

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Executive summary

South Cambridgeshire District Council was a standards authority for 2005/06 because of its performance on major applications from July 2003 to June 2004. The authority is a standards authority for 2006/07 because of its performance on major applications for the year ending 30 June 2005 but has not previously been a standards authority. Since April 2004 there have been clear signs of improvement in respect of major applications and performance for the annualised period up to the end of 2005/06 on major applications had slightly exceeded the national target of 60%. Minor applications and other applications are being processed above the national targets of 65% and 80%.

Although significant progress has been made it is not yet clear that this improved performance can be sustained. The main reason for this is the financial position of the Council. As an authority in a growth area with a rapidly growing population there is a time lag between the rise in population and the grant award. In addition the authority has been capped and significant cuts have had to be made for 2006/07. This has included reducing the corporate management team so that the Chief Executive and Director of Development Services will be leaving the authority in June 2006. With the development of a number of large settlements planned for the near future, the liaison required with Cambridgeshire Horizons the local delivery agency, issues of affordable housing and a large number of unauthorised travellers' sites, this reduction in senior management capacity is a concern.

Although officer caseloads have reduced this is based on a full establishment of staff and at the time of this report there was a 9% vacancy rate. A number of "major" major applications are expected and it is not clear that there is sufficient capacity within the service to handle these. There is no overall backlog of applications and the number of applications on hand at the end of each quarter has been reducing, but there was still a significant proportion of major applications: 20 out of 47 that were already "out of time" at the end of March 2006 which will have a bearing on performance in the short term. However, virtually all 'new' major applications determined in 2006 have been within the 13 week target and this is encouraging. The improvement plan only partially addresses meeting the BVPI 109 targets and the actions identified are not adequately resourced so that there has been slippage. More work is required to understand the barriers to sustained high performance on major applications including a review of the current committee arrangements.

In terms of support the key areas where the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) could assist the authority, in priority order, as agreed with the officers are: a review of current systems and establish a procedure for planning applications; set up performance management and project systems to assist with the overall control and management of workloads including local performance indicators; work with members to develop an improved scheme of delegation to officers and committee structure; arrange training on building design and urban design; an evaluation of system competence to comply with the 2006 PARSOL standards; assist with developing a customer charter; assist with development of model section 106 agreements and unilateral undertakings and assist with drafting a pre-application protocol including a review of charging for such advice

RECOMMENDATION

AMBER

The progress of the local planning authority to date is noted, but although the Authority has met all of the Best Value development control performance standards and targets set for 2005/06, some doubts remain as to the Authority's ability sustain all the BVPI 109 targets by March 2007.

The authority is, therefore, encouraged to contact the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) should it wish to utilise their support in the areas identified in this report.

DCLG ask the authority to ensure their improvement plan adequately addresses how the authority will sustain all national targets by March 2007 and beyond. The Government Office and DCLG officials will continue to monitor performance but if it gives further cause for concern, the Government Office will contact the authority to discuss what actions need to be taken.

Evaluation of questionnaire, other documentation and visit to the local planning authority

Profile of applications received

- The Council received 2526 applications in 2004/05, a 3% decrease from those received in 2003/04. Of those determined during 2004/05 about 3% were major applications, about 25% were minor and the remainder, some 72%, were other applications. Compared to the national average profile of 3% of major applications, 25% of minor applications and 72% of other applications these figures are around the average for all categories of applications. However, the Council is in a housing growth area and has 2 new settlements identified in its area so that there are a high proportion of "major" major applications.
- The data is not available for a breakdown of those major and minor applications determined in 2004/05 which required Transport Impact Assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments, section 106 agreements and unilateral undertakings.
- In addition and not included in the PS1 return to ODPM the Council received 53 resubmitted applications, 515 tree applications, 160 approval of conditions, 23 prior approval applications, and no other applications excluded from the PS1 return in 2004/05. A total of 10 were "finally disposed of" (under part 25 of the GDPO 1995).

Throughput of applications

- Performance on major applications has improved substantially from 26% in 2003/04 to 61% for the annualised period up to the end of 2005/06 and is now above the national target of 60%. Performance for 2004/05 was 39% but performance in 2005/06 has improved, although it has been erratic. (Q3 of 2005/06 achieved 53% and Q4 79% of applications determined within 13 weeks). The annual figure up to the end of 2005/06 is 1 percentage point above the national target.
- Performance on minor applications has improved from 49% in 2003/04 to 69% for the annualised period up to the end of 2005/06 which is above the national target of 65%. Performance for 2004/05 was 59% and performance in 2005/06 has improved. (Q3 of 2005/06 achieved 72% and Q4 72% of applications determined within 8 weeks). The annual figure up to the end of 2005/06 is 4 percentage points above the national target.

- Performance on other applications has improved from 78% in 2003/04 to 85% for the annualised period up to the end of 2005/06 which is above the national target of 80%. Performance for 2004/05 was 84% and performance in the 2005/06 has improved slightly. (Q3 of 2005/06 achieved 85% and Q4 85% of applications determined within 8 weeks). The annual figure up to the end of 2005/06 is 5 percentage points above the national target. Of the other applications determined in 2004/05 12.4% were Listed Building Consents and 1.3% Conservation Area Consents which together represent a significant proportion of workload.
- The current caseloads per officer are static at 115 in 2004/05 and 114 in 2005/06. This caseload is sustainable by comparison with the guideline figure of 150 cases per officer per annum, but does not take into account the considerable volume of non PS1 cases which if included in the calculation would make the caseload figure 172 in 2004/05, or the nature of the caseload. There is a FTE of 22 case officer posts and 2 of these posts were vacant at 30 September 2005. (If these posts remain vacant the caseload rises to 126 case per officer or 190 if the non PS1 cases are included).
- The refusal rate has remained static in 2003/04 and 2004/05 at 16% which is just below the national weighted average of 17%. The percentage of applications withdrawn has increased from 5% in 2003/04 to 8% in 2004/05.
- There is no overall backlog of applications. The figure of applications on hand stood at 86% of the number determined at the end of Q2 of 2005/06. At the time of the visit there were 20 major applications which were “out of time” and 27 within the 13 week target and this is likely to affect performance in the short term. However, virtually all new major applications are now being determined within the 13 week target and for the first 5 months of 2006 84% of all major applications have been determined within the target.

Appeals and enforcement workload

- The appeal workload on hand at the end of Q2 of 2005/06 is 60 appeals. This workload has increased since 2003/04. The percentage of appeals dismissed at 80% was above the national average of 66% for 2004/05, and has been above the national average of 67% for the first 6 months of 2005/06 at 69%. (The authority figures show that the percentage dismissed for 2005/06 was 71 %.) Performance against BVPI 204 was 19% in 2004/05 which is well below the national average of 33%.
- The Council has 2 specialist appeals officers responsible for the planning and administrative components of the process.
- The number of enforcement complaints is growing and the current caseload for 2005/06 of the 2.5 enforcement officers (with 0.5 post vacant) appears to be unsustainable even with all posts filled.

Systems and procedures

- Administrative support for development control is provided by 4.5 FTE posts. The Council has an internal validation checklist for applications and the target period for validation of applications is 3 days from receipt of applications. During 2004/05, 90% of applications were validated within this target period. The authority requires applications to be submitted with the following information in order for the application to be validated: a ‘red line’ plan and cheque, plus detailed plans and elevations. A total of 25% of applications received were initially considered invalid in 2004/05 and the 2 main reasons for them being invalid were planning application forms and supporting correspondence not signed properly or insufficient information received to register application.

- The authority's validation criteria have changed in the light of the best practice guidance on the validation of applications published by ODPM in March 2005. Guidance and new application forms are in preparation and the forms have now been launched following discussions with agents.
- Current consultation arrangements provide for a target of 3 days from registration to sending out neighbour notifications and consultations to statutory consultees and allow 21 days for comments on planning applications. The Council does not delay decisions beyond the expiry of the consultation period to wait for responses from statutory consultees. The Council accepts consultee and neighbour comments up to the date of decision.
- An up to date procedures manual (September 2005) is in place.
- Those application files reviewed revealed that there were some delays in the registration of applications. Files were generally well ordered, but would benefit from a pocket for storing plans so that they were more easily found. Proformas for site visits were in use but often there was no date of the visit noted and there was not always sufficient detail in the notes. Record keeping of meetings and telephone calls was patchy. Delegated reports were clearly laid out and identified the relevant policies but did not always identify and discuss all the key planning issues.
- Those committee reports reviewed were variable in quality and although using proforma headings did not always appear to be written to the required standard in respect to setting out clearly the main issues and providing an analysis of them. There was a tendency in some reports to concentrate on repeating policy and reporting representations. On the printed agendas provided there were no site plans included and the reports would benefit from the inclusion of a site plan.
- Performance management systems are in place to monitor performance. The management system tracks overall BVPI 109 performance, officer caseload, case numbers, backlog and cases missing BVPI 109 deadlines but there are no local performance indicators or targets for stages in the process which are currently monitored. The head of development control and the major applications champion monitor progress of all major applications through a weekly officer delegation meeting. At this meeting all 4 week old major applications are discussed and programmed. This meeting includes all relevant officers. Since this was introduced in autumn 2005 all major applications that need to go to Committee for a decision have been programmed within the 13 week target date.
- Overall performance is reported regularly to management, members and officers on at least a quarterly basis. There are no regular 1:1 meetings with officers. Weekly delegation team meetings take place to discuss individual applications and to provide guidance to officers.
- The Council has a recently established a development control agents/developers forum which meets quarterly.

Decision making

- During 2004/05 the planning applications committee met on a monthly cycle and dealt on average with 30 applications per meeting. There were, on average, 3 deferrals, 7 member site visits and 4 overturns of officer recommendation per meeting. These figures are very high. Site visits generally take place before the committee but this level of visits has significant resource implications. There is no provision to refer an application up to a parent committee. There are 32 members of the Council on the committee and with long agendas the meetings can be very long. There are arrangements for the chairman to consider applications suitable for delegation. About

10% of applications each month go to a meeting with the chairman (generally those where there is an objection from the parish council) who will determine whether or not the application needs to go to the committee for determination.

- In 2004/05 the delegation rate was 89%. This compares well with the guideline benchmark of 90%. There has been no real change in delegation from 88% of decisions delegated in 2003/04. The delegation rate at Q2 of 2005/06 was 89%. Delegation has recently been reviewed and a wider scheme has been agreed which is likely to further increase the delegation rate.
- There are standard written procedures for handling section 106 agreements but not unilateral undertakings. There is a set of model clauses available for section 106 agreements but not for unilateral undertakings. Draft heads of terms are not requested with applications. A formula based payment system is in place for section 106 agreements but not unilateral undertakings. The Council does not have an SPG or SPD that provides guidance on section 106 agreements and unilateral undertakings. Grampian conditions are used to expedite a decision and to require a legal agreement. The Council has partly outsourced the work to a firm of solicitors in Cambridge to prepare agreements. No information was provided on the number of applications within both the major and minor categories that required a section 106 agreement or unilateral undertaking and those that were determined within the target period.

ICT and customer service

ICT is used for some stages of the development control process and currently meets the following PARSOL service delivery standards:

- Online pre-application and general planning advice
- Submission of applications on line
- Submission of comments on current planning applications accepted on line
- Planning Committee agenda and associated decisions available on line

ICT is not used for:

- Electronic notifications of new planning applications or significant amendments
- Viewing planning applications on line
- Viewing planning related enforcement complaints and notices
- Submission of enforcement complaints on line

Work was not required to upgrade the existing system to meet BVPI 157 and the Council expected to meet BVPI 157 by the end of December 2005. The Pendleton score was 12 at May 2005 and 18 in December 2005. The Council has signed up to the Planning Portal. More work is, however, required on IT systems and support – some staff still use a typing pool to prepare reports and some delegated reports were hand written.

In terms of customer service:

- The Council does not have a published and adopted development control customer charter.
- There is no dedicated planning reception area and little information was on display and easily available to the public. Due to the location of the authority's offices on a business park there did not appear to be many casual enquiries and reliance for the provision of information is therefore on the website and the contact centre shared with the County and Huntingdon District Council based 6 miles away.
- Pre-application advice is provided for all categories of application. Advice on major, minor and other applications is delivered by the case officer or by appointment. In

addition advice on major applications is available from the development team or 'one stop shop'. There is no duty planner service provided. The usual waiting time for advice from a case officer is 2/3 days, whilst the development team/one stop shop normally sees the applicant within 1 week. Appointments on major and minor applications are usually made within 1 week and on other applications in less than 2 days. There is no charge for this advice.

- Retrieval records are kept in hard copy form for all categories of applications.
- Customer satisfaction levels measured in terms of BVPI 111 stood at 63% in 2003/04 compared to the national figure of 75% for district councils.
- Performance against BVPI 205 suggests the Council is performing well.

Policy framework

The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan Review was adopted in February 2004. The authority is moving straight onto Local Development Framework production. The current timetable for the Local Development Framework aims for a core strategy to be in place by April 2007 and first Local Development Document by April 2007.

Planning Delivery Grant

The Council was awarded £116,667 Planning Delivery Grant for 2003/04. The authority was allocated sums for improvement in performance and housing need growth factor.

The Council was awarded £219,962 Planning Delivery Grant for 2004/05. Details on how it was used are not known. The authority was allocated sums for making timely progress towards adopting a development plan; on account of its contribution to meeting housing demand in the South East area and within one of the Growth Areas. It received no development control improvement award as it made no significant improvement in development control performance in the period October 2002 to September 2003.

A sum of £507,902 was awarded for 2005/06. It is to be used in the planning service for staffing in development control, posts in the major development team and local plans, ICT and to commission external consultants. The authority was allocated sums for making timely progress in plan making; for being located in a growth area; for its on line planning capabilities and for performance improvement in development control in the period October 2003 to September 2004 compared to the previous year. The service has agreement to carry over some of the grant into 2006/07.

South Cambridgeshire has been allocated a total of £355,916 in Planning Delivery Grant for 2006/07, including £111,936 for development control; £13,047 for its on line planning capabilities; and £52,525.00 for plan making.

The scale of improvement since April 2004

From the information available the key areas of improvement since April 2004 would appear to have been:

- Recruitment of specialist staff to deal with the outline application for the expansion of Cambridge
- Recruitment to a new major champions post
- Transfer of functions to the contact centre

- Introduction of regular consultation with planning applicants and others involved in the planning process
- Staff training and development
- Setting up of agents users panel

Between 2004/05 and the end of 2005/06 major applications performance has risen by 22 percentage points, minor applications performance by 10 percentage points and performance on other applications by 1 percentage point.

The authority does not believe that the quality of applications, decision making, the service or development outcomes have been compromised during the 18 months up to September 2005.

Reassessment of previous evaluations

This authority has not been a standards authority in the past and therefore no previous evaluation is available.

Other inspections

There is no relevant Best Value inspection, but an inspection took place in April 2006, which focussed on the planning service. At the time of drafting this report the report had not been published.

The CPA report was published in July 2004 and has found the Council to be a fair authority. The assessment found that there was significant officer and staff capacity to deliver change and improvement and this is being strengthened by a review and restructuring of the organisation but there was a mixed track record of strategic partnership working and performance management was not fully effective. Although planning had been an area of focus for the Council the report noted that targets had not been met in 2002/03 and 2003/04.

Proposals for future improvement

There is a Service Plan for Development Control for 2005/06, which aims to achieve the Council's objectives of Quality of Village Life and Sustainability through planning policy and development control processes, while also providing a prompt and high quality service to applicants and all other involved. In addition there is a Major Applications Action Plan approved by Committee in January 2005. The key proposals for 2005/06 include:

- Identification and implementation of customer service standards
- Acquire and implement software for online receipt and processing of planning applications
- Review administrative processes and reorganise to frontload the registration process to ensure all essential information is required when major applications submitted
- Agree proforma with legal services and standard agreements for section 106 agreements and unilateral undertakings and agree the use of Grampian conditions
- Introduce rigorous time deadlines for completion of agreements
- Develop new set of application forms and provide guidance to developers as to the Council's requirements
- Use of Grampian conditions

Resources allocated to the planning service had been increased since the introduction of Planning Delivery Grant to achieve faster turn round in the short term but also investment in technologies to achieve long term performance improvement. Additional posts were created in development control during 2004/05. However, spending reductions of 18% overall within the Council as a result of capping mean that additional budget and staff resources for planning were not available in 2005/06. In fact resources available for the planning service are being reduced by 6%. All functions within the Council were weighted and then assessed as to what tranche of the budget had to be saved. Development control was given the most weighting and the core service has therefore not been cut this year.

However, the whole budget process took over a year and much senior management time was focussed on this area rather than towards implementing the improvement plan and making improvements to the service. Many posts were left unfilled including an area planning officer post and two experienced planning assistant posts until the budget review was completed. Although the front line service has been maintained the corporate restructuring of the senior management team means that the Chief Executive and Director of Development Services will be leaving the Council in June 2006. This will leave a significant gap in terms of negotiations with Cambridge Horizons the local delivery agency which is crucial to the growth agenda and the handling of affordable housing and travellers issues. There is a rapidly rising population but the tax base is rising more slowly and with a strict percentage increase in Council tax permissible within the capping constraints there are likely to be further rounds of cuts.

The review of administrative processes and reorganisation to frontload administration has been delayed by the redeployment of staff resources as a result of capping and to enable partial migration of some planning functions to the contact system. It is not yet clear therefore whether all the barriers to a sustained improved performance have been identified. The service would benefit from process mapping before setting any interim targets or deadlines for the various stages in the process so that there can be systematic monitoring and early identification of any delays e.g. stage at which a site visit is undertaken, negotiations on a planning application, preparation of reports and so on.

The arrangements for regular review of the Service Plan are not known. A more detailed Improvement Plan with a more direct focus on the actions required to meet BVPI 109 and incorporating outstanding improvements set out in the major applications plan is needed. An updated plan which looks forward to March 2007 and beyond is required and should include process mapping, set out the resources required to achieve any actions, the timescale for their implementation and undertake a risk analysis of the failure to deliver any of the planned improvements.

Sustainability of improvement

There is some uncertainty about the level of resources that will be available to fund the planning service and the resource implications of the actions proposed have not been fully costed and built into the budget. It is not clear whether the authority will be able to continue to fund the service at the current level. The current staff to workload ratio would appear to be realistic. However, being located in a housing growth area the Council receives a disproportionate percentage of “major” major applications which is likely to continue and this will require a high level of resourcing so that the Council will need to monitor its requirements closely. In addition, there is pressure to increase the proportion of affordable housing and the area has more unauthorised travellers’ sites than any other authority. These

issues take up a considerable amount of senior officer time. There is no overall backlog of applications at the moment, but workloads would appear to be increasing.

Until the Council was named as a standards authority for 2005/06 the target for its performance on major applications was set at 40% and it has only very recently accepted that it needed a significant change in its approach and to adopt a higher target. Changes have been implemented and performance in 2005/06 is encouraging but it is not yet clear given the financial issues facing the Council and the forthcoming restructuring whether this level of performance can be sustained. The authority relies heavily on the Planning Delivery Grant to fund part of its staffing costs and progress its IT plan, and Cambridgeshire Horizons to fund posts in the major applications team. Any significant reduction in this funding would reduce the Council's ability to meet the targets.

There is an up to date local plan but customer satisfaction has been below the average. One of the impacts of focussing work on determining applications means that the response time on informal inquiries has increased. This has led to increased customer dissatisfaction, time consuming complaints and delayed the possibility of adding an additional income stream, for example, by encouraging the submission of Certificates of Lawfulness. The Council will need to review the concerns raised in the most recent survey and consider whether it should introduce a duty officer system in line with best practice.

Good practice is demonstrated by the establishment of a major champion's post

Delivery capability

The Chief Executive's response to the PDG questionnaire states that members have viewed planning as a very high priority service for a number of years, appropriate to the context of the level of development growth in the district. A policy decision had, however, been taken by members that quality was more important than speed and accordingly a lower target than the national target had been set. The Council had taken the view that there are a number of special factors that make the national target less easy to achieve than in other authorities. Some of the major applications received are just too large to go through the process within 13 weeks as they require an environmental impact assessment. This is particularly so in a growth area and in the heart of an area of nationally important research based industries. In addition, many applications are called in for determination or are outside of the norm. However, once the Council was named as a standards authorities, the emphasis has changed and there is now recognition of the need to deal with applications expeditiously.

Even if planning resources are maintained at the current level the service is operating on a knife edge due to the forthcoming applications for Northstowe and other major settlements such as Cambridge Airport. If a rival application is submitted for Northstowe the Council will not be adequately resourced to handle it. The scale of the applications is such that the fees do not cover the cost and the cumulative effect on the Council is dramatic. The authority does not have sufficient resources if there is a build up of additional demand because cuts have already been made to non statutory or lower priority services. In particular, there have been cuts to community development which is seen as an essential part of establishing the new communities

Factors which are seen as negatively affecting performance include the capping of the authority's council tax, vacant posts, planning applications submitted which are not fit for purpose, response time from consultees and change management processes.

The Council should review its committee structure and chairman's delegation arrangement: the monthly cycle for planning applications committee may mean that this is a significant barrier in achieving the target. The agendas are long, committee membership is large, there are a high proportion of site visits, and deferrals and overturns (particularly surprising when the local plan is up to date) which may also be impacting on the ability to meet the targets as well as consuming increased resources. In addition, officers are servicing regular chairman's delegation meetings.

The planning service establishment at 30 September 2005 was 62.5 FTE staff with 37.5 in the development control service. At that date the development control service was delivered by the FTE of 22 professional staff, 4.5 technical and 4.5 administrative with 2 managers, no agency staff and consultants, and 2.5 enforcement officers. Vacancy rates for case officers stood at 9% with no administrative vacancies. Skills in the 5 specialist areas are sourced by the service with urban design, ecological, arboricultural and historic environment /listed buildings advice from within the service, and transport and highways advice from the county. Additional urban design advice is provided by consultants but given the scale of development being proposed for the area the Council would benefit from some in-house master planning or urban design advice. In addition, there was no in-house landscape advice during 2005/06, but the post has recently been advertised. The experience profile of development control staff is weighted toward those who are qualified with half having less than 2 years experience and only 3 with more than 10+ years experience. The Council has a training and development strategy providing on average 0.5 days training per FTE post in 2004/05.

Loss of professional staff during 2004/05 was 19 which is high. Information on the loss of administrative, technical and managerial staff is not known. Within the development control service since April 2004 no additional posts have been created. In the 18 months since April 2004, 94 posts were advertised across the Council and these have been filled but there have been difficulties recruiting to the Planning/Fraud Manager post in the housing section. No detailed information was available on the situation within the planning service. The Council has a corporate recruitment and retention strategy and is taking steps to deal with these problems through a recruitment and selection policy, a grading scheme, appraisal scheme and the introduction of workforce development plans. The authority may benefit from developing more specific service proposals geared to the retention of staff within the planning service.

No data was available on the volume of Environmental Impact Assessment, Transport Impact Assessment or section 106 agreements for both minor and major applications and so their impact on workload is not known.

Summary of key issues

Based on the information available it would appear that the key issues inhibiting the Councils ability to sustain performance at the BVPI 109 national targets are:

- Lack of resources to recruit and retain experienced staff
- The current committee structure and delegation scheme

From the information available improvement is needed in respect of the following:

- committee structure and operation needs to be reviewed
- performance management systems to include weekly monitoring of cases at key stages

- the development of a service staff recruitment strategy
- use of the process mapping to identify blockages in the application process and feed into a revised improvement plan looking forward to March 2007 and beyond
- development of guidance on section 106 requirements and a model agreement for section 106/unilateral undertakings
- review of pre-application procedures especially for major applications

Conclusion

In the 12 months to the end of March 2006 the Council had met the 2005/06 standards and national targets for major, minor and other applications.

However, it is not yet clear that this very encouraging performance can be sustained so that the national targets are met at March 2007 and beyond.

Support

The Council has agreed the following prioritised programme of action and support from the Planning Advisory Service would be beneficial:

1. Review current systems and establish a procedure for planning applications from submission of an application, validation and registration, through to decision-making and issuing the decision notice for major, minor and other applications
2. Set up performance management and project systems to assist with the overall control and management of workloads
3. Work with members to develop an improved scheme of delegation to officers
4. Arrange training on building design and urban design
5. Undertake a evaluation of system competence to comply with the 2006 PARSOL standards
6. Assist with developing a customer charter
7. Assist with development of model section 106 agreements and unilateral undertakings
8. Assist with drafting a pre-application protocol including a review of charging for such advice

Interviews and documents used in the preparation of this report

The authority was visited on 30 March 2006 by Alison Blom-Cooper. The visit included meetings with:

Councillor Dr David Bard:	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio holder
Councillor Patrick Orme:	Chairman of Development and Conservation Control Committee
John Ballantyne:	Chief Executive
David Hussell:	Development Services Director
Gareth Jones:	Deputy Development Services Director
David Rush:	Development Control Quality Manager
Colin Tucker:	Head of Legal Services
Bob Morgan:	Majors Champion
Jane Green:	Major Developments Manager
Jem Belcham:	Area Planning Officer

A review of a sample of files determined in the last 6 months covering major, minor and other applications, together with recent agendas, was also completed.

The following documents were examined:

1. Performance Indicators Case Datasheet 2005/06
2. Evaluation of PDG Questionnaire 2005/06
3. Evaluation of Chief Executive's PDG Questionnaire 2005/06
4. BVPI Questionnaire 2005/06
5. PS1 and PS2 returns for July to September 2005, October to December 2005 and January to March 2006
6. Performance Plan 2005
7. Comprehensive Performance Assessment Inspection report: July 2004
8. CPA Improvement Plan: January 2005
9. Service Plan for Development Control: 2005/06
10. Report to Development and Conservation Control Committee: 5 January 2005 and copy of major applications action plan
11. Training and Development Policy agreed by Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder: 24 May 2005
12. Development Services Staff Structure Charts
13. Email of 2 February 2006 with comments on draft report
14. Development Control and Enforcement Manual
15. Cambourne Guidance Note No 1: Planning application checklist
16. Draft application forms
17. Agenda for Chairman's delegation meeting on 16 March 2006
18. Committee papers for Development and Conservation Control Committee on 1 February and 1 March 2006
19. Self assessment of performance against Pendleton criteria
20. Delegated powers
21. Email of 14 June 2006 with comments on the draft report

Notes:

Backlog – An authority is considered to have a backlog of applications, in a quarter, where it did not determine at least as many applications as it received and the number on hand at the end of the quarter exceeds the number received or the number determined (whichever is greater) by more than 10%. In order to determine whether there is a static backlog, declining backlog or growing backlog the trend is reviewed over the last four quarters.

Caseloads – This has been calculated using the number of applications received in a year (only those included in the PS1/2 return) and divided by the number of **established** FTE posts for that year, ignoring current vacancies or any short term support. A sustainable caseload has been taken to be around 150 applications per case officer. A sustainable enforcement caseload has been taken to be around 150 complaints per case officer per annum.

Grampian Conditions - This expression derives from the decision in Grampian Regional Council v City of Aberdeen (1984) and in essence it provides that a condition precluding the implementation of development permitted by a planning permission until some step has been taken is valid. There have been a number of subsequent High Court decisions on this point, in particular British Railways Board v SSE in 1994. As a result of these it is lawful for a local planning authority to grant planning permission, even in respect of land not within the planning applicant's ownership, subject to a negative condition restricting its implementation, in whole or in part, until some event has occurred.