
MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

DATE: 22 MAY 2007

SUBJECT: PLANNING PERFORMANCE

REPORT FROM: BOROUGH PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES OFFICER

CONTACT OFFICER: TOM MITCHELL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

TYPE OF DECISION: COUNCIL

**FREEDOM OF
INFORMATION
STATUS:** This paper is within the public domain

SUMMARY:

The report provides a brief analysis of performance within Development Control for the year 2006/7 with comparisons from previous years.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):

The Committee is recommended to note the report.

IMPLICATIONS -

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework: N/A

**Financial Implications and
Risk Considerations** N/A

**Statement by Director of Finance
and E-Government:** N/A

Equality/Diversity implications: N/A

Considered by Monitoring Officer: N/A

Are there any legal implications? No

Staffing/ICT/Property: N/A

Wards Affected: ALL

Scrutiny Interest: N/A

TRACKING/PROCESS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Commission	Executive	Committee	Council

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The performance of the Council in terms of the Development Control function is subject to considerable scrutiny through the Best Value Performance Indicator 109 which measures the speed of decision making for 3 categories of application – Major (109a), Minor (109b) and Other (109c) (which includes house extensions).
- 1.2 The last of these categories is also included within the suite of Local Priority Indicators.
- 1.3 Attached to this report is a table of current and past statistics and a chart illustrating the improvements in BVPI 109 since 2002.
- 1.4 The speed of decision making only measures the quantitative aspects of the service and is not necessarily a true measure of the quality of the service but it is nonetheless used to assess the Council and has been used to decide how much Planning Delivery Grant has been made available to the Council. It is also going to be used to inform this current year's allocation. This aspect of the service is therefore an important consideration.
- 1.5 The importance of a speedy and efficient service is however also linked to good standards of customer service and applicants should expect a reasonable prompt determination of their planning application.
- 1.6 The statistics for development control are submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on a quarterly basis and are published regularly.

2.0 APPLICATION CASELOAD

- 2.1 The situation in Bury has reflected the national picture and following the boom in 2004/5 there has been a reduction in the number of applications received, back to the levels previously experienced in 2002/3.
- 2.2 The staffing level for case officers is currently 7 Planning Officers (qualified to RTPI standard), an increase of one, and 2 Assistant Planning Officers, who

have replaced other senior staff that have left the service during the year. During the past year we have reorganised to give a greater focus on the quality of our input to significant major applications which we have received and are continuing to work on, and have established a Major Applications Team (MAT). This is complemented by the Planning Application Team (PAT) which is focused on improving performance and the quality of service in respect of the majority of planning applications including Householder Applications. (During 2006/7 - 98.8% of Householder Applications were decided within 8 weeks.)

2.3 Information on last years appeal performance is included in a separate report.

3.0 SPEED OF DECISIONS

3.1 Currently, all 3 categories of application are being decided well above the Government targets and the service is amongst the best performing Councils in the Country. The main factors in the exceptional performance are

- The development of a performance culture within the section.
- The reorganising of the team based structure.
- The application of more rigorous standards in the validation of applications.
- The encouragement of pre-application discussions.
- Improved IT systems – e-government.

3.2 The speed of performance in respect of Committee decisions is understandably below the set targets, although there has been a steady improvement from 11% in 2002/3 to last year's figure of 57%.

3.3 The attached table indicates that the percentage of all decisions which have been delegated to officers, has crept upwards but this is wholly in line with the general national trend.

4.0 SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

4.2 The year has been a busy one for service development particularly in the area of providing information and keeping applicants and the public informed. We have further developed planning web based services to give a better 24/7 access to data and are working towards meeting PARSOL (Planning and Regulatory Services OnLine) standards for on line activities. In association with eplanning we are also in the process of piloting EDRM (electronic document management) for the department.

4.3 The new national planning application form is being piloted here in Bury.

4.4 The results of the user satisfaction survey have been previously reported and the level of satisfaction has increased to 76.5% compared to the situation 3 years ago.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 Performance of decision making is a major factor in external views of the service and good performance is key to both customer care standards and recognition from the ODPM and other inspection regimes.

5.2 The current performance levels are considered to be exceptional and reflect well on all staff who have contributed. These levels have been achieved by limited additional resources, but also by a sustained focus on performance issues by all staff. This focus will need to be maintained and improved over time in order to secure further resources and recognition from both the ODPM and the Audit Commission, however the future of Planning Delivery Grant is currently uncertain and it is unknown whether speed of decision making will remain a criteria for the award of grant.

List of Background Papers:- None

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