

COMMITTEE	PLANNING
DATE	17 January 2017
SUBJECT	Summary of Performance of the Planning Service for 2016
REPORT OF	Leigh Palmer Senior Specialist Advisor (Planning)
Ward(s)	ALL
Purpose	This report provides a summary of performance in relation to key areas of the Development Management Services for the relevant period
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Recommendations	That Members note the content of this report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Members will be aware that together we deal with a whole host of planning applications covering a range of differing forms of development.
- 1.2 Given the many varied types of planning application received Central Government require that all Councils report the performance in a consistent and coherent manner. To this end the many varied applications are clumped together into three broad categories Major, Minor and Other and the government have recently amended the criteria for the assessment of the Council's performance (see section on special measures below)
- 1.3 This report looks at the performance of the DM team across a number of elements of work in the following sections:
 - **Section 2 Special Measure Thresholds** – looking at new government targets
 - **Section 3 Planning Applications** – comparing volumes/delegated and approval rates
 - **Section 4 Pre Application Volumes** – comparison by type and volume over time
 - **Section 5 Refusals of Applications** – comparison of ward and decision level
 - **Section 6 Appeals** – An assessment our appeal record over time
 - **Section 7 Planning Enforcement** – An assessment of volumes of enforcement related activity.

2.0 Special Measures

- 2.1 Members may be aware that the Government have recently introduced new National performance criteria (Nov 16 on speed and quality) against which all Council's will be judged. Failure to perform against these targets runs the risk of the Council be designated as 'Non- Performing' and special measures will be initiated by Central Government.
- 2.2 The assessment of the draft against this new 'special measure' threshold has two limbs to it and will be reviewing our performance on a backward rolling two year basis, see tables below:

1. Looking at the **speed** of decision

The speed with which applications are dealt with measured by the proportion of applications that are dealt with the statutory time or an agreed extended period.

Application type	2018 threshold
Major Speed	60% of all applications (October 2015 – September 2017)
Non Major Speed	70% of all applications (October 2015 – September 2017)

2. Looking at the **quality** of the decision made (with reference to overturned appeal decisions).

Application type	2018 threshold
Major Quality	10% of all appeal overturns (April 2015 – September 2017)
Non Major Quality	10% of all appeal overturns (April 2015 – September 2017)

The quality of decisions made by the Council measured by the proportion of decisions on applications that are subsequently overturned at appeal.

- 2.3 If the Council are identified as not complying with these standards/criteria they would be declared as 'non performing' and formal designation would follow.
- 2.4 In terms of formal designation there are two potential outcomes:-
- Major applications the applicant would have the ability to bypass the Council and go straight to the Planning Inspectorate for determination. This would mean that the Council would lose deamination control until such time as the designation is lifted.
 - Non-Major applications the Council would have to submit the Central

Government an action plan addressing the areas of weakness that it has identified as having contributed to the underperformance.

- 2.5 In analysing this data it is important to note that the development type categories have changed with regard to type of applications falling under the non-major category. The data included in this section of the report has been reproduced in this new format.

2.6 SPEED OF DECISION

It is evident from the table below that the decisions taken for the survey period are currently above the special measures threshold.

Table 1

Criteria: Speed		District matter Majors						Non-majors					
		All Major Decisions	Major Decisions within 13 weeks	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions in time	Out of time	Result	M&O Decisions	M&O Decisions within 8 weeks	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions	PPA, EoT or EIA Decisions in time	Out of time	Result
Quarter 01	Oct - Dec 2015	1	0	1	0	1	0.00%	124	96	4	2	26	79.03%
Quarter 02	Jan - Mar 2016	2	0	2	2	0	100.00%	119	101	5	5	13	89.08%
Quarter 03	Apr - Jun 2016	4	1	2	2	1	75.00%	151	136	6	6	9	94.04%
Quarter 04	Jul - Sep 2016	2	0	2	2	0	100.00%	117	96	3	3	18	84.62%
Quarter 05	Oct - Dec 2016	2	0	1	1	1	50.00%	121	90	2	2	29	76.03%
Quarter 06	Jan - Mar 2017												
Quarter 07	Apr - Jun 2017												
Quarter 08	Jul - Sep 2017												
total		11	1	8	7	3	72.73%	632	519	20	18	95	84.97%
		Minimum level required						60.00%					
								70.00%					

2.7 Risk Area

It is considered that there is significant headroom against these targets and as such the risk of Special Measures for Non-Performance is low.

2.8 QUALITY OF DECISION

This section looks at appeal decisions and specifically the number/volume that have been allowed/overturned at appeal. The Government view that this performance indicator as a measure/reflection on the relevance of an up to date local plan and that the decision makers (officers at delegated and Members at planning committee) make the correct and informed decisions.

Table 2

Criteria: Quality		District matter Majors							Non-majors						
		All Major Decisions	Refusals	Appeals	Dismissed	Upheld	Pending	Result	Non-Major Decisions	Refusals	Appeals	Dismissed	Upheld	Pending	Result
Quarter 01	Apr - Jun 2015	0	0	0	0	0			117	14	2	1	1	0	0
Quarter 02	Jul - Sep 2015	0	0	0	0	0			134	11	6	5	1	0	0
Quarter 03	Oct - Dec 2015	1	0	0	0	0		0.00%	124	19	3	1	2	0	1
Quarter 04	Jan - Mar 2016	2	0	0	0	0		0.00%	119	14	5	3	2	0	1
Quarter 05	Apr - Jun 2016	4	1	0	0	0		0.00%	151	17	12	8	4	0	2
Quarter 06	Jul - Sep 2016	2	0	0	0	0		0.00%	117	12	2	1	1	0	0
Quarter 07	Oct - Dec 2016	2	2	1	0	0	1	0.00%	121	9	4	2	2	0	1
Quarter 08	Jan - Mar 2017	0	0	0	0	0					0	0	0		
	total	11	3	1	0	0	1	0.00%	883	96	34	21	13	0	1
		Minimum level required							10.00%						10

2.9 Risk Area

One area for Members to note from these criteria is that given the very low volumes of major applications progressed/determined within the survey period the implications of this are that a small number of appeal decisions can have a significant impact upon performance.

By way of an example Members will note that we have one pending appeal falling within the Majors category (BT Site Moy Avenue) and if this is upheld (allowed) then our performance would be jump from 0% up to 9% just below the threshold. In addition if we received ONE additional appeal decision that is upheld then we would be above the non-performing threshold at 15%.

2.10 Given the huge potential swing in performance given the very low volumes involved that there is a very high risk of the Council falling under special measures in this category.

2.11 Officers will advise on the this issue when major applications are discussed/debated at future planning committees and Members are requested to mindful of the impacts and consequences of refusing major applications.

3.0 Planning Applications

3.1 Given the new 'Non-Performing' special measure thresholds referred to above it is clear therefore that with the regular (quarterly) reporting of performance to Planning Committee so that issues, trends and pressures can readily be identified and where necessary may give sufficient time to address the issues.

3.2 The figures in Tables 3 – 4 below include the data from the Government return (currently excludes 'Notifications Prior Approvals and Certificates of Lawful development, trees and pre application submission). It is accepted that the Government have changed the content of the data that analyse, however this data is reported here to give the year of year comparison.

Table 3

3.3	Decisions	2013	2014	2015	2106
	All determined	574	596	545	569
	Delegated	510 (89%)	521 (87%)	472 (87%)	505 (89%)
	Granted	521 (91%)	546 (92%)	488 (90%)	515 (91%)
	Refused	49 (9%)	50 (8%)	57 (10%)	54 (10%)

3.4 Table 4

3.5		TYPE	NUMBER
	2013	All determined	574
	2014	All determined	596
	2015	All determined	545
	2016	All determined	569
	2017	All determined	
	2016 Q1 (Jan – Mar)	All determined	133
		Delegated	113 (85%)
		Granted	120 (90%)
		Refused	13 (9%)
	2016 Q2 (Apr - Jun)	All determined	168
		Delegated	143 (85%)
		Granted	150 (89%)
		Refused	18 (11%)
	2016 Q3 (Jul - Sep)	All determined	134
		Delegated	119 (89%)
		Granted	121 (90%)
		Refused	13 (10%)
	2016 Q4 (Oct - Dec)	All determined	134
		Delegated	130 (97%)
		Granted	124 (93%)
		Refused	10 (7%)

3.6 It is clear from the tables above that the volume of the cases determined during the survey period has percentage levels consistent with previous years.

3.7 It is considered that in granting planning permission for 90% of all applications received that the planning services of Eastbourne Borough Council have supported/stimulated the local economy and also helped to meet the aspirations of the applicants and only where there are substantive material planning considerations is an application refused. (see appeal section below)

3.8 It is acknowledged that for the last quarter of 2016 that the % of applications

determined at delegated level has significantly increased; this is reflective of the changes recently made to the scheme of delegation.

- 3.9 A future report will highlight the benefits of this change in terms of the costings to the Council and the speed of decision for the applicant.

4.0 PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

- 4.1 In addition to the formal applications received the Council offer a free pre application advice service. The table below indicates the numbers of pre-application enquiries received by the Council for the years 2014-5 and a rolling number for the current year.

Table 5

PROCESS NAME	NUMBER 2016	NUMBER 2015	NUMBER 2014
PRE APP (Old Process)	0	0	53
PRE APP HOUSEHOLDER	220	163	126
PRE APP MEDIUM	147	159	108
PRE APP MAJOR	18	10	16
TOTAL	385	332	303

- 4.3 This information is considered to be relevant given that it is a barometer of the additional workload of the team. Members should note a significant spike being reported during 2016 and if this level continues there may well be a staffing/resource issue. Going forward Member should be aware that Cabinet have agreed that EBC should explore the potential for pre-application charging. The full impact of this charging regime upon the volumes of cases coming through the system can only be assessed once the charging regime has been embedded. At the time of writing there is an expectation that the charging regime will commence on the 1st April 2017.
- 4.4 In addition Members should note that our returns to central government are based a prescribed application categories and they do not necessary highlight the volume of work going through the Planning section of the Council.
- 4.5 Members should note that the Table 6&7 includes further application data by ward.
- 4.6 Table 6&7
Number for the Calendar Year 2016 and the calendar year 2015.

Applications Received (Including All Planning Applications - Pre application Schemes - Tree application & Invalid submissions). This table gives the full account of the workload coming through the section.

Table 6

YEAR	TOTAL AMOUNT
2015	1319
2016	1433
2017	

4.7 Table 7

Year 2015

Row Labels	Count of ward
DV Devonshire	164
HP Hampden Park	46
LG Langney	50
MD Meads	386
OT Old Town	126
RN Ratton	138
SA St Anthonys	120
SV Sovereign	91
UP Upperton	198
(blank)	
Grand Total	1319

4.8 2016

4	DV Devonshire	216
5	HP Hampden Park	71
6	LG Langney	58
7	MD Meads	375
8	OT Old Town	155
9	RN Ratton	145
10	SA St Anthonys	127
11	SV Sovereign	107
12	UP Upperton	179
13	(blank)	
14	Grand Total	1433

4.9 Risk Area

Members will acknowledge that there has been an increase in the 114 cases in 2016 compared to the 201, this represents a 9% increase in workload. It is considered that this increase in workload needs to be monitored as it may have a resource impact going forward.

5.0 REFUSALS

5.1 Members requested further information on the number and break down of the refusal issued for the calendar year 2016 (to date). This information is highlighted within tables 8 & 9 below.

5.2 Member should be aware that in common with other years we refuse fewer

than 10% of the applications received, with the overwhelming majority being refused at delegated level. For 2016:- 49 cases were refused at Delegated and 7 were refused at Planning Committee level.

5.3 TABLE8 REFUSALS BY WARD

5.4	4	DV Devonshire	9
	5	HP Hampden Park	2
	6	LG Langney	4
	7	MD Meads	10
	8	OT Old Town	4
	9	RN Ratton	4
	10	SA St Anthony's	9
	11	SV Sovereign	5
	12	UP Upperton	9
	13	(blank)	
	14	Grand Total	56

5.5 TABLE9 REFUSAL BY DECISION LEVEL (COMMITTEE REFUSAL)

5.6	160152	CCC Planning Committee	retention of 3m x 4.05 m x 2.75 m brick outbuilding build in rear	DV Devonsh
	160316	CCC Planning Committee	Proposed two storey dwelling with parking space.	RN Ratton
	160398	CCC Planning Committee	Extension to the front of the existing dwelling and a roof raise loft	MD Meads
	160538	CCC Planning Committee	New build 3 storey residential accommodation consisting of 11	
	160617	CCC Planning Committee	Change of use from class A1 (Bakery), to A3 & A5 (restaurant &	SV Sovereig
	160677	CCC Planning Committee	To erect raised decking 1.1m above ground level projecting 3m from the	SA St Antho
	160929	CCC Planning Committee	Proposed refurbishment and extension to existing telephone exchange	SA St Antho

6.0 APPEALS

6.1 As commented above all applications that are refused have to the potential to be appealed by the applicant. The Council for the year 2016 have received 28 appeal decisions and the decision letters have been reported to committees through the year.

6.2 Appeals received by development type/application TABLE 7

6.3	HHH Householder	8
	OSR Outline (some reserved)	1
	PCI Prior Notification Class 1A	1
	PPP Planning Permission	15
	TTP Tree Works - Tree Preservation Orders	2
	VCO Variation of Condition	1
	Grand Total	28

6.4 APPEAL ANALYSIS

The appeal decisions letters received during 2016 have been analysed with the various decision permutations reported below.

Table 11

6.5		Officer Approve	Officer Approve	Officer Refuse	Officer Refuse
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	Cttee Refuse Appeal decision- Allowed	Cttee Refuse Appeal decision - Refused	Cttee Support Refusal Appeal decision Allowed	Cttee Support Refusal Appeal decision Refused
2013	7 (28%)	4 (16%)	2 (8%)	12 (48%)
2014	0	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	4 (40%)
2015	0 (0%)	3 (21%)	2 (14%)	9 (65%)
2016	5 (18%)	1 (4%)	5 (18%)	17 (61%)
2017				

6.6 The above table 11 identifies the relevant decisions permutations and it is acknowledged that the appeal volume is comparable to the levels of 2013. It is acknowledged that the highest volume appeal category was the 'planning permission type (15 cases); this is a wide and divers category covering all things from changes of use to replacement windows. The appeal rate/volume will continue to be monitored going forward with any trends that can be identified being reported via this report.

6.7 It is considered important to review and analyse all appeal decisions across all application types as an indicator that we have applied a sound planning judgement at both delegated and planning committee level. It is considered that reporting the appeal decisions in full to planning committee under a separate cover will assist in understanding trends and common issues.

6.8 Appeal Analysis Table 11 Column 1

Officer recommendation for approval – Member overturned – Appeal Allowed (Officers right Members were wrong) It is important to keep a watching brief on this column as this is often the scenario where costs are awarded against the Council.

It is accepted that at times there are differences of opinion between officers and Members however for the appeal decisions received to date there has been only 5 instances this year where this scenario has occurred.

6.9 Appeal Analysis Table 11 Column 2

Officer recommendation for approval – member overturned – appeal dismissed (Officers were wrong and Members were right) This shows that officers are not always right, there is 1 case falling into this bracket in this survey period.

6.10 Appeal Analysis Table 11 Column 3

Officer recommendation for refusal – Member support for refusal (committee or delegated) – Appeal allowed – Officers and Member were wrong. This shows that officers and Members are in tune but the officers have been overzealous with their

recommendation and it has not been supported by the Planning Inspectorate.

- 6.11 This is also often a category where appeal costs can be awarded
- 6.12 It is acknowledged that there are 5 appeals falling into this category within the survey period however it is important to continue to monitor as it is an indication that Officers may not be following planning policy/advice and skewing recommendations following neighbour concerns or trying to second guess the outcome of planning committee.
- 6.13 In essence it is important that officers do not shy away from making difficult recommendations especially where recommendations are in accordance with national and local advice/policies.
- 6.14 Appeal Analysis Table 11 Column 4
Officer recommendation for refusal – Member support for recommendation (committee or delegated decisions) – appeal refused (officers and Members were right). This column shows when Officers and Members are in tune and supported by the Planning Inspectorate. The higher the % the better, Members will note that this category is usually by far the largest, this is a reflection that the decisions that were taken were consistent with National and Local Policy advice.
- 6.15 Appeal Costs
As members will be aware the appeal process can award costs to any party involved in the appeal process where it can be demonstrated that any party has acted unreasonably. During the survey period the Council received one award of costs
- 6.16 Two costs appeals have been awarded this year in both cases the appeal inspector claimed that the Council has acted unreasonably in their handling of the application for the Biomass Boiler at 14 Maple Road and the residential development at 4-8 Pevensey Road (vacant Taxi Office) These cost claims total £5,500.
- 6.17 Members should note that this is not an insignificant sum of money that is taken from the public purse and as such collectively we should strive to secure that wherever possible costs claims are avoided. Legal and Planning Officers will advise members at Planning Committee (prior to making a decision where there is the likelihood of a cost claim being successful.
- 6.18 Risk Area
Given the changes to the to the way the Government assess what constitutes a good/well performing Council means that there is a very high risk of special measures on major applications being overturned at appeal.

The appeal costs award also has the potential for a financial risk and also a reputational risk and as such these have to be closely monitored and where possible lessons should be drawn from these cases. In this regard the regular report on appeal decisions to planning committee should help to inform this issue.

7.0 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

7.1 As outlined in the Planning Enforcement Policy Statement regular reporting of the enforcement function to Planning Committee is considered important as it keeps members aware of the cases and issues that are live in their area and it assists in:-

- Tackling breaches in planning control which would otherwise have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of the area;
- Maintaining the integrity of the decision-making process;
- Helping to ensure that the public acceptance of the decision making process is maintained.

Going forward these statistics are reported to Planning Committee on a quarterly basis with an annual review.

7.2 Members will note some of the data places high volumes in the Devonshire ward, this reflects the focus given with/by the Difficult Property Group through S215 (Untidy Sites) legislation and also emphasises the support for the 'Driving Devonshire Forward' policy document.

TABLE 12

7.3		4
	Devonshire	23
	Hampden Park	22
	Langney	3
	Meads	11
	Old Town	9
	Ratton	12
	Sovereign	8
	St Anthony's	15
	Upperton	13
	Grand Total	120

7.4 Cases Closed/Received

TABLE 13 Closed/Received Annual

7.5	YEAR	CLOSED	RECEIVED
	2014	253	363
	2015	347	332
	2016	354	361

7.6 It is important to note that the closure rate is generally consistent with the volume of the new cases received and as such there should not be an expanding backlog of live cases. Notwithstanding this Members

should note that the volume of cases on the over 6months old list hovers around the 30 cases around 26% of all live cases.

TABLE 14 Cases over 6 months old

7.7	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	2015	Not recorded	Not recorded	Not recorded	31
	2016	29	19	25	32

7.8 **Enforcement Related Notices served in 2016**

7.9 As members may know there are many differing types of enforcement notices the main ones being:-

- Enforcement Notice
- Stop Notice
- Temporary Stop Notice
- Planning Contravention Notices
- Breach of Condition Notices
- Injunctions

For the Calendar year 2016 34 notices (10% of all cases received) have been served.

7.10 It is clear that therefore that 90% of all enforcement cases are resolved/closed without the need to resort to a formal notice.

7.11 As Members will acknowledge from the adopted Planning Enforcement Policy that the serving of a notice is the last resort and that wherever possible a negotiated solution is preferable.

7.12 In terms of proactive monitoring of planning cases the following has been adopted:-

o **Monthly Site Meetings.** In relation to the Major development sites at Sovereign Harbour and Eastbourne College this will ensure early warning of potential breaches of planning control or where the developer wishes to alter their scheme for whatever reason and given this early warning officers can advise on the best ways forward.

- **Planning Condition Monitoring.** Using our back office system we are now regularly monitoring conditions of key decisions/cases, these are primarily planning committee cases.

7.13 Risk Area

It is clear that with the rate of closure of enforcement cases that the backlog is not increasing and that the volume of cases on hand (over 6 months) has been consistently on or about the 30. It is considered therefore that there are no identifiable risks at this stage.

8.0 LEGAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES

- 8.1 Save for the potential costs claim that could follow an appeal there are no other legal issues arising from this report.

It is considered that the current workload/capacity and the current level of performance can be sustained with/by the current establishment. However some scrutiny over the volume of work across the whole service area pre-application submissions is required in order to ensure that the resource levels match the extent of work being submitted.
