

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning & Sustainable Communities
Portfolio Holder Meeting

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PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PERFORMANCE REPORT

Purpose

1. To provide the Portfolio Holder with a performance update for 2009-10 (1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010) by Planning & Sustainable Communities. This report shows how Local and National Indicators, Councils' Aims and Actions have been met.
2. Planning & Sustainable Communities were asked to find savings of £165,000(sic) for 2009/10 and this target has largely been achieved.
3. Planning & Sustainable Communities has delivered a strong performance against its targets.

Recommendations and Reasons

4. The Portfolio Holder is requested to note achievements to date and improvements needed to meet performance targets moving forward.

Executive Summary

5. Government targets for NI157A, B and C have been met, together with the Council Aims and Actions.
6. Due to a technical error on the Corvu system, data in respect of: BV204, SP944, SP902, NI157A, NI157B, NI157C, SH320 and SP921 are showing incorrectly. This report details the true traffic lighting based on actual figures and is shown in Appendix II.

Background

7. Government targets for NI157A, B and C were successfully met during this financial year. By achieving the Government set targets, there should be no abatement of next years Housing Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) award.

	Government Target	Internal Target	Actual
NI157A Major planning applications in 13 weeks	60%	71%	67%
NI157B Minor planning applications in 8 weeks	65%	71%	77%
NI157C Other planning applications in 8 weeks	80%	86%	83%

8. The following Council Actions have been met and continue to be delivered:

(a) **Action 13 - Parish Council and Others Forum**

Set up a forum of parish councils, housing associations and others by Sep 2009 to examine the workings of our exception sites policy in light of recent experience and current market conditions.

Background continued ...

(i) **Exception Sites Parish Review Group**

This has been set up with Housing as a task and finish group (to complete its work in the financial year); the first meeting was held on Monday 18 January 2010 with a further 2 meetings due to be held in 2010. Further information can be found via the web:

<http://www.scambs.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/esprg.htm>

(ii) **Planning Parish Forum**

The first meeting was held on 19 January 2009 and continues to meet every six months. To date, the Forum has achieved:

- Briefing notes on:
 - Delegation system
 - How parish planning consultation should properly be dealt with
 - The process of compulsory purchase (CPO)
 - Noise
- Presentations on:
 - Biodiversity, planning and communities
 - Trees and landscape
 - Changes in the planning appeal process
 - Public Art Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
 - Open Space SPD
 - Conservation SPD
 - Enforcement
 - Responding to Planning Applications
 - Listed Building SPD
 - Biodiversity SPD

The Parishes have been very positive about the Forum as they see it as a chance to learn about different areas of planning, understanding the SPDs being adopted, S106 and provides them with the opportunity to discuss any issues/problems they may be experiencing. The difference the Forum has made is that it was used as a vehicle to give the Parishes input into developing the new system of delegation, has provided a better level of understanding and has seen an improvement in relations with officers. Further information can be found via the web: <http://www.scambs.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/ParishForum/default.htm>

(b) **Action 14a - Retirement homes in new major developments**

Include an appropriate proportion of retirement homes in each new major development

Two sites have been approved during this financial year:

- 101 retirement units for over 55's on the former EDF depot and training centre, Ely road, Milton
- 76 close care units for over 75's on land to the north of Wellbrook Way, Girton

(c) **Action 34 - Innovative working with developers**

Exploring innovative ways of working with developers

An Agents Forum was set up towards the end of 2007 and is held every six months. Attendance has grown so that while the initial meetings were held in a Committee room, they now have to be held in the Council Chamber. Thus far, Agents for the major growth sites have not attended and this should be included in a general review of the panel, suggested to take place towards the end of 2010. The Forum is used for consultations for various services ie pre-application charging and has proved successful in terms of providing information and obtaining valuable feedback from Agents. Further information can be found via the web:

<http://www.scambs.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/agentsForum.htm>

Background continued ...

9. Pre-application charging came into effect on 5 October 2009 and generated the £20,500 revenue that was originally anticipated; £20,640.50 by 31 March 2010. The service has proved successful in terms of quality advice, reasonable fees and working with applicants to achieve high standards of development. This is evident by the quality of applications being received (officer comments taken on board and addressed, substantial plans, design & access statements enclosed where applicable etc) and verbal positive feedback received from those who have received advice. Pre-application advice has also proved successful in terms of validating an application due to not having to contact the Applicant for missing data etc as all information is enclosed, together with addressing Officer concerns, policy and highways issues where applicable. Further information can be found via the web: <http://www.scams.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/pre-AppAdvice.htm>
10. A review of pre-application charging will be undertaken in the Autumn to include a wider range of areas ie Conservation, Building Control and Major Developments.
11. A breakdown of performance is provided below:

Red Indicators

- (a) SH320 - Affordable housing planning permissions
The target has not been met as outline planning permission for 380 dwellings at the former Bayer Crop Science site, Hauxton, granted in February 2010 did not secure 40% affordable housing as the preference was for the provision of a much needed 70 unit extra care scheme which has been secured on this site instead of general needs housing. Also a development of 10 dwellings at Gamlingay did not secure any affordable housing as the outline planning permission was determined against the Local Plan policies and the development did not meet the affordable housing triggers.
- (b) SP938 - Number of days to process 'others'
This has not been met due to delays in the registration process, vacant posts being frozen in advance of the planned improvements to work practices, improvements to the IT system and staff resources being diverted to developing the new work practices and acquiring and then installing the new planning IT system.
- (c) P10 - Core Strategy - Initial Consultation and Sustainability Appraisal
Planning Policy will take forward a revised timetable as a new local development scheme was agreed in March 2010. The new timetable is consistent with the revised timetable for the East of England plan.
- (d) P9 - Core Strategy - Preparation and Scoping of Sustainability Appraisal
Planning Policy will take forward a revised timetable as a new local development scheme was agreed in March 2010. The new timetable is consistent with the revised timetable for the East of England plan.
- (e) P15 - Gypsy & Travellers DPD - Initial Consultation and Sustainability Appraisal
Additional stage of consultation required entitled 'Issues and Options 3'. A revised timetable is included in local development schemes 2010-13. Approved in March 2010.
- (f) P20 - Planning obligations SPD - Adoption and Publication
This is in progress, with joint working with Cambridge City Council, linked with CIL and is due to be completed June 2011.
- (g) P5 - Statement of Community Involvement - Initial Consultation
The regulations for the production of a SCI changed in April 2009 and it is no longer necessary to do an initial consultation. SCI was adopted in January 2010.

Background continued ...

Amber Indicators

- (h) BC4 - Number of inspections and time taken
This information will be reported at the meeting.
- (i) SP922 - Initial notice submission response
This information will be reported at the meeting.
- (j) SP902 - Delegations to officers
From the PS1/2 reports, this measure was met in the last two quarters. However, as performance was 91% in Apr-Jun and 94% in Jul-Sep, performance is slightly less than anticipated.
- (k) NI157A - Major planning applications in 13 weeks
Delays in the registration process reduces the time Officers have to determine an application.
- (l) NI157C - Other planning applications in 8 weeks
Delays in the registration process reduces the time Officers have to determine an application.
- (m) SP921 - Householder applications in 8 weeks
Delays in the registration process continue to impact determining minor applications as it reduces the time Officers have to determine an application.
- (n) SP937 - Number of days to process 'Minors'
Delays in the registration process, vacant posts being frozen in advance of the planned improvements to work practices, improvements to the IT system and staff resources being diverted to developing the new work practices and acquiring and then installing the new planning IT system.
- (o) SP945 - Average days for Prior Notifications
Delays in the registration process, vacant posts being frozen in advance of the planned improvements to work practices, improvements to the IT system and staff resources being diverted to developing the new work practices and acquiring and then installing the new planning IT system.

Green Indicators

- (p) All green indicators are completed or on target.

12. The below noted Council Aims have been completed within the agreed timescales:

- (a) **DC1 - Meeting with Parish Councils**
Introduce a new system of meetings to which all Parish Councils will be invited by March 10
First meeting held on 19 January 2009 and continues to meet every six months.
- (b) **DC2 - Duty Officer System**
Establish a Duty Officer System by June 2009
System went live on 1 February 2009 operating from 9-5pm Monday to Friday. The system has proved very successful as it has met customer expectation by providing direct access to a qualified planning officer and has seen fewer complaints. However, the increased demand on the service will need to be reviewed due to the reduction in officers to find efficiency savings. Further information is available via the web:
<http://www.scams.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/dutyOfficer.htm>
- (c) **DC3 - Design Guides for 'major majors'**
Require the submission of Design Guides with applications for 'major major' developments by Sep 2009 (Arbury Park report recommendation)
The Council adopted (subject to no call in) the District Design Guide SPD on 2 March 2010. The adopted SPD takes account of any representations received during the six-week period of public consultation undertaken in October-December 2009. Further information is available via the web:
<http://www.scams.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/DistrictPlanning/LocalDevelopmentFramework/SPDs/DistrictDesignGuideSPD.htm>

Background continued ...

(d) **DC4 - S106 obligation database**

Increase staff resource to develop, launch and utilise the S106 obligation database by June 2009

The District Council appointed a Section 106 Implementation Officer in January 2009. The role is now secured via new policy requiring funding from Section 106 contributions across all new developments. The Section 106 monitoring database was created using Microsoft Access in January 2009 and has since been populated with circa 500 of the most recent legal agreements. Plans are in place to capture all remaining Section 52 and Section 106 agreements. The Section 106 Implementation Officer works closely with colleagues in Housing/Council Tax and Building Control to monitor the status of developments and agreements.

(e) **DC5 - Protocol for pre-application discussions**

Prepare a protocol for pre-application discussions, by June 2009 following discussions and agreement at the Agents Forum

Pre-application discussions were available by June 2009. Pre-application charging came into effect on 5 October 2009 and generated the £20,500 revenue that was originally anticipated; £20,640.50 by 31 March 2010.

Further information is available via the web:

<http://www.scams.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/pre-AppAdvice.htm>

Considerations

13. The introduction of the planning computer system will need to be carefully managed in order to maintain performance and improve service to our customers.
14. A modified form of systems thinking has been applied to the Development Control process and a new way of working identified and agreed. This will be a radical departure and will result in the Registration team being integrated within the area development control teams.
15. Once the recommendations have been implemented, it is expected that officers will have more time to determine applications. To help achieve the necessary savings and to resource the DC teams, the Appeals team will also have to be lost.
16. Short term measures such as transferring staff resources are in place, or are being considered to ameliorate the expected dip in performance. However as the new method of working is introduced and the IT system, it is planned that we should be able to meet our performance targets despite the cuts in staff resource. The challenge will be to make good the anticipated dip in performance over the remainder of the year.
17. A detailed review of pre-application charging across Planning and New Communities will see an increase in revenue, closer working of departments, a smoother process and quality applications.
18. In the last national survey of customer satisfaction in 2007, 67% of applicants were reportedly very or quite satisfied with the service provided. Over the last two years our own sample survey of customer satisfaction (based on the national survey questions) showed a significant improvement to 83% and from the comments made by customers on their returns, factors such as the Agents Forum and the Duty Officer System have played a part in this improvement. Regrettably there was a decline in the last quarter and from the supporting comments, this is a reflection in the difficulties reported above in registering applications.

Options

19. There are no options to consider at this moment in time.

Implications

20. Financial	A financial report was submitted by Finance, outlining spend to date. Financial savings have been met in the sum of £165,000.
Legal	There are no legal implications.
Staffing	Staff meetings are being held during the planning restructure. Low staff morale and stress levels are being monitored.
Risk Management	Performance may drop during the Planning restructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Working to new processes▪ Pressure to deal with the change including applying for new jobs whilst maintaining a high level of service/determining applications on time▪ New computer system
Equal Opportunities	The Council is committed to providing equal opportunities.

Consultations

21. All relevant planning sections were consulted with the production of this report.

Effect on Strategic Aims

22.	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all. A customer satisfaction survey is sent to every other applicant once a decision has been issued, providing the Council with feedback.
	Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all. Planning is critical to South Cambridgeshire continuing to be a safe and healthy place for people to live, ensuring good quality development and community infrastructure.
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live. Planning is critical to South Cambridgeshire continuing to be a safe and healthy place for people to live, ensuring good quality development and community infrastructure.
	Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all. Encouraging development proposals for small businesses and providing free pre-application advice for micro businesses up to 9 employees.
	Commitment to providing a voice for rural life. An Agents Forum is held every six months to share good practice and provides training on 'what makes a good development'.

Conclusions/Summary

23. Performance, in terms of budget and local and national indicators has delivered:
- (a) National Indicators for NI157A, B and C have been met:
- (i) NI157A - Major applications determined in 13 weeks
Exceeded Government target by 7%
Internal target of 71% was not met by 4%
 - (ii) NI157B - Minor applications determined in 8 weeks
Exceeded Government target by 12%
Exceeded internal target of 71% by 6%
 - (iii) NI157C Other applications determined in 8 weeks
Exceeded Government target by 3%
Internal target of 86% was not met by 3%

Conclusions/Summary continued ...

- (b) Council Actions completed:
 - (i) Action 13 - Parish Council and Others Forum
 - (ii) Action 14a - Retirement homes in new major developments
 - (iii) Action 34 - Innovative working with developers.

- (c) Council Aims completed:
 - (i) DC1 - Meeting with Parish Councils
 - (ii) DC2 - Duty Officer System
 - (iii) DC3 - Design Guides for 'major majors'
 - (iv) DC4 - S106 obligation database
 - (v) DC5 - Protocol for pre-application discussions.








24. Feedback from our customer survey and the joint panels referred to above, support the view that there are improving relations with our Parish Councils, Housing Associations, and Agents. The feedback on the Duty Officer System also suggests that we have improved our service to Householders. However the challenge in the current year is to make good the slippage we are currently experiencing while achieving the necessary savings.

Background Papers: True year end figures for: BV204, SP944, SP902, NI157A, NI157B, NI157C, SH320 and SP921 (Appendix I)

Corvu detailed performance report (Appendix II)

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**True Year End Figures for:
BV204, SP944, SP902,
NI157A, NI157B, NI157C, SH320 and SP921**

Measure	Target	Actual	Performance
BV204 % of appeals allowed	<36%	33%	
SP944 Customers satisfaction with planning application process	73%	83%	
SP902 Delegations to Officers	95%	94%	
NI157A Major planning applications in 13 weeks	71%	67%	
NI157B Minor planning applications in 8 weeks	71%	77%	
NI157C Other planning applications in 8 weeks	86%	83%	
SH320 Affordable housing planning permissions	40%	33%	
SP921 Householder applications in 8 weeks	90%	87%	