

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

19 NOVEMBER 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

AUDIT SCOTLAND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
SECOND QUARTERLY REVIEW 2008/09

Report by Director of Planning & Development

SUMMARY

This report advises Members on the delivery of the Development Management & Building Standards and the Development Plan services for the second quarter of 2008/09 with comparative figures for previous years. The Development Management and Development Plan figures are statutory performance returns to Audit Scotland. The Building Standards returns are no longer statutory but they have proved to be a useful management tool to assess the services' performance.

The report links to the Administration's Corporate Objectives for the Highland Council contained in the Programme for Administration.

"We will continue to pursue best value for our residents and service users, seeking efficiencies in the way we work and we will undertake a comprehensive review of the Council's spending priorities by 2009".

1. Introduction

1.1 Key performance indicator information is reported to Committee every quarter and the out-turn figures for the second quarter of 2008/09 are now available. The figures for the second quarter for the previous three financial years are reproduced for comparison purposes in respect of Development Management and Building Standards.

2. Development Management

2.1 The actual number of applications handled and fees received is shown as contextual information. The other tables summarise the results for Development Management in terms of householder applications (proposals to alter or extend existing houses) and for all other types of planning application and give a comparison with the last 3 quarters. The performance for 2008/09 to date is given in comparison to performance for previous years. The Quarter 2 figures for 2008/09 are compared with earlier years.

Development Management Performance: Contextual Information - Second Quarter Figures

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Applications	1379	1326	1253	975
Income (£,000)	537	602	567	474

Percentage of cases dealt with within 2 months (Second quarter, last 4 years)

	Target	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Householder	90	78.11	80.04	82.35	79.13
Non-householder	80	49.51	56.85	51.96	44.68
All cases	80	59.46	60.46	61.02	54.64

Percentage of cases dealt with within 2 months (last 4 quarters)

	Target	Q3 2007/08	Q4 2007/08	Q1 2008/09	Q2 2008/09
Householder	90	83.61	75.10	70.77	79.13
Non-householder	80	47.63	37.03	43.42	44.68
All cases	80	59.96	46.84	51.86	54.64

Percentage of cases dealt with within 2 months

	Target	Annual 2005/06	Annual 2006/07	Annual 2007/08	Y.T.D.
Householder	90	76.79	76.31	80.30	74.95
Non-householder	80	45.30	43.60	47.18	44.05
All cases	80	55.86	54.42	57.12	53.25

- 2.2 The number of planning applications received in the second quarter of 2008/09 has decreased by 278 (22.2%). This compared with a decline of 15.5% for calendar year 2008. This is mirrored by a fall in income of £105k (18.5%) for the same period.
- 2.3 Vacancies have recently been filled in Inverness, Fort William, Drummie and Wick and a Planner's post is currently being advertised in Dingwall.
- 2.4 While these vacancies have been a contributory factor it is disappointing to note that performance has fallen marginally for the year to date compared with previous years although there is recovery made in 2007/08 and 2008/09 to date. The Lochaber and the Dingwall offices have performed less well and the appointment of staff must reconcile this.

- 2.5 It must be noted that the reduction in planning applications is not consistent throughout the Council, for example, over the calendar year 2008 to date there has been a reduction of 15.5% in planning applications but this varies between a 20% reduction for Ross, Skye & Lochaber and a 5% reduction in the Inverness City Wards.

3. Building Standards

- 3.1 Contextual information of the number of applications for building warrant and completion certificates and of fee income in the second quarter over the last four years is given in the tables below. The second table compares the performance for the second quarter over the last four years and the third performance against targets for the last four quarters.

Building Standards Performance: contextual information – Second quarter figures

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Applications	1157	1001	886	701
Completion Certs	823	952	950	824
Income (£000)	418	686	544	490

Performance against targets – Second Quarter

	Target	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
%Warrants responded to within 15 days	80	48.25	58.84	33.09	32.23
%Warrants determined within 6 days	80	84.03	85.78	78.12	75.70
Average days to respond to completion cert.	N/A	10.19	5.90	7.65	5.71
% of completion certs issued within 3 days	80	92.67	93.05	93.61	86.25

Performance against targets – Last Four Quarters

	Target	2007/08 Q3	2007/08 Q4	2008/09 Q1	2008/09 Q2
% Warrants responded to within 15 days	80	32.05	29.47	34.95	32.23
% of Warrants determined within 6 days	80	81.70	73.194	78.43	75.70
Average days to respond to Completion Certificate	n/a	5.72	14.20	6.09	5.71
% of Completion Certificates issued with 3 days	80	94.04	91.52	87.93	86.25

- 3.2 There has been a 21% reduction in warrants determined in the second quarter compared with the same period in 2007/08 with a 16% decrease in the number of warrants submitted in calendar year 2008/09. Again this is mirrored by a reduction in the income of £54k (10%) from the second quarter of 2007/08 and £190k (9.7%) from calendar year 2007.
- 3.3 There are continuing vacancies in Fort William and Drummie (2) and these are to be re-advertised. Trainee posts have been filled in Portree and in Inverness.
- 3.4 Performance remains consistent with that of the second quarter of 2007/08 although there has been an incremental improvement since January 2008. The backlog of applications has, however, been substantially reduced.
- 3.5 The second Scottish Building Standards Division Audit was received in August and reported to the Planning, Environment & Development Committee in September. The Audit acknowledged that significant progress had been made on the Team's Action Plan with improvements to the Service. It was particularly pleasing to note that the Audit highlighted the empowerment of staff and an improvement in morale.

4. Development Plans

- 4.1 Work has continued on the preparation of a merged Local Plan for Lochaber and Skye & Lochalsh and the Local Plan for Sutherland. Both Plans were presented to the September meeting of PED with a recommendation that they are placed on deposit for public representation prior to a Public Local Inquiry to address any unresolved objections.

4.2 Development Plan Performance

Performance Indicators	Target	2007/08 Q2	2007/08 Q3	2007.08 Q4	2008/09 Q1	2008/09 Q2
% of Highland Population covered by Local Plans adopted within last 5 years	100%	59%	59%	59%	59%	59%
% of Highland population covered by Local Plans at Deposit stage and beyond	100%	82%	82%	82%	82%	82%

- 4.3 Progress has been made with an external consultancy on an assessment of the Council's approach to the generation and management of Developer Contributions. This will lead to further work in pulling together plans and strategies across the Council. It will also support the proposed amended approach to dealing with major developments. The Development Plans team has also led on the preparation of supplementary planning guidance on the provision, management and maintenance of public open space and this also appears elsewhere on this agenda.
- 4.4 The Information and Research team have completed work on the Housing Land Audit and contributed significantly to work on School Roll forecasting. It has also produced a Briefing Note on the Annual Population Survey for Scotland and dealt with a large number of information requests.

5. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to note the current position in respect of workload, income and performance and in particular the impact of the “Credit Crunch” on the Service.

Signature:

Designation: Director of Planning & Development

Date: 11 November 2008

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Background Papers

1. Audit Commission Performance Indicators Returns for the last 3 years