

**REPORT TO: DEVELOPMENT QUALITY COMMITTEE - 29 JUNE 2009**

**REPORT ON: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR DEVELOPMENT QUALITY 2008/2009**

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

**REPORT NO: 344-2009**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The report outlines aspects of Development Quality performance for the year 2008/2009 in relation to Scottish Government targets and Key Performance Indicators from the Planning and Transportation Service Plan 2007-2011.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a notes the significant improvement in performance of the Development Quality service in that Service Plan targets are achieved or exceeded in many cases whilst acknowledging that a major factor in this improvement relates to the fall in the number of applications received;
- 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 decisions whilst otherwise further improving the standard of service to customers and the service; and
- c acknowledges the major challenge which the Development Quality service faces in the future in maintaining levels of performance in the face of the issues raised in this report and in particular the present and projected increase in the complexity of the development management process as introduced by the Planning Etc (Scotland) Act 2006.

## **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **4 BACKGROUND**

4.1 Reference is made to the Minutes of the Development Quality Committee of 19 May 2008 (Report 234-2008 refers). That report contained aspects of Development Quality Service performance for the years 2003/2004 to 2007/2008.

4.2 This report outlines performance trends in relation to key performance targets drawing on six monthly returns made to the Scottish Government over the period 2004/2005 to 2008/2009.

4.3 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.

## 5 COMMENTARY ON PERFORMANCE AND TRENDS

5.1 Appendix 1 tabulates performance trends against the various relevant key indicators during 2008/2009 in comparison with previous years.

5.2 The main issues which may be drawn from the performance trends are as follows:

a Caseloads of Applications Received

There has been a noticeable drop in the numbers of applications received. The period for 2006/2007 represented the high point in terms of applications received (1,132 in total) and since then numbers have been dropping, with 21% less applications received in 2008/2009 compared with the previous year.

Performance in all areas has improved considerably, largely as a result of the drop in the number of applications received. Almost 84% of householder applications were dealt with within 2 months, exceeding the Service Plan target of 80% and representing an 11% improvement when compared with the previous year. Over 62% of all applications were dealt with within 2 months, exceeding the Service Plan target of 60% and also representing an 11% improvement when compared with the previous year.

b Balance to be Achieved between Delegated and Committee Referred Applications

In 2004/2005 84.6% of all planning applications were determined under powers delegated to the Director. This has fallen to the figure of 76.5% in 2008/2009. This figure is approximately 8.5% lower than any of the other Scottish Cities with which we benchmark.

These figures confirm the trend in numbers of applications of all types (especially householder applications) which have to be determined by Committee, frequently as the result of attracting a single relevant objection. Monthly cycles of Committee and the preparation work involved rarely means that the determination of a Committee Agenda item occurs within the statutory two month period on which the key performance indicators are based.

Measures have now been put into place with the introduction of the Interim Scheme of Delegation operating since 1 March 2009 and the proposed new Mandatory Scheme of Delegation under the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006 which will ensure that minor applications will no longer need to be considered by the Development Quality Committee. However, the impact of these measures are unlikely to have had any bearing on figures for 2008/2009 as applications considered during this period were assessed under the old scheme of delegation.

c Staff Resources

During 2008/2009 the number of case officers dealing with planning applications in the Development Quality Team was reduced from 7 to 6 midway through the period. This reduction in numbers has had no impact on performance due to the falling number of applications received. The caseload per planning officer averaged at just under 120 applications, a drop of 15% from the previous year.

d E-planning and Electronic Document Management

Since January 2004 a structured programme of work in pursuit of on line development quality functions has been implemented. Familiarisation, training and the adjustment of back office systems delivering electronic document management has been a continuing commitment this year, taking advantage of resources released by the drop in numbers of applications received. The ability for applicants to make on-line planning applications has been in place since April of this year.

e Planning Appeals

A separate Committee report elsewhere on this agenda outlines recent appeal performance against key departmental performance indicators. It will be noted from that report that the appeals workload of the team has increased considerably in the past year. This work has not impacted on performance in the processing of routine casework due to the fall in applications received.

f Road Construction Consents

Appendix 2 outlines recent performance together with influencing factors.

g Section 75 Agreements

During 2008/2009, 10 Section 75 Agreements were imposed on applications determined by Committee. This compares to 18 in 2007/2008. This has mostly resulted from the Council's policy in relation to the control of houses in multiple occupation. However, very little progress has been made in discharging these applications because applicants have not actively pursued these proposals in the light of the current housing market. This has no impact on current performance figures as the applications will not have been determined but may have an impact on future figures once the agreements have been concluded and consents issued.

h Implications of the Environmental Agenda

Increasingly, the Department is finding that a wide range of environmental issues are becoming significant material considerations in the planning process (eg contaminated land, air quality, noise, waste management) and in the future certain categories of application may have to be assessed in respect of their carbon emissions. These requirements have placed an additional strain on the Development Quality service and the expert support given to it by the Environmental Health and Trading Standards Department in particular. These pressures on applicants, agents and the Council are likely to intensify. However, there has not been an impact on performance.

**6 NEW PLANNING ETC (SCOTLAND) ACT - IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE DECISION-MAKING**

- 6.1 The content of the new Planning Act will have significant implications for how the Council undertakes its decision making responsibilities in respect of planning applications in the future. The various reports recently considered by the Committee testify to this.

- 6.2 In terms of improving performance, the new Scheme of Delegation, the introduction of revised appeals and local procedures and the proposals for enhanced scrutiny and increased pre-application work are likely to have the greatest impact.
- 6.3 The modernising agenda is likely to mean that a crude statistical method of assessing development management performance as at present is not sustainable in the future. To a degree this has been acknowledged by Scottish Government in the proposals for the assessment of Councils as the Act's provisions are implemented (Report 275-2007 to the Planning and Transport Committee of 11 June 2007 refers).

## **7 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 This Report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

Although there are no sustainability policy issues directly arising from this report, the Council should be aware that environmental issues are becoming more and more relevant as material planning considerations. These are new and complex areas for applicants, agents and officers to thoroughly discharge. This is having a progressive adverse impact on application processing timescales. In particular, issues of ground contamination, noise and air quality are increasing in frequency as potential material considerations and making the process of assessing applications more challenging. The range of material considerations is likely to get even wider as the agenda for promoting and enforcing environmental standards increases.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The performance figures for 2008/2009 represent a significant improvement on previous figures but are set against decreasing application workloads.
- 8.2 The new Planning Act has brought further changes which will influence future decision making patterns.

## **9 CONSULTATIONS**

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

## **10 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 Six monthly Performance Indicator Returns to Scottish Executive from 2004/2005 to 2008/2009.
- 10.2 Planning and Transportation Department Service Plan 2007-20011.
- 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 and Partners 2005 (paragraph 7.29).

- 10.6 The Planning Etc (Scotland) Act 2006.
- 10.7 Recent Scottish Government Consultation Papers and Secondary Legislation relating to development management processes and procedures.

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## APPENDIX 1

## COMPARATIVE DEVELOPMENT QUALITY PERFORMANCE 2004/2005 - 2008/2009

Performance Indicator	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
% Householder applications determined <2 months SE Target: 90% Service Plan Target: 80%	77.0%	85.75%	80.0%	75.0%	83.6%
% all applications determined <2 months SE Target: 80% Service Plan Target: 60%	62.5%	62.0%	59.0%	56.0%	62.3%
% Householder applications determined <3 months SE Target: 95% Service Plan Target: 95%	90.9%	95.8%	93.7%	89.6%	96.1%
% All applications determined <3 months SE Target: 85% Service Plan Target: 80%	82.2%	79.4%	79.2%	74.1%	79.7%
% Major applications determined <4 months SE Target: 80% Service Plan Target: N/A	74.0%	66.0%	71.0%	62.4%	64.8%
Applications Received	969 (+2.8%)	975 (+0.6%)	1,132 (+16.1%)	986 (-12.9%)	775 (-21%)
Applications Determined	919 (+7.2%)	902 (-1.8%)	948 (+5.0%)	968 (+2.1%)	735 (-24%)
Applications Received per Case Officer per annum (7 case officers down to 6.5 in 2008/2009)*	161	163	184 (+12.9%)	140 (-24%)	119 (-15%)
Service Plan Performance Measure % of road construction consent applications determined in 8 weeks Target: 70%	38.8%	76.0%	66.7%	62.5%	87%

Source: Scottish Executive 6 Monthly Statistical Returns 2004/2005 - 2007/2008

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

**APPENDIX 2****ROAD CONSTRUCTION CONSENT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total No of RCC Applications</b>	<b>Average Processing Time (weeks)</b>	<b>% of applications processed in 8 weeks</b>	<b>% of applications processed in 12 weeks</b>
2001/2002	21	6	80.9%	100.0%
2002/2003	20	10	45.0%	80.0%
2003/2004	22	9	59.1%	77.3%
2004/2005	19	10	38.8%	78.9%
2005/2006	13	7	76.0%	93.0%
2006/2007	27	7	66.7%	92.5%
2007/2008	16	7	62.5%	93.8%
2008/2009	15	5	87.0%	100.0%

The Service Plan Performance target for the processing of Road Construction Consent (RCC) applications is to have 70% processed within 8 weeks.

The above figures indicate that the target figure of 70% of applications considered within eight weeks has been met. This may be due to a streamlining of RCC procedures and the fact that there is a reduction in larger applications. In previous years an RCC application could be put on a Planning & Transportation agenda up to four weeks ahead of the agenda being approved. This time has now increased to five/six weeks prior to the agenda being approved. An investigation of the figures shows that 93% of the applications would have been considered within eight weeks if the lead in time to Committee was not increased. This figure should improve with the delegation of RCC applications under the new Scheme of Delegation approved by P & R Committee on 8 June 2009 (Report 293-2009).

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.