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# Strategic Planning and Environment

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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| <b>Report for:</b>   | Strategic Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee   |
| <b>Title of report:</b>  | Planning, Development and Regeneration Quarter 2 Performance Report 2022-23  |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 8 November 2022  |
| <b>Report on behalf of:</b>  | Cllr Alan Anderson, Portfolio Holder for Place   |
| <b>Part:</b>   | I  |
| <b>If Part II, reason:</b>   | N/A  |
| <b>Appendices:</b>   | Appendix 1 – Performance Report  |
| <b>Background papers:</b>  |  |
| <b>Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:</b> | <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> <p>Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)</p> |

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| <p><b>Report Author / Responsible Officer</b></p> <p>Alex Robinson – Assistant Director for Planning</p> <p>✉ 📞</p> <p>Alex.Robinson@dacorum.gov.uk / 01442 228236 (ext. 2208)</p> |
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| <b>Corporate Priorities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A clean, safe and enjoyable environment</li> <li>- Building strong and vibrant communities</li> <li>- Ensuring economic growth and prosperity</li> <li>- Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need</li> </ul> |
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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery</li> <li>- Climate and ecological emergency</li> </ul> |
| <b>Wards affected</b>                                | All   |
| <b>Purpose of the report:</b>                        | 1. To set out the performance outturn for the service for Quarter 2 of 2022-23.   |
| <b>Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):</b> | 1. That the report is noted.  |
| <b>Period for post policy/project review:</b>        |   |

## 1. Introduction

1.1 This report presents the performance outturn for the Planning, Development and Regeneration service for the second quarter (July – September) 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 Q2 the Council has been working at pace with affected authorities, Natural England and the National Trust to prepare a Mitigation Strategy that will enable the partial lifting of restrictions. Reports have been presented to this Committee in September 2022 and October 2022 with the Council’s Cabinet due to consider the Mitigation Strategy in November 2022.

2.3 Planning Resilience – The Council continues to develop strategies to build resilience across the service to improve both the capacity of the service but also its approach to customers. It is recognised that the service is under considerable pressure and finding it difficult to recruit. As such, other options may need to be considered to address this, including potential enhanced collaboration with partners.

2.4 Supplementary Planning Documents - The statutory consultations for the adoption of both the Paradise Design Code - Draft SPD, and the Employment and Skills - Draft SPD were launched by the Council on Friday 28th October. Residents, businesses and organisations will be able to make comments on these documents for four weeks, until the consultations close on Monday 28th November. All information relating to both consultations is available on the Council’s online consultation portal and the Council’s website, and hard copies of the documents have been made available for members of the public to view at Council offices and libraries across the Borough.

2.5 Proptech Engagement Fund – In 2021, the Council was awarded a grant from the Government to trial new digital engagement technology. The ‘Shaping the Future of Two Waters’ consultation took place between April and June 2022 and received over 980 contributions from more than 400 individuals. The final report summarising the processes and outcomes of the consultation has been published on the Council’s website; the findings will go on to inform future guidance for the Two Waters Opportunity Area. In addition to this,

the Council has provided separate feedback to the Government in relation to the lessons learnt from the trial, which they will refer to when formulating digital planning reform proposals.

- 2.6 Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan - The Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan has completed its independent examination, with the Examiner's final report received on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 2022. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2022, Dacorum Borough Council issued the decision statement for the plan, setting out that we, and the Parish Council, accept all of the main modifications set out in the Examiner's report. The Council is now progressing towards the referendum, which will determine whether the Kings Langley Neighbourhood Plan should be adopted. Voting will take place on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022, between the hours of 7am and 10pm.
- 2.7 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and s.106 - £733,991 of CIL has been collected this quarter. £67,516 of the neighbourhood proportion of CIL has been allocated to projects this quarter. This includes £25,000 towards towpath improvements along the Grand Union Canal, £1,050 for the garden at Warners End Community Centre, £30,000 towards a connecting footpath along the A4251, £2,806 for a seating area at Grovehill Neighbourhood Centre and £8,000 towards public realm improvements around Chaulden neighbourhood centre. S106 funds allocated to projects this quarter include £15,000 towards wayfinding feature posts along the Buncefield Lane Quietway – a project being overseen by the County Council, £13,010 to Tring Town Council towards a new community centre feasibility study and £10,000 towards the Hemel Hempstead Bike Hire and e-Scooter project.
- 2.8 Hemel Hempstead Bike Hire and e-Scooter Feasibility Study – The Council has commissioned 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 by December 2022.

### **3. Review of Performance**

- 3.1 The performance report at Appendix 1 shows a total of 17 indicators, twelve of which are performance measures with the remainder setting out other metrics for Q2. Of the twelve performance measures three are green, one is at amber and eight are at red for this quarter.

#### Income

- 3.2 Planning fees income (FIN 16) is currently 6.9% behind target at the end of Q2 at £728,751 compared to a target of £782,985.
- 3.3 Search fees against profiled budget (FIN17) are also down in Q2 by 11.7% at £102,012, compared to £115,500 in the previous quarter. The average time taken to process local searches (LC04) has improved to 8.89 days, down from 9.02 days in the previous quarter. This is below the target of ten days and therefore is at green for Q2.
- 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. Data aggregated from other Councils suggest that activity is reducing and this could be an indication of wider economic uncertainties.

#### Development Management Performance

- 3.5 The number of planning applications received in the quarter increased to 736 compared to the 606 applications received in the previous quarter (DMP02). However, this represents a 10% drop from the same quarter last year. It should also be noted that a high proportion of these applications are householder, tree

works and other minor applications. The lack of applications for new homes is most likely linked to the SAC restrictions that were announced during quarter one but also reflects the national picture.

- 3.6 The total number of planning refusals (DMP03) sat at 33% in Q2. This figure has fallen from the 58.5% figure reported in Q1 one and is showing as green. However, the Council needs to be aware of the relatively high figures in previous months and the resource impact this will have for the Council as it defends these appeals.
- 3.7 The percentage of major applications determined in 13 weeks (DMP04) has fallen to 25% which is significantly below last month's performance of 66.7% and below the target of 60%. All cases were complex and developers were not willing to enter into extensions of time. The percentage of 'minor' applications due to be determined within the eight week period (DMP05) has dropped to 63%. This is reduction in performance from 67% rate in the last quarter and still under the 70% target.
- 3.8 The slippage in performance has been caused by the sustained vacancy levels across the service and the diversion of resources to lift the moratorium. As with major applications it must also be pointed out that the figures reflect the inability of the Council to grant planning applications for new homes brought about by the recreation pressures affecting the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation. It is hoped that with the publication of the Mitigation Strategy for Cabinet (15 November 2022) will ease the situation and this indicator will improve.
- 3.9 Performance in the percentage of 'other' applications determined within eight weeks (DPM06) remains at green (at 76.4%) and is up from the previous period (71.6%). 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 over the last year (91%) due to staff vacancies.
- 3.10 Performance on the Council's success rate in defending planning appeals in Q2 (DMP30) sits at 69.2% which is down from the 100% achieved in Q1. Four of the dismissed appeals were household applications. However, it was never going to be possible to sustain that level of success. This still represents very good performance whilst the Council continues to face staff vacancies and other pressures.
- 3.11 Performance in the validation of planning applications (DMP08) has increased over the last quarter with 78% of planning applications validated within 4 working days, this is up from 53% in Q1. This is partly due to a decrease in the number of complex applications being received but also reflects newer staff being trained.

#### Enforcement

- 3.12 The number of priority 1 site visits undertaken in time (PE01) in Q2 was 90% which is below the target of 100%. Although this is reduction from the previous quarter it represents a longer term improvement in performance as measured over the last 12 months.
- 3.13 The number of priority 2 site visits undertaken in time (PE02) in Q2 was 66.6% which is also below the target of 100%. This represents a drop in performance in Q1 where 74% of visits were undertaken in time. For Priority 3 sites due a visit (PE03) in Q2 73.6% of sites were visited in time which is reduction from the quarter's performance of 82% (Q1).
- 3.14 The dip in performance in the last quarter is attributed to reduced capacity over the summer holidays and a much greater focus on closing cases in the period. However, in the last quarter the team closed 23 more cases than were received and reached the 400 live enforcement cases milestone. It is also noted that

Dacorum Council undertakes more enforcement activity than any other Hertfordshire authority. Despite these successes fluctuation in performance does continue to highlight the wider service resilience issues being experienced and the need for the Council to continue to investigate creative solutions to these issues.

#### **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)**