## DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT AND LAND CHARGES PERFORMANCE UPDATE

This is the quarterly report on planning applications and appeals for the period from April to June 2013, covering the turnaround of applications, workload and appeal outcomes and Land Charges searches received.

Table 1A (**Appendix)** sets out performance for processing planning applications for the first quarter of 2013/14.

Eight major applications were determined in the quarter, together with 124 minor applications and 227 other applications, a total of 359 applications, an increase of 91 compared with the previous quarter.

Members will recall from the discussion at the January Development Committee meeting the strenuous efforts being made to determine planning applications more quickly in the light of the possibility of 'special measures' sanctions being introduced by the Government under its open 'Planning Performance and Planning Guarantee' proposals, which were the subject of consultation at the end of 2012.

The most recent quarter saw 4 of the 8 major applications determined within the 13 week statutory deadline, ie 50%. This remains comfortably above the 30% figures mooted for special measures in the consultation paper. As yet, however, the Government has not published its final decision as to how the Planning Guarantee is to be taken forward.

Of the 4 applications that were out of time, 2 were long-standing applications, the subject of Section 106 Agreements, 1 was for a more recent residential development at 2 Furlong Hill/ Market Lane, Wells, which has also been the subject of a Section 106 Agreement, and the 4$^{th}$ was the application for the two wind turbines at Scottow.

In terms of "minor" applications, performance decreased by some 4.64% to 34.68% over the previous quarter, as against the Council's target of 72%.

As far as "other" applications are concerned performance increased by 0.04% to 52.86%, again below the Council's target of 80%.

Although performance remained below the Council's targets over the quarter, Members will appreciate that 91 more applications were determined during this quarter.

Table 1B indicates the workload for the Service during the quarter and shows that 393 applications were submitted, 32 more than the previous quarter, and some 34 more than the number determined. At the present time the Service is still struggling to keep pace with incoming work for Planning Applications.

Pre-application enquiries also increased during the quarter. However 'Do I Need Planning Permission?', Discharge of Condition applications and Duty Officer enquiries all remained at similar levels to the previous quarter.

In terms of delegation of decisions, the quarterly figure rose to 93.88%, and remains above the Council's target.

Table 2 indicates performance in terms of appeal decisions. During the quarter only 1 decision was made which related to the Bodham wind turbine, and which Members will appreciate was allowed.

The Government has recently released further guidance on how the planning performance of councils will be assessed in terms of timeliness and quality in management of major applications. It is introducing a new measure specifically for assessing the quality of major application decisions and an amended indicator for measuring timeliness of decision making also on major applications. These measures will be integrated into service planning and quarterly performance reporting to Cabinet from quarter 2 onwards. Currently our quality measurement shows we have 35 major applications decided between 1 January 2011 and 31 December 2012, which is the initial period the Government will be assessing. Of those decisions only one was a refusal. That refusal subsequently went to appeal and was allowed. Our performance against the indicator percentage of major decisions overturned at appeal is therefore 2.86% (were lower is better). The Government threshold for potential designation is 20% or above.

In terms of Land Charges searches, some 550 were submitted and handled during the quarter, a decrease of some 27 when compared with the previous quarter.

Conclusions

In summary, the first quarter of the new year has seen 50% of major applications determined within the statutory time scale. The other levels of performance remain broadly the same, although a significantly higher number of applications was determined during the quarter than the previous quarter.

In order to address the workload/performance issues in the short term, Members previously agreed 2 temporary Planning Assistant posts. One of those posts has already been filled. Following re-advertisement of the vacant post, it was agreed by Steve Blatch, Corporate Director, that 2 temporary appointments could be made. (This was in the light of the service carrying a vacant permanent Planning Assistant post, which is likely to continue for some time pending the work to be undertaken in association with the Peer Review Action Plan).

The new appointees will be taking up their posts in mid- August and the first week in September.

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