

**EXETER CITY COUNCIL****SCRUTINY ECONOMY COMMITTEE  
11 JUNE 2009****KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS****1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report advises Members on the current position regarding the Committee's key performance indicators.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Members have received a report every six months to measure the performance of the Directorate across a range of activities. Attached to this report are the figures for the full year 2008/09 with comparisons to the previous year's performance in 2007/08. Overall, performance is good but there has been one key area in Planning where performance has been problematic, which has already been highlighted to Members. There are a number of new performance measures brought in by the government for which there is no previous comparator and comment is necessarily more brief.

**Planning and Building Control**

- 2.2 The principal issue of concern here is the performance in the handling of major planning applications. During the first half of 2008/09, the performance in dealing with major planning applications within 13 weeks fell to 33% against the national target of 60%. The reasons behind that performance were set out and steps outlined to tackle this under performance. At the time it was reported that Planning Services would introduce a Major Applications Protocol which would hopefully result in better performance as a result of a more systematic approach to handling major applications. It is therefore pleasing to report that the second half performance has significantly improved and as a result the year end out turn is just over 50%. Whilst this is still below the national target, it was inevitable that we would fail to meet the 60% benchmark for our performance in the first half of the year.
- 2.3 A more detailed report has been prepared for Planning Member Working Group which discusses how we are addressing the performance issue. During the discussion, Members re-affirmed their desire to see an improvement in performance but not at the expense of quality decision making. They therefore accepted that slavish adherence to the 13 week target was undesirable and would produce negative outcomes. The principal remaining blockage to further improvement in performance is the time taken to negotiate Section 106 agreements. For many applications we now have a draft Section 106 agreement in place prior to Committee, but once the applicant has a resolution to grant consent, they will often stall on finalising the Section 106 agreement because the issue of planning consent often triggers a financial payment to a landowner. To overcome the problem, where such negotiations drag on, officers are considering introducing a cut off date for the completion of the 106 after which it will automatically be refused. PMWG supported this proposal subject to consultation with the development industry.

- 2.4 With regard to the other key performance indicators dealing with minor and other planning applications, the team has successfully hit the national targets and indeed performance is an improvement on 2007/08. At the end of the note there are several new indicators which include: previously developed land which has been vacant or derelict for more than five years; net additional homes provided; and supply of ready to develop housing sites. No trend data are provided in the table as these are new indicators but it is important to flag that additional homes provided has fallen significantly from a high of 891 completions in 2006/07 to 414 in 2008/09 because of the major downturn in the housing market. Interestingly, some 40% of that total was student accommodation which does add to the total housing stock. It is also worth flagging that whilst our housing land supply position does currently meet the government target – which is that there should be a five year supply available – it will almost certainly not meet that target at the end of 2009/10. The reason for this is that, once the Regional Spatial Strategy is approved in June, our housing target will increase dramatically and, without a new Core Strategy in place, our planning permissions allocations will not be sufficient to meet this new target. Members are likely therefore to be asked to consider how to respond to this during Spring 2010.
- 2.5 Performance with regard to Building Control remains very good in terms of the delivery of the service but as Members will be aware from previous Stewardship reports the service has incurred a loss during this year which is a result of the downturn in the building industry. The service ran at a surplus for several years so at present, this loss is being offset against that surplus. A close eye will be kept on income levels over the next few months to see whether any further adjustments in staffing levels is necessary. The authority continues to make good progress in ensuring that its buildings are fully accessible as indicated by the performance on BV156.

#### **Economy and Tourism**

- 2.6 All of the performance indicators here are local indicators and on the whole show good performance, particularly with regard to the operation of the Underground Passages following the extensive investment as part of the Princesshay scheme. It is hoped that lower levels of customer satisfaction for the Tourist Information Centre will be addressed by improved signing and in the case of the Quay House Visitor Centre by investment in upgrading the facilities which was approved by Members last year.

#### **Land Charges**

- 2.8 Performance is as normal outstanding though it has dipped by a tiny amount since 2007/08.

#### **Parking, Engineering and Business Support**

- 2.9 The service has secured 20 Safer Parking Awards with a target of increasing that to 22 for next year. Take up of the concessionary fares pass is slightly below target but in view of the huge publicity around the scheme we must assume that all those who wish to have the pass have taken the trouble to acquire one.

**3.0 RECOMMENDATION**

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

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

***Background papers used in compiling this report:-***

None