

PLANNING COMMITTEE**17 AUGUST 2023**

REPORT TITLE	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE - PLANNING APPLICATIONS
REPORT OF	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the performance of the Development Management Service with regard to determining planning applications. The report outlines performance against government targets in terms of the speed of processing all applications.

This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

Planning Committee is recommended to note and endorse the performance report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION**1.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 To enable Members to be updated on the performance of the Development Management Service with regard to determining planning applications.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 As this report is for information no alternative options are recommended.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Development Management Performance Indicators**

3.1 Development Management performance is monitored within the 3 subdivisions as set out below.

(a) Major Applications

The Government's target is for 60% of major applications to be determined in 13 weeks. Major applications are defined as residential development of 10 or more units

or retail/ commercial development of 1,000 square metres or more of additional floor area.

(b) Minor Applications

The Government's target is for 65% of minor applications to be determined in 8 weeks. Minor applications are defined as residential development of less than 10 units or retail/commercial development of less than 1,000 square metres of additional floor area.

(c) Other Applications

The Government's target is for 80% of other applications to be determined in 8 weeks. Other applications include advertisements, conservation area, listed building and householder proposals. Householder applications are not included as a separate National Indicator. However, they comprise about 60% of all applications submitted to the Council and their handling is therefore a key issue in performance terms.

Additional measures introduced to address issues with underperforming Authorities

- 3.2 Section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows certain applications to be made directly to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities where the local planning authority is deemed to be underperforming. The two criteria used to assess whether Local Authorities are performing to the required standard are Speed of Decisions and Quality of Decisions.

Speed of Decisions

- 3.3 The measure to be used is the percentage of decisions on applications for major development made:
- (i) within the statutory determination period; or
 - (ii) within such extended period as has been agreed in writing between the applicant and the local planning authority.

Currently 60% of Major applications must be determined either within 13 weeks or within the extended period agreed with the applicant.

- 3.4 In addition, the Secretary of State also monitors performance for non-major applications. In these cases, 70% of applications must be determined either within 8 weeks or within the extended period agreed with the applicant.

Quality of Decisions

- 3.5 The measure to be used is the percentage of decisions on applications for Major development that have been overturned at appeal, once nine months have elapsed following the end of the assessment periods recorded in the data collected by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

- 3.6 Currently the threshold for designation is 10% or more of an authority's decisions on applications for Major and Non-Major applications being overturned on appeal.

Commentary on Annual Performance – National and Local Targets

- 3.7 The table below includes overall figures for 2021/22, together with figures for all four quarters of 2022/23, and for the first quarter of 2023/24. New data not reported to Planning Committee previously is data for 2022/23 Q4 (1st January to 31st March 2023) which is also subsequently incorporated into the overall figures for 2022/23, and the data for Q1 (1st April 2023 to 30th June 2023) of the 2023/24 period:

Table 1 Performance

Planning Applications	2021/22 Year	Q1 2022/23	Q2 2022/23	Q3 2022/23	Q4 2022/23	2022/23 Year	Q1 2023/24
Majors (Applications determined within 13 weeks)	96% (25/26)	100% (4/4)	70% (7/10)	93% (13/14)	80% (8/10)	84% (32/38)	75% (9/12)
Minors (Applications determined within 8 weeks)	79% (199/251)	69% (36/52)	76% (41/54)	85% (46/54)	81% (42/52)	78% (165/212)	76% (54/71)
Others (inc. householders) (Applications determined within 8 weeks)	91% (1017/1121)	89% (193/216)	68% (124/183)	80% (154/192)	82% (183/222)	80% (654/813)	75% (151/201)
All (All application types determined within designated timescales)	87% (1238/1398)	86% (233/272)	70% (172/247)	82% (213/260)	82% (233/284)	80% (851/1063)	75% (214/284)
Householders (Householder applications determined)	89%	92%	65%	79%	83%	79%	73%

within weeks)	8	(692/774)	(170/185)	(103/159)	(129/163)	(151/182)	(402/507)	(116/158)
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- 3.8 The Service met the requirements for Major, Minor and Other targets in 2022/23. The reduction in the number of applications being determined within the statutory period, when compared to 2021/22, can largely be attributed to the introduction of the Council's new IT system for Development Management, which went live towards the end of June 2022.
- 3.9 As noted in the previous report, officers were unable to validate or determine applications for approximately 3-4 weeks whilst the service was migrated to the new system, and this created a backlog of applications to be registered and determined. In addition to this, processes have taken longer to complete as Officers and support staff familiarise themselves with the new system, whilst teething problems with the new system also caused further delays.
- 3.10 There was an improved performance for applications determined within time within Q3 and Q4 when compared to Q2 as Officers began to become more familiar with the new system. Despite this, issues with the new system remain. Whilst improvements are ongoing and processes are being continuously refined, it takes longer for the planning application process to be carried out on the new system and there is therefore a continued reliance on extensions of times to meet targets.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Financial risk because of fee return and the designation of planning authorities in special measures for underperformance is referred to above. These aspects are actively monitored, to allow priorities to be adjusted as required to reduce the risk.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Government monitors planning performance in terms of speed and quality of decision-making. In the event minimum standards are not met, an authority may be designated as underperforming with special measures applied that allow applicants for major development to apply for permission direct from the Planning Inspectorate and bypassing local decision-making. It is important to continue to meet these targets or special measures will be applied.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There is a risk of government intervention if performance falls below the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' targets. This report seeks to monitor performance and manage the risk.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 This report is factual so there has been no consultation on its contents.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. There are no equality implications arising from the proposals within this report.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no impact on emissions of Greenhouse Gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct community wealth implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years) Council

Council Meeting	Date
Planning Committee	11th February 2021
Planning Committee	15th July 2021
Planning Committee	14th October 2021
Planning Committee	10th February 2022
Planning Committee	13th October 2022
Planning Committee	9th February 2023