

## Rapid Review Scope

<b>Title</b>	<b>Member Engagement in Planning</b>
<b>Signed-off by</b>	Cllr David Carroll, Chairman, Growth, Infrastructure and Housing Select Committee
<b>Author</b>	Kelly Sutherland, Scrutiny Manager
<b>Date</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2021
<b>Rapid Review Group Membership</b>	TBC
<b>Scrutiny Team Resource</b>	Kelly Sutherland, Scrutiny Manager will manage this rapid review.
<b>Lead Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Gareth Williams, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration
<b>Lead Service Officer</b>	Christine Urry, Head of Planning and Development
<b>What is the problem that is trying to be solved?</b>	<p>As part of a service improvement programme, the Planning and Environment service has identified a need to ensure that members are well-supported to deal with enquiries from residents in connection with planning matters. For members who sit on one of the 5 Area Planning Committees (APCs) or on the Strategic Sites Committee (SSC), statutory training must be undertaken before the committees can make any decisions. Induction training is also provided for all members to raise their awareness of planning.</p> <p>Buckinghamshire Council has 147 elected members and the Planning service are dealing with circa 13,000 planning applications and 1,650 enforcement enquiries per annum. This generates a significant amount of queries/liaison between planning officers and members, therefore it is important that member engagement is meaningful and can resolve issues at an early stage.</p>
<b>What might the Rapid Review achieve?</b>	<p>Key lines of enquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key concerns of members and officers in the service (an open &amp; frank exchange of views and ideas)</li> <li>• Define what ‘member engagement’ means?</li> <li>• Identify what is already offered by the service and assess its effectiveness– what works? What could work better?</li> <li>• Speak to other comparable local authorities to gain insight into their approach and identify best practice ideas that BC might wish to consider adopting. (via MS Teams)</li> </ul> <p>By investigating the above, outcomes will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased trust between members and officers</li> <li>• Members will feel more confident to engage in planning queries with residents and to advocate for the planning service</li> <li>• Reduction in number of emails to the Cabinet Member and specific complaints about a lack of communication</li> </ul>

	This is an ideal opportunity for Select Committee members to influence the evolving culture and work practices of the Planning and Environment service.
<b>Is the issue of significance to Buckinghamshire as a whole and is the topic within the remit of the Select Committee?</b>	Yes
<b>What work is underway already on this issue?</b>	This project was identified by the Planning Improvement Board and it has been suggested that the Select Committee investigates as this will enable the voice of members to be amplified and recommendations to be made to Cabinet.
<b>Are there any key changes that might impact on this issue?</b>	Buckinghamshire Local Plan Planning White Paper  Both of the above are in early stages and therefore unlikely to impact on this rapid review.
<b>What are the key timing considerations?</b>	This will be a focussed rapid review to enable the Planning and Environment service to respond to any recommendations for improvement as soon as possible. Post-election and post-service redesign presents an ideal opportunity to propose new ideas to continue to improve/refine the service.
<b>Who are the key stakeholders &amp; decision-makers?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elected Members</li> <li>• Planning &amp; Environment Officers</li> <li>• CM for Planning &amp; Regeneration</li> <li>• Service Director – Planning &amp; Environment</li> <li>• Head of Planning and Development</li> </ul>
<b>What is out of scope?</b>	Liaison with Parish and Town Councils
<b>What media/communications support do you want?</b>	

### Evidence-gathering Methodology

<b>What types of methods of evidence-gathering will you use?</b>
<b>List them here:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desktop research</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Discussions with other local authorities</li> <li>• Possible member survey/call for evidence</li> </ul>
<b>How will you involve service-users and the public?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main focus of the rapid review is internal communications and engagement between elected members and planning officers.</li> </ul>

## Outline Project Plan

Stage	Key Activity	Dates
Scoping	Inquiry Scope Agreed by Select Committee	14 <sup>th</sup> October
Evidence-gathering	Evidence-gathering phase – anticipate 3-4 meetings	November/December
Reporting	Final Inquiry Group report with recommendations completed (signed-off by SC Chairman)	
	Report published for Select Committee	
	Select Committee agrees report to go forward to decision-makers	
	Cabinet/Partner considers recommendations	

### Definition of a Rapid Review

A Rapid Review is a focussed investigation with fairly narrow parameters, that can be conducted in a relatively short time scale. For example, you may hold three or four meetings as a review group – one to establish and understand what the key issues are, one or two to gather evidence from service users or other authorities to gain insight into best practice and a final meeting to discuss what members have heard and identify any useful recommendations. A rapid review format will be useful when considering less complex issues and may be helpful in delivering ‘quick wins’ for the Council’s service users and residents.