

Planning performance report

Planning Policy Committee Thursday 21 September 2023

Report of: Interim DM Manager

Purpose: For information

Publication status: Open

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

This report includes information about the key planning performance indicators for quarter 1 2023/24 (1st April–30th June 2023). The Council is required to submit this data quarterly to the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). It also contains information about the committee risk register and current planning applications.

This report supports the Council's priority of:

Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need

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Recommendation to Committee:

To review and note the Quarter 1 2023-2024 performance indicators and risks for the Planning Policy Committee.

Reason for recommendation:

To support the committee in monitoring and managing performance.

Introduction and background

1. Performance reports are presented to each policy committee at the end of each quarter. This report is divided into two sections: the first is a summary of the position with regard to the statistics collected by DLUHC, and the second contains a broader performance update on the work of the planning service.

Statistics collected by DLUHC

2. The following performance information has been submitted to DLUHC. With reference to the indicator descriptions, an "agreed extension of time" relates to when the applicant has given their consent to the Local Planning Authority exceeding the Government's statutory target date for the determination of their application.
3. The performance statistics only cover applications for planning permission but exclude a whole range of other application types including Prior approvals, Lawful Development Certificates, Pre-application advice, discharge of conditions and tree applications. They are the official statistics that the government monitors and on which our performance is judged.

Indicator	National Target	Last Quarter	Actual Q1
Percentage of decisions on major applications made within 13 weeks or within agreed extension of time	60%	83%	100%
Percentage of decisions on minor applications made within 8 weeks or within agreed extension of time	70%	90%	85%
Percentage of decisions on other applications made within 8 weeks or within agreed extension of time	70%	93%	94%

4. During quarter 1 there were 290 decisions (compared to 254 in the previous quarter), made on the following categories of applications:

Type of application	Total	Granted	Refused
Major applications	6	5	1
Minor applications	74	42	32
Other applications (incl. 180 householder)	210	188	22
Total decisions	290	235	55

5. All 6 major applications detailed in the table above were decided within the agreed time.

6. Of the 290 decisions detailed above 267 were made within the statutory deadlines or with an agreed Extension of time.
7. For the 74 minor applications, the percentage decided within the agreed extension of time was 85% (63).
8. Of the 267 decisions, which still met the statutory deadlines with an agreed extension of time, around 72% (191) were householder applications.
9. These results are in line with DLUHC's required performance levels for planning applications and demonstrate the continued improved performance of the planning service.
10. Councils which decide fewer than 60% of major applications within the statutory deadline of 13 weeks or 70% of minor and other applications within the 8 week deadline may be liable to government intervention.

Planning service performance – reducing the backlog (including non-DLUHC statistics)

11. Work continued during Q1 to further reduce the backlog of planning applications.
12. A backlog occurs when the number of planning applications being determined is less than the number of new applications received. If this occurs over a succession of quarters then the backlog position gradually worsens. The total number of regular applications for planning permission received in Tandridge in the year 2022-2023 was 907.
13. The worst quarter for decision-making was Q3 in 2022 when 217 planning applications were received but only 107 decisions were made.
14. The improvements seen in the previous quarter have continued in Q1 when 290 planning applications were determined.
15. Work on reducing the backlog continues and further progress is being made though Q2. We are applying for funds from the government's newly announced Planning Skills Delivery Fund which will assist further to this end.
16. The following table shows the comparison between the figures reported to the 22 June meeting and those prevailing at the time of writing (30 August 2023) there were:

Measure	June 2023	30 August 2023
Undetermined planning applications	375	354
Undetermined Lawful Development Certificates	81	54
Undetermined Prior Notifications	13	14
Other outstanding submissions *	180	176
Cases waiting to be validated	148	41
Invalid applications	67	35
Cases more than one year old	32	40
Cases past their target date with no EOT	196 (52%)	186 (53%)

* including pre-application advice cases, notifications, consultations, discharge of conditions and non-material amendments.

17. The validation timescales have substantially reduced since last year and that position is being maintained.
18. In terms of outstanding cases, of the 354 undetermined planning applications, 40 applications are more than one year old and 186 (i.e. 53%) were past their target determination date with no agreed extension of time. In most cases an extension of time will be requested and granted before a decision is made.
19. Officers aim to deal with applications in chronological order and within the statutory time limit but this is not always possible due to the reasons set out below:-
 - Further information requested from the applicant.
 - Amendments being made to the application.
 - Specialist advice being sought.
 - Waiting for responses from key consultees
 - The need to consult again once revised information is received.

20. On Enforcement, the caseload is as follows:

- Enforcement cases opened in Q1 – 94
- Enforcement cases closed in Q1 – 93
- Total live enforcement cases at beginning of quarter – 202
- Total live enforcement cases at end of quarter – 203

21. On Appeals, the performance has been as follows:

- Planning appeals - 23 decision issued. (11 allowed & 12 dismissed)
- Enforcement appeals - 2 decisions issued. (2 allowed & 0 dismissed)
- New Planning appeals received in Q1 – 26
- New Enforcement appeals received Q1 – 3
- Live Planning appeals at beginning of Q1 – 53 in total, comprising 3 Inquiries, 2 Hearings & 48 Written Reps
- Live Enforcement appeals at beginning of Q1 – 14 in total, comprising 5 Inquiries, 0 Hearings & 9 Written Reps
- Live Planning appeals at end of Q1 – 41 in total, comprising 3 Inquiries, 1 Hearings & 37 Written Reps
- Live Enforcement appeals at end of Q1 – 14 in total, comprising 4 Inquiries, 0 Hearings & 10 Written Reps.

Risk register

22. There is one red risk on the committee register, which is P1 Local Plan is found unsound by the inspector. The Council cannot mitigate against this risk, as the Local Plan will be found unsound, despite the Council's efforts to put forward a modified plan for consideration by the inspector. This risk must be tolerated. Please see Appendix A which has details of all risks with actions taken and being taken to mitigate against them.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

There are no direct financial implications from this report as it is presented for noting. Performance against specific KPIs may have a financial impact. Financial implications will be drawn out where relevant in the quarterly financial update report.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and performance reporting must be fit for purpose, monitored and managed to ensure effective Council governance. KPIs enable evidence based quantitative management reporting and where necessary allow for remedial actions and decisions to be taken.

Equality

This is a factual report with no implications for equalities.

Climate change

There are no significant environmental / sustainability implications associated with this report.

Appendices

Appendix A: Planning Risk Register

Background papers

None

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