

Report Title:	Planning Performance
Contains Confidential or Exempt Information?	NO - Part I
Member reporting:	Councillor Airey, Deputy Lead Member for Planning
Meeting and Date:	Planning and Housing Overview and Scrutiny, 7 December 2017
Responsible Officer(s):	Russell O'Keefe, Executive Director Place & Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning
Wards affected:	All

REPORT SUMMARY

- 1 The report is to update the Panel on planning performance since the implementation of an improvement plan within the service. The aim of the improvement plan was to consistently meet the national targets for the determination of planning applications.
- 2 The report identifies the next phase of work which the service is currently engaged in to further improve performance.

1 DETAILS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

RECOMMENDATION: That Planning and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Panel notes the report and the continued improved performance in the determination of planning applications.

2 REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The Chair of the Panel requested a report on planning performance. The statute on which this is based is set out in Section 62B of the Planning Act; the latest publication from Government relating to the criteria for assessment and designation was published in November 2016.
- 2.2 The Government's position is that planning departments play a crucial role in enabling development to deliver home ownership, building homes people can afford to buy and supporting economic growth. An efficient and effective planning system facilitated by skilled and experienced planners is essential to support this. Government wants to support and work with local authorities to make sure that the planning system is valued, resilient and capable of providing the service that local people and planning applicants expect, and delivering on the increasing challenges being asked of it.
- 2.3 The performance of local authorities in deciding applications for planning permission is crucial to achieving this objective. The existing approach to measuring the performance of authorities was introduced by the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 and is based on assessing local planning authorities' performance on the speed and quality of their decisions on applications for

major development. Where an authority is designated as underperforming, applicants have had the option of submitting their applications for major development (and connected applications) directly to the Planning Inspectorate (who act on behalf of the Secretary of State) for determination.

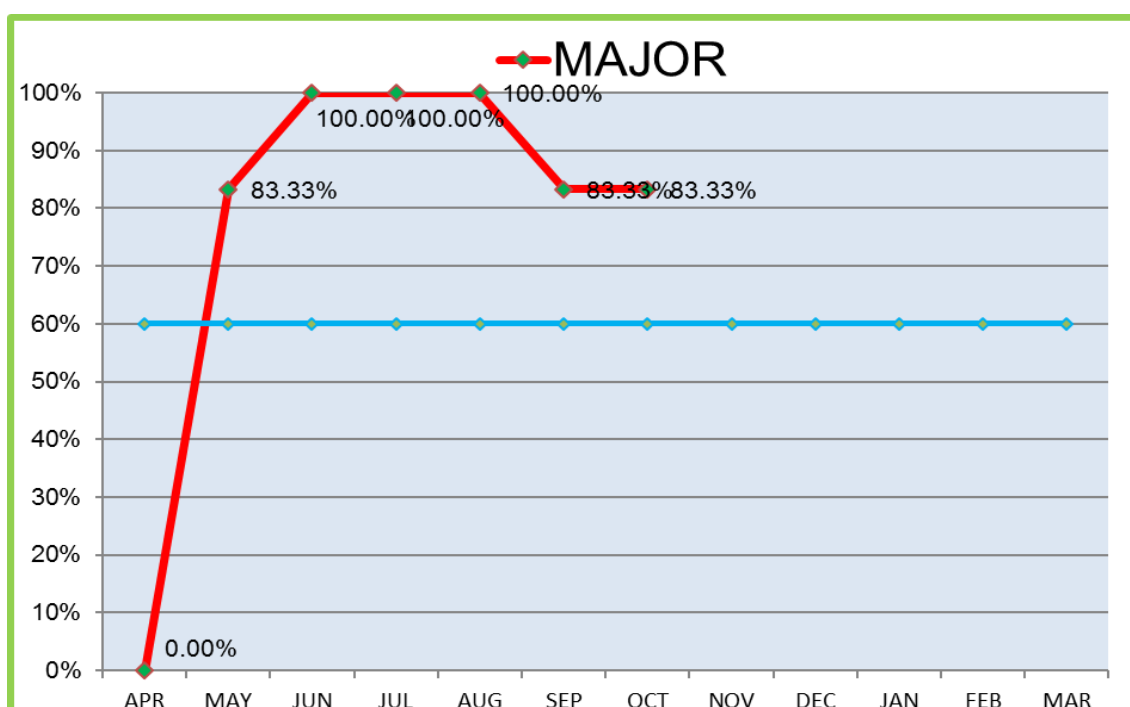
- 2.4 The Council is required to make statutory returns to Government each quarter; this data is then used by Government to publish performance tables. These are called PS1 and 2 returns. PS1 returns relate to major, minor and other planning applications; minerals and waste applications are captured separately as County Matters and then PS2 captures the rest of the applications which a planning authority would determine.
- 2.5 The Council's Performance Monitoring Framework captures the major, minor and other applications categories and also performance on planning appeals.
- 2.6 The following tables show the performance in each of these categories over the years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 (incomplete).

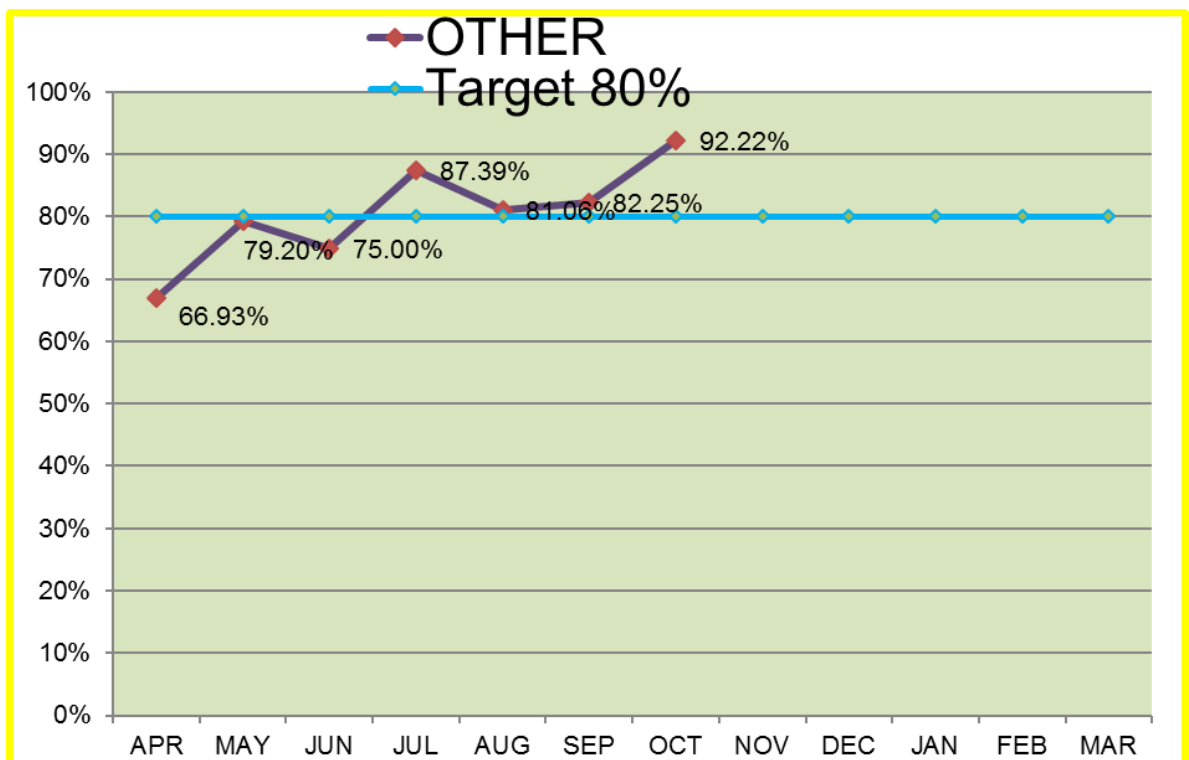
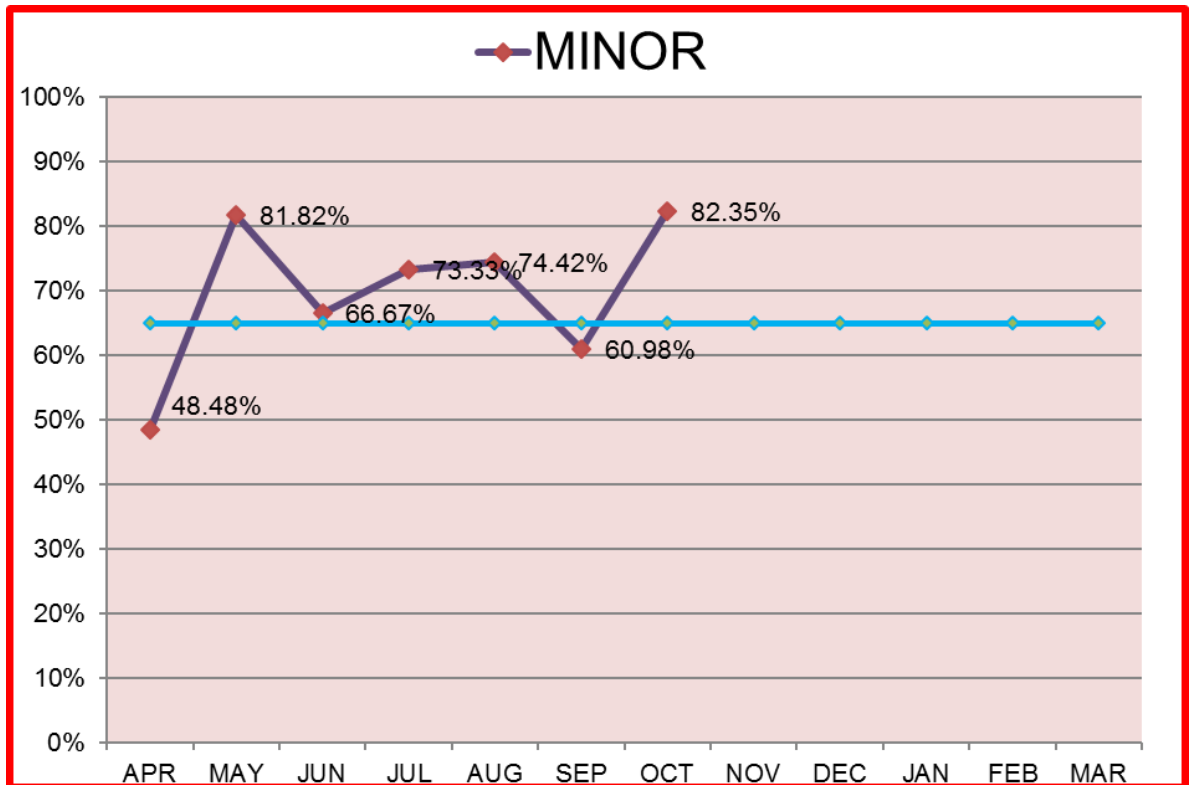
2015-2016					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YEAR
Major Planning applications - in target (60%)	5	4	10	14	33
Total Major Planning Applications	8	8	15	18	49
Performance	62.50%	50.00%	66.67%	77.78%	67.35%
Minor Planning applications - in target (65%)	44	49	47	83	223
Total Minor Planning Applications	104	116	102	121	443
Performance	42.31%	42.24%	46.08%	68.60%	50.34%
"Other" Planning applications - in target (80%)	241	194	187	327	949
Total "Other" Planning Applications	376	377	319	409	1,481
Performance	64.10%	51.46%	58.62%	79.95%	64.08%

	2016-2017					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YEAR	
	Major Planning applications - in target (60%)	14	16	10	15	55
	Total Major Planning Applications	17	23	13	19	72
Performance	82.35%	69.57%	76.92%	78.95%	76.39%	
Minor Planning applications - in target (65%)	73	69	53	45	240	
Total Minor Planning Applications	98	103	73	72	346	
Performance	74.49%	66.99%	72.60%	62.50%	69.36%	
"Other" Planning applications - in target (80%)	322	326	255	229	1,132	
Total "Other" Planning Applications	398	382	310	309	1,399	
Performance	80.90%	85.34%	82.26%	74.11%	80.91%	

	2017-2018				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YEAR
	7	11	5	0	23
	10	12	6	0	28
Major Planning applications - in target (60%)	70.00%	91.67%	83.33%		82.14%
Total Major Planning Applications					
Performance					
Minor Planning applications - in target (65%)	69	79	28	0	176
Total Minor Planning Applications	105	114	34	0	253
Performance	65.71%	69.30%	82.35%		69.57%
"Other" Planning applications - in target (80%)	283	343	83	0	709
Total "Other" Planning Applications	384	412	90	0	886
Performance	73.70%	83.25%	92.22%		80.02%

- 2.7 It can be seen that Q2 in 2015-16 was the worst performing quarter over the period shown. Performance rose in quarter 3 and then to the end of the year 2015-16. This is the point at which 'quick win' improvements were put in place by the Borough Planning Manager. The impetus for those improvements was to ensure that RBWM did not fall below the rolling two year performance targets thus placing it at serious risk of intervention from DCLG.
- 2.8 In 2016-17 an internal improvement plan was agreed with the Lead Member for Planning alongside a published improvement plan on planning appeals performance, this sector will be addressed later in the report. The main focus of the performance improvement was the minor category of applications which largely relates to the delivery of new dwellings and changes of use.
- 2.9 As part of that improvement the Council entered into a 12 month temporary contract with RE to provide a capacity contract for the determination of planning applications. The planning service was provided with up to £70,000 additional resource. This recognised that the service was experiencing a turnover of staff and that a number of posts were being backfilled using agency staff. Currently both the capacity contract and the backfilling with agency staff is ongoing.
- 2.10 Through the current year 2017-18 the focus has been on consolidating better performance and system improvements. This resulted in the planning service purchasing and implementing a document management system for the database system (used by other services also) and a connector to the Planning Portal which allows applicants to make applications on line and the information to be 'dropped' into the Council system. It has altered how the public and other users see information and documents on the website; it has also enabled the submission of comments through the website for residents and consultees.
- 2.11 The graphs below show the 2017-18 year to date performance on each category of applications by month:





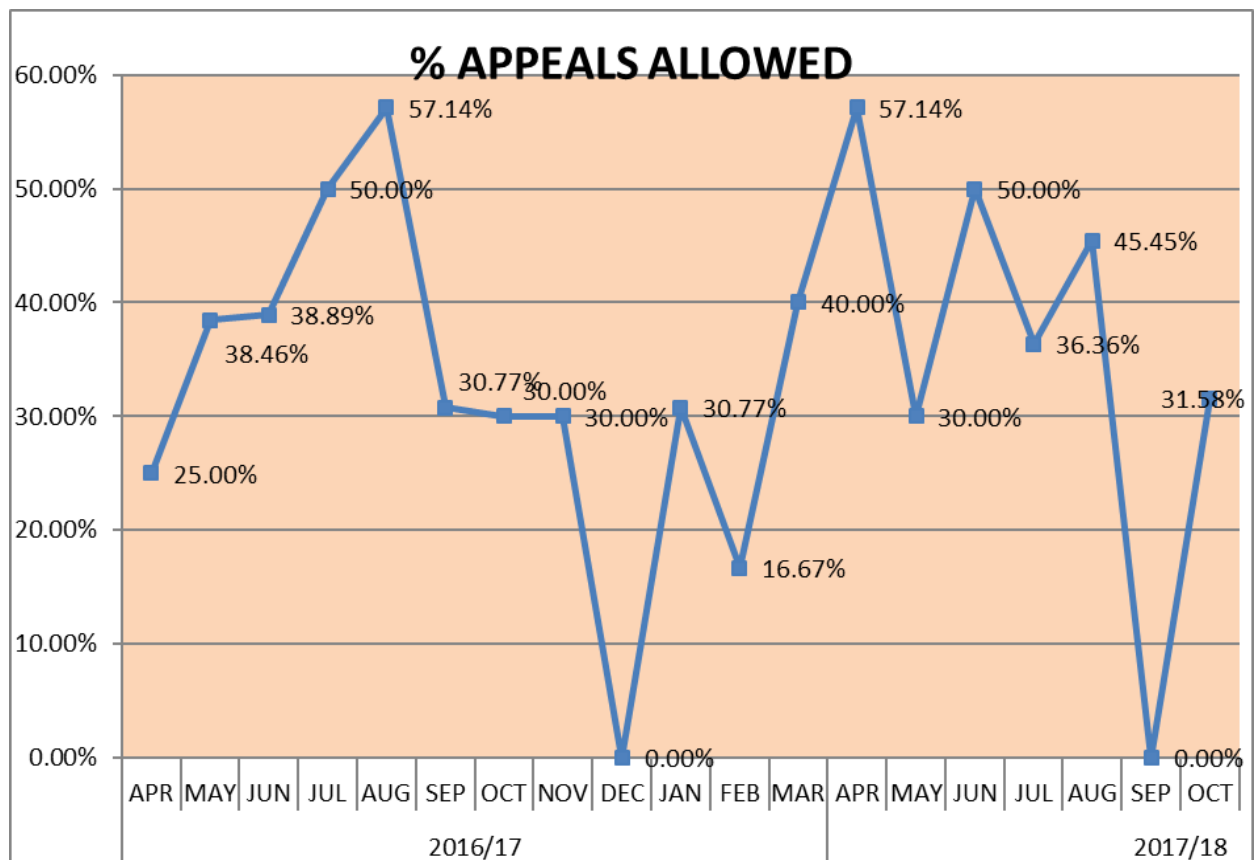
- 2.12 The newly appointed Deputy Head of Planning, Mr Ashley Smith, started work in October 2017. He will lead the development management service (including the enforcement and conservation team). Throughout October 2017 senior managers in the service have been engaged in further recruitment to a number of vacant positions currently backfilled with agency staff. The interest in positions working for RBWM planning service has been greater than

previously and consequently the service has managed to recruit two very experienced team managers alongside a range of other qualified and experienced planners. In January 2018 the development management side of the service will be fully staffed with permanent team members save for 2 positions and there will be a single vacancy maintained as funding for a capacity contract going forward. It is proposed the additional funding for that capacity contract will come from the 20% increase in planning application fees expected to be enacted by 31 December 2017 and which has to be ringfenced to fund improvements in the planning service.

Planning Appeals

2.13 The performance indicator for planning appeals is that less than 20% of planning appeals should be allowed. This has been a target which has challenged the Council for the last 3 years. The published improvement plan last year required that a programme of Member training be conducted alongside more detailed Part 2 reports to Members on the consequences of decisions taken by Planning Panels. These actions have been completed.

2.14 The table below shows the number of appeals allowed per month from April 2016 to October 2017; these are expressed as a percentage. 0% indicates that there were no appeals determined in that month. It can be seen that only one month achieved the target of beneath 20% of appeals allowed.



3 KEY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Planning performance is measured corporately against the national indicators for planning performance set by Government through the Department for Communities and Local Government. Failure to meet the national targets can result in being designated as a standards authority.

4 FINANCIAL DETAILS / VALUE FOR MONEY

- 4.1 There are no financial implications from this report. This report is for the Panel to note and makes no recommendations. A capital bid has been made for £120,000 to fund further service wide improvements in 2018/19. A decision on that bid will be made by Full Council in February 2018, it is not a recommendation of this report.

Table 3: Financial impact of report's recommendations

REVENUE	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Addition	£0	£0	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0
Net impact	£0	£0	£0

CAPITAL			
Addition	£0	£0	£0
Reduction	£0	£0	£0
Net impact	£0	£0	£0

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 No.

7 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 7.1 None arising from this report.

8 CONSULTATION

- None.

9 APPENDICES

10 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

10.1 None.

11 CONSULTATION (MANDATORY)

Name of consultee	Post held	Date sent	Commented & returned
Cllr Coppinger	Lead Member	26.11.17	26.11.17
Cllr M Airey	Deputy Lead Member	26.11.17	26.11.17
Alison Alexander	Managing Director	28.11.17	29.11.17
Russell O'Keefe	Executive Director	26.11.17	28.11.17

REPORT HISTORY

Decision type: For information	Urgency item? No
Report Author: Jenifer Jackson, Head of Planning, 01628 796042	

