

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

April 2021

COUNCILLOR JOHN TOYE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT

For the period February 2021 to April 2021

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

General Situation

Performance

All the information in numerical terms is now available to everyone on Inphase. The Inphase figures are regularly reviewed through committees, the main indicators of 2 year averages still remain good despite high workloads. This is a testament to the hard work of officers in the planning department.

Staffing Levels

Although we lost Sarah Ashurst on promotion and there has been some internal movement generally speaking staff levels are near to being at full established levels. The departure of Sarah has given the opportunity for the department to carry out an evaluation of staffing and distribution. Any re arrangements will be done within current budgets and is about ensuring skill levels across the organisation match delivery requirements. All areas continue to have high workloads.

Development Management Performance

Currently in the **non Major** applications officers currently have in excess of 35 applications per officer with some as high as the mid 40's. It is possible that there is a covid effect as people have spent more time in their houses and decided to make changes and additions. Despite still working remotely and adapting to the still relatively new Uniform system officer continue to deliver decisions on time and of a good quality. This is reflected in the performance figures and low level of decisions being overturned on appeal.

Year on Year comparisons for March,

Applications received up from 245 to 358.

Officers should be congratulated for keeping the number of applications decided also up from 286 to 371 in step to prevent any potential backlogs.

The **Majors** team have been working on bringing previous approved complex applications like Fakenham to conclusion so that the first phases of these applications can begin.

They have been prioritising affordable housing projects and it was pleasing to see the Walcott exceptions site delivered at a recent development committee as these were also houses being built to passivhouse standards.

The Majors team along with conservation and design environmental health and costal continue to be involved with the time consuming work of offshore windfarms this is important in delivering the views of the District Council into these and other national infrastructure projects.

Planning Policy & neighbourhood planning

Excellent progress continues to be made through the Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party (PPBHWP) to move the new local plan to regulation 19. It is still expected to have the final version of the Plan ready for consultation in the first half of 2022.

Assistance with developing local plans by parish councils has been on going with consultations and reviews.

Duty to cooperate has been the subject of recent PPBHWP with work on shared recreational mitigation schemes being the subject at the next duty to co-operate meeting.

Conservation Design & Landscape

With the high level of applications in development teams this reflects in workload levels for the Conservation, design and Landscape teams.

In addition to consultations for applications they have been working on the Recreation mitigation and carrying out Conservation area appraisals and consultations.

Current Conservation appraisals it is hoped will come to the May PPBHWP after consultation

Building Control

Workload and applications remain buoyant; fee income remains stable.

Completion inspections are being reintroduced from 6th April.

Peter Hazelwood (assistant BCO post) is confirmed to start 3rd May (Bank Holiday so first day May 4th), our contractor support terminates on 23 April.

The surveying team are completing early stage Covid vaccinations which will assist with inspections.

The surveying team are considering future working practices with potential for "hybrid" working potentially offering the best service delivery.

Land Charges Searches

It is notable that land searches since January of this year have doubled each month with February processing almost 3 times the amount of official and March almost 3 times the personal searches.

Digital transformation

Uniform has started to settle down with the odd system glitch occurring but the majority of issues has been resolved and it is believed that people are now getting the correct notifications with the correct information links.

Uniform is programmed for updates in May, most significantly is a 4 day period from 4th to 7th May where systems will be unavailable. All information on shutdowns and upgrades through May will be communicated to those affected.

Enforcement

The Combined Enforcement Team of 2.5 people remains very busy with planning enforcement and council tax/business rates property inspections for the revenues service. There around 290 live cases and although 260 or so will be closed down during the year this shows that there are number of more complex and therefore resource intensive cases. Currently we are advised to expect appeals to take 12 months

The Compulsory Purchase of The Shannoeks Hotel has been granted by the planning inspector and demolition is due to start on the 26th April. Site clearance is to be completed no later than 1 June 2021. The adjacent NNDC car park is to be leased under license to the developer as site compound for the period of the demolition. The site is to be screened by hoarding once demolition is completed. Under the agreement development is scheduled to start no later than June 2022 with all works to be completed on site no later than June 2023. The development is to proceed on the basis of the "Huddies" planning permission, i.e. the NNDC car park being for local car parking post development.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Planning Policy & Build Heritage Working Party
Development Committee

3 Meetings attended

Planning Policy & Build Heritage Working party
Development Committee. Norfolk Strategic Planning Forum
Parish council meetings By Zoom. Planning Team meetings and 1:1's