

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

26 February 2020

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BROWN - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING

For the period March 2020 to June 2020

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Development Management Performance

Our latest figures for speed of decision stand up to month end in January as:

Two-year average Majors at 82.86, down 5.71% from last reporting in February. National indicators require decisions should exceed 60%. In May 100% of major application (3) were determined within time.

Two-year average Non- major applications at 85.71 down 4.19% from February, (National indicators require decisions to be a minimum of 70%). In May 89.38% of decisions (49) were determined within time.

The performance of our service has been impacted by a number of factors:

- COVID 19 has drawn a number of the team away to support the corporate response.
- working restrictions for vulnerable team members
- significant change in working practices, with site visits being restricted.
- clearing an historic back log; over 300 applications cleared since lockdown measures were introduced.

A number of measures were introduced on 1 June to enable remote site analysis and facilitate site inspections where customer and officer safety can be guaranteed. Requests for extension of time were reduced to one-month post expiry date. Expectation is that the down turn in performance can then recover in the coming months, figures in May show a rebound, new measures were introduced on 1 June to move new applications forward. Overall, the view remains a positive one with both sectors significantly exceeding national requirements when viewed over the two-year performance interval.

It is essential that our planning decision making plays an active and facilitating role in the Post COVID recovery for North Norfolk. I shall require Service Managers and Head of Service to scrutinise performance closely at this sensitive time.

Our latest figures for quality of decision (as measured by appeal success)

stand as:

Majors no appeal decision have been overturned 0%.

Non-major developments 0.99% A slight worsening by less than 0.1%, this equates to 24 decisions overturned in the 2 year qualifying period. (National benchmark 10%).

No fees were refunded as a result of requests made following failure to determine the cases in 26 weeks.

Planning Policy & neighbourhood planning

Local Plan Review

The Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working party (PPBH) has been working under interim measures since March. Through these provisions PPBH was able to agree a revised Local Development Scheme with Cabinet in May. This revised document shows a clear project plan which will lead to the next stages of public consultation in July 2021, submission to Planning Inspectorate in September 2021, Local Plan Inquiry in January 2022 and final adoption in August 2022.

Interim measures have ensured that this timetable is on track. Via Officer and Portfolio holder, and local ward member engagement we have enabled our first allocations consultation review to be completed for consultation booklets on Sheringham, Stalham & Ludham to be completed on 3 June. Our first remote PPBH working party was held on 15 June to review consultation booklets for Holt, Hoveton & Wells next the Sea. This meeting will also review consultation responses for the revised public open space policies of the emerging plan. PPBH will conclude review of allocations in July 2020. Work is on-going in relation to the North Walsham Development brief with scheduled completion in January 2021.

Progress reports and key papers from PPBH will be taken to Overview & Scrutiny and Cabinet.

Neighbourhood Plan

Consultation is now complete on the Great Ryburgh neighbourhood plan. We will now assist as the neighbourhood plan group move the matter forward.

Major Developments

The major housing development proposals for 110 homes and land for a new primary school at Beresford Close, Holt were reported the Development Committee of 6 February and were refused. The appeal will move forward as a written representations appeal; statements are being exchanged currently. The Council will engage expert opinion to defend matters of housing land supply in this appeal.

Additional support has been engaged to assist the team in completing conditions discharge applications and enabling work to begin on approved sites asap.

Building Control

Covid 19 has been challenging for our Building Control team with around 50% of the team being directly impacted by restrictions. Remote site inspections have been undertaken and COVID 19 guidelines closely adhered to for any on site working. Additional support has been made available since 1 June to enable the greater cover for site inspections. The team continue to provide a timely and well respected service to the construction sector in North Norfolk.

Software Introduction

COVID 19 has led to the Go Live date for the Uniform (planning applications) project being deferred, the software contractors would be unable to complete on site installation as scheduled and our project team have been redeployed to other roles to support the Council's response to COVID 19.

Some elements of the project are being worked on again, the project team will regather and a Go Live date has been agreed with the Contractors to be on site in December 2020 to complete installation.

Staffing

Three officers have joined the service since reporting in February:

Alannah Hogarth – Conservation

Joseph Barrow – Development Management

Samantha Jones – Major Projects

Recruitment campaigns are underway for posts in Major Projects and Planning Policy, interviews are scheduled for mid-July.

Democratic process

It has been a challenging time across all portfolios and service areas at NNDC. I have been pleased to actively support members and officers in ensuring democracy remains respected in the planning process. Our Committee work has continued to progress with full engagement of elected members and public speaking. The planning processes have then been able to continue with appropriate levels of scrutiny and democracy. I should like to thank all members and officers in Democratic Services, Legal and Planning for their support in this important aspect of our service.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Planning Policy & Build Heritage Working Party – 13 July 2020

Development Committee – 23 July 2020 (note meeting 25 June 2020 to be cancelled)

3 Meetings attended

Planning Policy & Build Heritage working party – 16 March 2020

Development Committee – 5 March 2020; 2 April 2020; 30 April 2020.