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Aug 13 2014

Dear Neale,

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council – Improvement Planning Peer Challenge

On behalf of the peer team, thank you for inviting us to Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to deliver the recent planning improvement peer challenge as part of the LGA/PAS offer to support sector led improvement.

As you know peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector. They are improvement oriented and are tailored to meet individual councils' needs. Indeed they are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. They help planning services review what they are trying to achieve; how they are going about it; what they are achieving; and what they need to improve.

The five comprehensive themes of focus for a Planning Peer Challenge are:

- clarity and locally distinctive vision and leadership for the planning service;
- community leadership and engaging with the community;
- management arrangements and service delivery;
- partnership working both internally and externally; and
- achieving outcomes.

You asked the peer challenge team to specifically examine and report on the following areas:

- joint local plan timetable;

- advice/ approach of officers in relation to interpretation of National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and in particular the consequences of being unable to demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply:
- quality of effective joint working between officers and councillors;
- resources and demands;
- statement of community involvement;
- public perception; and
- enforcement.

This letter provides a summary of the feedback that was presented to you by the team at the end of their recent onsite visit. You asked us to focus on solutions and recommendations and our feedback to you both throughout the on-site phase of our work and in this report is based on **improvement themes**. We hope the feedback provided will help stimulate further debate and thinking about the future and how your plans might develop and evolve further.

Summary of feedback: overall messages

The Council continues to support the delivery of some high quality development through strong joint working with the public and private sector. Notable examples include town centre redevelopment such as the Jubilee 2 health and well-being centre and the mixed use redevelopment of the former Silverdale Colliery providing housing, employment and recreational land. The service has a good focus on supporting applications for major schemes through a development team approach involving specialist officers including economic development, housing, environmental health and highways. Speed of decision making is above the historically-set government targets.

However while the planning service does support growth and investment in the borough, the Council now more fully appreciates that it needs to bring the service 'front and centre' to deliver its corporate priority of 'delivering opportunity'. The borough needs more homes and more jobs to meet local demand. Critically, development is required to fund infrastructure needs such as roads, drainage and services. And without new development, locally generated income in the form of council tax, business rates or new homes bonus will not replace diminishing government grant.

Changes in a range of key national and local circumstances over the last two to three years have set a challenging context in the borough for delivering the planning function; these include the introduction of the NPPF; the changing local political landscape and the 5-year housing land supply issue. Recent decisions by the Council's planning committee to overturn officer recommendations on some large scale housing applications have brought to a head, issues concerning trust and confidence. This has impacted upon the ability of officers and councillors to work together, albeit respecting the key differences in their roles and responsibilities. An absolutely key improvement requirement is for councillors and officers to communicate and engage more effectively with each other. This is in both planning policy and development management.

We agree with both senior political leaders and senior managers that the status quo is not an option. The need for a clearer vision of what the Council can achieve through more effective use of its planning policy is obvious. We suggest that a new corporate 'narrative' is agreed that provides a 'golden thread' that will give more meaning to the objective of

creating a 'borough of opportunity' through various plans and strategies that complement the local plan. The imperative of needing a strong planning service to support development and increase locally derived income cannot be underestimated given continuing cuts to local government funding. The Council also needs to build on its key competitive locational advantages and on the use of its land assets.

We know that the Council is progressing its joint local plan with Stoke as quickly as it considers it is able to do. We make a fundamental recommendation about delivering an interim planning policy statement as soon as is practically possible in 2015. To achieve this and work at the fastest possible pace we recommend the Council revisits its resources and capacity to make sure these reflect its priorities.

We suggest changes to the way members of the planning committee can engage as early as possible with applicants involving major applications. We see improved training and development of councillors and officers as a key need. To create some headroom for this and time for better engagement we suggest some things that the service should do less or do differently.

Summary of feedback: investment, growth and the role of planning policy.

The borough benefits from key locational advantages in relation to proximity to strategic road, rail and bus services which have made it particularly attractive to logistics companies. The M6 runs through the borough as does the west coast main line, with the possibility of the proposed HS2 line running through the same corridor (or, alternatively, through Stoke). Keele University is located in the borough including a Science and Business Park where there is evidence of strong links with the NHS and a growing medical technologies cluster. People want to develop and invest in the area and demand is generally good, especially for housing. In addition there are many good examples of recent housing, commercial and recreational development in the borough. However, we did not receive a clear and consistent sense of the importance of jobs and homes to the area and noticed the absence of a strong 'golden thread' linking political ambition to plans, strategies and resources. We also consider that the Council is too 'reactive' when it comes to major and difficult planning decisions and our recommendations, later in the letter, seek to support change in effective and more consistent decision making.

The Council's political and managerial leadership recognise that it needs to capitalise on the advantages of the borough and build a stronger case for continued investment and growth. Some councillors recognised that they had not sufficiently prioritised the importance of growth to support the Council's corporate objective of a 'borough of opportunity' in relation to new homes and jobs. There is general acceptance that clear opportunities exist to put growth and regeneration at the centre of the Council's strategies and spending plans through a new investment and growth strategy. The Council will need to continue to influence and work with the local economic partnership given the importance of strategic economic plans and local growth funding to prioritise available regional funding to the borough.

Central to successful economic development, regeneration and new market and social housing is the role of the planning service and especially planning policy. Indeed the development of the local plan must form a central supporting strategy alongside other key strategies and plans such as the corporate plan, the medium term financial plan, capital

plan and asset management plan. We fully appreciate that councils themselves cannot create economic growth on their own, but they have a pivotal influence in creating the environment for it to flourish by being 'open for business'.

We therefore recommend that the Council develops a coherent strategy for investment and growth which recognises the key role that the planning service performs in relation to guiding development to the right locations. We also consider that the Council would benefit from developing a stronger political narrative around the benefits of growth for existing and future generations. The leaders of all political parties have a clear responsibility to work together in the best long term interests of all the existing and future residents in the borough. This should be at both a district and ward level and can be built round the benefits that economic and housing growth can deliver for people and places (shops, schools and community organisations). It can also include active use of the Council's media and communications resources showcasing the good work that is happening.

The Council is a large land and property owner. We suggest that it maximises this position to its advantage. The promotion of appropriate development will support increasing local funding via council tax, new homes bonus and business rates and potentially help to reduce the deficit on the Council's five year land supply. With the decline of central government grant through the austerity measures, such locally raised funding is vital to sustaining services and improving infrastructure. Additionally the generation of capital receipts from land disposals will provide capital funding to contribute towards the provision of core services and meeting the demands of the Council's capital programme.

Summary of feedback: local plan timetable, interim guidance and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Local Plan timetable

The Council is keenly aware of the fact that it is currently without a strong development plan policy basis for deciding major planning applications, especially housing where there appears to be some evidence of growing demand and where the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply. Its decision in 2013 to suspend work on the site allocations and policies document and instead proceed with the preparation of a new joint local plan with adjoining Stoke-on-Trent means that a clear spatial policy base that is in accordance with the NPPF remains at least some 4 years off. This makes it more difficult for the Council to direct housing to suitable sites and to resist applications for housing in inappropriate locations. Piecemeal and uncoordinated development on smaller sites also reduces the benefits that communities could expect to find in relation to planning gain such as necessary infrastructure and services

We recognise that the Council has identified the local plan as a key project and internal management meetings led by the responsible executive director seek to monitor progress. Agreement in principle exists for a councillor led joint advisory group with Stoke but this is yet to meet.

The Council's four year timetable appears realistic from its current position, building in evidence base surveys on themes such as housing land, employment need and infrastructure and public consultation. Commissioning of some of the major studies such

as the strategic market housing assessment is underway. It will be important for the Council to constantly review progress against milestones and to pause and reflect on the direction of travel of the plan, in particular whether the Council's aspirations remain aligned with Stoke-on-Trent's.

Interim local plan policy statement.

In an attempt to provide greater certainty to the development industry and to local people during the local plan preparation we recommend that the Council develops an interim local plan policy statement. Our recommendation would be to develop such a statement in parallel with the consideration of the key elements of the local plan evidence base, particularly the strategic housing market assessment, strategic housing land availability assessment and employment land review. The more specific the Council is able to be on the locations of growth and restraint, the greater the prospect that the Council will be able to address and maintain a five year housing land supply and thereby guide and control development while the full plan is being developed. Establishing a firm position on the need for and broad scale of any green belt review will also be a key milestone.

During all stages of plan development, councillor involvement will be essential. We suggest that councillor engagement with officers/consultants best takes place in a workshop environment with joint working and joint goals. The use of joint councillor/officer task and finish groups is also a helpful model to build ownership and to appreciate the challenges that the respective roles of officers and councillors have to deal with. The Council will need to determine what form any public consultation on the statement should take. Interim guidance offers clearer potential to make consistent decision making processes and to provide longer term land allocations to support new jobs and houses. Stronger spatial guidance based on objectively assessed needs would also encourage councillors to look beyond the short term local ward issues and inspire vision among their communities for long term quality of life improvements in terms of income, opportunities and homes.

We recognise some of the limitations of an interim position statement approach but consider that it is better to seek to guide development than to be driven by a laissez-faire developer/market led approach. Taking advice from the Planning Inspectorate would be beneficial in developing such an approach.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The Council has decided to suspend work on CIL mainly as a result of the decision not to proceed with the site allocations and policies local plan although it should be noted that there are impending changes to the rules on pooled section 106 contributions that would be pertinent. CIL provides the opportunity for substantial funds from development to provide improved local infrastructure to mitigate development. We recommend that the Council re-examine this decision by firstly investigating whether the benefits of introducing CIL are sufficiently high and, if so, to formally review the decision not to proceed. The Council is likely to want to take its own legal advice if it considers that there are clear benefits to proceeding.

Summary of Feedback - Planning Committee Arrangements

The planning committee displays a number of strengths and we consider that the Council should build on these to improve councillor engagement and decision making further. The planning committee decides all major applications for development in the borough and normally meets every three weeks. Some planning policy items are brought to the committee for its views that are then passed on to the council's cabinet or council meeting for decision. The operation of the planning committee is governed by a clear code of conduct and relevant protocols. The fifteen councillors sitting on the committee are supported in their decision making by appropriate planning, legal and democratic services advice.

Public engagement in decision making is high with large numbers often attending the planning committee to hear the debate and applicants and objectors taking advantage of public speaking opportunities. We attended the planning committee during the challenge. The venue has its limitations such as those in the public gallery not being able to see those who have registered to speak. Also given the distance away from the screens and size of the projected image, it is difficult to clearly see the quality of images presented via the overhead projector. The planning committee's decisions appear largely sound. Judged in relation to the number of appeals allowed by the Planning Inspectorate, the track record of the Council is very good at fewer than 3 per cent in 2013/4. The number of site visits undertaken by the committee have been historically low although they are rising in 2014/5. Delegation rates have declined slightly and for 2013-14 the Council achieved a rate of 87.6 per cent.

Despite these achievements the vast majority of people we spoke expressed concern about the operation of the planning committee in relation to a number of areas. This concern among councillors, across the political spectrum, was focused on the lack of an up to date local plan, lack of a five year housing land supply and the clarity and appropriateness of officer advice. Councillors and the public were also concerned as to whether officers were achieving the appropriate balance in their recommendations given their interpretation of the government's localism agenda. We were told that these tensions had, at least on a couple of occasions, spilled over into intemperate language, a lack of respect and political point scoring at planning committee. Additionally we gathered evidence indicating that there had been a recent deterioration in the culture and behaviour of councillors leading to a lack of effective joint working between officers and councillors. We were advised that growing tensions contributed to the recent overturns of officer recommendations on large housing applications.

We fully recognise the absolute right of councillors to reject officer advice but this also has to be balanced with their clear responsibility to make consistently sound and defensible planning decisions. In situations where councillors wish to overturn officer's recommendations, many councils have the procedure where the application cannot be decided at that meeting but that a decision is deferred to a further meeting and accompanied by an amended report. This allows time for sound planning reasons to be framed. Conversely where councillors wish to allow development, this allows time for any necessary conditions to be framed. We noted that at there is a procedure in place at Newcastle which is to defer a decision should the committee be proposing to make a decision contrary to technical advice to allow for further advice from the technical advisor to be obtained; but perhaps this procedure could be applied more widely. The peer team are not dogmatic on this point as alternative ways to achieve a more strongly managed

process exist and our recommendation later in the letter concerning pre planning committee briefings is a further opportunity to do this.

It is clear to the Council that improvement is required to ensure that cultures, behaviours and values match the goal of a 'co-operative council' in relation to the operation of the planning service. We concur entirely. If the local area is to maximise the benefit from its planning service it is imperative that there is effective joint working between councillors and officers. This involves rebuilding trust and confidence while respecting the differing roles and responsibilities that each perform. We suggest the following improvements that will offer the potential for improved engagement and trust leading to more consistent and effective decision making at planning committee. This will necessitate a review of codes, protocols and possibly the council's constitution.

We recognise that following the recent local elections the composition of the planning committee has a majority of new members and a new chair. It will be important for the chair and vice chair to provide strong leadership through effective joint working. The tone set at a leadership level will be important to support high quality decision making and re-establish trust and confidence. Our later recommendations on councillor and officer training are also designed to help increase capacity in the planning service.

We recommend that the Council establish an informal pre planning briefing for members of the planning committee. This should take place before the Council publishes officer reports on planning applications allowing all members of the committee to engage with planning and other technical officers in a timely manner. Such a pre planning briefing has the clear potential to encourage councillors and officers to discuss issues and likely recommendations in a more informal setting. This will aid councillor's understanding prior to the formal committee debate. It will also aid officers in understanding what issues they may need to provide more information on. Alongside this recommendation we would encourage the Council to review the operation of its strategic planning group which currently acts as a forum for senior officers and the leaders of political parties (along with the relevant cabinet portfolio holder and the chair and vice chair of the planning committee) to discuss planning issues but does not seem to link effectively with the relevant decision making committee.

The officer reports we read, and the reports we heard discussed at the July planning committee, provided sound technical planning advice based on government guidelines. However, some councillors told us that they could not understand or follow the planning officer's report and arguments, especially where housing development was recommended for approval in the countryside. We found the planning officer reports to be overly long and dense and seemingly written for largely a professional audience. We therefore recommend that reports are written in plain English with a clear goal of reaching out to a non-professional audience. A more extensive use of executive summaries may assist. This will help support councillor engagement and aid consistent and strong decision making.

At the time of the peer challenge visit we were made aware of two live appeals against the refusal of planning permission for major developments at Keele and Baldwin's Gate. In both cases decisions were made contrary to the officer's recommendations. Evidence was provided that showed the significant financial impact of preparing and representing the Council's case in these two instances. It would be inappropriate to speculate on the

outcome of these appeals and the ultimate financial consequences for the Council (in view of their live status). Nevertheless the Council should consider whether the control measures in place are sufficient to mitigate the risk of such situations arising in the future.

The planning committee occasionally considers major policy issues with its views then forwarded to the Council's cabinet or council meeting that determines these. These policy matters are normally considered at the start of the planning committee and at least on one occasion, the tone of the remainder of the meeting has been unhelpfully affected by policy based discussions. It would be helpful for the Council to review whether the current procedure is the most beneficial and effective.

Summary of Feedback - Councillor and Officer Training

Councillors and officers already benefit from training. Training for councillors before they can sit on the planning committee is mandatory, although not consistently enforced. The Council already recognises that it needs to do more to increase its capacity to deliver and monitor bespoke training to help councillors and officers deliver on the challenges facing planning policy and development management. Some of our recommendations, for example lengthening the gap between planning committees and increasing delegation are designed to create some 'headroom' for training and development.

It is vital that councillors and officers benefit from tailored training suitable for the particular challenges of planning decision making in the borough. We recommend that as much of the training is done jointly as possible to assist in both councillors and officers to clearly understand their respective roles and responsibilities. In order to support the Council in terms of a clearer focus on councillor and officer training and development and in order to prioritise scarce resources and time we recommend a focus on the following areas:

- comprehensive mandatory arrangements in relation to the roles, responsibilities and expected values and behaviours of planning committee;
- the corporate responsibilities of members;
- officer understanding of challenges and opportunities working in a political environment;
- support for new chair/vice chair of planning committee with specific training/mentoring as required;
- NPPF and local plan policy;
- Improved understanding on links between planning and finance, e.g. new homes bonus, council tax, NNDR and the medium term financial plan;
- report writing including use of plain english;
- material planning considerations; and
- delegation and increasing confidence of junior officers to allow more capacity to deliver.

Summary of feedback – Development Management Processes

The service has previously benefited from a 'lean systems' review in 2009 and has good quality information and system processes in areas including:

- information held and displayed electronically;
- validation and technical support;
- development team approach bringing internal consultees such as housing, environmental health and landscaping together to discuss pre applications and planning applications; and
- supplementary planning guidance.

The service has not fundamentally reviewed its processes since 2009 however it performs well on a number of indicators in relation to government guidelines on speed of decision making and overturned appeals. Despite meeting the historically-set government targets for deciding applications on major, minor and other applications there has been a dip in performance in recent years. The Council recognises that the main reason that some decisions on major applications do not meet targets is due to the need for section 106 legal agreements to be signed before the Council can issue a planning consent. For example, in 2012/3 of the 18 major applications decided, 8 involved section 106 obligations and only 2 of these were issued in the 13 week period. In 2013/4 of the 16 applications decided, 4 involved section 106 obligations and all of these were issued out of time

Major planning applications have the most potential to support the Council's need for additional houses, jobs, regeneration and supporting infrastructure. The Council should particularly focus its improvement efforts on working with the development sector to set out clear protocols and standards to improve delivery timetables and therefore increase investment certainty. In relation to section 106 requirements, we recommend that in line with many other planning services, the system should be front loaded. For example, we would expect viability assessments and Heads of Terms on section 106 to be required at validation of a major application. This requires the Council to 'take control' and raise its expectations of the development industry. We would encourage the Council to examine the procedures of councils that perform well in this area and take the learning to apply to the borough. Given the possibility of initial resistance from the development industry it will be important for councillors and officers to hold the line on any changes in order to see this important change take root and become part of the culture and expectation.

The planning committee operates on a three weekly cycle. While this short cycle can help support the speed of decision making – it places considerable pressure on planning staff, consultees, democratic services and councillors. We suggest that the Council review the frequency of the planning committee to examine the opportunities that moving to a four week cycle would bring. For example we think that allowing more time between committees would allow more time for councillor engagement, report writing and management/training.

Rates of delegated decisions have dropped below 90 per cent. This results in more applications being taken at the planning committee. During the on-site phase of the peer challenge we attended the planning committee which spent a long time discussing reserved matters applications. To ensure that the capacity of the committee is focused on strategic decision making we recommend that the Council reviews its codes and protocols to seek to increase rates of delegation to match the best in England.

We met with planning agents and developers who were generally happy with the planning service in terms of accessibility, validation and quality of decision making. The planning

service has recently started charging for pre application advice. While agents/developers did not object to this change they criticised the fact that on occasions officer advice was changed, sometimes at the last minute and just before the release of a decision. Their perception was that some pre applications were sometimes allocated to staff who lacked experience and confidence and that at least in some instances more senior managers often overrode junior officer's advice on development proposals. It will be important for the service to review this situation in more depth to gain a better understanding of why this is happening. The preferred outcome should be that advice offered in writing by the Council's officers should be honoured unless it is clearly incorrect. It is very important that pre application is consistent and provides confidence and certainty to applicants and developers. Agents also questioned whether the Council should be more proportionate in its use of external design advice to advise on design quality and limit its use to only those applications where it is appropriate. For example, it is questionable why such advice is being sought as a local mandatory requirement on outline applications where design matters are reserved.

The service could do more to better understand its costs and learn from bench marking against similar councils or best in class. For example, benchmarking from 2012/3 showed indirect costs to be far higher than similar councils. Also the service had a very high level (approximately 50 per cent) of invalid major applications, approaching 50 per cent, and far higher than similar councils. Invalid applications cost the service money in terms of administration and time and causes delay in decision making. We did not find a strong focus on monitoring and reviewing unit costs in the activities of the service. Given the financial imperatives in all councils the Council can do more to understand and manage its costs and income.

Summary of feedback – Resources

Resources as in all planning services are tight and the Council has effectively had to cut the service's budget in recent years resulting in a loss of the staff establishment. The planning service retains key skills in conservation and heritage and can call on tree and landscaping advice from another service area in the Council.

The Council has recently increased capacity in planning policy and we consider that, in light of the importance that needs to be attached to this function, this was an absolute necessity. In order to develop an interim planning position statement and to meet the 2018 local plan adoption date, we consider that the Council could go further and ensure that its resources match its priorities in this key policy area.

Dealing with breaching of planning control through planning enforcement is a very important part of the planning function. Resources in this area have diminished and the backlog of unresolved cases has grown to over 200 with some of these reaching back over 10 years. These backlogs effectively clog up the system and lead to inefficiencies and frustration in tackling public concerns. Not dealing with complaints for such a long time also runs the risk that unauthorised development becomes immune from enforcement action. The Council runs a corporate enforcement service but we sensed that its full capacity was not used due to concerns about experience and expertise. We would recommend that the Council consider both training and time limited additional capacity be brought to bear to bring down the backlog to a more manageable level. It would also be

good practice to publicise successes in resolving or preventing breaches of planning control to highlight the importance that the Council places on unauthorised development. This has been found in other Council areas to be a helpful deterrent.

In order to provide additional capacity and resources to meet its planning service priorities we recommend that the Council examine:

- partnering opportunities building on existing relationships with public sector providers in the area;
- short term funding opportunities – pump priming or invest to save – to bring dedicated resources in key areas including policy planning and enforcement; and
- use of planning policy agreements and developer contributions that could increase capacity in development management.

The Council's service plan has a range of challenging targets that are mainly focused on speed but which include pre applications and enforcement. The service failed to reach these stretch targets in 6 out of 7 areas in 2013/4. One target involving customer satisfaction had not been met for three years. We think it is important to reassess these stretch local targets to see if they remain priorities for councillors and the public. Again this is part of our concern to create some 'space' for better communication and engagement, management and training.

Summary of feedback – Communication

Access to the planning service is predominantly by phone and the Council operates a front line customer service approach. Access on foot is also available at the main civic centre and at its other main customer centre at Kidsgrove. The Council encourages a self-serve approach and in the planning service significant information is located on the Council's web site allowing key documents to be viewed and downloaded and planning applications made via the nationwide planning portal.

Councillors told us they were frustrated by the lack of good access on the phone to planning officers with officers on many occasions not ringing back. We have commented earlier on the need for better officer/councillor engagement and prioritising councillor calls should be an early quick win.

In a similar vein some developers and agents would value the use of a 'duty officer' to enable easier access to planning advice. This would not need to conflict or replace pre application advice. This service would also be of benefit to councillors and parish councillors.

We met with a large number of parish councillors some of whom also sat on local area partnerships. They expressed support for the aims and direction of the planning service but considered that communication and engagement could be improved. It was clear to us that parishes were uncertain of the NPPF's requirements and its relationship to the Council's plan-making and development management functions. Developing stronger capacity with parish councils offers clear potential to help sustain village life through improved understanding and openness in the use of the planning process. We recommend that the Council re-examines its engagement with parishes in relation to developing a joint understanding of planning policy and the role it will play in delivering the

Council's wider objectives for the borough as a whole. The development of the interim planning position statement offers an opportunity to do this, subject to suitable resources being available.

Improving the opportunities for even stronger partnership working with parishes, other service delivery partners and consultees will support the borough in meeting its challenging housing growth target. The development of new homes and other facilities in suitable locations across the borough will help provide some affordable housing and can assist in sustaining or enhancing local services.

Parish councillors would also be supportive of some of the changes we suggest earlier in our letter in relation to easier access to officers and making planning officer reports easier to understand.

Appendix 1- Summary of Recommendations

1. Set a clear political narrative for the long term future of the borough stressing the need and importance of homes, jobs, infrastructure and locally generated income/grant. Develop a 'golden thread' linking this to key corporate policy documents including the local plan.
2. Develop a coherent strategy for investment and growth which recognises the key role that planning performs. Examine opportunities for the release or reuse of land assets with partners to stimulate growth and economic development.
3. Develop an interim planning policy statement as part of local plan preparation process.
4. Re-examine resource allocations, especially in planning policy and enforcement to ensure that these match priorities and needs. Switch or increase resources to match priorities including pump priming, partnering and planning performance agreements (PPAs).
5. Develop systematic links between financial planning and local plan development / monitoring to help focus on costs and income in relation to non-national domestic rate, council tax and new homes bonus.
6. Establish an informal pre planning briefing for members of the planning committee including a review of strategic planning group.
7. Set up effective mandatory councillor training programme that is bespoke to meeting local needs. Develop wider training programme for councillors and officers to be delivered jointly where ever possible focusing on improving understanding of respective roles and the need for effective engagement.
8. Review the guidance and protocols in relation to section 106 to seek to front load the system and reach decisions more quickly on major applications.
9. Re – examine the scheme of delegation to allow the planning committee to focus on major applications.
10. Review the decision to suspend work on community infrastructure levy.
11. Undertake systematic review of the effectiveness of the service's methods of communication and access focussing on councillors, parish councils and service users.

Appendix 2 –see attached slides presented at final feedback

Planning Advisory Service - recommended support

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) offers a wealth of information, tools and activities. Information is available at:

<http://www.pas.gov.uk>

PAS will engage with the Council to discuss further relevant support activities. We have listed some specific areas of information and support relevant to the recommendations from the peer challenge.

Peer support

PAS can support the use of peers' time to give advice or support to the authority. This will be dependent on personal availability and the specific issues required. This would need to be discussed and agreed with PAS.

Performance Framework for Quality Planning Services

The framework is a collection of tools and techniques that can help you to understand how your Development Management service is performing and to deliver service improvement.

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/events-and-support2/-/journal_content/56/332612/5730199/ARTICLE

Councillor Support

Planning Committee training and support

Probity in Planning Guide

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/councillors-page/-/journal_content/56/332612/5638784/ARTICLE

Committee Decision Making briefings and support

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/events/-/journal_content/56/332612/6206809/ARTICLE

Plan making councillor training

Leadership Essentials: Supporting the delivery of local plans

22nd & 23rd October or 15th & 16th November, Warwick Conference Centre

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/councillors/-/journal_content/56/332612/6368753/ARTICLE

Strategic leadership of planning

Leadership Essentials: Planning Delivering Economic Growth

16th & 17th October or 29th & 30th November, Warwick Conference Centre

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/councillors-page/-/journal_content/56/332612/15013/ARTICLE

General

Councillor briefings

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/councillors-page/-/journal_content/56/332612/15306/ARTICLE

Development Management support

Pre-application advice

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/pre-application>

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/pre-application/-/journal_content/56/332612/6297229/ARTICLE

Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) advice

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/pre-application/-/journal_content/56/332612/6297229/ARTICLE

Policy support

Interim policy advice & support

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/local-planning>

OAN workshop

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/events/-/journal_content/56/332612/6382842/ARTICLE

Policy Production Community Engagement support

http://www.pas.gov.uk/plan-making-advice-on-community-engagement?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_pvyZG4XRoMN7&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1

Community Infrastructure Levy

<http://www.pas.gov.uk/3-community-infrastructure-levy-cil>

Planning and finance:

http://www.pas.gov.uk/web/pas-test-site/events-and-support3/-/journal_content/56/332612/5462849/ARTICLE



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