

REPORT TO PLANNING COMMITTEE

MID-YEAR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT 2019/2020

Purpose of the report

To provide members with a mid-year report on the performance recorded for Development Management between 1st April 2019 and 30th September 2019. Figures for 2017/18 and 2018/19 are also provided for comparison as are targets set within the relevant Planning Service Plan.

Recommendations

(a) That the report be received.

(b) That the Head of Planning and Development Manager seeks to maintain and improve performance of the Development Management team (including the technical support team) to meet the targets set out in the Planning Service Plan for 2019/20.

(c) That the next 'Development Management Performance Report' be submitted to Committee around June 2020 reporting on performance for the complete year 2019/20.

Reasons for recommendations

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 customer service to all who use the Planning Service.

1. Background:

An extensive set of indicators is collected to monitor the performance of the Development Management service. 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 significant area. The range of indicators included reflects the objective of providing a fast and efficient development management service including dealing with pre-application enquiries, breaches of planning control, considering applications, and approving subsequent details and delivering development.

2. Matters for consideration:

There is an Appendix attached to this report:-

APPENDIX 1: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20: Contains quarterly and annual figures for the Performance Indicators applicable during 2019/20 (comparative figures for 2017/18 and 2018/19 are also shown).

This report is a commentary on the local performance indicators that the Council has 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 17th July 2018 which reported on the performance achieved in 2017/18, and discussed appropriate targets.

The Council's Cabinet receives a Quarterly Financial and Performance Management report on a series of performance indicators including those which relate to whether Major and Non-Major planning applications are being determined "in time", and any indicators failing to meet the set targets are reported by exception.

3. The performance achieved:

National Performance Indicators

The Government has a system of designation of poorly performing planning authorities – two of the four current criteria for designation under ‘Special Measures’ are thresholds relating to the speed of determination of Major and Non-major applications, performance below which designation is likely. Designation as a poorly performing Local Planning Authority would have significant and adverse consequences for the Council.

The most recent assessment period is for a two year period from October 2017 to September 2019. The period referred to in this report – between April 2019 and September 2019 therefore falls within this reporting period.

The threshold for designation as an underperforming authority at the end of that reporting period for ‘Major’ applications is where the Council has failed to determine a minimum of 60% of its applications within a 13 week period or such longer period of time as might have been agreed with the applicant.

For ‘Non-major’ applications (All ‘Minor’ applications plus ‘Changes of use’ and ‘Householder’ applications) the threshold is where the Council has failed to determine a minimum of 70% of its applications within an 8 week period or such longer period of time as might have been agreed with the applicant.

The other designation criteria measure the quality of decision making as demonstrated by appeal performance (again for Majors and Non-Majors). Whilst this is normally reported in the Annual Appeals Performance Report, given that these figures are normally considered together and the fact the last reporting period was up to and including September 2019 it is thought appropriate to mention them here.

The threshold for designation with regard to both ‘Major’ and ‘Non-major’ in terms of quality of decisions is where the authority loses 10% or more of it’s a decisions are allowed at appeal. Therefore, in this instance the upper limit is 10%.

The Council's performance with regard to the 4 national indicators are as follows:

Special Measures

	Special Measures Designation threshold	Result Qtr. 1 2019-20*	Result Qtr. 2 2019-20*	Result Qtr. 3 2019-20*	Result Qtr. 4 2019-20*
Speed of major development applications	Less than 60%	72.4%	74.6%		
Quality of major development applications	Over 10%	1.6%	1.5%		
Speed of non-major development applications	Less than 70%	80.5%	82.9%		
Quality of non-major development applications	Over 10%	0.8%	1%		

*figure provided is the rolling total for the two year assessment period (October 2017 – Sept 2019)

As can be seen above, the Council is clearly above the threshold for designation in terms of ‘speed of decisions’ for both ‘Major’ and ‘Non-major’ applications and well below the upper thresholds of 10% in respect of ‘Quality of Decision’.

It is also important to note that, in respect of three of the four figures the Council is moving further away from the threat of designation. In relation to the Quality of decisions for 'Non-majors' the increase is actually very small at 0.2% and at 1% remains significantly below the 10% threshold.

These figures are drawn from nationally published 'Live Planning Tables' by the MHCLG. Even with the improved performance, in terms of the Council's placing within these tables, it remains within the bottom quartile of Local Planning Authorities within England with regard to 'Speed of Decision' for both 'Major' and 'Non-major' applications. However, it must be recognised that the reporting period is over a 2 year period and as such, whilst performance is now improving, it will take a while for these rankings to improve given historic underperformance in past and the large number of decisions involved. However, this is a rolling 2 year performance standard so, with sustained improvement moving forwards, any historic underperformance will fall away over time.

Local Performance Indicators

With regard to these 7 indicators are included in the Planning and Development Service Plan for 2019/20. These are referred to in the commentaries below.

INDICATOR - Percentage of applications determined within timescales:-

- (1) 72.5% of 'Major' applications¹ determined 'in time'²**
- (2) 77.5% of 'Minor' applications³ determined 'in time'²**
- (3) 85% of 'Other' applications⁴ determined within 8 weeks**
- (4) 85% of 'Non-major' applications⁵ determined 'in time'²**

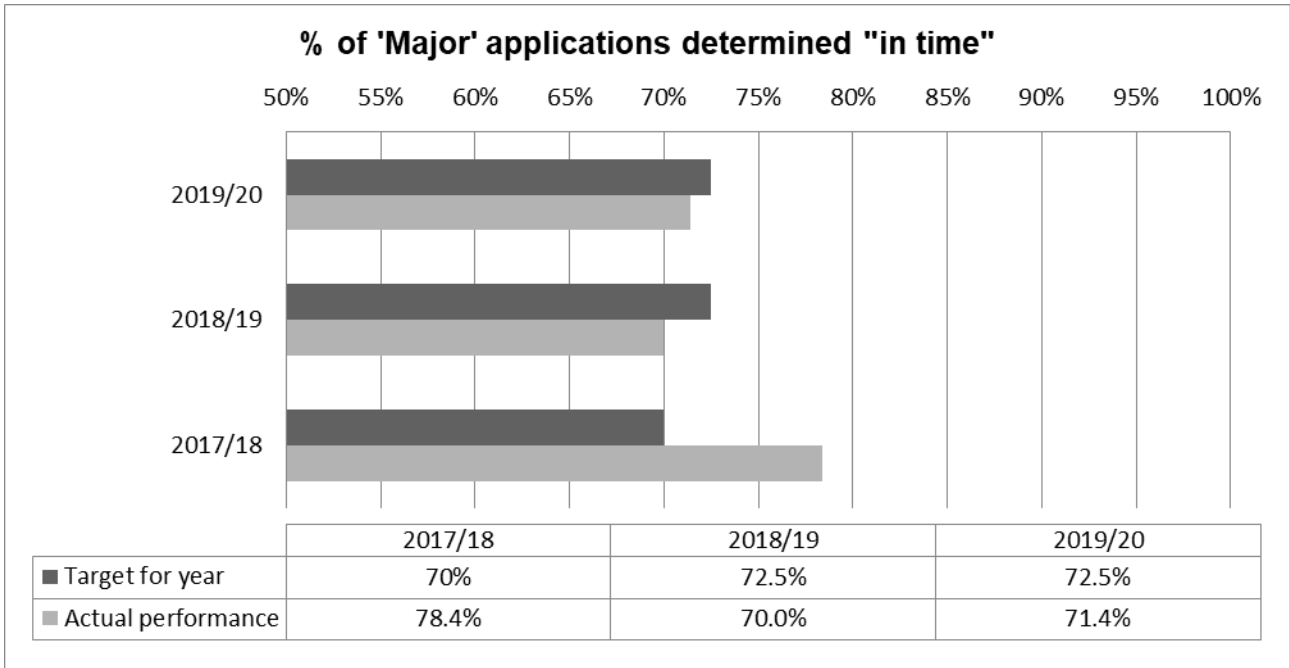
(see footnotes set out at the end of this report)

(1) In dealing with '**Major**' applications the 'LPI for majors is 72.5%. The figures to date for 2019/20 is 71.4% which is slightly below the target of 72.5%. However, these figure are reflective of the fact that the authority has historically been incorrectly recording its performance having regard to the advice provided by the Planning Advisory Service which has had significant impact upon all the Council's figures for reported applications. This issue has now been addressed and as a result the reported performance for the Council for the last two months of the Quarter 2 was actually 100% for Major applications.

This improved performance is also being supported by the introduction of a number of access reports which are currently being developed and rolled out for both the Development Management and the Planning Technical support team to ensure that applications are performance managed from first receipt through to final determination. This will include the ability for officers and managers to view both team and individual's 'live' performance for all application types to identify and recognise good performance as well as ensure that any problems are identified early and measures put in place to ensure the delivery of an efficient and cost effective service.

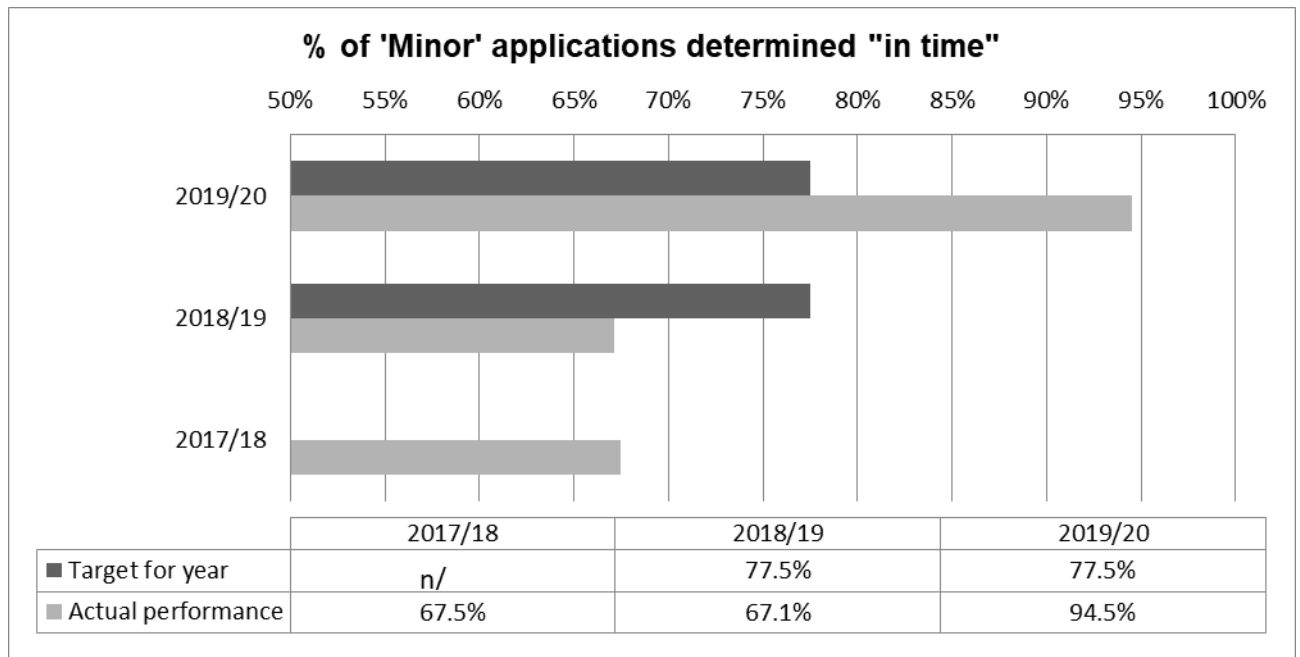
Obviously, these changes have only been recently introduced and, given the small number of 'Major ' applications received, it will take a while for these measures to be reflected in improved reported performance.

Taking these factors into consideration and the fact that the department has managed to appoint an experienced planner into the Planning Officer vacancy and also appoint to cover the maternity leave of another planner, it is highly likely that the target for the year will be met.



TARGET FOR 2019/20 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

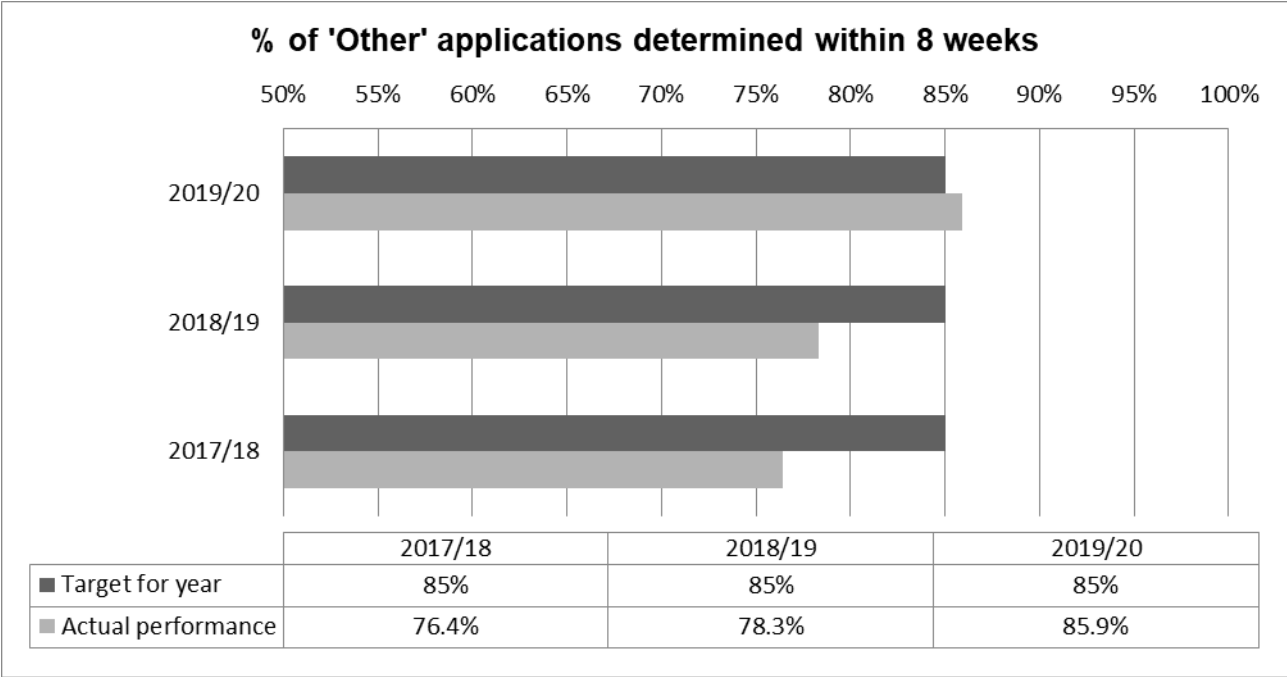
(2) In dealing with 'Minor' applications the 'LPI for minor is 77.5%. The figures to date for 2019/20 is 94.5% which is significantly above target.



The performance to date for 2019/20 has been consistently good and changes being put in place mentioned above will assist in improving these figures moving forwards. In the October the team has achieved 100% of cases in time.

TARGET FOR 2019/20 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

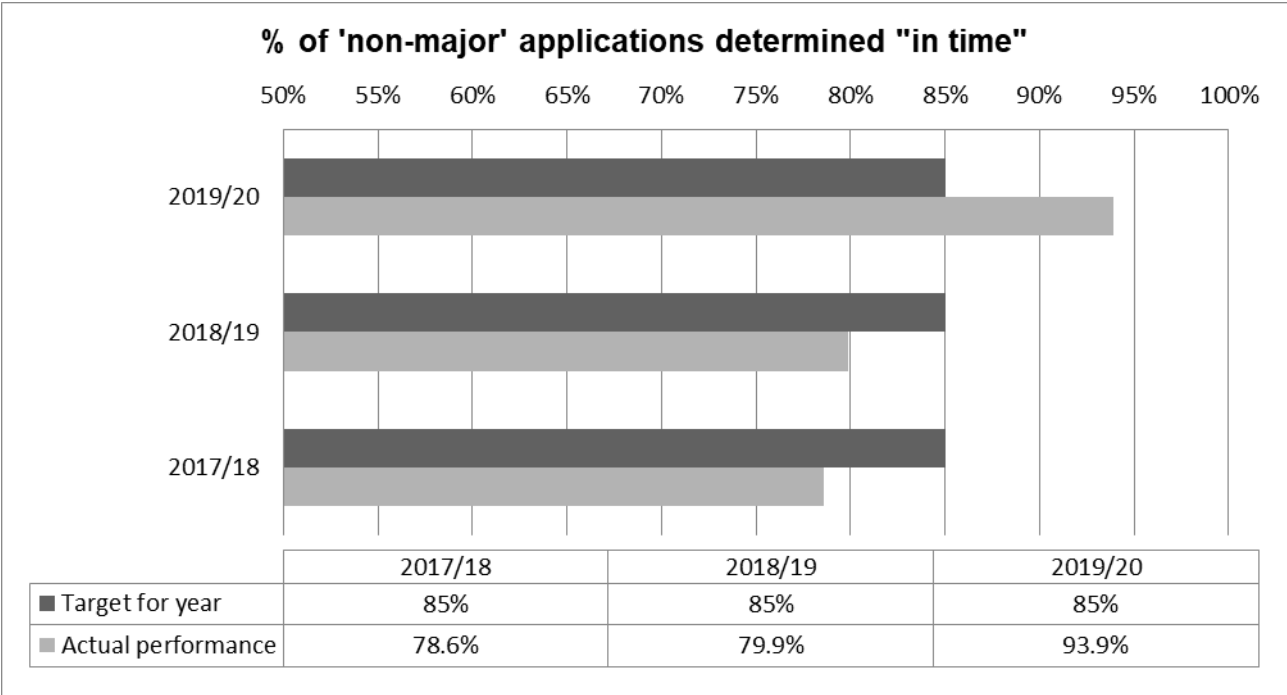
(3) In dealing with **'Other' applications** the 'LPI for minor is 85%. The figures to date for 2019/20 is 85.5% which is above target.



Performance for 2019/20 has been very good despite the team having two vacant Planner posts who would be the officers primarily dealing with this types of application. As mentioned above an experience Planner has now been secured and will be starting in the new year along with another officer to cover maternity leave. Given these appointments and the other measures being introduced it is likely that the target will continue to be met and significantly improved upon moving forwards.

TARGET FOR 2019/20 IS LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

(4) In dealing with **'Non-major' applications** the 'LPI for minor is 85%. The figures to date for 2019/20 is 93.3% which is significantly above target. For clarity this reported LPI is different from the 'Non-major' KPI mentioned above as this is the performance figure for 2019/20 year to-date and not the 2 year rolling figure.



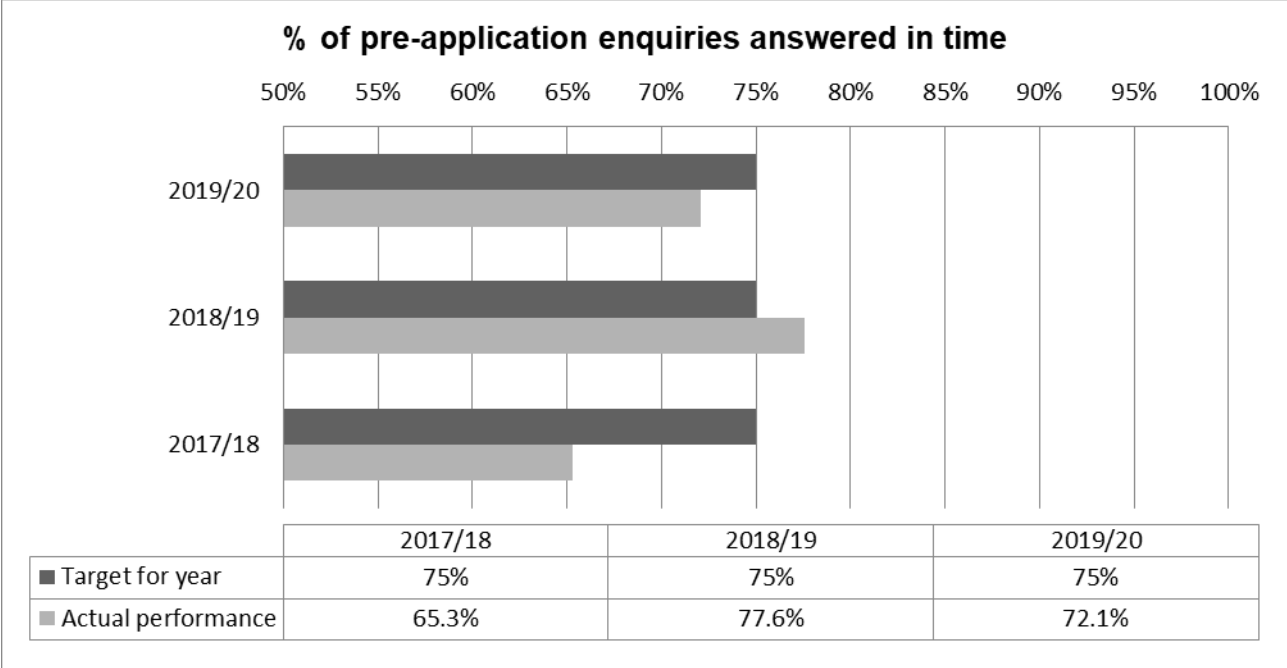
The performance to date for 2019/20 has been consistently good and changes being put in place mentioned above will assist in improving these figures moving forwards. Again, in October the team has achieved 100% of cases in time. Importantly, a large number of the applications assessed under this LPI are 'Householder' application which are usually dealt with by Planning Officers. The filling of the two Planning Officer vacancies mentioned above will allow this exemplar performance to continue into the New Year.

TARGET FOR 2019/20 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

In conclusion, currently 3 out of the 4 four targets are being met and exceeded and that all four targets relating to the speed of determination of applications are likely to be achieved.

INDICATOR - Percentage of pre-application enquiries answered in time

In dealing with 'Pre-application enquiries' the 'LPI for minor is 75%. The figures to date for 2019/20 is 72.1% which is currently below target.



The pre-app service is currently under review and this work is ongoing.

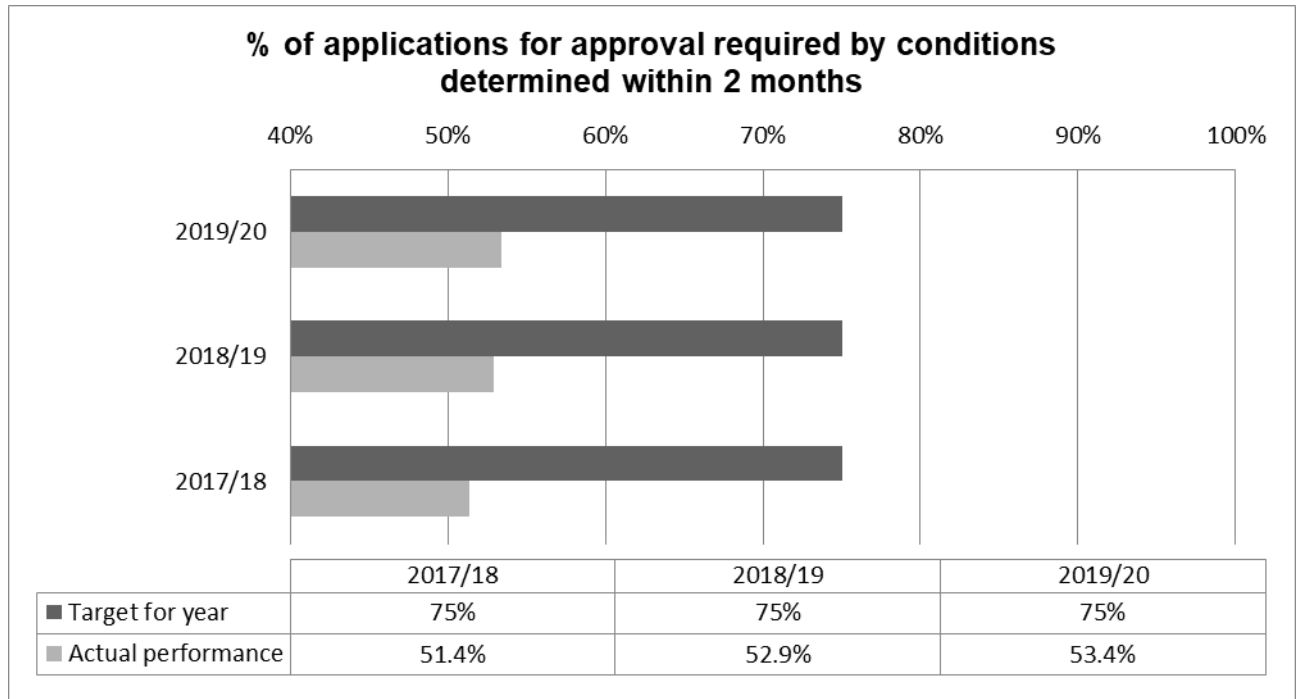
Similar to planning applications, a number of performance monitoring tools are being developed which will also be used to monitor and performance manage pre-apps moving forwards.

Having regard to the above it is considered that, whilst the target has not yet been reached, the introduction of new management reports and the appointment of additional staff will ensure that the 2019/20 target is reached.

TARGET FOR 2019/20 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

INDICATOR - Percentage of applications for approvals required by conditions determined within 8 weeks

In dealing with ‘Discharge of Condition applications’ the ‘LPI for minor is 75%. The figures to date for 2019/20 is 53.4% which is currently well below target.



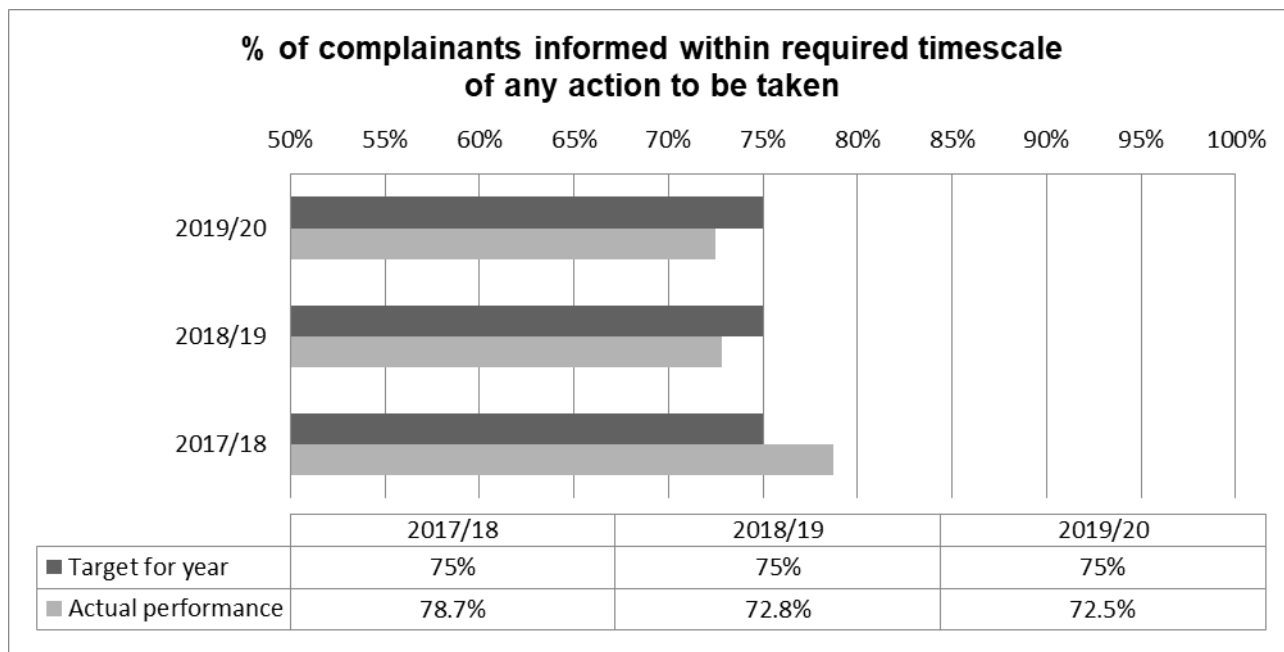
Similar to planning applications and pre-apps, this type of application has not benefitted from performance management and, due to the shortage of staff, the department has struggled to deal with these applications in time. With the introduction of proper performance management tools and the appointment of additional staff it is anticipated that the target will be reached.

TARGET FOR 2019/20 is LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

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

In dealing with ‘Enforcement complaints’ the ‘LPI for this service is 75%. The figures to date for 2019/20 is 72.5.4% which is currently below target.

Currently there is one officer undertaking this role who is supported by Planning Officers in formulating an action plan to deal with the cases. Currently, there are limited performance tools available to track performance which again is exacerbated by the lack of officers within the team to support the officer. With the introduction of proper performance management tools and the appointment of additional staff it is anticipated that the target will be reached.



TARGET FOR 2019/20 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

Footnotes

¹ '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 1,000 square metres or more or the site area is 1 hectare or more.

² 'In-time' means determined within an extended period of time beyond the normal 8 week target period that has been agreed, in writing, by the applicant.

³ 'Minor' applications are those for developments which do not meet the criteria for 'Major' development nor the definitions of 'Other' Development.

⁴ '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.

⁵ 'Non-major' means all 'minor' development and also householder development and development involving a change of use which fall within the 'other' development category.

Date report prepared:

15th November 2019

Source of information/background papers

- General Development Control Returns PS1 and PS2 for 2017 – 2019
- Planning Services own internal records, produced manually and from its UniForm modules.
- MHCLG Live Planning Tables.