

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE UPDATE

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the Area Committee with an update on the performance of the MAKI Development Management for the period April 2013 – March 2014.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the content of this report.

3.0 PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 The volume of planning applications processed within the MAKI office remains high. From April 2013 – March 2014 in total 400 new planning applications were received and 377 applications determined. This represents 29% of the applications within the Council area with 1374 new applications being received and 1328 being determined across Argyll and Bute during the same period. The volume of new planning applications within MAKI is up almost 12% on the previous period and 9.5% across the Council Area as a whole from the previous year.
- 3.2 The statutory time period for determination of the majority of local planning applications is 2 months from receipt of a valid application – this time period is reflected within the Government's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs). The Service Plan previously set a performance target for determination of 70% of all planning applications within 2 months which was regularly being achieved across the Council Area as a whole. In line with the Scottish Government's introduction of additional SPIs which now look to reflect the average time taken to process applications the Service Plan now sets a target of determining all planning applications within an average time period of 12 weeks.



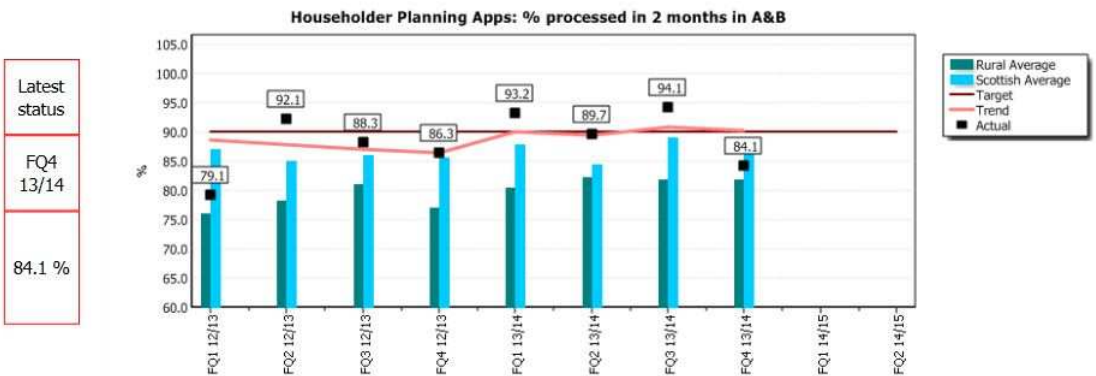
3.3 The MAKI team's performance has over the last financial year been marginally below the 70% target set within the Service Plan, with targets only being exceeded during FQ1. However, during this period the volume of applications determined has continued to keep pace with the volume of new applications received and is now only marginally below the performance target. In particular it is worth noting that despite an ongoing requirement to process a number of complex and contentious applications, performance within MAKI has remained consistent across the period; this is considered to be a significant improvement on the previous year where performance dropped off markedly at times as a result of additional workload and staff pressures. The performance must also be set within a context where it is noted that the number of pre-application enquiries we deal with is the highest it has ever been. They are up 59% in MAKI from last year and this has a direct impact on the ability to focus on Planning Applications.



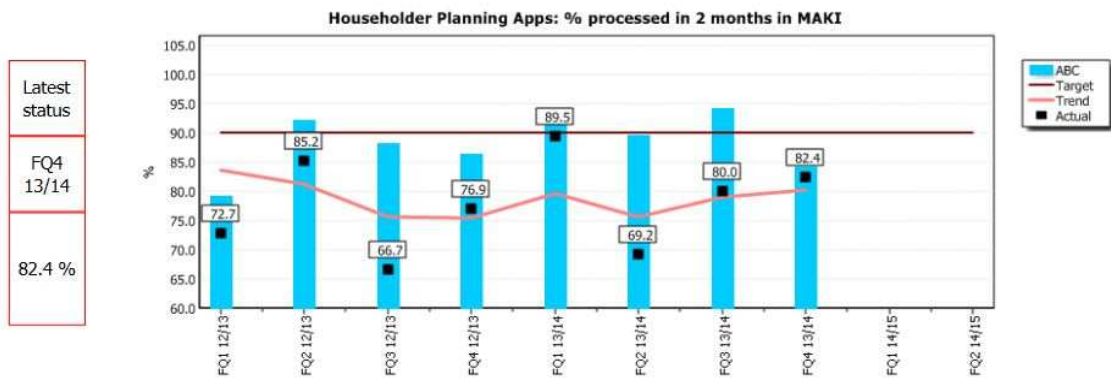
3.4 Using the new average time taken SPIs, the average time taken to determine all local applications within MAKI during the period March 2013 – Apr 2014 was slightly over 12 weeks but well within the interim performance target of 14 weeks that was set for this period. Given that the previous period has involved the significant reduction in the number of longstanding applications on the books, this would indicate that there is good prospect of the MAKI team being able to meet the more challenging and aspirational 12 week performance target set for the current financial year.



3.5 Householder planning applications account for almost 25% of the overall volume of planning applications received by the Council. In recognition that these applications generally relate to minor, less complex developments, the Service Plan set out a performance target for determination of 90% of householder applications within 2 months. In line with a move toward measurement of performance in terms of the time taken to obtain a determination, the Service Plan sets out a revised target for all householder applications to be determined within 8 weeks for the current year.



3.6 Within MAKI, householder applications represent some 20% of the overall volume of applications determined. The MAKI team have been unable to meet the 90% performance target during the last financial year and whilst this is disappointing it is highlighted that in each financial quarter this has been as a result of a relatively small number (between 3 and 8 applications) being determined outwith the 2 month period. It is again noted that performance on householder applications has fallen off during periods where the team has experienced work pressures arising from the summer holiday period. Some cover has been provided from a Senior Planner in the OLI Team for certain applications.

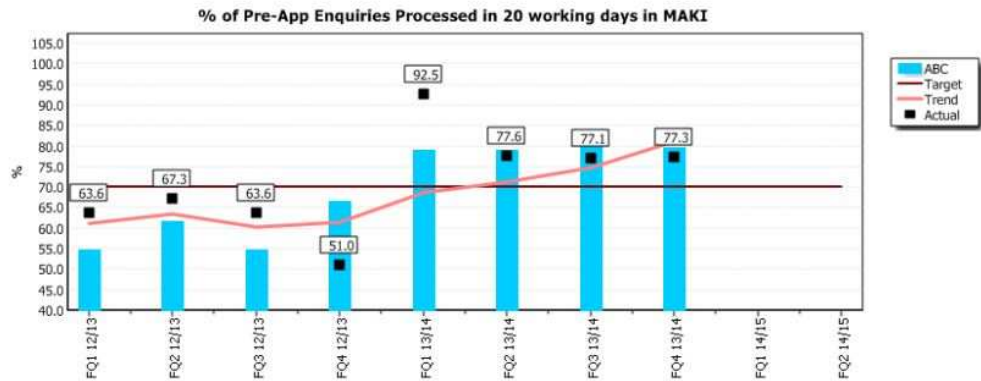


3.7 Using the new average time taken SPIs, the average time taken to determine all householder applications within MAKI during the period March 2013 – Apr 2014 was slightly over 8 weeks; performance remained under 8 weeks for all bar the second quarter where the determination of one longstanding application significantly skewed performance for the whole quarter.



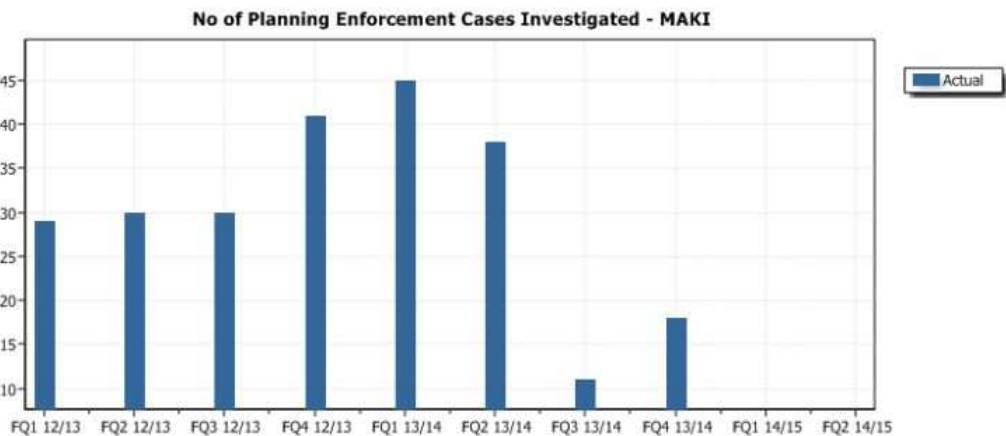
3.8 A pre-application service is also provided by Officers to assist applicants with the development of their proposals. During the period April 2013 – March 2014 over 1000 pre-application enquiries were received across the Council Area, some 270 of these were processed by the MAKI team. The volume of pre-application enquiries has increased by 36% across the Council area from the previous year. Within MAKI pre-applications enquiries are up 59% from last year and represent an increasing strain on the staff time. However, despite the increased work pressure in this respect within MAKI over 77% of these enquiries were responded to within the target period of 20 working days and performance across the period has remained comfortably above the 70% performance target.

Latest status
FQ4 13/14
77.3 %



3.9 In addition to the above, MAKI officers have also made contributions over the last 12 months to strategic projects and officer working groups with Machrihanish Airbase, Campbeltown CARS/THI/CHORD, Local Authority Aquaculture Group, the endorsement of three masterplans and ongoing work relating to a further four masterplans which remain at a development stage being some of the more notable items.

3.10 Planning Enforcement continues to be a significant role within MAKI with 109 new cases investigated during the period April 2013 – March 2014. Following initial investigation, 98 of these cases were found to involve a breach of planning control and have been taken up formally; 116 formal enforcement cases have been satisfactorily resolved and closed within the same time period.



4.0 MOVING FORWARD

4.1 Whilst 2013-14 may in many respects appear to be a disappointing year when viewed purely in a statistical context I would suggest that to the contrary the MAKI team has markedly improved upon its performance over the previous period as was anticipated in last year's performance report and has consolidated this with a standard of performance which, if maintained,

should result in compliance with the revised average time targets set out in the Service Plan for the forthcoming period.

4.2 A number of measures are currently in place with a view to improving the performance of the MAKI team over the coming period, these include the targeting of straightforward applications for earliest possible determination, taking a more proactive approach to concluding problematic applications – including seeking to issue an early refusal of planning permission where an applicant is unwilling or unable to affect a satisfactory solution, and making full use of professional cover available from other Area Teams in effectively managing workloads and reducing the impact of planned and unplanned absences. Service wide measures seeking to improve internal processes, the efficiency of working practices and management of staff resources are also on going.

4.3 The only significant change to service delivery is the relocation of the MAKI team from Ardrishaig to Manse Brae which was undertaken early in April 2014. It remains to be seen whether time lost to the relocation process or establishment of new work practices have any significant impact on performance during FQ1 and beyond but will be the subject of review over the coming period.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy: None
- 5.2 Financial: None
- 5.3 Legal: None
- 5.4 HR: None
- 5.5 Equalities None
- 5.6 Risk: None
- 5.7 Customer Service: None

For further information contact: Peter Bain – Area Team Leader – MAKI, Development Management.

Date: 8th May 2013