

Carlisle City Council

Report to:-	Development Control Committee		
Date of Meeting:-	1st February, 2002	Agenda Item No:-	
Public	Operational	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: July-September 2001		
Report of:-	Director of Environment & Development		
Report reference:-	EN 012/02		

Summary:-

The most recent Statistical Release from the DTLR shows the City Council continues to perform creditably in terms of speed of handling of applications for planning permission. This is in spite of an increase in application numbers experienced for the year ending 31st December 2001 and related staff changes.

Recommendation:-

That the Report be received.

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M Battersby

Director Environment and Development

21 January 2002

1. Just prior to Christmas the Government's Statistical Office released the Dept of Transport, Local Government and the Regions' latest compilation of statistics showing the relative performance of local authorities throughout England and Wales in terms of speed of handling applications for planning permission.
2. These revealed a national average of 65% of applications receiving a decision within 8 weeks of submission to planning authorities, 15% below the aspirational target of 80%. Moreover, in commenting on these figures the Planning Minister, Lord Falconer, expressed concern that in the third Quarter of 2001 fewer authorities actually achieved the 80% target than the previous Quarter. These criticisms are, perhaps, unjustified since the Statistical Returns acknowledged that the number of applications submitted to district planning authorities in England and Wales in the third Quarter of 2001 was the highest received for that Quarter since 1989 and 5% higher than the previous year.
3. Carlisle City Council's performance remains consistently solid with 75% of applications within the Quarter being determined within 8 weeks of receipt, a figure bettered in Cumbria only by Eden District Council which decided 82% of its' applications within 8 weeks of receipt. That authority deals with fewer applications but it is understood that the turnaround in its' performance derives from recent organisational and procedural changes within its planning function. Members will also appreciate that, as anticipated when the previous Quarter was reported to Committee in November, the City Council's performance has dipped (from 78% in the second Quarter) following the loss of one post-holder to another authority and the delay in having her replacement in post.
4. Measured against the full year ending on 30th September, however, Carlisle remains the best performing of Cumbria's District Councils with 74% of planning decisions in the year being made in 8 weeks or less with Copeland and Allerdale next best placed with 71%.
5. The statistics for the third Quarter nonetheless reveal some paradoxes. Eden's good performance is probably attributable to their increased percentage of decisions that are now delegated to Officers (84%) compared to Carlisle (82%). However, that correlation is not matched in Allerdale which has the highest percentage of delegated decisions of all Cumbria's District Councils (92%) yet made 73% of those decisions within the 8 week target.
6. Examined in more detail, the statistics indicate that 80% of "householder" applications are decided in Carlisle within 8 weeks or less with, not surprisingly, "major" developments taking longest to be decided with only 13% of those applications having a decision within 8 weeks of submission.
7. The associated Press Release for these Quarterly Statistics incorporates a "league table" showing the comparative performance of local planning authorities in England and Wales and this makes particularly heartening reading with Carlisle being placed in 53rd position overall (out of 293 authorities that submitted returns) and 36th highest placed authority out of these 293 Councils in dealing with applications for commercial and industrial development.
8. Setting to one side the Government's Statistical Returns, Members may also wish to note that the City Council received 1188 planning submissions and commented on 20 "County" submissions in 2001. This is significantly higher number of applications dealt with in any single year than at any time throughout the last ten years and reflects the generally healthy state of the local economy.