

Local Members' Interest
N/A

Planning Committee – 3 December 2020

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Planning, Policy and Development Control Team Half Year Performance Report

Purpose of the Report

To inform the Planning Committee about our planning policy-making and planning development control performance and related matters during the first half of the financial year (1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020).

Recommendation

That the report be noted.

Summary

Planning policy-making performance

We are continuing to monitor our Mineral and Waste Local Plans and we are aiming to publish our 16th Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) before the end of the year albeit that the results of national surveys of aggregate production (dis-aggregated for Staffordshire) may not arrive in time and would have to be added later. Notwithstanding, the AMR is expected to conclude that both Local Plans continue to work well, guiding minerals and waste development as intended and that there is no immediate need to update them.

Planning development control performance

- a) Speed - major development decisions **100%** (10 out of 10)
- b) Quality – major development decisions overturned at appeal **Nil** (0 out of 10)
- c) Speed - County Council's 'non-major development' decisions **100%** (5 out of 5)
- d) Speed - County Council's major development decisions **Nil** (0 out of 0)
- e) Delegated decisions **100%** (15 out of 15)

Application and Pre-application Advice Service Income

- a) 61 applications and submissions received and about £96,000 in fees.
- b) 4 requests for pre-application advice and about £1,250 in fees (excl. VAT).

Staffing and Caseload

As reported in August, in response to the [Coronavirus crisis we have adjusted our planning service](#) but for the most part, after an initial pause during the first lockdown, we have been able to continue to operate as 'normal', albeit that officers are still working from home. Therefore, despite the crisis, it remains 'business as usual'.

Our caseload (applications, submissions and consultations received) at the end of Q2 was slightly higher than the same period last year – 87 cases (21+40+26) compared to 74 (24+37+13) with the main difference being the larger number of consultations this year. The year before we received 132 cases (21+52+59). The number of applications was the same as this year. The larger number of consultations mainly accounts for the higher number.

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.

This is our performance report for the first half of the year (1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020).

Planning policy-making performance

We are continuing to monitor our Mineral and Waste Local Plans and we are aiming to publish our 16th Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) before the end of the year albeit that the results of national surveys of aggregate production (dis-aggregated for Staffordshire) may not arrive in time and would have to be added later. Notwithstanding, the AMR is expected to conclude that both Local Plans continue to work well, guiding minerals and waste development as intended and that there is no immediate need to update them.

Planning development control performance

[Appendix 2](#) provides a summary of performance by quarter in 2020-21.

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

a) Speed - major development decisions **100%** (10 out of 10)

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 10)

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

National target	10% (over 2 years)
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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. The number of mineral and waste development decisions made during the first half of the financial year was lower when compared to the same periods in the previous two (10 compared to 13 and 16) (see [Appendix 3](#)).

c) Speed - County Council's 'non-major development' decisions **100%** (5 out of 5)

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 **Nil** (0 out of 0)

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 the same as last year (5) and slightly down on the previous year (7). No County Council major development applications were determined in the period 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 **100%** (15 out of 15)

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

Local target 80% (over 1 year)

Commentary: All the decisions issued to the end of Q2 were made by your officers under delegated powers. However, it is worth noting that decisions made when the

Planning Committee met in August and October will be added in Q3 or when the legal agreements have been completed and the decisions issued.

[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 21 applications, 40 submissions and just over £96,000 in fees compared to 24, 37 and just over £180,000 in the first half of 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 first half of this financial year was just over £16,000 and the accumulated total was just over £71,500 (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 2020. We currently charge between about £230 and £800 and received 4 requests for pre-application advice and about £1,500 in fees (incl. VAT) compared to 7 and almost £4,350 in the same period last year.

Staffing and Caseload

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

Overall caseload (applications, submissions and consultations) is slightly higher than last year (87 compared to 74) but lower than the year before (132) when we received significantly more consultations (59 compared to 26 in the same period this year).

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

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 now aiming to 'go-live' at the end of January 2021. 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

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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

- Annual Performance 2019-20 - Planning Committee Report and Minutes – 6 August 2020 ([see agenda - item 76](#))
- [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 Q2 was just over £71,000).

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– 2020-21

	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% 3 out of 3			100% 10 out of 10
	Quality of 'major development' decisions	10% (5%)	Nil	Nil			Nil 0 out of 10
Local	Speed of the County Council's own 'non-major development' decisions	(90%)	100% 3 out of 3	100% 2 out of 2			100% 5 out of 5
	Speed of the County Council's own 'major development' decisions	(80%)	Nil	Nil			Nil
	Applications determined under delegated powers	(80%)	100% 10 out of 10	100% 5 out of 5			100% 15 out of 15

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 – Half Year Performance – 2020-21

Year	<u>National</u> (Local Target)	Performance
Speed of 'major development' decisions		
2020-21	60% (90%)	100%
		10 out of 10
2019-20	60% (90%)	100%
		13 out of 13
2018-19	60% (90%)	100%
		16 out of 16
Speed of the County Council's own 'non-major development' decisions		
2020-21	(90%)	100%
		5 out of 5
2019-20	(90%)	100%
		5 out of 5
2018-19	(90%)	100%
		7 out of 7
Speed of the County Council's own 'major development' decisions		
2020-21	(90%)	Nil
2019-20	(90%)	Nil
2018-19	(80%)	Nil
Applications determined under delegated powers		
2020-21	(80%)	100%
		15 out of 15
2019-20	(80%)	89%
		16 out of 18
2018-19	(80%)	83%
		19 out of 23