

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**REPORT TO:** Planning Portfolio Holder

14 December 2010

**AUTHOR/S:** Corporate Manager, Planning & New Communities

### PLANNING PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2

#### Purpose

1. This report outlines the progress made by the Planning Service in meeting its targets, as set out in the published 2010/11 Service Plan.
2. This is not a key decision.

#### Recommendations and Reasons

3. To note the progress made to date against the local and national indicators and action taken on exception areas.
4. This is the second of four quarterly performance reports over 2010/11.

#### Development Control

5. The performance for Development Control, including listed buildings is shown in the table below:

	<b>Govt Target</b>	<b>Local Target</b>	<b>Apr'09-Mar'10</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Qtr Apr-Jun</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr Jul-Sep</b>	<b>Sept-10</b>	<b>Oct-10</b>	<b>Nov-10</b>
Majors-13 weeks	60%	>71%	67%	83%	35%	None	None	None
Minors- 8 weeks	65%	>71%	77%	64%	40%	20%	29%	41%
Others	85%	>86%	83%	71%	52%	40%	40%	49%
Customer satisfaction		>73%	83%	68%	56%	Not available	Not available	Not available
Appeals		<36%	35%	42%	39%	36%	25%	awaited

6. There has been a significant drop in performance during this quarter. The coming together of the implementation of the new staffing structure, with the appointment of three new managers and introduction of new working practices combined with the 'go live' of the new Planning IT system has been the cause. It is important to note that the statistics show performance over the previous two months, and therefore the issues in August and September will impact on Quarter 3 performance. There were delays in registering and processing applications and in issuing decision notices. Analysis of the data has shown that most applications have been processed in 13 weeks, so that although we have provided a slower service than usual, there has been a throughput of decisions. During October and November, there has been gradual and steady improvement from a low-point in September.

7. It is also worth noting that there has been a significant increase in the number of planning applications as the year has progressed. Extrapolating the number of applications forward from those received by end of November and comparing with the last calendar year, we predict an increase in applications from 1757 in 2009 to 1935 in 2010. Officers also have additional work with the Government's introduction of new forms of application for the discharge of conditions and non-material amendments.
8. Pre-application charging has generated an income of £28,218 up to the end of November and this represent 72% of the predicted income for the financial year (i.e. £39,000) and so we are likely to exceed the forecast.

### **Enforcement**

9. Enforcement cases are slightly down overall at 371 year-to-date (-3.0%- or 12cases fewer than 2009). Overall, the number of investigations remains consistently high when compared to previous years.
10. The number of enforcement notices for the period January to November inclusive totalled 26, that represent 5.6% against a target of 5%. During the second quarter only one enforcement notice was issued, representing 0.9%. Other information was provided in a report to Planning Committee on 6 October 2010 under Agenda item 19.
11. In addition to the above, we are leading a joint agency project regarding caravan sites situated within Fen Road, Chesterton that are predominately used by migrant workers.

### **Appeals**

12. In the period under review, the Council received the decision on the Linton Wind Farm and this was a comprehensive dismissal of the appeal and complete award of costs to the Council. This was particularly satisfying because we had strongly advised the applicant against appealing prematurely.

### **Building Control**

13. The building control service has maintained its current statutory performance indicators of 99% plans approved and same day inspections, but has not achieved the non-statutory 15 working day target for plan checking and meaningful responses on plan submission. This is being addressed by changes in working practice and should be back on track by January.

### **Conservation**

14. Public Consultation on the Papworth Everard Conservation Area ended on 18 October, and once the responses have been evaluated, it will be taken forward in the New Year.
15. As a priority, and in response to feedback from users of the service, we are implementing an improvement plan for conservation. As a first step, internal processes/work practices are being reviewed to improve the speed and accuracy of determining joint applications for listed buildings. There will also be steps to enhance the focus on customer service.
16. From 1<sup>st</sup> July – 30 September, there were 134 applications for Tree Preservation Orders.

## Update on the APAS Planning System

17. The system went live in July and had a number of teething issues that were not evident from initial 'closed' system testing. Many of the issues were based in the public web environment relating to how pages were served up and the public's ability to search for applications. In total there were 31 individual system faults. By mid-September, the vast majority of issues had been resolved, helped by a series of liaison meetings and with close collaboration between staff in the Council's Planning and ICT Departments and with the supplier, Swift LG.
18. In total there are three issues that remain outstanding as technical faults. These are:
  - Ability for consultees to find their address through searching SCDC's gazetteer
  - Numbering sequences for applications in the pre-application module are not always sequential
  - Numbering sequences for applications in the enforcement module are not always sequential.
19. The supplier, Swift, is actively seeking solutions to these issues, and we expect them to be resolved by the end of December. It should be noted that the SCDC website performs well in comparison to the sites of other local authorities using Swift, and that we are one of only four authorities whose officers are benefitting from features only available in the latest database version.
20. The previous Planning ICT system, Devcon, allowed plans applications to be viewed on a local map. This feature is not available from Swift. The Council has separately procured a system to restore to restore this function, and this will be available in February.
21. In November members from the Planning Department visited Dudley Council and attended the Working Group AGM. These visits have been very helpful, and enabled officers to feel more confident and make better use of the system. Refresher training has been organised for key members of staff in each team, and is planned to start 14 December. Twelve Parish Councils have volunteered to join a Planning IT forum to help plan further improvements and improve liaison. The first meeting will be held in January.

## Council Actions

22. The Planning Portfolio was assigned two Council actions for 2010/11:

### **Action 07**

**We will promote the district to new businesses by March 2011**

23. The following progress has been made during this quarter:
  - a. Workshops to support business, including start-ups, delivered in partnership with Business Link is ongoing
  - b. The Commercial property database is progressing. The search engine has been launched for use on the business pages of the Council's website
  - c. Further work is underway to link the commercial property database to the marketing actions
  - d. Work on the marketing plan continues
  - e. The Council is working with colleagues in Hunts, East Cambs and Fenland on broadband access. Part of the aim is to enable business start-up
  - f. The Economic Strategy is due to be launched for Consultation. Various actions are proposed to support business and the council action to be open to new business.

- g. A new officer forum that includes the Economic Development Officer has been introduced to give Development Control (DC) Officers the advice they need to support proposals that may otherwise be rejected as being contrary to policy

### **Action 08**

#### **We will support local people to establish community orchards by March 2011**

- 24. A project plan is being undertaken to deliver our target of at least 6 community orchards during 2010/11. At present we are predicting that we will deliver 8 by March 2011, with schemes coming forward for the winter planting season. The team have been working with different groups, parish councils, and tree wardens. Two of the schemes involve restorative management rather than the creation of a new orchard or the restoration of a historic orchard. Two schemes have been supported with grants. On 5 December we are held a Community Orchards training seminar with the East of England Apples and Orchard Project with 12 parishes represented.

### **Implications**

25. Financial	A separate budget report is presented to the meeting.
Legal	There are no legal implications.
Staffing	The Planning restructure is complete. Temporary staff have supported the service during the introduction of the new planning ICT system. The costs are within the overall approved budget for the service.
Risk Management	A comprehensive risk register is maintained and accompanies the 2010/11 Service Plan. The Service is a contributor/key partner with other LAs, namely Cambridge City and Cambridgeshire County Councils.
Equal Opportunities	Not applicable.
Climate Change	Not applicable.

### **Consultations**

- 26. All Section Managers were consulted in the compilation of this report.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

#### **27. Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all**

- a. The customer satisfaction survey has reviewed so that we are confident that we are asking the right questions to help us improve the service.

#### **28. Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all**

- a. Pre-application advice encourages good quality developments.

#### **29. Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live**

- a. Working with Applicants to encourage good quality development.

#### **30. Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all**

- a. Encouraging development proposals for small businesses and providing free pre-application advice for micro businesses up to 9 employees.

#### **31. Commitment to providing a voice for rural life**

- a. An Agents Forum is held every six months, sharing good practice and providing training on 'what makes a good development'. The last Agents Forum held on 22 September provided positive feedback.
- b. The 2nd Meeting of the Exception Sites Parish Review Group" took place on the 8th November 2010, and presentations were made by Circle Anglia on standards in affordable housing and the County Council's experience as a landowner and provider of 'exception sites'. There was a positive feedback from the 30 or so Parishes attending, and it was reported that since the first meeting a number of additional parishes are actively exploring a possible scheme in their villages.
- c. The next Planning Parish forum is scheduled for January

### **Conclusions / Summary**

32. Performance dropped during the summer and autumn months, however it is now rising again.
33. The service is working well to achieve the Council Aims outlined above.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

Service Plan 2010/11  
PS1/2 report  
Corvu performance report

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