

## PERFORMANCE AND FINANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### Planning and People Portfolio Update

Portfolio	Planning and People
Ward(s) Affected:	All

#### Purpose

To provide a progress report on the Planning and People Portfolio for 2018/19

### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Planning and People Portfolio comprises the following service areas: Corporate Enforcement, Drainage, Planning Policy and Planning Enforcement services. In addition for the sake of completeness a brief update on performance for the Development Management and Building Control teams is also included. A summary of the key issues arising in 2018/19 for each of these areas is set out below.

### 2 Planning Policy and Conservation

- 2.1 The key work area for this team is the production of the Local Plan Review. The Issues and Options document was published for public consultation in 2018. Work on a pre-submission document is now underway and will be reported to Councillors in late 2019. The issue that has provoked the most comment is the identification of the strategy for the location of future new development. The delivery of new new housing continues to be a priority for the government. As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 the Council still did not have a 5 year supply of housing land as required by the Government although the gap in supply is closing.
- 2.2 The team produces an Annual Monitoring Report which records, amongst other data, housing completion rates in the Borough. In the last 5 years overall housing completion rates have been as follows.

Year	Net completions	Objectively Assessed Housing Need Target
2014/2015	187	191(Core Strategy figure)
2015/2016	305	191
2016/2017	226	382 (2016 SHMA figure)
2017/2018	224	382
2018/2019	361	332 (Government standard methodology figure)

Overall there has been a shortfall in completions of 175 units against the targets.

- 2.3 For affordable housing overall, the completion rates have been below target as shown below, with a shortfall of 95 units over the past 5 years.

Year	Affordable Housing Completions	Target
2014/2015	6	65
2015/2016	21	65
2016/2017	74	65
2017/2018	36	65
2018/2019	93	65

- 2.4 The main reason for failure to provide affordable housing continues to be viability. All viability assessments provided by developers are independently checked before any agreement over a reduction in contributions is reached.
- 2.5 Part of the housing work also includes looking at the need for Gypsy and Traveller pitches. This work is being taken forward and will be reported to Councillors in late 2019. Work on the need for a Transit Site is being taken forward through Surrey County Council.
- 2.6 The team is continuing to support work on other national planning projects which require input from the council and which require significant staff input. Such projects include the Esso pipeline and Heathrow 3rd runway. The team also supports the work for infrastructure funding bids to the EM3 Local Economic Partnership and the projects themselves.
- 2.7 The team also supports the work around the Thames Basins Heaths Special Protection Area, including work with partner local authorities, monitoring of SANGs capacity and work to look at alternative avoidance measures. The team is currently fully staffed.

### **3 Planning Enforcement Policy**

- 3.1 Unauthorised development activity within the Borough continues to be a key source of complaints to the Council.
- 3.2 It has so far proved impossible to recruit a dedicated planning officer to support planning enforcement to oversee the preparation and serving of notices. Temporary staff have been used but all have proved to be unsuitable and contracts have been terminated. External support is being used to prepare enforcement notices but this is expensive. Investigation work is undertaken by the Corporate Enforcement team who also undertake enforcement work for Environmental Health and other activities.
- 3.3 Planning Enforcement caseloads in 2018/19 were as follows.

Case type/action	Number
Total number of referrals received	178
No breach found	77
Breach ceased/compliance achieved	39
Enforcement Notice served on site	1
Planning permission submitted and granted	38
Planning permission sought, waiting to be determined appeal	9

Planning permission refused/ Allowed on appeal	5
Still ongoing	9
Not yet checked	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>178</b>

- 3.4 Swift Lane continues to be the main enforcement action for this team and a contract for direct action is currently out to tender. Actions on other sites are also underway.

#### **4 Drainage**

- 4.1 This is a one man service responsible for maintenance of Council assets and also working with other bodies to address flooding in the Borough. In 2018/19 the Drainage Engineer has continued to work on flood attenuation measures to be provided as part of the Chobham Water Meadows SANGs and also at Staple Hill Chobham. Again in 2018/19, there were no reported incidences of flooding in Chobham Village.

#### **5 Land Charges**

- 5.1 This service provided 1,995 Land Charges searches last year compared with 2,100 the year before. Most were provided within 24hours, well within the target of 3 days. Numbers have declined as the housing market slows down.
- 5.2 As a result, income has declined from £230,000 in 2017/18 to £193,000 in 2018/19. Whilst the service is still currently self-funding cost for the rollout of new software and the cost of extra staff time needed to deliver this means that income in 2019/20 will be carefully monitored.
- 5.3 The roll out of the government project to move delivery of part of land charges away from local authorities and into the Land Registry as a new online service is continuing. The project is, however, moving slowly and it is not anticipated that Surrey Heath will now be incorporated until 2022 at the earliest.
- 5.4 This team also supports the Development Management team with the processing of planning applications. During 2018/19 the team has been involved in supporting the roll out of new Uniform software for both Land Charges and Development Management. This is a major project to replace both the current software used for processing Land Charges, planning applications, appeals and tree preservation orders together with a new document management system and changes to the Geographical Information System (GIS). This also involves rewriting or reconfiguring all of the standard documentation used, staff input into the upgrade and testing process and training of staff. This project will be completed in 2019/20. Work on this project has had an impact on performance at the time or writing turn round times for Land Charges searches had increased to 10 days to allow for staff training. The team is currently fully staffed.

#### **6 Building Control**

- 6.1 This service operates on a commercial basis in direct competition with private companies but in addition the Council retains a statutory duty to maintain a service for enforcement purposes.
- 6.2 In 2018/19 the team processed 594 applications for Building Regulations approval and this involved 4261 separate site inspection visits as construction

works progressed. In addition, the team undertook successful enforcement actions on 38 sites where there were unauthorised works, they also attended 22 dangerous structures.

- 6.3 During 2018/19 the team has been involved in supporting the roll out of new Uniform software for the Building Control process. Key staff have been involved in the rewriting or reconfiguring all of the standard documentation used, staff input into the upgrade and testing process and training of staff. This project will be completed in 2019/20. The team is currently fully staffed.

## **7 Development Management**

- 7.1 The overall numbers of planning applications received in 2018/19 remains consistent with previous years. Table 1 below compares performance over the past 3 years.
- 7.2 Income in 2018/19 was boosted by the fee for the Fair Oaks application and this has been rolled forward to fund the continuing work needed for that application. The Princess Royal Barracks development continues to generate significant work for the team. The development of the site continues to be delayed and the Army are not now expected to have left the site until early 2021.
- 7.3 The unspent government funding received in 2017/18 for design work team has been rolled forward to continue support work in improving the quality of design in new development. This support will be particularly useful as the Council moves forward with work on the redevelopment on the London Road Block in Camberley.
- 7.4 During 2018/19 the team has been involved in supporting the roll out of new Uniform for the Development Management process. Key staff have been involved in the rewriting or reconfiguring all of the standard documentation used, staff input into the upgrade and testing process and training of staff. This project will be completed in 2019/20.
- 7.4 A key challenge for this team was and still is recruitment. In 2018/19, agency staff were used to address immediate problems, this is however expensive and alternative solutions are being explored.

Background papers: None

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**Table 1 Development Management performance**

	<u>Target</u>	2016/17				2017/18				2018/19			
		<u>Q1</u>	<u>Q2</u>	<u>Q3</u>	<u>Q4</u>	<u>Q1</u>	<u>Q2</u>	<u>Q3</u>	<u>Q4</u>	<u>Q1</u>	<u>Q2</u>	<u>Q3</u>	<u>Q4</u>
Majors Performance	(60%)	67%	92%	75%	78%	89%	91%	85%	93%	100%	100%	100%	92%
Minors Performance	(65%)	69%	56%	58%	76%	83%	90%	87%	91%	83%	92%	85%	90%
Others Performance	(80%)	76%	69%	67%	73%	87%	90%	95%	90%	91%	92%	88%	89%
% Appeals allowed		17%	42%	57%	17%	43%	36%	56%	29%	14%	11%	11%	44%
% Appeals allowed – Committee		0%	25%	100%	50%	100%	33%	50%	0%	100%	0%	0%	50%
% Appeals allowed - Delegated		20%	50%	25%	0%	33%	25%	57%	29%	0%	100%**	11%	43%
No. Planning Apps Received		323	204	210	229	246	218	218	228	241	288	179	173
No. Planning DN's Issued		222	205	214	203	215	221	251	199	224	212	197	164
% Apps Registered Electronically		74%	69%	74%	73%	70%	74%	80%	80%	81%	81%	78%	81%
No. Appeals Determined		6	12	8	7	7	11	9	7	14	9	9	16
No. Outstanding Appeals		25	26	19	25	22	26	27	29	23	32	30	29
No. Appeals Lodged		10	9	10	10	7	10	10	15	10	12	12	12