



Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	23 March 2021
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Planning, Development and Regeneration Quarter 3 Performance Report 2020-21
Contact:	Cllr Alan Anderson, 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 3 of 2020-21
Recommendations	That the report is 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 Planning fees and Local Land Charges report an under recovery of income against target levels.
'Value for money' implications	<u>Value for money</u> None arising from this report.
Risk implications	None arising from this report. Risks addressed through service level risk register.
Community Impact Assessment	Not applicable for this report.

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) Appeals Summary (appendix 2)
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	None.

1. This report presents the performance outturn for the Planning, Development and Regeneration service for the second quarter (July-September) of the business year 2020-21. The full performance report is at Appendix 1.
2. Of 15 indicators, five are running at green; six at red; one at amber; and three are for information only.

Income

3. Planning fees income (FIN 16). The financial position in relation to planning fees continues to improve, and at the end of Q3 is essentially on target at just £411 below budgeted income. This has improved from Q1 when a 21% under-recovery against the expected receipts at that stage in the business year was reported, and by the end of Q2, the rate of under-recovery had narrowed to 7.6%. As reported previously, caution needs to be exercised in the event of economic downturn, but for now, business remains strong.
4. The number of applications received continues to rise strongly, at 749 received for Q3, and up again from the 692 planning and related applications were received in Q2.
5. Land Charges Income (FIN17). There continues to be a significant improvement in the income received processing property searches for Q. At the end of Q1, under-recovery of fees was running at 61% of the profiled income target. This had narrowed to 35% by the end of Q2 and the Q3 result is 19% under target.
6. As reported previously, the housing market appears to have responded well to the stamp duty holiday for purchases up to £500,000. This runs until 31 March 2021. Members will note that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has

extended the stamp duty holiday at this level until 30 June 2021, when it tapers down to a £250,000 purchase threshold before reverting to the previous £125,000 threshold on 1 October this year.

7. Officers are continuing to monitor income received to the end of the financial year. An under-recovery is still expected by year end, but the trend is improving.

Development Management Performance

8. As reported above, incoming caseload remains high and slightly up on Q1. By the same token, the proportion of caseload running over time has come down from 41% in Q4 of 2019/20 to 31% at Q3 this year.
9. Performance in the service was good in Q3. 87% of major applications were determined on time (DMP04) – up from 75% in Q2; Minor applications (DMP05) was at 78% - up from 68% in Q2; and 85% of applications in the 'others' category were on time (DMP06), comparable to the 86% in Q2.
10. The validation of planning applications was at 91% within three days, significantly above the target of 70% (DMP08), though down a little from the 96% achieved in Q2. This high level of performance has been maintained constantly across the quarter.
11. The exception to this good performance picture is the Q3 outcome for appeals where six out of twelve cases were allowed by Planning Inspectors giving a result of 50% dismissed against the target of 70%. This is down from the 75% of cases dismissed in Q2, representing nine out of twelve cases that quarter.
12. The main theme to the appeals allowed is around design and scale of proposed developments, where Inspectors took the view that proposed increases in sizes of buildings would not be disproportionate. This is a subjective matter, where there is always bound to be differences of opinion between the Council and the Inspector who would be making the final decision in an appeal situation.
13. Once case in Berkhamsted did involve the issue of the Council not having a full five year supply of housing, which has risen substantially given the high housing need for the Borough.
14. Quarterly reports on appeals are now being made to the Development Management Committee and for reference the last report is attached at Appendix 2. Members will also note that details of any appeal decisions received by the Council are being sent out on Fridays with the Members' News email.

Enforcement

15. The remaining exceptions to good performance are under the indicators covering time taken to carry out site visits for priority 1 and 2 planning enforcement cases (PE01 and PE02), running at 50% and 37% respectively.

16. The reasons are two-fold: firstly a large increase in cases being reported for investigation, and secondly Covid19 restrictions which have limited the ability of Officers to get out on site and make the first visit to investigate.
17. To deal with these issues which have been present for this year so far and much of 2020, a number of measures have been put in place. The caseload is being addressed on an area by area basis with officer resources being directed to geographical areas of the Borough two weeks at a time. Where there are urgent cases, Members can be assured that these will take priority. A full review of the caseload is under way to deal with long running cases which may be able to be closed down. Furthermore a one-year temporary enforcement officer post is being recruited to and at the time of writing, an offer of employment had been made to a suitable candidate.
18. As Members will be aware, enforcement cases often take a long time to resolve and as the measures outline take effect, it is likely that these indicators may remain as red for some time to come.