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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 1 Performance Report 2022-23
Date:	21 September 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:	<p>Back Office Planning System (BOPS)</p> <p>Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</p> <p>Planning Performance Agreements (PPA)</p> <p>Reducing Invalid Planning Applications (RIPA)</p> <p>Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</p>

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 1 of 2022-23.
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 (April – June) of the business year 2022-23. 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 Q1 the Council has not been able to issue planning decisions for new residential development across the Borough following the publication of the Footprint Ecology Report in the beginning of Q1 of 2021/22. In Q1 of 2022/23 the Council has been working with partners to develop the necessary Mitigation Strategy to allow restrictions to be lifted. A detailed report on the progress has been published for SPAEOSC for consideration.

2.3 Planning Resilience – The Council continues to develop strategies to build resilience across the service to ensure performance is maintained as far as possible and to adapt to the increased pressures the service is under. Over the coming months the Council will be considering further the operational needs of the service and developing options for how best to ensure continued high quality service delivery across Planning.

2.4 Article 4 Directions for Maylands – The Council made a number of Article 4 Directions to protect further automatic conversions of offices to residential development without the need for planning permission. Subject to feedback received during the consultation the Council will look to formally confirm these Directions in Q2 of 2022/23.

2.5 Reducing Invalid Planning Applications (RIPA) / Back Office Planning System (BOPS) – All planning records from 2001 have now been corrected and reflect an accurate history of Dacorum’s planning applications. Work to review and update spatial records for Article 4s and Listed buildings has been completed and these are undergoing further reconciliation to allow these to be uploaded to the Council’s website to allow easier access to these documents for residents. A similar process will be undertaken for Tree Preservation Orders and Conservation Area layers. The Council is also fully onboarded onto the DLUHC team working with the software developers to start progressing the software into its next phase of development; we expect to launch the Beta test version for Dacorum by the end of this year.

2.6 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and s.106 collection - £761,081 of CIL has been collected this quarter. £24,948 of the neighbourhood proportion of CIL has been allocated to projects this quarter. This includes £14,748 towards installation of an assisted bath in Centre in the Park from Hemel Hempstead Town Centre and £10,200 from Bovingdown, Flaunden and Chipperfield towards three Speed Indicator Devices. In addition to this £157,000 of S106 funding was used to improve facilities in Canal Fields Play Area, Berkhamsted. Westwick Field games area received a further £17,800 to deliver improvements. Details of projects that have been fully or part-funded by S106 developer contributions recently can be found at [https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/developer-contributions/developer-contributions---projects-funded-\(s106\)](https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/planning-development/planning-strategic-planning/developer-contributions/developer-contributions---projects-funded-(s106))

- 2.7 ESRI pilot project using GIS analytics to improve planning, monitoring and use of Developer Contributions – The Council, working with ESRI, have now completed phase 1 of this project and entered the product testing phase. We are pleased with the initial the outcome which provides us with a visual and spatial representation of monies received and infrastructure delivered using developer contributions. This project will improve efficiencies in the management of developer contributions and developer funded infrastructure. It has also provided DBC the opportunity to be recognised as being at the forefront of pilot project that could be useful to authorities across the country and wider.
- 2.8 Hemel Hempstead Bike Hire and e-Scooter Feasibility Study – The Council will shortly be commissioning a feasibility study to look at whether a funded scheme providing electric bikes and e-scooters could work in Hemel Hempstead. The study is expected to be complete in October 2022.

3. Review of Performance

- 3.1 The performance report at Appendix 1 shows a total of 34 indicators, twelve of which are performance measures with the remainder setting out other metrics for Q1. Of the twelve performance measures five are green, one is at amber and three are at red for this quarter.

Income

- 3.2 Planning fees income (FIN 16) is 18.8% ahead of target at the end of Q1 at £465,189 compared to a target of £391,493. This is largely relating to the submission of two large applications and skews the overall 20% drop in the total number of planning applications submitted in the period.
- 3.3 Search fees against profiled budget (FIN17) are also down in Q1 by 9.8% at £52,105, compared to £57,750 in the previous quarter. However, search activity did pick up considerably at the end of the Quarter. The average time taken to process local searches (LC04) has decreased 9.02 days from 7.76 days in the previous quarter. This this is below the target of ten days and therefore is at green for Q1.
- 3.4 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.

Development Management Performance

- 3.5 The number of planning applications received in the quarter dropped to 606 compared to the 756 applications received in the previous quarter (DMP02). This represents a 20% drop and is most likely linked to the SAC restrictions that were announced during the last quarter. This is particularly noticeable in the number of “full” applications being received. This is the first set of data available since the publication of the Footprint Ecology Report and associated restrictions being introduced.
- 3.6 There were 41 refusals in the quarter with 24 appeals being submitted. This represents a figure of 58.5% (DMP03). This is a surprisingly high figure and one that will need to be monitored over the coming quarter as this could have a significant resource implication for the Council as it defends these appeals. It is worth noting that over the last three months the team have had a 100% record in defending appeals.
- 3.7 This quarter there were 3 ‘major’ applications (DMP04) due for determination, down from 6 in Q4. Two of these were determined on time, resulting in performance of 66.67% which is above the target and therefore at green. This is an improvement from Q4 where performance had slipped to 50% (and was at red) but is largely a result of fewer applications being due for determination in the period.
- 3.8 There were 46 ‘minor’ applications due to be determined in the period with 31 determined within the 8-week period resulting in a 67.3% performance measure in the Quarter (DPM05). This is an improvement

from the 56% rate in the last quarter but this is still under the 70% target. 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. 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.

- 3.9 Performance in the 'others' category remains at green (at 71.66%) and is broadly in line with the previous period (76.55% in Q4). 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%. It should be noted that performance in this area has deteriorated in the last three quarters due to staff vacancies. The number of applications has also increased significantly in the period (up 20% from 260 in Q4 to 314 in Q1).
- 3.10 Performance on the Council's success rate in defending planning appeals in Q1 (DMP30) sits at 100%, which is a significant improvement from 56% in Q4. This is an excellent performance being able to defend all appeals whilst also facing times of staff vacancies and other pressure. Although the number of appeals in the period was half of that in the previous period it is still a good performance.
- 3.11 Performance in the validation of planning applications (DMP08) has increased over the last quarter with 53% of planning applications validated within 4 working days, this is up from 26% in Q4. The overall number of planning applications due for validating in the period was 714, down from 761 in Q4. A combination of high caseload and an inexperienced team has meant that there was an inability to handle cases.

Enforcement

- 3.12 The Council had 3 Priority 1 site visits due in Q1 of which all were undertaken in time, representing 100% (PE01). It is important that this measure returned to 100% (up from 75% in the previous quarter) as this was a key requirement from the recent audit of the planning Enforcement Service.
- 3.13 A total of 54 Priority 2 site visits were required to be undertaken of which 40 were carried out in time. This represents 74% of all cases which is below the target of 100%. Although in percentage terms performance is similar to last quarter there were fewer visits that took place (40 this quarter vs 55 last quarter). This is reflective of the staff shortages that were seen within the planning enforcement team as well as the volume of work they are dealing with.
- 3.14 For Priority 3 sites due a visit in Q1 82% of sites were visited in time which is broadly similar to the previous quarter's performance of 81% (Q4). The sustainment of performance needs to be considered in light of the 150% increase in the number of visits that needed to take place in the Quarter (up from 16 in Q4 to 40 in Q1).
- 3.15 Resourcing of the Council's Enforcement Team has been identified in previous performance reports but the Council is beginning to see the signs of improvements following the recruitment of additional staff into the staff, albeit on a temporary basis. It is clear that the current resourcing situation will need to be looked at if the Council is to deliver the high levels of service expected.

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
- 5.3 Ronan Leydon – Team Leader, Strategic 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)