

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

23 FEBRUARY 2023

**REPORT OF PLACE
SELECT COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member: Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing – Cllr Nigel Cooke

**SCRUTINY REVIEW OF PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT) AND ADOPTION OF
OPEN SPACE**

SUMMARY

The Place Select Committee has completed a review of Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S) / DECISION(S)

This topic was included on the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2021-2022 (though did not commence until the start of the current 2022-2023 municipal year). The review is now complete, and the recommendations have been endorsed by the Place Select Committee for submission to Cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That options for introducing a charge for pre-application advice for major developments, but not for households/individuals, are investigated.
2. That the current response time of 15 working days for pre-application enquiries is re-evaluated to determine if it should be extended.
3. That current planning enforcement powers are reviewed and the opportunity of employing an enforcement officer is explored.
4. That *Maps@Stockton* is enhanced to provide information on those responsible for the maintenance of individual open spaces across the borough.
5. That Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) provide guidance to town or parish councils, where approached, and continue to liaise with developers on adoption of open space.
6. That planning conditions for maintenance of open space be reviewed and options for SBC to obtain a copy of the maintenance agreement for each new residential development is investigated.

DETAIL

1. The attached report outlines the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of Planning (Development Management) and Adoption of Open Space. The aim of the review was to examine the work of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's (SBC) Planning Service, namely pre-application advice, the effectiveness of the Council's planning support service (resources / performance) and planning enforcement. In addition, the review focussed on the issues surrounding the maintenance and adoption of open space land on new residential developments.
2. The Committee has taken evidence from Council Officers, a planning agent, and housing developers.
3. The Committee visited five residential development sites in November 2022 as part of the open space aspect of the review.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

4. This review has provided the Committee with the opportunity to highlight the need for a greater degree of transparency and accountability regarding the maintenance of open spaces and any changes to charges passed on to residents for this service. It has also been recognised that the current pre-application process should be re-evaluated and options for charging for pre-application advice should be explored.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

5. There are no corporate parenting implications identified at this stage.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. There are no direct financial implications for the Council arising from the recommendations.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. There are no legal implications identified at this stage.

RISK ASSESSMENT

8. The review is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

9. Not applicable.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

10. None.

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