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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 Quarter 3 Performance Report 2023-24
Date:	6 March 2024
Report on behalf of:	Cllr Sheron Wilkie, 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:	None

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 3 of 2023-24.
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 service for the third quarter (Oct – Dec) the business year 2023-24. The full performance report is at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The performance report at Appendix 1 shows a total of 5 indicators. Of the revised Key Performance Indicators, two are departmental performance measures and three are measures that reflect local construction activity. Of the two departmental performance measures, one is green and one is red.

Planning Applications Determined Within Target

- 1.3 The percentage of all planning applications determined within target (DMP01) sits at 81.72%, against a target of 70%. The percentage shows a fractional decrease compared to Q2 (which was 82%). This represents sustained overall good performance from the team, particularly given the ongoing restrictions relating to the Chiltern Beechwoods SAC. However, some caution must be added as this figure includes applications that were granted within an agreed extension of time.
- 1.4 In respect of Major planning applications, 83.3% were determined within 13 weeks (or an agreed extension of time). This is a decrease from 100% recorded last quarter, but remains well above the 60% target. In numerical terms 5 out of 6 Majors were determined in time.
- 1.5 As for Minors and Others, they performed in Q2 as follows, against a 70% target:

MONTH	MINORS (%)	OTHERS (%)
October 2023	78.9	82.3
November 2023	72.0	87.9
December 2023	81.8	84.2
TOTAL Q2	77.6	84.8

- 1.6 As can be seen from the above table the 70% target was exceeded for each month in respect of Minors and Others. Planning Officer capacity has been increased through the recruitment of two new trainees. They will require time to fulfill their potential; however, the outlook looks positive in respect of other applications (i.e. householders). We have also appointed to Lead Planning Officer vacancy which will assist with Minor applications.
- 1.7 The Planning Department was successful in its bid for the Planning Skills Delivery Fund. This has provided the Council with approximately £35,000 to spend on additional capacity in dealing with the planning application backlog. This additional resource, which will focus on those blocked or more complex applications, will also result in a dip in terms of performance as these older applications are determined. It could also likely see a rise in the percentage of applications refused, which could increase the amount of appeal work the team is required to complete.

Enforcement Site Visits

- 1.8 The percentage of all planning enforcement priority site visits (PE04) is 32.1%, against a target of 100%. This matches the 32% seen for Q2. In the previous performance report I wrote, *“We have welcomed an Agency*

Enforcement Officer on Oct 2nd (with the second one due to start on November 13th) as part of the Reserves funding for this service. However, as the additional resource picks up cases previously held in abeyance we are likely to see a further drop in first site visit performance before an improvement in this measure in Q4". Now that the team have both additional Enforcement Officers in place, the number of outstanding first site visits has fallen and Cases are now being visited for the first time in accordance with priority deadlines. As such Q4 will see a significant improvement on this performance measure.

- 1.9 Furthermore, the Enforcement service remain focused on dealing with the most harmful breaches of planning control. A total of 4 formal Notices were served in Q3 (2 Enforcement Notices and 2 Breach of Condition Notices). (In addition, a further 5 Notices have been served in Q4 so far).

Affordable Housing

- 1.10 Indicator DO1 and DO2 – the number of affordable housing starts and the number of completions in the period has been changed to an annual rather than quarterly indicator, as a Local Authority we receive the figures annually. These will be reported in Q4 of each year.

Retail Properties

- 1.11 For indicator CPE01 – the number of retail properties (vacancy rate) for the period – there is no data on this for the period as we are reliant on external parties. This will be reported at the earliest opportunity.

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace

- 1.12 SPAE OSC requested a quarterly update on the delivery of SANG in the borough.
- 1.13 In January, Officers met with the Chair and Councillors from Chipperfield Parish Council to discuss the Common and management plan and a range of other issues within the village. Future communication was agreed, with Ian Ross, Head of Neighbourhood Management to attend a Full Parish Council on 12th March. Ian will be progressing all issues related to Secretary of State Applications for works on the Common (these types of works may include car parks, installation of signage and information boards, bollards and fencing). Trees and Woodlands are also meeting with specialist contractors to discuss works to Apostles Pond.
- 1.14 The newly created roles in Clean Safe and Green will be advertised and it is hoped that appointments made in Q1 2024/25. The additional resources will start to deliver the management plan requirements for Bunkers Park to become a SANG site.
- 1.15 Two planning applications have been received for SANG and are currently pending decision;
- 23/02972/MFA Planning application for the change of use from agricultural land to Suitable Accessible Natural Green Space (SANG), together with a vehicular access, car park, paths, fencing and landscaping at Castle Hill Berkhamsted Hertfordshire
 - 23/02508/MFA Planning application for the change of use from agricultural land to a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) together with provision of a new car park at Haresfoot Farm (Commercial) Chesham Road Berkhamsted Hertfordshire HP4 2SU

2. Options and alternatives considered

- 2.1 Not applicable.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 James Doe – Strategic Director (Place)

3.2 Diane Southam – Assistant Director, Place Communities and Enterprise

3.3 Philip Stanley - Interim Head of Development Management

3.4 Ronan Leydon – Team Manager, Strategic Planning

4. Financial and value for money implications:

Financial

4.1 None arising from decisions on this report though the financial indicators for Planning fees report an under recovery of income against target levels.

Value for Money

4.2 None arising from this report.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 None arising from this report.

6. Risk implications:

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

7. Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

7.1 Community Impact Assessment - Not applicable for this report.

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

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

8.1 None arising from this report.

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

9.1 None arising from this report.

10. Conclusions:

10.1 Not applicable

Appendix 1 - Performance Report (attached separately)