 2191 Local Land Charges searches in the last year and on average provides a response in less than 2 days. However the changes to the Land Charges function proposed by the Government will come forward over the next two

years and we await further information. The team's main role continues to be to manage the data and systems that support the Development Management function.

Planning Policy and Conservation

This team is responsible for the delivery of the Councils planning policy advice and guidance. It also provides an annual monitoring report on performance against policy to the Executive. In the coming year it will embark on a review of the current Local Plan which is now out of date. Advice on Listed Buildings and Conservation areas is provided through this team by Waverley Borough Council who supply an officer one day a fortnight to support the Development Management Service and provides some support to property owners.

Private Sector Housing Enforcement

This team is responsible for overseeing licencing of House in Multiple Occupation, inspection checks of housing in substandard condition, caravan site licencing and other miscellaneous functions. The team has inspected 79 properties so far in 2016/17 with 126 inspections being undertaken.

Housing

This now operates as a Housing Options service responsible for managing the Councils Housing Register which has reduced from over 700 households at the beginning of 2016 to 515 by the beginning of 2017. This reduction is primarily due to changes in eligibility criteria rather than a reduction in demand for housing. The team has been successful in maintaining the low rates of referral to bed and breakfast through close working with local land lords. The numbers of prevention of homelessness case worked with has increased from 84 in 2015/16 to 107 in 2016/17 so far. Lack of social and affordable private rented housing and low delivery of new affordable housing continues to be a problem with homelessness from private rented accommodation increasing as Local Housing Allowance fails to keep pace with the increased cost of renting in the private sector.

Funding for the joint Team Around the Person Project working with single homeless including street homeless ceased in Autumn 2016. However, Housing has maintained the by service using Prevention of Homelessness grant to fund this. Surrey heath partnership has agreed to fund a project officer in the team for 2017/18 to set up day services to support single homeless residents.

In addition, the Housing Team took over the Councils Disabled Facilities Grant function in autumn 2016. The coming year will see new policies coming to the Executive in mid-2017, as the team seeks to turn the focus of the service from reactive to proactive working with the CCG and Adult Social Services.

In 2017/18, the emerging Homelessness Reduction Bill is likely to present budgetary challenges as Councils are asked to increase services to the homeless but its principles of early intervention and personalised support fit well with the service we already deliver.

Family Support

The Regulatory Service also delivers this service for Surrey Heath and Runnymede Borough Councils on behalf of the SCC Children's Early Help Service. The team continues to meet its targets, working with 104 families a year addressing issues such as poor school attendance, domestic violence and substance abuse. In 2016/17 so far 13 families have been referred to Surrey Children's services due to safeguarding concerns.