

Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Friday, 8 April 2016

Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions);
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Report of the Planning Matters Task Group

Appendix 'A' and 'B' refer.

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

The Task Group was formed at the request of CC Liz Oades after concerns had been expressed by some district councils regarding the scope, content and timeliness of Lancashire County Council consultation responses particularly regarding education, highways and flood risk management.

The scope of this review is limited to the County Council's consultation responses to district councils, and does not include wider planning matters.

The Task Group has undertaken a review and has prepared a series of recommendations. District Councils were consulted on the draft recommendations, which have been subsequently modified following feedback.

The Task Group's recommendations are now presented for the Committee's consideration.

Recommendation

The Scrutiny Committee is requested to approve the recommendations of its Task Group.

Background and Advice

The Task Group was formed at the request of CC Liz Oades after concerns had been expressed by some district councils regarding the scope, content and timeliness of Lancashire County Council consultation responses particularly regarding education, highways, and flood risk management. Furthermore, concerns had been raised that the County Council's advice was not adequately represented in reports presented to district council planning committees for the determination of

planning applications, and the County Council's reputation had sometimes been damaged as a consequence.

Membership of the Task Group

The Task Group's membership was comprised of the following County Councillors:-

- CC Liz Oades (Chair)
- CC Munsif Dad
- CC Bernard Dawson
- CC Michael Devaney
- CC Michael Green
- CC David Howarth
- CC Ron Shewan

Scope of the Scrutiny Exercise

At the commencement of the process the factors that contributed to concerns were outlined by members as follows:

- The timeliness of responses from the County Council to district council planning committees.
- Information had not been fully brought to the attention of district planning committees; or it had been summarised to the point where necessary information had been left out or misinterpreted.
- The two-way flow of information was not deemed to be properly maintained.
- Details could be missed by planning officers (in some circumstances).

To address the above, the Task Group sought to investigate the processes surrounding the submission of planning applications; the determination of planning applications and to understand the responsibilities of various organisations in the planning process.

The Task Group aimed to secure a working protocol for the submission of responses by the County Council to planning consultations from district councils. The Task Group also looked at how communication could be improved so that the County Council's resources can be deployed to best effect when making responses.

Specific areas of the County Council investigated by the Task Group were:

- highways development control
- finance for schools (s106 and education contributions)
- flood risk management

All of the above touched on Lancashire County Council's infrastructure planning for future housing need, which was a theme raised during the review.

Consultations

Once the Task Group's investigation of the above had concluded, the recommendations formulated at each meeting were collated and sent to the consultees (see heading, 'consultations') for comments. An email detailing the

consultation was circulated on December 1st 2015. The deadline for responses has now passed, with two reminders circulated after the deadline. Most district councils have submitted a response.

Responses have been received and analysed. All responses are supportive of the proposals and offer suggestions to improve the system. Suggested recommendations put forward during the consultation stage are attached at Appendix 'B'.

This report and the recommendations at Appendix 'A' display the product of the Task Group's work and subsequently the proposed solutions to the aforementioned issues.

Consultees:

- LCC Highways Officers
- LCC Flood Risk Management Officers
- LCC Education Officers
- Lancashire Development Control Officers Group
- Chairs of District Council Planning Committees
- District Council Planning portfolio holders

Implications:

If implemented, the recommendations will improve the quality of planning determinations in district councils.

Risk management

Through improved communication, the proposals from the Task Group should help to improve the allocation of LCC resources in responding to planning consultations from district councils.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
None		