

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO THE  
ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND PLACE COMMITTEE**

**Date 20 June 2019**

1. **REPORT TITLE** Update of Planning and Enforcement Recruitment
- Submitted by:** Head of Planning and Development – Mr Guy Benson
- Portfolio:** Planning and Growth
- Ward(s) affected:** All

**Purpose of the Report**

To provide as requested by the Chair information on the Planning Service

**Recommendations**

**For Scrutiny Committee to note the contents of this report**

**Reasons**

This report was requested by members of the Scrutiny Committee

1. **Background**

- 1.1 Members may recall that at its July 2018 the Committee received a report on the Planning Service (including both Development Management and Planning Policy) with a review of case load, % compliance with required completion of workload, a review of number of staff vacancies within the department and the action plan to fill this gap.
- 1.2 The Chair has asked for an update on the position with particular reference to the staffing position and this is provided below

2. **Issues – Principal Elements of the Planning Service Caseload**

***Planning Policy***

- 2.1 Preparation of the Joint Local Plan, in conjunction with the City Council, involving the commissioning of a range of evidence including the Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Employment Land Review, a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and a range of other studies. Target to get the new Local Plan through an Examination in Public by 2021. A number of further stages are required to get to that point. Policies within Core Spatial Strategy being held to be out of date on appeal.
- 2.3 Supporting currently 4 Qualifying Bodies preparing their Neighbourhood Plans – each at a different stage – and further interest being expressed

- 2.4 Annual Monitoring of housing, employment, retail and leisure development across the Borough
- 2.5 Annual Calculation of the 5 year housing land supply position within the Borough
- 2.6 Annual preparation of Council's Brownfield Sites Register
- 2.7 Fulfilling the ongoing duty to cooperate with other adjoining Local Planning Authorities

***Development Management***

*(graphs showing key trends attached as Appendix 1a and 1b)*

- 2.8 Providing a pre-application enquiry service – 371 enquiries in 2018/19 (392 in 2017/18)
- 2.9 Determining “planning applications” including applications for planning permission, outline planning permission, applications for the approval of reserved matters, applications for listed building and advertisement consent, applications for the approval of details where such approval is required by conditions . Graphs showing trends will be available to be displayed at the meeting.
- 2.10 Defending the Council's decisions on appeal (25 valid appeals received in 18/19; 13 in 17/18)
- 2.11 Dealing with the enforcement of planning controls, including the investigation of reports of breaches of planning control - 270 received in 2018/19 (264 in 2017/18)
- 2.12 Conservation and Heritage – including the preparation of Conservation Area
- 2.13 Appraisals and Management Plans (10 year rolling programme involving 22 Conservation Areas), the running of the Council's Historic Buildings Grants Scheme (, the biannual review of the Council's Local Register, the Biannual Civic Awards Scheme, & working with owners of Listed Buildings including in particular those designated by 5 yearly surveys to be at risk
- 2.14 Complying with expected statutory requirement for an Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement

3. **Compliance with Required Completion of Caseload**

***Planning Policy***

- 3.1 Local Plan preparation – Government seeking to persuade / penalise authorities to bring forward their plans – most recent timetable for Joint Local Plan announced October 2018 and published on website.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood Plans – statutory periods which have to be complied with as well as duty to assist – statutory periods achieved in 18/19 but at cost to Joint Local Plan work
- 3.3 Demands for annual monitoring – no Annual Monitoring Statement has been produced for several years
- 3.4 5 year housing land supply position – key component (but not sole factor) in development management decisions and whether the titled balance set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF is to apply, position last calculated in September (of situation as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018). Yet to prepare statement to reflect position as at 1st April 2019

- 3.5 Duty to Cooperate demands from adjoining authorities, Council part, with City Council, of Planning Advisory Service pilot project for new Statements of Common Ground

***Development Management***

- 3.6 % of pre-application enquiries responded to within agreed time periods – Local target for 2018/19 75% - performance for first 6 months of 2018/19 was 82 % (2017/18 performance was 65.3%)
- 3.7 % applications for Major development determined “in time” - Local target 70% for 2018/19 – performance 70.0% (2017/18 performance was 78.4%)
- 3.8 % of applications for Minor development determined “in time”– local target 77.5% for 2018/19 – performance 67%
- 3.9 % of applications for “Other development” determined within 8 weeks – Local target for 2018/19 85% - performance 78.3% (2017/18 performance was 76.4%)
- 3.10 % of applications for “Non-major” development determined “in time” – Local target for 2018/19 85% - performance 77.6% (2017/18 performance was 78.6%)
- 3.11 % of applications for approvals required by conditions determined within 2 months - Local target for 2018/19 75% - performance for first 6 months 42.6% (2017/18 performance was 51.4%)
- 3.12 % of complainants (about alleged breaches of planning control) informed within required timescale of any action to be taken – local target for 2018/19 75% - performance for first 6 months of 18/19 - 76.1% - (2017/18 performance was 78.7%)
- 3.13 Partial award of costs recently made against the Council for its handling of an appeal Introduction of Member Planning Enforcement Protocol expected to put additional pressure upon DM resources

4. **Proposal – Current Staff Vacancies and Steps to Address these Vacancies**

<b>Vacancy</b>	<b>Stage at</b>	<b>Intended next steps</b>
<b>Planning Policy</b>		
Senior Planning Policy Officer posts (2) – vacant since Feb 2019	Advertised with closing date mid May. Limited response received to advert.	Going back to market with amended Person Specification and invitation to apply for both Senior Planning Policy Officer and Planning Policy Officer posts within the Authority  Taking of steps to provide temporary agency cover to deal with current position  NB Planning Policy Manager in post as from April is not

		F/T
Fixed term (1 year) Neighbourhood Planning Officer –Part time 22.2 hours – vacant since April 2018	Offer made and successful candidate expected start, subject to contract completion, 17th June	
<b>Development Management</b>		
Senior Planning Officer (Enforcement) - Full time – New post	Advertised with closing date mid May. Limited response received to advert	Holding of interviews with candidates meeting essential requirements who have been shortlisted
Assistant Support Officer – vacant since Sept 2018	JD and PS require revision and then Vacancy approval procedure initiated	