

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL  
AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Internal Audit Summary of Work Completed 01 April to 30 Jun 2018**

Please note that this is a summary of recommendations only, as to include all recommendations made from each audit report in detail would result in a lengthy document. Members may request a full copy of any report once finalised or alternatively meet with the Audit Manager to discuss specific audits further.

Audit Area	Summary
<p><b>Planning Applications</b></p> <p>Assurance rating: Some Improvement Required ★★★</p>	<p>Targets have been set by Central government for local planning authorities to deal with planning permission applications in a timely manner. The statutory period is 8 weeks for minor applications and within 13 weeks for Major applications.</p> <p>Where a valid application has not been determined within the relevant statutory period (or such other period as has been agreed in writing between the local planning authority and the applicant), the applicant has a right to appeal to the Secretary of State. If the applicant has not exercised this right of appeal and the application remains undetermined after 26 weeks, then the fee paid by the applicant will be refunded to them.</p> <p>The Secretary of State can designate local planning authorities that repeatedly fail to perform their function of determining applications when assessed against published ('Improving Planning Performance' document produced by the Department of Communities and Local Government) criteria i.e:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- speed of decisions (percentage of applications determined within the statutory period)</li> <li>- quality of decisions made (measured by the proportion of decisions on applications that are subsequently overturned at appeal)</li> </ul> <p>In the last twelve months there has been a drop in performance in processing minor planning applications. This was highlighted on the most recent corporate work plan. Since January 2017, the Council's processing times for minor and major applications have for some quarters been under the threshold levels.</p> <p>The agreed scope of the audit included a review of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To check that the correct process is being followed for minor planning applications</li> <li>• To try and help determine causes for the drop in performance regarding speed of determining planning applications</li> <li>• Help find solutions to improve the speed of determining minor planning applications.</li> </ul> <p>From the review of planning application processing times it has been difficult to draw out a specific reason for the poor processing times. Planning application processes are complex and many cases have individual reasons for delays. However, the review has identified some key themes which appear to have contributed to the longer processing times. These are:</p>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Applicants failing to obtain pre-application advice</li><li>- Poor record keeping within the administration of applications, leading to officers wasting time looking for information or duplicating advice or work that may have been done at pre-application, which wasn't recorded.</li></ul> |
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Remedial actions were agreed in respect of 7 medium risk and 1 low risk findings.