



Report To: Planning Portfolio Holder
Lead Officer: Director of Planning & New Communities

3 February 2015

Planning, Building Control, Enforcement and Appeals Performance Report – Quarter 3 2014/15

Purpose

1. To inform the Planning Portfolio Holder (PPFH) of arrangements for the monitoring of performance of planning and building control decisions.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that PPFH notes this report as a reasonable reflection of current performance of planning and building control decisions.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. Performance continues to be maintained and, in some areas, improved.

Background

5. Performance statistics have previously been reported on a quarterly basis.

Considerations

6. The number of planning decisions continues to exceed the number of new planning applications on a month by month basis, which indicates increasing effectiveness. This was at a time, during Q3 when a conscious management focus was given to new pre-application procedures, so productivity through the quarter was improved.
7. The number of on hand applications continues, however, at a high level. All outstanding cases awaiting determination by way of a Section 106 agreement are currently being scrutinised to identify the extent to which the number of on hand cases is a consequence of delays in reaching agreement. This has recently been exacerbated by the uncertainty arising from the way in which the Minister introduced changes to the thresholds of development requiring planning obligations in November 2014. The consequence upon performance is a reduced percentage figure for the processing in time of Minor applications.
8. The number of on hand enforcement cases remained high during the quarter, but should reduce, following the filling of a vacant planning enforcement post.
9. Building control performance remains at an acceptable level, taking into account the seasonal variation in general building activity.

Planning Improvement Project Phase 1 Implementation

10. The focus over the last three months has been on service and embedding new pre-application processes to provide a more tailored and responsive service. The details of this are set out in a separate report in this agenda.
11. Regular meetings are now being held with the Contact Centre to monitor and review the number and type of planning inquiries being received. The forthcoming work to improve the planning webpages on the Council's web site will help customers, as they will be able to find relevant information more easily for themselves. The contact centre team should also benefit from a reduction in the number of calls it currently receives.
12. Workshops have also been held with Housing and Health and Environmental Health Services with the aim of improving and speeding up the internal consultation process. New guidelines and templates will be in place by the end of this month.

Planning Implementation Project Phase 2

13. The recommendations for this phase are now being converted into an implementation plan.
14. More proactive management has been introduced with each officer having regular case reviews with their Team Leader, who provides professional oversight and sign-off of pre-application advice for schemes (except householders) to ensure consistency and certainty for applicants. In addition, to help 'smooth out' workflows in the teams, applications and pre-application cases are generally now being allocated on a daily basis.
15. The Interim Development Control Manager has started to review the process maps for all stages of the planning application with a view to creating a practical Procedures Manual which will provide clarity and consistency to our approaches.
16. The Informal Consultation for the Planning and New Communities Support Review has been launched. This will consider the level of support and technical expertise that is needed, and how this is best organised to support the Service. To inform this review, all staff are currently completing timesheets, which will provide useful information about their range and extent of duties and activities.
17. A project plan for the next build of the APAS system including document management is currently being scoped with a view to implementation over the next 3-6 months.

Options

18. A new format for the presentation of the attached statistics is under consideration.

Implications

19. There are no significant implications.

Background Papers

Planning, Enforcement, Appeals and Building Control Statistics – Q3 2014/15

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