

**Decision Maker:** Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee

**Date:** 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent                      Non-Executive                      Non-Key

**Title:** Planning Application and Planning Enforcement Performance

**Contact Officer:** Jim, Kehoe, Deputy Chief Planner  
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**Chief Officer:** Marc Hume, Director of Renewal & Recreation

**Ward:** All

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 At its November 2012 meeting, the Committee requested a report on Planning performance on minor applications, other applications and Planning enforcement. This follows in particular performance on these applications falling into the 'red' level.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 That the Renewal and Recreation PDS consider the contents of the report and provide comments in respect of the actions to date and the proposed actions.

### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing policy.
  2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council.
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
  2. Ongoing costs: N/A.
  3. Budget head/performance centre: Planning
  4. Total current budget for this head: £1.484m
  5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget 2012/13
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 53ftes (excluding Building Control, Land Charges)
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 14
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### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Non-statutory - Government guidance.
  2. Call-in: Call-in is not applicable.
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected):
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? N/A.
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### **3. COMMENTARY**

#### **3.1 Planning Application Performance**

The Council's performance on the time taken to determine planning applications is important to a large number of its customers and to the local economy. We determine about 3,000 planning applications each year and these represent a substantial value of construction work to the local economy. We do not want to delay projects unnecessarily.

The time taken also indicates our general efficiency in dealing with applications

The pattern of performance is shown in Appendix One.

In order to guide remedial action, it is relevant to analyse some of the main factors that can influence performance and this information is summarized at Appendix One. From this, we can see that the trends in the volume of applications and level of income are relatively steady when compared to the time taken to determine applications.

We can also use a benchmark of around 190 cases per Development Control case officer to measure whether staff workload is reasonable. This benchmark is based on the analysis of performance of a wide range of planning councils carried out for Central Government. At present, the Council has about 200-210 cases per D.C. case officer which is not an unreasonable level.

However, the number of cases that are in a 'backlog' (awaiting a decision and beyond the target date for decision) is significantly higher than the national average.

In that context, we have focused on the stages of application processing and already commenced with remedial action.

At the early stages – receipt of an application and its initial processing – it is clear that the time taken for a planning application to be validated and reach the case officer is too long.

We therefore completed a review of the planning validation process in November/early December 2012. Our objective is to achieve a 'receipt to D.C. Case Officer' time for 80% of applications in 5 working days.

The main changes needed to reach this objective are:-

- to introduce a new method of processing the applications – focused on a multi-tasked team rather than specialist roles.
- reductions in the high proportion of applications that are invalid upon receipt and more rapid resolution of reasons for invalidity.
- to ensure that our consultees normally accept electronic details rather than paper copies.

The new methods of working have been introduced in December.

The next steps will be:- the phased review of other parts of the planning application process in a similar way; the monitoring of the success of the 'validation' stage actions. In addition, the Development Control Committee is due to receive a wider report on planning at its late January meeting and an outline general improvement plan is attached at Appendix 2.

## Planning Enforcement

Planning Enforcement information is attached at Appendix 3. This shows that the Council is active in pursuing cases to formal notices. This is important to avoid undermining planning controls in general. Nevertheless, it is also appropriate in some cases to seek remedial action where there is a breach of control without recourse to formal action. In many cases, reports of breaches of planning control are found not to be a breach and this is reflected in the total of around 900 queries received by the Planning Enforcement Team each year.

In common with many Council Planning Enforcement services, issues arise in Bromley from the powers available to Councils and from communicating progress with the stages of enforcement action. This includes both development in breach of planning control and the 'untidy sites' cases. To address this, it is proposed that Planning Enforcement be included in the outline Improvement Plan shown at Appendix 2 as a specific topic.

### 5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct revenue implications arising from this report.

5.2 A breakdown of the latest budget monitoring position is shown below for information: -

Type of expenditure/income	2012/13 Latest budget £'000	2012/13 Projected outturn £'000	2012/13 Projected variance £'000
Employees	2,027	1,772	(255)
Premises	10	10	0
Transport	12	20	8
Supplies & services	179	146	(33)
Income	(1,425)	(1,125)	300
<b>Controllable budget</b>	<b>803</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>20</b>
Net recharges	681	681	0
<b>Total Net Budget</b>	<b>1,484</b>	<b>1,504</b>	<b>20</b>

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy, Personnel and Legal Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	