

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 FEBRUARY 2019

REPORT BY HELEN STANDEN – DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PLANNING ENFORCEMENT UPDATE – JANUARY 2019

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- Provide an 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 COMMITTEE:

That:

(A)	Members are invited to consider the report and offer advice and comments for consideration by the team
------------	---

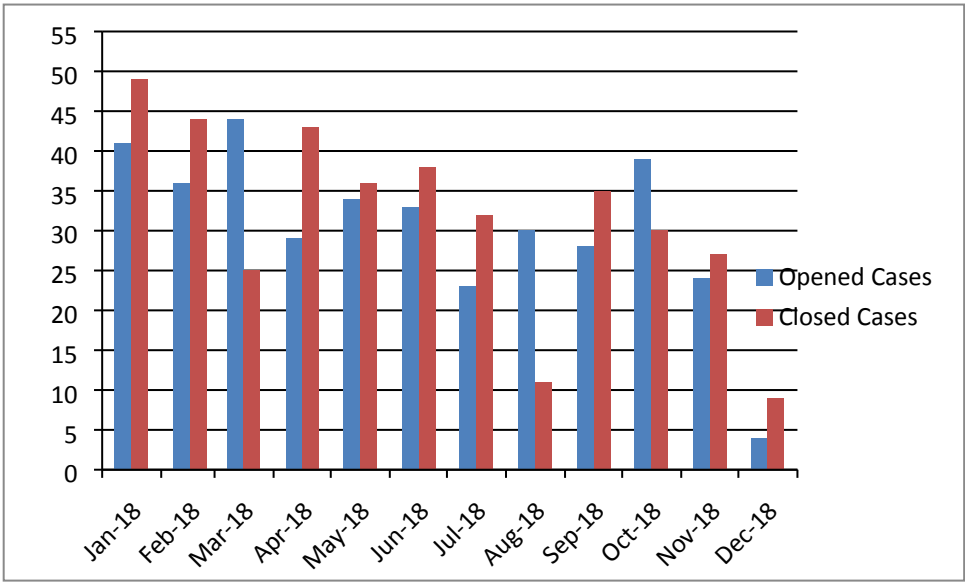
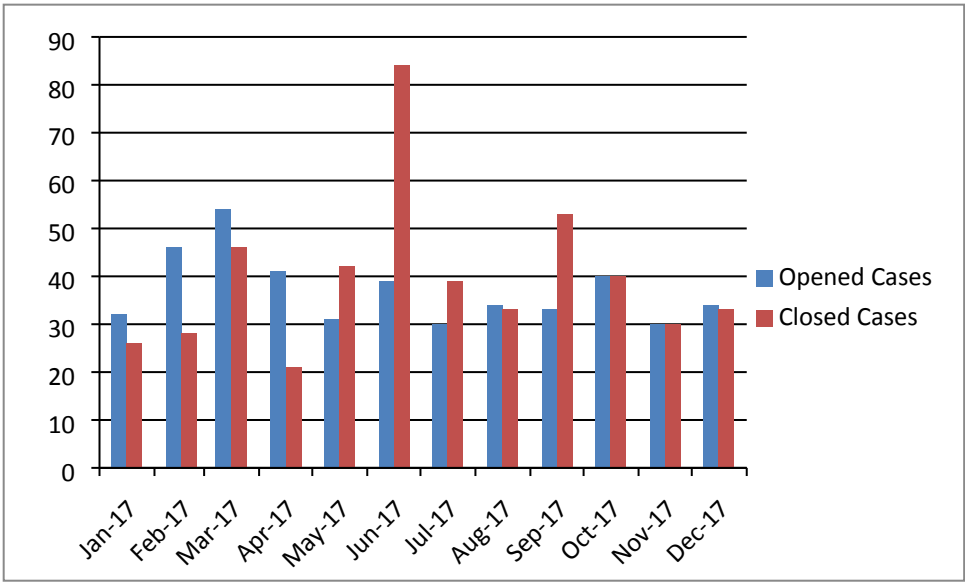
1.0 Background

A review of the Planning Enforcement Service was undertaken in May 2017. A further update was provided in July 2017 and again in February 2018. 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. Following a report which was presented to the committee in February 2018, this report gives a review for the last 6 months of 2018.

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 nearly 12 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 February 2018, two posts, one focusing on Enforcement and one on Compliance, were recruited to. The compliance officer left the authority in August 2018 and this post currently remains vacant but it is expected that this post will be re-advertised in January 2019 for a full time role under an 18 month contract. This will increase our ability further to act at compliance rather than enforcement stage.
- 2.4 This has impacted on the number of cases which each officer has on hand, increasing the demand and has affected the progress the team were expecting to make with regards to compliance visits.
- 2.5 Our arrangement with LSR (Planning Consultants) ceased following a public inquiry for the last remaining case where the appeal was dismissed.
- 2.6 The Enforcement Team locally continues to manage the incoming workload whilst reducing the outstanding files and contain day to day enforcement issues arising.
- 2.7 At the commencement of the initial review in June 2017 there were 315 cases on hand of which 160 were pre 2017. Currently there are 41 open files that are pre 2018, most of these cases are large sites which are ongoing or are currently under appeal following the service of a notice or awaiting the outcome of a planning decision/appeal.

2.8 The Enforcement Team currently has 221 cases on hand, 155 are currently active, 46 have been served notice/appeal and 20 are awaiting the determination of a planning application



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.

- 3.2 The team is currently investigating other opportunities such as reducing enforcement action through a higher level of compliance activity. This work will continue in the New Year following recruitment to the full-time Compliance Officer role.
- 3.3 The team continue to be supported by the Deputy Chief Executive, Portfolio Holder and the Service Manager where the workload continues to be regularly monitored. The responsibility has now been handed fully to the Service Manager.
- 3.4 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 has gone to the Service Manager. The team continues to explore other ways of making the team and its duties more efficient and customer focused.

4.0 Implications/Consultations

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

Contact Member: Suzanne Rutland-Barsby
Suzanne.Rutland-Barsby@eastherts.gov.uk

Contact Officer
and report author: Helen Standen - Deputy Chief Executive
Contact Tel No - 1405
helen.standen@eastherts.gov.uk