

Public Question(s)

Question	Agenda Item	Raised by	Question Raised	Answer
1	8	Mr John Dix	<p>Barnet residents are fed up with planning. The main KPI focuses exclusively on meeting timescales with nothing about quality of the service. Pre app advice falls far short of best practice and breaches LGA guidelines, raising very serious issues around transparency and probity. The report suggests that a principal officer spending two years on the Brighton Marina is a good thing; many would say it is the opposite. Major developers seem to have their own VIP lane. Has this decision on planning been made purely on a financial basis and have you lost sight of the service quality imperative?</p>	<p>We strongly believe that the planning service is in compliance with all legal, transparency and probity requirements. However, if Mr Dix has specific evidence to the contrary, we will of course arrange for it to be examined.</p> <p>The Barnet planning service is one of the busiest in London, processing approximately 7,000 applications a year, of which some 500 involve pre-application advice and around a dozen involve Planning Performance Agreements. Housing development is a requirement of national and London policy and generates significant CIL revenues for the benefit of residents. Barnet planning policies facilitate that development. This is an award-winning service that consistently meets its KPIs – both on quality and speed of processing – and has reasonable customer satisfaction scores. Any rebalancing of the relative importance of KPIs will be considered as part of the discussions on the extension proposals.</p> <p>The Brighton Marina project was cited as one example of a project that enables planning officers to broaden their range of experience and knowledge and it was carried out at no cost to the council.</p> <p>Like the majority of London Boroughs, the council offers Planning Performance Agreements for major developments. The developer pays an appropriate fee for the level of service and, as this advice is provided by a dedicated officer, we are confident that this does not have an impact on the level or speed of service provided to residents more generally.</p>

Public Question(s) – Financial Performance and Contracts Committee – 23 November 2021

Question	Agenda Item	Raised by	Question Raised	Answer
				<p>We recognise that there is a difference of views between Mr Dix and the council on the planning service, as referenced in the report on public engagement at item 9 on this agenda.</p> <p>However, it should be noted that no final decision has been made on the planning service and, as set out in the report, any such decision will be based on service quality considerations as well as value for money.</p>