

Report To: Scrutiny and Overview Committee
Lead Officer: Planning and New Communities Director

July 2016

Development Management Performance and Progress in Service Improvements

Purpose

1. To update the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on performance and service improvement within the Development Management Service.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder notes progress in performance and also the service improvement measures for the Development Management Service.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To enable Members to monitor performance of the Service

Background

5. Performance was reported previously on 7th April 2016, this included a summary of performance figures for the last quarter in 2015 and also a 6 month improvement plan from February- July 2016. At this meeting Members expressed concern about the high workload of officers and asked that performance is reported again in July 2016, including numbers on applications per officer and staff vacancies.

Performance Highlights

6. The service is measured against national targets, which focus on the speed of processing applications. The dashboard in Appendix 1 shows performance in 2015/16 and to date in 2016/17.
7. Performance in 2015/16 overall fell short of national requirements with a year end outturn of 59% major (60% national target), 46% small major (60% target), 56% minor (65% target), 65% Other (80%).
8. 2015/6 was a year of change in management, organisational structure and ICT as well as an increasing complexity of applications due lack of 5 year land supply for housing. All when combined with staff shortages and retention contributed to reduced performance, particularly from August 2015 to February 2016, with the exception of December 2016.

9. Recent figures from the last three months indicate that the Service is now benefitting from some of the changes put in place, including those outlined in the last report to Scrutiny and Overview in April 2016 In May 2016 the team achieved and in some instances exceeded national targets Major 67% (target 60%), small major 100% (target 65%), Minor 65 % (target 65%) and Other 81% (65%)

Improvement Planning

PAS Quality Framework

10. The Service is improving however it is important that this is sustained, we are progressing discussions with the Government's Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to develop further insights on how we can achieve this including benchmarking with other authorities.
11. We have signed up to be a part of the PAS quality framework, which will provide us with a series of data about our planning applications and from people who use our service.
12. It differs from measuring purely the speed of application and aims to also "focus Councils on the things that matter to customers" and therefore includes online customer surveys.
13. We have provided PAS with the relevant information set and are waiting on confirmation when we will receive the first quarterly report. This will provide detail on applicant numbers and fee profiles, approval rates, how well resources are matched to work volumes and efficiency of our processes.
14. A customer survey will ask customers how helpful we are, how well we manage time, how well we use information and clarity of our decisions.

Improvement Measures

15. The service improvement measures we have and are continuing to put in place focus on getting the right balance between customer satisfaction for our residents and businesses, quality decisions and speed of processing
16. Appendix 2, outlines the measures and timeframes. We have actively engaged our teams and have used feedback from our customers to date including lessons learned from complaints, agents and parish forums to help inform and deliver them.
17. We recognise that monitoring success of measures we are putting place is essential both to enable us to promote achievements of the team and improve the reputation of the service and also review were further changes may needed.

Team and staffing

18. Members have raised concerns about the workload for the Development Management Service.
19. Development Management establishment has 15 case officer posts varying from project officers to Principals but not including lead officers or other management. There are also 7 technical support officers. Last year the service received 1967 applications and 573 pre-applications.
20. The traditional benchmark for planning cases per officer is 150 per annum, based on our application case loads, this equates to 131 cases per officers. If however we include our pre-applications the number of overall cases per officer is 169.
21. PAS is now basing its resource benchmark on headcount including case officers and technical officers but not management. From an OPDM study the figure was less than 100. Based on a head account of 22, we are dealing with 89 applications and 115 with pre-applications.
22. As the benchmarks above are based on planning applications our resources are currently within the acceptable levels. However factoring in pre-applications it would suggest that there is limited resiliency in the service to deal with reductions in resources at peak holiday time and should staff leave the organisation.
23. Due to limited resiliency the team will also be more greatly affected by changes which could affect their capacity to do their role, for example new legislation and high court decisions which affect how we assess applications. Other issues which can significantly impact on performance of the team, causing delays include invalid applications and poor quality applications.
24. Lead officers review reports on officer's caseloads on a weekly basis and when allocating applications to ensure we manage our resources effectively, including any unnecessary pressure on the team. Workload is also reviewed at monthly one to one meetings.
25. Should volumes of applications increase it would be important to put additional resources in place to sustain performance. Similarly this may also be required depending on the amount we engage the team in helping develop and implement future service improvement measures.
26. The team has recently recruited to one of the vacant principal roles and has an agency member of staff in place covering the other vacant principal role, which we did not successfully manage to recruit to. We have recently appointed to the remaining two vacant TSO posts, which were previously being covered by temporary staff.

Processing of backlog applications

27. In April we reported in December 2015 there were 977 backlog applications. Delays in validation as the TSO upskilled has resulted in a new backlog building up (See Appendix 1). The out of time applications increased significantly in March over the Easter period which echoes the conclusions drawn above about the risk that there is not sufficient resiliency in the team to deal with issues such as peak holiday periods.
28. We have created a temporary backlog team of an additional 4 case officers who have been successful in reducing the overall backlog of applications to 595. All out of time applications were transferred to this team by start of June 2016. We originally set a target for the backlog to be cleared by end of July but due to the new backlog building this is not likely to be September/ October 2016.
29. Processing out of time applications will also affect performance figures, although we are negotiating extensions of time where appropriate.

Implications

30. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

31. The costs are contained within budgeted resources for this financial year.

Legal

32. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Staffing

33. All improvements to process and working arrangements are being made with involvement of staff and training will be included as an integral part of implementation.

Risk Management

34. Whilst improvement has improvement in the last quarter there is still room for further improvement, the measured outlined above to be implemented in the next 6 months are essential to enable the team to build on what have recently been achieved.

Equality and Diversity

35. The recruitment campaign and working arrangements allow for full flexibility to meet specific requirements of current staff and candidates.

Climate Change

36. No specific implications.

Effect on Strategic Aims

37. The recommendation seek to achieve the Council's three A's

Background Papers – Appendix 1: Speed of determining applications

Appendix 2: Service Improvements

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Appendix 1

Application speed of determining applications against National Targets

National Targets	% in time
Large Major	60%
Small Major	60%
Minor	65%
Other	80%

5% and over from meeting target
Within 5% of target
Hit Target

2015/16 Performance: percentage of applications in Time

	% in time												
	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	Total
Lg Major	33	100	50	100	0	n/a	100	0	100	n/a	50	33	59%
Small Major	71	80	50	71	0	33	25	0	50	20	0	100	46%
Minor	47	61	55	57	55	55	53	50	80	49	45	88	56%
Other	73	83	74	81	60	57	61	42	73	50	57	83	65%

2016/2017 Performance: percentage of applications in Time

	% in time		
	Apr	May	Total
Lg Major	67	67	67
Small Major	n/a	100	100
Minor	59	65	62
Other	75	81	77

Out of Time Backlog Application Figures: January – June 2016

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Total
Backlog c/forward	977	892	725	590	486	430	430
New backlog	+ 25	+ 41	+82	+17	0		165
							595

Appendix 2: Service Improvements

Implemented Improvements

Measure	Outcome	Timeframe	Improvement Type
Making consultation responses available on line	Transparency	May 2016	Speed Customer
Consultation response guidance for public	Higher quality consultation Reduce need for redaction Reduce risk of complaint	June 2016	Speed Customer Quality
Calls to application at key stages in application process	To keep customer up to date Reduce risk of complaint	May 2016	Customer
Process to allow Decision in week 5 if no issues	Speedy decisions on straightforward applications	May 2016	Quality
TSO Validation training and processes	Speedy decisions Quality submissions	June 2016	Speed Quality Customer
Agreed approach on lack of 5 year land support	To develop staff Sound planning decisions	April & June 2016	Quality
Timetable for committee preparation	To manage impact of last minute To ensure we are prepared for committee	April 2016	Quality Customer
Early briefings for committee with officers presenting cases	Empower and develop the team To ensure we are prepared for committee	December 2015	Quality
New performance management process	Empower and develop the team Improve and manage performance	December 2015	Quality Customer Speed
Case conference	To develop the team To enable the team to share experiences and discuss cases To coach staff in making high quality and decisive decisions	December 2015	Quality Speed
Significant case list with target dates	To forward manage performance To develop a shared understanding of all significant cases To grow partnership working with Policy	March 2016	Quality Speed
Weekly application lists with target dates for each officer	To forward manage work To manage resources effectively	January 2016	Speed
Backlog team with weekly monitoring and target setting	To close down out of time applications	January 2016	Speed Customer
Complaint analysis	To draw lessons learned from complaints	March 2016	Customer

Revised scheme of delegation	To reduce the number of applications going to committee and provide a more efficient service for customers	April 2016	Speed Customer
Team customer charter	To development commitment from staff to achieve good customer service	June 2016	Customer
Duty householder service	To ensure customers are provided with a more responsive service	May 2016	Customer Quality
Traffic light issues log for significant pre-apps	To provide clear guidance for applicants on what issues need to be resolved prior to an application being submitted	March 2016	Customer Quality Speed
Pre-application protocol	To engage members, the parishes and the public in the early application stages	April 2016	Quality Customer
Members training	To develop Members and support them in making good decisions	March 2016	Quality Customer
ICT workflow to support new application process	To support new application process	May 2016	Speed

Improvements In progress

Measure	Outcome	Timeframe	Improvement Type
Appeal process and mapping of roles and responsibilities & staff training	Transparency More effective management of appeal process	June 2016	Speed Customer Quality
Review Appeal contract	More effective management of appeal process More effective use of resources	July 2016	
PAS Quality Framework	Higher quality consultation Reduce need for redaction Reduce risk of complaint	June 2016	Speed Customer Quality
Committee roles and responsibilities and PAS peer review	To keep customer up to date Reduce risk of complaint	September 2016	Customer
Mapping of service ICT requirements	Speedy decisions on straightforward applications	September 2016	Quality
Recording of duty service calls to inform scripts & training for contact centre	To improve customer experience ensuring they have access to information they need	August 2016	Customer
Staff development programme	To improve the confidence of staff	August 2016	Quality Speed Customer
Reduce volume of paper information being prepared	To make most efficient use of time and ensure parishes are getting	July 2016	Speed Customer

for parishes	information they need in the best way Will enable staff to spend more time on validation		
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