

Planning Applications Committee

19 July 2023



Reading
Borough Council

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Title	FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT - PLANNING & BUILDING CONTROL
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Julie Williams, Development Manager (Planning & Building Control)
Lead councillor	Councillor Micky Leng, Lead Councillor for Planning and Assets
Corporate priority	Inclusive Economy
Recommendations	The Committee is asked: 1. To note the report.

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. To advise Committee on the work and performance of the Planning Development Management team and Building Control team for the first quarter of 2023/2024 (April to June) with comparison to previous years.
- 1.2. Unlike the annual reports these quarterly reports are focussed on just planning and building control application processing performance.

2. Planning Development Management team

2.1 Performance Targets

a. For applications for major development: **60 per cent** of an authority's decisions should be made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant.

b. For applications for non-major development: **70 per cent** of an authority's decisions should be made within the statutory determination period or such extended period as has been agreed in writing with the applicant.

Decisions Issued

- 2.2 The following Table 1a provides a breakdown on the decisions issued for the 1st quarter of this year compared to the previous year's quarters. Those issued within the statutory timeframe or an agreed extended timeframe for the different types of planning applications handled compared to total applications decided are shown.
- 2.3 The number of applications decided in this first quarter has dropped for all types of applications, apart from Major applications, when compared to the same quarter last year and the issuing of decisions (management and speed) has greatly improved. One of the team is moving on so another round of recruitment is due to start but the team are confident that performance can remain at this high level for the rest of 2023/2024.

**Table 1a: Planning Application Performance
By quarters in 2022/2023 and in quarter 1 2023/2024**

Description	DLUHC Target	Q1 2022 Apr-Jun	Q2 2022 Jul-Sept	Q3 2022 Oct-Dec	Q4 2023 Jan-Mar	Q1 2023 Apr-Jun
Major	60%	0/1 0%	5/5 100%	3/4 75%	5/5 100%	7/7 100%
Minor	70%	35/57 61%	35/50 70%	37/44 84%	38/45 84%	29/32 90%
Others (including householders)	70%	89/144 62%	60/111 54%	138/156 88%	117/128 91%	110/119 92%
Overall Totals		124/202 61%	100/166 60%	178/204 87%	160/178 90%	146/158 92%

2.4 The following table shows fee income for the same quarters.

Table 1b provides information on fee income.

Fee Income	Q1 2022 Apr-Jun	Q2 2022 Jul-Sept	Q3 2022 Oct-Dec	Q4 2023 Jan-Mar	Q1 2023 Apr-Jun
Applications	£189,196	£219,296	£222,689	£102,522	£203,555
Pre-App	£30,037	£29,074	£27,910	£9,498	£11,720
Miscellaneous	£5,161	£1,717	£4,943	£905	£1,436
Totals	£224,394	£250,087	£255,542	£112,925	£216,711

3. Planning Enforcement

- 3.1 The Planning Enforcement Team are now part of the Public Protection service. Officers within Planning Enforcement continue to have regular weekly meetings with senior planners and support from legal to progress cases.
- 3.2 The new Principal Planning Enforcement Officer (David Lloyd) has now started working with the team and this has enabled an improved case management structure to be implemented. Further to this the service has secured technical support for the team so that officers can focus on undertaking enforcement visits and investigations. There is further recruitment pending for the two vacant positions of senior planning enforcement and enforcement officer roles for the team.

4. Building Control

- 4.1 The team is served of 3 permanently employed technical support officers and the Building Control Team Leader and 2 agency surveyors. The team are about to be joined by 3 trainee building control surveyors and recruitment is underway for more senior surveyors. The aim is to develop the team to provide a competent and effective service providing expert support for corporate projects and private developers. The market share for the past quarter gives Approved Inspectors 60% of applications submitted and we need to change this trend.

- 4.2 Table 2 shows the case load as submitted for the 1st quarter for this year 23/24 and the previous years' quarters. The approval rates for applications within statutory timeframes remains at a high level even with surveyors being called to attend some complex dangerous structure incidents and dealing with the repercussions.

Table 2: Building Control work.

Indicator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2022/2023	Q1 2023 Apr-Jun
Dangerous structures attended. Non fee work	5	4	7	11	27	12
Inspections carried out					1629	333
Building Control applications submitted	97	92	140	64	393	70
Applications approved within 5 & 8 weeks Statutory limits	85/97 96%	88/92 96%	137/140 98%	44/44 100%	354/373 95%	68/70 98%
Number of completion certificates issued	24	13	89	108	234	73
Fee income	£70,670	£62,044	£77,487	£69,597	£279,798	£61207.20
Approved Inspectors Initial Notices	131	65	124	43	363	107

5. Contribution to strategic aims

- 5.1 The processing of planning applications and associated work (trees, conservations areas and listed buildings) and building control activities contribute to creating a healthy environment with thriving communities and helps the economy within the Borough, identified as the themes of the Council's Corporate Plan in Section 2 of this report.

6. Community engagement

- 6.1 Statutory consultation takes place on most planning applications and appeals. The Council's website also allows the public to view information submitted and comments on planning applications and eventually the decision reached. There is also information on policy matters and the and this can influence the speed with which applications and appeals are decided. Information on development management performance is publicly available.

7. Equality impact assessment

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics, it is considered that the development management performance set out in this report has no adverse impacts.

8. Environmental and climate implications

- 8.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 8.2 The Planning & Building Control and Planning Policy Services play a key part in mitigating impacts and adapting building techniques using adopted policies to encourage developers to build and use properties responsibly, making efficient use of land, using sustainable materials and building methods.

9. Legal implications

- 9.1 The collection and monitoring of performance indicators is a statutory requirement. In addition, a number of the work targets referred to in this report are mandatory requirements including the determination of planning applications and the preparation of the development plan.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report although we welcome the commitment in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill to increase application fees which will help to better resource the planning service.