



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

Councillor David Cole
Convener,
Planning Services Scrutiny Working Group

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Our Ref / Ein Cyf:

RFD/JW

Your Ref / Eich

Cyf:

Date / Dyddiad:

13 April 2015

If you require this or any other information in another format e.g. Braille, audio tape or a different language, please contact me

Dear Councillor Cole

PLANNING SERVICES SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP – 19 MARCH 2015

I refer to your letter received 26th March 2015 regarding the above.

Firstly, I would again like to thank you as Convener and the Members of the Scrutiny Working Group for your work, for your focus on key elements of the Planning Service and for your further recommendations for improvement. I comment below on the points raised.

Enforcement Activity

I am pleased that the restructuring and process changes to the enforcement process has brought about an improvement in performance when measured against a number of key PI's and anticipate that the rate of enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks will improve in due course as the backlog of older complaints is reduced further.

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I share the view of the Working Group that it is important to monitor performance and that this be reported to Planning Committee on a regular basis. In this respect a performance report is presented to Committee on an annual basis in line with the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office and in this respect I have instructed the Development, Conservation and Design Manager to address these issues in the next cycle in August of this year.

Legal Support

It must be acknowledged that the Head of Legal, Democratic Services and Procurement has sought to address the resource issues dedicated to Planning Services despite current budgetary pressures. This area of work is, however, resource intensive and can raise unforeseen pressures as circumstances arise. In this respect officers within the respective Service areas have worked closely together to identify how best to address these issues and I anticipate this process will continue as we move forward.

In this respect it is anticipated that, as the enforcement backlog begins to reduce further, the Authority will progress with a number of prosecution cases. I have instructed, therefore, the Development, Conservation and Design Manager to put processes in place to ensure that the relevant Ward Councillors are briefed in accordance with the recommendation of the Working Group.

Publicity for Planning Enforcement

I share the view that positive publicity of enforcement activity could provide benefits particularly in terms of promoting improved public understanding of what is a complex process and public perception. This may also go some way to reducing breaches of planning control as a consequence.

Proposed changes to the planning and enforcement system in Wales as part of the Wales Planning Bill provide an opportunity to promote this and I have asked the Development, Conservation and Design Manager to progress this matter as appropriate.

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Major Developments

The significant resource issues associated with responding the applications for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects such as the Tidal Lagoon, are well recognised and have been raised with Welsh Government. Similar concerns have been raised by the Authority regarding the proposed tier of Strategic Developments to be dealt with by Welsh Government and introduced as part of the Wales Planning Bill.

I would hope that this issue will be addressed in a practical way, however, in the meantime officers continue to negotiate voluntary Planning Performance Agreements with such developers in an effort to recoup at least part of the associated costs to maintain an appropriate level of service in this respect.

Householder Advice

The Authority introduced a fee for the provision of pre-application advice in respect of most forms of development on 1st April 2015. Advice to householders on alterations or extensions to their properties and developments within the curtilage of dwellings, however, is provided free of charge.

This service also includes the provision of a Householder Development Surgery held each Wednesday afternoon in the Civic Centre, Swansea. This service is provided to householders only (not agents) on an appointment basis and can be arranged by ringing the following telephone number Tel. 01792 635701

Details of this service are available on the Council's public website via the following link: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/preapp>.

I appreciate that some Councillors may not be fully aware of this service and the changes recently introduced and I will ensure that this information is circulated to all Councillors in a timely manner.

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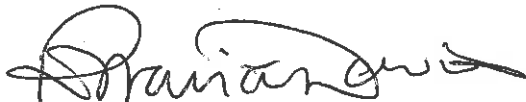
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I trust that the above provides an appropriate response to the issues raised by the Planning Services Scrutiny Working Group. Once again I would like to thank you as Convener and the Working Group as a whole for the positive approach adopted and the constructive recommendations that have been forthcoming. I would, however, be more than happy to provide further clarification or comment on any of the issues raised.

Yours sincerely



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