

## **15. PLANNING PERFORMANCE UPDATE (BJT)**

### **1. Purpose of the report**

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

#### **Key Issues**

- **Whether performance is above nationally prescribed standards**

### **2. Recommendation:**

- 1. 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 Information**

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.
5. 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.
6. On 10th January 2024 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 2023. At that time this showed an average performance level of 65.1% (up from 61% from the previous year). At this time the Authority was able to respond and demonstrate that quarterly performance had been above the 70% standard for the previous 4 quarters and that the improvement trajectory was well on-track to resolve and exceed national standards.
7. Government officials replied on 5<sup>th</sup> March stating that they were content that exceptional circumstances had been demonstrated and that there was recognition of the work the Authority had already commenced. Furthermore, Government wished to support our performance improvement and not therefore designate the Authority.

8. Since the recorded designation period (up to September 2023) the Authority has now recorded 2 further quarters above the national threshold and our data now demonstrates a 2-year average of around 75%. This moves the Authority out of the risk of designation.
9. By way of update it is important to acknowledge suggested changes to the designation regime. Government has indicated its intention to discount figures related to agreed extensions of time, meaning that only data relating to performance within 8 weeks will be considered, albeit with a reduced threshold of 60%. With this in mind officers are maintaining efforts regarding performance improvement and have begun discussions with the Planning Advisory Service regarding further initiatives to bring more decisions within the 8-week determination period.
10. A critical element in achieving better performance will be the resumption of our charged for pre-application advice service as of the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024. This came on the back of a successful Forum with over 20 local agents where we discussed bringing back the service, improving our communications, and getting involved in future design review. These additional actions add real value to the way we engage with communities and local businesses

### **Proposals**

11. To maintain our performance improvement commitment and development further actions in discussion with the Planning Advisory Service.

### **Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?**

#### **Financial:**

12. There will be a need to monitor the update of pre-application advice during the financial year and ensure sufficient cost recovery to sustain the Planning Service budget.

#### **Risk Management:**

13. Moving consistently above national standards for the speed of planning decision making removes a significant corporate risk. .

#### **Sustainability:**

14. The recent improvements in staff capacity, allied to the return of pre-application advice and income generation are all positive indicators that the Planning Service is reaching a sustainable state once more. This will then impact positively on the services and quality we can offer the outcomes this brings for the National Park.

#### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:**

15. Recent changes to the way we recruit have brought about a more diverse staffing structure to the planning service with a balance of gender and age profiles allied with new opportunities for career progression, all of which we hope will be an attraction and strength to new and existing staff in the Service.

#### **Climate Change**

Maintaining a sustainable caseload with a positive approach to decision making is a key means of delivering our policy objectives for climate change, including energy efficiency, transport and biodiversity gain.

#### **Background papers (not previously published)**

None

18. **Appendices**

NONE

**Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date**

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