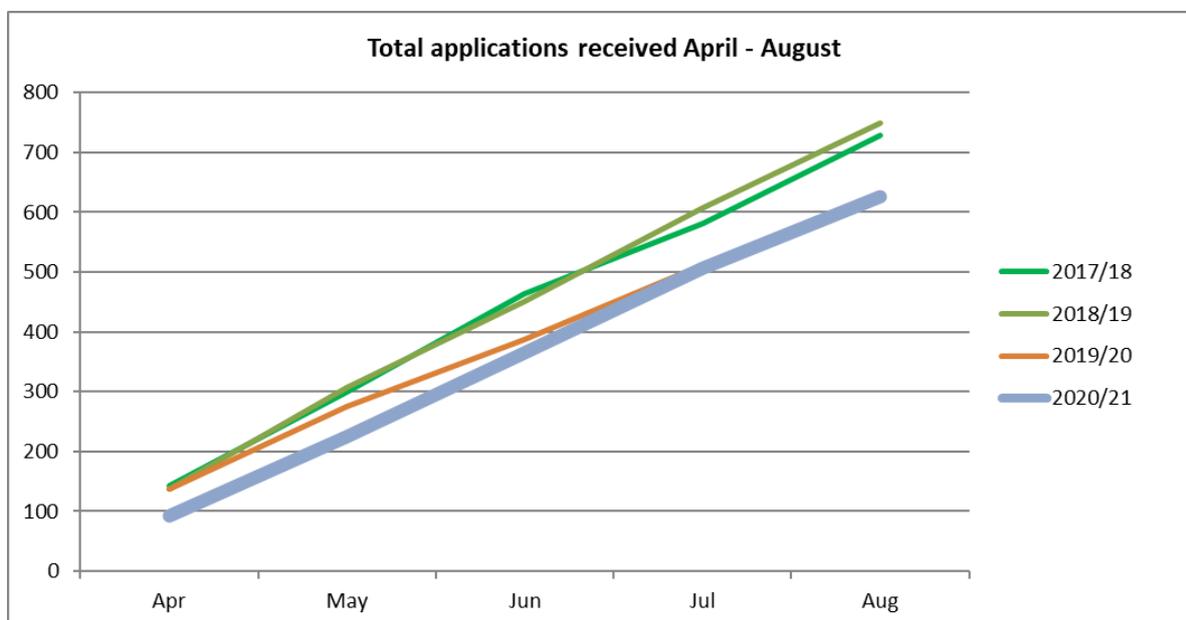


Committee: Ordinary Council	Date: 7 th October 2020
Subject: Chairs report for Planning and Licensing Committee	Wards Affected: All
Committee Chair: Cllr Olivia Sanders	
Report of: Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy	Public
Report Author/s: Name: Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy Telephone: 01277312500 E-mail: philip.drane@brentwood.gov.uk	For Information

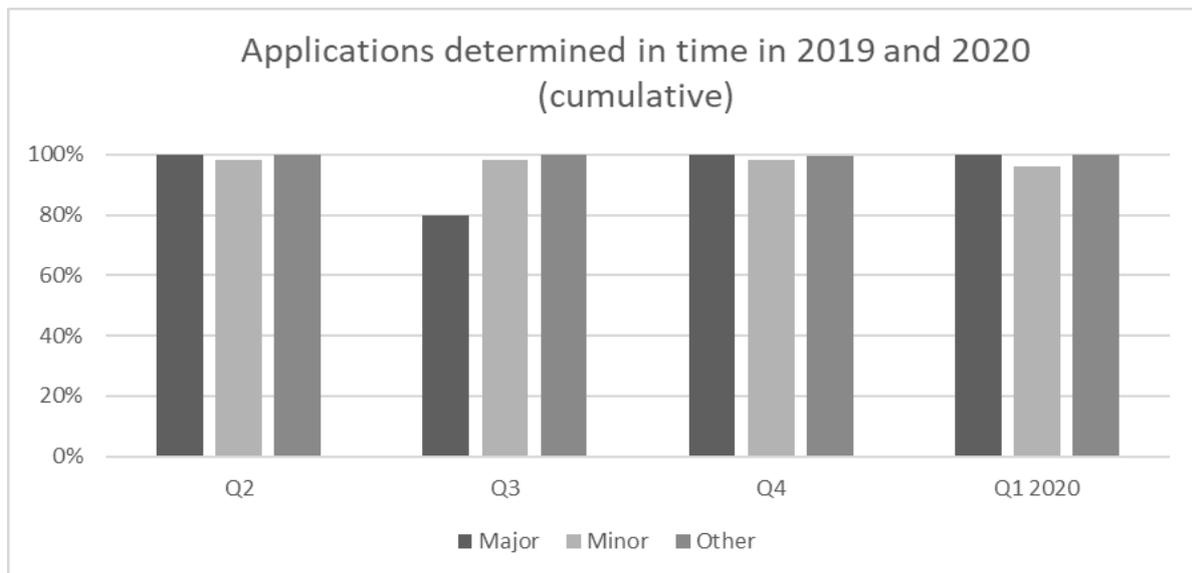
PLANNING DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Applications

As reported in September, the effects of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic have been felt by the authority, for example in the number of applications received which reduced significantly in April and May 2020. However, using the broadest measure, i.e. relating to all types of applications, levels have rebounded by the end of August to within four applications of the number received to the end of August last year (see chart below). The number of applications in the narrower measure of applications (FUL, LBC etc) is now only 2.4% down on the same period last year. This recovery in numbers has been felt nationwide, but in contrast to other authorities, the application fee income here has also recovered and is slightly ahead of the position this time last year.



For several years now, the percentage of planning applications decided within the statutory time periods has remained at around the highest levels recorded for the department (see chart below). While the second quarter of 2020/21 is still current, performance is in line with previous quarters.



Appeals

As well as monitoring the speed of determining applications, the Secretary of State also operates a 'quality' assessment of decisions. Like the measures for speed, these are assessed as two types – Majors and non-Majors. The measure assesses the number of allowed appeals as a percentage of all applications of that type of application determined by the planning authority in the previous two years. Effectively this assesses the decision failure rate, what the Government may consider to be poor or bad decisions. The threshold for concern is 10 percent, i.e. the loss rate should not exceed this level. 10 percent of the total number of Major applications determined (just over 40 in the qualifying two-year period) allows four Major appeals to be lost.

As reported last month, the percentage of Major appeals lost is approaching this critical threshold. Currently the number is three Major appeals lost. Looking at appeals on a more basic allowed/dismissed level the number and percentage of appeals lost were lower than in previous years, despite a rise in appeal cases. However, this is not the measure that the Government considers to be important.

Staffing

We have recently interviewed candidates for two vacant planning assistant posts and anticipate being able to make appointments to those roles soon.

PLANNING POLICY:

Updates regarding the Local Development Plan (including delivery of Dunton Hills Garden Village), are provided under the chairs report for Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.

LICENSING:

The Licensing Team has seen a rise in the number of applications that are being received under the Licensing Act 2003 after the lull during the business shutdown

due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is in contrast with the applications to renew Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licences that have seen a decrease since lockdown. The government has now introduced Guidance for Taxi Licensing which will impact on the Council's policies, this process will be updated and be subject to public consultation.

The Council recently successfully defended an appeal in the magistrates court, supporting the decision of the Licensing Sub-Committee to revoke a taxi driver licence based on complaints and behaviour.

Managing the implications of the Coronavirus Restriction Regulations has meant a busy time for the team, with changes to the regulation and guidance on a frequent basis. Compliance has generally been good across the borough, although we are working closely with partner agencies to focus on those businesses that are not following guidance.