

DELEGATED

AGENDA No.

**REPORT TO PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

DATE 20th FEBRUARY 2008

**REPORT OF HEAD OF
PLANNING**

PLANNING PERFORMANCE

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update members on the current performance of the planning department for the third quarter of 2007/2008 and present an update on the current staffing situation.

Recommendation

That planning committee note this quarterly performance report.

Background

1. In terms of the processing of applications, the government established new national targets, broken down by categories of development, known as BVPI standards. It was required that all LPA reached these standards by March 2007, which Stockton Planning Services achieved. Members will be aware that this refers particularly to BVPI 109 a, b and c, where 60% of all major applications must be determined within 13 weeks (109a), 65% of minor within 8 weeks (109b) and 80% of others within 8 weeks (109c).
2. The reporting timeframes for the BVPI targets runs from 1st April-31st March. This report presents the performance of the third quarter in that period, 1st October-31st December 2007.

Current position

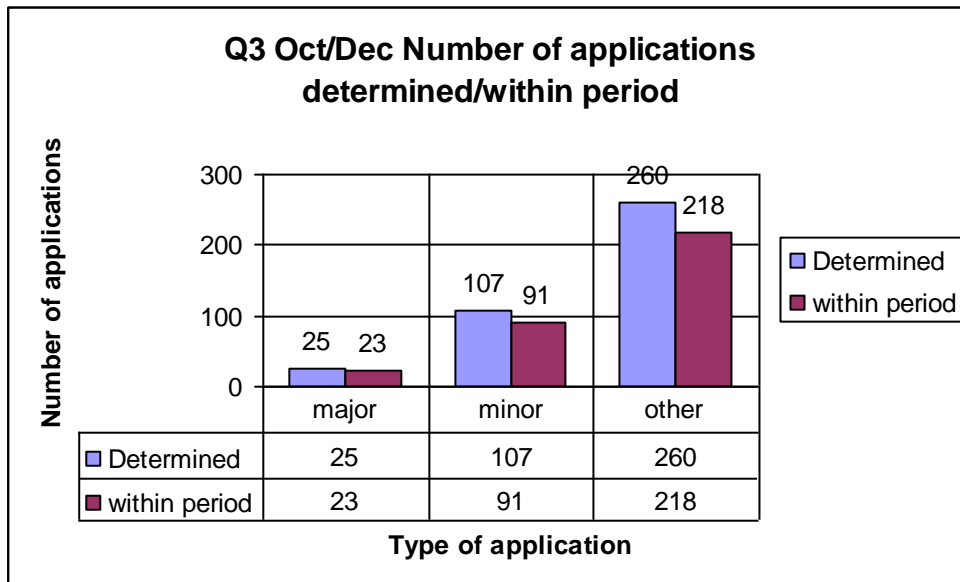
3. The BVPI 109 indicator is reported on the annual year-end results, and the third quarter of that period has now passed. Performance results achieved for that period are 92% for major applications, 85.05% for minor and 83.85% for others, achieving above performance in all 3 categories. Table 1 highlights the performance over the third quarter and the cumulative performance to date.

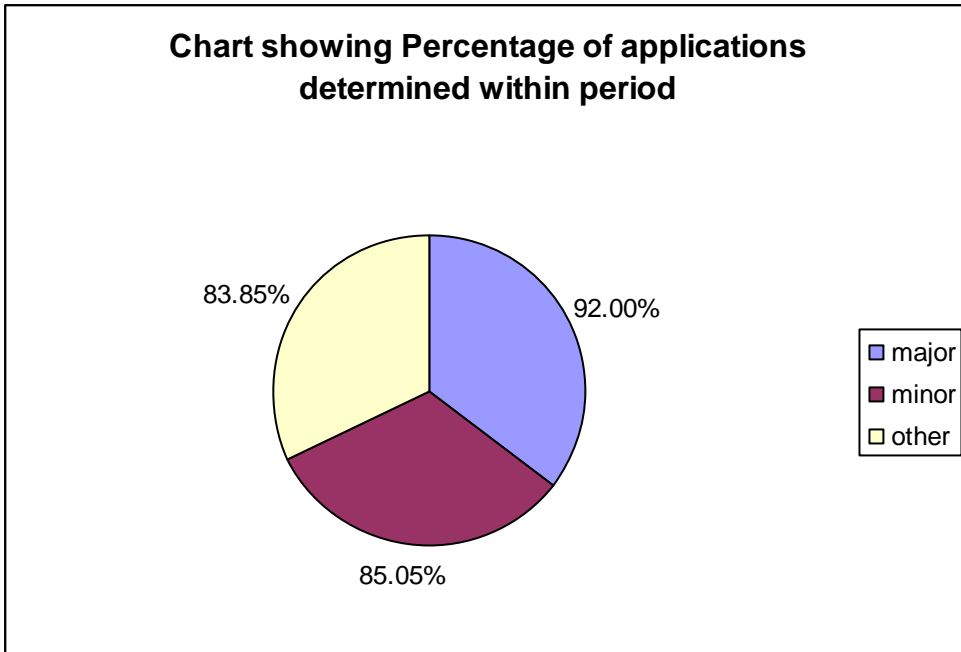
2007/2008

	Target	Determined	Q3		Cumulative		
			Oct/Dec within period	percent	April/December Determined	within period	percent
Major	60.00%	25	23	92.00%	67	61	91.04%
Minor	65.00%	107	91	85.05%	306	257	83.99%
Other	80.00%	260	218	83.85%	976	792	81.15%

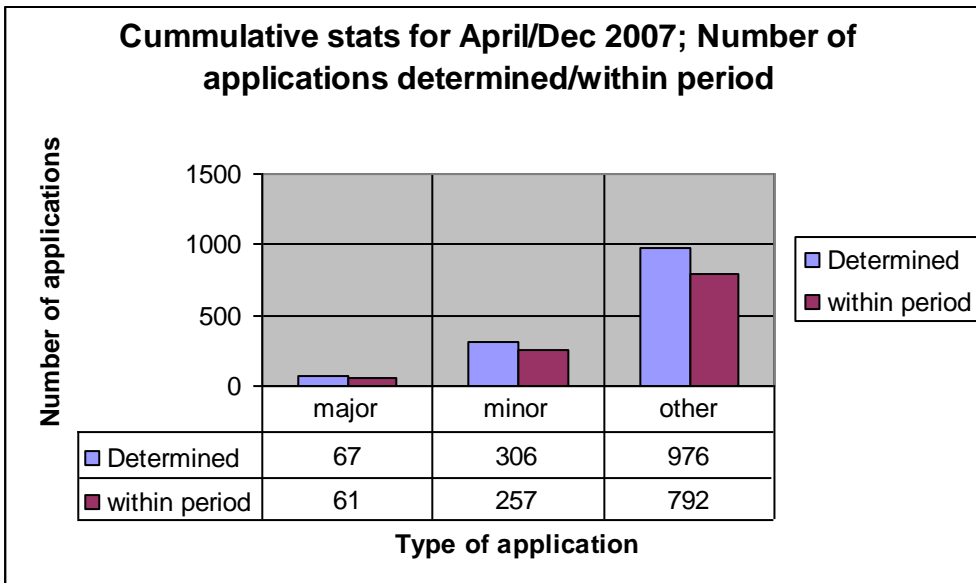
Table 1 Quarter 3 performance results

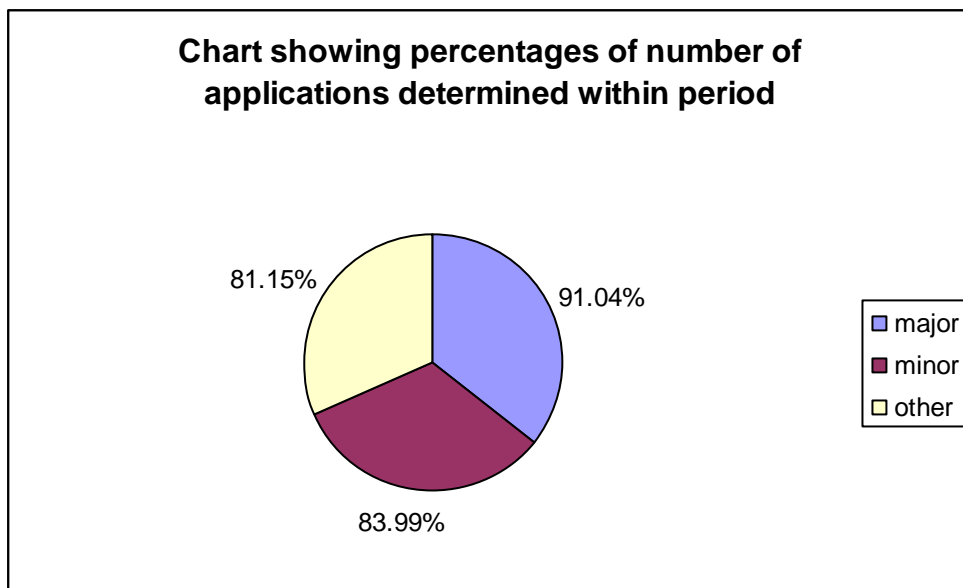
4. Performance of major applications has exceeded BVPI standards for a third quarter with 23 out of the 25 applications determined within the 13 week time period. This is an outstanding achievement. There are now only 2 major applications that have expired still in the system, the Durham Tees Valley Airport application having already been to committee and approved in principle.
5. Performance in BVPI 109 c (other) applications has now started to rise again, following from a period of decline due to staffing issues at the time. Performance for the quarter was 83.85%, above the required performance level of 80%, contributing to a cumulative total of 81.15% of the applications being determined within 8 weeks.
6. The following graphs and charts highlights performance against national targets.





Quarter 3 chart of applications determined





Cumulative chart of applications determined

7. However, the current quarter, the fourth and final one for the 2007/2008 performance year, is the last that the BVPI indicators will be reported as such. The old BVPI's are going to disappear, and in their place, Councils have been given a set of 198 indicators to work towards, now known as National Indicators (NI). Of that 198, Planning will be directly responsible for 3, (NI 157, 159 and 170) and will have an impact into another 7 (NI 154, 155, 185, 186, 187, 188 and 198). Of those 198, the Council has to prioritise 35 to put into the Local Area Agreement (LAA), in consultation with GONE and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) i.e. Renaissance Board. To date, 2 of our NI's will be going forward into the LAA, NI 157 and 159. These 35 indicators will be the ones by which the performance of the whole Council will be judged.
8. The NI that will now be reported on from Planning Service are:-
 NI 157-Processing of planning apps as measured against targets for major, minor and others (i.e. the old BVPI 109)
 NI159-Supply of ready to develop housing sites
9. With regards to performance, it will be the responsibility of each local authority to set their own targets, rather than sticking to the 60%, 65% and 80% from previous years. For LAA purposes it will be necessary to set annual targets (for the next three years) to show the ambition to have the service improving year-on-year from a baseline position. The expectation from GONE of us as an excellent Council will be to be ambitious and stretch our performance levels. Consideration is being given to this at present in consultation with the staff involved.
10. The steady increase in performance over the last 18 months has been reflected in the level of PDG allocation announced this month. The grant was announced in 2 stages, Stockton being allocated £55,142 in the first round last year, based entirely on development control performance for the year ending June 2006. The second tranche of grants confirmed on 8th February related to development control performance from 1st July 2006 to 31st March 2007 with a £50,000 for meeting all 3 BVPI targets on top of the original

£126,228 allocated. In addition, the second part of the grant also awarded £61,872 for plan making and sustainable development and £17,938 for e-planning.

11. The grant aims to provide additional funding to enable local authorities to improve their planning resources and introduce the many changes that the government is bringing in as part of its programme to reform planning. To encourage reinvestment, 25% of any PDG allocation must be spent on capital expenditure, which is likely to involve the replacement of the servers to continue the provision of a seamless end to end planning system, and to scan the outstanding planning applications into CAPS to make the information available online, doing away with the need for the historical paper files.
12. From a staffing perspective, there have been 4 appointments in the quarter, where 2 Planning Technicians were appointed as Planning Officers (Debra Moody and Daniel James), and will attend the 2 year course at Newcastle University. Mirelle Brownlee and Joanne Hutchinson were subsequently appointed as Planning Technicians. At present we are recruiting for the vacant senior planning officer post, and for a Planning Officer as Helen Williams left at the beginning of January.
13. In Spatial Planning, there has been an increase in the workload of the section due to the number of documents and studies required to be carried out in order to ensure that the Core Strategy and Regeneration DPD will be found sound, and the work required in the production of the SHLAA. This has placed great pressure on the existing staff and will require the LDS to be altered to reflect the fact that staff have been diverted from their work on the Regeneration DPD and YEAAP to undertake such work. In addition, GONE and PINS have requested that consideration be given to staggering the Core Strategy and Regeneration DPD to ensure that we have produced a sound Core Strategy that can be adopted prior to progressing any other documents to the examination stage. This is being considered at the present moment, but may result in reduced allocation of HPDG in future years. In order to be undertake all the work and keep the Core Strategy on track, we are at the present moment seeking to recruit 2 new additional members of staff to the section.

Recommendations

14. That planning committee note this quarterly performance report and acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Planning Staff and colleagues within other service areas to continuously improve performance and the reputation of the Council.

Corporate Director, Development & Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer: Carol Straughan
Tel: 01642 527027
carol.straughan@stockton.gov.uk

Financial Implications; PDG based on performance targets reached

Environmental Implications; None directly.

Community Safety Implications; None directly.