

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Planning Committee – 6 August 2020

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Planning, Policy and Development Control Team Annual Performance Report

Purpose of the Report

To inform the Planning Committee about our planning policy-making and planning development control performance and related matters over the previous financial year (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020).

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Summary

Planning policy-making performance

We are continuing to monitor our Mineral and Waste Local Plans and published our 15th [Annual Monitoring Report \(AMR\)](#). The AMR concluded that there was no immediate need to update our Minerals or Waste Local Plans.

Planning development control performance

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------------------|
| a) | Speed - major development decisions | 100% (23 out of 23) |
| b) | Quality – major development decisions overturned at appeal | Nil (0 out of 23) |
| c) | Speed - County Council's 'non-major development' decisions | 100% (13 out of 13) |
| d) | Speed - County Council's major development decisions | 100% (1 out of 1) |
| e) | Delegated decisions | 86% (32 out of 37) |

Application and Pre-application Advice Service Income

- 112 applications and submissions and just over £242,000 in fees.
- 13 requests for pre-application advice and almost £5,600 in fees (excl. VAT).

Staffing and Caseload (plus Q1 update during the Coronavirus crisis)

Business and Enterprise, of which Planning, Policy and Development Control is a part, was re-organised during the year to save £190,000 identified in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2020-21. As a consequence, one Planning Information Officer was made redundant.

The total number of cases received (applications, submissions and consultations) was significantly down compared to the same period in the previous two years (136 compared to 215 and 239). Notably a fall in the number of consultations accounted for a significant part of this difference (24 compared to 89 and 114).

In response to the [Coronavirus crisis we have adjusted our planning service](#) but for the most part, after an initial pause, we have been able to continue to operate as 'normal', albeit that officers are working from home. Despite the crisis, the data confirms that it remains 'business as usual'.

Background

Performance in planning policy-making and planning development control is reported after the end of the financial year with an update after 6 months. Quarterly performance updates are reported to the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure.

This is a report about planning policy-making and planning development control performance and related matters over the previous financial year (1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020).

Planning policy-making performance

We [reported to the Planning Committee](#) in February 2020 that we had completed our 15th [Annual Monitoring Report](#) (AMR) for the period April 2018 to March 2019. The AMR concluded that:

- a) we have enough reserves of most minerals; adequate facilities to process our waste; and our policies are working well. There is some uncertainty about the longer-term supply of clay to some of the county's brickworks, and a few of our older mineral sites have yet to produce detailed restoration plans.
- b) overall, there was no immediate need to update our Minerals or Waste Local Plans.

Planning development control performance

[Appendix 2](#) provides a summary of performance by quarter in 2019-20.

[Appendix 3](#) provides a comparison with the previous two years.

- a) Speed - major development decisions **100%** (23 out of 23)

The proportion of the minerals and waste development decisions made within 13 / 16 weeks or within an agreed extension of time.

National target	60% (over 2 years)
Local target	90% (over 1 year)

- b) Quality – major development decisions overturned at appeal **Nil** (0 out of 23)

The proportion of the minerals and waste development decisions overturned at appeal.

National target	10% (over 2 years)
Local target	5% (over 1 year)

Commentary: The proportion of the mineral and waste development decisions made on time, or within an agreed extension of time, remained at 100% and the proportion of those decisions appealed, let alone overturned on appeal, was nil as we continue to try to resolve outstanding matters before reaching a decision. Notably the number of mineral and waste development decisions made during the financial year was down compared to last year but similar to that two years ago (23 compared to 31 and 20) (see [Appendix 3](#)).

- c) Speed - County Council's 'non-major development' decisions **100%** (13 out of 13)

The proportion of the County Council's non-major development decisions made within 8-weeks or within an agreed extension of time.

Local target	90% (over 1 year)
--------------	-------------------

- d) Speed - County Council's major development decisions **100%** (1 out of 1)

The proportion of the County Council's major development decisions made within 13 / 16 weeks or within an agreed extension of time.

Local target	90% (over 1 year)
--------------	-------------------

[See [Definitions](#) for an explanation of 'major development' and 'non-major development'.]

Commentary: The proportion of County Council developments decisions made on time, or within an agreed extension of time, remained at 100% as we continue to try to resolve outstanding matters with the applicant before reaching a decision. The number of non-major County Council development applications was slightly higher compared to the previous two years (13 compared to 11 and 9). There was only one County Council major development application which was the same as in the previous two years) (see [Appendix 3](#)).

[Note: The County Council's major developments typically involve large projects such as new schools e.g. the Branston Road High School near Burton; and, major highway improvement schemes e.g. the Stafford Western Access Road and the Lichfield

Southern Bypass. Non-major developments typically involve much smaller projects e.g. additional classrooms at schools and new barns on the County Farms.]

e) Delegated decisions **86%** (32 out of 37)

The proportion of all decisions made by your officers in accordance with delegated powers.

Local target **80%** (over 1 year)

Commentary: The proportion of decisions made by your officers under delegated powers is close to the target and it is worth noting that as the number of decisions made is small, one decision either way has a significant effect on the percentage figure (e.g. 29 out of 37 = 78%).

[Note: The delegated powers apply to applications that do not involve a substantial new site or significant extension; applications for county developments; applications where there are no objections from a statutory consultee, district / parish council or local member; or applications where there are no more than 4 objections on material planning grounds.]

Application and Pre-application Advice Service Income

We received 112 applications and submissions and just over £242,000 in fees compared to 125 and £45,000 in the last financial year. In line with Government regulations introduced in January 2018, the County Council has ring fenced 20% of the fee income to spend on the planning service. The total at the end of the financial year was just over £40,300 and the accumulated total was just over £55,500 (see [Appendix 1](#) 'Resource and Value for money implications' section for more information).

We increased our pre-application service charges in line with the general 2% increase in April 2019. We charge between about £230 and £800 and received 13 requests for pre-application advice and about £5,600 in fees (excl. VAT) compared to 15 and £5865 in the last financial year.

Staffing and Caseload (plus Q1 update during the Coronavirus crisis)

The Planning, Policy & Development Control Team:

Team Manager
2 Policy and Development Control Team Leaders
1 Principal Planning Officer and 1 Senior Planning Officer (part-time)
1 Planning Information Team Leader and 1 Planning Information Officer

The total number of cases received (applications, submissions and consultations) was significantly down compared to the same period in the previous two years (136 compared to 215 and 239). Notably a fall in the number of consultations accounted for a significant part of this difference (24 compared to 89 and 114) due to the effectiveness of our standing advice. The number of mineral and waste development decisions made during the financial year was down compared to last year but similar to that two years

ago (23 compared to 31 and 20) (see [Appendix 3](#)).

The paid-for pre-application service is also continuing to generate additional work and income.

Staffing to support our development control caseload, policy-making workload and overall performance will continue to be monitored.

Quarter 1 - 2020- 21 during the Coronavirus crisis

In response to the [Coronavirus crisis we have adjusted our planning service](#) but for the most part, after an initial pause, we have been able to continue to operate as 'normal', albeit that officers are working from home. Despite the crisis, the data below confirms that it remains 'business as usual'.

Quarter 1 2020-21

- Speed - major development decisions **100%** (7 out of 7)
(the same as in Q1 last year)
- Quality – major development decisions overturned at appeal **Nil** (0 out of 7)
- Speed - County Council's 'non-major development' decisions **100%** (3 out of 3)
(1 in Q1 last year)
- Speed - County Council's major development decisions **Nil**
(the same as in Q1 last year)
- Delegated decisions **100%** (10 out of 10)

We have also received:

- 10 major applications (the same as in Q1 last year)
- 1 county development application (plus 1 which was later withdrawn and 2 that are currently invalid) (3 in Q1 last year)
- 17 submissions of detail / non-material amendments (19 in Q1 last year)
- 3 requests for pre-application advice; and,

approved 15 submissions of detail / non-material amendments (16 in Q1 last year)

Replacement of our Planning ICT system - update

Work to replace our Planning ICT system, developed in-house in 2003, began in June 2020 and we are aiming to 'go-live' in October 2020. The work involves the migration to the new systems of about 9,000 records and an estimated 100,000 associated documents and plans (over 150 gigabytes of data). The new systems will also introduce new back-office functionality, and public-facing web features based around a Citizen Portal.

Report author

Mike Grundy
Planning, Policy and Development Control Manager
(01785) 277297

Definitions

'Major development' is defined in the [Town and Country Planning \(Development Management Procedure\) \(England\) Order 2015](#)

In so far as it is relevant to applications determined by the County Council, a 'major development' means development involving the winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits; waste development; the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more; or development carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more.

List of Background Papers

- Half Year Performance 2019-20 - Planning Committee Report – 6 February 2020 ([see Committee agenda - item 63](#))
- [MHCLG - Improving planning performance: criteria for designation \(November 2018\)](#)
- [DCLG - Live tables on planning application statistics](#)
- [Town and Country Planning \(Section 62A Applications\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

This report has been prepared in accordance with the County Council's policies on Equal Opportunities.

Legal implications:

Officers are satisfied that there are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Resources and value for money implications:

Officers are satisfied that there are no direct resource and value for money implications arising from this report.

A significant increase in workload and the next review of our Minerals and / or Waste Local Plan are likely to require additional resources if we are to maintain our current high performance. Decisions to refuse applications may lead to appeals being made. The funds to cover the cost of appeals would need to be found from the County Council's contingencies.

An ICT budget has been provided to replace our in-house planning ICT system with an externally hosted system (in accordance with the Corporate ICT Strategy). An annual budget for the cost of hosting the new system, beyond the initial contract period, will be

required.

[The Town and Country Planning \(Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2017](#) increased planning application fees by about 20% with effect from 17 January 2018. At the request of the Government, the County Council, together with all other Local Planning Authorities, has agreed to re-invest the additional income in the planning service (the total accumulated at the end of 2019-20 was just over £55,500).

Risk implications:

Officers are satisfied that there are no direct risk implications arising from this report

Climate Change implications:

The Staffordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plans and the Staffordshire District / Borough Local Plans include policies to address climate change which are considered, where applicable, when determining planning applications for mineral and waste development and applications for the County Council's own developments.

Government planning policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (February 2019), which refers to climate change (section 14), is also a material consideration in reaching decisions.

Health Impact Assessment screening:

The Staffordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plans and the Staffordshire District / Borough Local Plans include policies to address health which are considered, where applicable, when determining planning applications for mineral and waste development and applications for the County Council's own developments.

Government planning policy in the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (February 2019), which refers to healthy communities (section 8), is also a material consideration in reaching decisions.

Appendix 2 Planning Development Control - Quarterly Performance– 2019-20

	Target Description	Target (Local)	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Performance (final outturn)
National	Speed of 'major development' decisions	60% (90%)	100% 7 out of 7	100% 6 out of 6	100% 5 out of 5	100% 5 out of 5	100% 23 out of 23
	Quality of 'major development' decisions	10% (5%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Local	Speed of the County Council's own 'non-major development' decisions	(90%)	100% 1 out of 1	100% 4 out of 4	100% 3 out of 3	100% 5 out of 5	100% 13 out of 13
	Speed of the County Council's own 'major development' decisions	(80%)	Nil	Nil	100% 1 out of 1	Nil	100% 1 out of 1
	Applications determined under delegated powers	(80%)	75% 6 out of 8	100% 10 out of 10	78% 7 out of 9	90% 9 out of 10	86% 32 out of 37

* Speed is measured (in so far as it relates to applications dealt with by the County Council) by the proportion of major applications dealt with within 13 weeks, or within 8 weeks for non-major development decisions, unless the application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement when the target is 16 weeks, or within an agreed extension of time.

** Quality is measured (in so far as it relates to applications dealt with by the County Council) by the proportion of major applications that are subsequently overturned at appeal.

Generally, a 'major development' (in so far as it relates to applications dealt with by the County Council) is defined as an application for the winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits; and, waste development. A 'non-major development' is defined as an application which is not a 'major development'.

Appendix 3 Comparison with the previous two years

Planning Development Control – Full Year Performance – 2019-20

Year	<u>National</u> (Local Target)	Performance
Speed of 'major development' decisions		
2019-20	60% (90%)	100%
		23 out of 23
2018-19	60% (90%)	100%
		31 out of 31
2017-18	60% (70%)	100%
		20 out of 20
Speed of the County Council's own 'non-major development' decisions		
2019-20	(90%)	100%
		13 out of 13
2018-19	(90%)	100%
		11 out of 11
2017-18	(80%)	100%
		9 out of 9
Speed of the County Council's own 'major development' decisions		
2019-20	(90%)	100%
		1 out of 1
2018-19	(90%)	100%
		1 out of 1
2017-18	(80%)	100%
		1 out of 1
Applications determined under delegated powers		
2019-20	(80%)	86%
		32 out of 37
2018-19	(80%)	81%
		35 out of 43
2017-18	(80%)	77%
		23 out of 30