

<b>Report to</b>	Planning applications committee 5 June 2014	<b>Item</b> <b>5</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Head of planning services	
<b>Subject</b>	Performance of the Development Management Service, Jan-Mar 2014 (Quarter 4, 2013-14)	

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## **Purpose**

To report the performance of the development management service to members of the committee.

## **Recommendations**

That the report be noted.

## **Financial Consequences**

The financial consequences of this report are none.

## **Strategic Priority and Outcome/Service Priorities**

The report helps to meet the strategic priority “Strong and prosperous city – working to improve quality of life for residents, visitors and those who work in the city now and in the future” and the implementation of the planning improvement plan.

## **Contact Officers**

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## **Background Documents**

None.

# Report

## Background

1. On 31 July 2008 Planning Applications Committee considered a report regarding the improved working of the Committee which included a number of suggested changes to the way the Committee operates. In particular it suggested performance of the development management service be reported to the Committee and that feedback from members of the Committee be obtained.

## Performance of the development management service

2. Table 1 of the appendix provides a summary of performance indicators for the development management service. The speed of determining applications is National Indicator 157 (NI157). Table 2 shows the numbers received, pending and on hand at the end of the quarter. The NI157 figure for majors are a significant improvement on the previous quarter and are all above target and higher than the previous quarter.
3. The government has commenced collecting and publishing data on decisions made in 26 weeks as part of the “planning guarantee”. From 1<sup>st</sup> October 2013, there are opportunities for applicants to request the refund of fees if decisions have taken longer than 26 weeks to determine, unless there is either a planning performance agreement signed pre-submission, or a written agreement to extend the time period for determination for major applications. In such cases the applications are not eligible for a refund and count as being “in time” in the NI157 13 week performance data. In the last quarter 145 out of 149 were dealt with in 26 weeks and all were valid prior to October last year so the potential for refund of fees does not apply in those cases.
4. Major schemes achieved 90.9% on time with 10 out of 11 within 13 weeks. However, as the one item that took longer than 13 weeks was by agreement with the applicant it counts as being “in time”. Therefore the official statistics for government purposes was 100%. 78.9% was achieved for minors and 85.9% for others. The English averages for the latest period with available data (quarter 3, 2013-14) being 74%, 70% and 84% respectively i.e. these are all exceeded by between 2 and 26 percentage points.
6. Overall the data for is generally positive and results from improvements to processes to speed up the early stages of processing, a good quality pre-application advice service and improved information on the website, and more effective ways of working. There are very few old applications still pending and the future performance of the planning service should be close to target levels in the coming months.
6. There is a dip in performance for minors and others in the fourth quarter. This is due to a combination of factors with some significant problems in the operation of the Public Access system so that errors were appearing on the website which indicated that consultations had closed when they had not. This necessitated a lot of staff time to resolve and a further allowance for comments had to be made and some items were delayed to a subsequent Committee. In

addition the workload is gradually increasing and the final quarter is normally lower than the third quarter due to the impact of the office closure at Christmas and New Year which impacts on decisions taken in January and February.

6. The government has announced that it will take action if councils perform poorly on major applications or have a very poor appeal success rate. This will result in “designation” and applicants would then have the right to bypass the local planning authority and have the application dealt with by the planning Inspectorate. It is not anticipated that there will be any issues in Norwich with the appeal rate of success. However, care will have to be taken with respect to the monitoring of the speed of handling major applications over the coming months. “Designation” will be linked to previously submitted NI157 data. Applicants would then have the option of submitting applications direct to the Planning Inspectorate and the council would lose the planning fee. However, and more importantly, designation would have reputational harm, and have negative impacts on trust by developers in the proper working of the planning function.
7. For the two years ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2013 the figure for determination of major applications in 13 weeks was 39.7%, above the government’s floor for “designation” of 30%. The government has proposed that it will increase the minimum figure to 40% for the next round, and which will be announced in the autumn. The cumulative figure for the five quarters ending 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2013 was 42.8%, for 6 quarters it was 47.8%, and for the 7 quarters ending 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2014 it was 55%. The next quarter should be in excess of this level and so the final outturn for the 2014 designation round is expected to be well above the designation threshold.
8. The percentage of decisions delegated to officers was 91% (previous quarter 92.7%). The national average for district council's is 91%.

Table 1

Speed of determination of planning applications recorded by National Indicator 157

	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010	2010 - 2011	2011 - 2012	2012 - 2013					2013 - 2014				
	Year	Year	Year	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year
<b>Major</b> % 13 wks	<b>37%</b>	<b>72.5%</b>	<b>75.7%</b>	<b>52.9%</b>	77.7%	50%	14.2%	7.1%	<b>35%</b>	50%	68.5%	100%	100%	<b>75.9%</b>
% 26 wks										58.3%	73.6%	100%	100%	<b>83.7%</b>
<b>Minor</b> % 8 wks	<b>75%</b>	<b>88.4%</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>67.2%</b>	81.5%	69.6%	66.1%	63.3%	<b>73.4%</b>	70%	86.5%	88.8%	78.9%	<b>80.4%</b>
% 26 wks										96.2%	95.9%	98.4%	98.0%	<b>97.1%</b>
<b>Others</b> % 8 wks	<b>80%</b>	<b>90.3%</b>	<b>89.6%</b>	<b>81.6%</b>	86.4%	77.2%	78.6%	82.4%	<b>81.1%</b>	85.5%	83.9%	92.6%	85.9%	<b>86.7%</b>
% 26 weeks										100%	98.5%	100%	95.9%	<b>98.9%</b>

**Table 2****Numbers of planning applications recorded by National Indicator 157**

	2010 - 2011				2011 - 2012				2012 - 2013				2013 - 2014			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Received	212	222	197	255	184	245	176	221	273	255	171	207	223	193	188	199
Withdrawn/called in	15	11	19	15	9	21	10	8	17	6	8	8	5	25	9	9
On hand (pending) at end of quarter	144	132	136	206	169	160	119	179	190	154	149	173	168	104	106	126
Decisions	197	222	174	169	212	232	203	157	246	223	167	175	223	231	178	167