

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change
Portfolio Holder

11 November 2011

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SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS & FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2011/12 – Q2

Purpose

1. To update the Portfolio Holder on performance and finance for the second Quarter Year (July to September) 2011/12.

Recommendations

2. The Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change Portfolio Holder note the report.

Background

3. Financial performance information is attached as **Appendix A (1) and Appendix A (2)**.

Considerations

4. **Building Control Performance** The building control section has been achieving greater success in the response to searches and solicitor enquiries. With the assistance of a temporary technical support officer employed in August the backlog has been reduced. Statutory duties are being maintained and applications continue to be approved within deadlines. Following the resignation of one support team member recruitment processes are now underway. To maintain service the temporary support has been continued. In the last quarter, fee-earning applications numbered 293, almost the same level as the previous quarter, and decisions were issued on 182 full plans application considerably more than the 117 applications in the previous quarter. Other applications received were made up of Building Notices, Regularisations and partnership applications that are site-based projects that do not require plan checking. The external market continues to be depressed and until the economic climate stabilises it is unlikely there will be any major upturn in applications or income.
5. **Development Control, New Communities and Conservation Performance** In terms of processing time between validation and decision the Quarter 2 performance outcome for planning and related applications managed by Development Control, New Communities Planning Team and Conservation is shown in the table below. A large major application is an application for 200 homes or more, or with floorspace over 10,000 square metres. A small-scale major application is an application for 10 – 199 homes, or with floorspace of 1,000 – 9,999 square metres. As the number of major applications is relatively small, time performance measures will tend to be volatile. Minor developments involve the construction of 1-9 homes and some commercial developments. The category 'others' includes by far the largest number of applications which are mainly householder applications but also include changes of use and Listed Building applications.

| Targets | Major/Minors/Others | Q1 11/12 | Q2 11/12 |
|---------|---------------------|----------|----------|
| 60% | Large Majors | 25% | 0% |
| 60% | Small Majors | 33% | 46% |
| 65% | Minors | 54% | 52% |
| 80% | Others | 65% | 67% |

6. For Quarter 2, the total number of applications determined within the target timescale was 61%. This is considered to be an unsatisfactory long-term situation however in the context that the 'on hand' caseload of current applications is being reduced there is an inevitable impact on performance against speed of processing indicators. This is because all the 'old' cases are out of time, and therefore depress the overall performance figures.
7. The year 2010/11 was a period of major change in the planning service with a restructure and the introduction of a new planning IT system. Those changes impacted negatively upon performance throughout the year and this continued into Quarter 2 of 2011/12. The number of applications determined in Quarter 2 at 506 is 10% higher than the number determined in the previous quarter, 456 which itself was a significant improvement on previous levels. The number of applications determined in Quarter 2 is considerably higher than the number of applications validated, 463. These are encouraging results. Indeed the number of applications on hand had grown steadily month on month throughout 2011 to be in the order of 600 at the end of Quarter 1 of 2011/12. This level of current activity was not conducive to timely performance or customer satisfaction. The 'on hand' caseload is now showing a strong rate of reduction. It is necessary to appreciate that there is an additional large volume of non-application planning enquiries in addition to the formal applications registered.
8. There is considerable cause for optimism. Management is now a much more visible activity within the service area and significant progress has been achieved in 'The Way Forward' actions that are subject of a separate report on this agenda. The achievement of a consistent reduction in 'on hand' caseload is a focus of attention. Customer feedback is now consistently gathered and gauged through analysis of a service requests and compliments log and customer satisfaction surveys have been initiated enabling managers to monitor improvement. Highly successful training and information sessions have been held with groups of Parish Councils that have been extremely well attended.
9. During the Quarter a total of 12 appeal decisions have been received. Of these decisions 8 appeals were won and 4 were lost.

10. **Section 106 Agreements**

Quarter 2 – monies received

| | |
|--|------------|
| Affordable Housing (offsite contributions) | £0 |
| Community Facilities | £1,794.75 |
| Public Art | £5,921.19 |
| Public Open Space | £22,331.61 |

Number of Parish Councils received offsite open space contributions – 7

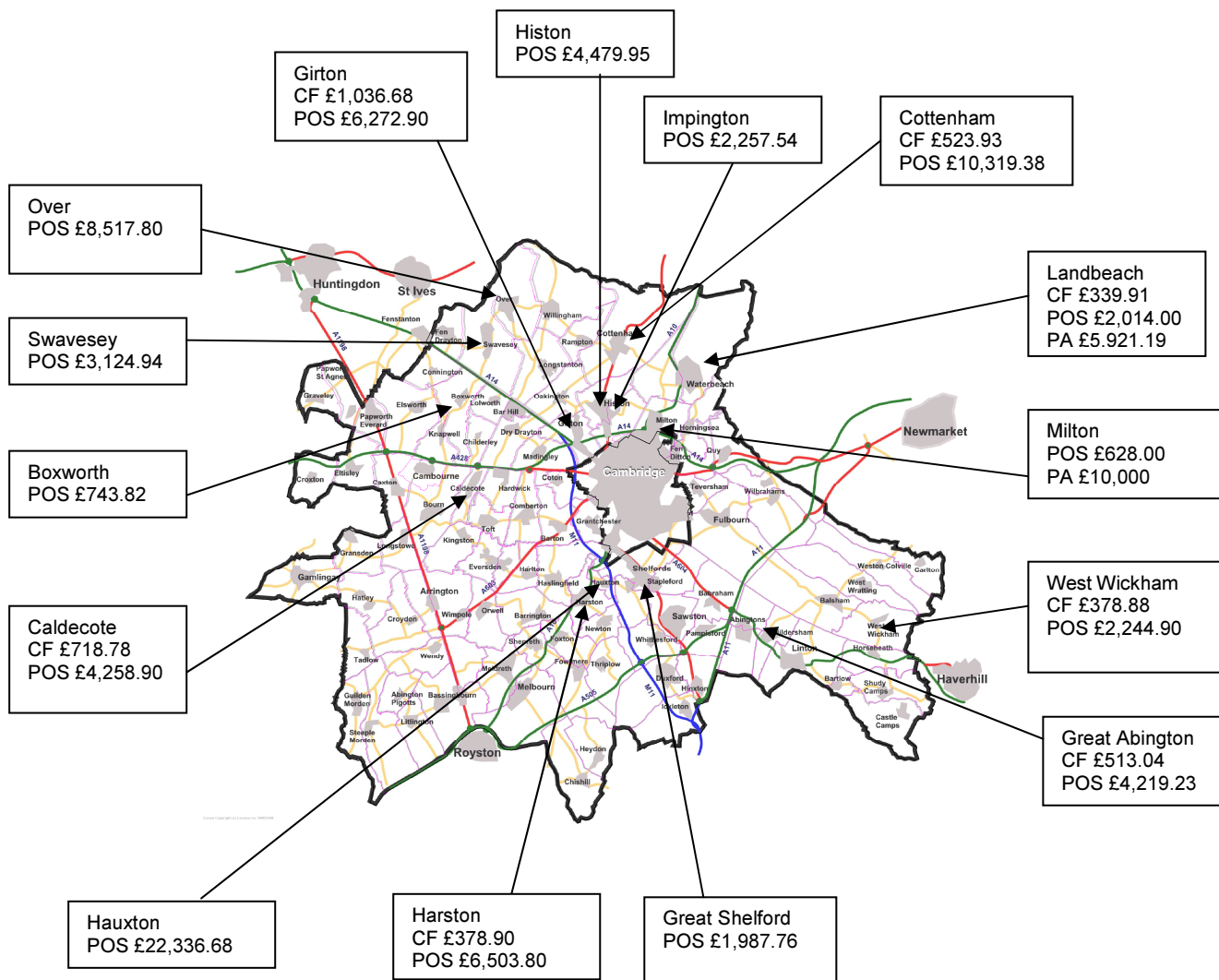
Number of section 106 agreements completed this quarter – 17

Annual to date (April 2011 – September 2011) – monies received

| | |
|--|------------|
| Affordable Housing (offsite contributions) | £0 |
| Community Facilities | £3,890.12 |
| Public Art | £15,921.19 |
| Public Open Space | £79,909.60 |

Number of Parish Councils received section 106 contributions – 15
Number of section 106 agreements completed this year – 39

Section 106 Monies Received - Apr-Sept 2011



AH = Affordable housing (offsite)
POS = Public open space (offsite)
POSM = Public open space maintenance (onsite)
CF = Community facilities
PA = Public Art

11. **Planning Enforcement** There were 118 Planning enforcement cases opened during Quarter 2 and 120 cases were closed. At the end of Quarter 2 there were 56 cases currently active that had arisen during 2011 with a further 23 cases remaining current from previous years. This represents a considerable reduction in the current caseload. September has been a very busy month with 40 cases being opened and 65 closed. The high number of cases closed however is due in part to the addition of

a temporary team member covering for a long-term sickness absence continuing since January 2011.

12. In addition to the above enforcement data the enforcement service is now providing electronic weekly Ward Alerts to Members identifying the opened and closed cases in their respective areas. Other work in progress is the corporate Enforcement and Inspection review. This currently involves members of the team attending weekly meetings with other enforcement and compliance teams and completing additional work for each session as required. Monitoring inspections carried out by the enforcement team are also continuing at the Hauxton Beyer Crop remediation site. The site is nearing completion of the first stage. Dale Farm also features highly with ongoing monitoring of the Smithy Fen traveller site and other sites that have injunctions in place.
13. **Green Environment** A highly successful Community Orchard event was held at Sawston Village College including planting of trees, national tree figures giving talks, 100 Parish Tree Wardens and support from the Chief Executive and Leader. Work on Swifts at Fulbourn is attracting much interest and praise. A new funding arrangement and business plan has been agreed for the Farmland Museum/Denny Abbey. Council has endorsed the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy that provides a good basis for new Local Nature Partnership.
14. **Sustainability and Climate Change Performance** September saw Council adopt our new Climate Change Action Plan (2011-13). This challenging corporate programme aims to help communities make a difference, ensure the Council sets a good example and work with businesses to help contribute to the transition to a low-carbon economy. Alongside fulfilling Council Priority Action E1 to continue work with parishes through the South Cambs Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership (SPEP), the following progress has been made:
15. Continuing to develop and maintain SPEP:
 - ▶ new enquiries from Little Abington and Orchard Park; initial meetings with parish councils at Guilden Morden and Landbeach.
 - ▶ meetings to discuss next steps in Bourn, Milton, Kingston, Dry Drayton, Melbourn, Shepreth, Meldreth, Histon & Impington; public meetings held in Gamlingay (CRIF) and Rampton (Launch event); film/discussion evenings held in Histon and Bassingbourn; SPEP workshops held in August at Gamlingay (Site visit of the Ecohub/ the Green Deal) attended by 32, and Impington (CRIF/Using Social Media to broaden our reach), attended by 19; Parish Booklet – completed and distributed in Dry Drayton;
 - ▶ promotion of energy efficiency and renewables at village events – stalls and/or displays in 14 parishes; village Energy Day held in Shepreth with >15 stalls and 3 talks from local companies and organisations.
 - ▶ microgeneration using Solar PV: information evening held in Barton; bulk purchase scheme launched in Coton; community financed PV scheme under development in Coton;
 - ▶ Newsletters mailed in September and October.
16. The Rampton Drift Retro-fit project is running well within schedule tolerances and within the budget set. Some delays introduced as supply of monitoring equipment slipped. Delivery of the final phase is due for completion in the first week of November. The quality of energy saving installations remains very high, relations between all partners and residents is good, and the project continues to bring forward an invaluable wealth of learning and experience. Ministerial visit planned for 31st October and first reporting drafting cycle scheduled for November.

17. The project to install an array of photovoltaic panels on South Cambs Hall is on calendar. Tender documents have been sent out and we await the return of these (deadline 26th Oct) with decision on award of contract due 11th November. The delivery schedule remains a tight but realistic one – aiming for commissioning in March 2012.
18. A ‘green’ breakfast seminar for local businesses was successfully trialled on 30th September to highlight opportunities and share experience on utility efficiency in buildings. A second seminar is pencilled in for November to be aimed at the hospitality sector.
19. A tender is about to go out to commission a study of the effectiveness of on-site renewable energy in land-use planning policies. This has been secured with £20k of funding from the Climate Change Skills Fund (administered through Sustainability East). The study will be procured and hosted by SCDC but will draw in other LPA partners and stands to have regional/national significance.
20. Due to other pressure the formal commissioning of a scoping study, in partnership with Cambridge City Council, has been rescheduled. The study will consider how best to encourage low carbon living behaviours in the new residents of our major growth sites – the study will use the NW Cambridge University site as a case study (a £10,000 funding has been secured from the Housing Growth Fund).
21. The Cambridge Renewables Infrastructure Framework project now co-ordinated by the County Council is continuing. Preliminary reports have been taken forward for discussion and a concluding session open to the public and entitled “Tackling the Energy Challenge Together” will be held on 15th November 5.00pm at the SmartLife Centre in Cambridge.
22. SCDC has taken a lead role in securing £20k funding (from Sustainability East) for a countywide collaborative project to bring forward and shape local authority delivery options for the Green Deal – support to be delivered from the Energy Saving Trust with an initiation meeting scheduled for early November (completion March 2012).
23. **Financial Performance.** Attached appendices A(1) and A(2) set out the financial position relating to Quarter 2.
24. Planning fees. We have received 48% (£403,452) of the budget at the 30 September. The income for September included a major application for £78,425 from the University of Cambridge for NW Cambridge. Projecting the income forward would indicate a shortfall of about £40,000 on the budget of £848,700. However, there are further major applications expected which may compensate for this. With respect to appeals only 21% (£10,908) spent at 30 September out of a budget of £50,970. Expenditure from this budget is related to the number of relevant appeals lodged. These cannot be predicted. Regarding expenditure on specialist consultancy advice on current applications only 11% (£4,044) was spent at 30 September out of a budget of £36,070.
25. Building Control Fees. We have received 58% (£191,012) of the budget (£330,000) at the 30 September. Projecting the fees forward would indicate extra income of about £52,000.
26. Capital. This is only 16% (£18,324) paid and committed to the 30 September out of a budget of £113,507. No progress has been made on the repair work at St Denis Church, East Hatley for which the budget is £22,000. Only £6,234 (12%) of the

Historic Buildings budget of £50,507 is committed as there have not been many applications for grant. The Tree/Hedge Partnership Scheme will incur commitments later in the year. Wildlife grants are only 5% (£490) committed out of a budget of £10,500.

Implications

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 27. Financial | Planning income levels will be carefully monitored as the financial year progresses |
| Legal | No direct implications |
| Staffing | No direct implications |
| Risk Management | Risks associated with poor performance are included in and managed through the Planning and New Communities Risk Register |
| Equality and Diversity | No direct implications |
| Equality Impact Assessment completed | No Equality Impact Assessments are completed for specific actions prior to implementation |
| Climate Change | No direct implications |

Consultations

28. Managers across New Communities and Planning and Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report

Consultation with Children and Young People

29. None

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Attached appendices A(1) and A(2) set out the financial position relating to Quarter 2.

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