



## AGENDA ITEM:

### SUMMARY

<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Strategic Planning and Environment Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>20 June 2017</b>
<b>PART:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Quarter 4 and End of Year 2016/17 Performance Report – Planning, Development and Regeneration</b>
Contact:	Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration  James Doe, Assistant Director – Planning, Development and Regeneration
Purpose of report:	To report on service performance for the end of year and fourth quarter of 2016/17, and to provide an update on the Operational Risk Register.
Recommendations	That the report be noted.
Corporate objectives:	The report focuses on the service plan for the area and key performance indicators. All corporate objectives are therefore relevant.
Implications:	<u>Financial</u>  None arising directly from this report.
'Value For Money Implications'	<u>Value for Money</u>  None arising directly from this report.
Risk Implications	Risk Assessment completed as part of the service plan.
Equalities Implications	None arising from this report.

Health And Safety Implications	None arising from this report.
Consultees:	<p>Cllr Graham Sutton, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Regeneration.</p> <p>Mark Gaynor, Corporate Director for Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>Andrew Horner, Group Manager for Development Management and Planning</p> <p>Chris Taylor, Group Manager for Strategic Planning and Regeneration</p>
Background papers:	<p>Planning and Regeneration Service Plan 2016-17</p> <p>Performance information held on the CorVu system.</p>

## Introduction

1. The report provides the end of year position for 2016/17, with a report on performance for Q4.
2. In summary, performance across the services has been generally strong albeit with some exceptions which are outlined in the report. The main concern over the year was whether the service's three main income streams, planning, building control and local land charges fees would be achieved in the wake of market uncertainty in summer 2016. Income has however held up with the exception of a slight under-recovery in land charges.

## Performance Indicators

3. Building Control. The service has continued to perform strongly over the year. The key indicator, applications determined within two months of receipt (BC01), ended the year at 99.69%, just below the target of 100%.
4. Income from the Building Control service was on target at just over £544,000 (FIN15). This is a good outcome for the Council. Building Control is a competitive service where customers are able to use independent Approved Inspectors to discharge consent under the Building Regulations, so there is always the threat that business could be lost and the Council's income suffer.
5. DBC has approximately 75% of the market by volume and this has held steady despite the operation of Approved Inspectors. Members may be aware that seven other Hertfordshire Authorities have formed a consortium which is now operational as Hertfordshire Building Control which in time will operate an Approved Inspector service which can trade outside of the respective Boroughs and Districts that make it up.
6. A key pressure for the service has been the rising cost of professional staff. For the past two years, the service has had to engage agency staff to maintain the service – itself a statutory requirement – and to maintain income levels. Recruitment for vacant permanent posts has not been successful. The

service has however taken on three new trainees with the intention of growing talent in-house and reducing the reliance on agency staff.

7. As part of the budget setting and savings process, the Council raised its Building Control fees by an average of 10% on 6 April 2017. Although the service is now more expensive, it remains competitive against the charges levied by other Hertfordshire authorities.
8. Development Management. Workload (DMP02) remains high within the service. Although there were slightly planning and related applications were received in 2016/17 than the previous year (2429 versus 2559), the number of major planning applications rose from 26 in 15/16 to 34 in 16/17. This trend is likely to continue as proposals from local housing allocations as set out in the Borough's Core Strategy and Site Allocations document begin to be built out – proposals for land at West Hemel Hempstead (LA3) and Marchmont Farm (LA1) are expected to be submitted for determination in 2017/18.
9. Planning fee income (FIN16) ended up at £843,031, in excess of the target of £812,710. This is a good outcome considering there was a pause in some market activity in the summer of 2016 and, had the trend continued, there would have been a risk of under-recovery against budget. Members should note that the budget target for planning fee income was raised by over £70,000 per annum for the past year.
10. In 2015/16, there was a significant improvement in processing times for planning applications (DMP04, 05 and 06); this trend has continued.
11. For major planning applications, the target of 60% of applications determined in 13 weeks was exceeded comfortably at 88.24% (up from 83.33%).
12. Just over 90% of Minor applications were approved on time – well ahead of the 65% target and up from just over 65% last year.
13. The 'other' category of applications – the bulk of the service's workload – finished the year at 89.29% and up from the 77.39% achieved in 2015/16.
14. The refusal rate for planning applications continues to remain low, with only 5.37% of applications refused, well ahead of the 12% target (DMP07). This means that nearly 95% of applications were approved – a measure which helps to support the development process, saves the Council time and money, and is good for the Council's reputation as open for business. It is hopefully an indication that the growing pre-application advice service is working, to help shape acceptable proposals and deter those which have no or little realistic chance of being approved, being submitted.-
15. The planning appeal success rate ended at just under 70% (DMP30), meaning 30% of appeals were allowed by planning inspectors. There was a similar appeal allowed rate of 32.5% in 2015/16, whereas this was just under 17% in 2014/15. As remarked in this report to the Committee last year, this may reflect growing confidence in the development industry to challenge Local Authorities' decisions as the local economy continues to perform well. Members need to note that additional appeals will place further burdens on the resources of the service. This factor is however mitigated by proactive work carried out at the pre-application stage which helps to limit problems

during the processing phase of applications, and limit the need to refuse proposals.

16. The one exception to performance in development management in 2016/17 was in the time taken to validate planning applications (DMP08). Against a target of validating 70% of applications within 3 days, the year ended on 53%. The service suffered from some long term staff sickness, and the backlog of cases is now starting to clear. Importantly, slower validation of applications has not affected their key turnaround times (DMP04, 05, 06) which have all improved.
17. Planning Enforcement. Performance has remained high. The Council's approved Local Enforcement Plan sets out priorities for investigations into three categories. The final figures for Priority 1 cases to be visited within 1 working day (PE01) are awaited; Priority 2 and 3 cases came in at 88.5% and 95.7% for the target visiting times of 10 and 15 working days respectively (PE02 and PE03). Quarter 4 performance was at 100% for priority 1 cases and over 96% for both priority 2 and 3 cases.
18. Land Charges. Performance has improved again to finish at an average processing time of 5.66 days to process property searches against the target of ten day. This is an improvement on the 2015/16 result of 8.16 days. Income was a little below target at £246,232 received in search fees (FIN15).
19. Strategic Planning and Regeneration. There was positive progress on business development with a net growth of 205 businesses registered for VAT (SPR03). 6 new apprenticeships were created in the Borough.
20. 2016/17 was a good year for house building in the Borough, with 523 new homes completed – of all tenures. This compares well to the annual core strategy target of 430 new homes per annum.

### **Operational Risk Register**

21. The risk register is at appendix 2. Having been reviewed recently, this remains unchanged from the last report to the Committee. Questions on the register are invited at the meeting.

### **Dacorum Development Programme - projects led by the Service**

22. In previous years an update on key projects under the Dacorum Development Programme – such as the Marlowes Shopping Zone – was provided. Much of the Hemel Evolution programme of town centre projects is now complete, with the Water Gardens coming to an end at the present time.
23. There are a further range of projects underway or in progress, such as the Bury Museum project, Maylands Business Centre Extension, Hemel town centre access and movement. These will feature on a separate report on the progress of the Dacorum Development Programme to the Committee later in the year.