

EXETER CITY COUNCIL**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – ECONOMY
13 NOVEMBER 2008****KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report advises Members on the current position on key performance indicators.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members receive a report every six months on the Key Indicators to measure the performance of the Directorate's work in the important areas of service delivery. Attached to this report are figures at the half-year point for 2008/09 which are set in the context of the targets previously agreed and in the context of performance in the previous full year, 2007/08. Overall performance to date is broadly positive. Key issues to highlight are as follows:

Planning

- 2.2 There are a number of national performance indicators on which the Council's planning performance is judged. The performance of the Planning Services team has slipped over the first six months of this year. Regrettably, our performance on handling major applications has plummeted with 33% of applications dealt with within the 13 week target against a national standard of at least 60% being determined within this period. There are a variety of reasons why this has happened, ranging from failure by statutory consultees to meet the consultation deadline, through to the delays in signing historic Section 106 agreements and the increasing complexity of the documentation required for an application, resulting in applicants failing to submit sufficient quality information and needing considerable work to bring this up to standard. At bottom, however, we have also failed to manage the process proactively which requires routine and frequent monitoring of progress and taking a clear cut decision in the first six weeks on whether an application is likely to be sufficiently good to warrant approval, or in fact warrants an early refusal rather than an extended period of negotiation which takes us over the 13 week limit.
- 2.3 I, and the managers of the service, are sufficiently concerned about this performance that we have introduced a new set of procedures for handling major applications which will provide much greater clarity in the form of pre-application discussions. This means that when applications are submitted, it is much more clear cut whether or not an application is likely to warrant approval or refusal without protracted negotiations. A protocol has been prepared and discussed with agents and developers and has been warmly received by them. The protocol has been reviewed by Planning Member Working Group and Members have endorsed the revised approach which we are now implementing from the beginning of this month. It will undoubtedly mean that hitting the target this year is fairly unlikely but we will do our very best to dramatically improve the performance for the second half of the year. In respect of minor and other applications, our performance is above target in the case of minor applications and just below target for other applications.

Economy & Tourism

- 2.4 Members have received a verbal report in the context of the staffing paper on the Underground Passages at the September meeting which indicated that this attraction was performing particularly well. The data so far indicate that in the first full year of operation some 20,300 visitors went through the Passages (up 10% on the previous best year) producing £77,000 income (55% up on the previous best year). Customer satisfaction at our three facilities is good with scores of 98% of uses at the Underground Passages saying the experience was good/excellent, 81.5% at Exeter Visitor Information and Tickets and 92% at the Quay House Visitor Centre against a target of 90%.

Building Control

- 2.5 Yearly figures are reported for all Building Control performance indicators. With respect to the service being self-financing, in recent months income has fallen due to the decline in construction activity and competition from approved inspectors. This has been funded by setting this loss against the surplus in the reserve which reflects previous years' surpluses. Customer feedback remains very positive with high levels of satisfaction.

Land Charges

- 2.6 Achievement at the half-year point remains very encouraging with 100% of local searches carried out within 7 days.

Administration and Parking Services

- 2.7 Take up rates among over 60's for the concessionary bus travel pass in Exeter is particularly high – much higher than other districts in the Devon Concessionary Bus Travel Partnership. Take up stands at 83% as at 30 September 2008. Usage levels are also high which is covered separately in the Stewardship report.

3.0 RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

**JOHN RIGBY
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ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None