

DEVELOPMENT SERVICESPortfolio Holder Statement Update – Half yearly review 2013/14**1 What have the measures in the Portfolio Holder Statement been telling you about how things are going in service during 2013/14?**

The service area is showing significant improvements in its planning application performance during the first half the year. For the quarter ending 30 June 2013, we determined 97.43% of planning applications (238 applications) within the statutory timescale putting us 3rd in the performance table of all local planning authorities for that period. It should be noted that there have been a high number of large scale housing schemes submitted within the period. This has resulted in high levels of income to date.

The proportion of planning applications submitted electronically has remained stable throughout the half year period at between 60 – 64%. Our aim is to increase that proportion to over 70% by year end.

The number of appeal decisions against officer advice remains fairly low, together with the number of planning decisions overturned by planning committee.

The number of enforcement cases registered is generally consistent throughout the year. Whilst there has been a reduction in the amount of resource in the team, there has been focus on dealing with the older decisions to bring them to a conclusion. We have also focused heavily on ensuring processes are fully electronic and streamlined.

The number of full searches received in the year has reduced by approximately 15% as more people are having personal searches done as they are quicker and cheaper. We have been moving to a more streamlined electronic system of searches which will enable customers to be able to do their own search on-line in the future.

Building Control cases are remaining at a fairly constant level, which in an economic downturn and strong competition from Approved Inspectors is positive. B.C. continues to receive positive feedback from clients responding to the customer satisfaction questionnaire, with 98% saying they are very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the service they have received.

The percentage of commercial property voids reflects the condition of individual properties and the market conditions. Those that are empty for longer tend to be in a poorer condition. Until recently the market for offices (in particular) has been poor. When comparing Estates income with the projection, it is broadly on target, which is good considering the market conditions.

The programme for the Local Plan has been kept under review during the year. Due to decisions by the Inspector of the Coventry Core Strategy, the timetable for the Local Plan submission has been delayed to enable a joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment to be undertaken. Whilst the Local Plan has continued to progress, the complexities of the context within which we are working has meant the original timetable could not be achieved without significantly undermining the soundness of the Plan.

2. Which measures have been of particular interest or concern during the period and what have you learnt about your systems from these measures?

The public reaction to the Local Plan has been monitored. The 2013 Revised Development Strategy consultation has received a similar level of public response as the 2012 Preferred Options. This seems to indicate ongoing public concern about the proposals which we are analysing in detail. It is interesting to note however, that the public response to the Gypsy and Traveller proposals was three times higher than the revised development strategy and this is having an impact on the Policy team's resources.

Performance on determining planning applications continues at a high level which demonstrates that processes and procedures that have been put in place are working well, and the team have taken responsibility for their performance, at a time when Government are targeting Local Authorities that are not achieving statutory targets.

The proportion of planning applications submitted that were valid on receipt (i.e. included all of the information required to enable them to be progressed at the time that they were submitted) continues to be at a low level: for the quarter July – September 2013 this figure was 55%.

We are in the process of looking at the cost of dealing with planning applications and the income generated, and there are some types of applications that bring in very little income compared to the cost of processing them. This needs to be addressed without reducing the opportunity of engagement by the public in the process.

The current financial situation does not allow easy investment into properties that are currently void (particularly the regency buildings). In developing the business case for 26 Hamilton Terrace with H&P S, the team is using demand data to assess commercial viability eg: local office requirement data, interviews with potential tenants, Althorpe waiting list. There is a significant contrast between the modern Althorpe Enterprise Hub (Fully let) and other regency offices (eg: 4 Jury Street, 26 Ham Terrace) that are void.

Approved Inspectors are continuing to provide strong competition. The Local Approved Inspectors are concentrating on our traditional "bread and butter" domestic market with some success. We must continue to look at the way we provide our service and see what improvements can be implemented. One of the key projects is the shared building control service with three of our neighbouring authorities, which Warwick DC will be the lead authority.

Customer surveys are carried out but could be shared better across the service area and with staff so there are lessons learnt to make them worthwhile and demonstrate to the customer that we make changes because we have listened.

3. What have you done to date as a result of learning from these measures?

Performance on planning applications and enforcement is regularly discussed in team meetings. Although monitoring monthly data is important, longer term trend data provides useful information and we are beginning to build on and use this information. Staff are also taking more responsibility for their case load and performance of the service.

We have learnt that we need to survey all our customers, ie. Committee, applicants and neighbours to developments, users of building control and estates. This also needs to be done more frequently.

We have reviewed the land charges service in terms of the cost of searches, as we are significantly more expensive than other authorities in the sub-region. Also, the impact of personal searches is increasing (which is inevitable as they are cheaper and quicker). The service has become more electronic in the last year which helps us deal with them quicker and be more competitive with personal search companies. However, we are also in the process of reviewing our fees.

On the Local Plan we have:

- We have agreed a revised Local Plan timetable
- Brought in some additional support (eg work experience and external procurement) to work on consultation inputting and analysis
- Undertaken further studies on air quality, historic environment, transport and housing requirements
- Started to consider options for amending the Revised Development Strategy. These options will be discussed with members in due course.

As indicated in 2 above, there is significant progress now being made on the shared service for building control and this will provide the resilience to the service needed in the future.

4. What has been the impact of what you have done to date?

There was a re-structure of the service area last year and this has provided us with the opportunity to review the way we were working and to ensure that the service is fit for purpose.

We have been reviewing all the processes and procedures for each part of the service area so that we streamline what we are doing. This continuous improvement work is on-going and has helped us turn performance around, in particular in planning and enforcement, which continues to be at a high level.

One of the recommendations from the Peer Review was to prepare an Enforcement Procedure which, once adopted, is intended to assist the Enforcement Team in prioritising their workload and to provide customers with

clarity about the enforcement investigation process. It is anticipated that the Procedure will be adopted following consideration by Executive in December this year.

Executive have approved the formation of a Local List of Historic Buildings which is intended to safeguard buildings and structures which whilst not benefitting from national listing are nevertheless of local historic and architectural note. This will be based on a system of criteria against which requests will be considered and it is anticipated that this will commence early next year.

Fundamentally we have changed the way we can make decisions on the non-operational property in estates. We have also removed hidden risk for the transfer of Estates Management to H&PS

Building Control is working with the three other authorities in the shared service to ensure that we align the way we work so that the customer receives a consistent service across all the authorities involved.

The delays to the Local Plan may have had an impact on the number of major housing planning applications we have received this year. Work on the Local Plan is progressing and is still on track to deliver the revised timetable. Proposals for Gypsies and Travellers and allocation of sites in and around villages are also progressing parallel.

5. What else do you plan to do as a result of learning from these measures?

Different areas of the service are working more closely so that we can offer a better and more joined up service to the customer in a more timely way. As part of that approach officers are also engaging with a peer group comprising representatives of a small number of other similar Local Planning Authorities in order to learn from each other and assist in the provision of a more cost effective and efficient planning service.

Officers have been working closely with the Planning Advisory Service who carried out a Peer Review of the service, and we will be taking their recommendations forward to continue to improve the service.

There is still further work to do to ensure that the service area is more cost effective and competitive.

With regard to the local plan, there are so many changes at a national level, as well as decisions being made on other authorities local plans that need to be reflected upon and have had an influence over delaying our timetable, but it is important that the plan progresses towards being a sound plan as we go to examination.

6. Of your key projects (as identified in your portfolio holder statement) how many were completed and how many are not? Of those that were not completed please indicate what the revised dates are.

Project Name	Progress	Original Milestones	New Milestones
Building Control			
Exploring shared service	Significant progress being made	Implementation on Jan 14	On target
Review emergency call-outs	Part of shared service review	June 13	Jan 14
Planning policy			
Development of draft Local Plan	Plan is still being developed ready for submission in Summer 2014	Submission originally to Council June 13	Submission draft to Council Mar/Apr 14
Development of Warwick AAP	Partnership working progressing to options stage	Executive report Autumn 2013	Revised timetable to follow shortly behind local plan timetable
Support Neighbourhood Plans	Several neighbourhood plans are being progressed	On-going	
Develop CIL Scheme	Significant progress towards preparation of the submission draft	Submission Draft to Full Council in June 2013 2012	Submission draft to Council in March/April 2013
Gypsy and Traveller			Submission draft to Council Mar/Apr 14

HS2	Support being provided in terms of planning	On-going	
Leamington AAP	Work to commence on AAP	Mar 14	On target
Development Management			
Monitoring performance of determining planning applications	On-going	April 2012	Target met
Planning portal on-line submissions – encourage applicants to make on-line submissions	On-going	Target of 70% by Mar 14	On target
Customer satisfaction surveys		June 13	Dec 13
Review validation checklist	Work has progressed	July 13	Dec 13
Develop pre-application charging service	Decision made not to progress this	N/A	
Review planning committee		April 13 review done – implementation on-going	
Review S106/CIL implementation	Delay with the implementation of CIL by Central Government		
Monitor S106 contributions including levy at 3%	In place	April 13	
Develop and implement training plan	Training plan being developed	June 13	Dec 13

Review the use of ICT systems	This is to improve the way we deliver services and to make us more effective and efficient	April 13 – this work is continuous	
Economic Development & Regeneration			
Events Intervention	This project has now been handed over to the events team	May 13	
Jobs, Skills & Economy Delivery Plan	This is now awaiting new Leader in place to decide how to take this forward	Sept 13	To be confirmed
Review, Development and delivery of town centre action plans	Progress made on Warwick and Kenilworth	On-going	
Tourism Strategy Implementation	DMO launched Oct 13	May 13	Oct 13
Visitor Services Review		May 13	Oct 13
Provide staff resource into Stoneleigh Hub Enterprise scheme	Project has changed and WDC are no longer providing staff	N/A	
Community Right to Bid	Procedures put in place to deal with bids.	April 13	

7. Does your Service Area Plan/Portfolio Holder Statement need to be amended? If so, please describe the changes.

Changes and updates to milestones need to be done to the Service Area Plan. The service area has been through significant changes over the last few years and there are external and internal factors that result in some of the target dates not being delivered, particularly in relation to the Local Plan .