



REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
DATE: 20 MAY 2008
SUBJECT: PLANNING PERFORMANCE
REPORT FROM: ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (Planning, Engineering and Transportation Services)
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 2007/8 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

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). For the coming year this is now referred to as a National Indicator 157
- 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, although for 2008/9 this is no longer the case. The Planning delivery Grant awarded to Bury for 2007/8 was £295,160 of which £238,872 was awarded for performance in Development Control and e-Planning.
- 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 RTP1 standard), and 2 Assistant Planning Officers. The staff are organised into 2 teams - the Major Applications Team (MAT) and 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 2007/8 - 99% 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 maintenance of a performance culture within the section.
 - The organisation 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 61%.
- 3.3 The attached table indicates that the percentage of all decisions which have been delegated to officers, has stabilised at 90% which is in line with the general national trend, although many authorities have now hit high figures and 95% is not unusual.

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. There have been significant improvements to the IT environment with an updated back office system (Plantech) and the introduction of EDRM (electronic document management) using the corporate solution (Anite).
- 4.3 The new national planning application, for which Bury was a pilot, has now been rolled out alongside the new application validation scheme.

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 maintained with no additional resources, but by a sustained focus on performance issues by all staff.
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List of Background Papers:- None

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