



Report to Growth, infrastructure and Housing Select Committee

Date:	9 th December
Title:	Planning Enforcement
Relevant councillor(s):	Councillor Gareth Williams
Author and/or contact officer:	Darran Eggleton
Ward(s) affected:	All Wards
Recommendations:	It is recommended that the Committee note the report for information.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report is prepared in order to provide an overview of the planning compliance and enforcement service to the GIH select committee.

2. Content of report

Planning Enforcement

- 2.1 Since the last report to the GIH Select Committee in March 2021 the team have continued to provide a robust planning enforcement service, taking a no-nonsense approach where appropriate.
- 2.2 The team addresses breaches planning control in a firm but fair way, taking strong and justified enforcement action against breaches where appropriate. This approach means that the Council complies with the relevant legislative framework whilst providing a service which maintains the public's confidence in the Council being able to perform its duties.

Team structure and service improvements

- 2.3 In the past 8 months, the team has completed a management restructure which has resulted in a stable and effective Leadership team. The team is managed by a team manager, Gemma Davies, appointed in February 2021.

- 2.4 The next tier of the leadership structure was completed in September 2021 and resulted in the appointment of 2 area team leaders, Stephanie Penney and Olivia Stapleford.
- 2.5 The team is now split geographically into 2 area based teams. Stephanie Penney is responsible for the West, East and South planning areas whilst Olivia Stapleford is responsible for the North and Central.
- 2.6 This new Leadership structure has provided some much needed leadership structural stability and has allowed the team to address some key strategic issues as well as progress some key cases. The leadership structure has helped to bring the teams together as a single planning enforcement service, provide a uniformed approach to back office systems and to address inconsistencies in service delivery across the Buckinghamshire Council area.
- 2.7 Examples of this work includes a newly created notices template directory and the uniform use of the Council database.
- 2.8 The above mentioned points have created a strong and stable foundation upon which the teams have been able to move forward with service improvements including its efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.9 In the meantime, the team have continued to increase the number of formal notices issues and maintained a high performance in enforcement notice appeals. The team has also commenced a review of the cases in hand and a review of extant formal notices.
- 2.10 The team will be producing a 'Members Guide to Planning Compliance and Enforcement' and will also be providing member training in the coming months. The team provides quarterly updates to the area planning committees and use these meetings to liaise with the committee members and seek their feedback. We are also consulting the committees on any specific training needs to incorporate into our member training.

3. Vacancies

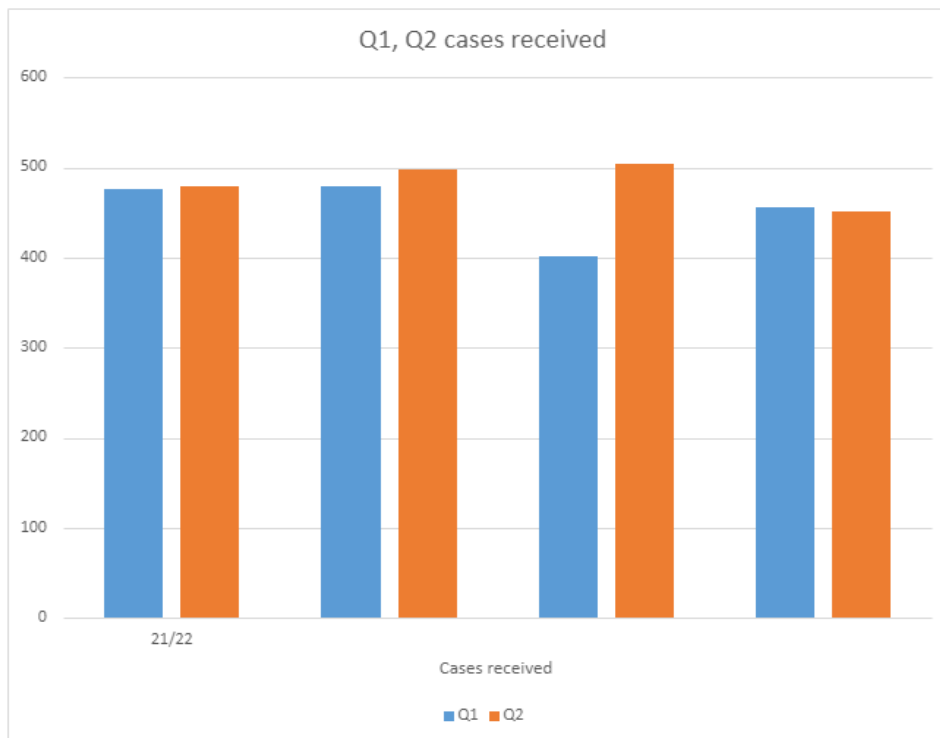
- 3.1 At present the team have 3 vacancies. These vacancies are all going through the recruitment process and we anticipate filling those vacancies in the coming months.

4. LEMP Review

- 4.1 The Local Enforcement and Monitoring Plan (LEMP) was adopted by Cabinet in June 2020. The LEMP sets out that a review of the document would take place within 3 years of its adoption.
- 4.2 At this stage we feel that the LEMP continues to be relevant and therefore we intend to commence a formal review of the LEMP in Quarter 2 of 22/23.

5. Performance

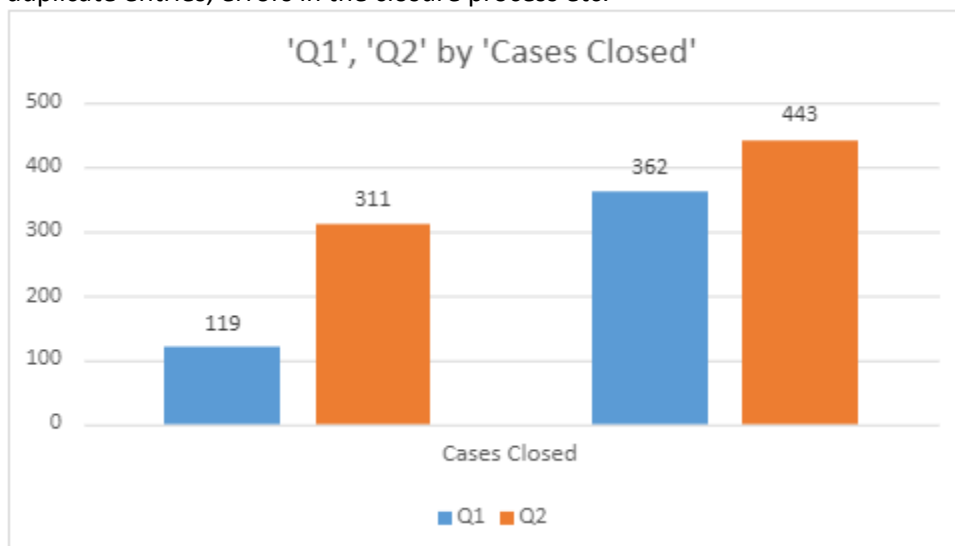
- 5.1 In the first 2 quarters of 21/22, the team received 907 new reports of alleged breaches of planning control. This is similar to the number of new reports received by BC in 2020/21 and also similar to the combined number of cases for the 5 legacy authorities during the previous same period over the previous 2 years.
- 5.2 On average the team receive around 450 cases per quarter.



5.3 During the same period, the teams closed 805 cases following investigation. This is a 187% increase in the number of cases closed in the same period in 20/21.

5.4 The implementation of the leadership structure has allowed significantly more focus on the team backlog of cases. This focus has included case surgeries for decision making, and expediency decision and authorisations to take place on a far more regular basis.

This focus has continued into Qtr 3 where a program of review has commenced to assess the cases in hand as a whole. This has already seen vast numbers of old cases being closed down. The reasons for these closure have been varied but include to lack of expediency, duplicate entries, errors in the closure process etc.



- 5.5 Over the past 8 months, the team has continued to increase the number of formal actions taken against breaches of planning control across the Council area.
- 5.6 In the past 2 quarters we have issued 24 enforcement notices. This is a small increase in the number this time last year but, due to some progress in some key cases, we anticipate the total number of notices issues this financial year will significantly increase beyond last year's total.

6. Appeal performance

- 6.1 The increase in the number of enforcement notices over the past 18 months has resulted in an increase in the number of appeals we receive. We currently have 28 appeals in hand.
- 6.2 However, our performance on enforcement notice appeals remains very high. We have a 6.5 out of 7 appeal success rate. The 0.5 loss was a split decision where an Inspector allowed permission for a small car park within a much larger site.
- 6.3 The high performance on appeals is a direct endorsement from the Planning Inspectorate that the Council are making the correct decisions in their planning Enforcement Notices.

7. Customer service/Customer experience

- 7.1 Over the past 8 months the team have been pursuing a number of initiatives in an effort to free up more officer resource to enable a better focus on customer service.
- 7.2 The appointment of the area team leaders has provided team management stability and the introduction of activities like dedicated and focussed case conference sessions, and a change in the way in which corporate complaints are dealt with within the team, has helped re-direct case officer time to their tasks in hand. These initiatives are all in the interest of freeing up officer time so that customer service is a fundamental part of the enforcement service.
- 7.3 In order to streamline the customer journey from the outset, we are promoting the use of a single reporting channel via the planning enforcement web form. We now have one web form for all parties to use to report alleged breaches of planning control and whilst this currently requests the reporter to manually select the legacy area, in due course this will become automatic, depending on the address of the breach.
- 7.4 In addition to the above (and to the work being undertaken/reported to the Planning Improvement Board) we also undertake periodic management reviews and overview of our service area complaints so that we can better understand the reasons for complaints being lodged.
- 7.5 As part of our continued compliance with the Local Enforcement and Monitoring Plan we continue to notify the relevant Town or Parish Council following the issue and service of a Planning Enforcement Notice. We hope that this helps the Town and

Parish Council have an awareness of the formal enforcement action that we have taken in their area.

- 7.6 Finally, we continue to explore potential IT solutions for improving the public's self service to our systems.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 This paper is for information and therefore recommends that the committee note its content.

