

Report of Chief Planning Officer

Report to Joint Plans Panel

Date: 22 June 2017

Subject: Planning Services end of year 2016-17, performance report

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	☐ Yes	☒ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	☐ Yes	☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	☐ Yes	☒ No

Summary of main issues

1. This report covers planning performance and activity for the period 2016-17 financial year.
2. Largely, it has been a year of good news: the service has been recredited for the Customer Services Excellence Award, was shortlisted for two planning excellence awards, by the industry ruling body, the RTPI, the number of applications determined in time remains consistently high, fee and pre-application income has increased and the service has had the ability to recruit agency staff and going forward into 2017-18 the service will appoint to two planner posts to deal with the high volume of work.
3. However, there are areas where the service has seen a drop in performance including an increase in the number of customer complaints received and in the number of upheld appeals. The residential housing appeal decisions received this year have been particularly significant in terms of the Council's five year housing land supply. Measures are being put in place to mitigate and manage these work areas going forward, but it has been a further challenging year, balancing workloads with the available resources within a changing planning environment and pick up in the economy.

Recommendations

4. Members are asked to note the report and to receive a further performance report in six months' time.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 At the last Joint Plans Panel meeting on 31 January 2017, members received and noted a performance report for planning services for the first three quarters of 2016-17. It was resolved that the Joint Plans Panel would receive an end of year report at its next meeting.
- 1.2 This report is presented for information and comment.

2 Background information

- 2.1 During 2016-17 the service continued to deal with a significant workload, whilst progressing with a number of large and strategically important planning applications. This is in the context of an evolving national planning policy picture, as part of the Government's planning reform agenda and a pick-up in the economy.
- 2.2 The year has seen some significant applications come in, as well as some landmark appeal decisions, impacting on the Council's position on the five year housing land supply. Application numbers have risen again for the fifth successive year and at the same time the service is experiencing very buoyant pre-application activity. This is also in the context of the departure of further staff from the service this year.

3 Main issues

3.1 Planning performance and workload

- 3.1.1 In 2016-17, the service received 4,966 applications; this was a 5.6% increase from the previous year. This will be the fifth successive year that the service has seen an increase in number of applications being submitted. This is compared with national figures which has seen a 2% increase in overall workloads levels (year ending December 2015 compared with year ending December 2016)¹.
- 3.1.2 There have been 4,832 decisions made in the reporting period, 9.3% increase from the previous year.
- 3.1.3 Fee income at the end of the financial year was a very healthy £3,998,879 almost half a million pounds above the end of year estimate.
- 3.1.4 The table below shows the services' performance in relation to applications being determined in time or within agreed timescale.

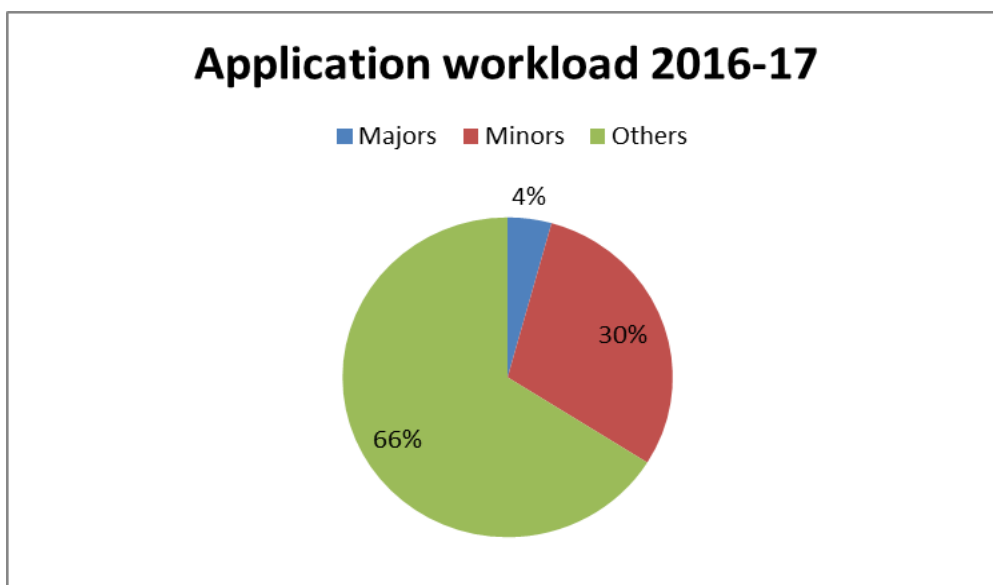
	% Majors in time	% Minors in time	% Other in time
2016-17	93.1%	89.4%	93%
2015-16	96.6%	90.6%	93.5%
2014-15	88.7	85.1	91.8

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government Statistical release Planning Applications in England: October to December 2016.

2013-14	73.3	70.3	83.3
2012-13	61.3	77.4	88.9

- 3.1.5 The latest national figures for applications determined in time show that Local Planning Authorities decided 86% of major applications within 13 weeks or the agreed time². Therefore, Leeds performance is above the national average determination timescale. However, there has been a reduction in performance in comparison with the previous year, this is due largely to the resource constraints the service has been working within, carrying 6.6 vacancies twinned with the 5.6% increase in application numbers.
- 3.1.6 The resourcing situation is in hand however, with a temporary principal planning officer and temporary enforcement officer joining the service and the recruitment process is underway for the appointment of two permanent planner posts.
- 3.1.7 Members have previously heard about the Planning Guarantee; under this Government initiative, applications over six months old without a decision and where there isn't an extension of time agreement in place, are liable for the planning fee to be returned to the applicant. In the reporting period, £775 has been refunded, relating to three schemes. Officers will try to negotiate extension of time agreements with applicants to ensure the application remains in time and to mitigate the risk of returning any fees.
- 3.1.8 The pie chart below shows the application workload for the service in 2016-17. The category "others" (which includes household applications) accounts for the largest proportion of the work, with 3,280 applications received during the reporting period. The changes to the permitted development rules, including larger house extensions and where prior approval is required, such as office to residential, does not seem to have had an impact on reducing the number of applications which need to come before the Local Planning Authority. In the reporting period, there were 213 majors submitted to the planning service, accounting for 4% of the overall workload.

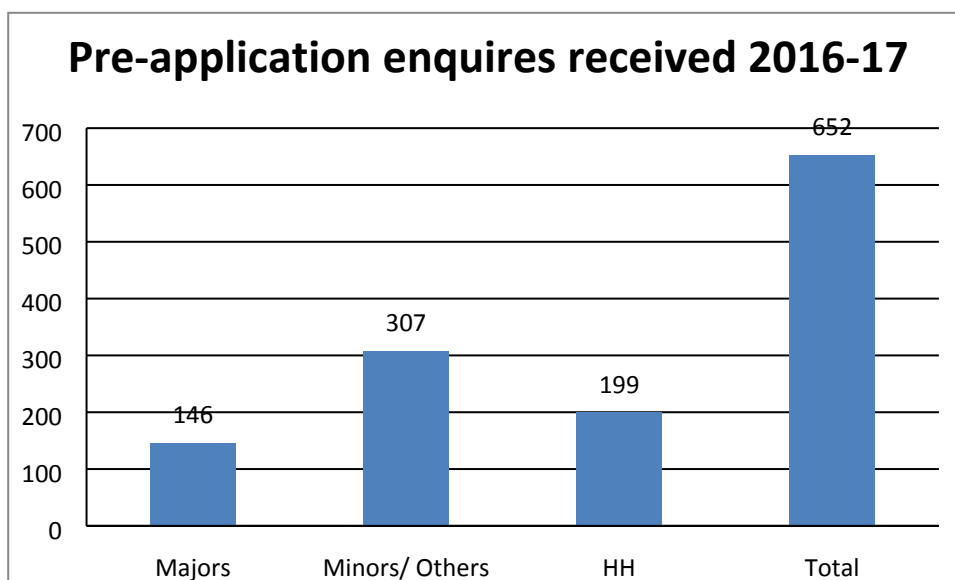
² Department for Communities and Local Government Statistical release Planning Applications in England: October to December 2016.



3.2 Pre-application

3.2.1 In the reporting period the service received 652 pre-application enquiries; of those 146 were for major schemes. £203,070 was generated in pre-application enquiry fees, £113,170 from enquiries on major schemes. The number of pre-application enquires received in the final quarter of 2016-17 were double the number of those received the same period the previous year. Clearly, the pre-application enquiry service continues to be used very well and the service is mindful of the resource impact in terms of officer capacity to deal with the enquiries in a timely way.

3.2.2 The table below shows the breakdown by type of enquiry.



3.2.3 An in service review of pre-application fees has now been undertaken and a 20% increase has been agreed. This is in line with the Government's increase in national planning fees. Assuming current activity levels, this will provide an additional £40,000 of pre-application income per annum.

3.3 Panel decision making

3.3.1 In 2016-17, the three Plans Panels decided 105 applications.

3.3.2 There is some inevitability that different decisions are reached to that recommended by the officer, especially where decisions are finely balanced, or where different weight is attached to the potential planning considerations and the table below shows the position over the last few years. Eleven were contrary to the officer recommendation, 8 at North and East and 3 at South and West Panel. Of these decisions, three have led to appeals, one is in progress, one appeal was allowed and another dismissed.

Year	Decisions	Decisions contrary to officer rec (as a % of the total no of Panel decisions)	Appeals Against Refusal	Dismissed	Allowed	Costs awarded
2016-17	105	11 (10.4%)	3	1	1	0
2015-16	127	4 (3%)	2	0	1	0
2014-15	191	14 (7%)	9	4	5	0
2013-14	136	7 (5%)	0	0	0	0
2012-13	127	8 (6%)	3	0	3	2
2011-12	171	11 (6%)	5	1	4	0

3.4 Major schemes

3.4.1 There have been some significant application submissions, particularly residential schemes in recent months, which include:

- Victoria Reservoir and Land, Bruntcliffe Road, Morley Residential development of 210 dwellings
- Land At Whitehall Road New Farnley, Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved except for means of access to, but not within, the site) for up to 130 Dwellings to include the demolition of 632 and 634 Whitehall Road
- The Radius, Springwell Road, Holbeck, LS12 1AW Demolition of existing buildings and erect multi level development comprising 224 apartments and commercial units
- Land To The East Of Otley Road Adel LS16, Outline Application for residential development (Use Class C3) for up to 100 dwellings and land reserved for primary school with construction of vehicular access from Otley Road, to the north west and Ash Road to the south, areas of open space, landscaping
- Kentmere Approach/Former Asket Primary School, Residential development of 250 dwellings, new public open space and associated works

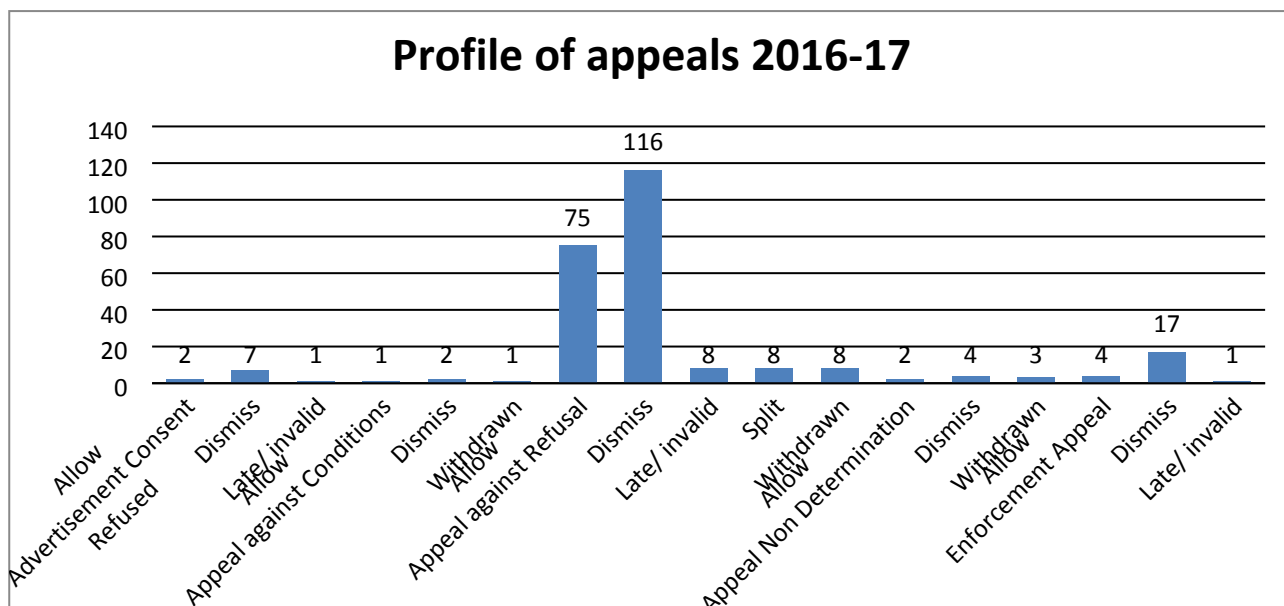
- Brooklands Avenue, Brooklands Drive And Parkway Close, Seacroft, Residential development of 272 dwellings, public open space, road link between South Parkway and Brooklands Drive
- Seacroft Crescent, Seacroft, Residential development of 50 dwellings, new public open space, associated highway improvements
- Former York Road Depot, Seacroft, 33 dwellings, creation of new public space and associated highway improvements
- Wykebeck Mount/Avenue Residential development of 102 dwellings; new public open space and associated highway improvements
- Kendal Drive/Rathmell Road, Halton, Residential development for 109 dwellings

3.5 Appeals

- 3.5.1 The service uses several indicators to determine the quality of decision making one is number of lost appeals. In 2016-17 there were 233 new appeals made and the Planning Inspectorate made 260 decisions on appeals. The figures are different because of the six month window allowed for appeals to be made.
- 3.5.2 The table below shows the outcome of the appeals for 2016-17. Performance on appeals dismissed has reduced from that in 2015-16 where 74.1% of appeals were dismissed compared with 63% dismissed in this reporting period.

Year	Appealed Decisions	Dismissed	Costs awarded Council	Costs awarded to Council
2016-17	260	63%	0	0
2015-16	231	74.1%	3 partial, 1 full	1 partial, 1 full
2014-15	237	66%	5	0
2013-14	251	71%	4	0
2012-13	187	67%	3	0
2011-12	254	69%	7	2

- 3.5.3 The chart below shows that most of the appeals made in 2016-17 were in relation to appealing against refusal of planning consent. Of the total appeals in 2016-17, 93 decisions related to householder appeals where 42% of them were allowed; since the relaxation of the permitted development (PD) on larger house extensions, it appears from analysis of the Planning Inspectorate's decisions that more household extensions are being allowed which are "marginal", given the PD fall-back position. The service is committed to further analysing these appeals and making changes as appropriate.



3.5.4 There have been some significant appeal decisions during the reporting period, notably the Protected Areas of Serach (PAS) sites:

- Grove Road, Boston Spa for up to 104 new homes, appeal was allowed in a decision by the Secretary of State in May 2016. (Reserved Matters application for 88 houses was deferred at North and East Panel in 13 April for further information)
- Sandgate Drive, Kippax. The Council withdrew from this appeal in August 2016 on the basis that it was in the midst of challenging the Grove Road decision. The appeal was allowed.
- Breary Lane, Bramhope, Bradford Road, East Ardsley and Leeds Road, Collingham. The appeals were conjoined and heard by inspector Ken Barton in February 2016. These three appeals have subsequently been allowed.

3.5.5 We are anticipating the Bagley Lane, Farsley decision in June 2017.

3.6 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 3.6.1 Executive Board, in February 2015, made key decisions around spending of the future Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) income, directing it into two main funding streams; a strategic fund and a neighbourhood fund, plus up to 5% for administrative costs. Executive Board agreed that the Strategic CIL Fund will be 70-80% of the total CIL received, and that priorities for its spending will be decided on an annual basis as part of the Council's budget setting process, in line with the Regulation 123 List, and taking into account the impact of specific and cumulative infrastructure needs arising from new developments. The balance of the Strategic Fund is almost £1.6 million.
- 3.6.2 In relation to the Neighbourhood CIL Fund, Executive Board agreed that this is to be 15% in an area without a Neighbourhood Plan, and 25% in an area with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. In town and parish council areas the CIL neighbourhood fund is to be passed directly to those local councils, as required by national CIL regulations. In non-parished areas the decisions about spending are

delegated to the relevant Community Committee (as the lowest democratic representative), and the CIL neighbourhood fund ring-fenced by the City Council for that purpose.

3.6.3 A report went to the Strategic Investment Board in February 2017 outlining the CIL funds available in the Strategic Fund. A report will go to the Executive Board in July 2017 to assist in the prioritising for spending of the CIL monies, in accordance with the Executive Board decision.

3.6.4 The table below shows the breakdown of the CIL monies paid and received by the Council, in comparison with year 2015-16:

	Total CIL paid to date	Total admin fee paid to date	Total neighbourhood fund paid to date	Total strategic fund paid to date
2015/2016	£126,878.21	£6,343.90	£19,031.73	£101,502.58
2016/2017	£1,865,696.08	£93,284.80	£279,854.41	£1,492,556.86
Total	£1,992,574.29	£99,628.70	£298,886.14	£1,594,059.44

3.7 Compliance activity

3.7.1 The number of enforcement cases received in 2016/17 has remained at a consistently high level with 1275 cases received. As such the workload through the service remains substantial with a significant number of complex cases being investigated. However, the number of cases on hand has been maintained at approximately 1000 which has been a long standing service objective. This is a key step in improving the overall handling of cases as it will ultimately assist in reducing officer caseloads as staffing issues are addressed.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
No of cases received	370	299	311	295	1275
No of cases resolved	333	402	317	259	1311
Initial site visits					
Category 1: Site visit same day/within 1 day. Target 100%	100%(1)	100%(2)	100%(0)	100%(5)	100%(8)
Category 2: Site visit within 2 working days. Target 95%	80%(10)	100%(8)	100%(2)	100%(6)	95%(26)
Category 3: Site visit within 10 working days Target 90%	83% 298/360	88% 263/297	91% 283/309	91% 259/284	86.5% 1103/1275

3.7.2 **Cases received and resolved and performance in undertaking initial site visits**

3.7.3 Performance in undertaking initial site visits has been maintained and indeed slightly improved in the last two quarters. The target visiting times are in the process of being amended to reflect the priorities in the enforcement plan and this will be reflected in the next performance report.

3.7.4 In relation to the Category 1 and 2 cases the figures relate to a relatively small number of cases. For example there were 26 category 2 cases during the reporting period and only 2 of those cases missed the 2 day target and this is reflected in the figures. It should be noted that a bulge of category 3 cases were received in quarter 1 and this resulted in a dip in performance in undertaking in-time visits due to the subsequent pressure on staff in the service by this increase.

3.7.5 The overall number of open cases on hand has generally been maintained and currently stands at 1018.

3.7.6 **Outcomes of case resolved**

3.7.7 The number of complaints investigated that that are found to either involve no breach of planning control or are minor infringements and not expedient over the period sits at 47%. This has gradually reduced from a figure of 60% in 2010/11.

3.7.8 This can possibly be accounted for by the increased rigour in examining cases as they come into the service. Where there is clearly no breach of planning control, cases have not been opened and complainants advised that the matter will not be investigated and the reason why. The remaining 53% of cases which have been closed involve significant breaches which have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Council through negotiations, granting planning permission or formal enforcement action. Ward Member meetings have continued during the year. Invitations are sent out with the bi monthly key cases list which continues to be sent to both ward members and parish councils with updates on priority cases within each ward.

	Total
No Breach*	36%
Resolved by negotiation	34%
Breach but de-minimis/ not expedient	11%
Planning permission/ CLU granted/ appeal allowed	15%
Enforcement /other notices complied with	4%

3.7.9 **Enforcement and other Notices**

3.7.10 A total of 80 enforcement and other notices have been served during the year so far. A greater number of PCNs and S330 notices have been served. These are formal requests for information and used to gain information to establish the nature of the breach or ownership information. This is a continuation of activity levels of previous years. There have been five temporary stop notices served during the period in relation to both unauthorised building works that were

continuing on site and not considered acceptable or likely to gain planning permission and to prevent increased occupation of unauthorised travellers sites. We continue to take more formal action than all the other core cities by some distance reflecting the importance Members place in Leeds on the service

*Includes matters that are “permitted development”; where no development or material change of use is involved; matters that were time exempt from enforcement action on investigation; or where approved plans and conditions have been found to have been complied with.

	Total
Planning Contravention Notices / Section 330 notices	87
Breach of Condition Notice	8
Enforcement Notice	60
S215 Untidy Land Notice	3
Temporary Stop Notice	5
Stop Notice	2
	167

- 3.7.11 The compliance service continues to draft and issue its own notices with input from legal officers only on the more complex cases. This is continually monitored and whilst it does carry some risk, the resource savings in doing this are significant. It does however place increased pressure on case officers in progressing cases within the service and requires additional on-going training.

3.7.12 **Prosecution Outcomes and outstanding cases**

- 3.7.13 A small number of cases have been brought or are being brought before the courts for non-compliance with enforcement and other notices. These have been in relation to continuing long standing breaches. Monitoring of the letting board area has recommenced with a number of successful prosecutions for the continued display of boards in breach of the code. A number of cases have been sent letters before action and this threat of court action can be effective in securing compliance with notices and remedying the breach in advance of preparing formal papers for the courts. A small number of cases have been prosecuted but the breach remains unresolved, despite fines being imposed by the courts. These cases are subject to review to look at actions to remedy the breach but are difficult without a works in default budget.

3.8 **Staffing and Resourcing**

- 3.8.1 It has been a difficult year regards resourcing with for most of the year 6.6 FTEs vacant and in addition two colleagues on long term sick leave during which time the application workload has grown by 5.6% and decisions by 9.3%. Compliance services in particular has soldiered on despite significant staffing difficulties for a number of years now, which we are trying to address.
- 3.8.2 There has been some significant difficulty advertising externally for the two Planner posts. This process started on December 12th 2016 following approval of a business case by City Development Directorate and only recently have we got to a position where the posts have been advertised. There has been a tremendous response which reflects well on Leeds as a city and how it is viewed

as an employer, with 48 applications to short list. Interviews have been timetabled commencing the 28th June for three days. To release some pressure a temporary Principal Planner and Compliance Officer have been appointed and further temporary Planner is being sought until the permanent appointments can be made.

- 3.8.3 In addition the Council /Service have taken the opportunity to utilise the offer of a 20% increase fees from the Government providing this is spent on the Planning Service; this equates to approximately £550k. It is acknowledged that staffing levels currently reflect workloads established during the economic collapse. It is intended therefore to increase staffing at a senior development management officer level to deal with the increase in major applications and to further develop the Planning Performance Agreement service which ultimately should enhance income. Combined with this would be a dedicated Senior Highways Officer. A further additional Planner on a career grade is proposed to help with the increase in activity in the householder and other application categories and an additional Compliance Officer.
- 3.8.4 To implement one of the recommendations in the Community Infrastructure Levy Audit it is also intended to appoint a dedicated CIL officer. And because the member of the Customer Service Team whom previously dealt with complaints has recently retired, it is intended to introduce a Complaints Officer post.

3.9 **Service quality**

3.9.1 **Complaints**

- 3.9.2 From April 2016 to March 2017 there have been 148 stage 1 and stage 2 complaints received by the LPA. This is a 15% increase in the number of complaints received when compared to the previous year.
- 3.9.3 The main theme of upheld complaints focus on the way planning applications have been advertised and that comments received from neighbours have not been taken in to account by officers. Action has been taken to ensure the appropriate number of site notices are erected by printing additional notices for the planning case officer to erect on site. Additionally, when any representations made by separate emails or letters are uploaded to Public Access, an auto generated email is sent to the planning officer informing them that new comments are available to take into consideration.
- 3.9.4 The other main area of complaint was the lack of communication throughout the process. With the recent introduction of Enterprise Voice applicants and agents now have the option to leave a voicemail or email the officer direct, and feedback is being given to team leaders where complaints are upheld.
- 3.9.5 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) reported 25 cases to the Planning Service during this period of which 17 were received closed with no further action being taken by the LGO. This compares with 14 new cases with 10 requiring no further action in 2015-16. Eight cases received in 2016-17 required investigation, and two cases identified fault. Two cases are awaiting a decision (Daisy Hill

where the officer report was incorrect and Fish Farm Thorner where the complaint centred around how the application was considered).

4 Service improvements

4.1 RTPI Awards

4.1.6 Planning services has been shortlisted for two planning excellence awards by the industry ruling body, the RTPI. The RTPI Awards are the most established and respected awards in the UK planning industry. Running for 40 years, they celebrate exceptional examples of planning and the contribution planners make to society.

4.1.7 This year saw a nearly 40% increase in entrants and the judges have shortlisted 90 finalists across 14 categories. The service will now go through to the next round of judging where the overall category winner will be announced on 15 June 2017. The two nominated categories are:

- Local Authority Planning Team of the Year
- Excellence in Planning to Create Economically Successful Places for the Victoria Gate Development (Phase 1)

4.2 Customer Services Excellence reaccreditation

4.2.1 In March 2017, the service was successful in being reaccredited with Customer Services Excellence (CSE). This is a national government standard awarded to organisations which demonstrate that they are a customer focused organisation. The assessors report was particularly complementary about the planned improvements to the website, committee rooms 6 and 7 and the way members of the public were treated at the Plans Panel meetings.

4.3 Customer satisfaction survey

4.3.1 As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, a customer satisfaction survey is carried out on a two-yearly basis. In January 2017, an online survey was sent out to over 5,000 participants who had used the planning service. The response rate was 4%; whilst this is not a high return, it is possible to identify common issues arising particularly from the comments respondents made. A number of themes emerged from the survey including:

- Officers and lack of communication throughout the planning application process, lack of access to officers
- Validation criteria inconsistencies, overly complex and barrier to expeditious determination
- Delays in determination and lengthy process for what appeared to be less complex applications
- Poor website and lack of usability of the content

- 4.3.2 Work will be undertaken to try to address some of these issues, however, it is noted that the resourcing issue and increased workloads has had an impact on service delivery and the appointment of both temporary and permanent staff will hopefully assist in alleviating some of the issues.
- 4.3.3 On a more positive note, when asked for general comments, 17% of the comments made were constructive about Planning Services. Compliments were calculated as 16% of the general comments received and ranged from officers being very helpful, being fast and efficient and access to submitting planning applications online.

4.4 Internal Audit

- 4.4.1 In the reporting period two audits were carried out by Internal Audit. The first carried out in November 2016 into planning enforcement received good assurance in both the control environment and compliance. The report was positive, but there were a number of highlighted areas to address, which largely boil down to the need for consistency in providing a robust audit trail. The service is working its way through the recommendations and implementing appropriate changes.
- 4.4.2 The second carried out in the last quarter of 2016-17 was an audit of the Community Infrastructure Levy. The scope of the audit was to gain assurance over the arrangements in place to ensure income is identified and collected and that the monies are used in line with the intended purpose. After discussions with key staff, it was agreed to undertake the audit in two stages due to the volumes and values currently involved; the first stage of the audit carried out in February 2017 involved the testing of a sample of schemes liable for CIL to ensure that all CIL income had been fully and accurately accounted for on FMS. The second stage of the audit will be undertaken during either 2017/18 or 2018/19 depending upon volumes and value of CIL income involved at the time.
- 4.4.3 A draft report has now been produced which highlights several areas which need addressing ranging from increased record keeping and more transparent audit trail, to staffing and resourcing arrangements to provide a more streamlined and robust service. The service is working its way through the report, but has already identified key changes and has committed to the creation of a dedicated post from the 5% administration top slice, which under the regulations, the LPA is allowed to retain. This in particular will make a significant difference in ensuring better consistency, transparency and assurance.
- 4.4.4 Audit will revisit the service in six to nine month time to ensure the appropriate changes have been made.

5 Challenges Ahead

5.1 Balancing workloads with resources

- 5.1.1 The Government published its Housing White Paper in February 2017 which contained a three pronged approach to boosting planning capacity. One such measure was an increase in planning fees by 20% from July 2017, to increase

planning resources. Under the move, local authorities must commit the additional fee income to their planning departments. Leeds City Council has signed up to this.

- 5.1.2 The government also said it is “minded” to allow an increase of a further 20% for those authorities delivering “the homes their communities need” and said it will consult further. It has also promised to keep the resourcing of planning departments and fees under review.
- 5.1.3 In another measure, the government will make available £25 million of new funding to help “ambitious authorities in areas of high housing need to plan for new homes and infrastructure”. This will be channelled into engaging communities on the design and mix of new homes.
- 5.1.4 In the third move, the government will crack down on unnecessary appeals to the Planning Inspectorate which it said “can be a source of delay and waste taxpayers” money. It will consult on introducing a fee for making a planning appeal but is keen that this will not discourage smaller builders from making legitimate claims. One option under consideration is for the fee to be capped at £2,000 for the most expensive route leading to a public inquiry. Fees would be refunded if an appeal succeeds, with a suggestion of lower charges for less complex cases.
- 5.1.5 Whilst the white paper’s intention to release extra resources is to be welcomed, RTPI data suggests a 29% drop in development management staff between 2010-15 and the measures may not be enough to mitigate under investment in the planning service over recent years. Additionally, resources may also need to be made available to cope with the demands of new government policies outlined elsewhere in the white paper such as maintenance of a brownfield land register.

6 Corporate Considerations

6.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1.1 This report is presented for information and there has not been the need for wide consultation.

6.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 6.2.1 There are no specific equality considerations arising from this report.

6.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 6.3.1 The effective and expedient determination of planning applications contributes to the overall prosperity of the City and plays a key part in the regeneration and growth agenda. The service makes a key contribution to the delivery of housing growth.

6.4 Resources and value for money

- 6.4.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report. However, measures are being taken to ensure that the service is delivered within the financial constraints.

6.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 6.5.1 There are no specific legal implications and this report does not relate to a key or major decision.

6.6 Risk Management

- 6.6.1 There are a number of risks associated with the decision making process which are both financial and reputational. Measures, processes and future service improvements outlined in the report seek to minimise the risk of challenge.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The upward trend in workload has continued for the last five years and this reporting period is no different, with numbers of applications up by 5.6% in comparison with the previous year. Performance on determining applications in the statutory timescales or within an agreed time has slipped a little, although still significantly higher than the national average. Measures will be put in place to ensure that performance is maintained and improved if possible going forward. Leeds continues to receive a significant number of major applications so considering the complexity and size of some of the schemes in Leeds, maintaining such a high performance level is an achievement. Emphasis will continue to be placed on the efficient and expeditious determination of applications through the promotion of the pre-application service and use of extensions of time agreements when it is clear that applications cannot be determined in the statutory timeframe.
- 7.2 A close watch will be kept to ensure that there are sufficient resources to maintain the quality and speed of service necessary. This situation will be aided by the increase in planning fees from July 2017 and the resulting increase in staffing.
- 7.3 The service anticipates a further challenging time ahead, however, the direction of travel and objectives are clear in terms of transforming how we work, maintaining and improving performance levels and continuing to improve services to customers within the resources available to deliver the service.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the report and comment as they feel appropriate and to receive a further performance report in six months' time.