

Report to	Planning applications committee 10 October 2013	Item 6
Report of	Head of planning services	
Subject	Performance of the Development Management Service, 1 July to 30 September 2013 (Quarter 2, 2013-14)	

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

Graham Nelson, Head of Planning Services	01603 212530
Ian Whittaker, Planning Development Manager	01603 212528

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. Table 2 shows the numbers received, pending and on hand at the end of the quarter, although the data on applications received will be reported verbally as it was not available at the time of writing the report. The data this quarter is somewhat skewed by the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy on July 15th. This resulted in a number of older major applications being determined just before this deadline and hence in this quarters figures. Despite this, the figures for majors are an improvement on the previous quarter
3. The National Performance Indicators (NI157) achieved in the second quarter of 2013-14 were 68.5% for major schemes (being 18 percentage points above the previous quarter), 86.5% for minors (16 percentage points above the previous quarter) and 83.9% for others (2 percentage points below the previous quarter). The figures for majors and others are below the locally set top target of 80% and 90% respectively but the minors figure is above the 85% target. All are in the second quartile nationally. The national average for quarter 1 being 59%, 68% and 82% respectively i.e. these are all exceeded by between 2 and 18 percentage points. The government has changed the way that it collects data so that applications are now excluded from the NI157 data for majors if the applicant has agreed a “post application agreement” i.e. there is mutual agreement between the applicant and council that the decision process is best served by extending the 13 week period.
4. The government has commenced collecting and publishing data on decisions made in 26 weeks as part of the “planning guarantee”. From 1st October, 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 which case the applications are not eligible for a refund and are excluded from the NI157 13 week performance data. In the last quarter 70% of major applications, 97.2% of minors and 98.5% of others were dealt with in 26 weeks. 5. The 8 and 13 week data for all three categories was higher in the Apr-June quarter than the Jan – Mar quarter. Majors and minors were again significantly higher in the last quarter although there was a modest fall in the others figure.

5. This is very positive and results from changed staffing levels and improvements to processes to speed up the early stages of processing and the determination of old applications pre CIL. There are very few old applications still pending and so the future performance of the planning service should be able to be close to target levels in the coming months.
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. If a Council determines fewer than 30% of major decisions in the preceding two years ending on 30th June then the council would be designated by a decision made in the autumn. Applicants would then have the option of submitting applications direct to the Planning Inspectorate. The council would lose the planning fee, but more importantly, designation would have reputational harm, and have negative impacts on trust in the proper working of the planning function.
7. For the two years ending 30 June 2013 (and which will form the basis for the government’s designation to be announced shortly) the figure for determination of major applications in 13 weeks was 39.7%, above the government’s floor for “designation” of 30%. For the latter half of that period, however, the figure is 30.2% so it will be very important that the figures for the year 1st July 2013 – 30th June 2014 are excellent to avoid a risk of designation in the autumn of next year.
8. The percentage of decisions delegated to officers was 86.1% (previous quarter 92.4%). The national average for district council’s is 91%.

APPENDIX

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	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Yr
Major % 13 wks	37%	72.5%	75.7%	75%	20%	71.4%	30%	52.9%	77.7%	50%	14.2%	7.1%	35%	50%	68.5%			
% 26 wks	47.4%	73.8%	88.9%					73.5%	88.8%	90%	28.6%	35.7%		58.3%	73.6%			
Minor % 8 wks	75%	88.4%	78.9%	50%	64.3%	83.1%	74.5%	67.2%	81.5%	69.6%	66.1%	63.3%	73.4%	70%	86.5%			
% 26 wks			99.6%					95.9%	97.7%	98.5%	100%	96.6%		96.2%	95.9%			
Others % 8 wks	80%	90.3%	89.6%	70%	78.3%	90.1%	88.5%	81.6%	86.4%	77.2%	78.6%	82.4%	81.1%	85.5%	83.9%			
% 26 weeks			99.6%					97.9%	100%	98.6%	100%	97.7%		100%	98.5%			

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	???		
Withdrawn/called in	15	11	19	15	9	21	10	8	17	6	8	8	5	25		
On hand (pending) at end of quarter	144	132	136	206	169	160	119	179	190	154	149	173	168	???		
Decisions	197	222	174	169	212	232	203	157	246	223	167	175	223	231		

* This number not yet finalised at the time of writing.