

Planning Review Steering Group

Meeting held: 30 March 2023

Attendees: Alderman Hillis, McKeown, Councillors Dallat O'Driscoll, Hunter, McGurk (chair), Nicholl

David Jackson, Denise Dickson

Mr J Mackinnon (external consultant)

1. Apologies:
Moirá Quinn
2. Declarations of Interest:
None
3. Minutes of previous meeting:
Unanimously **agreed**.
4. Implementation Plan:

D Dickson took Members through the updated Planning Review Action Plan (previously circulated).

D Jackson advised that he had engaged with the local Chamber of Commerce and discussed the redesignation of one of the award categories

D Dickson referred to difficulties recruiting temporary staff to fill vacant posts and impact this is having on performance and workloads. She advised that she has volunteered to act as a mentor with Ed Baker, Belfast City Council, on the Development Management and Enforcement workstream for the Planning Improvement Programme, reporting back to the Interim Regional Commission. D Dickson advised that she is looking at a streamlined process for straightforward planning applications and will be developing this further after the Easter break with the aim of initially rolling this out for infill dwellings and advertisements. She advised that she had been selected as one of The Planner's Women of Influence for 2023.

Councillor McGurk congratulated D Dickson and this was echoed by those in attendance. She thanked D Dickson for volunteering for the Development Management workstream of the Planning Improvement Programme. She welcomed the trial of a streamlined process to improve processing times. In relation to staffing issues, Cllr McGurk queried if a planning apprenticeship had been considered.

D Dickson advised that she had just agreed to a one-year placement student and stated that she was aware of planning apprenticeships in the UK but none in Northern Ireland. J Mackinnon advised that apprenticeships require a lot of support.

J Mackinnon congratulated the Planning Department on the progress made and considered the mentoring role as part of the Planning Implementation Programme reflected the positive attitude to change. In relation to the customer survey, he queried progress.

D Dickson advised that there had been an initial flurry of activity, but comments received had reduced substantially over the last number of months. She advised that the survey is largely completed by those who have had a negative experience and compliments are largely received by email.

D Jackson referred to a recent email of thanks and agreed that these emails should be taken into account in reviewing overall comments received.

Proposed by Councillor McGurk that the Steering Group is now closed, seconded by Councillor Dallat O'Driscoll.

Unanimously **agreed**.

J Mackinnon agreed that the Group had served its purpose and the Planning Department has embraced the actions; issues can be dealt with through the Planning Committee.

5. AORB:

Councillor McGurk thanked everyone for their work.

6. Date of Next Meeting: **Close Steering Group**.