

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY
12 MARCH 2008

NATIONAL PERFORMANCE INDICATOR RESULTS 2007/2008
HOW EXETER'S RESULTS COMPARE

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 A full analysis of Exeter's performance indicator results for 2007/08 has been sent to Members under a separate cover. This report provides an overview of the performance of those services covered by this committee. The other two Scrutiny Committees will receive a similar report covering services within their remit.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Exeter's performance indicator results for 2007/08 were published in the Corporate Plan. The Audit Commission subsequently published audited comparative data in December 2008.
- 2.2 The graphs contained within the detailed analysis compare Exeter's results against authorities in the Council's benchmarking group and therefore provide a comparison against other broadly similar councils. (Audit Commission family grouping)
- 2.3 The graphs have been arranged in ascending order. Exeter's results are highlighted on each.
- 2.4 Results for BVPI 78a (Average time to process new benefit claims) and BVPI 78b (Average time taken to process change in circumstances) are still being verified by the Audit Commission and as a result, have not yet been published.
- 2.5 The Audit Commission uses national upper and lower quartile figures as benchmarks against which to judge service performance. The detailed analysis also shows quartile figures for all English district councils against each graph. Services should generally be aiming to be in the top quartile (i.e. the best performing 25% of councils in the country).

3.0 RESULTS OVERVIEW

- 3.1 Exeter is in the top quartile for 19 indicators out of a total of 59 where comparisons are possible (32%), compared to 20 out of 65 (30%) last year. It is in the bottom quartile for 10 indicators, compared with 9 last year.
- 3.2 This year has seen improvement in 25 indicators with 6 of these achieving a higher quartile rating than last year. However, 25 indicators show a lower performance than last year, with 12 achieving a lower quartile rating than last year.
- 3.3 Out of the 7 comparable indicators that fall within the remit of this Scrutiny Committee, 4 have poorer performance. These are BVPIs 106, 109a, 109b and 109c (see below).

Planning

- 3.4 The percentage of new homes built on brown field sites (BVPI 106) fell from 80.42% in 2006/07 to 68.6% in 2007/08. As a result, Exeter has dropped from the second to the third quartile. However, performance is affected by the context of the planning strategy for the area, in particular, the availability of brownfield sites. In Exeter, many brownfield sites have been re-developed over the last decade. The Council has recently relied on the development of the large greenfield site at Clyst Heath to meet much of its requirements. Some authorities are achieving 100% on this indicator, including Eastbourne, Ipswich, Oxford, Worcester and Worthing within our benchmarking group.
- 3.5 The percentage of major planning applications determined within 13 weeks (BVPI 109b) has dropped from 75% in 2006/07 to 68.57% in 2007/08 causing Exeter to fall from the second to third quartile. Exeter is ninth from the top in its benchmarking group with Cheltenham and Ipswich at the top with 94.44% and 92.31% respectively. The number of major applications is relatively small. The need for section 106 agreements significantly impacts upon performance. Following a more recent drop in performance, new procedures have been put in place to improve the handling of major applications.
- 3.6 The Council processed 74.16% of minor applications in 8 weeks (BVPI 109b), compared with 76.71% in 2005/06. Exeter has remained in the third quartile. Exeter is tenth in the benchmarking group for this indicator. The best performing council in the group was Ipswich with 90.07%. Some authorities achieve higher performance by refusing to negotiate amendments to planning applications, requiring applicants to make fresh applications. This is at the expense of customer satisfaction.
- 3.7 The percentage of other applications processed within 8 weeks (BVPI 109c) has dropped from 84.50% in 2006/07 to 80.4% in 2007/08. This places Exeter second from bottom in its benchmarking group and maintains its position in the bottom quartile.
- 3.8 Significant improvements have been achieved in two areas. 85% of the Council's conservation areas now have an up to date character appraisal (BVPI 219b), compared to 70.6% in 2006/07. This places Exeter in the top quartile. The percentage of appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse planning applications (BVPI 204) has dropped from 32.1% in 2006/07 to 30.7% in 2007/08, resulting in a jump from the third to the second quartile.

4.0 RECOMMENDED

(1) That Members consider the report and indicate whether they wish to receive any further information on any particular issue(s).

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ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling the report:

National Performance Indicator Results - December 2008