

Committee: AUDIT AND REVIEW

Date: 8 November 2022

Report: PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Purpose of the report

1. To provide an update on progress in carrying out the performance review of the Authority's Development Management service.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That Members note the work carried out to date by the Review Team, and the next steps and timetable for completing the review.

Strategic Planning Framework

3. The information and recommendations contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:

Corporate Plan objectives

35: Provide high quality, efficient and effective services and communications to the public and other stakeholders.

Background

4. The Committee determined in April 2021 to carry out a performance review of the Development Management service. The review was to assess the impact of the move to a new software system on the way that the service is delivered.
5. Work on the review was initially delayed by both sustained workload pressure on the service last year, and ongoing issues with the Agile planning software, which meant that it could not yet be fully used in the way intended. In April the Committee agreed that the review should now take place this year.
6. The Review is being led by the Member Champion for Development Management (Jim Munday) and a Member from this Committee (Yvonne Peacock). The other members of the review team are: Gary Smith (Director of Conservation and Community); Richard Graham (Head of Development Management); Michelle Clyde (Head of Finance) and Josie Wilson (PA to Director of Conservation and Community).

Progress to date

7. The Review Team met in June to agree the detailed terms of reference for the review (**Annex A**), and to identify the likely evidence and data sources that would be needed in order to answer the questions set. Over the summer, officers began to collate the data, including seeking information from other national park authorities.
8. Subsequently, the Review Team has met twice to consider the data, develop initial proposals for how the efficiency and effectiveness of the service might be improved; and identify areas where further information is needed. Overall, the evidence (see **Annex B**) reveals that the service is performing well in relation to the objectives that the Authority has set, namely to:

Provide an efficient development management service that supports appropriate opportunities for economic and community development whilst helping to conserve and enhance the special qualities of the National Park, including ensuring that 65% of minor and 80% of 'other' planning applications are being determined within eight weeks and at least 80% of applicants are satisfied with the service provided.

9. As Members will note from the scoping document, the Review Team concluded that the most meaningful performance and cost comparisons would be with other National Park Authorities that deal with a similar level of applications (Dartmoor, New Forest, and North York Moors NPAs). Again, the initial conclusions are that the Authority's performance is relatively strong (See **Annex C**).
10. More detailed analysis of the data for the three comparable NPAs has identified two potential issues that need further investigation:
 - a. the Authority's service *appears* to be relatively more expensive. Cost comparisons are not straightforward, since every Authority has different staffing structures and ways of operating. However, the scale of the apparent difference is significant enough to warrant further exploration;
 - b. whilst the Authority performs well on the number of applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed extension of time (the national performance measure), it is behind the other Authorities in terms of the number actually determined within 8 weeks. Again, this warrants further investigation
11. In light of the above, the Review Team proposes to undertake further work to look in more detail at the way that the Development Management Service operates in Dartmoor, New Forest, and the North York Moors to see if any lessons can be learned for the service here. That work will take place over the winter, with a full final report coming to the next meeting of this Committee.
12. The group has identified a number of improvements that are already being put into practice, including: improving guidance for applicants and agents on validation requirements and the planning application process (including FAQs on our website); making sure issues with applications are flagged up earlier in the process; improving communication with applicants whose applications are being dealt with by agents; streamlining internal consultation processes; and, working with our software provider to fully realise the benefits of the Agile system.

Conclusion

13. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to date by the Review Team, which confirms that the Authority continues to provide a good Development Management Service – meeting our objectives and performing well in comparison to other NPAs.
14. Alongside a number of potential improvements already identified, the Review will now look in more detail at the two possible areas where more significant improvement might be possible.

Gary Smith
Director of Conservation & Community

21 October 2022

PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT: SCOPING

At the outset of the review, the Review Team needs to agree in more detail the scope of the review, including:

- The strategic and financial context;
- The parts of the service that will be included;
- Any significant issues already identified;
- Data that will be needed in order to inform the evaluation;
- The other bodies to whom the Authority's performance/costs will be compared;
- Any other input/advice to the review team.

Strategic and financial context

- current state of planning nationally:
 - *increasing applications*
 - *staff shortages;*
 - *backlogs etc;*
- local strategic context:
 - *priority service – so quality matters;*
 - *Agile;*
 - *move to blended working;*
 - *increasing no of applications;*
 - *recruitment difficult;*
- financial position:
 - *decreasing real value of core grant, and increasing reliance on external funding;*
 - *need to make savings from 2023/24 onwards – so unlikely to be much scope to increase costs.*

Work areas to be included

- Development management includes all aspects of determining planning applications:
 - Pre-application advice;
 - Processing applications
 - Determining applications
 - Giving effect to decisions (including legal aspects like s106s, discharging conditions/approving minor amendments).

- Doesn't include:
 - Minerals;
 - Enforcement.
 - Land charge searches
 - Planning policy

Significant issues to cover

1. *Communication with the public*

- Via Agile – consultations, acknowledgements, the portal etc
- Contact with officers – email, phone, in person
- Website
- Planning Surgeries
- Pre-app advice – what we provide (time, cost, effectiveness)
- % of valid applications (still under 50%)

2. *Implementation of Agile*

- How is it working now, what still needs fixing/improving?
- Where could processes be streamlined/improved further?
- How have job roles changed, and do we have the right number/type of posts?
- Recruitment options

3. *Overview of Service (inputs and outputs)*

- Members expectations of the level of service;
- Performance on objectives/key measures;
- Resources and costs – staff, admin, income;
- Performance on key indicators, benchmarked against selected other NPAs and LPAs

Development Management

Facts and figures for 2021-22...

- 561 applications were determined (an increase of 16% on the previous year);
- 92% of applications were approved (down from 93% in 2020/21)
- The most significant application approved was for Station Road, Sedbergh – a site for 49 houses, including 34 affordable dwellings.
- 132 new dwellings were approved, compared to the annual target of 85. This is the highest figure since 2005/06.
- 52 permissions were granted for the conversion of barns and other traditional buildings to residential use, with 2 refusals (an approval rate of 96%)
- Over 90 new dwellings were built, compared to the NPMP objective of 67 – the highest figure since 2003.

...and current trends on key policies

- 368 new dwellings have now been approved since April 2018 (target = 340).
- 209 new dwellings have now been completed since April 2018, still some way behind the NPMP objective (268)
- There are still some 606 dwellings waiting to be built:
 - 472 from uncompleted planning permissions;
 - 134 on sites specifically allocated for housing in the Local Plan.
- Since March 2015, 282 barns and 190 other traditional buildings (472 in total) have been approved for conversion to residential uses under Local Plan policy L2.
- Over the same period, 17 applications have been refused - an approval rate of 96%.

YDNPA DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE: 5-YEAR PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total	Average
No. of planning applications received	697	692	656	695	717	3,457	691
No. of planning applications ¹ :							
determined	531	593	567	482	561	2,734	547
withdrawn	69	63	45	60	84	321	64
other closures	4	4	3		2	13	3
% of applications approved	94%	91%	90%	93%	92%		92%
% of decisions:							
delegated	92%	92%	89%	87%	96%		91%
by Committee	8%	8%	11%	13%	4%		9%
No. of technical/prior approval applications received	38	72	43	63	42	258	52
No. of applications to discharge conditions received	126	120	146	114	97	603	121
No. of non-material amendment applications received	23	23	16	31	23	116	23
No. of pre-application enquiries completed.	378	330	316	312	325	1,661	332
No. of Appeals received	13	12	14	12	11	62	12
No. of Appeals:							
allowed	2	6	1	3	1	13	3
dismissed	2	5	16	12	4	39	8
allowed/dismissed (dual decision)	2	1	2	0	0	5	1
% of applicants satisfied with the service	88%				88%		88%
% of applications valid on receipt	40%	37%	39%	54%	48%		44%

¹ Only includes the 'major', 'minor' and 'other' applications (as submitted on the government returns). Excludes all other application types (e.g. to modify planning obligations, Lawful Development Certificates etc) so totals don't match the total no. of applications received.

National Park Family Indicators – 5 Year data

% of all applications determined which have been approved

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Northumberland	97%	Northumberland	97%	Northumberland	98%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	97%
Exmoor	95%	Broads	95%	Moors	94%	Broads	95%	Broads	93%
Moors	95%	Lakes	95%	Lakes	92%	Moors	95%	Moors	93%
Yorkshire Dales	94%	Moors	95%	Broads	91%	Yorkshire Dales	93%	Yorkshire Dales	92%
Lakes	94%	Exmoor	92%	Yorkshire Dales	90%	South Downs	93%	Lakes	92%
Broads	89%	Yorkshire Dales	91%	Dartmoor	87%	Exmoor	92%	South Downs	92%
Dartmoor	89%	South Downs	88%	Exmoor	84%	New Forest	90%	Dartmoor	91%
South Downs	87%	Dartmoor	87%	New Forest	0	Dartmoor	86%	New Forest	91%
New Forest	84%	New Forest	83%	Peak	0	Lakes	86%	Exmoor	90%
Peak	67%	Peak	74%	South Downs	0	Peak	80%	Peak	84%

Major applications determined within 13 weeks

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Yorkshire Dales	100%	Yorkshire Dales	100%	Lakes	100%	Yorkshire Dales	100%	Yorkshire Dales	100%
Broads	100%	New Forest	100%	Northumberland	100%	Exmoor	100%	Exmoor	100%
New Forest	100%	Northumberland	100%	Yorkshire Dales	89%	New Forest	100%	New Forest	100%
Peak	100%	Lakes	88%	Moors	78%	Lakes	86%	Lakes	91%
Exmoor	90%	Moors	83%	Broads	33%	Moors	78%	South Downs	89%
South Downs	86%	South Downs	78%	Dartmoor	0	Dartmoor	50%	Peak	86%
Lakes	80%	Peak	72%	Exmoor	0	Broads	17%	Moors	73%
Moors	75%	Exmoor	50%	New Forest	0	Northumberland	0	Broads	43%
Dartmoor	0	Broads	20%	Peak	0	Peak	0	Dartmoor	0
Northumberland	0	Dartmoor	0	South Downs	0	South Downs	0	Northumberland	0

Minor applications determined within 8 weeks

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Northumberland	97%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%
Broads	96%	New Forest	92%	Lakes	82%	New Forest	95%	New Forest	85%
Exmoor	94%	Peak	92%	Yorkshire Dales	79%	Lakes	83%	Yorkshire Dales	82%
South Downs	87%	Exmoor	91%	Moors	79%	Moors	82%	South Downs	81%
New Forest	84%	Yorkshire Dales	81%	Dartmoor	67%	Yorkshire Dales	75%	Moors	75%
Lakes	82%	South Downs	80%	Exmoor	62%	Exmoor	74%	Exmoor	73%
Yorkshire Dales	80%	Lakes	79%	Broads	53%	Broads	53%	Dartmoor	61%
Moors	73%	Moors	77%	New Forest	0	Dartmoor	53%	Broads	58%
Dartmoor	67%	Broads	55%	Peak	0	Peak	0	Lakes	54%
Peak	64%	Dartmoor	55%	South Downs	0	South Downs	0	Peak	52%

Other applications determined within 8 weeks

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%	Northumberland	100%
Exmoor	93%	Peak	93%	Yorkshire Dales	91%	New Forest	95%	New Forest	91%
South Downs	93%	Yorkshire Dales	91%	Lakes	90%	Lakes	92%	Yorkshire Dales	89%
Broads	92%	New Forest	91%	Moors	83%	Moors	90%	Moors	82%
Lakes	92%	Lakes	88%	Dartmoor	73%	Exmoor	84%	Exmoor	77%
Yorkshire Dales	91%	South Downs	87%	Broads	69%	Yorkshire Dales	82%	Dartmoor	71%
New Forest	91%	Exmoor	83%	Exmoor	64%	Dartmoor	77%	Lakes	69%
Dartmoor	85%	Dartmoor	80%	New Forest	0	Broads	76%	Broads	67%
Moors	82%	Moors	80%	Peak	0	Peak	0	Peak	64%
Peak	73%	Broads	71%	South Downs	0	South Downs	0	South Downs	0

No. of applications received

2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22	
South Downs	2790	South Downs	2501	Lakes	1130	South Downs	2031	South Downs	2226
Lakes	1164	Lakes	1189	Peak	745	Lakes	1173	Lakes	1379
Peak	1110	Peak	1175	New Forest	716	Peak	955	Peak	1253
New Forest	821	New Forest	725	Yorkshire Dales	656	New Forest	820	New Forest	809
Moors	731	Yorkshire Dales	692	Dartmoor	620	Yorkshire Dales	695	Yorkshire Dales	717
Yorkshire Dales	697	Dartmoor	647	Moors	550	Moors	611	Dartmoor	617
Dartmoor	583	Moors	557	Exmoor	270	Dartmoor	555	Moors	617
Broads	254	Broads	236	Broads	208	Exmoor	355	Exmoor	420
Exmoor	242	Exmoor	222	Northumberland	52	Broads	189	Broads	224
Northumberland	64	Northumberland	84	South Downs	0	Northumberland	101	Northumberland	99

Planning applicants satisfied with service

2011/12		2013/14		2017/18		2021/22	
Broads	100%	Dartmoor	89%	Northumberland	93%	Broads	91%
Dartmoor	90%	Exmoor	88%	Exmoor	91%	Yorkshire Dales	88%
Exmoor	89%	North Y Moors	87%	North Y Moors	90%	Dartmoor	78%
North Y Moors	87%	Broads	80%	Yorkshire Dales	88%	Peak	75%
Northumberland	82%	Yorkshire Dales	80%	New Forest	84%	South Downs	53%
Yorkshire Dales	81%	New Forest	78%	Broads	83%	Exmoor	0
Lake District	76%	Northumberland	64%	Peak	75%	Lake District	0
New Forest	64%	Lake District	0	South Downs	69%	New Forest	0
Peak	59%	Peak	0	Dartmoor	0	North Y Moors	0
South Downs	0	South Downs	0	Lake District	0	Northumberland	0