
For Priority Answer on : 14/11/2018
Question Number(s): 64 Question Reference(s): 47097/18
Department: Housing, Planning and Local Government
Asked by: Darragh O'Brien T.D.

To ask the Minister for Housing; Planning and Local Government the status of An Bord Pleanála's adherence to statutory timeframes for planning decisions; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

REPLY

Under Section 126 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, An Bord Pleanála (the Board) has a statutory objective to determine planning appeals within 18 weeks. Where the Board does not consider it possible or appropriate to reach a decision within 18 weeks (e.g. because of the particular complexities of a case or the requirement to hold an oral hearing), it will inform the parties of the reasons for this, and will indicate when it intends to make its decision.

It is acknowledged that there has been a reduction in the Board's compliance rate with the statutory objective period over the past year due to a number of factors, including a significant increase in the number of cases it has received. At end October 2018, the compliance rate for normal planning appeals stood at 38%, and for all planning cases, the rate stood at 43.5%. A range of measures have been taken to address the situation, including the appointment of additional Board members. I am satisfied, taking account also of the increased Exchequer grant of €18.5m for the Board in 2019, a 7% increase on 2018, that the measures involved will enable the Board to significantly improve its compliance rate. Indeed, the number of cases decided by the Board in the 10 months to end October 2018 was up 26% on the corresponding period in 2017 and the Board's output is now at circa 250 cases per month.

In relation to large housing developments, it is important to note that new streamlined arrangements have been introduced to enable planning applications for strategic housing developments (SHD) to be made directly to the Board. At end September 2018, 39 SHD planning applications had been made, with the Board issuing decisions in 29 cases, all of which were made within the prescribed 16-week timeframe, delivering a 100% compliance rate in these cases. In addition, planning appeals in respect of housing developments of 30 units or more are prioritised.

The Board currently has a complement of 11 members, including a new Chairperson who took up duty on 30 October 2018, and an extra Board member engaged in June 2018 in addition to the normal complement of 10 members. The Board also employs over 150 staff members including the 10 additional dedicated staff engaged in 2017 to support the Strategic Housing Division. My Department will continue to liaise closely with the Board to ensure that it has appropriate resources to support it in the performance of its functions.