

Housing and Planning Scrutiny Select Committee

02 December 2025

Part 1 - Public

Matters for Cabinet - Non-key Decision



Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Taylor, Cabinet Member for Planning
Responsible Officer	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health;
Report Author	Eleanor Hoyle, Director of Planning, Housing & Environmental Health

Planning Advisory Service - Review of the Council's Planning Service

1 Summary and Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report presents the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) review report to Members for approval along with an action plan for delivering on the recommendations of the review.

2 Corporate Strategy Priority Area

- 2.1 Efficient services for all our residents, maintaining an effective council.
- 2.2 By having an external service review carried out, the Planning Service has the opportunity to build on existing good practice and to develop more efficient processes and more effective working practices.

3 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- 3.1 NOTE the contents of the Planning Advisory Service Review Report including the recommendations for action and RECOMMEND to Cabinet that they endorse this report.
- 3.2 ENDORSE the proposed action plan for delivering on the PAS Review recommendations and RECOMMEND to Cabinet that this is adopted.
- 3.3 NOTE the proposed timescales in the action plan and AGREE that progress will be reported back to the Housing & Planning Scrutiny Select Committee in May 2026.

4 Introduction and Background

- 4.1 The undertaking of a PAS Review is an identified project in the Council's 25/26 Annual Service Delivery Plan.
- 4.2 The scope of the review was presented to Members of this committee on 20 May 2025 for endorsement.
- 4.3 The Review took place in two stages – the first was a review of operational Development Management matters, which included a desktop review of performance information and a series of workshop sessions with Development Management Officers in July 2025. A specific report on this element of the review has been provided and is appended to this report as Annex 1.
- 4.4 The second stage was the full PAS Review, which took place between Monday 15 and Thursday 18 September 2025. The PAS Review team comprised of:
 - **Councillor David Brackenbury**, North Northamptonshire Council
 - **Mark Cassidy**, Chief Officer – Planning and Climate Change, Lancaster City Council
 - **Christine Lyons**, Executive Director Growth and Partnerships, Basildon Borough Council
 - **Rachel Murtagh**, Principal Consultant, PAS
 - **Peter Ford**, Peer Review Manager and Principal Consultant, PAS
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- 4.5 The PAS team ran a debrief session at the end of their time at the Council to give initial feedback. The draft report was received by officers in late October and reviewed for factual issues before a final draft was issued in November. It is appended to this report as Annex 2.

5 PAS Review Action Plan

- 5.1 The PAS Review report makes a number of recommendations which have been formulated into an action plan with a proposed set of actions, timescales and ownership. This is appended to the report at Annex 3 for Members' consideration.

6 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 6.1 The costs of the Review were met through a specific budget allocation drawn from the Transformation Reserve.
- 6.2 Any items in the action plan that require funding, either on a one off or ongoing basis, will be subject to the Council's usual business case and financial management processes.

7 Risk Assessment

- 7.1 The issues highlighted in the PAS review report that relate to appeals percentages have been reviewed and added to the Planning Service Risk Register and to the Strategic Risk Register.

8 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Legislative changes may be required to implement proposed changes to Planning Committee structures. The timescales for this are therefore outside of the Council's control

9 Implementation

- 9.1 As per the proposed action plan, the intention is to monitor the progress of the action plan through regular meetings between senior Members and officers. Officers will undertake operational monitoring through existing structures including team meetings and 121s.
- 9.2 The first formal review point is proposed for the meeting of this committee in May 2026.

10 Cross Cutting Issues

10.1 Climate Change and Biodiversity

- 10.1.1 Significant impact on reducing emissions in support of carbon neutral by 2030 or enhancing the natural environment.

- 10.1.2 Climate change advice has not been sought in the preparation of the options and recommendations in this report.

10.2 Equalities and Diversity

- 10.2.3 Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people.

10.3 Others If Relevant

- Business Continuity / Resilience

Background Papers	None
Annexes	Annex 1 - PAS Review Annex 2 - PAS Review (Development Management operational) Annex 3 - PAS Review Action Plan