

REPORT TO: DEVELOPMENT QUALITY COMMITTEE: 24 APRIL 2006

REPORT ON: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR DEVELOPMENT QUALITY 2005/2006

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION

REPORT NO: 256-2006

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The report outlines aspects of Development Quality performance for the year 2005/2006 in relation to Scottish Executive targets and Key Performance Indicators from the Planning and Transportation Service Plan 2004-2007.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee
- a Notes the trends in performance of the Development Quality service.
 - b Reaffirms the approach to quality of planning decision making as its predominant requirement while at the same time seeking the adoption of any measures which will increase the speed of decision and whilst otherwise further improving the standard of service to customers and the service.
 - c Acknowledges the major challenge which the DQ service faces in maintaining present levels of performance in the face of the issues raised in this report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no Local Agenda 21 implications associated with this report.

5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no equal opportunities implications of relevance to this report.

6 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Reference is made to the Minutes of the Development Quality Committee of 25 April 2005 (Report 211-2005 refers). This report contained aspects of Development Quality Service performance for the years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005.
- 6.2 This report outlines performance trends in relation to key performance targets drawing on 6 monthly returns made to the Scottish Executive.
- 6.3 Separate reports have been prepared for Committee in relation to appeals, enforcement and tree preservation activity and may be found elsewhere on this agenda. These reports should be read in conjunction with this report.

7 COMMENTARY ON PERFORMANCE AND TRENDS

7.1 Annex I tabulates performance trends against the various relevant key indicators over the period 2005/2006 in comparison with previous years. For comparative purposes, where available, the Scottish average for each indicator is provided. Activity trends are also illustrated with reference to statistics for planning and related applications received and determined.

7.2 The main issues which have impacted from the performance trends are as follows:

a Increasing caseloads of applications received. Over the period 2002/2003-2005/2006 there has been a progressive increase in application workloads as indicated in the annex. This is a welcome reflection of commercial and residential investment activity in the City and the desire by householders to extend and improve their houses. Members will be aware from Committee agendas of the increasing numbers of major investment projects which come before them particularly in the categories of housing, healthcare, retail and academic sectors. It is estimated from information available that between December 2002 and March 2006 82 major applications in these sectors were approved representing a minimum of £165 million investment in the city. (This figure is derived from applications for Building Warrant and therefore does not take into account other projects.) A further 19 planning applications for similar major projects are pending.

The emphasis which the Council (supported by national planning policy) places on the importance of design quality and customer care are now a significant and increasingly prevalent factor in development quality workloads. It continues to be the department's policy to invest time with applicants and agents in negotiating quality developments which can be recommended for approval. 96% of householder applications and 92% of all applications are approved.

b Pre-application activity, advising customers and public involvement in the planning process. The service operates a 'One Stop Shop' facility service for any citizen, agent or developer seeking free independent advice without the need for appointment during normal working hours. Increasing demand on this service reflects growing public awareness of the planning system, the desire to participate and the need for advice in support of financial and legal transactions. This has led to a perceptible increase in the level of general queries administered by telephone, correspondence and reception. These activities inevitably impact on application processing time with five case officer days per week devoted to this aspect of the service alone.

c Balance to be achieved between delegated and Committee referred applications. The Council's Scheme of Delegation under its Standing Orders allows the majority of straightforward applications to be determined under powers delegated to the Director of Planning & Transportation. Committee referred applications take considerably longer to determine than delegated applications. The performance statistics reveal the challenge faced by the team in balancing the competing claims on limited resources of meeting Committee agenda timecales, processing a delegated caseload and providing a quality advice service to the public. An increasing proportion of applications is decided by Committee (30% in 2005/2006 compared to 16% in 2004/2005).

- d The role of applicants/agents in providing essential information eg amending plans, impact statements etc. A recommendation cannot be finally concluded until information such as this is supplied to the Council. Delays in processing applications and in issuing decisions can result. The speed of determining an application can be assisted by the imposition of conditions only for officer time to be increasingly deflected to the task of receiving, considering and deciding on the information sought and in enforcing these conditions. A difficult balancing act needs to be undertaken.
- e Staffing Changes. Overall staffing levels are now relatively constant following team changes, recruitment of replacement staff and team reorganisations during the year to reflect departmental policy of rotating professional staff for training and experience purposes. It will be noted from the appendix that the caseload per officer is higher than the national average.
- f Introduction of E-Planning. Since January 2004 a structured programme of work in pursuit of on-line development quality functions has been implemented. Familiarisation and training has been a significant commitment this year and this has impacted on processing timescales. Long term benefits should accrue.
- g Planning Appeals and Inquiries. A separate Committee report outlines recent appeal performance against key departmental performance indicators. There has been a 62% increase in the number of appeals processed and determined.
- h Road Construction Consents. Annex 2 outlines recent performance together with influencing factors. The significant performance improvement for 2005/2006 should be noted.
- i Section 75 Agreements During 2005/2006 12 applications were approved subject to the negotiation and conclusion of Section 75 agreements compared to 2 in 2004/2005. This has mostly resulted from the Council's policy in relation to the control of houses in multiple occupation. This activity involves considerable liaison with the Council's legal service.

7.3 The New Planning Bill when enacted will present the Council with major challenges in how it manages and delivers the development quality service including the way in which different types of application are evaluated and decided. Further reports on this aspect will be repeated for decisions by the Committee in due course.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 The performance figures are set against consistently increasing application and non-application workloads, and is a barometer of investment trends throughout the City. Regardless of the influences noted above and, in particular, the Council's acknowledgement of the importance of quality of decision and the need to maintain a high level of service delivery offered to citizens, developers, applicants, agents, the Council consistently maintains levels of performance comparable to Scottish average standards and with its city benchmarking partners. Nevertheless, the Council is asked to acknowledge that increasing workload pressures, ever increasing expectations on performance from applicants, agents, the general public and the Scottish Executive coupled with the ever increasing complexity of the planning process and the need for accuracy, it will be increasingly difficult to maintain

satisfactory performance without increasing the resources available to the Development Quality Team.

9 CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Assistant Chief Executive (Community Planning) have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

10 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 6 monthly Performance Indicator Returns to Scottish Executive 2002/2003 - 2005/2006.
- 10.2 Planning & Transportation Department Service Plan 2004-2007.
- 10.3 SPPI The Planning System Scottish Executive Development Department 2002
- 10.4 Report of the Targets Working Group. Scottish Executive Development Department October 1999.
- 10.5 Resources for Planning - Ove Arup & Partners 2005 (Para 7.29)

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ANNEX I

Performance Indicator	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006
% Householder applications determined <2 months SE Target: 90% Service Plan Target: 85%	85% (84%)	79% (81%)	77% (79.8%)	(N/A) 85.75%
% all applications determined <2 months SE Target: 80% Service Plan Target: 60%	64% (67%)	61% (64%)	62.5% (62.9%)	62% (N/A)
% Householder applications determined <3 months SE Target: 95% Service Plan Target: 95%	95% (94%)	95% (93%)	90.9% (91.5%)	95.8% (N/A)
% All applications determined <3 months SE Target: 85% Service Plan Target: 85%	83% (83%)	82% (81%)	82.2% (79.1%)	79.4% (N/A)
% Major applications determined <4 months SE Target: 80% Service Plan Target: N/A	75% (57%)	81% (49%)	74% (51.8%)	66% (N/A)
Applications received	834 (+8.5%)	942 (+ 13%)	969(+2.8%)	975(+0.6%)
Applications Determined	727 (+10.5%)	857 (+18%)	919(+7.2%)	902(-1.8%)
Applications Received per Case Officer per annum (6 case officers)* National Average: 143	139	157	161	163
Service Plan Performance Measure % of road construction consent applications determined in 12 weeks Target: 90%	80%	77.3%	78.9%	93%

Source: Scottish Executive 6 Monthly Statistical Returns 2002/2003-2005/2006

Note: () = Scottish Average

*A recent report by Ove Arup & Partners for the Scottish Executive indicated that the estimated Scottish average of 143 applications received per case officer.

ANNEX 2**Road Construction Consent Performance Indicators**

Year	Total No of RCC Applications	Average Processing Time (weeks)	% of applications processed in 8 weeks	% of applications processed in 12 weeks
2001-2002	21	6	80.9%	100%
2002-2003	20	10	45%	80.0%
2003-2004	22	9	59.1%	77.3%
2004-2005	19	10	38.8%	78.9%
2005-2006	13	7	76%	93%

The Service Plan Performance target for the processing of Road Construction Consent (RCC) applications is to have 90% processed within 12 weeks.

The above figures indicate that this year's target has been reached. This is mainly due to a streamlining of the procedure for registering applications by trying to ensure that the appropriate number of drawings and the correct forms are signed at the time the submission thereby reducing delays in the RCC process.

It should be noted, however, that there are overriding factors which contribute to this pattern. The applications that took an unusually long time to process were held up due to matters outwith the RCC process. For example, it should also be noted that with such a low number of applications, statistically if one or two applications are delayed, this can have a disproportionately adverse effect on the figures.

Another influencing factor in all years is the need for some applications at a completed stage to await Committee approval.

Most Local Authorities in Scotland work to a 12 week cycle for processing RCC applications and do not submit the RCCs to Committee for approval.