

Quarter 1: Planning performance report

Planning Policy Committee Thursday 19 September 2024

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 (1 April – 30 June 2024). The Council is required to submit this data quarterly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It also contains information about 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:

That the Quarter 1 2024 - 2025 performance indicators for the Planning Policy Committee be noted.

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 covers quarter 1 period of 2024/25 and is divided into two sections: the first is a summary of the position with regard to the statistics collected by MHCLG, and the second contains a broader performance update on the work of the Planning Service.

Statistics collected by MHCLG

2. The following performance information has been submitted to MHCLG for Q1. 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 ('LPA') exceeding the Government's statutory target date for the determination of their application. The Government measures

LPA's on their speed of decision and quality of decision. The speed of decision is based on 'major applications' and 'non-major applications' which is generally a combination of 'minors' and 'other applications'. The quality of decision is based on the number of applications allowed at appeal for 'major applications' and 'non major applications' against the total number of decisions determined by the LPA.

- 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. The table below shows the speed of decisions but broken down more specifically to 'minor applications' and 'other applications' as well as 'major applications'. As can be seen in the table, the planning service has continually exceeded the national target in all 4 quarters of 2023/24 with the exception of Q3 where the target was met.

Performance Indicator: Percentage of decisions on major applications made within 13 weeks or within agreed extension of time.

Q2 2023-2024	Q3 2023-2024	Q4 2023-2024	Q1 2024-2025	Target
July-September 2023	October - December 2023	January - March 2024	April - June 2024	National Target 60%
90%	60%	71%	100%	Met

Comments:

Performance Indicator: Percentage of decisions on minor applications made within 8 weeks or within agreed extension of time.

Q2 2023-2024	Q3 2023-2024	Q4 2023-2024	Q1 2024-2025	Target
July-September 2023	October - December 2023	January - March 2024	April - June 2024	National Target 70%
85%	86%	87%	89%	Met

Comments:

Performance Indicator: Percentage of decisions on other applications made with 8 weeks or within agreed extension time.

Q2 2023-2024	Q3 2023-2024	Q4 2023-2024	Q1 2024-2025	Target
July-September 2023	October - December 2023	January - March 2024	April - June 2024	National Target 70%
90%	88%	91%	96%	Met

Comments:

4. During quarter 1 there were 199 decisions, made on the following categories of applications:

Type of application	Total	Granted	Refused
Major applications	10	4	6
Minor applications	65	45	20
Other applications (incl. 177 householder)	124	106	18
Total decisions	199	155	44

5. Of the 10 major applications detailed in the table above, all (100%) were decided within the agreed time or with an agreed Extension of time.
6. Of the 65 minor applications detailed in the table above, 58 (89%) were decided within the agreed time or with an agreed Extension of time.
7. Of the 124 other applications detailed in the table above, 119 (96%) were decided within the agreed time or with an agreed Extension of time.
8. Cumulatively of the 199 decisions issued in quarter 1 as detailed above, 187 (94%) were made within the statutory deadlines or with an agreed Extension of time.
9. These results are in line with MHCLG'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.
11. With regards to the quality of decision as measured by MHCLG, they are measured on 'major' and 'non-major' applications. These are measured on a 2 year (8 quarter) rolling basis with a 9 month lag to take into account appeals determined. The latest statistics on the quality of decision from MHCLG shows 1.6% of total applications determined for 'non major' schemes allowed at appeal from July 2021 to June 2023. For 'major' applications, this shows that 8.3% of the total of major applications determined were overturned at appeal in the period of July 2021 to June 2023.
12. Councils which have more than 10% of both their major applications and non major applications overturned at appeal may be liable to government intervention. On both matrices, the Council is below the threshold.

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

13. Work continued during Q1 to further reduce the backlog of planning applications.
14. 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 2023-2024 was 879.
15. Work on reducing the backlog continues and further progress is being made. The reduction in the backlog of applications can be shown in the table below where it is measured as “cases past their target with no EOT”. This shows there has been a reduction in the backlog of 16 applications from 24 May 2024 to 22 August 2024. At the start of the year 49% of cases were past their target date and this has reduced to 23%.
16. The following table shows the comparison between the figures reported to the 22 June 2023 meeting and those prevailing at the time of writing there were:

Measure	22 June 2023	30 August 2023	5 January 2024	24 May 2024	22 August 2024
Undetermined planning applications	375	354	287	191	170
Undetermined Lawful Development Certificates	81	54	59	36	38
Undetermined Prior Notifications	13	14	9	12	2
Other outstanding submissions *	180	176	158	82	82
Cases waiting to be validated	148	41	62	72	42
Invalid applications	67	35	32	57	87
Cases past their target date with no EOT	196 (52%)	186 (53%)	142 (49%)	55 (28%)	39 (23%)

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

17.The validation timescales have substantially reduced since last year however there has been an increase since the last quarter as a result of the introduction of a new validation checklist, staff being on leave, staff turnover with a team leader leaving and an Officer seconded to another team for a further month.

18.In terms of outstanding cases, of the 170 undetermined planning applications, 39 (i.e. 23%) 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 Appeals, the performance has been as follows:

- Planning appeals – 18 decision issued of which 4 were allowed & 14 were dismissed.
- Enforcement appeals – There were no enforcement appeal decisions made during this quarter.
- New planning appeals received during the quarter - 20
- New enforcement appeals received during the quarter - 1
- Live planning appeals at beginning of quarter – 62 in total, comprising 2 Inquiries, 14 Householders & 46 Written Representations.
- Live enforcement appeals at beginning of quarter – 14 in total, comprising 2 Inquiries, 1 Hearing & 11 Written Representations.
- Live planning appeals at end of quarter – 48 in total, comprising 1 Inquiry, 9 Householders & 38 Written Representations.
- Live enforcement appeals at end of quarter – 13 in total, comprising 2 Inquiries, 2 Hearings & 9 Written Representations.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

21.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 regular quarterly financial update report.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

22. There is no statutory duty to report regularly to Members on the Council's Planning performance, however under the Local Government Act 1999 a best value authority has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Regular reports on the Planning Service performance assist in demonstrating best value.
23. The Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 included a number of actions, including an action to improve the systems in place for managing performance. This stated that the Council must ensure basic systems and controls are in place to ensure that performance is managed, and risk appropriately identified, reported and monitored. Performance data should measure the quality of services for users, use of resources and value for money.

Equality

24. The Equality Act 2010 sets out duties for local authorities in relation to equalities, including the public sector equality duty, which requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. In relation to equality of opportunity, the legislation requires the Council to consider the need to remove or reduce disadvantage, meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life and other activities. Performance data can assist the Council to identify gaps in service and consider what action is required to address this.

Climate change

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

Appendices

26. None

Background papers

27. None

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