

**Report for:** Regulatory Committee

**Item number:**

**Title:** Planning Services 2015 review

**Report authorised by :** Stephen Kelly

**Lead Officer:** Emma Williamson, emma.williamson@haringey.gov.uk, 5507

**Ward(s) affected:** N/A

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** for information

- 1. Describe the issue under consideration**  
A report on the work of the Planning Service in 2015
- 2. Recommendations**  
That this report be noted
- 3. Reasons for decision**  
Not applicable
- 4. Alternative options considered**  
This report is for noting and as such no alternative options were considered
- 5. 2015 work report**

### Development Management

- Applications to date **3704**
- Applications in same period 2014 **3433**
- Number of cases on-hand **762 (581 this time last year)**
- Appeals decided **68**
- Appeals dismissed **43 (63%)**
- Cumulative performance
  - Majors **100%** (17/17)
  - Minors **81%** (323/397)
  - Others **86%** (1402/1635)
  - PSO **81%** (1147/1414)

### Performance overview

- 5.1 The sustained effort and commitment of the team through the year has seen continued improvements in performance - with the focus on minor and others applications and PSO realising a significant improvement from the summer onwards – supported by the planning support teams who have been able to

achieve significant improvements in validation and registration times alongside changes to the process for officer allocation. The service performance in Q3 of 2 days for validation and registration represents some of the highest performance in London and is a significant improvement on 4 days earlier in the year (Jan- Oct), despite the increased application numbers and the reduction in staff in April with the introduction of the corporate customer contact centre.

### Pre-application advice

- 5.2 In line with the commitment in the MTF5, the service implemented revised charges for pre-application advice – with for the first time the move to a charged service for householders. To date (December 2015) there have been 147 requests for householder pre-application meetings (providing £23k of income. The service has been successful in delivering more accountable responses (avoiding previous claims about advice received verbally by the “duty planner” service which was not routinely captured) but this has placed additional workloads on both support staff and officers that have been hard to contain. Over the next quarter, the service expects to review the performance of the pre-application service with users in time for the anniversary of its introduction as well as review the process to see where efficiencies can be created.
- 5.3 The use of pre-application advice for other larger proposals has also continued to grow. Where the proposals are for larger applications, the Council has steered applicants towards “Planning Performance Agreements” based around a programme of activity and agreed application timetables. The calculation of costs for such PPA’s has been improved by the publication (in April) of new charges – including individual staff costs. Income from pre-application advice and planning performance agreements has accordingly grown to £175k for pre-apps and £81k for PPAs.

### Systems Thinking (Planning Solutions Team)

- 5.4 Over 2015, the Planning team engaged with the Planning Advisory Service and Wolverhampton’s Chief Planner to rethink our way of working using the ‘Systems Thinking’ method. This work focused around process re-design aimed at improving productivity and effectiveness of officers allowing reduced decision times for customers/applicants and reduced workloads (applications on hand) for individual officers. A project team trialled this way of working with some live cases and subsequently the service bid for, and has been awarded, “transformation” funding from the corporate transformation programme. This funding has enabled the creation of a small team of dedicated officers (the systems thinking team) which is implementing this approach in 2 wards. This approach will be rolled out across the borough incrementally in 2016.

### Resources Review

- 5.5 Planning Advisory Service provided funding for a consultancy to carry out a ‘Resources Review’. The Resource Reviews has been designed to support authorities in being more effective and efficient given challenges for local planning authorities to reduce their net cost to the Council. The aim of the resource review is to help councils understand, with evidence some of the

resourcing options and opportunities that exist across the development management service.

- 5.6 The Resources Review considered the main resourcing aspects of service delivery, including:
- Understanding costs and income levels across the development management service.
  - Understanding the volumes/variety of work and the effect on resources.
  - Spotting opportunities to reduce costs and/or increase revenue.
  - Ceasing to offer services or delivering them differently.
  - Evidencing the effect that changes/opportunities identified will have.
  - Identifying ways in which the service delivery can be improved so that the reputation and confidence in the service is enhanced
- 5.7 The final report from the Resources Review is expected shortly. Preliminary findings suggest that Haringey is an efficient service recovering some 75% of the cost of providing the service through fees – whilst officer workloads are some of the highest observed in the study. The findings of the review will be fed into the ongoing improvement programme.

#### Planning Quality Framework

- 5.8 Haringey is taking part in the Planning Quality Framework which is coordinated by Planning Advisory Service. This provides us with an opportunity for us to compare our performance data with other similar local authorities and also for us to gather customer satisfaction data.

#### Quality Review Panel

- 5.9 In April 2015, following a nationwide competition that attracted over 60 applications from design specialists across the Country, the service established its new “Quality review Panel” with independent chair, Peter Studdert. The panel members were shortlisted to some 25 members from across the built environment spectrum. The process has been designed to be self funding and since May reviews have taken place on 20 schemes. The QRP is one part of the Council commitment to improving the quality of new development (see below) and has been positively received by members of the Planning Committee and applicants.

#### Planning Decisions

- 5.8 The planning Committee has met 13 times over 2015 and considered a total of 48 applications. It has approved 44 and refused 4. Of the applications refused, 2 have subsequently been the subject of an appeal, both of which were allowed. In one of these cases partial costs were awarded against the Council. Further details on appeals April-December 2015 are included in the appendices.
- 5.9 Reflecting the growing interest in the borough, the work of the committee has grown in scale and significance over the year. Notable applications in 2015 include Highgate Magistrates Court in January and St Anne’s Hospital Site in March 2015. The ambitious plans for Alexandra Palace were also received and

resolved to grant in February 2015. The ambitious plans for Tottenham Hotspurs' stadium have seen 4 applications considered by the committee. In all, the planning committee have approved applications for 1,184 new homes over 2015.

### Planning Enforcement

- Complaints received 2014 **966**
  - Complaints received 2015 **895**
  - Enforcement notices served 2014 **115**
  - Enforcement notices served 2015 **105**
  - Enforcement appeals lodged- 73 enforcement appeals lodged (42 pending, 4 withdrawn)
  - Enforcement appeal decisions- of these 73 appeals lodged 19 notices upheld and 8 allowed.
- 5.10 The planning enforcement team has seen significant change in 2015, with the departure of the former team leader in December 2014 and a review of performance and monitoring systems that highlighted poorer than expected performance. The work of the team since that time has focused upon improved monitoring and targeted action that seeks to ensure that complaints are investigated and complainants advised of outcomes in a timely manner. Over the year, performance has improved from 72% 768/1063 average January-November of complaints being notified within 8 weeks to 97% (35/36) in December. A workshop with members was held to discuss priorities for the Enforcement service and a new Enforcement Policy will be consulted on in 2016.
- 5.11 The enforcement team also received £46,000 in Proceeds of Crime Acts fines together with some convictions and fines from prosecutions. Considerable staff turnover through the year has nevertheless impacted upon the delivery of the Industrial Living Project - with the departure of the dedicated enforcement officer in May and the re-deployment of the project manager to mainstream enforcement management activities. The recruitment planned (see below) in the New Year, is hoped to provide additional capability to re-engage on the delivery of this project.

## **PLANNING POLICY**

### Haringey Local Plan

- 5.12 Following preliminary work on Haringey CIL and issues and options stages of the Local Plan in 2014, 2015 seen both a preferred option consultation on the local Plan (in January – February) and the preparation and approval of the Pre-submission drafts of a suite of planning documents covering an update to the strategic policies DPD, and replacements for the saved UDP policies with a Development Management Policies, Site Allocation and Tottenham Area Action Plan DPD's. This has required engagement with a range of land interests, alongside reviewing and summarising almost 700 individual representations making in excess of over 6,000 individual comments/proposed changes to the

plan. The schedule of responses to the plan which accompanied the Full Council meeting, during which the revised documents were approved for consultation, ran to 1,380 pages.

- 5.13 The service has also supported the preparation of the Joint North London Waste Local Plan through towards the anticipated publication of a preferred option for the waste plan in spring 2016. Collaboration with the GLA has seen Wood Green meanwhile, emerged as a potential “Opportunity Area” in the future London Plan and prompted preparation of an Area Action Plan (scheduled for consideration in January) to underpin the aspirations contained in a new vision for the Metropolitan Centre – reflecting the likely renewed focus on the location through the emerging Crossrail 2 proposals.

#### Neighbourhood Planning

- 5.14 The policy team have also supported the Highgate Neighbourhood Forum in the progression of the Highgate Neighbourhood plan which is currently out for consultation prior to submission to the Council next year. The policy team have also provided advice and support for the recently recognised Neighbourhood Forum for Crouch End, who are expected to begin work on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for that area in 2016.

#### S106/CIL

- 5.15 Investments in infrastructure have seen some £1,040,162 spend through 2015 as well as £2,607,609 collected in CIL revenue – the majority of which (£1,853,081) being provided to the Mayor. Projects supported by S106 payments in 2015 include:

Legible London Signs in Archway area	£15,000
Expenditure on the Wood Green Investment Framework Project	£80,000
Feasibility Study and design of a CPZ in the Muswell Hill area	£40,000
Road Safety measures on Bishopswood Road and Hampstead Lane, N6 including new raised zebra crossings	£120,000
Highway Improvement Works on Leaside Road N17 and Land fronting Watermead Way, N17	£11,946
Highway Works at Hornsey High Street	£773,215
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,040,161</b>

- 5.16 The planning service has also participated in a recent (December) scrutiny review of the spending of S106 and CIL receipts. The expectation is that in accordance with the recommendations of an independent audit of the service, a new CIL/S106 investment process – to reflect the growing need to manage the dispersment of unassigned CIL payments, will be implemented in 2016.
- 5.16 The planning service has also participated in a recent (December) scrutiny review of the spending of S106 and CIL receipts. The expectation is that in accordance with the recommendations of an independent audit of the service, a

new CIL/S106 investment process – to reflect the growing need to manage the dispersement of unassigned CIL payments, will be implemented in 2016.

### Conservation

- 5.17 The Conservation “team” comprising one full time and one temporary officer has had a busy year; in addition to supporting regeneration colleagues and the Alexandra Palace Trust in securing £2m and £16m respectively from the HLF, the team has also supported officers from across the regeneration and property teams secured £10,000 from Heritage of London Trust Operations (HOLT ops) for the Wood Green drinking fountain and trough and £80,000 for the restoration of the Tottenham Green War Memorial. The service has also advised the property team on Hornsey town hall, and Bruce Castle and the regeneration team on implementation of the West green/North Tottenham Shop front grant scheme.
- 5.18 Greater engagement with Historic England (formerly English heritage) has seen support for the Noel Park community in the assessment of their neighbourhood and production of a draft Noel Park Conservation Area Management Plan (reflecting ongoing work with Homes for Haringey in the area) as well as further funding to support the ongoing appraisal and preparation of management plans for the North Tottenham and Scotland Green Conservation Areas.
- 5.19 In 25 September 2014 the service hosted a visit by the “London Advisory Committee” of Historic England at the Bernie grant Arts centre. The Council had sought advice from the LAC on managing the heritage interests of the Area whilst enabling regeneration of the area. The recommendations of the LAC have been considered in the context of both the emerging Local Plan and the conservation area appraisals now underway.
- 5.20 Meanwhile, the Principal Conservation Officer has also provided advice in respect of 102 planning and listed building applications over the year, including attending 2 informal hearings as part of the Councils planning team. In addition, she has provided advice on several pre-application meetings along with input into appeal statements. She has also provided input in the various local plan policy documents with regard to proposals that may impact the borough’s historic environment.

### Transportation

- 5.21 The team has made major contribution to supporting planning officers in dealing with their very high number of planning applications as well as providing input at the pre-application stage. The team provided comments to over 400 applications. A significant amount of staff time was dedicated to the application for Spurs football ground which gained a committee resolution to grant planning permission in December.
- 5.22 The team has supported the delivery of regeneration in Tottenham and Wood Green through the provision of transport planning advice and participation in a range of delivery groups. It has lead on the Council’s input to Crossrail 2 which, if approved, would transform access and capacity across much of the Borough.

- 5.23 The team has worked with the Smarter Travel team to deliver personalised travel planning in the Harringay/St Ann's area of the borough. The team is leading on measures to mitigate the impact of motor traffic such as setting up a car club contract, supporting the use of electric vehicles through BluePoint London and point to point car hire through Drive Now.
- 5.24 Following a successful bid in October TfL has allocated £2.3m LIP funding for transport projects in December for delivery in 2016/17. Transport planning has led on planning of cycle routes, provided input to bus service planning and commenced work on developing a Transport Strategy.

## **BUILDING CONTROL**

- Fee earning Applications received 2015 - 1322
  - Fee earning Applications received 2014 - 1305
  - Fee income from applications 2014 – £582k
  - Fee income from applications 2015 – £637k
- 5.25 Against a challenging background, the Building Control Service has continued to provide valued customer services. Applications over the year have increased, and the reach of the service has increased, (following a protocol for BC across London) with the service inspecting and considering 28 applications for development beyond the Borough boundary.
- 5.26 Dangerous Structures have again been ever prevalent, both within normal office hours and outside office hours, with the team has been “called upon” over 200 times this year, from emergencies including partial demolition of buildings by vehicles to rectifying poor workmanship where adequate temporary support was not provided. Notable enforcement cases have included the need to mass fill an unauthorised and unsafe basement in South Tottenham to removing partially collapsed scaffolding.
- 5.27 BC consult – as a means of providing affordable expert advice to Council services, and in respect of Party Wall Agreements, the service has provided charged consultancy support to a number of projects in 2015, including feasibility studies, party wall awards and numerous structural surveys and repairs.

## **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.28 In line with a commitment given to support member's development, over 2015, the Planning service has organised a number of “off site” training tours. Starting the year at the offices of Allies and Morrison, visits to the Olympic Athletes village, Lime wharf in Islington and A number of sites in Bow, plus a seminar on the top floor of Brook House were arranged. Visits were well attended, and members have been invited to suggest further venues and destinations for 2016.

## **Planning community conference 17 October 2015**

5.29 The inaugural planning community conference was held at the Civic centre on Saturday 17 October. Invitations were sent out to a large number of local groups representing amenity societies across the borough with around 40 attendees attending to hear from officers on the priorities and challenges facing the service – as well as the emerging policy framework and the range of services proposed to be provided by the Planning Service in the future.

### **Planning Protocol**

5.30 A review of the Planning Protocol was undertaken and a session with members was held. It is proposed that ward members be given speaking rights at Planning Committee pre-application briefing meetings. Due to pressure on resources the revised protocol has not yet been produced for agreement. This will be before the February Regulatory Committee.

### **STAFFING**

5.30 Like much of the South east, the demand for planning officers reflects the record applications numbers across the region. Competition between local planning authorities (and the private sector) for experienced planning officers and for building control professionals is high. Through 2015, the Planning Service has begun a re-structure aimed at providing a positive career pathway for all officers within the service (and to allow local people to access the service) and as a means to undertake a recruitment campaign in early 2016 in an attempt to attract permanent staff to a number of senior planning and enforcement roles. The scarcity of skills and high demand mean that the new structure has been created with the expectation that there will continue to be a changing demand for skills as economic fortunes improve or decline. A number of anticipated major applications also prompt a need for additional capacity at peak times to manage performance and workloads of officers (within the existing budget envelope). The first round of internal recruitment has successfully seen the appointment of 4 staff to permanent roles (replacing posts filled by agency staff) as well as the promotion of 3 existing permanent staff to management roles. Phase 2 of the re-structure will engage with the Building control service and seek to provide a similar pathway and flexibility for the future and is expected to begin in February.

### **Local Government Ombudsman**

5.31 The service has received 3 findings of maladministration from the local government Ombudsman in 2015, one in relation to Connaught House, one in relation to Muswell Hill Place and one in relation to development in South Tottenham. Following both findings, the service has taken corrective action in an attempt to restore trust and confidence in the community, and to learn the lessons from the investigation process.

### **PERFORMANCE**

5.32 The service has committed to be top quartile in London for speed, quality and cost. The service is top quartile for Majors and Minors. The attached appendix



explains how the service is progressing in the realisation of this objective and reflects reporting undertaken to the corporate performance board. (see appendix). These figures are April-November (financial year to date).

## **CHALLENGES**

- 5.33 Notwithstanding that the service has made significant progress in 2015, there remain significant challenges facing the Planning Service in 2016.

### Funding

- 5.34 The stability of fee income is hard to predict – and is heavily dependent upon the state of the economy and investor/development activity. The government have consistently declined to increase planning fees to reflect the full cost of providing the service (and to mirror building control services) with the consequent effect that despite application numbers increasing, the service has been unable to fund a corresponding increase in staff. The reliance upon “earned” income as the service seeks to meet the MTFC requirements has accordingly increased. This income is sensitive to market and wider economic conditions. This is particularly important as the funding provided overall to the Council declines.

### Skills

- 5.35 Demand for experienced planning and building control professionals is at a record high – reflecting the loss to the profession of senior staff during the last downturn, and the unprecedented demand and competition for staff – especially in the south East of England where growth pressures are highest. Attracting and retaining staff to Haringey will continue to be challenging and whilst the service is seeking to broaden its offer, there is an expectation that temporary staff will be continue to be required to manage peaks in workload and budget pressures.

### Density and growth

- 5.36 The emerging Local Plan and growing need for housing in London reflect a need for higher density developments that pose a range of challenges for communities, and decision makers. The preparation of an up to date local plan is one part of the services responses, along with new process and policy commitments to ensuring high quality development. Nevertheless, ensuring that the borough can grant planning permission for an appropriate number of new homes (and that these homes get built) remains of critical significance if the Borough is to be able to manage and control growth as required by the NPPF. Housing completions in the borough fell below the Boroughs target in 2014/5 and are expected to do so again in 2015/16. If the borough cannot secure an appropriate increase in delivery in the year ahead, there is a risk that, on appeal, substandard or poor quality homes will be approved.

### Affordable housing

- 5.37 Significant pressure on the provision of new affordable housing is being created through policy and viability pressures. The government’s announcement of and emphasis on new “affordable ”home ownership products in the Housing Bill and

the recent consultation on changes to the definition of affordable housing in the NPPF mean that challenges to the delivery of genuinely affordable rented housing is set to increase further in the year ahead. This risks further impacting the communities' confidence in the planning service and the Council to deliver homes that meet their needs. The planning service, is seeking to collaborate with other London boroughs on a protocol for assessment of viability and Scrutiny Committee have committed to investigate the issue of viability in a forthcoming review – to help guide policy and practice in the borough. Officers nevertheless anticipate that, in the event that national changes to the NPPF are executed, level of affordable homes to rent delivered through the S106/planning process will decline further.

### Supporting businesses and the economy

5.38 The Borough's housing growth targets have put pressure on traditional employment spaces – particularly with the advent of a range of “permitted development” regimes that remove traditional controls from changes of use. Whilst the Council has responded with a commitment towards an Article 4 direction for loss of business space, the viability of new employment space means that to create additional workspace will require some form of subsidy (potentially from higher value development) – if it is to be affordable. S106 agreements meanwhile have the scope to provide a pipeline of apprentice and post construction opportunities. Securing such commitments will continue to be challenging given the limited resources of the Council, and the multiple partnerships required to realise these objectives. The Planning Service is nevertheless embarking on work with the Economic Regeneration Team to develop a new programme and process to maximise new space for target business sectors and to ensure that construction and post occupation training and employment opportunities can be captured for local communities.

### Infrastructure delivery

5.39 The review of the local Plan is being accompanied by a new infrastructure investment plan. Meanwhile, the Council is also developing its capital strategy - outlining the targeted investment required to support health and education, transport, energy and the range of community infrastructure that is associated with growth. The public sectors ability to plan for and manage infrastructure delivery is mixed. The creation of an up to date local plan provides an opportunity for the council and its partners to collaborate around a single growth plan but capacity and timetables for such investments, and the fragmented nature of delivery still provides challenges. The level of CIL funding available across the borough varies. Whilst rates in the west are high, the level of growth in that area is low. Meanwhile in Tottenham CIL rates are very low, whilst levels of anticipated growth are high. CIL and Ss106 will not cover the cost of all infrastructure. A review of CIL rates and the schedule of infrastructure required will nevertheless take place in 2016 to ensure that CIL and s106 can better support the delivery of infrastructure to meet the communities' future needs.

## **6. Contribution to strategic outcomes**

The Planning Service contributes to outcomes in Priority 4 and 5.

**7. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)**

Not applicable

**8. Use of Appendices**

Development Management and Planning Enforcement performance data

**9. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

Planning Applications are on the Planning Register on the Council's website and the Local Plan Documents are also on the Council's website.