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Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Planning, Development and Regeneration Quarter 4 Performance Report 2021-22
Date:	14 June 2022
Report on behalf of:	Cllr Alan Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Place
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Performance Report
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	Back Office Planning System (BOPS) Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) Reducing Invalid Planning Applications (RIPA) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Report Author / Responsible Officer

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Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment- Building strong and vibrant communities- Ensuring economic growth and prosperity- Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need- Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery- Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All

Purpose of the report:	1. To set out the performance outturn for the service for Quarter 4 of 2021-22.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	1. That the report is noted.
Period for post policy/project review:	

1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents the performance outturn for the Planning, Development and Regeneration service for the fourth quarter (January – March) of the business year 2021-22. The full performance report is at Appendix 1.

2. Service Highlights

2.1 The following updates are provided on some of the key activities that have been underway during the last quarter.

2.2 Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation – During Q4 the Council published the Footprint Ecology Report which evidenced the recreational damage currently affecting the site. As a consequence the Council is required to pause issuing planning decisions for new residential development across the Borough until a mitigation strategy is in place. It is expected that it will take between 3 – 6 months to resolve. The Council will closely monitor the implications of the moratorium on service performance.

2.3 PPA Protocol - Historically, individual Lead Officers have worked on Planning Performance Agreements (PPA) and therefore the outcomes have been varied. The PPA project team assembled at the start of 2022 and have worked on creating a team and process structure, protocol and fee schedule to effectively manage PPAs. These elements have been translated into several documents including a risk tracker, consultation response tracker and cost calculator. The documents are expected to go live in June, in combination with a promotion of the new service.

2.4 Reducing Invalid Planning Applications (RIPA) / Back Office Planning System (BOPS) – This is the largest of our planning pilots and is progressing well. We have completed the induction training for BOPS and have been conducting user testing in the other authorities test environments. We have held two Subject Matter Expert workshops to build the team and identify our skills and opportunities as a group. In addition, we have started reviews of our data, in particular Article 4s and restrictions on PD where we have started to build old documents into databases, so far we have completed 8,900 records and generated over 50,000 data entries. This work is building to all the introduction of new customer facing web service Find Out If You Need Planning Permission (FOIYNPP) - this service will give a fully interactive service to customers using fully automated permitted development software. The next steps for the project is brining all our spatial data up to the minimum standard to allow installation of FOIYNPP, RIPA and BOPS.

2.5 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) - Officers prepared a Draft Employment and Skills SPD for consideration by Members and public consultation. The SPD will enable the Council to ring-fence specific job and training opportunities arising from larger developments to benefit the borough's residents.

2.6 ESRI Pilot Project using GIS analytics to improve planning, monitoring and use of Developer Contributions – Dacorum was selected as one of three winners nationally to conduct a joint pilot project with ESRI (who develop some of the most powerful GIS mapping and spatial data analytics software currently available)

to look at the use of GIS to improve planning, monitoring and use of Developer Contributions. DBC officers have been working with ESRI this quarter in preparation for commencement of the project in April 2022. We expect this project not only to improve efficiencies in the way we work in the management of Developer Contributions and developer funded infrastructure but also potentially provide DBC an opportunity to be recognised as being at the forefront of delivering a project that could be useful to authorities across the country and wider.

2.7 CIL income for 2021/22 - The financial year 2021/22 ending this quarter has brought in total CIL income of £7,475,436, of this £5,987,592 was core funds, £1,114,072 was the neighbourhood proportion and £373,771 was toward the cost of administration of CIL. We have also undertaken a Member training session on spending the neighbourhood portion of CIL.

2.8 S106 for Affordable Housing - £1,636,865 of S106 monies was allocated this quarter towards delivering Affordable Housing in the borough.

3. Review of Performance

3.1 The performance report at Appendix 1 shows a total of 34 indicators, twelve of which are performance measures; the remainder are for information and provide context to the performance outcomes for Q4.

3.2 Of the twelve performance measures, eight are at red for this quarter, one at amber and four at green.

Income

3.3 Planning fees income (FIN 16) is 1.2% ahead of target at the end of Q4 at £1,416,685 compared to £1,399,640. The figures reported in Appendix 1 are erroneous and reflect a glitch in the Council's performance reporting software; this will be corrected for the next performance report. At the end of Q4 planning income is around £17k ahead of budget.

3.4 Land Charges Income (FIN17) has reduced to slightly below target at the end of Q4 with actual income about 4% lower at £611,090, compared to £635,250.

3.5 Activity in Land Charges continues to be high and the average time taken to process local searches (LC04) is 7.76 days compared to the target of ten days and therefore is at green for Q4.

3.6 Trends in both planning and land charges income continue to be monitored closely as activity here has a strong correlation to the local and national economic climate. In addition, the recently announced moratorium on planning decisions could have an impact on income.

Development Management Performance

3.7 The number of planning applications received in the quarter remains high (756) and slightly up on Q3 (730). It should be noted that the reporting period predates the publication of the Footprint Ecology Report and restrictions.

3.8 This quarter there were 6 'major' applications (DMP04) due for determination, up from 4 in Q3. Three of these were determined on time, resulting in performance of 50% which is outside of target and therefore at red. This is the same as in Q3.

3.9 There were 91 'minor' applications due to be determined in the period, a small drop from 93 applications in Q3. Of the 91 applications 51 were determined within the 8 week period. As a result the percentage of minor applications due to be determined in 8 weeks (DMP05) dropped to 56%. There is a downward trend of this indicator which dropped from 67.5% in Q2, to 66.67% in Q3 and now 56% in Q4 and is significantly below the target of 70%.

- 3.10 The slippage in performance has been impacted by further staff losses across the service during the period and continued difficulties in recruiting. It must also be pointed out that some of the figures for determining planning applications are as a direct result of the restrictions brought about by the recreation pressures affecting the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation.
- 3.11 Both resourcing pressures and the moratorium are likely to continue for several months and as such performance indicators in certain areas are likely to remain outside of target.
- 3.12 Performance in the 'others' category remains at green (at 76.5%) but has fallen from 88.79% in Q3. 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. The target remains at 70%. Although the caseload has decreased from 321 applications in Q3 to 260 in Q4 performance has been impacted by high vacancy rates.
- 3.13 Performance on the Council's success rate in defending planning appeals in Q4 (DMP30) sits at 56%, which is an improvement from 50% in Q3. Members will note that this measure does not take into account appeals that are withdrawn or split decisions. If the single 'part allowed' decision was taken into account then the figure would increase to 60%. Whilst this may initially cause some concern, the outturn for Q4 has to be seen against the context of appeal caseload where there was a significant increase in appeals in the period (30) and 17 dismissed being dismissed; this is up from 10 and 5 respectively in Q3.
- 3.14 Performance in the validation of planning applications (DMP08) has dropped over the last quarter with 26% of planning applications validated within 3 working days, this is down from 60% in Q3. The overall number of planning applications due for validating in the period was 761, down from 795 in Q3. A combination of high caseload and experienced members of the team having to train new members of the team and there are vacancies in the team.

Enforcement

- 3.15 The Council had 4 Priority 1 site visits due in Q4 of which 3 were undertaken in time (PE01). This represents 75% but below the 100% target. A total of 73 Priority 2 site visits were required to be undertaken of which 75% were undertaken in time (PE02). This is up from 56% in Q3 despite a significant increase in the number of Priority 2 cases due a site visit in the period (up from 51 from Q3). For Priority 3 sites due a visit in Q4 81% of sites were visited compared to 13% in Q3.
- 3.16 Resourcing of the Council's Enforcement Team continues to be significant issue and is largely driving the performance measures. Despite incredible pressures the service is still able to conduct the majority of visits within the target time but it is unlikely that the service will reach 100% in the foreseeable given the ongoing recruitment issues. The Service's management is in the process of developing options for the service to address the recruitment issues.
- 3.17 The service continues to work to the twelve-month improvement plan, known as the 'Enforcement 400 Plan' to tackle the issue of working through the combination of backlog from the inability to carry out site visits during lockdown and restriction periods and rising workloads. However, resourcing pressures remain acute in the service with vacant posts unable to be filled (again a particular issue for higher level posts) and significant workloads for each case officer.

4. Options and alternatives considered

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Consultation

5.1 James Doe – Strategic Director (Place)

5.2 Philip Stanley - Interim Head of Development Management and Planning

6. Financial and value for money implications:

Financial

6.1 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

6.2 None arising from this report.

7. Legal Implications

7.1 None arising from this report.

8. Risk implications:

8.1 None arising from this report. Risks addressed through service level risk register.

9. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

9.1 Community Impact Assessment - Not applicable for this report.

9.2 Human Rights – There are no Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

10. Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

10.1 None arising from this report.

11. Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

11.1 None arising from this report.

12. Conclusions:

12.1 Not applicable

13. Appendix 1 - Performance Report (attached separately)