

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **27 April 2021**

Title: **Development Management / Planning Enforcement Service Review**

Portfolio Area: **Environment – Councillor Caroline Mott**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Upon the expiry of the Overview and Scrutiny Call-in period.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. That the Hub Committee endorses the review of the Development Management and Planning Enforcement Services, as set out in 3.2 to 3.11 below and the subsequent development of a service improvement plan.**
- 2. That officers are instructed to bring back a report and service improvement plan to the Hub Committee within the next 3 months.**
- 3. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the ongoing performance of the service against the improvement plan on a six monthly basis.**

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 Development Management and Planning Enforcement are key services delivered by the Council. The services can be highly complex and involve significant consultation and engagement with many different parties. As a result the services are highly visible to many within our communities, businesses and for those that interact with these services, a key indicator on the effectiveness of the Council.
- 1.2 The services are receiving year on year increases in applications and reported planning breaches. Despite increases in resources

both services are struggling to meet the needs of service users and there have been a number issues as a result of protracted timescales and / or quality issues.

1.3 The purpose of the review is deliver step change improvements in:

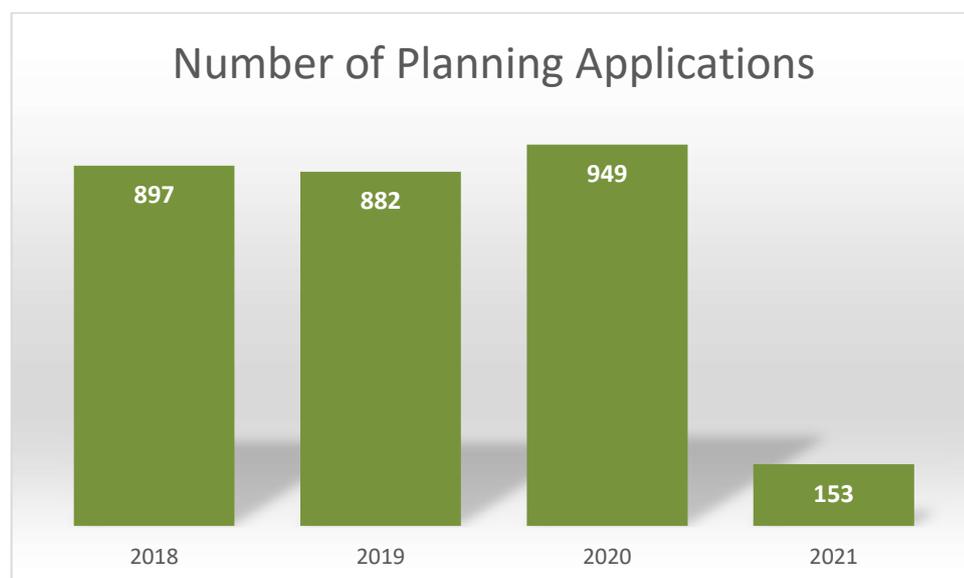
- Performance
- Quality
- Communication
- Customer and Member satisfaction

1.4 The Council and the shared officer team have been stretched considerably during the last 12 months of the Pandemic and through the 3 lockdowns. The planning and planning enforcement team are no exception. The team have had to adapt to Covid safe working practises and whilst having reduced capacity. Over the same period we have received a 7.5% increase in planning applications and a 45% increase in planning enforcement cases.

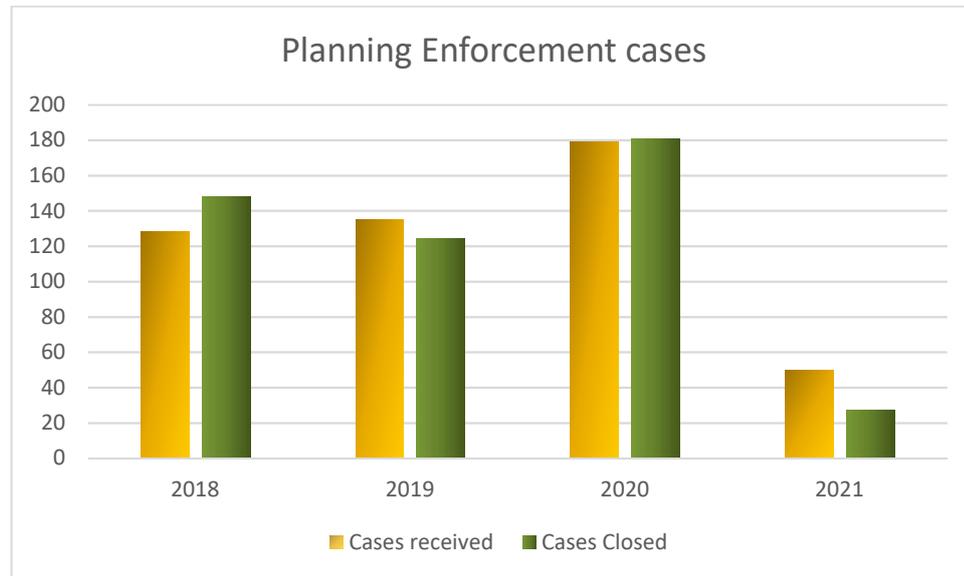
1.5 The report details the key areas that will inform the development of a service improvement plan which will be considered by a future meeting of the Hub. In addition, performance against the plan will be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a six monthly basis.

## 2. Background

2.1 The table below demonstrates that the number of planning applications received increased in 2020 and based on the first 2 months of 2021, are almost 20% higher than the equivalent period in 2020.



2.2 The table below shows that planning enforcement cases also continue to increase, 2020 saw a 30% increase in reports and whilst the number of cases closed increased by over 45%, resolving complex cases have become increasingly difficult and protracted.



### 3. Outcomes/outputs

3.1 The scope of the review will be focussed on, but not limited to, the following:

3.2 Communication and customer engagement

i. Improve the day to day communication with:

- Customer
- Service users
- Members
- Town and Parish Councils

Ensuring that they are kept informed throughout the process in a timely manner.

3.3 Performance Management and Accountability

- i. Setting of clear expectations and objectives for all staff delivering the service directly or contributing to individual applications / issues.
- ii. Regular reporting of performance.

3.4 External benchmarking of the services against:

- i. Cost of the service.
- ii. Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) including Customer Satisfaction.

- 3.5 Processes & Resources
  - i. Review of all processes and resources with the introduction of the new IT system to deliver efficiencies and service enhancements.
- 3.6 Quality
  - i. Introduction of quality assurance across all areas to drive consistency and quality in terms of process, applying policy and determination/enforcement.
- 3.7 Pre-application Services
  - i. Ensuring that these paid for services (Planning Performance Agreements, Pre-app) deliver value for money for the customer and delivers a quality planning application.
- 3.8 Consultees
  - i. Review resources allocated against demand and performance. To include Heritage, Landscape, Ecology, Environmental Health and Drainage.
  - ii. Review processes and the performance of external consultees such as Devon County Council Highways, Environment Agency, Dartmoor National Park.
- 3.9 Legal
  - i. Review of resources against demand.
  - ii. Review the processes, interaction and engagement with both services.
- 3.10 Conservation & Heritage
  - i. A gap analysis what we actually do against; must do/should do/could do.
- 3.11 Strategic fit
  - i. Ensure the service aligns with the Councils wider corporate priorities and supports business and economic growth across all sectors.
  - ii. Consider how planning policy within the Joint Local Plan will be reviewed and updated.
- 3.12 It is anticipated that whilst some performance improvements should be seen in the short term, sustained and measurable improvements should be delivered through quarter 3 and 4 of the 2021/2022 financial year.

#### **4. Proposed Way forward**

- 4.1 As the data in 2.1 and 2.2 shows, there is clear need to review the services to ensure that they can deliver effective and improved performance against sustained increasing demand.

4.2 Failure to act now could result in increased customer and resident dissatisfaction and could result in increased financial costs as a result of appeals and legal challenges.

4.3 The Service Improvement Plan proposed in the report will be brought back to the Hub for consideration in due course.

## 5. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	The review will also look at the financial aspects of the service.
Risk	N	
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Council Homes Environment Enterprise
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	N	No direct carbon/biodiversity impact arising from the recommendations
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	
Other implications	N	

### **Supporting Information**

#### **Appendices:**

None

#### **Background Papers:**

None