

Performance update – Continuing improvements

Our endeavours to improve performance and provide a better customer experience are continuing to deliver much improved planning appeal handling times. A total of 67 inspectors have been recruited this year and are dealing with appeals. This has allowed our more experienced inspectors to concentrate on the older, more complex appeals that were waiting to be decided. Since the beginning of the year this has reduced the number of older cases in the system by 50%.

Over the past 3 months we have delivered a record of around 3,700 appeal decisions, this is the highest number for the second quarter running this year. Our customers are also seeing their planning appeals, handled through the Written Representation process, being decided on average within 20 – 25 weeks and 42% in 18 weeks.

Rosewell Review

The recommendations of the Rosewell Review are proving to be effective resulting in the first 22 cases being decided within 26 weeks; 21 of these cases were decided in 24 weeks. Since March, the Inquiry event for more than 80 planning appeal inquiries has been scheduled within 13 to 16 weeks from the start of the appeal.

We know the time taken to deal with Enforcement appeals is not meeting expectations. To improve this, we are working on improving our processes and making better use of digital technology. We have appointed more than 20 additional Enforcement inspectors and case officers to deal with these. We expect that new appeals, from January 2020 that follow the written representations procedure, will meet our current target of 36 weeks. With the intention of improving the time taken to deal with Enforcement Inquiry cases, we are also going to trial the principles of the Rosewell Review.

Putting customers at the heart of everything we do

Our determination to improve the service we offer to customers doesn't end with deciding appeals quickly. We also want to make it easier for customers to do business with us.

We have an ongoing project to transform our end-to-end delivery process by:

- Making it easier for our customers to do business with us
- Supporting our staff to work as efficiently and effectively as possible
- Maximising the use of digital opportunities
- Providing excellent value for money for taxpayers

A new planning appeals portal is currently being developed to make it easier for customers to submit and participate in the appeal process. This new portal helps guide the customer through making submissions to ensure they submit the correct documents and automatically validated appeals. Once appeals are received, customers will be able to track progress via the portal's clear timeline.

This new service went live in August with 27 local authorities in East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent. These authorities are testing the service on s.78 planning appeals suitable to be decided by written representation procedure. As the service is tested and improved, we will be expanding the number of appeals processed via the service.

Implementing a more effective and efficient structure

To achieve our goal of putting customers at the heart of everything we do, we are also changing the way we are structured. We have created a slimmed down, more effective management team to focus on delivering an outstanding service to our customers, to look to the future, making the right strategic decisions.

The new structure will also make the processing of appeals more efficient by inspector and case work teams working together at the very the start of an appeal.

Our work to improve performance and our customer's experience is continuing. We will keep you updated here.