

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT 2013/2014

Purpose of the report

To provide members with an end of year report on the performance recorded for Development Management (Development Control) between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014. Figures for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are also provided for comparison as are targets set within the Planning and Development Service Plan 2011/12 to 2013/14, as revised in May 2013.

Recommendations

- (a) That the report be received**
- (b) That the Development Management Team Manager continue to operate mechanisms to maintain current high performance levels and improve the service provided for those procedures where our level of performance needs to be addressed.**
- (c) That the 'Mid-Year Development Management Performance Report 2014/15' be submitted to the Committee in October 2014 reporting on performance achieved for the first half of 2014/15 in relation to targets that will have been set by the Head of Planning in the 2014/15 Service Plan for the Planning Service in consultation with the Planning Portfolio holder**

Reasons

To ensure that appropriate monitoring and performance management procedures are in place and that the Council continues with its focus on improving performance, facilitating development and providing good service to all who use the Planning Service.

1. Background:

For many years an extensive set of indicators have been collected to monitor the performance of Development Management. These include both "National Indicators" and those devised by this Council – "local indicators". These indicators have changed over time and officers have sought to ensure that the right things are being measured to enable us to improve performance in every area. The range of indicators included reflects the objective of providing a *balanced* end to end development management service, including dealing with pre-application enquiries, breaches of planning control, considering applications, & approving subsequent details and delivering development.

2. Matters for consideration:

There is an Appendix attached to this report:-

APPENDIX 1: 'NATIONAL AND 'LOCAL' PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT 2011/12, 2012/13, and 2013/14: Contains quarterly and annual figures for the national and 'local' Performance Indicators applicable during 2013/14 (comparative figures for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are also shown). This also provides the current draft targets" for 2014/15,...

This report is a commentary on the national and local performance indicators as set out in detail in Appendix 1. It follows on from a report that was considered by the Planning Committee at its meeting on the 10th December 2013 which reported on the mid-year performance figures and gave predictions on whether the targets for 2013/14 would be likely to be achieved.

3. The performance achieved and the likely targets for 2014/15

6 indicators were included in the 2011/12 -2013/14 Planning and Development Service Plan pertaining to Development Management with targets for 2013/14. These are referred to in the commentaries below. Members will note that out of these 6 performance indicators, the target set has been met in 1 case, but it has not been achieved in the other 5 cases.

INDICATOR Percentage of applications determined within timescales:-

- (a) 70% of 'Major' applications determined within 13 weeks**
- (b) 85% of 'Minor' applications determined within 8 weeks**
- (c) 92.5% of 'Other' applications determined within 8 weeks**

The above challenging targets for 2013/14 had been set 'locally'- the former national targets for this indicator as set by the previous Government being 60%, 65% and 80% respectively. The current Government no longer sets such "targets", but instead has brought in a system of designation of poorly performing planning authorities as previously reported to the Committee – which includes the setting of a threshold of the speed of determination of Major applications, below which designation is likely. 'Major' applications are defined as those applications where 10 or more dwellings are to be constructed (or if the number is not given, the site area is more than 0.5 hectares), and, for all other uses, where the floorspace proposed is 1000 square metres or more or the site area is 1 hectare or more. 'Minor' applications are those for developments which do not meet the criteria for 'Major' development nor the definitions of Change of Use or Householder Development. 'Other' applications relate to those for applications for Change of Use, Householder Developments, Advertisements, Listed Building Consents, Conservation Area Consents and various applications for Certificates of Lawfulness, etc.

(a) Our performance in dealing with '**Major**' applications was that during 2013/14 we determined 62.5% of the 16 such applications within 13 weeks against the 'local' target of 70%. The performance for 2011/12 and 2012/13 was 81.8% and 66.7% respectively.

TARGET NOT ACHIEVED

Performance in terms of this indicator has declined for the third year running. A wide range of factors are behind this as reported to the December 2013 Planning Committee. The target for the year 2013/14 was 70% in continued recognition of the importance of these applications to the economic growth of the area, the LEP Planning Charter, and the emerging plans for the designation of poorly performing planning authorities and the Planning Guarantee, etc. As already reported the government has recently consulted on proposals to raise the threshold for designation (i.e. potentially increase the number of authorities "at risk"). From April 2013 the national indicator measuring the speed of determination of major applications has been amended so as to include as "in time" those decisions where there has been a Planning Performance Agreement, an agreed extension of the statutory period, or application subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment and where the decision has been made within the agreed time – reflecting a more nuanced approach to the measurement of timeliness of determination. To ensure that there is appropriate focus on this critical threshold (a failure to meet which would result in designation of the authority) the intention is to include performance against this threshold, with an appropriate buffer, as a performance measure for 2014/15 which will be reported to the Committee on a half yearly basis. For internal management purposes measurement against the former 13 week target will still however .

(b) During 2013/14 77.2% of the 206 '**Minor**' applications were determined within 8 weeks against the 'local' target of 85%. The performance for 2011/12 and 2012/13 was 87% and 91.9% respectively.

TARGET NOT ACHIEVED

Performance on minor applications did not achieve the local target, falling short by more 7% and dropped significantly from that achieved in 2012/13. Again there are a wide range of factors underlying this change in performance, and it is not considered to represent a significant deterioration in the service provided. A specific factor – delays associated with the obtaining of unilateral undertakings to secure payments towards

the Newcastle (urban) Transport and Development Strategy (NTADS) – a significant contributor to the performance achieved in 2013/ - will not feature in the 2014/15 performance – developer contributions no longer being sought for NTADS since April 2014. The intention is to maintain the target for this indicator at 85% for 2013/14

During 2013/14 93.1% of the 376 ‘Other’ applications were determined within 8 weeks. The ‘local’ target was 92.5%. The performance for 2011/12 and 2012/13 was 94.8% and 92.8% respectively.

TARGET ACHIEVED

The performance with respect to “Other applications”, which is very likely to be “top quartile”, reflects very well upon the Development Management Section particularly when account is taken of the increase in the total number of decisions and the departure of one of the members of the team half way through the year and the non-filling of that particular post. The intention is to maintain the target at 92.%.

INDICATOR - Percentage of pre-application enquiries answered in time

During 2013/14 78.3% of pre-application enquiries were answered in time. The target for this ‘local’ indicator in 2013/14 was 80%.

TARGET NOT ACHIEVED

This is a new indicator replacing one that measured the percentage of preapplication enquiries answered within 15 working days. That indicator was replaced with one that recognises that preapplication enquiries vary considerably in complexity and specifically allows for more time for enquiries concerning the more significant proposals. For ‘Major’ pre-application the target response time is 35 calendar days, for ‘Minor’ pre-application enquiries the target response time is 14 calendar days, and for ‘Other’ pre-application enquiries the target response time is 10 calendar days.

To give members some idea of volume the Service received some 654 such enquiries in 2013/14 of which 31 were ‘Major’ pre-application enquiries; 214 were ‘Minor’ pre-application enquiries; and 409 were ‘Other’ pre-application enquiries.

The performance level achieved although below target was not significantly so. As there have been charges for a significant proportion of these enquiries during 2013/14 it is understandable that there is a renewed focus on the timeliness with such enquiries are dealt with. This and the quality and consistency of the advice given are areas of focus for the development management service. The intention is to maintain the target at 80% for this indicator for 2014/15.

INDICATOR - Percentage of applications for approvals required by conditions determined within 2 months

During 2013/14 66% of conditions applications were determined within 2 months against a target of 75% of condition. The performance figures for 2011/12 and 2012/13 were 72.8% and 57.7% respectively.

TARGET NOT ACHIEVED

Whilst performance in 2013/14 improved notably from that achieved in 2012/13 the target was not achieved despite being reduced from 80% to 75%. The number of conditions applications dealt with in 2013/14 at 402 was higher than the number in 2012/13 (337). The intention is to maintain the target for this indicator at 75% for 2014/15.

INDICATOR - Percentage of complainants informed within the required timescales of any action to be taken about alleged breaches of planning control.

85.4% was achieved in 2011/12 and 67.2% was achieved in 2012/13. Performance in 2013/14 was 55.9%. The 'local' target was 80%.

TARGET NOT ACHIEVED

There was a reduction in the number of new complaints in 2013/14 (199) compared with the number in 2011/12 (222).

The 80% target was not reached despite it being reduced to 80% for 2013/14 (previously 85%). Performance has, however, been slowly improving since the second quarter of the year when an inexperienced enforcement officer replaced the former post holder and it is hoped that this will continue. Support and training continues to be provided. The intention is to have the target for this indicator 75% for 2014/15 in the expectation that this will be more achievable and realistic than the current 80% figure.

Source of information/background papers

- 1. General Development Control Returns PS1 and PS2 for 2011/12 – 2013/14**
- 2. Planning Services own internal records, produced manually and from its uniForm modules**
- 3. Planning and Development Service Plans for 2009/10 - 2012/13 and for 2010/11 - 2013/14**