

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT BY DIRECTOR : HELEN STANDEN

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE FEBRUARY 2018

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- Provide a half year update on the action plan and to provide an assessment of the overall position in regard to the Council's Planning Enforcement Service

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Overview and Scrutiny: That:

(A)	Members are requested to note the report and the progress made and submit any further comments to the Director
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1.0 Background

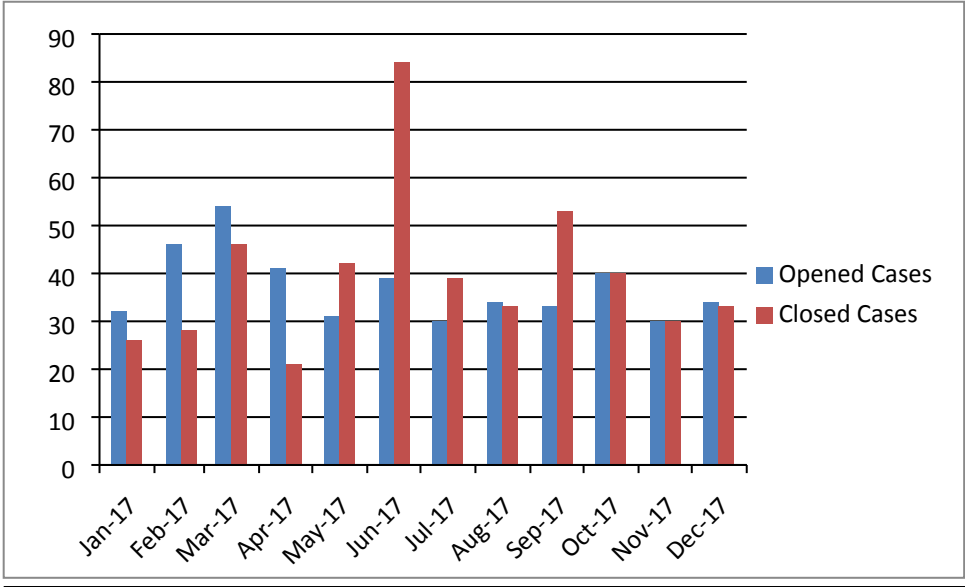
A review of the Planning Enforcement Service was undertaken in May 2017. A further update was provided in July 2017. A task and finish group (set up in September 2015) considered and revised the Enforcement Plan, culminating in a report back to Environmental Scrutiny Committee in February 2016. The Plan was adopted but not fully integrated within the service area. Following the update to Scrutiny in July 2017, officers provided a further report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12th

September 2017. Officers have requested the opportunity to present a 6 month review by way of this report.

2.0 Report

- 2.1 The Action Plan, endorsed by the Executive Member and Portfolio holder for Planning and scrutinised by Committee has now been in operation for 6 months.
- 2.2 The Plan is embedded within the service area and most actions have been completed or are commencing in accordance with the original timescales.
- 2.3 As reported in September, two posts, one focusing on Enforcement and one on Compliance, were recruited to and the 'new' employees have received training to enable them to be effective in their roles.
- 2.4 Our arrangement with LSR (Planning Consultants) reduced considerably in line with the requirements of the Action Plan and all cases were either resolved fully or returned at EHC request to enable final /follow-up action to be taken. As at 1/1/2018, 1 case remains with LSR as they are undertaking enforcement action on our behalf. It is expected that this case will be resolved before the end of the financial year.
- 2.5 The Enforcement Team locally continues to manage the incoming workload whilst reducing the outstanding files and contain day to day enforcement issues arising.
- 2.6 At the commencement of the initial review in June 2017 there were 315 cases on hand of which 160 were pre 2017. The current position as at 1/1/2018 shows a reduction to 202 cases on hand (an overall decrease of 113 cases or **36%**. Most notable is the reduction in pre 2017 cases which as at 1/1/2018 stood at just 38, a reduction of **76%**.

2.7 In addition to this achievement by the Enforcement Team, of the 202 cases on hand, 157 are currently active, 45 have either a current planning application or have been served notice/appeal. In addition, as can be seen by the chart below, the team have reversed the trend of more cases per month v closure.



3.0 Progress and Action Plan

3.1 The Action Plan has been updated and is provided in full at **Essential Reference Paper B**. Complete implementation continues to be work in progress.

3.2 Planning Enforcement is active in the wider Digital East Herts Project planned implementation has taken place to improve our use of IDOX (software system). This will continue to be rolled out over the next 6 months.

3.2 The team is currently investigating other opportunities such as reducing enforcement action through a higher level of compliance activity. This work is on-going.

3.3 The team continue to be supported by the Director, Portfolio

Holder and the Service Manager where the workload continues to be regularly monitored. The responsibility for this will be handed fully to the Service Manager by the end of March 2018.

- 3.4 As previously advised, the sum of £20,000 was set aside to enable a significant reduction in the backlog. With one outsourced case outstanding, the case work undertaken as at 1/1/2018 cost £20,037.
- 3.5 In conclusion, there has been a significant reduction on both the cases on hand and those outstanding. The Action Plan will continue to be monitored and updated on a quarterly basis. Full responsibility for the Enforcement team will revert to the Service Manager by March 2018. The team continues to explore other ways of making the team and its duties more efficient and customer focused.

4. Implications / Consultations

- 4.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper A**.

Background Papers

None

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