



## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 07 June 2021

<b>Subject</b>	Annual Review of The Planning Referral Panel Procedure and Processes
<b>Report of</b>	Councillor David Ritchie Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management
<b>Supporting Officer</b>	Liz Beighton Planning Manager (Development Management) 01394 444778 <a href="mailto:Liz.beighton@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Liz.beighton@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>

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

## Purpose and high-level overview

**Purpose of Report:**

This report provides summary of the applications presented to the Referral Panel in respect of the volume of traffic, level of Ward Member comment and statistics of the route of determination of all applications presented.

**Options:**

Not applicable.

**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:**

Not applicable.

**Environmental:**

Not applicable.

**Equalities and Diversity:**

Not applicable.

**Financial:**

Not applicable.

**Human Resources:**

Not applicable.

**ICT:**

Not applicable.

**Legal:**

Not applicable.

**Risk:**

Not applicable.

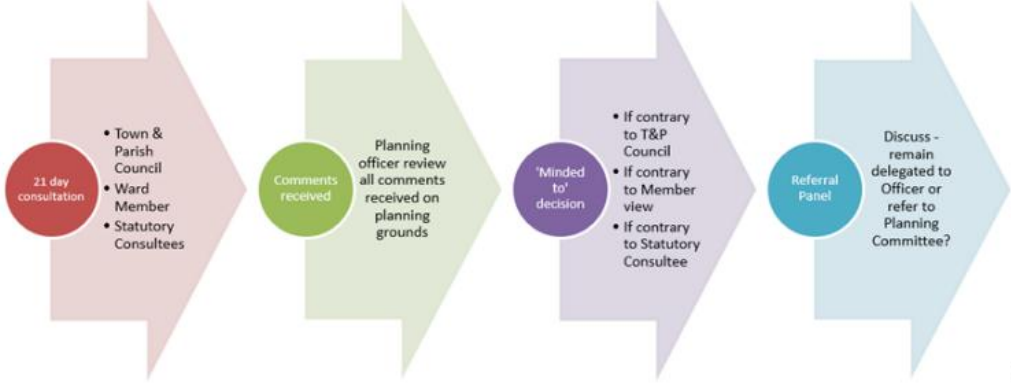
<b>External Consultees:</b>	None
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## Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> which are supported by this proposal: (Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
<b>T01</b>	<b>Growing our Economy</b>		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>T02</b>	<b>Enabling our Communities</b>		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>T03</b>	<b>Maintaining Financial Sustainability</b>		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 checked="" 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"/>
<b>T04</b>	<b>Delivering Digital Transformation</b>		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>T05</b>	<b>Caring for our Environment</b>		
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 type="checkbox"/>
<b>XXX</b>	<b>Governance</b>		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>How does this proposal support the priorities selected?</b>			
To provide information on the performance of the enforcement section			

## Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	This report provides Members of the Strategic Planning Committee with an analysis of the referral panel decisions in the year from April 2020 to April 2021.
1.2	This report should be read alongside the reports on planning performance and appeals decision which are being presented to the Strategic Planning Committee.
2 Current position	
2.1	In April 2019, East Suffolk Council brought into force a new scheme of delegation aligning the former authorities of Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council. This scheme sets out the means by which applications will be determined and seeks to clarify which applications will be determined by the Head of Planning and Coastal Management and which will be referred to the Planning Committee for consideration.
2.2	The scheme of delegation was established following extensive dialogue with Planning Committee members and the Portfolio holder for planning and seeks to secure an appropriate balance between efficiency of the service and securing public scrutiny in the planning service.
2.3	<p>The scheme of delegation is laid out in the Council's constitution and reads as follows:</p> <p>All planning application decisions including decisions concerning Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) decisions or considerations requiring Habitat Regulation Impact Assessments (HRA) are delegated to Head of Planning and Coastal Management UNLESS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Planning Application is, in the opinion of the Head of Planning and Coastal Management and/or the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Committee, of significant public interest; would have a significant impact on the environment; or should otherwise be referred to Members due to its significance in some other respect; or</li> <li>2. The applicant or landowner is East Suffolk Council;</li> <li>3. The applicant, or agent, is an East Suffolk Councillor or an East Suffolk Council employee, or the applicant, or agent, is a close relative of an East Suffolk Councillor or East Suffolk Council employee; or</li> <li>4. The referral process is triggered</li> </ol> <p>In which case, if item 4 is invoked, the Planning Application will be referred to the Referral Panel – the panel will discuss with the Head of Planning and Coastal Management (based on planning grounds) to either refer the application to Planning Committee for decision or remain delegated to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management.</p>
2.4	The table below shows, in diagrammatic form, how the referral process is operated. In essence, any application where the view of either planning officer is

	<p>contrary to that of either the Town or Parish Council, statutory party or Ward Member, where they relate to material planning considerations.</p>
<p>2.5</p>	<p>For the process to be instigated those comments need to be received during the prescribed consultation period, unless a formal extension of time has been granted in writing.</p> 
<p>2.6</p>	<p>The Planning Service has undertaken training sessions both Ward Members and representatives from Town and Parish Councils to help the understanding of the process and how to form consultation responses in the best way to aid the Referral Panel in determining the pertinent issues surrounding the application and whether those instigate sufficient weight to justify a round table discussion at Planning Committee. This is in addition to communicating such information by written notes.</p>
<p>2.7</p>	<p>The Planning Service is committed to continuing working with our Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils. Further Town and Parish training has been held on the 4 and 25 March 2021. Further Ward Member training is scheduled for the 28 May 2021.</p>
<p>2.8</p>	<p><b>THE REFERRAL PANEL</b></p> <p>The referral panels meet every Tuesday and are made up of both the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the North and South Planning Committees. To aid a decision on the route of determination to be made by the Panel, Members are furnished with both a written report and a visual presentation of the application by officers. This information is also made available to interested parties on the Councils website alongside the relevant application details once a decision has been made. The outcome of the referral panel is communicated to the relevant parties as soon as possible after the meeting by the relevant case officer</p>
<p>2.9</p>	<p>In June 2020 the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning took a report to the Strategic Planning Committee providing with a recommendation that no changes were made to the scheme. The Committee agreed with the recommendation but requested a further report be presented to the June 2021 Committee with relevant background information on how the Panel is performing.</p>

2.10	From the 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, East Suffolk Council has determined a total of 2425 planning applications, 134 more than the same period on the preceding year. The detail surrounding the performance of such is laid out in the planning performance report tabled at the Strategic Planning Committee.
2.11	From the 1 April 2020 until the 31 March 2021 a total of 230 planning applications have presented to the Referral Panel. For reference in the preceding year 295 applications were presented.
2.12	Of the 230 reports presented, the Referral Panel determined that 188 could be delegated to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management for determination and 42 applications were referred to the Planning Committee. Four applications remain live. The rate of delegation for these applications sits at 81%. For comparison, the delegation rate in the preceding year was 85%. A slightly greater percentage of applications are therefore being referred to the Planning Committee.
2.13	Only 18 of the referral panel applications had comments from Ward Members, a percentage of 0.08%. This is a slight increase on last years figure of 0.02%
2.14	<b>CONCLUSION</b>  The Council operates at a high delegation rate which enables the Planning Committee's to look at those applications that warrant wider debate in the public arena, hear the views of interested parties and allow public scrutiny of those important and significant applications. It is important that Planning Committees are not overburdened with volume of applications, and that appropriate time is allowed for full and proper debate on those applications what warrant such.
2.15	It is also important to note, sitting alongside this process, the associated reports on appeals performance and speed of determination remain extremely high and above the national requirements, offering confidence in the quality of decisions being made by East Suffolk Council.
2.16	Officers are committed to working closely with our Town and Parish Council's and will provide further guidance and assistance to enable enhanced dialogue in the planning application process.
2.17	It is also important to note that there is limited communication from Ward Members on applications, which sits at just 18 applications of a total of 230 that were presented to the Referral Panel. Contrary views of Ward Members is one of the key triggers of the Referral Process and Officers would welcome enhanced dialogue with Ward Members on planning applications.

### 3 How to address current situation

3.1	Yearly monitoring and reporting to Strategic Planning Committee
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<b>4</b>	<b>Reason/s for recommendation</b>
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4.1	That the contents of the report are noted
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## Appendices

<b>Appendices:</b>
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None.
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<b>Background reference papers:</b>
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None.
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