

Report to Planning Applications Committee
7 August, 2014
Report of Head of Planning Services
Subject Performance of the Development Management Service,
Apr- Jun 2014 (Quarter 1, 2014-15)

Item
5

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
Ian Whittaker, Planning Development Manager

01603 212530
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 (NI157). Table 2 shows the numbers received, pending and on hand at the end of the quarter. The number of applications received was higher than the previous three quarters.
3. Major schemes achieved 85.7% on time with 6 out of 7 within 13 weeks. 72.9% was achieved for minors and 90.5% for others. The English averages for 2013-14 being 58%, 70% and 83% respectively i.e. these are all exceeded by between 2.9 and 27.7 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 but few of the items are delayed significantly and partly result from a change in working practices so that applicants are given some time to amend a scheme in minor ways to secure a satisfactory outcome rather than issuing a refusal with the associated costs and delay to both applicants and the council in dealing with a re-submission.
6. The government 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 over a two year period. If designated 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 June 2014 the figure for determination of major applications in 13 weeks was 59.6%, well above the government's floor this year for "designation" of 40%. It is of note that the figure for the most recent 12 months was 83.7% and as this will be the first year of two in the 2015 designation round this provides an excellent basis for determination rates well above any likely level for next year.
8. The percentage of decisions delegated to officers was 88.9% (previous quarter 91%). The national average for district council's is 91%.

Table 1

Speed of determination of planning applications recorded by National Indicator 157

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	20-13-14					2014-15			
						Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Major % in time	37%	72.5	75.7	52.9	35%	50%	68.5%	100%	100%	75.9%	85.7%			
Minor % in time	75%	88.4	78.9	67.2	73.4%	70%	86.5%	88.8%	78.9%	80.4%	72.9%			
Other % in time	80%	90.3	89.6	81.6	81.1%	85.5%	83.9%	92.6%	85.9%	86.7%	90.5%			

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

	2011-12				2012 - 2013				2013 - 2014				2014 - 2015			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Received	184	245	176	221	273	255	171	207	223	193	188	199	215			
Withdrawn/called in	9	21	10	8	17	6	8	8	5	25	9	9	15			
On hand (pending) at end of quarter	169	160	119	179	190	154	149	173	168	104	106	126	131			
Decisions	212	232	203	157	246	223	167	175	223	231	178	167	168			