

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 June 2023

Wards: All

Subject: Reference from the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – Development Control Performance

Lead officer: Rosie Mckeever, Scrutiny Officer

Lead member: Councillor Stuart Neaverson, Chair of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Contact officer: Rosie Mckeever, Scrutiny Officer, 0208 545 4035

Recommendations:

1. The Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel requests that Cabinet respond to its reference set out in paragraph 2.6 to 2.8 below.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. During the 23rd February 2023 meeting of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, The Chair of the Planning Committee Councillor Aidan Mundy presented a paper outlining the provisions within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to standardise planning data and software, this will have direct implications for Merton.

2 DETAILS

2.1. Scrutiny process

- 2.2. The Chair of the Planning Committee reported that the data and software standards planning authorities must comply with are shortly due to be updated. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (19 December 2022 version) Chapter 1 section 81 will put a duty on Merton Council to only use approved planning data software systems. The bill is in the Lords Committee stage in Parliament.

- 2.3. The current planning applications software is unlikely to be compliant with the requirements of the Levelling Up Bill. The system will require replacement.

2.4. Scrutiny response

- 2.5. The Panel RESOLVED (all ten members voted in favour) to send the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- 2.6. An officer taskforce is established to:

1. Scope opportunities to maximise and optimise current development control software. This would include opportunities to improve data quality.
2. Subject to available resource, and increasing returns to scale, implement improvement opportunities identified that support system migration.
3. Scope the resource and processes required to stand up a programme of work to:
 - Replace the current development control software.

- Iterating processes to improve efficiency and software utilisation following migration.

2.7 Both with the aim of being compliant with the regulations following the Royal Assent of the Levelling up and Regeneration Bill.

2.8 The Panel also ask that the findings from the task group be brought back to the scrutiny in due course.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. None – Cabinet is required under the council’s constitution to receive, consider and respond to references from overview and scrutiny.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. None for the purpose of this report.

5 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

5.1. None for the purpose of this report.

6 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. Cabinet is required under the council’s constitution to receive, consider and respond to references from overview and scrutiny. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires Cabinet to respond to reports and recommendations made by scrutiny committees within two months of written notice being given.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are no human rights, equalities and community cohesion implications as a result of this report.

8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

8.1. These are no crime and disorder implications as a result of this report.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are no risk management and health and safety implications as a result of this report.

10 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- None

11 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None