



## STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Monday, 07 March 2022

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|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject</b>            | Planning Performance Report – June to September 2021   |
| <b>Report of</b>          | Councillor David Ritchie<br>Cabinet Member with responsibility for Planning and Coastal Management   |
| <b>Supporting Officer</b> | Ben Woolnough<br>Planning Manager (Development Management)<br>01394 444593<br><a href="mailto:Ben.woolnough@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Ben.woolnough@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a> |

|                               |      |
|-------------------------------|------|
| Is the report Open or Exempt? | OPEN |
|-------------------------------|------|

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is <b>NOT</b> in the public interest to disclose the exempt information. | Not applicable |
| <b>Wards Affected:</b>  | All Wards      |

## Purpose and high-level overview

**Purpose of Report:**

This report provides an update on the planning performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the timescales for determining planning applications.

**Options:**

Not applicable.

**Recommendation/s:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## Corporate Impact Assessment

**Governance:**

Not applicable

**ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:**

Not applicable

**Environmental:**

Not applicable

**Equalities and Diversity:**

Not applicable

**Financial:**

Not applicable

**Human Resources:**

Not applicable

**ICT:**

Not applicable

**Legal:**

Not applicable

**Risk:**

Not applicable

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| <b>External Consultees:</b> | None |
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## Strategic Plan Priorities

| Select the priorities of the <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> which are supported by this proposal:<br>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate) |  | Primary priority                    | Secondary priorities                |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>T01</b>  | <b>Growing our Economy</b>                                   |                                     |                                     |
| P01   | Build the right environment for East Suffolk                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P02   | Attract and stimulate inward investment                      | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P03   | Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P04   | Business partnerships  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P05   | Support and deliver infrastructure                           | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>T02</b>  | <b>Enabling our Communities</b>                              |                                     |                                     |
| P06   | Community Partnerships                                       | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P07   | Taking positive action on what matters most                  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P08   | Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District     | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P09   | Community Pride  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>T03</b>  | <b>Maintaining Financial Sustainability</b>                  |                                     |                                     |
| P10   | Organisational design and streamlining services              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P11   | Making best use of and investing in our assets               | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P12   | Being commercially astute                                    | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P13   | Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P14   | Review service delivery with partners                        | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| <b>T04</b>  | <b>Delivering Digital Transformation</b>                     |                                     |                                     |
| P15   | Digital by default   | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P16   | Lean and efficient streamlined services                      | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P17   | Effective use of data  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P18   | Skills and training  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P19   | District-wide digital infrastructure                         | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>T05</b>  | <b>Caring for our Environment</b>                            |                                     |                                     |
| P20   | Lead by example  | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| P21   | Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling          | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P22   | Renewable energy   | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| P23   | Protection, education and influence                          | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| <b>XXX</b>  | <b>Governance</b>  |                                     |                                     |
| XXX   | How ESC governs itself as an authority                       | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>How does this proposal support the priorities selected?</b>  |  |                                     |                                     |
| To provide information on the performance of the enforcement section  |  |                                     |                                     |

## Background and Justification for Recommendation

| 1 Background facts |   |
|--------------------|---|
| 1.1                | This report provides details on the determination timescales for all planning applications at East Suffolk Council when tested against the government set timescales as well as the East Suffolk Council stretched targets. |
| 1.2                | The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are reported on a quarterly basis and included within the East Suffolk Council performance report and tested against the Council's Business Plan.                                     |

| 2 Current position |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 2.1                | <p>At the beginning of the quarter there were 2111 cases on hand and at the end of the quarter there were 2070.</p> <p>The breakdown for Q3 (September 2021 to December 2021) compared with the previous quarters (Q1 and 2) are reported as follows (% rounded up):</p> |

|                   | Current Quarter |          | Previous Quarters |          |               |          | Targets                       |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------|-------------------|----------|---------------|----------|-------------------------------|
|                   | Q3 Percentage   | Q3 Total | Q2 Percentage     | Q2 Total | Q1 Percentage | Q1 Total |                               |
| Major Development | 89%             | 8/9      | 64%               | 7/11     | 64%           | 9/14     | 60% national<br>65% stretched |
| Minor Development | 53%             | 79/149   | 76%               | 103/136  | 72%           | 92/127   | 65% national<br>75% stretched |
| Other Development | 60%             | 287/482  | 85%               | 474/560  | 76%           | 446/586  | 80% national<br>90% stretched |

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| 2.2 | <p>The figures for Q3 of the financial year show a continued high number of application submissions with a total of 649 submissions but we are seeing a reduction back to normal levels.</p> <p>Following an improvement in the last quarter there has been a fall in the percentage of applications determined in time for Minor and Other development. This was anticipated and is largely as a result of the continued high case load. It is also due to a recent push for officers to issue longstanding applications in their caseloads which may not benefit from extensions of time. Factors such as considerable accrued annual leave being taken by officers along with a significant back log in the signing off of applications have also had an effect. The latter point has presented itself as a challenge in recent months. Some changes in the way this is spread across the team, as the final stage of the application process, has caused it to become a dominant task for Senior and Principal Planners. The Planning Manager has had to step away from this task in recent months to address other essential improvements to the service and some under resourcing in place over the previous quarter.</p> |
| 2.3 | <p>As a positive influence on this, the team gained a third Principal Planner at the start of this year through Marianna Hall joining the team. This has added capacity to the team covering signing off responsibilities and further support for other officers. Considerably work is also taking place to increase efficiencies in the determination process and the use of the planning software to enable swifter decision making. This is already presenting benefits including optimisations in the signing off process. We anticipate that the slight decline in performance in the last quarter will be evened out to meet national targets on an annual position.</p>  |
| 2.4 | <p>The Development Management Team have also been appropriately using the extension of time mechanism to ensure that appropriate discussions can take place with applicants/other parties to secure high quality sustainable developments. Occasionally, due to the delay in signing off applications, the ability to secure extensions of time has been hindered.</p>  |
| 2.5 | <p>The Council maintains a high approval rate across all types of applications and proactively look to support development where policy permits and work proactively with applicants and agents to secure appropriate schemes.</p>  |
| 2.6 | <p>Where applications are refused Officers seek to defend those refusals robustly. Members will note the separate appeals report on the agenda which demonstrates confidence that applications are being refused correctly and those decisions are for the most part upheld at appeal.</p>  |
| 2.7 | <p>Officers continue to work proactively with agents to promote the pre-application service to seek to ensure that where applications are submitted they have the right level of information accompanying them to enable swift decisions on applications to be made. The Planning Manager is currently engaging with a range of agents to understand their needs and expectations of the team to factor into further improvements.</p>  |

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| <b>3</b> | <b>How to address current situation</b> |
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| 3.1 | Quarterly monitoring |
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| <b>4</b> | <b>Reason/s for recommendation</b> |
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| 4.1 | That the report concerning the performance of the Development Management Team in terms of the speed of determining planning applications is noted. |
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## Appendices

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| <b>Appendices:</b> |
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| <b>Background reference papers:</b> |
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| None. |
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