

**REPORT TO: BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE – 26 APRIL 2001**

**REPORT ON: BEST VALUE REVIEW OF BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE WITHIN THE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**REPORT NO: 6-2001**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To report on the Best Value review of the building control service provided within the Planning and Transportation Department.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that the Sub-Committee:

- a Agrees the outcome of the review described in Para 15 of this report.
- b Notes those areas identified for continuous improvements described in Section 16 of this report.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The review accounts for 2.35% £198,700 of the Department's revenue budget and is 20.04% of the total review expenditure planned in the Department in this financial year. Revenue from building warrant application fees amounted to £595,000 in the financial year 98/99 representing 11.26% of the Department's income.

## **4 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The review was undertaken taking into account the issues raised in Local Agenda 21 and, in particular, that resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised.

## **5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The statutory requirements in the Building Scotland Acts and systems adopted by the Building Control Team are consistent with the Council's equal opportunities policy.

## **6 DEFINITION OF SERVICE REVIEWED**

6.1 To discharge the Council's statutory responsibilities as Building Control authority in respect of the provisions of the Building (Scotland) Acts 1959-1970. The Building Procedural Regulations 1981 and the Building Standard Scotland Regulations 1990 as amended and the main components of the service reviewed include:

- Advising customers and stakeholders regarding the statutory requirements laid out under the Building Scotland Acts regarding building warrant applications.

- Pre-application discussions with customers, applicants and agents.
- Plan checking to ensure building warrant applications comply with the current building regulations.
- Site inspections as required by the Building Scotland Procedural Regulations.
- Final inspections and the issuing of Certificates of completion as required by the Building Scotland Acts Procedural Regulations.
- Relaxation requests.
- Unauthorised works.
- Assisting the Licensing Board regarding inspection of licensed properties and events throughout Dundee City Council area.

## **7 JUSTIFICATION FOR REVIEWING THE SERVICE**

- 7.1 The Building Control service is an important statutory responsibility of the Council and is responsible for ensuring the health and safety of people in and around buildings as described in the Building (Scotland) Acts 1959 and 1970 the Building Scotland Procedural Regulations and the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 1990. The service plays a vital role in ensuring that new buildings and buildings which require alterations including change of use and the demolition of existing buildings, all comply with current building regulations. The way in which the Building Control Department discharges these duties has a direct impact on the safety of people in and around buildings. It is therefore important that our customers and stakeholders receive the best possible professional advice and quality of service.
- 7.2 The service is a significant generator of income for the Council and people who pay fees for service desire to expect best value in return.
- 7.3 The service is continuously monitored and statutory performance indicators are set by the Scottish Executive.

## **8 BENCHMARKING**

- 8.1 The service is part of the Four Cities Benchmarking Group which has been ongoing since 1996/97 and best practice initiatives are being considered as a result. The results of the comparisons are described in Para 14.2.

## **9 REVIEW METHODOLOGY**

- 9.1 The review team consisted of a Review Team Leader from the Management Services Department, a Lead Officer, (Team Leader Building Control), the Building Quality Manager and the Administrative Officer (Financial Services).

The review was conducted through:

- Establishing critical success factors.
- Opinion surveys of customers and stakeholders.
- Trends shown from statutory performance indicators.
- Comparing performance and cost indicators against those of benchmarking authorities.

## **10 CUSTOMERS AND STAKEHOLDERS**

10.1 The principal stakeholders were identified as follows:

<u>Internal:</u>	1	Elected members including the Convener of the Building Quality Department.
	2	Architectural Services
	3	Engineering Services
	4	Licensing Board
	5	Environmental Health Department
	6	Economic Development
	7	Improvement Grant Unit
	8	Development Quality Team
 <u>External:</u>		
	1	Architects
	2	Agents
	3	Consultants acting for Applicants
	4	SEPA NOSWA
	5	Tayside Fire Brigade
	6	Scottish Executive
	7	Health and Safety Executive

## 11 MEASUREMENT OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

### 11.1 Critical Success Factors

The critical success factors identified by the Four Cities Benchmarking Group are as follows:

Speed  
Costs  
Procedural Competency  
Customer Care

## 12 CONSULTATIONS

12.1 There is a need to test the validity of these critical success factors and to that end a questionnaire survey of selected customers and stakeholders was undertaken between October and December 1999.

## 13 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

13.1 Details of the survey are recorded in the audit file. The conclusions regarding the survey are summarised as follows:

A total of 100 questionnaires were forwarded to applicants and agents. 22 questionnaires were returned: 14 Dundee-based architects; 7 from out-of-town architects; 4 from others; 3 from members of the public and 1 from a Dundee City Council Department. The results of the critical points in the survey are listed on the appendix. Overall the respondents are extremely satisfied with the service provided by the Building control Team. However, further feedback has shown that our customers are, in general, dissatisfied with the fact that they have to provide plastic copies of drawings and a large detailed drawings of drainage layouts. The Department will undertake to address all the points raised in the survey.

## 14 COMPARISONS

14.1 The work undertaken by the Four Cities Benchmarking Group and the discussions and membership of SACBCO (Scottish Association of Chief Building Control Officers) has given the Council's Building Control Team the opportunity to service improvements and also provides a credible basis for the comparison of statistics.

14.2 The Four Cities Benchmarking Group was formed – Dundee, Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh in 1996/97 with the following objectives:

- To compare statistical data
- To compare working practices and procedures
- To define and develop benchmarking indicators
- To identify and implement best practice procedures

The comparison between Dundee City Council's Building Control Team and the other three Benchmarking Authorities in the critical areas over the last three Benchmarking years are as follows:

### Dundee City Council

Average time taken to respond to a request for a Building Warrant	14.33 work days
---	-----------------

Average time taken to issue a Building Warrant	6.5 work days
--	---------------

Average time taken to respond to an application for a Certificate of Completion	4.3 work days
---	---------------

Average time taken to issue a Certificate of Completion	4 work days
---	-------------

### Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Glasgow

Average time taken to respond to a request for a Building Warrant	12.6 work days
---	----------------

Average time taken to issue a Building Warrant	7.5 work days
--	---------------

Average time taken to respond to an application for a Certificate of Completion	5.4 work days
---	---------------

Average time taken to issue a Certificate of Completion	4 work days
---	-------------

14.3 The audit file outlines the breakdown and net costs for providing the Building Control function in the full financial years 1996/97, 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/2000.

14.4 The figures indicate that over the period indicated the following trends:

Gross

Net

96/97	319,162	(63,366)
97/98	443,525	(131,318)
98/99	627,000	21,000
99/00	799,000	195,000

- 14.5 The Four Cities' Benchmarking exercise which measured the range of variable net costs for the service provided shows Dundee City Council in a favourable light compared with the other members of the Benchmarking Group.
- 14.6 The Audit File provides comparisons between the Four Cities in the agreed categories.
- 14.7 The Four Cities group endeavoured to ensure that each indicator was relevant and comparable, reflecting each Authority's differing caseloads, staffing arrangements, management structure and corporate priorities.

## 15 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 15.1 The Building Control function in Scotland is the sole responsibility of Local Authorities as Building Authorities and the general provisions relating to local authorities are clearly defined in the Building Scotland Act 1959. Under the Building Scotland Act 1959 there is no alternative method of administering the statutory requirements of the Act. However, consultations regarding the future of the Building Control function in Scotland are ongoing and prove that local authorities are continuing to adapt to changes and are providing their customers and stakeholders with the service they require and deserve.

## 16 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROPOSALS

- 16.1 The following proposals for the continuous improvements of the service are suggested for each of the Critical Success Factors.

- Speed

The service will aim to improve the standards set in the critical areas listed in 14.2 by 2001/2002.

The targets for improvement are listed below:

Average time take to respond to a request for a Building Warrant	12 works days
Average time taken to issue a Building Warrant	5 work days
Average time taken to respond to an application for a Certificate of Completion	4 work days
Average time taken to issue a Certificate of Completion	4 work days

However, resources and fluctuating workloads will always have an effect on performance targets.

- Procedural Competency

The nature of the Building Control service regarding the health and safety of people in and around buildings must be upheld and safety standards should not be forfeited in the pursuit of speed.

- Customer Care

Customers and Stakeholders should be surveyed at regular intervals, say every two years. (The next review will take place in 2001).

Future survey results should confirm the current high customer care satisfaction levels shown in Appendix 1. The customer questionnaire survey shows that overall 32% of our customers rated the service provided by the Building Control Section as excellent 50% rated it good and 18% rated it average.

- Costs

The calculation methodology for the cost of providing the Building Control Service will be reviewed by March 2002 taking into account the benchmarking figures and results.

- Added Value

All aspects of the service will be reviewed to ensure that the maximum added value is achieved.

The suggestions for improvement contained in our customer survey results will be implemented where possible by April 2001.

Officers will be encouraged to participate in continuous professional development in order to develop additional skills.

The system to monitor workloads for the benefit of our officers and customers will be improved by May 2001.

The organisational structure of the department will be reviewed and where necessary improved for the benefit of our officers and customers by June 2001.

Management will provide the backing required in order to maintain and improve an efficient professional service for the benefit of our customers and stakeholders.

Training plans will be developed by June 2001 in order to enhance procedural competency.

## 17 CONSULTATION

- 17.1 The Director of Planning and Transportation has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

---

Alex Stephen  
Chief Executive

17 April 2001

IGSM/KCF/RJ  
Dundee City Council  
Tayside House  
Dundee

Bestvalu\bvreps\buildcontrol

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL  
PLANNING & TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT  
BUILDING CONTROL SECTION  
SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE – 22 RESPONDENTS – 11.3 APPENDIX (1)

- 1 Were the staff able to give you the necessary information?
- |        |                      |           |                |       |
|--------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|-------|
| Always | On Most<br>Occasions | Sometimes | Not Very often | Never |
| 13     | 9                    | 0         | 0              | 0     |
- 2 How was the quality/accuracy of the information/advice given?
- |            |       |              |         |              |
|------------|-------|--------------|---------|--------------|
| Very clear | Clear | Satisfactory | Unclear | Very Unclear |
| 6          | 12    | 4            | 0       | 0            |
- 3 Was the information you received consistent?
- |                      |                    |            |              |                      |
|----------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Always<br>Consistent | Very<br>Consistent | Consistent | Inconsistent | Very<br>Inconsistent |
| 6                    | 3                  | 12         | 1            | 0                    |
- 4 In terms of the time taken to finalise your application, do you think it was:
- |           |      |            |      |           |
|-----------|------|------------|------|-----------|
| Very Fast | Fast | Just Right | Slow | Very Slow |
| 5         | 4    | 9          | 3    | 0         |
- 5 How important is speed to you in dealing with an application?
- |                   |           |                 |                       |                     |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Very<br>Important | Important | Quite Important | Not Very<br>Important | Of No<br>Importance |
| 17                | 5         | 0               | 0                     | 0                   |
- 6 How important is accuracy to you in dealing with an application?
- |                   |           |                 |                       |                     |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Very<br>Important | Important | Quite Important | Not Very<br>Important | Of No<br>Importance |
| 11                | 10        | 1               | 0                     | 0                   |
- 7 Were the staff who dealt with your application:
- |              |                |         |                  |           |
|--------------|----------------|---------|------------------|-----------|
| Very Helpful | Fairly Helpful | Helpful | Not very Helpful | Unhelpful |
| 13           | 6              | 3       | 0                | 0         |
- 8 Did you find the process simple?
- |             |               |        |                       |                     |
|-------------|---------------|--------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Very Simple | Fairly Simple | Simple | Fairly<br>Complicated | Very<br>Complicated |
| 6           | 8             | 8      | 0                     | 0                   |
- 9 Following the issue of a Building Warrant and the commencement of site works, how important to you are site inspections by Building Control Staff?

Very Important	Important	Quite Important	Not Very Important	Of No Importance
3	9	7	0	3

10 How would you rate the overall service you received from the Building Control Section in dealing with your application?

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
7	11	4	0	0