

## DELEGATED

AGENDA No.

REPORT TO PLANNING  
COMMITTEE

DATE 29<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2009

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 final quarter of 2008/2009 and present an update on the current situation in light of the credit crunch and expected income for 2009-2010.

### Recommendation

That planning committee note this quarterly performance report.

### Background

1. The old BVPI's have now been replaced National Indicators (NI). Planning will be directly responsible for 3, (NI 157, 159 and 170) and will have an impact on another 7 (NI 154, 155, 185, 186, 187, 188 and 198). Of these, 2 planning indicators have been included in the Local Area Agreement (LAA), in consultation with GONE and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) i.e. Renaissance Board. NI157 replaces BVPI 109 and is the processing of planning applications against targets which the local authority sets itself for major, minor and other applications. NI 159 relates to the supply of ready to develop housing sites, which is determined through the RSS housing numbers and the SHLAA.
2. With regards to performance, it has been 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 was 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.
3. The targets that have now been set for the next 3 years are as follows:-

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Major	70%	73%	75%
Minor	75%	78%	80%

Other                      82%                                      85%                                      88%

4. Meeting or exceeding these targets no longer qualifies for Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG), but grant will be deducted instead if targets are not reached.
5. The reporting timeframe for the NI targets remains and runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April-31<sup>st</sup> March. This report presents the performance of the fourth quarter in that period, 1<sup>st</sup> January -31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

**Current performance position**

6. The NI indicator is reported on the annual year-end results, and the final quarter of that period has now passed. Performance results achieved for that period are 100% for major applications, 91.49% for minor and 92.36% for others, achieving above performance in all 3 categories. Table 1 highlights the performance over the four quarters of this year, and the chart maps out performance over the entire year.

Table 1 Yearly performance results

April/June			July/Sept		
Determined	within period	percent	Determined	within period	percent
Major-22	21	95.45%	Major-26	26	100.00%
Minor-84	68	80.95%	Minor-112	101	90.18%
Others-238	205	86.13%	Others-306	272	88.89%

Oct/Dec			Jan/Mar		
Determined	within period	percent	Determined	within period	percent
Major-18	17	94.44%	Major-9	9	100.00%
Minor-96	92	95.83%	Minor-94	86	91.49%
Others-191	171	89.53%	Others-157	145	92.36%

Cumulative April/March		
Determined	within period	percent
Major-75	73	97.33%
Minor-386	347	89.90%
Others-892	793	88.90%

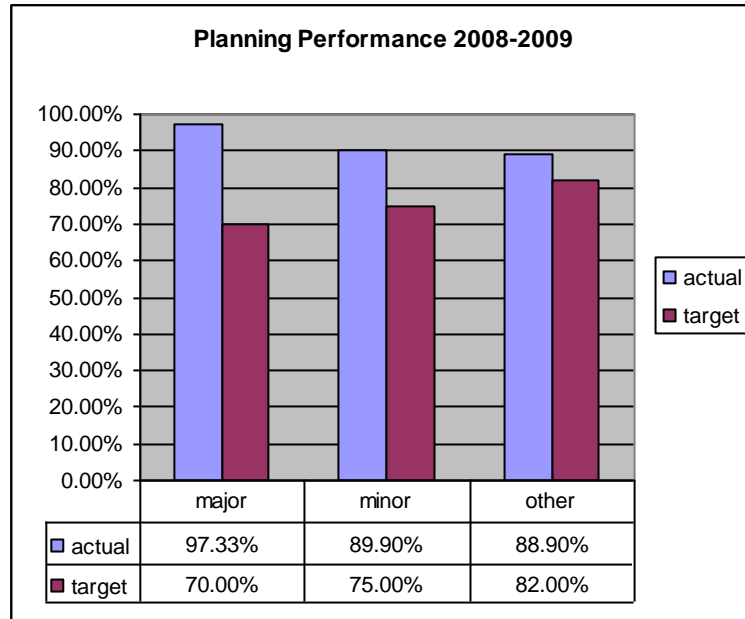


Chart of planning performance for the year 2008-2009

7. Performance of major applications has exceeded NI standards for the fourth quarter with all 9 applications determined within the 13 week time period, with 73 of the 75 applications over the year also meeting the target.
8. Performance in the “other” category of applications has continued at a high level, following from a period of decline due to staffing issues at the time. Performance for the final quarter of 2007/8 was 87.82%, compared to the final quarter for 2008/09 at 92.36%, giving an annual total of 88.90%. Performance in minor applications has actually fallen from 95.83% in the last quarter to 91.49% due to officers who have left clearing out applications before they left.

### **Current Economic Climate**

9. From a staffing perspective over the year, there has been a lot of movement in the last quarter with the need to redeploy staff due to the drop in income. It is clear from the above tables how the credit crunch has effected the number of applications, particularly the majors where 22 applications were determined in the first quarter dropping down to 9 in the last. The “credit crunch” has had an impact on both the number of planning applications and the level of income received during the year to date. Annual income figures are now available, and Planning Services did not achieve the income targets set for the year, with around a £250,000 shortfall. This has been met through savings within other budgets in planning, use of managed surplus from PDG that had been carried forward from 2007/2008, and savings on staff costs. However this will not be available in the current year, and it is unlikely that in the present economic climate, that we achieve the £950,000 target income set for 2009/2010.
10. This has led to all staff within Planning Services being asked to consider redeployment, either within the Council or externally, and for suggestions on how the service could achieve the income levels set for the next financial year. HR are working closely with staff to offer opportunities elsewhere, and

give practical advice and support to those staff wishing to redeploy. There have been 2 vacant planning officer posts in Spatial Planning, both of which have been filled internally, one from Development Services and the current planning technician in Spatial Planning. This has then left the technicians post vacant, which will be filled by another technician from Development Services. A Principal Planning Officer has also resigned, and it is also hoped to fill the post internally by redeploying a member of staff from Development Services. A planning officer has left Development Services and was redeployed within the architects, a planning technician took up the post of building control technician, and 2 members of the technical admin team have left for jobs elsewhere. All posts have been “frozen” until the market recovers and the workload increases, which results in a net of 2 admin posts, 2 planning officer posts and 2 planning technicians, with the principal planning officer post still to be resolved. It remains to be seen whether this is sufficient to balance the budget against the expected income level, and this will be closely monitored each month in case further action is required.

### **Recommendation**

11. That planning committee note this annual 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 against the background of the current difficult economic circumstances and low morale.

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**Financial Implications; HPDG abated if targets not met , decrease in income has budgetary implications for service delivery**

**Environmental Implications; None directly.**

**Community Safety Implications; None directly.**