

Meeting:	Performance and Finance
Date:	29 <sup>th</sup> April 2008
Subject:	By exception: Officers' report on performance in Planning Appeals
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Corporate Director, Community & Environment
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Marilyn Ashton
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	None

## **SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This report sets out key points in relation to performance issues in the Planning Appeals function on the Development Management Service.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- a) That the report, and the proposals for improvement, be noted.
- b) That the Sub-Committee make any additional recommendations for improvement they think fit.
- c) That the Sub-Committee decide whether further action on this topic be required, subject to the options set out in "main options" in the body of the report.

## **SECTION 2 - REPORT**

### Background

In July 2007 members agreed that performance issues would be considered by the sub-committee on a “by exception” basis. The specific criteria for the “by exception” items at committee having been agreed, it was concluded that for the sub-committee to function most effectively key information should be raised and discussed at committee – focusing directly on improvement – and that the reports being despatched to committee should reflect this commitment.

As such this report contains a number of answers, provided by officers, to a set of questions that are identical to those asked for all other “by exception” issues brought up at committee, the intention being that the same quality of information be made available to members on all topics, without the presumption being placed upon officers to provide a great deal of onerous written documentation.

### Current situation

This report is being provided to give members an insight into performance issues identified by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman at a recent meeting.

This report presents officers’ responses to a standard set of questions relating to the issue under discussion.

### Why a change is needed

In performance terms, it has been established that this issue meets the “by exception” criteria established by Performance and Finance to govern which issues are considered by the Sub-Committee. As such, there is a significant need established for improvement.

### Main options

Findings and recommendations pertaining to this issue will be discussed at committee. Members may:

1. Make comments and recommendations as appropriate, and decide to escalate the issue to Overview and Scrutiny, for that committee to commission work on the subject.
2. Make comments and recommendations as appropriate, and resolve to consider the item again only insofar as it meets the “by exception” criteria in the future.
3. As above, but request that performance information on this issue be – where possible – be made available monthly to permit the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to monitor this matter closely.

The option to request that another report to be made available to the next meeting of the sub-committee will not be available, as performance issues are only escalated to this body if they meet the “by exception” criteria on each occasion the committee comes to consider the relevant item.

### Other options considered

Not applicable

**Recommendation:** - that the improvement information presented below be considered by members of the sub-committee, for recommendations to be made and, if necessary, for issues to be escalated to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.

### **Considerations**

Resources, costs and risks: none

Staffing/workforce: none

Equalities impact: none specific

Legal comments: none

Community safety: none

### Financial Implications

None specific to report.

### Performance Issues

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Officer comment</b>
How will performance be improved? Is an improvement plan a) in place and b) being followed?	<i>Strengthening of pre - application process, to build in engagement of Members and Planning Officers. Review of leadership of Major and Minor Teams. Establish a stable experienced team of planning professionals. Planning Committee Member training on valid reasons for refusal. Medium/ long term - ensure Local Development Scheme currently being produced provides ability to change current Development Management policies, thus providing statutory weight to current appeals that are being allowed by Planning Inspectorate.</i>
What resources are being put in place to deliver these improvements?	<i>£250k approved by Cabinet for 08/09 to deliver improvements required within the Planning Enforcement and Planning Appeal functions.</i>
How, if at all, will other PIs or services be affected – positively or negatively –	<i>To improve effectiveness of Planning Enforcement some functions have</i>

<p>either by this performance, or by any redirection of resources to alter this performance?</p>	<p><i>been moved into main stream Development Management. This has increased workload and hence impacted on turn around times (BV 109) and Appeals (BV205). Impact has been limited by improving processes in these service areas.</i></p> <p><i>Performance should be assisted by additional resources approved by Cabinet for 08/09</i></p> <p><i>Forms part of the CPA: Environment Block of indicators- currently in lower threshold.</i></p> <p><i>Satisfaction with Planning service will be adversely affected (BV111).</i></p>
<p>How are residents and service users impacted?</p>	<p><i>Dissatisfaction with Planning service. Increased degree of uncertainty in respect of obtaining planning permission.</i></p> <p><i>Length of time taken / cost to lodge and determine appeals.</i></p>
<p>How will the success of the improvement plan be monitored?</p>	<p><i>Forms part of the CES Corporate Directorate Improvement Plan and reported every Quarter.</i></p> <p><i>Performance continually measured as appeal decisions provided direct to Harrow.</i></p> <p><i>New appeal decisions immediately circulated to members and key staff.</i></p> <p><i>Comparison of number of Member overturns being lost now to those lost in 6 to 12 months time.</i></p> <p><i>Improved success rate of Member overturns at appeal.</i></p> <p><i>Progress on changing some current Development Management policies via the Local Development Framework timetable.</i></p> <p><i>Success of improvement plan will not be evident for up to 12 months due to time lag for decisions made now to go through the Planning Inspectorate appeal process. .</i></p> <p><i>Outcome of London Mayoral elections could have an (positive or negative?) impact on performance over time.</i></p>

How are the service / council's finances affected by this performance issue and by the steps put in place to improve performance?	<i>Planning Delivery Grant abatements for poor appeal performance. 07/08 -£4,060 Lower threshold in CPA Environment Block- impact on Council's overall ability to improve rating.</i>
What impact will there be on partners (statutory and otherwise)?	<i>Limited depending on type / size of project involved.</i>

### SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Name: Sheela Thakrar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 18 April 2008		
Name: Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 17 April 2008		

### SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Contact:** Andy Parsons, Head of Planning  
020 8736 6106: [andy.parsons@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:andy.parsons@harrow.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:**

List scorecards considered

**IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?**

1.	Consultation	YES/ NO
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES / NO
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	