

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change
Portfolio Holder

8 July 2011

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director, Operational Services

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2010/11 YEAR END REPORT

1. This report outlines the progress made by the Planning & Sustainable Communities Service in meeting its targets, as set out in the published 2010/11 Service Plan.
2. The report provides information on performance for the full year April 2010 – March 2011.
3. This is not a key decision because it is a monitoring report.

Recommendation

4. That the Portfolio Holder for Planning notes the progress made for 2010/11 against the local and national indicators, and action taken on exception areas.

Reasons for Recommendations

5. This is a monitoring report enabling the Portfolio Holder to monitor and review performance.

Considerations

Development Control and Conservation Applications

6. The performance outcome for planning applications managed by Development Control, New Communities Planning Team and Conservation is shown in the table below. The table shows the national government target, the local target that was agreed April 2010, performance for 2009/10, each quarter 2010/11, and full-year results 2010/11.
7. A large major application is an application for 200 homes or more, with floor space over 10,000 square metres. A small-scale major application is an application for 10– 199 homes, with floor space of 1,000–9,999 square metres. Minor developments involve the construction of 1-9 homes. The number of major applications is relatively small.
8. The category 'others' includes listed buildings and other householder applications, as well as non-material amendments and discharge of conditions.
9. We have participated in the Planning Advisory Service benchmarking project, and through this project received customer satisfaction figures for Quarter 4 as shown below.

| | Govt Target | Local Target | Apr'09-Mar'10 | 1st Qtr Apr-Jun | 2nd Qtr Jul-Sep | 3rd Qtr Oct-Dec | 4th Qtr Jan-Mar | Apr 10 – Mar 11 |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Majors (large)-16 weeks | 60% | >71% | 67% | 100% | None | 80% | 100% | 89% |
| Majors (small) – 13 weeks | 60% | >71% | 67% | 83% | 35% | 22% | 50% | 43% |
| Minors- 8 weeks | 65% | >71% | 77% | 65% | 40% | 37% [%] | 43% | 46% |
| Others | 85% | >86% | 83% | 74% | 53% | 57% [%] | 57% [%] | 60% |
| Customer satisfaction | | >73% | 83% | 68% | 56% | Not available | 57% | 60% |
| Appeals (lost) | | <36% | 35% | 42% | 39% | 36% | 15% | 26.3% |

10. We received 1,959 planning applications, across all categories, during 2010/11. The comparative figure for 2009/10 was 1,794. The number of applications in each category was greater in the last year, and gives an indication that the market is improving. The breakdown by type of application is shown in the table below:

| | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| Large Major | 12 | 18 |
| Small Major | 43 | 61 |
| Minor | 467 | 503 |
| Others | 1251 | 1282 |

Note: There are a small number of categories such as non-material amendments that do not feature in the table above as they are not included in government returns, but are included in the overall total number of applications.

11. Last year was a period of major change in the planning service: with a restructure, new planning IT system and new ways of working. The changes impacted negatively upon performance throughout the year.
12. There are a number of indications that the service now has the building blocks in place to significantly improve performance. Since August, new planning applications have been listed on the planning system and passed to the team leader for allocation on the day they are received. Team leaders are now allocating cases promptly to planning officers who work closely with technical support officers to check each application is valid and begin the process of case management. For the last three months, registration has been done quickly, and decision notices issued without delay. Poor performance in the last quarter has been due to delays in decision-making. There are measures in place to tackle this, including improved performance data from the planning IT system.

13. The Council's success rate with appeals has improved through the year, and during the last quarter only 15% appeals were lost.
14. 2300m of hedges were grant aided in the year and 100 trees planted. 100% of tree applications were dealt with within target.
15. In the year, repairs to 20 historic buildings were grant aided and 3 buildings taken off the 'at risk' register. Feedback from listed building consent applicants recorded 100% satisfaction in the last quarter of the year. 50% of listed building and conservation area consents were dealt within time in the quarter against a target of 80%. Staff absence and other work pressures have prevented work on Conservation Area Appraisals except for further stakeholder engagement on and development of the Papworth Everard Appraisal.
16. The second consultation on the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy is underway following significant input from officers. The Farmland Museum/Denny Abbey has been developing its forward plan, which will reflect potential changes to funding and aim to maximise the potential of the site.
17. There were 501 enforcement cases opened during 2010. From January–March 2011, 116 new cases were opened indicating that the number of investigations remains consistently high.
18. For the period January-December 2010, there were 21 enforcement notices issued.

Building Control

19. Building Control continues to achieve all statutory targets. In the last quarter, the team decided 100% of applications within the two-month deadline. There were 290 applications in the last quarter, of which 115 were full plans applications. Over 99% of inspections were carried out within the same day period. Against the target of 15 working days, 45% of plans have been checked.
20. The total number of fee earning applications during 2010/11 was 1082, compared to 976 in 2009/10. The number of disabled adaptation applications fell to 149 in 2010/11 from 165 during 2009/10.

Council Actions

21. Planning was assigned two Council actions for 2010/11:

Action 7

We will promote the district to new businesses by March 2011

22. The following action was taken during the year:
 - a. The Economic Strategy 2010 – 2015 was approved by the Portfolio Holder in March 2011. Actions to support businesses were implemented through the range of measures agreed under the Economic Downturn programme.
 - b. Work on Investment Development, underpinning existing investment and attracting new investment has commenced.
 - c. 25 workshops to support business, including start-ups, were delivered in partnership with Business Link.

- d. The Council is working with colleagues in Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire and Fenland to seek to improve broadband access.
- e. The Step-Up business competition was run during summer 2010.
- f. The Economic Development Panel, an officer forum that includes Economic Development, Development Control (DC) and Planning Policy was set up and offers advice to planning officers considering applications that relate to businesses.

Action 8

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

- 23. We met our target to provide 6 Community Orchards during 2010/11. The projects included restoration and planting at the Harston Community Orchard, and new orchards at Landbeach, Melbourn, Coton, Impington and Rampton. Grants have been given for three of the orchards. We have worked with Emmaus at Landbeach and Cambridgeshire, Past, Present and Future at Coton. We have run and supported community training and planting events and the projects have involved local volunteers.

Conclusions / Summary

- 24. Some areas of performance suffered during 2010/11 in the service areas that were impacted by the introduction of the new IT planning systems and the restructure. A key priority for 2011/12 is to raise the speed of decision-making for planning applications and increase customer satisfaction.
- 25. The number of planning and building control applications is higher during 2010/11 than the previous year, and this gives an indication that the market is improving.

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

Contact Officer: Jo Mills- Corporate Manager Planning and New Communities
Telephone: (01954) 713350