
ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES
October 2010

UPDATE REPORT ON BUILDING STANDARDS BALANCED SCORECARD AND GENERAL PERFORMANCE

FROM HEAD OF PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper follows on from the report tabled in March 2010 and outlines Building Standards performance with respect to its Balanced Scorecard which is submitted annually to the Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government (BSD and the processing times in relation to building warrant and completion certificate applications for the calendar year to date. As intimated previously, there is no current Audit Scotland requirement for a return of figures for Building Standards although with the verifier process currently under review by the BSD with all Local Authority Verifier Licenses due to expire in 2011 this may be a further requirement placed on Local Authority Building Standards post 2011.
- 1.2 In accordance with the Council's Best Value reporting framework this paper also provides an update on customer feedback reviews for Building Standards

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members note with satisfaction the content of the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members may recall from the report tabled in March 2010 that the Balanced Scorecard process originated with the search for a management tool to gauge the performance of the local Authority Building Standards function, replacing the existing system of comparison of statutory performance indicators. The scorecard is basically a comprehensive performance management tool, incorporating a "Best Value" approach, which measures Verifier performance in relation to 5 perspectives, i.e. Public Interest, Private Customer, Internal Business, Continuous Improvement and Financial.

Each perspective contains a number of actions determined by the Verifier which will contribute to service improvement and will seek to ensure "Best Value" service delivery to the public. These actions are linked to the strategic objective of the Council.

- 3.2 Members will recollect that in October 2008 the Council's Building Standards section was audited by the BSD scoring 'Good' in each of the five perspectives.
- 3.3 The final conclusion to take from the BSD audit is that there would be no need to undertake any further audits within the present verification appointment period.

- 3.4 Since then the Building Standards section has gone from strength to strength. This year it's annual scorecard submission was especially commented on by the BSD who stated in a letter to our Building Standards Manager '*I am impressed with your commitment to driving your service forward*'.
- 3.5 As previously reported annual work plans which flow from the Balanced Scorecard are drawn up with full consultation of staff and consistently delivered. The 2010 work plan is again on target.
- 3.6 These business improvement tools coupled with an analysis of the processing times for both Building Warrants and Completion Certificates allows the conclusion to be drawn that the service continues to meet the goals set out in its balanced scorecard and provides in Argyll & Bute a customer focussed and high quality successful service in terms of the criteria set down. This is particularly important given the corporate goals of Argyll & Bute Council and also the review of the verification role of all Local Authorities which is due on the 01st May, 2011.
- 3.7 Due to the global downturn applications for Building Warrant have remained sluggish, through 2010 however during the last few weeks of September the service has seen a massive influx of new applications from applicants and agents keen to lodge their application prior to the updated Technical Standards coming into force on 1st October. As reported in previous years, development patterns and projects vary enormously over this diverse area of Scotland as does the quality and detail of the application submissions.
- 3.8 This glut in applications being received in such a short period will undoubtedly provide a massive challenge to the section in the short term to continue to meet its challenging response times target.
- 3.9 Despite the difficulty in recruiting qualified successors to posts currently vacant in Oban and in Mid Argyll we have managed to fill a vacancy at assistant level in Helensburgh with a young graduate which will assist us in meeting our response times however we still have a senior surveyor on extended sick leave. Despite our staffing problems analysis has shown that response times have consistently improved and is a credit to the dedication of the existing staff.
- 3.10 Throughout 2010 the performance figures have continually exceeded targets with the last quarter's figures as follows:

July – September 2010

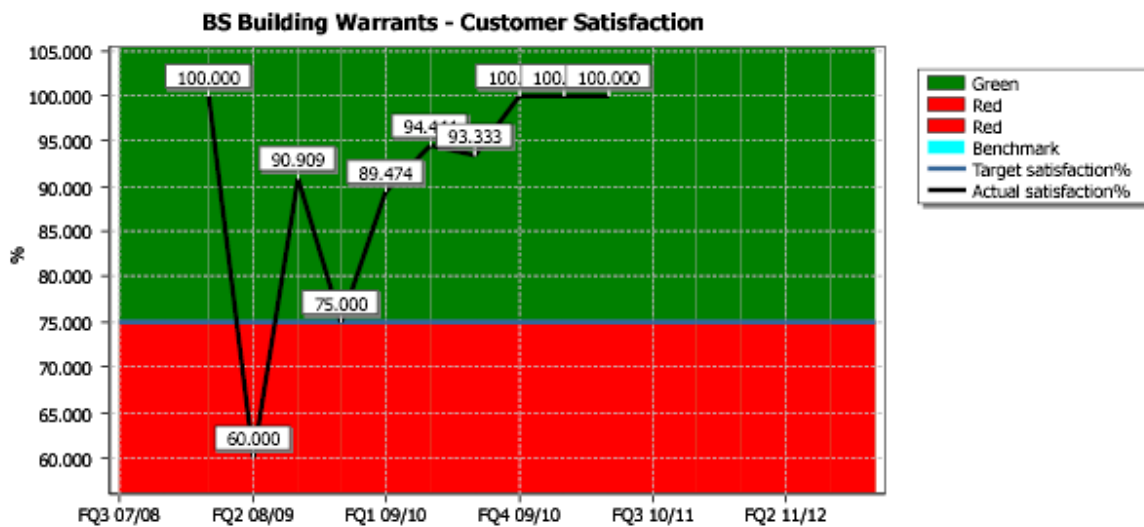
	Target	Actual	Trend
The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 20 days	80%	90.24%	-
The percentage of completion certificates issued/accepted (or otherwise determined) within 3 days	80%	82.47%	-

3.11 Had there been a requirement to submit performance information to Audit Scotland the all areas average for Argyll & Bute Council show returns in excess of the historic targets.

4. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

During 2010 Building Standards has continued to adopt a variety of measures to enable it to gauge customer satisfaction including the issuing of Customer Service Questionnaires with each Warrant Approval and Completion Certificate Acceptance

It is gratifying to note that through 2010 our customers continue to appear happy with our service delivery as demonstrated in the attached graph which shows that for the third quarter in a row 100% of customers who returned a questionnaire graded our service delivery as either good or excellent.



5. CONCLUSION

The effects of losing staff and the problems experienced in recruiting qualified replacements has made it challenging to achieve consistency in service delivery throughout the authority, however staff have risen to the challenge and the overall performance of the Building Standards section has been excellent and well received by its regular users and the Building Standards Division of the Scottish Government.

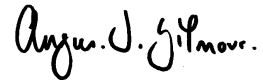
6. IMPLICATIONS

Policy In accordance with "Best Value" objectives

Financial: Due to the global downturn the total building warrant application fee income for the year is still down when compared to previous years although the trend is showing a modest recovery underway.

Personnel: The problems experienced in recruiting qualified building standards staff during the year increases the commitment to training consistent with the "grow your own" policy.

Equal Opportunity: None

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Angus J. Gilmore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

04.10.2010

For further information contact: Martin Matheson, Building Standards Manager.