



Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	17 March 2020
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Planning, Development and Regeneration Quarter 3 Performance Report 2019-20
Contact:	<p>Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Infrastructure</p> <p>Author/Responsible Officer: James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration Sara Whelan, Group Manager – Development Management and Planning</p>
Purpose of report:	To set out the performance outturn for the service for Quarter 3 of 2019-20
Recommendations	That the report is noted.
Corporate objectives:	All Corporate Objectives are relevant with this annual review of service performance.
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>None arising from decisions on this report though the financial indicators for Planning fees and Local Land Charges report an under recovery of income against target levels.</p>
'Value for money' implications	<p><u>Value for money</u></p> <p>None arising from this report.</p>
Risk implications	None arising from this report. Risks addressed through service level risk register.
Community Impact	Not applicable for this report.

Assessment	
Health and safety Implications	Not applicable for this report.
Consultees:	Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director Housing and Regeneration Chris Taylor, Group Manager Strategic Planning and Regeneration Sara Whelan, Group Manager Development Management and Planning
Background papers:	Performance report (appendix 1)
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None.

Executive Summary

1. This report presents the performance outturn for the Planning, Development and Regeneration service for the third quarter of the business year 2019-20. The full performance report is at Appendix 1.
2. Of 18 indicators, four are running at green; seven at red, four at amber and three are for information only.

Key Issues

3. The main exceptions to good performance are in the areas of income for Planning fees and Land Charges and, to a degree, Building Control, though Members will note that this service has now transferred to Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. Also, performance in the development management service has declined in the short term given the transitional effects of installing the new back office IT system.

Income

4. Planning fees income (FIN 16). This remains below trajectory at the end of Q3, but like in the Q2 report the position has continued to improve. Fees received are now £60k short of target, an improvement on the just under £99k short of target at Q2, now running at 93% of expected fees received, compared to 83% at Q2.
5. Some large applications which were expected to be submitted in the current financial year are likely to materialise in 2020/21. These include the National Grid site, London Road Two Waters, Core Strategy site LA2 at Cherry Bounce Hemel Hempstead and new proposals for Symbio House, Whiteleaf Road Two Waters.

6. By contrast, the current financial year has been very good for pre-application and Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) Fees. By the end of January 2020 (and therefore one month on from the end of Q3), income had exceeded the year-end target by £175k. PPAs do result in additional work and application of staff resources.
7. With applications expected to be submitted before the end of the financial year, the overall income target of £1.154m may yet be achieved, but not exceeded as previous reports had anticipated.
8. Land Charges Income (FIN17). Income remains at 86% of expected receipts, which was the same at the end of Q2. Actual income was £25k short of trajectory, with market uncertainty continuing to impact on property transactions.
9. There are reports of improvements in the housing transactions market which may lead to an end of year improvement. Land Charges is a competitive service and Dacorum's market share is running at about 50% versus private sector providers. Actions over the rest of the year will focus on better promotion of the service.
10. Building Control Income (FIN15). At the end of Q3, fee income for the service was running at about 85% of trajectory, a worsening of the position from the previous quarter and representing an under-recovery by around £67k.
11. Members will be aware that the Building Control service transferred to Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd (HBC) on 16 December 2019. The worsening of income receipts in Q3 can be mainly attributed to the transition period that ran across the quarter before the transfer was completed (although this coincided with a downturn in Building Control activity across the County).
12. By the end of September 2019, in anticipation of the proposed transfer to HBC in October, the DBC in-house team was effectively wound down. Some unexpected delays occurred in October over details of the transfer, which resulted in HBC staff running the Dacorum service – at DBC – for a short period. The winning of partnership work from customers outside of the Borough, which the DBC service had been achieving, ceased. This led to a drop-off in some income being achieved in the latter weeks of 2019.
13. As the service has now transferred, direct performance management is now a matter for HBC and this and the other Building Control performance indicators are no longer relevant. Members should note however, that the duty to provide Local Authority Building Control services remains with DBC and its membership of HBC is the way in which this responsibility is being discharged. For this reason, and that the Council now has a financial stake in HBC, good performance by HBC is in DBC's interests.
14. DBC is now a shareholder of HBC and is represented on its Board of Directors by the Corporate Director for Housing and Regeneration, and at a more operational level at its Commissioning Panel by the Group Manager for Development Management and Planning.

15. As agreed with the Chair of this Committee, Officers will bring progress reports on DBC's membership of HBC and its performance in the coming years.

Development Management Performance

16. Indicators for the speed of validating planning applications (DMP08), and determining all categories of planning applications (DMP04, 05 and 06) declined in Q3. Three main reasons account for this.
17. Firstly, the transition from changing the old to the new back office IT system. The new system, Uniform, became operational in late 2019. There was an unavoidable 4-week period whereby consultation responses could not be issued until the new system was in place. To be clear, there was no loss of consultation with residents or other consultees; only that extra time had to be allowed to enable the consultation requests to go out, be logged on the new system and taken into consideration.
18. Secondly, staff resources. A dedicated staff team was established to deal with the IT transfer, with necessary backfilling. The new system has nevertheless required a great deal of training and familiarisation for all staff, which has impacted on performance.
19. Thirdly, a rise in the number of applications received in November 2019. There was a spike in the receipt of new proposals by sixty cases. Taken with the transitional IT issues and staff resourcing as above, this has added to the delays, which are likely to continue into Q4.
20. Recruitment and retention of quality professional staff remains an ongoing issue for Dacorum, as it does for most authorities in the Home Counties area where demand is high and supply is limited. Last week, two new trainees started in Development Management, and interviews were held for vacant Team Leader and Planning Officer positions.
21. A service improvement project, dealing with both the issues of managing an increasingly complex caseload of development proposals, and using the capabilities of the new IT system, is currently underway.
22. Planning appeals dismissed (DMP30). This indicator remains at red, with 54% of appeals dismissed (in other words, won by the Council) against the target of 70%. This is a slight improvement on Q2 where performance was at 52%.