



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>18 June 2019</b>
<b>Part:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	<b>Planning, Development and Regeneration Performance Quarter 4 and End of Year Report 2018-19</b>
Contact:	Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure  Author/Responsible Officer: James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration
Purpose of report:	To set out the performance outturn for the service for quarter 4 and the end of your position at 2018/19.
Recommendation	That the report be noted.
Corporate objectives:	All Corporate Objectives are relevant with this annual review of service performance.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u>  None arising from decisions on this report though the financial indicators for Building Control and Local Land Charges report an under recovery of income against target levels, and an over-recovery for planning fee income.
'Value for money' implications	<u>Value for money</u>  None arising from this report.
Risk implications	Risk register currently under review.
Community Impact Assessment	Not applicable for this report.
Health and safety	Not applicable for this report.

Implications	
Consultees:	<p>Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>Chris Taylor, Group Manager Strategic Planning and Regeneration</p> <p>Sara Whelan, Group Manager Development Management and Planning</p>
Background papers:	Performance report for 2018-19 (at appendix)
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>Als – Approved Building Control Inspectors</p> <p>LABC – Local Authority Building Control</p>

## Executive Summary

1. The report provides the end of year performance position for the Planning, Development and Regeneration service for 2018-19. It follows the quarterly reports on performance that have already been considered by the Committee for this business year.
2. The report covers 17 Indicators, of which three are for information only; eight are at green, two at amber and four at red. The end of year performance report is at appendix 1.
3. Overall performance across the service has been strong with planning decision turnaround times all exceeded, planning fee income exceeded by almost 38%, and over 70% of planning appeals successfully defended.
4. The red indicators cover income levels in Building Control and Local Land Charges income, and some slippage in the time taken to visit planning enforcement cases.

## Summary of Performance and Issues

### Planning, Development and Regeneration – Service Overview

5. The service is headed by James Doe, Assistant Director and contains two service groupings under two Group Managers – Development Management and Planning, headed by Sara Whelan, and Strategic Planning and Regeneration headed by Chris Taylor.
6. The Development Management and Planning group is responsible for the full range of planning casework – planning applications for new building, changes of use and associated work. It includes the processing of applications for works to listed buildings, certain types of advertisements, and works to preserved trees. With this comes the responsibility for the enforcement of

breaches of planning control. The service group is also responsible for the conservation of local heritage.

7. It also covers the local Building Control service acting as the regulatory authority for approving new construction in accordance with national Building Regulations. A further team covers the processing of local land charge searches which are necessary to support the sale and purchase of property across the Borough.
8. The Strategic Planning and Regeneration group is responsible for a range of services. It covers the production of the Local Plan, the forward strategy and policy base for dealing with new development in Dacorum. A separate team is dedicated to the delivery of strategic sites, including the proposals for the major expansion of Hemel Hempstead through the Hemel Garden Communities programme. It manages the receipt and spend of financial contributions received from developers through the s106 obligation process and Dacorum's Community Infrastructure Levy, and the production of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan which sets out the Borough's infrastructure needs into the future.
9. The group is responsible for economic development services, including the management of the Maylands Business Centre at Redbourn Road and Kylina Court, Hemel Hempstead. In the recent past, the service has led on directly provided regeneration schemes including major improvements to Hemel Hempstead town centre through the Hemel Evolution programme. It continues to manage other projects currently under development, including the Bury museum proposals.

#### 2018/19 Performance – Development Management

10. The principal measures of performance in the Development Management service is the speed at which the Council processes, and determines planning applications. These are in three categories: Major applications (DMP04), proposals for 10 or more new homes or 1,000 square metres or more of other new floorspace; Minor applications (DMP05) which includes smaller residential and commercial proposals and Others (DMP06), the majority of which include 'householder' developments for home extensions and other buildings within the curtilage of residential property.
11. The statutory timescale for determining applications is eight weeks with the exception of the major category where it is 13 weeks, or 16 weeks where applications have to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment – often the more complex and larger cases. The timescale can be varied by way of a planning performance agreement (PPA) with the applicant. It is these timescales performance is measured against.
12. Performance of the service for determining planning applications within these timescales was achieved in all three categories: 79% for Majors, 78% for Minors and just under 91% for Others. All targets have been met comfortably, though speed of determining major applications was down from very good performance of 89% last year, and minors by around 4% from 82%.
13. The backdrop to this is the growing number of applications being handled by the service. It received 2,628 applications (ref DMP02) in 2018/19, a rise of 13% on the previous year when it received 2,352 submissions for

determination. Also the complexity of major applications is rising, and as a consequence proposals will occupy more of the handling officer's time. Recruitment was held last year to appoint junior staff to boost capacity to handle lower-level cases, thereby making more time for more senior staff to handle the more complex proposals.

14. This is a trend which is set continue as large sites continue to come forward through the development process.
15. An important measure of the success of the service is in how it handled planning appeals against either the refusal of planning permission, the imposition of conditions to a planning consent, or enforcement action (ref DMP30).
16. Dacorum's performance has always been consistently good, and at 72% of appeals dismissed, the target of 70% was met. Members will note this is down from better performance of 82% in 2017/18, though the number of appeals lodged with the Planning Inspectorate has increased from 37 in 2017/18 to 47 in 2018/19.
17. Maintaining good performance in defending planning appeals is important for the Council's reputation and confidence in its planning service. Officers are reviewing the cases that were allowed last year to identify any areas that need particular attention in the cases where permission is to be refused, and ensuring there are sound and robust reasons for doing so.
18. For 2019/20, a new measure will be introduced to record performance on major developments going to appeal, as this is a key measure that Government has introduced.
19. In terms of planning decisions, just under 7% of applications were refused last year (DMP07). The refusal rate is up slightly from 5.5% in 2017/18, but still well within the target of 10%.
20. The approach with applications is to identify problems with a development proposal at pre-application stage to avoid the need to refuse when the formal submission is made. This leads to better developments, and avoids the need for re-submissions of refused proposals, where, if it is made within 6 months of the decision, no fee is payable and consequently there is a further work and resource pressure for the Council with no remuneration.
21. Service improvement objectives for 2109/20 include improving turnaround times and efficiency and reducing the number of applications that are subject to extension of time agreements with the applicant.
22. The time taken to validate planning applications received was good at 80% of cases cleared in 3 days (DMP08), and a big improvement on disappointing performance from 2017/18.
23. Validation is an important part of the planning application process. It covers the registration of the proposals, checking that all necessary information, including the correct fee, has been submitted, and issuing consultations to neighbours and key organisations. The quicker this is done, the quicker the service can get on with considering the proposals and will be in a better position to get cases processed within target timescales.

24. The service has recently appointed a specific team leader for the administration staff to, amongst other things, improve performance and lead business improvements to the service. This has helped in getting validation performance up.
25. Finally, fee income for planning applications received in 2018/19 was very strong at nearly £1.44m, and over target by almost £400k. Income was also up by £400k on receipts in 2017/18.

#### 2018/19 Performance – Planning Enforcement

26. Workload in the enforcement service rose by 50% during 2018/19. Despite this, the service maintained good turnaround times relating to commencing investigations and site visits according to case priority. Indicators PE01, 02 and 03 refer.
27. The priorities for investigating enforcement cases are set out in the Council's Local Enforcement Plan which is found online at <http://www.dacorum.gov.uk/docs/default-source/strategic-planning/local-enforcement-plan.pdf?sfvrsn=0>. This document is being reviewed this year.
28. In each category, over 90% of the visits made to sites were carried out within the target timescales. The service has taken on a new lead enforcement officer to add capacity to deal with the heavy workload it has.
29. For 2020/21, new performance indicators will cover enforcement workload, numbers of formal notices served and compliance rates.

#### 2018/19 Performance – Building Control

30. Previous reports to the Committee have highlighted the issues in Building Control in terms of income levels and the difficulty in recruiting staff. Members will note that separate reports on this agenda set out proposals for transferring the service to Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd.
31. The reported performance indicators for Building Control relate to fee income (FIN15) and the percentage of applications for approval under the Building Regulations determined in two months (BC01).
32. Fee income, at £554k finished £47k higher in 2018/19 than it did in the previous year. This receipt was however £42k under target. The new interim management brought in to the service with improved application handling times achieved an improvement on last year's outturn.
33. Just under 90% of applications were determined within two months. This was down from almost 99% in 2017/18 as the service has been clearing a backlog of cases. Most new work coming in to the service has been turned around in just a day or two.

#### 2018/19 Performance – Local Land Charges

34. The Land Charges service processes land charge searches on properties being bought and sold. The target (LC04) is to have an average turnaround time of 10 days to process searches.
35. Performance remained strong this year with each searches taking 6.7 days on average, a modest improvement on the 7.3 days from 2017/18.
36. The reduction in activity in the local property market has however suppressed fee income which was £209k, against an anticipated target of £291k for the year. The income target for 2019/20 has been lowered to reflect market conditions.

### **Recommendations**

37. The Committee is asked to note the report.