

Appendix 3: Delivery of PAS Recommendations March 2025 PUBLIC

Improvement plan issue			
Improvement action	Progress	Status	RAG
PAS Review 2025			
Recommendation 1(a): Review the way that members are involved in planning proposals at pre-application stage. This should involve a review of best practice followed by councils who engage members in pre-application discussions, using the PAS pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements (PAS) guidance.	A protocol has been prepared and will be published to provide the opportunity for prospective applicants and applicants to seek engagement with relevant ward members and the Portfolio Holder in taking pre-application advice. Alongside this, the Council's pre-application guidance for Officers has been updated. The new approach to member / developer engagement has been reflected in the Council's charging schedule (existing hourly rates apply) DM staff have been reminded of the provisions of the SCI.	In Progress	
Recommendation 1(b) Review the way that members are involved in the build-up to planning committee. Also, a review of the way councils allow pre-planning committee developer presentations, using the PAS Modernising Planning Committees National Survey 2025 to identify councils who operate this practice.	Following the establishment of the new Planning Committee in May/June, regular pre-committee briefings are now being held with committee members to assist the smooth running of the committee and the readiness of both Councillors and Officers.	Completed	
Recommendation 2a – Site visits procedures Improve awareness of the existing site visits procedure both for members and officers so that it is used consistently and effectively. The existing procedure should form part of a member training programme, along with a discussion on any further changes officers and members feel may be appropriate to ensure the efficient running of the planning committee.	A protocol (part of the pre-application protocol above) has been published which includes: • Formal arrangement at committee for visit before meeting • Ensuring there is a regular day for site visits (ideally 2 days before meeting after agenda is published) and guidance on substitution • Guidance that being a member of committee involves availability for site visits	Completed	

Recommendation 2b - Member training programme To help efficient running of the planning committee.	Enhanced induction training was provided for Planning Committee Members following the 2026 local elections. A twelve-month on-going training programme is in place and has already covered topics such as application types and processes, evidential decision making and engagement during the application stages. A members' forum has been established as an internal opportunity to share best practice, performance, legislative updates and upcoming plans. A best practice committee training session has also been delivered and recorded for officers.	Completed	
Recommendation 3 – Managing late information received for planning committee	A protocol for the submission of late materials and a clear deadline of 4pm the day before committee for the publication of written updates has been put in place.	Completed	
Recommendation 4 – Member engagement with appeals Increase member engagement with the appeals process, building upon the Informal Planning Forum meetings. Discussing appeals during an early stage of a planning committee meeting (when appropriate) Improving training for members on appeal Actively encouraging members to be involved in supporting the council position at planning appeal hearings and public inquiries	Appeals training was provided via the Internal Members Forum in April 2026 and is a standing agenda item at these meetings. Appeals are now earlier on the agenda for planning committee.	Completed	

Recommendation 5 – Member engagement with planning enforcement Improve member awareness of planning enforcement. Have regular item on the planning committee agenda to report planning enforcement cases opened and closed, alongside reviews of the local enforcement plan. Member training on planning enforcement matters.	Planning enforcement is now a standing item at the informal members forum and training was provided to members in February 2026. Have a standing item on planning enforcement at planning committee. Liaise with legal services whether a part 1 or part 2 (confidential) items. A report on Planning Enforcement was presented to the March Planning Committee is scheduled on a quarterly basis going forward.	Completed	
Recommendation 6 - Review of planning committee officer reports Review the content and structure of the officer reports that are used at planning committee. Reflect on the good practice currently taking place and areas for improvement. Use the PAS best practice in report writing guidance to assist with this review.	Head of DM and DM Team Leaders has reviewed best practice with a view to achieving consistency to set expectation standards for sign-off. Training has been provided to officers and templates have been refreshed. Updates to best practice forms part of the standing agenda item at the internal Member's Forum on a bi-monthly basis and DM team meetings on a monthly basis. Opportunities to introduce technology assisted solutions are being fed into the requirements capture of the Planning Service Improvement Programme (Transformation). DEF developer sessions are being organised to review the existing system and whether additional functionality can be utilised.	Completed	
Recommendation 7 – Review the existing member training programme Review the training available to members to address areas for improvement Include training on site visits Provide practical training on lessons learnt from decisions	As above. A rolling training programme is in place for Members. An enhanced, led by an external legal adviser, induction has been provided to Members following May 2026 elections.	Completed	
Recommendation 8 - Re-introduce the developers' forum	The first Developers Forum was held on 12th August 2026 and was well attended. This is supplementary to the well-established Area Oversight structure (Kidlington, Bicester and Banbury) which is	Completed	

Better engage the local development community by re-introducing the developers' forum. Consider how members can be involved in the developer forum Learn from best practice from across the country on how a developer forum might work.	attended by colleagues from the Development Management service. Officers are also invited to a countywide developers' forum and participate in a countywide s106 working group.		
Recommendation 9 - Review the Legal representation at the planning committee meetings Review the current arrangements whereby a representative of Oxfordshire County Council attends the planning committee meetings (as a representative of CDC). Consider the areas of support that officers and members best need to make sound decisions at planning committee, particularly prior to the formal meeting.	CDC Head of Legal Services now attends committee and agenda setting meetings to provide legal representation.	Completed	
Advice: Consider size of the Planning Committee CDC currently has 18 members who sit on the planning committee. Government direction of travel is to limit planning committees to 11 members. PAS considers that a planning committee between 9 and 12 members is best practice.	Changes to the size and frequency of committee meetings have been implemented post May 2026 elections. Officer and member engagement has taken place.	Completed	
Advice: Officer advice to members Whether officers could be more assertive could be an area of discussion between the chair and lead officer to help to reduce the length of the meetings and the tendency for some members to stray off the key issues of the application.	Discussions have taken place with the Chair of Planning Committee, and it has also been discussed at the internal Members' Forum. The provision of officer advice has also been discussed with Executive Members to help identify areas for continuous improvements and the smooth running of the committee. Officer training has also been delivered (see above)	Completed	

Advice: Member Questions and Debate Recommend that any further training considers the importance of looking for evidence to support issues raised by objectors.	Evidential decision making and handing objections training has been delivered to members.	Completed	
Advice: Performance Enough time and focus is given to performance management of the planning team and that all tasks are recorded with specific timings agreed and acted upon before each performance review. Planning performance agreements should be more closely monitored in terms of time and outcomes and the performance of partners in contributing to the process. To have a regular item at planning committee meetings to report appeal decisions as good practice. Have this at the front of the agenda (see above), particularly if there are lessons to be learnt from an appeal that is upheld or costs have been awarded against the council.	A report on performance is now regularly presented to the Planning Committee. Monthly reporting to the Portfolio Holder has been updated to include performance data. See above on planning appeals. A performance dashboard has been created and subject to on-going review. Planning is one of the priority areas in the Council's Transformation Programme, including a focus on digitalisation. Options for future planning 'back office' systems are being reviewed to support cross service improvement and workflows, the customer front door', process efficiency and performance. The national indicator for the quality of decision making (the % of decisions on major developments overturned at appeal) remains an area of focus, particularly considering the relatively high number of applications for major development the Council receives. As such, two additional posts have been approved to increase capacity within the team. In addition, a Planning Performance Manager post has been created and is in the process of recruitment.	Completed	
Advice: Length of meetings and number of items The PAS modernising planning committees national survey 2025 found that 78% of planning committees considered 2-4 items per meeting and the majority averaged between 1 and 3 hours in length.	The length of meetings has been changed with a 9pm cut off now in place including mandatory breaks. The frequency of meetings has also been changed to three weekly.	Completed	

Officer Review			
Consideration of the PAS report - Ensuring the report is socialised	The PAS report has been discussed with within the service, with the Corporate Leadership Team, with the Members of the Council's Executive, with the Portfolio Holder, with Committee Members (internal Members Forum), and with the Legal and Democratic Services team. The report is publicly available at https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18229/cherwell-district-council-planning-committee-review.pdf	Completed	
Culture - Ensuring evidence-based decision making	The importance of evidence-based decision making and the committee not being overly influenced by local objections has been discussed at briefings with Portfolio Holder and Committee Chair and through dialogue at the internal Members Forum. Message reinforcement, in the interest of ensuring decision making is as robust as possible, takes place through the Head of Development Management at committee meetings. Following the May 2026 local elections, two training sessions were arranged to support Members of the new Planning Committee to constructively review decision-making experience and performance on an on-going basis.	Completed	
Running of Committee - Ensuring a quality of response to Members' questions at committee and supporting the efficiency of the meeting	The pre-committee briefings for Members are used to invite questions and a deadline of 2 working days before the committee meeting for submission has been put in place. It is entirely without prejudice to Members' lines of enquiry at the committee meeting. Officers had invited questions previously on an item-by-item basis for complex cases.	Completed	
Time of day for the meeting - Ensuring an optimal time for Members	Reviewed - The current start time of 4pm is still considered to be optimal.	No change	
Drafting reasons for refusal - Ensuring more efficiency in capturing Members' reasons for refusal	Without prejudice to their recommendations, officers are being asked to consider the potential reasons that might arise from the issues, and these considerations are now presented in the officer reports.	Completed	