

**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 3
JUNE 2008**

**SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE REVIEW FOR PERIOD JANUARY 2008 TO
MARCH 2008**

BY: DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 The reason for the report is to: -

- (a) Provide the Committee with an update of performance against indicators relating to the Development Services department;
- (b) Provide the Committee with an overview of Environmental Services complaints

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Sections F(1), F(2), F(4), F(13) and F(20) of the Council's Administrative Scheme

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Committee is requested to scrutinise and note the update for performance indicator and complaints information.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Statutory and other performance indicators provide assessment of Service delivery against set targets and also form part of the Performance Management Framework. Targets were approved at Environmental Services Committee on 10 October 2007 (para 15 of the Minute refers). It was also agreed at this meeting that appendices to this report would be made available in the Members library (appendices para 14 (iv) of the minute refers).

| Development Services | Number of PIs | Green - Performing well | Amber - Close Monitoring | Red - Action Required |
|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| Building Standards | 5 | | | 5 (note 5.1.1) |
| Development Control | 3 | | 2 | 1 (note 5.1.2) |
| Environmental Health | 8 | 4 | 3 | 1 (note 5.1.3) |
| Planning and Development | 1 | 1 | | |
| Trading Standards | 8 | 5 | 3 | |
| Total | 25 | 10 (40%) | 8 (32%) | 7 (28%) |

Out of a total of 25 indicators relating to Development Services, 18 (72%) are achieving, or within an acceptable threshold of, targets for the quarter. Seven (28%) of indicators are significantly below targets. These indicators are discussed in section 5.

4.2 Complaints

| Type of Complaint | Development Services | | Direct Services | | Environmental Services Total | |
|--------------------|----------------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|
| | Quarter 4 total | 2007/08 Total | Quarter 4 total | 2007/08 Total | Quarter 4 total | 2007/08 Total |
| General Stage 1 | 3 | 35 | 3 | 28 | 6 | 63 |
| General Stage 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 7 |
| MSP | 3 | 27 | 3 | 28 | 6 | 55 |
| Councillor Stage 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Councillor Stage 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Ombudsman | 2 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 8 |
| Total | 8 | 73 | 7 | 62 | 15 | 135 |

| | Quarter 4 total | 2007/08 Total | Quarter 4 total | 2007/08 Total | Quarter 4 total | 2007/08 Total |
|---|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Percentage acknowledged within 3 days (Target = 100%) | 100% (8 of 8) | 86% (63 of 73) | 71% (5 of 7) | 90% (56 of 62) | 87% (13 of 15) | 88% (119 of 135) |
| Percentage responded to within 20 days (Target = 85%) | 50% (4 of 8) | 86% (63 of 73) | 86% (6 of 7) | 86% (53 of 62) | 67% (10 of 15) | 84% (114 of 135) |
| Percentage part or fully upheld | 0% | 4% (3 of 73) | 14% (1 of 7) | 10% (6 of 62) | 7% (1 of 15) | 7% (9 of 135) |

Acknowledgement times for 2007/08 are below target for Environmental Services as a result of the 3-day acknowledgement deadline having been missed for 16 out of 135 complaints.

Performance for response times is significantly below target for the quarter for Development Services, and this drop has lowered both the quarter 4 and 2007/08 Environmental Services totals below target levels. It should be noted, however, that this drop relates to 4 complaints which were responded to after the 20-day deadline.

5. Comments on Exceptions

5.1 Performance Indicators

5.1.1 Development Services – Building Standards.

Response levels are below targets for all parts of the service that are recorded. This level of performance can be attributed principally to understaffing. Although a vacancy was successfully filled in mid August 2007, shortly after taking up post the Officer was absent due to long-term sickness. A qualified Building Standards Officer also left the section in December 2007.

The Building Standards Officer on long-term sick leave has now embarked upon a phased return to work and the vacancy arising in December has been filled as of 1st May 2008. As the Officers appointed to these posts had little Building Standards experience, training implications will prevent a significant improvement in performance levels being possible in the short term. The additional post of Building Standards Officer remains vacant, as no suitable applicants were attracted to the post when advertised in April 2008.

An increase in the number of applications received was seen for all categories over the quarter. In particular, the number of “mid-range” applications received has shown a significant increase over previous quarters. The increase in the “major” applications category included a number of very complex proposals. The number of amended plans received remains very high, and has increased significantly compared to previous quarters. The Service has been meeting with agents to raise awareness of the current situation and to encourage them to submit better quality plans and drawings. It was intended that this would reduce the number of attempts taken to attain compliance with Building Regulations but this has not had the effect desired to date. The need to deal with such numbers of amended plans has major implications for performance throughout all other categories. Overall, these increases have had a serious impact on an already under-resourced team.

The increased number of applications is reflected within the fee income received by Building Standards. Income for 2007/08 exceeded the budget prediction by £171,996.62.

Although, performance for all categories is significantly below target, it should be noted that over the quarter the average time taken to respond to applications was as follows;

- the average time taken to respond to a completion certificate application was 10 days (average for 2007/08 was 12 days).
- the average time taken to respond to fast track applications was 12 days (average for 2007/08 was 9 days).
- the average time taken to respond to mid-range applications was 38 days (average for 2007/08 was 30 days).
- the average time taken to respond to major applications was 38 days (average for 2007/08 was 32 days).
- the overall average time taken to respond to applications was 30 days (average for 2007/08 was 23 days).

5.1.2 Development Services – Development Control.
Planning application decision times are below target for the “non-householder” category. One post in the Development Management Team has remained vacant since October 2007 despite being advertised twice with no suitable candidates coming forward. This situation has now been compounded by the departure of another member of staff at the end of April.

In order to address these staffing issues, future vacancies will be advertised to widen out the scope to include trainee planning officers and possibly school leavers, who could then be trained accordingly. Interviews are scheduled to take place on 22 May with the intention of filling these posts. The possible secondment of planning staff from the Planning and Development Team is

- 5.1.3 Development Services – Environmental Health.
Performance is below target for the food safety “more than 12 months” inspection category. This is due to the Service prioritising the inspection of high-risk food safety (categories A & B) premises over the inspection of premises which fall into the “more than 12 months” category. The Service is currently running with a vacant food safety officer position. The post was advertised during the quarter but it was not possible to fill the vacancy. The post was re-advertised during May, but no suitable applications were received.

6 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Development Plan / Community Plan / Service Improvement Plan

(b) Policy and Legal

This review of performance is in accordance with the Financial Regulations section 2.14.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

(d) Consultations

Development Services senior management have been consulted during the preparation of this report.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 The Committee is requested to scrutinise and note the update for performance indicator and complaints information.

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