

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 2020 and 30th September 2020. Figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20 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 2020/21.

(c) That the next 'Development Management Performance Report' be submitted to Committee around June 2021 reporting on performance for the complete year 2020/21.

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, 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21: Contains quarterly and annual figures for the Performance Indicators applicable during 2020/21 (comparative figures for 2018/19 and 2019/20 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 21st July 2020 which reported on the performance achieved in 2019/20, 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 in respect of speed of decision is the two year period from July 2018 to June 2020. The period referred to in this report – between April 2020 and September 2020 therefore partially 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). The two year period in respect of quality is April 2017 to March 2019

The threshold for designation with regard to both ‘Major’ and ‘Non-major’ in terms of quality of decisions is where 10% or more of the authority’s 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:

	Designation threshold	Result Qtr. 1 2020-21*	Result Qtr. 2 2020-21*	Result Qtr. 3 2020-21*	Result Qtr. 4 2020-21*
Speed of major development applications	Less than 60%	76.8%	84.6%		
Quality of major development applications	Over 10%	1.5%	3%		
Speed of non-major development applications	Less than 70%	84.9%	90.4%		
Quality of non-major development applications	Over 10%	0.8%	0.9%		

*figure provided is the rolling total for the two year assessment period covering July 2018 – Sept 2020 for speed and April 2017-March 2019 for quality.

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 two of the four figures the Council is moving further away from the threat of designation. In relation to the quality of decisions of major development applications, whilst the percentage has doubled between the first and second quarter at 3% it remains significantly below the 10% threshold. In relation to quality of decisions for 'Non-majors' the increase is actually very small at 0.1%.

These figures are drawn from nationally published 'Live Planning Tables' by the MHCLG. The improved performance, in terms of the Council's placing within these tables, has resulted in the Council moving from the fourth (bottom) quartile to the third quartile of Local Planning Authorities within England with regard to 'Speed of Decision' for both 'Major' and 'Non-major' applications. With sustained improvement moving forwards the Council should move up the league table. In respect of quality of decisions the Council is in the third quartile for 'Major' development applications and second quartile for 'Non-major'.

Local Performance Indicators (LPI)

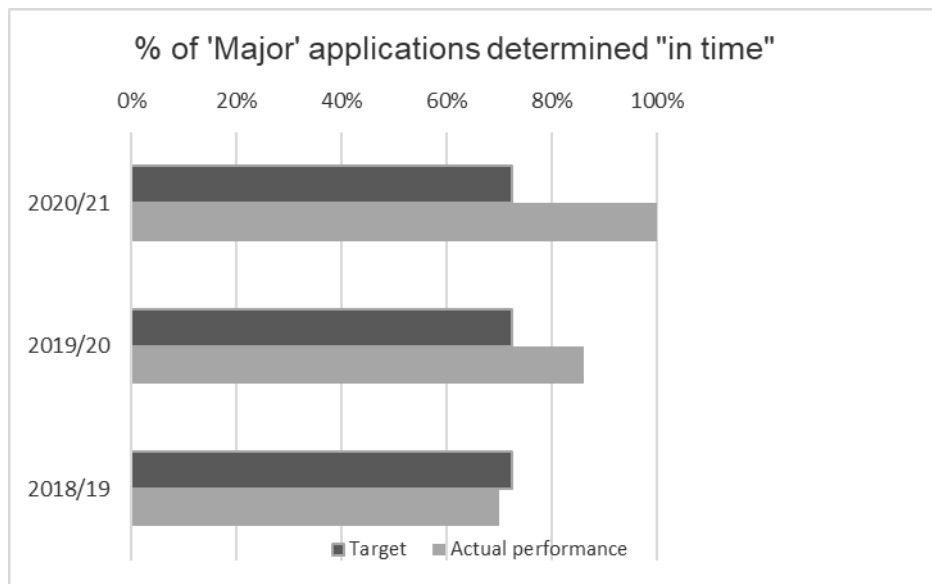
With regard to these 7 indicators are included in the Planning and Development Service Plan for 2020/21. These are referred to in the commentaries below.

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 'in time'²**
- (4) 85% of 'Non-major' applications⁵ determined 'in time'²**

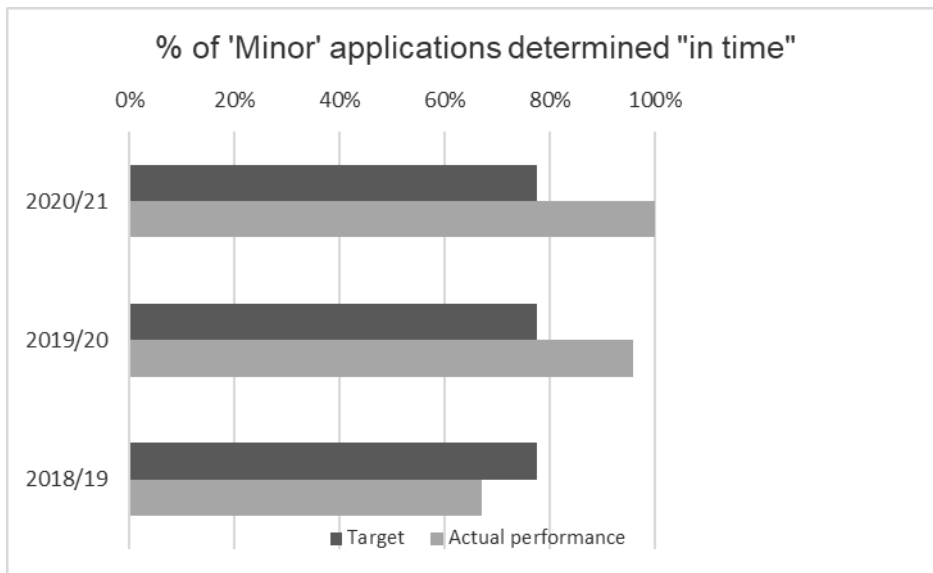
(see footnotes set out at the end of this report)

(1) In dealing with **'Major' applications** the LPI for majors is 72.5%. The figures to date for 2020/21 is 100%. This is a marked improvement from the same time last year when performance was 66.7%.



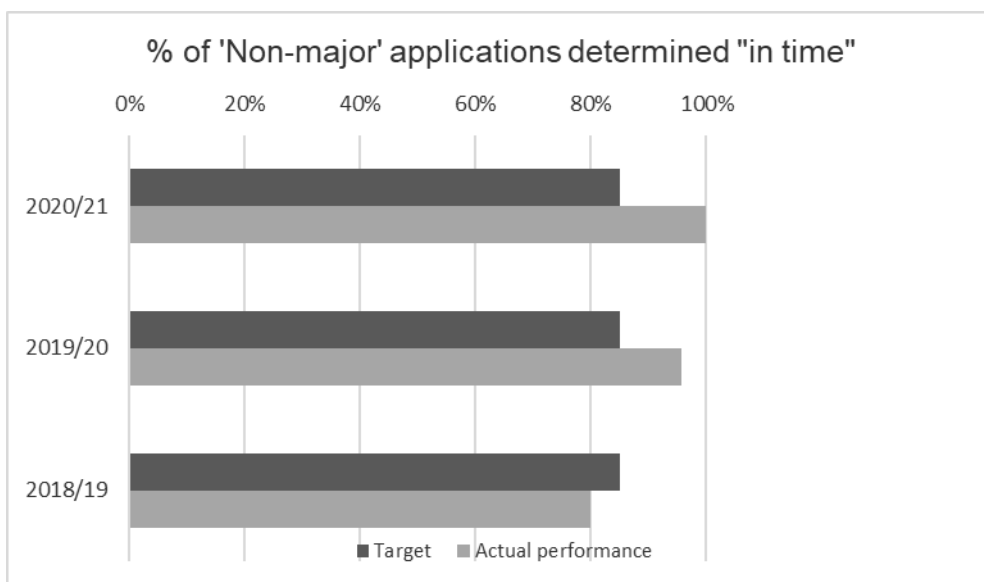
TARGET FOR 2020/21 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

(2) In dealing with **'Minor' applications** the LPI for minor is 77.5%. The figures to date for 2020/21 is 100%. At this stage last year performance was 94.5%.



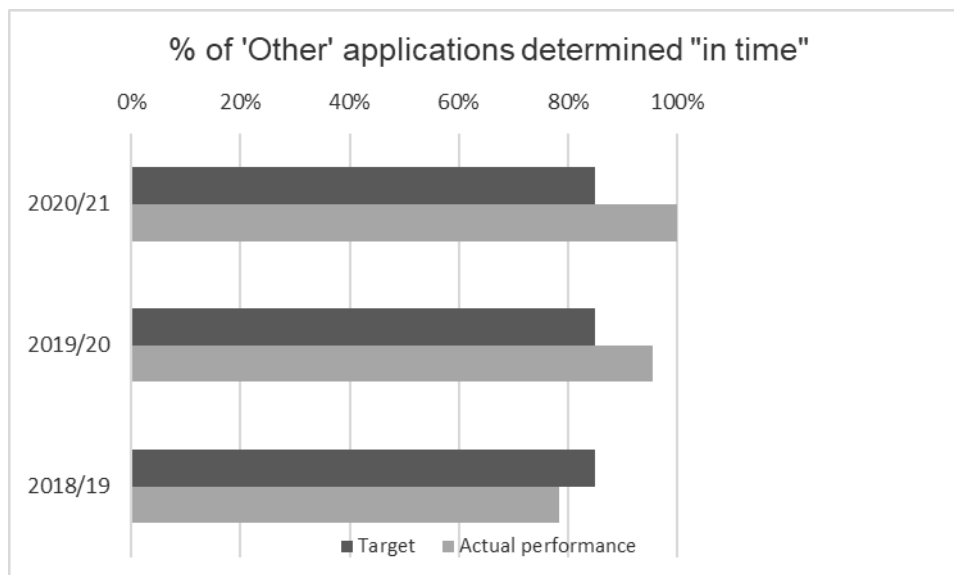
TARGET FOR 2020/21 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

(3) In dealing with **'Other' applications** the 'LPI for minor is 85%. The figures to date for 2020/21 is 100% a marked improvement on performance this time last year which was 85.5%.



TARGET FOR 2020/21 IS LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

(4) In dealing with **'Non-major' applications** the 'LPI for minor is 85%. The figures to date for 2020/21 is 100% (93.3% this time last year). 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.

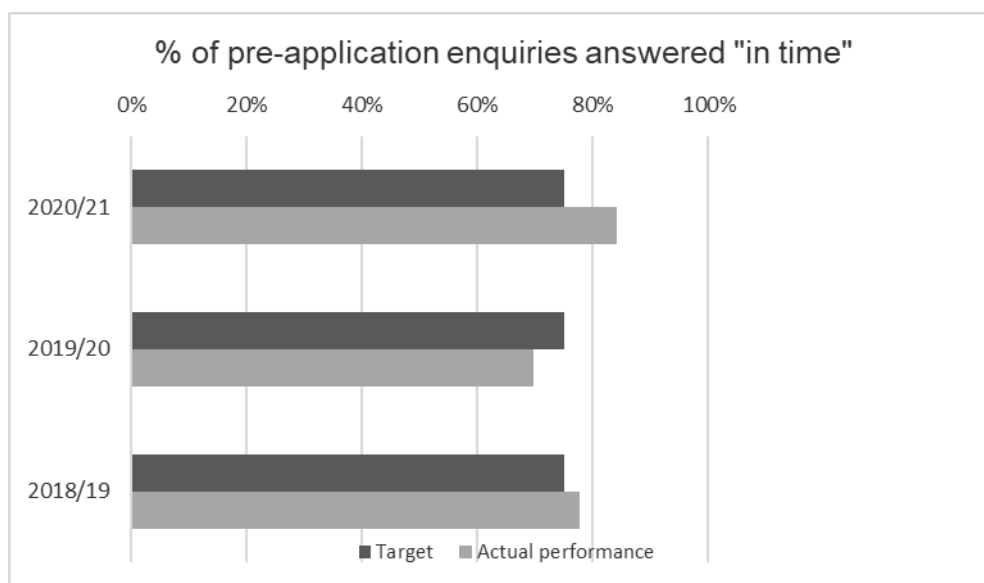


TARGET FOR 2020/21 LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED

In conclusion, the Service has achieved 100% against all four targets in respect of determination of planning applications which is extremely commendable performance particularly when it is noted that there are currently vacancies within the team. On the basis of this performance it is predicted that all four targets 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 2020/21 is 84.2% which currently exceeds the target.

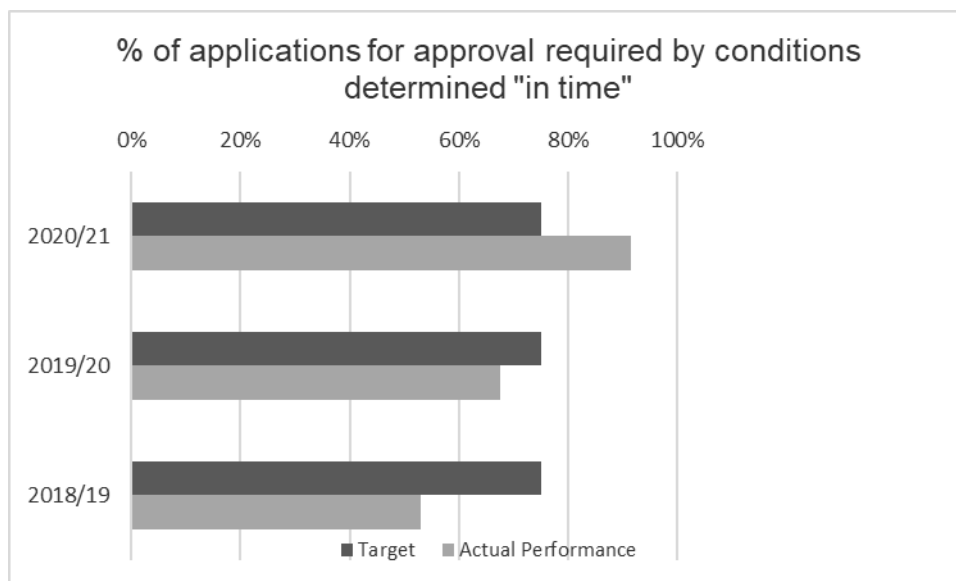


The Service is set to achieve this target for only the second time in the last five years.

TARGET FOR 2020/21 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 is 75%. The figures to date for 2020/21 is 91.4% which is significantly above the target.

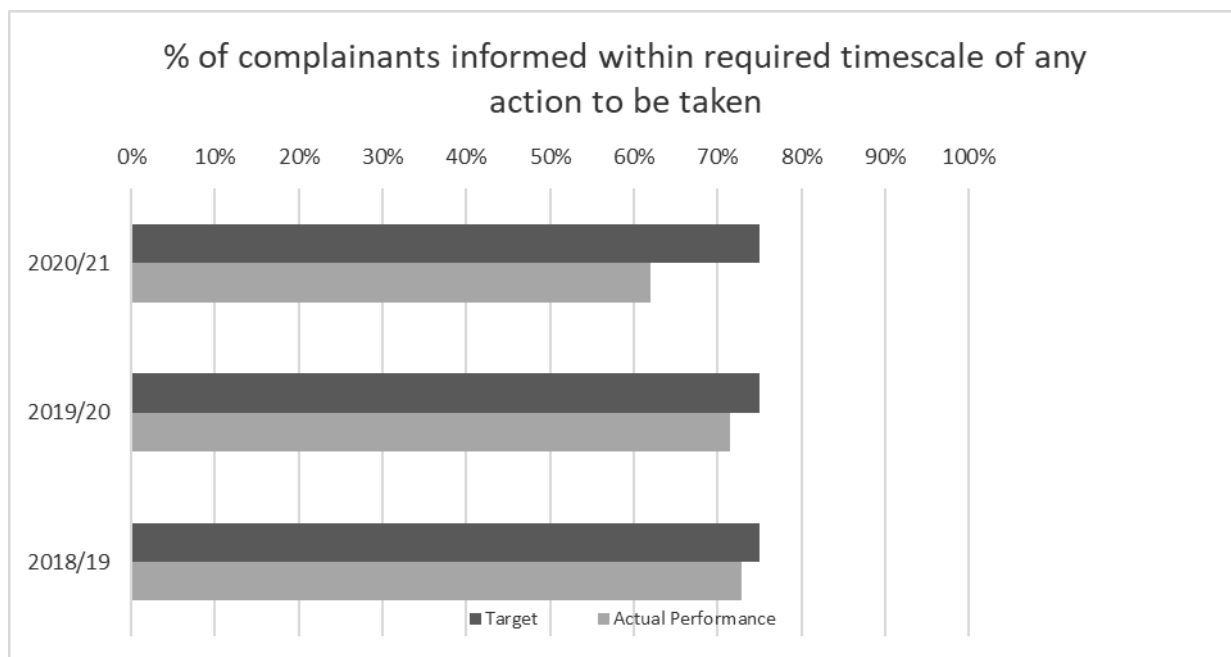


This target was changed at the start of this year from the percentage of conditions determined within 8 weeks to the percentage of conditions determined "in time". This change together with improved performance management tools and greater focus on such matters has led to a marked improvement in performance. At this stage last year performance was 53.4%, which had improved to 67.6% by the end of the year.

TARGET FOR 2020/21 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.

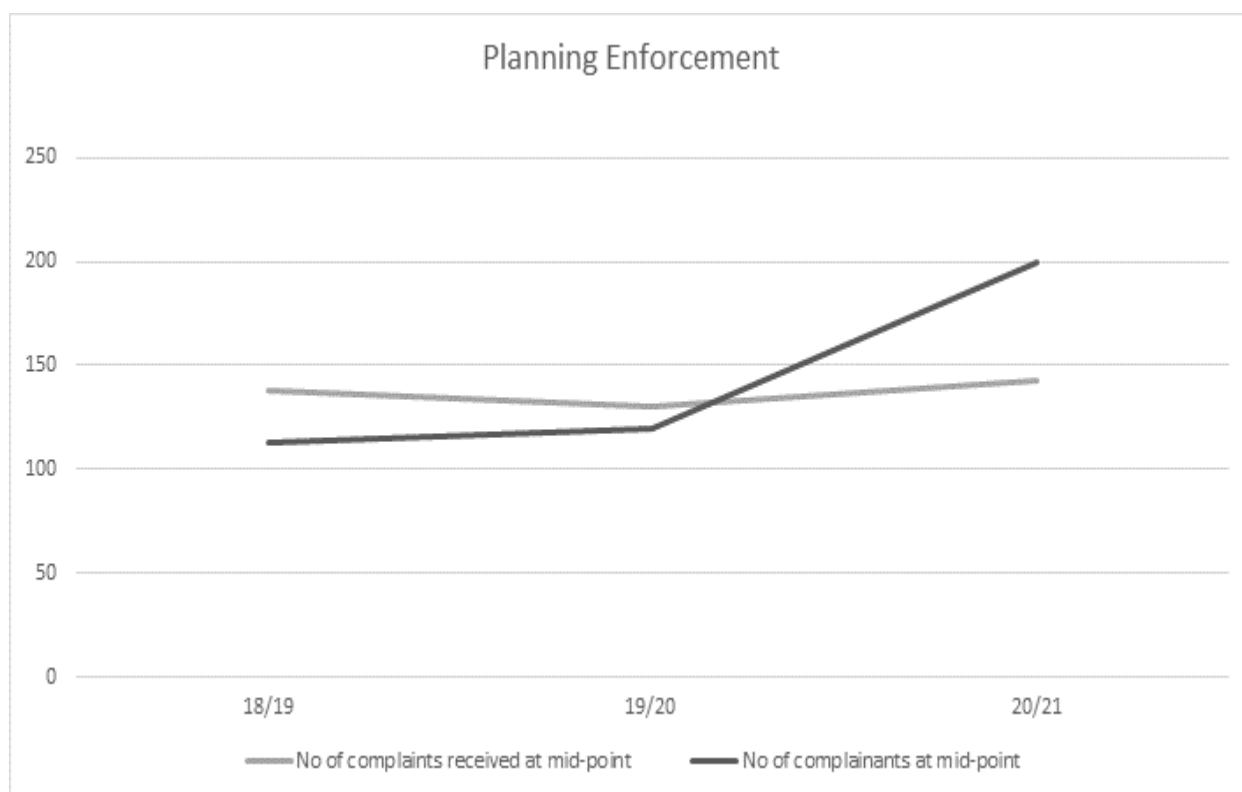
In dealing with '**Enforcement complaints**' the 'LPI for this service is 75%. The figures to date for 2020/21 is 62% which is currently below target.



Whilst the Service has continued to investigate and pursue breaches of planning control during the Covid-19 pandemic the restrictions that have been in place and the need to ensure that site visits are undertaken safely has had an impact on performance. In addition the number of cases received has increased during the pandemic, although not by a significant amount, and more notably the number of

complainants has increased quite considerably as can be seen in the table and graph below. Therefore any delay in determining what action should be taken on a case has a disproportionate impact on performance where that case generated a large number of complainants.

	No of complaints (cases) at mid-point	No of complainants at mid-point
18/19	138	113
19/20	130	120
20/21	143	200



Performance management tools are being developed in conjunction with the rolling out of the Local Planning Enforcement Policy approved earlier this year which should result in improved performance. Recruitment to the vacant posts within the Development Management Team will also be beneficial as there will be additional resources available.

TARGET FOR 2019/20 UNLIKELY 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:

24th November 2020

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.