



Committee	Strategic Planning Committee
Date	08/07/2024
Subject	Review of the North, South and Strategic Planning Committees and the work of the Referral Panel 2023-2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Kay Yule
Report Author(s)	Katherine Scott Principal Planner (Development Management, Technical Lead) katherine.scott@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
Head of Service	Ben Woolnough Head of Planning, Building Control and Coastal Management ben.woolnough@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
Director	Nick Khan Strategic Director nick.khan@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Key Decision?	No
Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN

Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	n/a
---	-----

Purpose/Summary

This report publishes the quarterly and annual figures for the number of 'Planning Applications' and Planning related applications determined within government targets or agreed extensions of time within the most recently completed financial quarter.

Recommendation(s)

1. That Strategic Planning Committee notes this report in respect of the performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the speed of determining planning applications.
2. Recommends to Full Council that when considering the calendar of meetings for Municipal Year 2025/26, the start time for Planning Committee North and Planning Committee South be moved from 14:00 to 9:30.

Strategic plan

How does this proposal support Our Direction 2028?

Environmental Impact	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to the this. However, it is recognised that the planning application process and the decision makers have to consider the material planning impacts upon the environment.
Sustainable Housing	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to the this. However, it is recognised that the planning application process and the planning policies which are used to determine such applications seeks to ensure the provision of sustainable housing.
Tackling Inequalities	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to the this. However, it is recognised that the planning application process and the planning policies which are used to determine such applications, seek to support communities, and the provision of facilities which can be beneficial including community buildings, open space and facilities for physical and mental health wellbeing.
Thriving Economy	The statistics presented in this report are not directly applicable to the this. However, it is recognised that the planning application process and the planning policies which are used to determine such applications, seek to support appropriate economic development within the district.
Our Foundations / governance of the organisation	The Planning Service and the determination of planning and planning related applications is a statutory function of the Council. It also provides a vital mechanism through which improvements to the district can be secured for the benefit of residents, businesses and visitors.

Justification for recommendations

1. Background

- 1.1. This report provides Members of the Strategic Planning Committee with an analysis of the work of the three planning committees and the Referral Panel for decisions in the year from April 2023 to March 2024.
- 1.2. As per the reports in June 2022 and July 2023, the reporting for this matter now provides far greater depth and analysis led by oversight of the process by Katherine Scott, Principal Planner (Technical Lead).
- 1.3. This remains important to understand the effectiveness and efficiency of decision making and to maintain public confidence in the scrutiny and accountability the Planning Committees and Referral Panel provide.
- 1.4. Importantly this also provides an annual review of the involvement of Ward Members and Town and Parish Councils in the planning process.
- 1.5. The recommendation of this report also asks the Strategic Planning Committee to discuss the timing of the start of Planning Committee meetings in order to understand the desires of members for the next municipal year and whether any change is desired. To enable the debate, a 09.30am start time for Planning Committee South and Planning Committee North is recommended for approval. However, officers are not committed to this proposal but wish for members to have the opportunity to discuss a proposed change in time.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. This section of the report explains the process routes by which planning applications are determined at East Suffolk Council (i.e. Delegated, Referral Panel Committee etc), and provides data on how many planning applications have been determined via each route during the financial year 2023 to 2024.
- 2.2. Data and analysis are also provided on the outcomes of those applications, the level of involvement of ESC Members and Town/Parish Councils in the different determination process routes, and the time frame implications of those processes.
- 2.3. This report relates to Planning Applications, which are defined into three scale categories, which are defined at a national level, and these are the terms used in this report when referring to different scale of applications.
- 2.4. In terms of the applications that East Suffolk Council deals with as Local Planning Authority at a district Council, they are defined as:
 - 'Major':
 - 10 or more dwellinghouses, or

- a site area of 0.5 hectares or more where the number of dwellinghouses is unknown, and/or
- the floorspace to be created is 1,000sqm or more, and/or o the site area is 1 hectare or more.
- ‘Minor’
 - 1 – 9 dwellings, o A site area of up to 0.5 hectares where the number of dwellings is unknown,
 - Up to 1,000sqm of floorspace (excluding works to existing dwellings), and/or
 - The site area is less than 1 hectare.
- ‘Other’
 - Works to existing dwellinghouses, often referred to as Householder applications, and
 - Changes of use where no additional floorspace is created.

2.5. This report is intended to be read as a whole, but this ‘Introduction’ section is split into the following sub-sections to aid in navigation and finding the specific information relating to the current situation and statistics relating the 2023-24 financial year:

- [Scheme of Delegation](#)

This section explains the current scheme of delegation including the addition of the ‘call in process’ introduced earlier this year. It also explains the proportion of Planning Applications determined via Planning Committee (3.6%), at officer level following delegation from the Planning Referral Panel (8.5%) or at officer level without triggering the Planning Referral Panel or Planning Committee (87.9%).

- [Planning Committees](#)

This section provides information on the proportion of cases which were triggered to Planning Committee by being called in by the Head of Service (24%), called in by the Planning Committee Chair/vice Chair (3%), because ESC were the applicant or land owner (29%), because the applicant or agent was an ESC Elected member or member of staff or close relative (6%), or referred to Planning Committee by the Planning Referral Panel (38%). It also explains the time taken in planning committee meetings, and geographical spread of applications determined at Planning Committee.

- [Planning Referral Panel](#)

This section explains the Planning Referral Panel process, and examines the number of applications triggering the process (160), the scale of those applications (70 Minor and 80 Other Planning Applications, and 10 that technically didn’t trigger but accompanied an associated planning application that did trigger), the geographical spread of those cases in terms of the North/South Planning Committee areas, the wards and the parishes applications at the panel were from, including identifying those towns/parishes with the most items at the panel (Felixstowe and Lowestoft with 13 items each, closely followed by Southwold and Walberswick, with 11 each). Details are also provided on the proportion of applications the panel referral to planning committee for determination (20%).

- [Involvement of Ward Members](#)

This section explores the level of involvement of Ward Members during the planning application process. It sets out the opportunities they have to be involved and looks at the level of formal comments received from members on applications at the Planning Referral Panel (11.3%), attendance at Planning Referral Panel meetings (36% of Ward members attended at least one Panel meeting) and the proportion of items at Planning Committee Meetings on which a Ward Member spoke (17.8%). These figures are also explored in more detail in terms of the geographical variations and in terms of ward members speaking at planning committee, the variation that occurs between the different reasons items were triggered to committee.
- [Involvement of Town/Parish Councils](#)

This section assesses the involvement of Town and Parish Councils during the planning application processes. As with the Ward Member section above, it sets out the opportunities they have to be involved in the process and explores the level and types of comments receive that trigger items to the Planning Referral Panel (99.4% of items at the Panel had comments from the Town/Parish council). The number of items on which Town/Parish Councils attend to speak at Planning Committee meetings is also explored (31.1% of items), along with the variation that occurs between the different reasons items were triggered to committee.
- [Involvement of Statutory Consultees](#)

Comments from Statutory Consultees can trigger the Planning Referral Panel Process, and therefore this section explores the number of items at the Panel with comments from Statutory consultees contrary to the minded to views of officers.
- [Involvement of Third Parties](#)

Third Parties can attend Planning Committee meetings to speak on applications, and therefore this section examines the number of items on which this opportunity is taken up (18.89%), and how this seems to vary depending upon the reason the application has been triggered to Planning Committee.
- [Outcomes of applications](#)

Whichever process route a planning application takes i.e. Planning Committee for which ever trigger reason or delegated with or without the Planning Referral Panel process, all applications are generally either approved or refused by the Local Planning Authority, with the only exceptions being if applications are withdrawn by the applicants or if they submit an appeal against non-determination. This section therefore looks at the outcomes of applications via the different process routes.
- [Appeal outcomes of applications](#)

This section overlaps with the Planning Performance Report also on this agenda and explains that of the 73 appeal decisions received 89% were dismissed, and that there are no concerns regarding the decisions being made.

- [Time Implications of Process](#)
Each of different determination process routes can have implications in terms of the time it takes to determine an application. Therefore, this section examines the time implications both in terms of that spent in meetings but the potential delays they can have upon the determination of applications, and the resulting implications upon proportion of planning applications that are determined within government set 8 or 13 week targets or agreed extensions of time. It identifies that 97% of applications determined via Planning Committee were determined out of time (i.e. beyond the 8 or 13 week target), and that in terms of applications that triggered the Planning Referral Panel and were then delegated back to officers 37% were issued out of time, with 51% only being classed as in time due to an agreed extension of time. However, the importance of the Panel and Committees to the democratic process is recognised, and that ideally there would be more participation in those processes.
- [The start time of North and South Planning Committees](#)
This section recommends that the Strategic Planning Committee discuss the timing of the start of North and South Planning Committee Meetings. The suggestion is for a start time of 9:30am, although officers are not committee to this time, and wish members to have the opportunity to discuss a proposed change in time. This discussion is recommended in part due to the number of cases that have been set for committee consideration during some months requiring extraordinary committee meetings, as not all items could be included on the agenda for existing meetings with an afternoon start.

Scheme of Delegation

- 2.6. The Scheme of Delegation for Planning Applications is set out in Section E – Appendix 1 of the East Suffolk Council Constitution. For ease of reference, a copy of the relevant extract is included in **Appendix A, Figure 1** to this report.
- 2.7. The Scheme of Delegation for Planning Applications delegates the determination of all applications unless 1 of 5 triggers are met. These triggers can be summarised as:
- Direct Call-in/referral to Planning Committee by the Head of Service or by the Chair/Vice-chair of the Planning Committee,
 - The applicant or landowner is East Suffolk Council (ESC),
 - The applicant or agent is an ESC Councillor or ESC Employee, or close relative of either,
 - The Planning Referral Panel Process is triggered and they refer the item to Planning Committee for determination (further details are in [Planning Referral Panel](#) section of this report).
- Or
- Within the consultation period a contrary position to the officer recommendation is received from the Town/Parish Council and a request for Committee is received from a relevant ward member, triggering the member call in process.

- 2.8. A diagram explaining the routes applications meeting these triggers follow is included in **Appendix A, Figure 2**.
- 2.9. During the 2023-2024 financial year, 3.6% of Planning Applications were considered at Planning Committee, 87.9% were determined by Officers without triggering the Planning Referral or Committee Process and the remaining 8.5% triggered the Planning Referral Panel Process and were delegated to officers for determination.
- 2.10. The inclusion of the democratic process through the Planning Referral Panel Process and the Planning Committee Process has to be balanced with providing an efficient and effective planning service that is able to meet the required national targets for timeliness of decision making, which is explored further in the [Time Implications of Process](#) section of this report and in the Planning Performance which is also on this Strategic Planning Committee meetings agenda.

Planning Committees

- 2.11. As stated in paragraph 32.12.1 of the East Suffolk Councils constitution the Planning Committees are 'Quasi-judicial bodies'. This means they are there to determine Planning Applications on the basis of the consideration of Planning Law, Planning Policy and material Planning Considerations.
- 2.12. No matter which route an application has taken to reach a Planning Committee, and no matter which Planning Committee they are at, they all follow the same procedure during the committee meeting. The procedures for Planning Committee are set out in in Appendix C of the [East Suffolk Constitution-A-B-C.pdf \(eastssuffolk.gov.uk\)](#).
- 2.13. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were 90 items considered at North, South or Strategic Planning Committee.
- 2.14. As explained in the Scheme of Delegation Section above, applications can reach one of the Planning Committees for determined, via different routes. During this financial year there were (As shown in **Appendix S, Figure 1**):
- 21 items (24%) were called directly into committee by the Head of Service,
 - 3 items (3%) were called directly into committee by either the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee,
 - 36 items (29%) went directly to committee because ESC were the land owners and/or applicant on the application,
 - 5 items (6%) went directly to committee because the applicant or agent was an ESC member of staff or ESC Elected Member, or close relative of either
 - 34 items (38%) triggered the Planning Referral Panel, and were then referred to Planning Committee by the Panel,
 - 0 items (0%) triggered the Planning Committee Call in-process.
- 2.15. As shown in **Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix S**, there is no particularly strong pattern over time as to which route applications took to reach Planning Committee. However, it is noted that all three of the items called in to Planning Committee by the chair or vice-chair were in the earlier part of the financial year (April and July), and there were no

items at Planning Committee due to an ESC Staff/Member connection in November through to March.

- 2.16. It is also noted from the other figures in that Appendix, that all 3 of the items that were called into Planning Committee by the chair or vice-chair were within the North Committee Area (2 in Blundeston and 1 in Oulton Broad (Carlton & Whitton / Blundeston Wards). There were no items reaching Planning Committee via this route within the South Area.
- 2.17. These observations could be purely down to the nature of the applications submitted, and do not necessarily reflect any longer-term patterns. In comparing these graphs to those included in Appendix S of the same report to Strategic Planning Committee from July 2023 ([CMIS > Meetings](#)), suggests that these do not indicate longer term trends (although it should be noted that the figures shown in the graphs from last year do not show the same level of detail because the data relating to the reasons items reached planning committee was only collated into 3 categories, not the 6 categories used for the 2023-24 period).
- 2.18. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, 52 hours 14 minutes was spent in Planning Committee Meetings (24hrs 56 mins in North Planning Committee, 19hrs 33mins in South Planning Committee and 8 hrs in Strategic Planning Committee).
- 2.19. This is similar to the previous financial year (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023), during which the Planning Committee met for more than 50 hours, with almost 21 hours in North Planning Committee, almost 23 hours in South Planning Committee and over 6 hours in Strategic Planning Committee.
- 2.20. In addition to the time in formal meetings, considerable time is required in terms of drafting and reviewing reports and recommendations, drafting slides for the PowerPoint presentations, and scheduling meetings, along with additional time following the meetings, to collate minutes, and completing paperwork etc so that planning decisions can be issued.
- 2.21. As illustrated in **Appendix R, Figure 1**, the number of items at Planning Committee North and at Planning Committee South each month is rarely the same. This is to be expected, not only because the North Planning Committee had 53 items compared to the 37 items at South Planning Committee, but also because there is a natural variation in the scale, type and complexity of applications submitted to the Local Planning Authority, along with a variation in the level of public interest in such applications.
- 2.22. The higher number of applications within the North Area, during this financial year, appears to be in part due to the significantly greater number of items reaching Planning Committee from the Southwold Ward than from other wards of the district (illustrated in **Appendix R, Figure 4**). Southwold Ward had 15 items, compared to an average of 3.1 items per Ward.
- 2.23. Based upon the number of items per ward, the South Planning Committee Area appears to have a more consistent geographical spread of items, as the North Area had 5 wards

without any items at Planning Committee, compared to just 2 wards without items from the South Area (**Appendix R, Figure 4**).

- 2.24. Ward members can attend and speak on applications within their wards at Planning Committee meetings. Their attendance is explored within the [Involvement of Ward Members](#) section of this report.
- 2.25. The eventual outcomes/determinations of applications is explored within the [Outcomes of applications](#) section of this report.
Planning Referral Panel
- 2.26. The presentation of an application to the Referral Panel can take place as a result of the comments received from either the Ward Member, Town/Parish Council and/or a statutory consultee during the consultation process being contrary to the 'Minded to' recommendation of officers.
- 2.27. The Referral Panel meet every Tuesday and is made up of both the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the North and South Planning Committees. To aid a decision on the route of determination to be made by the Panel, Members are furnished with both a written report and a detailed visual and verbal presentation of the application by officers.
- 2.28. All ward members are also notified each Friday afternoon of the items on the agenda of the meeting scheduled for the following Tuesday and are invited to attend if they wish. This notification takes place via a Teams message on the "Notification of Upcoming Planning Referral Panel meetings" chat, (which all Councillors are members of). A copy of an example of the notification is included in **Appendix D, Figure 1**.
- 2.29. The meetings are undertaken in accordance with the Planning Referral Panel Protocol (**Appendix C, Figure 1**), so case is presented by officers to the panel, who then have the opportunity to ask questions, then the relevant Ward Member is given the opportunity to confirm if the presentation and answers to the questions were accurate. The Panel then discusses the item and concludes on whether the item should be referred to Planning Committee or delegated to officers for determination. They are not determining the planning application, just the process route it will follow.
- 2.30. All Ward Members, the Town/Parish Council and agent/applicant are also subsequently informed via email by the case officer of the outcome of any relevant items following each Panel meeting. In the case of Ward members this is any applications within their ward and with Town/Parish Councils any applications within their parish.
- 2.31. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were 160 items at the Planning Referral Panel, which consisted of 70 'Minor' Planning Applications, 80 'Other' Planning Applications, and the remaining 10 items were applications that technically didn't trigger the process but were taken to the panel because the associated planning application triggered (e.g. Listed Building Consent applications). There were no 'Major' applications at the Planning Referral Panel. Further details on the proportions of Minor and Other applications are included in the various **Figures 2 to 9 of Appendix E**.

- 2.32. As shown in **Figure 1 of Appendix E** 42% of items at the Planning Referral Panel were from the South area and 58% from the North Area. This follows the pattern of the preceding years, during which North has had a higher proportion of the items at Planning Referral Panel for two out of the three years:
- 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023, 53% North and 47% South,
 - 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022, 50% North and 50% South,
 - 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021, 54% North and 46% South,
 - 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020, 55% North and 45% South.
- 2.33. As shown in **Figure 1 of Appendix G**, there were items at the Referral Panel from all wards across the district, although some wards had a significantly greater number of items than others, and they do not necessarily correspond with the larger towns. For example, 'Southwold Ward' had the most with 24 items, but even if the 'Eastern Felixstowe' and 'Western Felixstowe' Wards are combined, that only totals 13 items.
- 2.34. In looking at the number of items at the Referral Panel it is important to consider the number of Planning Applications received in total for each ward, and the proportions of those which triggered the Referral Panel Process (**Figures 3 and 4 of Appendix G**). It is clear from Figure 4 that the 'Southwold Ward' is clearly triggering a significantly higher proportion of its items to the Planning Referral Panel than any other Ward, and the 'Oulton Broad Ward' triggered the smallest proportion of its items, with the 'Wrentham, Wangford and Westleton Ward' also triggering one of the lowest proportions. This is particularly interesting as the 'Wrentham, Wangford and Westleton Ward' geographically wraps around the 'Southwold Ward', but these figures suggest that there is no correlation between the two wards.
- 2.35. The number of items at each meeting from each ward is shown in the various Figures in **Appendix F**. These graphs shown that most of the Wards who have had more than one item, have had those items triggered to the Planning Referral Panel throughout the year. Therefore, there does not appear to be any seasonal pattern.
- 2.36. There are particular Parishes which appear to be triggering significantly more items than others (**Figure 1 of Appendix H**). As may be expected the largest settlements, Lowestoft and Felixstowe triggered the largest number of items with 13 items each. However, the parishes with the next highest number of items were Southwold and Walberswick, with 11 items each, which indicates despite being significantly smaller than Lowestoft or Felixstowe, they are the Parishes inflating the figures for the 'Southwold Ward' result in it having the highest number of items at the Planning Referral Panel.
- 2.37. The majority of the Parishes with no items at the Referral Panel are the smaller more rural Parishes who tend to have relatively few Planning Applications each year (**Figure 2 of Appendix H**).
- 2.38. The numbers/portions of applications triggered to referral panel on the basis of comments from the ward member(s), town or parish council and/or statutory consultees, including which are triggering the most number of items etc are explored in the [Involvement of Ward Members](#), [Involvement of Town/Parish Councils](#), and [Involvement of Statutory Consultees](#) sections below. Attendance by Ward Members at

the Planning Referral Panel is also explored in the [Involvement of Ward Members](#) section below.

- 2.39. The Referral Panel decides on the determination process route, they do not determine the application itself. The four members vote and can choose to refer to Planning Committee or delegate for determination, or abstain from voting, and the route is determined by the majority vote.
- 2.40. This means that there can be a various combination of 1, 2, 3 or 4 members for each type of vote i.e. 3 panel members could vote for committee and 1 to delegate to officers. **Appendix E, Figure 12** shows the proportion of each possible vote combination.
- 2.41. The proportion of cases referred to Planning Committee for determination by the Planning Referral Panel, was slightly higher in the 2023-24 financial year at 20% to that of the 2022-23 financial year which was 19%, and higher than the three preceding years, as shown in **Figure 11, Appendix E**.

Involvement of Ward Members

- 2.42. As explained in paragraph 3.8 of the East Suffolk Council's Constitution, the representational role of members is a key part of the planning process, and subject to compliance with the terms of the Members' Code of Conduct, in fulfilling that role members are given the opportunity to:
- Respond in writing to officers on the merits of the application,
 - Attend any committee meetings for applications in their ward,
 - To make representations to the determining committee.
- 2.43. In addition to the above, officers also notify all members of the agenda of Referral Panel Meetings, and they are provided with a Teams meeting link so that they can attend meetings with items from their Ward (**Appendix D, Figure 1**). They also have the opportunity to take part in accordance with the Planning Referral Panel Protocol (copy in **Appendix C, Figure 1**).
- 2.44. In accordance with paragraph 9.1 of Part B the East Suffolk Council's Constitution, Ward Members are not formally consulted on applications within their Ward because the applications are accessible via the portal/[Public Access](#).
- 2.45. All Ward Members are set up on the [Public Access System](#), so although not sent a formal consultation letter, they receive notifications via email on all valid applications received within the geographical area of their ward. All members are therefore made aware of all applications within their ward and have the opportunity to review and comment on the application. An illustration of the process and the various points they can be involved is included in **Appendix B, Figure 1**.
- 2.46. Ward members have the ability to get formally involved the planning application process at a number of points, as well as being able to contact the case officer directly with any queries or questions. In chronological order of the application process, the formal points at which they can be involved are:

- Submitting formal comments during the consultation period, following their Public Access notification of a valid application (see paragraph above), within these comments they have the opportunity to explain if they think the application should be taken to Planning Committee for determination and if so the reasons why, which can in turn trigger either the Planning Referral Panel Process or the Committee Member Call-in Process (see [Scheme of Delegation](#) Section above for further details)
- If the Planning Referral Panel Process is triggered, they can attend the Planning Referral Panel meeting, and they are notified via a Teams Chat message of which applications are on the agenda every week (see process defined in [Planning Referral Panel](#) Section above and in **Appendix D, Figure 1**).
- When an application goes to Planning Committee for determination, the Ward Member(s) can attend and speak on that item as part of the process (see explanation of process in [Planning Committees](#) Section above).

- 2.47. As explained in the [Planning Referral Panel](#) and [Scheme of Delegation](#) sections of this report, if the comments of the Ward Member(s) are contrary to the 'minded to' recommendation of officer, the Planning Referral Panel Process is then triggered, unless the ward member(s) also share the views of the Town/Parish Council, in which case the Committee Call-in Process is triggered.
- 2.48. However, there continues to be a limited number of applications at the Planning Referral Panel with comments from relevant Ward Members.
- 2.49. As illustrated in **Appendix J**, Figure 8, the proportion of items at the Planning Referral Panel has consistently remained around the 10% mark for each of the last 4 financial years. This diagram shows the following proportion of items has having written comments of any form from a relevant ward member:
- 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 = 11.3% with comments / 88.7% without comments,
 - 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 = 9% with comments / 91% without comments,
 - 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 = 7.8% with comments / 92.2% without comments,
 - 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 = 7.9% with comments / 92.1% without comments.
- 2.50. These figures and the lack of any items triggering the Committee Member Call-in Process between 24 January 2024 and 31 March 2024, suggests a lack of formal involvement by Ward Members during the consultation period on applications. If Ward Members were submitting written comments during that period, they would likely trigger the Planning Referral Panel Process or Committee Member Call-in Process, and therefore be reflected in the annual statistics for those processes.
- 2.51. As explained in the earlier sections of this report, the Ward Member(s) are also able to attend the Planning Referral Panel meetings, and they are sent the agenda for those

meetings, along with being 'tagged' so that they are made aware when there is an item in their Ward (example copy of notification in **Appendix D, Figure 1**).

- 2.52. Between 9 June 2023 and 31 March 2024, 19 (49%) of Planning Referral Panel meetings had elected members other than the panel members in attendance (**Appendix P, Figure 1**). Although this figure is below 50% it indicates that a significant number of the meetings are being attended by Ward Members.
- 2.53. However, during the same period only 20 (36%) of Elected Members attended at least one Planning Referral Panel Meeting (the other 35 or 64% didn't attend a single Referral Panel Meeting). These figures suggests that it is likely the same members attending more than one meeting during the monitoring period, and that is what is also reflected in the graphs in **Appendix P, Figures 3, 4 and 5**, which show the number and proportion of Referral Panel meetings each member attended.
- 2.54. Some wards had member attendance on multiple occasions, for meetings where there were items in their wards, whilst others have had no members attend a single meeting (**Appendix P, Figure 5**).
- 2.55. As shown in **Appendix G, Figure 1**, all wards had at least 1 item at the Planning Referral Panel, but as shown in **Appendix P, Figure 3**, 13 of the 29 Wards had no ward member attendance any Referral Panel Meeting.
- 2.56. Between the adoption of the Committee Call-in process on 24 January 2024, and 31 March 2024, there were no applications triggering that process. However, the process has since been triggered, and data is being collected for those items for monitoring purposes, so can be included in future reports of this nature.
- 2.57. As explained in the [Planning Committees](#) section above, when applications are taken to Planning Committee (by whichever of the 5 potential routes), the Ward Member(s) have the opportunity to attend the meeting and speak for on the application (plus answer questions from the Planning Committee).
- 2.58. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, only 16 of the 90 items at Planning Committee had a Ward Member speak on them (**Appendix T, Figure 1**). That is just 17.8% of items with a relevant Ward Member using their opportunity to speak to Planning Committee as the Ward Member, or 82.2% without a relevant Ward Member using their opportunity to speak.
- 2.59. As illustrated in **Appendix T, Figures 2 to 7**, the proportion of items on which Ward Members spoke did vary based upon the reason the applications were at Planning Committee with relevant Ward Members speaking on:
- 14.3% of items that had been called straight to Planning Committee by the Head of Service,
 - 66.7% of items that had been called straight to Planning Committee by the Chair/Vice Chair of Committee,
 - 14.81% of items that were at Planning Committee because ESC were the owners and/or the applicant,

- 0% of items that were at Planning Committee because the agent or applicant was an ESC Elected Member or ESC member of staff or close relative of either,
- 20.6% of items that were referred to Planning Committee by the Planning Referral Panel.

Involvement of Town/Parish Councils

- 2.60. In the East Suffolk Council area, more than 90% have a [Public Access](#) accounts set up, which their clerks can use to monitor applications and submit comments. This is an expectation of Town and Parish Councils since notifications/updates on applications (other than formal consultations) are not sent manually and Clerk's/Town or Parish Councillors are expected to monitor notifications regularly.
- 2.61. Those that have a Public Access are notified via email alerts from the Public Access system as a minimum when:
- An application is validated within their area, and thus available for them
 - to view online and submit comments if they wish,
 - If the address or description is revised during the application process,
 - When the application status is changed,
and
 - When the application is determined
- 2.62. A Town/Parish Council is consulted on any planning application (and many other planning related applications) on a site within their town/parish. They can view the documents online via [Public Access](#), and submit comments either through the Public Access system or via email.
- 2.63. The points at which they can interact with the Planning Application Process are illustrated in **Appendix B, Figure 2**, which shows the formal consultation process through which they can submit written comments, potentially triggering the Planning Referral or Committee Call-in Process and their ability to attend and speak on applications that go the Planning Committee.
- 2.64. As explained in the [Planning Referral Panel](#) and [Scheme of Delegation](#) sections of this report, if the comments of the Town/Parish Council is contrary to the 'minded to' recommendation of officer, the Planning Referral Panel Process is then triggered, unless the ward member(s) also share the views of the Town/Parish Council, in which case the Committee Call-in Process is triggered.
- 2.65. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, 160 applications triggered the Referral Panel Process and 159 or 99.4% of those were at Planning Referral Panel had comments from the relevant Town/Parish Council. This demonstrates that Town/Parish Councils are clearly engaging with the formal consultation process on applications.
- 2.66. When applications are taken to Planning Committee (by whichever of the 5 potential routes), the Town/Parish Council also have the opportunity to attend the meeting and speak for up to 3 minutes (plus answer questions from the Planning Committee).

- 2.67. Between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, 28 of the 90 items at Planning Committee had a Town/Parish Council speak on them. That is 31.1% of items. This is significantly higher than proportion of items on which Ward Members utilised their opportunity to speak (17.8%), but still only a minority of applications.
- 2.68. As illustrated in **Appendix T, Figures 2 to 7**, the proportion of items on which relevant Town/Parish Councils varies based upon the reason the applications were at Planning Committee with relevant Town/Parish Councils speaking on:
- 47.62% of items that had been called straight to Planning Committee by the Head of Service,
 - 66.67% of items that had been called straight to Planning Committee by the Chair/Vice Chair of Committee,
 - 3.7% of items that were at Planning Committee because ESC were the owners and/or the applicant,
 - 0% of items that were at Planning Committee because the agent or applicant was an ESC Elected Member or ESC member of staff or close relative of either,
 - 44.12% of items that were referred to Planning Committee by the Planning Referral Panel.
- 2.69. Therefore, it is clear that Town and Parish Councils are attending to speak on some items at Planning Committee meetings, particularly those that are called straight in by the Head of Service or Committee Chair/Vice-chair, and those which are referred by the Planning Referral Panel.
- 2.70. However, it would be welcomed if more Town/Parish Councils took the opportunity to speak on a higher proportion of items at Planning Committee. On some trigger reasons their figure is significantly lower compared to that of agents/applicants, as set out in the table below and illustrated in the graphs in **Appendix T, Figures 1 to 7**:

Table 1: The proportion of items on which each speaker spoke at Planning Committee between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024

Reason at Committee	Town/Parish Council	Third Party	Agent/Applicant	Ward Member
Part 1 - Straight to committee by HoS or for other reason	47.62%	47.62%	90.48%	14.29%
Part 1 - Called to committee by Chair/Vice-chair	66.67%	0%	0%	66.67%
Part 2 - ESC owner/applicant	3.70%	3.70%	48.15%	14.8%
Part 3 - ESC staff/member connection	0%	0%	40%	0%
Part 4 - Referred by Panel	44.12%	17.65%	73.53%	20.59%

Part 5 - Called in via P Committee call in process	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Overall / All Committee Items	31.11%	18.89%	65.56%	17.78%

- 2.71. It is not clear why this variation in speaking by Town/Parish Councils at Planning Committee is occurring. There doesn't appear to be particular Town or Parish Councils more likely to attend to speak, and there doesn't appear to be any geographical pattern, or link to the scale of the settlement (based upon the information included in **Appendix T, Figure 8**, which shows the number of items at Planning Committee by parish and the number of items the Town/Parish Council spoke at). It could be linked to the nature and scale of the proposals.
- 2.72. By comparing the data in **Appendix S, Figure 6** (the number of items per reason at Planning Committee), with the number of items the Town/Parish Council spoke on set out in **Appendix T, Figure 8**, it appears that some of the towns/parishes with the largest number of items but the Town/Parish only spoke on a small number of items, are locations where the majority of the items were at Planning Committee either because ESC were the applicant/land owner or there was an applicant/agent connection to an ESC elected member or member of staff, so those items weren't necessarily items that the Town/Parish Council had significant views on (e.g. Felixstowe and Lowestoft).
- 2.73. However, there are some Towns/Parishes where a significantly larger number of items were at Planning Committee via the Planning Referral Panel, than the number of items on which the Town/Parish Council spoke at Planning Committee. This suggests that the Town/Parish Council were very likely to have had a contrary view to officers in order to trigger the Referral Panel Process but then they didn't take up the opportunity to speak the Planning Committee meeting (e.g. Walberswick had 6 items at Planning Committee via the Panel, but only spoke on 3 of them).
- 2.74. The referral of applications to the Planning Committee via the Planning Referral Panel provides an opportunity for the relevant Town/Parish Council to speak on the application, and Town/Parish Councils are encouraged to take up that opportunity.

Involvement of Statutory Consultees

- 2.75. Planning Law sets out the circumstances where Local Planning Authorities have to consult specific bodies prior to an application being made on a planning application. These are referred to as 'Statutory Consultees'. The requirements to consult each organisation is dependent upon the nature and location of the site, any designations and the specifics of the proposal. Therefore, not all statutory consultees have to be consulted on every application. A list of Statutory Consultees has been produced in Government Guidance at [Consultation and pre-decision matters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/consultation-and-pre-decision-matters).
- 2.76. The diagram in **Appendix B, Figure 3**, illustrates the interaction points of Statutory Consultees in the application process.

- 2.77. As explained in the [Planning Referral Panel](#) section of this report above, if the comments from a Statutory Consultee are contrary to the 'minded to' recommendation of officers it triggers the Planning Referral Panel Process.
- 2.78. As illustrated in **Appendix O, Figures 1 and 2**, a relatively low proportion of items were at the Planning Referral Panel between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, with views from statutory consultees contrary to the 'Minded-to' recommendations of officers, with just 2 items with contrary comments from the Environment Agency, 1 item with contrary views from SCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority, and 8 from SCC as Local Highway Authority.
- 2.79. In making such recommendations contrary to the views of statutory consultees, officers would have very carefully considered their comments and have had to have clear justification in order to reach a different conclusion.

Involvement of Third Parties

- 2.80. Third Parties are those neighbours who share a boundary with the application site along with any other nearby residents or those living further afield who comment on a Planning Application.
- 2.81. Whilst the comments from such parties can not trigger the Planning Referral Panel Process, any material planning considerations they raise are considered in the determination of the application, and such parties have the opportunity to speak at Planning Committee meetings.
- 2.82. As set out in Table 1 in the [Involvement of Town/Parish Councils](#) Section of this report, and in the graphs in **Appendix T, Figures 1 to 7**, some third parties do take up the opportunity to speak at Planning Committee meetings, with third party speaking recorded on 18.89% of all Planning Committee Items.
- 2.83. However, taking up this opportunity does appear to vary significantly depending upon the nature of the trigger reason for the item being at Planning Committee for determination, with Third Party Speaking on 47.62% of items at Planning Committee through direct call in by the Head of Service, but no third party speaking on items at Planning Committee through direct call in by Chair/Vice Chairs or there due to a ESC Elected Member or staff connection, and only on 17.65% of items referred to Planning Committee via the Planning Referral Panel.
- 2.84. It is not known why this variation is occurring. However, having a higher figure for items at Planning Committee through direct call in by the Head of Service is expected as they tend to be case with significant public interest. The lower figures for the other categories may be due to limited interest in some items, even if they are triggered to the Planning Referral and then Planning Committee by the comments of the Town/Parish Council, or it could be that third parties are unaware of their opportunity to speak or when the items are going to be at Planning Committee, despite details of both being provided on the ESC website, and the initial consultation letters directing people to that information.

Outcomes of applications

- 2.85. As shown in **Appendix U, Figure 11**, there was some variation in the proportions of applications that were approved, refused or remained live at the end of the financial year.
- 2.86. The decision route type with the highest proportion of applications subsequently refused was items that had triggered the Planning Referral Panel and then been delegated to officers for determination. Given that most applications triggered to the Planning Referral by the comments of the town or parish council being contrary to the minded to recommendations of officers, this indicates that approximately 20% of the applications at the Planning Referral Panel were there because the town/parish council recommended approval, and approximately 79% were there because they recommended refusal.
- 2.87. The decision types with the least number of refusals were applications called into Planning Committee by the Chair or Vice-Chair, and applications that were at Planning Committee due to a connection to an ESC elected member or ESC member of staff.

Appeal outcomes of applications

- 2.88. As explained in the Planning Performance Report on this agenda, the outcomes of appeals are reported on a quarterly basis to the Strategic Planning Committee and the latest of these is also on this meeting's agenda.
- 2.89. As also explained in that report between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, there were 73 Planning related Appeal Decisions received, with 89% dismissed (i.e. upholding the ESC's decision), 5% allowed (i.e. overturning ESC's decision) and 6% split appeal decisions (**Appendix F, Figure 3** to the Performance Report also on this agenda).
- 2.90. Based upon these figures there are no concerns regarding the decisions being made at Planning Committee or at officer level (either triggering or not triggering the Planning Referral Process).

Time Implications of Process

- 2.91. Between 9 June 2023 (after the May elections) and 31 March 2024, the Planning Referral Panel meetings took a total of 36 Hours 5 Minutes. This is a significant number of hours and would have likely been significantly longer if data included the entire financial year. Based upon the average of 57 mins per meeting, and assuming there had been a weekly meeting for each of the 9 weeks of the financial year not covered by the current data, that would have been an additional 8 hours 38 minutes, or a combined total for the year of 44 hours 43 minutes.
- 2.92. In addition to this time in the meetings themselves, significant officer time is required in preparing the reports and PowerPoint slides presented to the Panel. Therefore, it has to be recognised that the Planning Referral Panel Process takes a significant amount of both officer and member time.

- 2.93. Between the 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the North Area Planning Committee Meetings took 24 hours 56 minutes, the South Area Planning Committee meetings took 19 hours 33 minutes, and the Strategic Planning Committee 8 hours 15 minutes. This is a total of 52 hours 44 mins. Although there was a pause in the Planning Committee Meetings due to the elections in May 2023, this is similar to the previous financial year which had more than 50 hours in Planning Committee meetings, including almost 21 hours in North Planning Committee and almost 23 hours in South Planning Committee and over 6 hours in Strategic Planning Committee meetings.
- 2.94. In addition to this time in the meetings themselves, significant officer time is required in preparing the reports, complying and publishing the agenda and preparing PowerPoint slides for presenting to the Planning Committee, and then there is as significant officer time required afterwards for things like the publication of minutes etc. Therefore, it has to be recognised that the Planning Committee Process takes a significant amount of both officer and member time.
- 2.95. Both the Planning Referral Panel, and the Planning Committee Processes, add time to the application determination timeframe, because the need to prepare and publish reports ahead of scheduled meetings etc creates a delay between a minded to recommendation being formed and a formal decision being made on the application.
- 2.96. In many cases, particularly those items that go via the Referral Panel Process and then on to Planning Committee, this can add several weeks, and can often require extensions of time to be agreed with applicants/agents to avoid such applications as been logged as out of time/beyond determination period.
- 2.97. As shown in the graphs/charts in **Appendix V**, particularly **Figure 11**, the determination route with the highest proportion of applications meeting the Government target times are those that are delegated without triggering the Referral Panel Process, and during the last financial year the majority of applications determined via Planning Committee (97%) were issued out of time (74% within an agreed extension of time and 23% beyond the government set targets or any extension of time agreement).
- 2.98. In order to achieve the Government, set targets for the proportions of applications being determined in time (70% for non-majors), based upon the proportions illustrated in **Appendix V, Figure 11**, a significant number of Extensions of Time are having to be agreed.
- 2.99. This is particularly noticeable for cases that are either triggering the Planning Referral Panel and are then delegated back to officers for determination (only 13% in government target, 51% within Extensions of time and 37% out of time), and for cases that are determined at Planning Committee (only 3% within government target, 74% within extensions of time and 23% out of time). These are shown by the third and fourth bars on **Appendix V, Figure 11**.
- 2.100. Whilst the importance of member involvement through the Planning Referral Panel Process and Planning Committee process to the democratic process must be recognised,

these figures illustrate the impact of the additional time required for applications to follow the Planning Referral Panel and/or Planning Committee Processes.

- 2.101. As outlined in the [Involvement of Ward Members](#) and [Involvement of Town/Parish Councils](#) sections of this report, the potential value of the existing democratic process is clearly not being fully utilised by those that can directly input into the Planning Referral Panel and Planning Committee Process including the trigger mechanisms for those processes.
- 2.102. Higher levels of Ward Member involvement through the submission of written comments and attendance at Referral Panel meetings, along with higher levels attendance to speak at Planning Committee meetings, along with higher levels of Town/Parish Council involvement by attendance/speaking at Planning Committee, would increase in the level of input to the democratic aspects of the process.
- 2.103. Whilst increased participation into the democratic aspects of these processes is to be encouraged, it must also be recognised that any increase in such activity could increase the number of applications going through the referral panel and committee processes and/or the length of time such applications take, which may affect the ability of the Local Planning Authorities ability to meet the Government set targets.
- 2.104. As explained in the 'Planning Applications' section within the Introduction of the 'Planning Performance Report' which is also on this meetings agenda, the Local Planning Authority is currently monitored quarterly on its ability to meet nationally set timeframes for Major and Non-Major Planning Applications, and those quarterly statistics are monitored in terms of overall proportions during a 2-year period.
- 2.105. As set out in that report, the minimum target for Majors is being exceeded, and those for Non-Majors is also being met in terms of the overall 2-year figure, but was below the 70% for the January to March 2024 period. It is still realistic to expect the overall 2-year figure for non-majors to be above 70% as there are still 2 quarters left in the current monitoring period, but that will require that as many as possible non-major decisions are issued within time or within agreed extensions of time. The easiest process route by which to get decisions in time is when they are delegated and do not trigger the Planning Referral Panel, Committee Member Call-in route or straight call in to Planning Committee, as those routes add weeks to the process of determination. However, this need to meet targets has to be balanced with the democratic process and shouldn't be seen as a reason not to trigger any of these processes.

The start time of North and South Planning Committees

- 2.106. The recommendation of this report also asks the Strategic Planning Committee to discuss the timing of the start of Planning Committee meetings in order to understand the desires of members for the next municipal year and whether any change is desired. To enable the debate, a 9.30am start time for Planning Committee South and Planning Committee North is recommended for approval. However, officers are not committed to this proposal but wish for members to have the opportunity to discuss a proposed change in time.

- 2.107. At present North and South Planning Committees start at 2pm. They usually conclude by 5.30pm. There have been some months recently where due to the number of cases set for committee consideration that month, the agenda would not have concluded within four hours. Therefore, extraordinary committee meetings have been called within those months, creating two area committee meetings for the month. One advantage of starting at 9.30am is that a full day of Planning Committee can be held, accommodating more agenda items in one meeting, rather than two – where business dictates this is necessary. However, full day meetings can be exhausting for officers and members and can cause long periods of waiting for public speakers.
- 2.108. The current afternoon meetings are relatively concise and focussed. However, compared with focussed attention officers and members may have in the morning, at times, energy levels may be lower mid-afternoon. It is however recognised that people varying when their energy levels peak in order to focus on the detailed business of Planning Committees.
- 2.109. For some members the afternoon start may be preferable for personal and working commitments. For others a morning session may be preferable and allow a free afternoon. Officers respect that we have a broad range of members with varying commitments over the daytime and evening hours. Occasionally, due to commitments such as childcare, some officers have had to leave the Planning Committee early when the agenda has extended beyond 5pm.
- 2.110. A recommendation to change the start time of meetings to 9.30am is proposed to enable discussion, rather than as an evidenced recommendation. Officers do not wish to create any division over the concept of a change but would like to use this recommendation to gauge opinion of the committee members and if necessary, return with further consideration and proposals at a future meeting. If there was support for a change to this time, or an alternative agreed time, this would need to be included in the calendar of meetings for the 2025/26 municipal year, to be agreed by Full Council in early 2025.

3. Proposal

- 3.1. These figures and processes should continue to be monitored on an annual basis.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. As explained in the [previous Planning Performance Report to Strategic Planning Committee in January 2024](#), the planning application fees were increased on 6 December 2023 through [The Town and Country Planning \(Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#) and those regulations also amended Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure Order 2015 (as amended), to introduce a 16 week planning guarantee.
- 4.2. This means where a planning application takes longer than the statutory time periods (i.e. 13 weeks for Major and 8 Weeks for Non-Major) and an extension of time has not been agreed with the applicant, the Planning Guarantee applies.

- 4.3. This means that if a Major application is not decided within 26 weeks or a Non-Major within 16 weeks, and where no extension of time has been agreed, or appeal against non-determination been submitted, then the fee paid by the applicant will be refunded to them.
- 4.4. Therefore, the Local Planning Authority needs to ensure to ensure that planning applications are determined within the set timescales or agree extensions of time in order to minimise the potential risk for fees to be refunded on such applications.
- 4.5. However, it should be noted that applications can potentially be refused if the applicants are deliberately trying to delay the determination or refuse to agree an extension of time in order to seek to secure a refund. National Planning Policy Guidance is clear that applicants should not attempt to delay a decision on their application simply to obtain a fee refund and that a Local Planning Authority will be justified in refusing permission when an applicant causes deliberate delay and has been unwilling to agree an extension of time [Determining a planning application - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/determining-a-planning-application).

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. If a planning application is not determined within the eight- or 13-week target time, or within an agreed extension of time, then the applicants have a right to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, who would then be the determining authority for that planning application.
- 5.2. However, it should be noted that planning applications do not obtain deemed consent if they are not determined in time. The eight- and 13-week time frames for determination are important for ensuring that the not only the decision on each application remains with the Local Planning Authority, but ensuring that the government targets are met for the two-year monitoring period process, so that wider determination powers remain with the Local Planning Authority.
- 5.3. Prior Notification applications which do not form part of this two-year monitoring period process, because they are not Planning Applications, also need to be determined within time, because if the proposals meet the criteria to be Permitted Development subject to the Prior Notification Process (as set out in [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/1004/ppt/1)), are not determined within the set timescale or an agreed extension of time, they can obtain deemed consent, which means works can go ahead outside the control of the Local Planning Authority.

6. Risk Implications

- 6.1. As outlined in the accompanying Planning Performance Report on the agenda for this meeting, there are nationally set targets for Major Planning Applications (13 weeks) and Non-Major Planning Applications (8 weeks) to be determined within, and East Suffolk Council as Local Planning Authority has to submit quarterly returns to central Government relating to the percentage of Planning Applications it determines within these timescale or agreed extension of time, with a requirement for 60% of Major

Decisions and 70% of Non-Major Decisions to be determined within 8/13 weeks or agreed extensions of time, in order to avoid the possibility of being placed in special measures.

- 6.2. As outlined in the [Time Implications of Process](#) section of this report, both the Planning Referral Panel Process and the Planning Committee Process can add significantly to the time taken to determine Planning Applications.
- 6.3. Therefore, any increase in the number of Planning Applications required to follow either or both processes has the potential to increase the number of Planning Applications being determined after 8/13week nationally set target dates, which in turn makes it more difficult for the Local Planning Authority to meet the targets for the proportion of Planning Applications determined in time (which if not met for the monitoring period can result in a Local Planning Authority being placed in special measures and losing its ability to determine such applications).
- 6.4. As these processes add time to the determination process of Planning Applications and therefore as illustrated by **Appendix V, Figure 11**, and reduce the proportion of planning applications determined within the 8/13 weeks, they also increase the risk of appeals against non-determination. Applicants have a right of appeal against non-determination if their application is not determined within the target date and no extension of time has been agreed. In such circumstances, the power to determine the application is lost by East Suffolk Council and passes to the Planning Inspectorate.
- 6.5. There is also a risk in terms of costs to the local authority, because if applications go beyond the 8/13 weeks, with no agreed extension of time, and it becomes 16 weeks old since validation, applicants are entitled to a refund.
- 6.6. The current proportions of applications triggering the Planning Referral Panel Process and/or Planning Committee Process appear to be appropriate, because although they are affecting the Local Planning Authorities ability to meet the 8/13week target date on applications that pass through those processes, overall, over a 2-year monitoring period, the negative impact can be absorbed by the proportion of delegated decisions being determined in time.
- 6.7. However, any increase in the proportion of applications triggering either process would increase the risk of the Local Planning Authority struggling to meet the nationally set targets, having appeals against non-determination and having to refund application fees.
- 6.8. Therefore, in order to manage this risk it is recommended that the Planning Referral Panel and Planning Committee processes continue to be monitored through these annual reports.

7. Options

- 7.1. There are not any options other than to continue to monitor the processes through these annual reports and seek to address any potential issues if or as and when they arise.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1. That Strategic Planning Committee notes this report regarding the performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the speed of determining planning applications.
- 8.2. That Strategic Planning Committee recommends to Full Council that when considering the calendar of meetings for Municipal Year 2025/26, the start time for Planning Committee North and Planning Committee South be moved from 14:00 to 09:30.

9. Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1. That the contents of the report are noted and that no changes are made to the Referral Panel Process.
- 9.2. In respect of the Planning Committee North and Planning Committee South start time recommendation, in order to appraise the opinion of the Strategic Planning Committee on this proposed change.

10. Conclusions/Next Steps

- 10.1. Strategic Planning Committee should continue to receive these annual monitoring reports.
- 10.2. Subject to the outcome of the Committee start time recommendation, to implement any agreed change from 1st April 2025.

Areas of consideration comments

Section 151 Officer comments:

The Section 151 Officer has received a copy of the report and has no further comments'

Monitoring Officer comments:

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion/EQIA:

There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Safeguarding:

There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Crime and Disorder:

There are no specific implications arising in terms of this matter from the statistics included within this report.

Corporate Services implications:

(i.e., Legal, Finance, Procurement, Human Resources, Digital, Customer Services, Asset Management)

Planning Committee meetings require a clerk from the Democratic Services Team, and therefore any increase in the number of Planning Applications at Planning Committee would increase the time they are required to publish the reports, spend in meetings and to type up the minutes etc.

Residents and Businesses consultation/consideration:

Not applicable to the statistics presented in this report

Appendices:

Appendix A	The Scheme of Delegation for Planning as set out in the East Suffolk Council Constitution
Appendix B	The key formal interaction points during the Planning Application Process
Appendix C	The Planning Referral Panel Protocol
Appendix D	The notifications sent to Ward Members of upcoming Planning Referral Panel Meetings and to Planning Committee Members of the Call-in process.
Appendix E	The numbers, proportions and scale of applications at the Planning Referral Panel
Appendix F	The numbers of items per meeting for each ward at each of the Referral Panel meetings between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024
Appendix G	The numbers and proportions of Planning Applications at the Planning Referral Panel, shown by ward
Appendix H	The numbers and proportions of Planning Applications at the Planning Referral Panel, shown by Town/Parish
Appendix I	The number and proportion of items at the Planning Referral Panel with/without comments from relevant Ward Members, shown by Town/Parish for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Appendix J	The number and proportion of items at each Planning Referral Panel meeting with or without comments from the relevant Ward Members for the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023
Appendix K	The number and proportion of items at the Planning Referral Panel with/without comments from relevant Town/ Parish Council, shown by Ward for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
Appendix L	The number and proportion of items at the Planning Referral Panel with/without comments from relevant Town/ Parish Council, shown by Town/Parish for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
Appendix M	The number and proportion of items at each Planning Referral Panel meeting with or without comments from the relevant Town/Parish Council for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
Appendix N	A comparison of Town/Parish Council responses and Ward Members comments on applications at the Planning Referral Panel
Appendix O	The number and proportion of items at Planning Referral Panel meetings with or without comments from the Statutory Consultees for the period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
Appendix P	Attendance by relevant Ward Member(s) at Planning Referral Panel Meetings between May 2023 and 31 March 2024.(Since May 23 elections)
Appendix Q	The Planning Committee Procedures as set out in the East Suffolk Council Constitution
Appendix R	The number and scale of Planning Applications at Planning Committee between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024
Appendix S	The reasons items were at Planning Committee between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024
Appendix T	Attendance / Public Speaking at Planning Committee
Appendix U	The outcomes of Planning Applications between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024
Appendix V	The timeliness of decisions, based upon determination route

Background reference papers:

Date	Type	Available From
8 July 2024	Annual Planning Performance Report – 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024	CMIS > Meetings
3 July 2023	Review of the North, South and Strategic Planning Committees and the work of the Referral Panel 2022 -2023	CMIS > Meetings
6 June 2022	Review of the North, South and Strategic Planning Committees and the work of the Referral Panel 2021 -2022	CMIS > Meetings
7 June 2021	Annual Review of the Planning Referral Panel Procedure and Processes	CMIS > Meetings
4 June 2020	Review of the Planning Application Referral Panel Process to determine with applications are considered by the relevant Planning Committee	CMIS > Meetings