

**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE – 25 JUNE 2001**

**REPORT ON: SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN PILOT AUDIT**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION**

**REPORT NO: 323-2001**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To review the situation regarding the Development Plan process one year after receiving the results of the Pilot Audit carried out by the Scottish Executive and advise the Committee of the actions that have been taken since then.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a notes the actions carried out as a result of the Pilot Audit.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications from this report.

## **4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Local Agenda 21 implications of this report cover a very wide range of key themes, in particular the transportation implications for new developments affect issues of sustainable development, the efficient use of resources and minimising of waste and access to facilities, services, goods and people is not achieved at the expense of the environment and are accessible to all.

## **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 No equal opportunity implications are associated with this report.

## **6 BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 Members will recall that a report to Committee in January 2001 detailed the main findings of the Pilot Audit of the Development Plan System carried out by the Scottish Executive in January 2000. The Audit examined closely the Plan process and commented on the strengths and weaknesses of the system.
- 6.2 In general the Council's procedures and practices were held to be of good standard, however there were some areas identified that could give scope for improvement. The main conclusions of the Audit were summarised as follows:
- Management and organisation of development planning is undertaken in a firm but fair manner.
  - There were concerns about the future Joint Structure Plan process.

- There were advantages in the review of both Structure and Local Plans together but this would have implications for the demands on staff and already limited resources.
- While the Tayside Structure Plan was comprehensive, reliable, clearly written and contains straightforward policies, it was over detailed and the presentation dense.
- The Dundee Local Plan was produced relatively quickly and provides a reasonable basis for planning at the moment, however it is too comprehensive, but re-evaluated and slimmed down could form a good base for the future replacement plan. There was also a need for it to be more positive in encouraging development.

6.3 A year on from these comments it is now possible to make a number of observations.

- Experience in operating the Joint Structure Plan process has shown that while it is undoubtedly more difficult, has a tendency for increased bureaucracy, and to be more time consuming, the published timetable has not been exceeded by any significant margin and a first Draft of the Structure Plan was produced and jointly approved by both Authorities.
- It is the case that the firm management of the process on the part of both Councils has been the key factor in achieving this outcome.
- The review of the Dundee Local Plan is about to start and this will test current resources.
- The less detailed and user friendly presentational format of the new Draft Structure Plan is welcomed by parties. However there is still a question mark over the balance between brevity and comprehensiveness and this is clearly exemplified by the responses from the Scottish Executive and Statutory Consultees where this contradiction is most clearly brought out.
- The lessons learnt in the Structure Plan process will be applied to the Local Plan.

6.4 The review of progress in the period since the Scottish Executive undertook its Audit of the Development Plan process in Dundee indicates that positive improvements have taken place. It is intended that this progress and the lessons learnt will continue through to the completion of the Joint Structure Plan and in the preparation of the review of the Local Plan.

6.5 In conclusion it should be stressed that there is no one major factor that stands out as a key determinant to the success of the Development Plan process but a strict observation of achieving a realistic timetable is of significant benefit and Members' willingness to call special Committee meetings if necessary to achieve this is a significant factor.

6.6 In future the progress of the Development Planning process will be monitored as part of the Council's Best Value exercise.

**7 CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Support Services, and Director of Corporate Planning, have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

**8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 Development Plan Pilot Audit Report, Scottish Executive Development Department, September 2000.

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