

15 PLANNING PERFORMANCE UPDATE (BJT)

Purpose of Report

1. To update members on current performance of the Authority's development management function.

Key issues

Whether performance is above nationally prescribed standards

2. Recommendation

That the report be noted.

How does this contribute to our policies and legal obligations?

3. The criteria for assessing the performance of Local Planning Authorities is defined by Section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Background

4. Planning statistics are reported quarterly to the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC), and the performance of planning authorities is judged against criteria related to:

- The speed of determining applications for major development;
- The quality of decisions made by the authority on applications for major development;
- The speed of determining applications for non-major development;
- The quality of decisions made by the authority on applications for non-major development.

The speed of determination thresholds for 2023 below which a local planning authority is eligible for designation are:

- a) For applications for major development: less than 60 per cent of an authority's decisions made within the statutory determination period (13 weeks) or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant;
- b) For applications for non-major development: less than 70 per cent of an authority's decisions made within the statutory determination period (8 weeks) or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant.

On 17th January 2023 the Secretary of State advised the Chief Executive that the National Park Authority might be liable for designation under section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 due to its performance around its determination of applications for non-major developments in the defined assessment period. The determination period considered performance over a 2 year period up to the end of September 2022. At that time this showed an average performance level of 61%.

We will continue to be assessed by DLUHC for data returned and aggregated over a 2 year period.

On the 4th October 2023 the current Secretary of State wrote again to the Chief Executive and stated:

"I have reviewed the actions your authority has taken to improve performance over consecutive quarters from October 2022 to June 2023 and am pleased to note that for the most recent quarter April to June 2023 your performance at

85% is above the required threshold. However, I remain concerned that on a rolling two-year basis, performance remains below the 70% threshold at 62%. Due to the improvement over recent quarters I am minded not to designate your authority for poor performance at this time. I recognise that to do so may undermine the work your authority has already commenced and I wish to support your performance improvement.”

The Head of Planning has now also returned data for the latest quarter (July – September 2023). We reported to DLUHC that we determined 83% of non-major applications within the statutory determination period (8 weeks) or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant.

For the last quarter we have therefore remained well within the required thresholds. This also means that the Authority has now been performing above the national standard for every quarter since October 2022.

If this trend were to continue into the quarter for January to March 2024, the overall 2 year average would also move back over 70%.

In terms of the culture of the Service it is also pleasing to note that 85% of all decisions over the last quarter were approvals, reflecting the work of officers and agents to engage in positive outcomes, through the negotiation of amended plans.

The team is continuing with our recruitment plan to build our staffing capacity and we will also re-engage with the Planning Advisory Service to review progress to date and implement other improvement initiatives.

Officers have also scheduled a return of our Agents Forum in January 2024 where a key topic will be the return of our pre-application advice service.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

- 5 **Financial:** None, recruitment plan is costed and agreed following the organisational change
- 6 **Risk Management:** If performance levels dipped below 70% there remains a risk of designation into special measures.
- 7 **Sustainability:**
- 8 **Background papers** – Letters from DLUHC and NPA responses.

Appendices - None

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

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