

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Portfolio Holder Statement Update – Half year position 2014/15

1 What have the measures in the Portfolio Holder Statement been telling you about how things are going in service during 2014/15?

The service area is continuing to perform at a high level with regard to planning application performance with the number of planning applications determined within the statutory time scale remaining at over 90%. There also continue to be schemes submitted resulting in a continued increase in levels of income.

The proportion of planning applications submitted electronically has increased to 86% as a result of which the Council has been awarded *Smarter Planning Champion* status.

The number of successful appeals against officer decisions remains at a consistent fairly low level, together with the number of successful appeals against decisions where members have overturned officer's recommendations. This data is regularly reported to planning committee to be used as a learning tool for officers and members.

Building on the streamlining of processes within the Enforcement Team, the number of enforcement cases on hand throughout the year remains at a consistent level of around 100 open investigations which demonstrates the ongoing investigation of issues in an effective and focussed manner.

The number of full searches received in the year continues to be at a lower level than was previously the case, predominantly because more people are having personal searches done as they are quicker and cheaper. We are continuing to move towards a more streamlined electronic system of searches which will enable customers to be able to do their own search on-line in the future. It is worth noting, however, that the Government is considering moving land charges under the responsibility of the Land Registry in the near future.

Building Control cases are remaining at a fairly constant level, which in an economic downturn and strong competition from Approved Inspectors is positive. The scale and nature of the cases has marginally reduced, which has affected income, although figures to date do still demonstrate a profit due to the sharing of our resources with other authorities. Building Control continues to receive positive feedback from clients responding to the customer satisfaction questionnaire, with a very high level of satisfaction.

The percentage of commercial property voids still reflects the condition of individual properties and the market conditions. Those that are empty for longer tend to be in a poorer condition. The office and occupier market has steadily improved (from September 2013) from a poor base. Keeping retail occupiers in our tertiary properties is particularly challenging. When comparing Estates

income with the projection, it is broadly on target, which is good considering the market conditions.

Althorpe Enterprise Hub remains fully let and the Court Street Creative Arches will shortly be fully let.

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. The consultation on sites in villages also received a high level of response, indicating that these issues are also felt strongly in rural areas. All these consultations underline the sensitivities associated with new housing and also the importance of delivering high quality infrastructure

Performance on determining planning applications continues at a high level which demonstrates that processes and procedures that have been put in place are continuing to work well. This remains a priority in providing a high level of customer service and in ensuring that the Council is not at risk of being placed in special measures by the Government

The proportion of planning applications submitted that were valid on receipt (i.e. all of the information supplied to enable them to be progressed at the time that they were submitted) has increased. Following the benchmarking that was undertaken last year, with support from the Planning Advisory Service and peer authorities we are introducing measures to continue to improve and retain performance in this area.

The current financial situation has not allowed easy investment into properties that are currently void (particularly the regency buildings). In developing the successful bid to the CWLEP for funding for the digital games incubation centre at 26 Hamilton Terrace with H & P S, the team used demand data to assess commercial viability eg: local office requirement data, interviews with potential tenants and the Arch Creatives network. 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.

The length of time to carry out deals on properties has reflected the relative complexity of the situation with many of our properties.

In Building Control, 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. One of the key projects in responding to this has been the implementation of a shared building control service with three of our neighbouring authorities, Rugby, Daventry and Coventry, which Warwick DC is the lead authority. We are currently in the final stage of agreement with each of the authorities to set up the permanent arrangements for the shared service.

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 continuing to build on and use this information. Staff are also taking more responsibility for their case load and performance of the service. As said earlier, a mechanism for learning from appeal decisions is now taking place

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. We have reviewed our fees and as a result are as competitive as all other authorities in the sub-region and have better evidence on how the cost has been derived.

On the Local Plan 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
- Developed revised site options and policies which are now being prepared for presentation to Council in April 2014.
- Agreed to consult on revised location of employment
- Reviewed SHMA in light of ONS data
- Improved DTC processes

The consultations on the Local Plan have underlined how important the delivery of high quality infrastructure is.

The learning from Estates Management over the last 12 – 18 months has resulted in improved working with H&PS on carrying out dilapidations surveys on our properties – these have potentially reduced the cost of maintaining the non-operational estate. In addition, the need to monitor progress on rent reviews, lease renewals has resulted in a review of how we utilise our electronic systems. This will lead to the creation of a service standard that will be incorporated into future SAPs & TOPs.

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?

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 has now been adopted. It has assisted the Enforcement Team in prioritising their workload and to provide customers with clarity about the enforcement investigation process. Performance has improved significantly in terms of responses to complaints. This is regularly reported to planning committee to assist with monitoring.

Work on 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) is now up and running. Nominations for buildings to be added to the Local List can now be made via the Council's website with selection being based on a system of criteria including architectural design and merit and historical or social interest.

Fundamentally we have changed the way we can make decisions on the non-operational property in estates. We are reviewing the transfer of Estates Management to ensure that we take the option that is best for delivery of the service.

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 recently. Work on the Local Plan is progressing and is still on track to deliver the revised timetable. Allocation of sites in villages has been dovetailed in to the Local Plan and proposals for Gypsies and Travellers 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. We are part of a number of benchmarking groups, and share knowledge with other authorities who also want to learn from the improvements we have made.

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.

The consultations on the Local Plan underlined how important the delivery of high quality infrastructure is. We are addressing this by preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and importantly creating in a new post (funded by development) to monitoring S106 contributions and coordinate the delivery of infrastructure associated with major development sites.

Members have asked for officers to consider a Conservation Advisory Board for Warwick, the feasibility of which will be explored in 2014/15.

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 and trial underway	Implementation on Jan 14	Done Permanent arrangement to commence Apr 1 st 2015

Review emergency call-outs	Part of shared service review	June 13	May 14 - done
Planning policy			
Development of draft Local Plan	Focused consultation commencing Oct 2014	Submission originally to Council August 2014	Submission draft to Council Mar/Apr 14 - done. Submission planned for end of January
Development of Warwick AAP	Policies now subsumed in Local Plan. Delivery of opportunity being progressed	N/A	
Support Neighbourhood Plans	5 neighbourhood plan areas have been designated and further 4 proposed for designation at Nov Executive	On-going	Likely that first Plans (Whitnash/Bishops T) will be submitted for Examination before March 2015
Develop CIL Scheme	Review of viability being undertaken. Draft CIL scheme being prepared for submission	Submission Draft to Full Council in June 2013	Submission draft to Council to follow shortly after Local Plan submission
Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations	Initial options consultation complete. Preferred		Additional consultation for Stratford Road site

	Options consultation complete. Submission draft approved Aug 2014		planned. Submission draft to Council in early 2015
HS2	Support being provided in terms of planning (officer now in post)	On-going	
Leamington AAP	Initial work commenced	Mar 14	Work to commence on AAP in early 2015
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	Target met.
Customer satisfaction surveys	Work has progressed in some areas of the service	June 13	June 15
Review validation checklist	Work has progressed	July 13	December 14
Develop pre-application charging service	Under further consideration	Initial report to December 14 Executive	
Review planning committee		April 13 review done –	Target met
Review S106/CIL implementation	Delay with the		

	implementati on of CIL by Central Government		
Monitor S106 contributions including levy at 3%	In place – although set at 1% up to max of £30K	April 13	In place
Develop and implement training plan	Training plan being developed	June 13	Ongoing
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			
Review of success of Events Intervention and it can be enhanced	Opportunity to review	Mar 15	In place
Prosperity	Prosperity Agenda taken to Executive to set out framework for action	Nov 14	Development Services work to be in place by March 15
Review, Development and delivery of town centre action plans	Progress made on Warwick and Kenilworth	On-going	N/A
Tourism Strategy Implementation	DMO launched Oct 13 Destination Management Plan being	Jan 15 for	In place Timeline for consultation

	developed	consultation	to be agreed
Community Right to Bid	Procedures put in place to deal with bids.	April 13	On-going

7. What has been the impact of Fit for the Future and what will be the further impact on staff and customers?

The impact of FFF has resulted in significant savings in the service area which have been achieved. However, we have been mindful that these changes should have minimal effect on our staff and customers and to that end, we have carried out a considerable amount of work on ensuring that our processes and procedures are improved and streamlined. This work is continuous. We also do work with our peers at other authorities so that we can learn from them and continue to improve the way we operate.

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

Changes and updates to milestones have been done to the Service Area Plan for 2014/15. 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.

Changes for 14/15 for economic development include:

- Data preparation and analysis for Warwick District area
- Implementation of skills agenda
- GRO Warwickshire Leader programme
- Assessment of BID viability for Kenilworth and Warwick
- Market Tender completion (for implementation by end Jan 15)
- Bowls Championship promotion and economic assessment