



Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	22 September 2021
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	Planning, Development and Regeneration Quarter 1 Performance Report 2021-22
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 1 of 2021-22
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 Philip Stanley, Group Manager Development Management and Planning
Background papers:	Performance report (appendix 1)
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 first quarter (April-June) of the business year 2021-22. The full performance report is at Appendix 1.
2. Of 15 indicators, eight are running at green; three at red; one at amber; and three are for information only.

Income

3. Planning fees income (FIN 16). The year has started strongly with receipts at just over £420k, representing performance of 20% ahead of trajectory for budgeted income at this stage of the financial year. Members will recall from the last report to the Committee on Q4 for 2020/21, there was a strong end to the year but there was a slight under-recovery as income had dropped significantly during the early months of the Covid19 pandemic in early 2020.
4. For now, the strong trend continues and in Q1 a total of 908 planning and related applications were received (DMP02), representing an increase of over 6% on the volume received in Q4 of last year.
5. Land Charges Income (FIN17). As with planning fees, the current year has also started strongly and this income stream is also 20% ahead of budgeted target by the end of Q1 with receipts of just under £69.5k.
6. Members should note that full relief on Stamp Duty for property purchases was tapered down from purchases of £500,000 or over to £250,000 or over at the end of June, and this will revert to the original threshold of £125,000 or over by the start of October. The effect of the withdrawal of this temporary relief on the housing market is yet to be fully seen, but for now, activity

remains strong as reported further ahead in relation to Local Land Charges performance.

7. Trends in both planning and land charges income will be monitored closely as activity here has a strong correlation to the local and national economic climate.

Development Management Performance

8. As outlined above, incoming caseload remains high at 908 applications received in Q1, up over 6% on Q4 of 2020/21.
9. This has been a strong month for performance with all three indicators (DMP04, 05 and 06) all at green and with improvements on the previous quarter.
10. 100% of all major applications (DMP04) were determined on time, though there were only 3 proposals due for decision.
11. Minor applications (DMP05) moved from the amber category at just under 65% determined within 8 weeks of receipt in Q4 to 70% in Q1. This 5% increase in performance also needs to be seen in the context of the volume of caseload in this category rising by one third from the previous quarter, and is a good indication of the work of the service to clear down older cases being successful.
12. Performance the 'others' category improved from 84% determined on time within 8 weeks of the statutory period (DMP06) to just under 90% in Q1. As with minor applications, there was a higher workload – up 16% from the previous quarter – and more decisions made. This category includes the smallest scale cases such as house extensions and other domestic development, where the service has put in place fast track arrangements for processing.
13. Performance on the Council's success rate in defending planning appeals in Q1 (DMP30) has improved again, and out of the red category with just over 80% of appeals being dismissed. The appeal caseload was also significantly up, with decisions made on 21 cases compared to 16 cases in the previous quarter.
14. The validation of planning applications (DMP08) has fallen into the red category for Q1 at 53% of cases validated within three days of receipt, and down from the very good performance of 88% in Q4 previously. A combination of staff time lost due to sickness, election duty early in the business year and annual leave has contributed to this.
15. Importantly though, the length of time to validate applications has only typically been between four and five days from receipt rather than the one to two days which has been typical of performance in this area. Overall, the revised systems in the service have been delivering very fast validation over the past year or so. Validation is an important part of the planning application process as a fast turnaround helps to enable good performance on speed of processing applications, for which there has been improvements this quarter.

Enforcement

16. The other indicators showing as red for Q1 relate to first visits to enforcement cases under Priorities 1 and 2 in the Local Enforcement Plan (PE01 and PE02) which are running at just over 57% for visits to Priority 1 cases and just under 46% for Priority 2.
17. In the last report to the Committee regarding Q4 performance it was set out that a combination of an increase in enforcement caseload and a build-up of cases from last year during Covid19 restrictions – which prevented sites being visited in person by officers – have caused this. Also that the service is working to a twelve-month improvement plan, known as the ‘Enforcement 400 Plan’ to tackle the issue. A further officer, on a twelve-month contract was brought in earlier this year as part of this.
18. The improvements will take some time to work through. Members should note that although performance has not improved markedly since Q4 last year, the caseload in Priority 1 and 2 cases have both grown since then.
19. There will be further challenges with managing the workload over the rest of the year due to staff changes. The Team Leader, Philip Stanley has been promoted to Group Manager for Development Management and Planning; the Assistant Team Leader and one of the Enforcement Officers both moved on to new positions outside of the Council this summer.
20. At the time of writing, interviews to fill the vacant Team Leader position will be held this September. The Assistant Team Leader post has been filled, for now, on an interim basis. The Enforcement Officer brought in on the twelve-month contract has now been appointed into the permanent vacancy left by one of the departures in the summer. The service is looking to fill the remaining temporary post urgently, and make a permanent appointment into the Assistant Team Leader post.

Local Land Charges

21. The only indicator at amber for Q1 is for the average time to process land charge searches (LC04). This is running at just over 10 days, which is the target. As reported above under the section on Finance, there has been a strong growth in casework and the slightly longer processing time is due to this factor.