

Carlisle City Council

Report to:-	The Chairman & Members of the Development Control Committee		
Date of Meeting:-	15th November 2002	Agenda Item No:-	
Public	Information	Delegated: Yes	
Accompanying Comments and Statements		Required	Included
Environmental Impact Statement:		No	No
Corporate Management Team Comments:		No	No
City Treasurers Comments:		No	No
City Solicitor & Secretary Comments:		No	No
Head of Personnel Services Comments:		No	No
Title:-	Development Control Statistics: April-June 2002		
Report of:-	The Director of Environment & Development		
Report reference:-	EN.127/02		

Summary:-

The Report sets out the City council's performance in relation to National objectives for handling planning applications.

Recommendation:-

That the Report be received and noted.

M Battersby

Director Environment and Development

Contact Officer: Alan Taylor

Ext: 7171

To the Chairman and Members of the EN.127 /02

Development Control Committee

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The upwardly rising trends in relation to planning activity that were evident for the first Quarter of 2002 have been confirmed in the most recent Statistical Release from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

1.2 It relates to the period from 1st April to 30th June and identifies that the District Planning Authorities in England received 158,000 applications for planning permission and other related consents during that period. That is the highest number received since 1989 and is 6% higher than the equivalent period of 2001. That increase occurred throughout all of the Regions with the North-East experiencing the greatest increase (12%) followed by the North-West. Paradoxically, the South-East and Eastern Regions showed the smallest increases (under 3%).

1.3 Within the Quarter 147,000 planning decisions were made, again an increase (8%) over the corresponding Quarter of last year and the highest since 1989. Once again, the North-East led the way with a 15% improvement on last year, followed by the North-West with 14% more decisions than April-June 2001. London experienced the smallest improvement (3%) of all the Regional Offices.

1.4 It is notable that the single greatest cause of the increase in development activity is householder applications, which account for over half of all decisions (79,100) an increase of almost 11,000 compared to this Quarter in 2001. However, the house building sector accounts for the next largest type of application with 10% of decisions relating to new dwellings.

1.5 Nationally, 87% of applications that were determined in the Quarter were approved. This figure is consistent with the historical trends: values of 86 to 88 per cent approvals have been achieved in all quarters over the last 6 years. Nonetheless, regional variations are evident with the highest prospect of an "approval" seemingly being in the North-East (93% of decisions) whereas the chances of success in London are merely 80%.

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Development Control Committee

1.6 Of the decisions made in England during the Quarter, 68% were within the Government's 8 week target period which is 3 percentage points better than the second Quarter of 2001. The North-West is the quickest region in terms of dealing with applications with 71% of decisions being made in 8 weeks or less and 89% in under 13 weeks.

1.7 Of the 362 District Planning Authorities, 358 (99%) responded with their performance figures in time to be included in the Statistical Release. Almost all of them (355) also supplied particulars of decisions made using delegated powers. Only 2 Authorities in the Quarter had delegated less than 10% of decisions to Officers but some Authorities have delegated as much as 97% (Allerdale, Ashfield) of their decisions to Officers.

1.8 Carlisle's performance compared to the national pattern evident in these Statistics is somewhat mixed. Speed of performance is just below the national average with 65% of all decisions made by this Authority in the Quarter being within 8 weeks. This is the second poorest performance in Cumbria. It is, nonetheless, significant that both the City Council and South Lakeland DC (which made 61% of its decisions in 8 weeks or less) each dealt with the highest number of applications (6% more than the next largest number and more than double the Authority with the lowest number of decisions) of the Cumbrian Authorities. More tellingly, however, this Authority has the lowest level of delegation (60%) amongst all the Cumbrian Authorities with the next lowest dealing with 10% more of its planning decisions as delegated decisions.

1.9 While this may seem legitimate to Members in terms of local accountability, it is a matter which may be adversely highlighted when the Best Value Review and Comparative Performance Assessment of the Planning Service is undertaken over the next 12 months and should, therefore, warrant careful thought over the coming months.

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1.10 More detailed scrutiny of the performance of the City Council for the Quarter reveals that this Authority dealt with more Major applications than the other Districts in the County but only 25% of these decisions are made in 13 weeks or less. This is very significantly less than the Government's target rate of 60% decided in less than 13 weeks and well below the national average of 42%. However, that does not in itself account for the overall poor performance in either "National" or "County" terms. The 4 other Classes of Development into which the Statistics of Performance are dis-aggregated i.e. Minor Developments, Change of Use, Householder and Other Applications similarly compare less favourably. Thus, there is no specific factor that causes the overall performance figure to be low other than to reinforce the point that both poorest performing Authorities (Carlisle and South Lakeland) deal with most applications.

1.11 Members will recognise that these trends have become apparent over a number of months and have been highlighted in previous Reports. Consequently, resources have been released to appoint 2 further Planning Officers to the Development Control Section, one a permanent contract with the second post being a Fixed Term appointment. Both posts have been advertised, interviews have taken place and the successful candidates will be in post by the second week of December. A successful aspect of the appointment process is that both new members of staff are mature, experienced Officers with a number of years of Development Control experience. This will ensure that, in combination with the existing staff, not only will the general workloads be relieved but also more of the complex major proposals can be assigned to experienced and knowledgeable staff.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Report be received and noted.

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Director Environment and Development

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