

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND REGENERATION

PLANNING PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 2015/16

RECOMMENDATION:

For information and discussion.

REASON FOR REPORT:

To provide the Committee with information on the performance of Planning Services for quarter 3 within the 2015-16 financial year.

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 designated as being 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 year period. The target of more than 40% has been met (56%), but the target is to be increased to 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 (5%).

RISK ASSESSMENT: Financial risk as a result of fee return and the designation 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 three from 1st October – 31st December 2015 together with a comparison with the target and figures from the earlier quarters in this financial year.

Performance data is published quarterly on the Council's website at <https://new.middevon.gov.uk/planning/performance-standards/>

The performance for this first quarter 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	Qu 1 2015/16	Qu 2 2015/16	Qu3 2015/16
Major applications determined within 13 weeks	60%	57%	50%	75%
Minor applications determined within 8 weeks	65%	68%	73%	74%
Other applications determined within 8 weeks	80%	91%	85%	75%

Householder applications determined in 8 weeks	85%	92%	97%	95%
Listed Building Consents determined in 8 weeks	80%	70%	67%	85%
Enforcement site visits undertaken within 15 days of complaint receipt	87%	100%	94%	89%
Delegated decisions	90%	94%	93%	94%
Applications over 13 weeks old without a decision	Less than 45 applications	25	26	36
Major applications determined within 13 weeks (over last 2 years)	More than 40%	51%	58%	56%
Determine all applications within 26 weeks or with an extension of time (per annum –Government planning guarantee)	100%	97%	96%	94%
Building Regulations Applications examined within 3 weeks	95%	70%	70%	76%
Building Regulation Full Plan applications determined in 2 months	95%	99%	98%	97%

In addition during this quarter activity within the enforcement part of the Planning Service included and can be compared against that of earlier quarters:

Enforcement 2015/16	Qu 1	Qu 2	Qu 3
Number of new enforcement cases registered	14	71	54
Number of enforcement cases closed	47	53	39
Number of committee authorisations sought	3	2	1
Number of planning contravention notices served	Data available from Qu 2	9	5
Number of breach of condition notices served	0	1	0
Number of enforcement notices served	2	1	0

The performance for quarter 3 of 2015/16 shows that in the majority of instances targets are being met or exceeded. Listed Building Consent performance during this quarter has improved, with the 80% target for applications determined within 8 weeks being exceeded. The major application target of 60% determined within 13 weeks was also exceeded within this quarter (75%), but will need to be monitored closely in the final quarter of this financial year as the two earlier quarters missed this target. However there remain some areas of concern identified in the performance figures:

The ‘other’ type application performance target of more than 80% of decisions within 8 weeks was missed

Planning Service staffing continues to still not be at full strength due to the maternity leave of several senior staff. This has had knock on effects in terms of associated arrangements for staff cover and redeployment of staff into different roles. Not all posts have been backfilled.

In the publication ‘Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation’ as part of the summer budget 2015, the Government has indicated its intention to tighten planning performance requirements so that local authorities making 50% or fewer decisions on time or those processing minor applications too slowly are at risk of designation. 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. Within this publication the Government has also indicated its intention to significantly tighten the planning guarantee for minor applications. Planning performance continues to be closely monitored. The performance of the planning service against targets will therefore become increasingly important, requires resourcing and presents a financial risk to the authority in the event that the planning guarantee is not met.

Every effort continues to be made to maintain our charter standards of customer service and our performance levels within the eight and thirteen week government target periods. The impact of a challenging period for staffing, particularly within Development Management continues to be reflected in some of the application time taken figures. Staffing change within this team will continue throughout the financial year as a result of maternity leave and associated cover arrangements.

Contact for Information: Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning and Regeneration
01884 234346

List of Background Papers: PS1 and PS2 returns
'Fixing the foundations – creating a more prosperous nation' HM Treasury July 2015

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