

Report to:

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Relevant Officer:

Susan Parker, Head of Development Management

Date of Meeting:

16 November 2021

SCHEME OF DELEGATION: PLANNING APPLICATIONS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To seek Committee approval to amend the existing Scheme of Delegation to enable senior officers to sign-off planning applications.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 That the Committee approves amendments to the existing Scheme of Delegation to enable officers in the following roles to sign-off planning applications:

Head of Planning Quality and Control
Head of Development Management
Principal Planner
Senior Planner

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To improve resilience within the team and to enable it to better cope with fluctuations in workload and officers taking leave.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 To keep the scheme of delegation as it is at present.

5.0 Council Priority:

5.1 This report is relevant to both Council priorities:

- Priority 1 - The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool
- Priority 2 – Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

6.0 Background Information

- 6.1 At present the Scheme of Delegation only permits the Head of Planning Quality and Control, the Head of Development Manager and the Principal Planner within Development Management to sign-off planning applications.
- 6.2 Whilst the Head of Planning Quality and Control is authorised to determine applications, in practice this is not part of the role or function of this post.
- 6.3 The significant increase in application numbers, including a notable increase in applications of strategic significance, has resulted in increased workload for the Head of Development Management and the Principal Planner both in terms of applications dealt with and sign-off to be managed. This is intensified when periods of extended annual leave (such as a full week or more) are taken.
- 6.4 This increased pressure results in a risk of statutory deadlines being missed which could compromise the Council's performance against statutory targets.
- 6.5 Extending the Scheme of Delegation to Senior Planners would enable more flexible working arrangements and greater resilience within the team. Senior planners would typically sign-off smaller scale applications but would be able to sign-off more significant proposals as and when required to meet business needs. Having application sign-off as a standard element of senior workload would make the senior officers more comfortable and familiar with the process. This would again provide greater flexibility and would be likely to improve the quality and speed of decision-making.
- 6.6 The proposed changes would not affect the Scheme of Delegation in terms of the types of application brought to Committee or the circumstances in which applications would be determined by Committee. The intention is merely to extend the Scheme of Delegation to Senior Planners to improve and expand their skill set and build resilience within the team.
- 6.7 The Head of Development Management would remain responsible for the allocation of work, including sign-off responsibilities, and could ensure that applications are signed-off by the most appropriate officer.
- 6.8 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices

None.

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 Poor performance puts the Council at risk of designation and the potential for loss of fee income.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 Performance is influenced by staffing numbers, sickness and leave.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 Performance is influenced by staffing numbers, sickness and leave. Under-resourcing of the service and poor utilisation of available resources could lead to inability to respond to peaks in workload

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 None.

13.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

13.1 Not applicable.

14.0 Background Papers

14.1 None.