

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND REGENERATION

PLANNING PERFORMANCE 2014-15

RECOMMENDATION:

For information and discussion.

REASON FOR REPORT:

To provide the Committee with information on the performance of Planning Services for the financial year 2014-15 and quarter 4.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION:

Performance against targets and Planning Service staffing in the immediate future.

RELATIONSHIP TO CORPORATE PLAN:

Well Managed Council

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Planning performance has the potential for significant financial implications in the event that applications are not determined within 26 weeks or an extension of time negotiated. In that instance the planning fee is returned.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS: The Government monitors planning performance in terms of speed and quality of decision making. In the event minimum standards are not met, an authority may be placed in special measures allowing applicants to apply for permission direct from the Planning Inspectorate and bypassing local decision making. The speed measure is the number of major applications determined within 13 weeks as measured over a 2 years period. The target of more than 40% has been met (50%). The quality measure is the percentage of major applications determined over a two year period that have been overturned at appeal. The less than 20% target has been met (14%).

RISK ASSESSMENT: Financial risk as a result of fee return and the placement of planning authorities in special measures for underperformance is referred to above. These aspects are actively monitored, to allow priorities to be adjusted as required to reduce the risk.

1.0 PLANNING PERFORMANCE

Set out below are the Planning Service performance figures for quarter four 1st January – 31st March 2015 together with that for the whole financial year 2014-15. For comparison purposes, the performance in earlier quarters of the same financial year is also indicated.

Performance data is published quarterly on the Council’s website at <http://www.middevon.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4026>

The performance over the last twelve months is set out below and expressed as a percentage unless marked otherwise and reports against a mix of Government and local performance targets.

Planning Service Performance	Target	2013/14	2014/15				2014/15
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Major applications determined within 13 weeks	60%	37	50	75	57	70	64%
Minor applications	65%	54	64	71	68	63	67%

determined within 8 weeks							
Other applications determined within 8 weeks	80%	76	84	77	83	70	78%
Householder applications determined in 8 weeks	85%	83	91	82	89	97	90%
Listed Building Consents	80%	71	68	66	77	64	70%
Enforcement site visits undertaken within 15 days of complaint receipt	87%	89	100	100	80	100	94%
Delegated decisions	90%	93	94	95	96	92	95%
Applications over 13 weeks old without a decision	Less than 45 applications	53	28	34	30	36	36
Major applications determined within 13 weeks (over last 2 years)	More than 40%	67	57	53	50	50	50%
Determine all applications within 26 weeks or with an extension of time (per annum –Government planning guarantee)	100%	94	94	95	96	100	95%
Building Regulations Applications examined within 3 weeks	95%	87	70	92	88	53	74%
Building Regulation Full Plan applications determined in 2 months	95%	99	100	99	93	91	98%

The performance figures given above show that for the majority, targets are being met or exceeded and in terms of major, minor and other planning applications compare favourably with performance for 2013/14. However there are a couple of exceptions to this including performance on other applications which narrowly misses the Government's target of 80% determined in 8 weeks. This is due to increased emphasis being placed upon major applications, the performance of which is closely monitored by the Government and has increased from 37% determined in 13 weeks 2013/14 to 64% for 2014/15 and is now above the target.

The Listed Building Consent application target was not met for this year. However this must be viewed in context of work achieved by the Conservation Team including the assessment and designation of a new Conservation Area centred around Blundell's School, the review of the Article 4 Direction in Cullompton and contribution to enforcement investigation of breaches; the drafting of 5 new Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

The Government's planning guarantee requires that authorities determine all planning applications within 26 weeks unless an extension of time is agreed with the applicant. If not, the planning fee is returned. Performance under this is closely monitored with only £385 returned to date.

The Building Control team has seen significant changes over 2014/15 with the redundancy of the Building Control Manager at the end of quarter 3. The Manger previously acted as an Inspector over part of the District and managed a caseload of applications. With the reduction in the size of the team the time taken for certain activities has increased. A review

of the Building Control service including workloads and level of staffing is currently being undertaken in conjunction with North Devon Council's Building Control Manager. Recommendations will be made regarding future service delivery.

Current policy production targets are as follows:

Document	Anticipated presentation
Local Plan Review	Pre-submission consultation in progress until 27th April 2015
CIL Draft charging schedule	Pre-submission consultation in progress until 27th April 2015
Annual Monitoring Report	AMR presented to Cabinet February 2015
Heritage Assets Register	Published on website
Cullompton Article 4 Review	Consultation completed December 2014, target to Cabinet 4th June 2015
Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans: Thorverton Morchard Bishop Newton St Cyres Cheriton Fitzpaine Silverton	In preparation Consultation completed mid March
Solar & Wind Landscape Sensitivity SPD	In preparation
Self Build guidance / SPD	In preparation
Open Space SPD	In preparation

The priority for the Forward Planning Team is currently the Local Plan Review and associated tasks. At the current time there are vacant posts in the planning policy section due to the team leader being on maternity leave and certain other postholders having left or about to depart. An interim Team Leader is due to start employment on the 13th April 2015 and further resources are being secured via consultancy and external recruitment in order to ensure sufficient staff resources are in place to complete the Local Plan Review process through Examination and to adoption.

Simultaneously there are also vacancies within the Development Management and Enforcement team as a result of maternity leave, departure of postholders and restructuring the service. Recruitment is underway.

Until the recruitment process is completed and staff in place, the number and availability of staff to deal with development management matters and other planning related matters will be reduced. While every effort will be made to maintain our charter standards of customer service and our performance levels within the eight and thirteen week government target periods some reduction in service and performance is inevitable over the next few months.

Performance will be monitored carefully during this period but Members are being made aware that it is likely our response to applications and other enquiries will take longer. This should only be for a short period of approximately three months subject to being able to successfully recruit of order to return the team to its full compliment.

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List of Background Papers: PS1 and PS2 returns

Circulation of the Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton
Members of Planning Committee