



STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 06 March 2023

Subject	Design Skills Audit
Report of	Councillor David Ritchie Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
Supporting Officer	Chris King Design Champion and Specialist Service Manager Chris.King@east Suffolk.gov.uk 01394 444611

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

This report presents the Design Skills Audit for the East Suffolk Council Planning Service. The purpose of the report is to outline the process associated with undertaking the Audit and to present the outputs and the opportunities identified.

Options:

This report is for information only.

Recommendation/s:

That the content of the report be noted.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

Not applicable.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

The Audit relates closely to Local Plan policies which aim to achieve good design.

Environmental:

No impact.

Equalities and Diversity:

This report is for information only, so no equality impact assessment is required.

Financial:

The Design Skills Audit has been undertaken within existing budgets for the team.

Human Resources:

The Audit report identifies opportunities related to training.

ICT:

No impact.

Legal:

No impact.

Risk:

The Audit proposes to identify and address gaps in design skills, potentially addressing risks in this regard.

External Consultees:	None
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Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: (Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>How does this proposal support the priorities selected?</p> <p>The Design Skills Audit analyses the current skills within the Planning service to support the delivery of good design in new development and place-shaping, which is fundamental to building the right environment for East Suffolk (P01) and to maximising and growing the unique selling points of East Suffolk (P03).</p> <p>The Audit has been based upon a survey of staff, supporting the priority of effective use of data (P17).</p>			

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	The creation of the Design Champion and Specialist Services Manager role last year has provided an opportunity to strengthen the importance given to high quality design not only in decision making on planning applications but also in creating future planning policies and guidance and in the Council's wider place shaping projects. This is important, given the increased emphasis nationally on achieving well-designed places and also acknowledging the importance locally placed on good design.

2 Current position	
2.1	The Design Champion role has enabled focus to be given to considering the design skills across the Planning service. However, ensuring the delivery of high quality design cannot lie solely within this role and that of other design specialists in the service, but should be embedded across the service.
2.2	It was therefore identified that an Audit, which could identify strengths, gaps and opportunities, should form the starting point and inform the identification of ways in which design skills can be expanded, developed and best applied.

3 How to address current situation	
3.1	The audit was created to gain a clear and measurable understanding of both the perception of design within the Planning service and also to understand the level of knowledge on the topic. The Audit was undertaken in October 2022 and focused on officers in the Planning service. The results are a data driven set of information which provides measurable outcomes allowing this to be re-evaluated and compared in years to come.
3.2	The results of the Design Skills Audit has provided a clear insight into where strengths lie in the teams, including within the existing guidance and policies, as well as areas for improvement and enhancement in knowledge and skills. This has provided the Design Champion role with a clear focus in addressing these specific areas, ensuring resource, training and awareness can be focused.
3.3	The Audit identifies a series of opportunities including the provision of an internal resource hub, a role for 'design advocates', considering opportunities for a dedicated design officer, a design training programme and undertaking a private sector design audit. Opportunities can potentially be delivered Council wide and not just focused to the Planning service. They include some 'quick wins' in delivering changes which will have instant impact, while others will require further review in resourcing and capacity. Following this review, any future opportunities and related implications will be reported separately as appropriate
3.4	This is believed to be the first Design Skills Audit undertaken by a Local Planning Authority in the UK, where this transparency and openness to learn will hopefully be seen as a precedent in driving the agenda of 'well designed places'.
3.5	The Design Skills Audit will be published on the Council's website in order that both the approach and the outcomes can be communicated and promoted.

4	Reason/s for recommendation
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4.1	This report is for information.
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Appendices

Appendices:

Appendix A	East Suffolk Design Skills Audit Report
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Background reference papers:

None
