

**REPORT TO: DEVELOPMENT QUALITY COMMITTEE – 26 APRIL 2004**

**REPORT ON: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2002/2003**

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

**REPORT NO: 245-2004**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 The report outlines the aspects of Audit Scotland's report on Performance Information for Scottish Councils 2002/2003 as far as it relates to building control and planning applications.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 It is recommended that Committee

- i Note the improved performance of building control brought about by the continuing review of administration and practice.
- ii Confirm 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.

**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 Audit Scotland recently published their annual report for 2002/03 on the Performance Indicators for local authority environment and regulatory services which compare the performance of Scottish Councils. Of particular interest to the Development Quality Committee are the performances against the indicators for building warrants and certificates of completion and the indicator for planning applications.

6.2 The figures for Dundee show that the building control service is operating at a very efficient level with 99% of certificates of completion being issued within 3 days of application and 94% of warrant applications being responded to within 15 days. Figures for the 4 measures for building control suggest that Dundee City Council was one of the best if not the best performing building control authority in Scotland.

6.3 This improvement in performance against the performance indicators has been largely as a result of changes in the work practices of the team involved. This has resulted in more time being spent in the vetting of applications. A better balance has been achieved between vetting and site inspections. Although there has been a reduction in time spent on site inspections this has not been to the detriment of the overall service. The implementation of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 may impact upon the performance measures and indicators. However the recently approved staffing review of the Building Control team should ensure a continuation of the current level of success and will meet the challenges presented. The impact of the new legislation will be closely monitored and assessed for any further required

adjustments to the Team structure which will be reported back to the Committee for approval if required.

- 6.4 The figures for planning applications are, on the face of it, not as good as those for building control. For householder applications, Dundee City Council dealt with 82.3% within 2 months against a Scottish average of 83.4%. The Scottish Executive target is that 80% of all applications and 90% of householder applications should be determined within 2 months. Only 44% of non-householder applications were dealt with within the 2 month period against a Scottish average of 53.0%. This has contributed to the 61.1% of all applications being dealt with within 2 months against the Scottish average of 66.9%.
- 6.5 It should be recalled that these indicators relate to speed in determining an application. There is no measurement of the quality of the decision which has always been important to Dundee City Council. A considerable amount of staff time is spent negotiating changes to an application in response to objections or the concerns of consultees particularly with non-household applications. The objective of these negotiations is to achieve a quality of decision by ensuring that all of the issues have been properly addressed and that the Committee is in full possession of the facts when making its decision. The time is also used in many instances to obtain improvements to the proposed development. The success of this approach may be judged against the relatively low level of appeals and the equally low level of appeals sustained. It is worth noting that some of the authorities with better performance figures than those of Dundee have a more extensive scheme of delegation. However, it is considered that any extension to the existing scheme in Dundee would result in only minor improvement and mostly with the householder applications.
- 6.6 The performance figures for building control are outstanding and the challenge for the building control service will be to maintain the current level of service. For planning applications the figures should be viewed against the quality of decision and development. Nevertheless, any opportunity which is identified for improving the speed of decision making will be grasped and implemented.

## **7 CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1 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.

## **8 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 None.

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