

REPORT TO:

Planning Committee November 2023

LEAD OFFICER:

Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development

Compliance Report

Executive Summary

1. On 1 November there were 521 open cases in South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City. There are currently 269 identifiable open cases in South Cambridgeshire.
2. Since 1 January 2023 the compliance team have received a total of 696 compliance referrals across both South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City.
3. Details of all compliance investigations are sent electronically to members on a weekly basis identifying opened and closed cases in their respective areas along with case reference numbers, location, case officer and nature of problem reported.
4. Statistical data is contained in Appendices 1 and 2 attached to this report.
5. Data relates to the end of October statistical information

Updates to Service Delivery

The Planning Compliance Team is part of the Development Management service of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service.

Rebecca Smith
Delivery Manager (Development Management and Compliance)

Chris Braybrooke
Principal Planning Compliance Manager

Alistair Funge
Senior Planning Compliance Officer

Nick Smith

Senior Planning Compliance Officer

Tony Wallis

Senior Planning Compliance Officer

George Mynehan

Senior Planning Compliance Officer

Robert Bird

Planning Compliance Officer

Updates on significant cases

Should Members wish for specific updates on cases they have involvement in, or have been made aware of then please contact the Principal Planning Compliance Manager who will be able to update you or advise you of the case officer and request that the officer contacts you.

A proposal going forward is, once Members have alerted the Principal Planning Compliance Manager to a case they wish to seek an update on, for that update to also be provided monthly or quarterly (whichever is most appropriate) to the Committee (outside of the general committee update report) so all Members are kept abreast of significant cases.

Reply to Committee Questions raised in the October Planning Committee on 11 October 2023

Members enquired if officers had any suggestions on how the compliance service could be improved, especially given the challenges arising from delays from the Planning Inspectorate.

The Committee will be aware new processes we have put in place to provide better service to internal and external parties. These improvements include the acknowledgement of compliance complaints when they are submitted to the Council, if an email address is provided by the complainant. These acknowledgements provide details of case officer, contact email address and the reference number for the investigation, this provides a direct point of contact for the officer dealing with individual cases.

A recent change has seen the Technical Support Team taking over the responsibility for creating new compliance case files. This change ensures that new cases are picked up quicker when a complaint is made; each case file is created with all required information completed; and an acknowledgement sent without delay (if an email address is provided) when the initial complaint is received.

The compliance team are in the process of setting targets for performance management of officers against the Planning Compliance policy adopted earlier this year. This month will see reporting on “undertaking of site visits” broken down by the priority of each enforcement case, as set out in the policy to see if the targets set in the policy are being met, those priorities being A, B and C, these are set out below

- A - High priority cases are for work which is irreversible or irreplaceable and these will be immediately investigated within 5 working days of receipt— examples include damage or loss of Listed Buildings or protected trees.
- B - Medium priority cases are for activities have or can cause harm, such as adverse effects on conservation areas or breaches of conditions. Our aim is to instigate the investigation and assess whether a breach of planning control within 10 working days of the site visit.
- C - Low priority cases are for a development which may cause some harm but could be made acceptable by way of implementing conditions or simple correction action. Our aim is to instigate the investigation and assess whether a breach of planning control within 20 working days of the site visit.

These targets are the first part of a wider set of performance measures aimed at improving the way the Council investigates compliance complaints and the management of officer output. More targets will be set in due course to monitor the further planned improvements in the overall service.

The Management team will be monitoring performance against targets to identify key issues that arise and be able act upon any performance related concerns that arise in a timely manner.

These changes to performance management are an incremental process to ensure that each stage is implemented correctly, officers understand the changes, and that those changes work as intended before moving on to the next change in the process. This also ensures that staff within the team are not overwhelmed and does not create other problems within the investigation process that takes place.

The Planning Compliance Policy will be reviewed early next year to ensure it takes in to account any changes that are made to working practices in compliance, and that the Policy is capable of delivering what it sets to achieve.

Further updates on performance management will be provided when they are available.

In answers to members questions these changes which are being implemented within the team should help to improve the compliance service for complainants, residents and also the officers within the team.

Statistical Data

It is proposed in future reports to bring statistical data in the following format:

- Total number of open cases on hand
- Number of open case older than 6 months
- Number of cases newer than 6 months
- Break down of total number of cases by officer and council
- Number of closures by month / quarter

Background Papers

Planning Enforcement Register.

Statistical Analysis of Uniform Planning Enforcement Software Program.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Compliance Cases Received and Closed.

Appendix 2: Notices Served.

Report Author:

Chris Braybrooke – Principal Planning Compliance Manager Date: 01/11/2023