

QUARTERLY PLANNING CONTROL STATISTICS

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report comments on the statistics shown on the appended table regarding the performance of the Planning Control Section in relation to planning applications and appeals over the period from July to September 2006 and for the previous four quarters.
- 1.2 The 8 week performance figures for both the Minor and Other categories have risen over this quarter to 85% and 93%, the highest figures ever reported for these categories. These figures are substantially above the Government's targets for these categories and equates to Croydon's own targets to achieve upper quartile performance in these categories.
- 1.3 The performance on the 'Major' category of applications at 58% determined within the 13 week period has slipped from that of previous quarters and is just below the Government's target of 60%.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee note the report.
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3. BACKGROUND

(a) Performance Targets

- 3.1 The Government has set all local planning authorities a deadline of the end of the year 2006/07 to achieve its performance targets of 60% of all major applications determined within a 13 week period, 65% of minor applications determined within 8 weeks and 80% of other applications to be determined within 8 weeks. Croydon has achieved these targets for the rolling year to March 2006 a year before the deadline set by Government.
- 3.2 The table shows performance last quarter in the Minor category has risen from 78% applications determined within 8 weeks to 89%. This is a marked rise, well in excess of the government's target of 65% and is the highest ever reported figure for this category. Whilst comparative data for this quarter across London

Boroughs is not yet known, this figure is in excess of Croydon's local best value target of 85% determined within 8 weeks which reflects anticipated upper quartile performance.

- 3.3 The performance in the 'Other Applications' category, which is the largest category including all householder applications, has risen from 92% determined within the statutory 8 week period to 95%, the highest figure ever reported in this category. Both these figures are well above the government's target of 80% for this category and show a sustained level of high performance. Croydon's own higher target of 93% determined within 8 weeks reflects anticipated upper quartile performance across London and for the first time performance has exceeded this target.
- 3.4 In relation to the Major applications category performance this quarter has fallen from 72%, the highest figure ever reported for this category, to 58% which is below the Government's target of 60% applications determined within 13 weeks. Whilst recent performance in this category has generally been encouraging, should this quarter's performance be repeated there is a danger that the Government's target would be missed. Awards of Planning Delivery Grant would also be at risk. Should performance slip further there is the possibility that the Council would be subject to the Government's 'Standards Regime' with associated intervention; this minimal acceptable standard is likely to be set at 55%. The Council's score in the Environment block of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) would be adversely affected by such an outcome.
- 3.5 The Major category is more volatile than the other two being based upon a much lower number of applications. The majority of the older applications for permission required the completion of a legal agreement which also has to be completed within the 13 week deadline. Most of these related to applications presented to Committee within the 13 week period but could not be completed on time or to Committee resolutions made after the 13 week period.
- 3.6 The figure of 58% major applications determined within 13 weeks is substantially adrift of upper quartile performance in this category to which the Council aspires. The previous figure of 72% would place Croydon in the lower half of London Boroughs. Officers are considering ways to enable a sustained improvement in this category to be achieved. These include a greater use of planning conditions instead of legal agreements where this would be lawful and a change in the terms of delegation to officers in respect of major applications. The Standards Committee will shortly be commenting on suggested changes to the terms of delegation prior to these being referred to this Committee for decision.

(b) Backlog and On-hand Totals

- 3.7 During the quarter there has been a small rise in the number of applications received and a greater rise in the number of applications determined. As a result, the on hand total of all applications at the end of the quarter has fallen to 661, the lowest figure for some time. The number of applications more than 13 weeks old also continues to fall maintaining a healthy trend over the last few quarters. These reductions in the on hand totals are putting the service in a good position to enable higher performance levels to be sustained.

(c) Appeals

- 3.8 The proportion of appeals allowed or allowed in part against the Council's decisions in the July to September quarter has fallen from 37% to 35%. This has been a variable figure in the past but Croydon's average figure over recent quarters would be comfortably within the Government's benchmark figure of 40% allowed and compares well with other local authorities.

(d) Management Issues

- 3.9 The improved performance over recent quarters has been achieved through closer monitoring of applications and sustained staff levels. Monitoring has resulted in closer targeting of applications to delegated business target dates and to Committee dates. There has been little turnover of staff in the reported quarter.

4. EQUALITIES CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 There are no equalities considerations arising from this report.

5. FINANCIAL AND STAFFING CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The financial considerations arising from this report relate mainly to the desire to maintain staffing levels of planning officers processing applications and appeals at their present level.
- 5.2 The risks of not maintaining this staffing level is that the improvement in performance will not be sustained and the government's performance targets may not be met. This would adversely affect any subsequent awards of Planning Delivery Grant for this Council.
- 5.3 Once the on hand total of applications is reduced and Planning Control is performing consistently in accordance with the targets set by Government then it would be possible to review the establishment necessary and the reliance on some temporary staff in relation to budgets and future awards of Planning Delivery Grant.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 There are no environmental considerations arising from this report.

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1.1 Statistics prepared for Development Control Committee, calculated from all applications					
Applications	July-Sept 2005	Oct-Dec 2005	Jan-March 2006	April-June 2006	July-Sept 2006
(i) Received	1002	936	986	1016	1029
(ii) Decided	955	953	876	973	1018
(iii) Withdrawn, not determined etc	89	86	93	77	81
(iv) On hand at end of quarter	851	748	765	731	661

1.2 Number of applications on hand for:			
	8 weeks or less	9-12 weeks	13 or more weeks
At 30 th September 2005	540	66	245
At 31 st December 2005	429	81	238
At 31 st March 2006	540	40	185
At 30 th June 2006	551	29	151
At 30 th September 2006	492	32	137

2.1 Statistics prepared for DCLG Quarterly returns on certain types of application (NB does not include, for example, tree works or telecommunications proposals or applications withdrawn or not determined)							
Comparisons with previous quarters	Applications on hand at end	Total number of decisions	% applications granted	% major applications decided in 13 weeks or less	% minor applications decided in 8 weeks or less	% all other applications decided in 8 weeks or less	Average weeks to decision
July-Sept 2005	781	873	67	57	80	90	9.3
Oct-Dec 2005	682	852	67	66	74	83	10.6
Jan-March 2006	708	773	68	64	70	82	11.0
April-June 2006	681	862	66	72	78	92	9.4
July-Sept 2006	610	905	57	58	89	95	8.6
Performance for year 2006/07				66	84	93	
LB Croydon BVPP Target for year 2006/07				65	85	92	
Government Targets (by 2006/07)				60	65	80	

3 Appeal Results

- 3.1 The percentage of all appeals decided over period 01/07/06 to 30/09/06 which were allowed or allowed in part 35%
- 3.2 The number of these appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse on planning applications. 36%

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