

11. 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?

- 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

- Planning statistics are reported quarterly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), 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 2025 below which a local planning authority is eligible for designation are: a) For applications for major development (District Matters): 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 major development (County Matters): less than 60 percent of authority's decisions are made within the statutory determination period (13 weeks) or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant; and c) 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.
- The performance of the Authority's Development and Enforcement teams on the above is as follows:
 - Major Development (District Matters) = 100% (designation period average 83%)
 - Major Development (County Matters) = 0 decision in last quarter (designation period average 100%)
 - Non Majors = 93% (designation period average 88%)

7. With this in mind officers are maintaining efforts regarding performance improvement and continue to respond to the recommendations offered by the Planning Advisory Service from their review of the service in 2024.
8. A critical element in achieving better performance will be the resumption of our charged for pre-application advice service as of the 1st 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.

Other improvement projects

- **Pre-application advice service** – has now been operating for a full year which has assisted service quality and performance and also enables improved budget sustainability.
- **Local Validation list** – has now been updated and consulted upon. Officers will be bringing the new list to Planning Committee
- **Standard conditions** – to be updated and will bring greater efficiency and consistency to reports and decision notices
- **Specialist consultations** – a review of both archaeology and built historic buildings inputs which will reduce the number of cases consulted upon and focus in on those heritage assets with the highest levels of significance and complexity. These are the cases which are most helpful for additional input to planners and offer the necessary mitigating conditions. Other lower level cases can be dealt with by senior planners. A new career graded conservation officer is also being developed to enable a broader scope of heritage work to be undertaken and to facilitate further home-grown talent.

Proposals

9. To maintain our performance improvement commitment and develop further actions in response to the recommendation from the Planning Advisory Service.

Are there any corporate implications members should be concerned about?

Financial:

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

Risk Management:

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

Sustainability:

12. 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:

13. 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.

14. **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. Having a sustainable caseload also enables the broader planning team to engage in the reviews of our Local Plan and design guides, ensuring they are up to date and fit for purpose.

15. **Background papers (not previously published)**

None

16. **Appendices**

NONE

Report Author, Job Title and Publication Date

Brian Taylor, Head of Planning, 8 May 2025
brian.taylor@peakdistrict.gov.uk