

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

**REPORT ON BUILDING CONTROL PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND SIX MONTHLY SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS
COUNCIL WIDE AND DECENTRALISED AREA TEAMS****FROM HEAD OF PLANNING**

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper outlines Building Control half yearly performance with respect to processing building warrant and completion certificate applications in accordance with the requirements of Audit Scotland, which are detailed in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The paper also compares and contrasts the performance of the four area teams, gives the overall average for the six month period in 2002 and 2003 (**2003 figures shown in bold**) and lists the agreed Council targets.
- 1.3 In accordance with the Council's Performance Management and Planning reporting framework this paper provides an update on service plan commitments/action plans and customer feedback reviews for Building Control

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members note the content of the report.
- 2.2 Members note progress on service plan commitments and stakeholder consultations.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members are aware that performance indicators were first introduced for Building Control in financial year 1997/98.
- 3.2 For financial year 2002/3 Audit Scotland changed the basis of the performance indicators to better reflect percentage achievement within Building Control authorities as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.3 The following table compares the workloads and performance of the area teams and the overall council achievement against the Audit Scotland requirements over the same six-month periods of years 2002 and 2003. The measured items however relate only to part of Building Control as no indicators have yet been introduced to show performance in such matters as site inspections, pre-application discussions, enforcements, dangerous buildings and other such matters.
- 3.4 Numbers of applications generally have increased a further 14% on the same period last year and it should be remembered that the last annual performance report showed applications for 2002 numbering 1841 an increase of 21% on the 2000 level of 1522.
- 3.5 Despite limited resources, the devolved nature of the service and an unpredictable pattern of development it can be seen that each of the diverse areas has contributed substantially to the Council's achievement of again meeting the targets set by Audit Scotland.

AREA TEAM COMPARATIVE PERFORMANCES 1 st April to 30 th September 2002 and 2003												
Area	No. of Warrants Rec'd. / Issued		No. of Completions Rec'd. / Issued		% Age response within 15 days		Average days response to Completion Certificates		% Age issue within 6 days		% Age issue within 3 days	
	Bute & Cowal	184 230	181 188	105 104	105 104	92% 81%	81%	1.95 2.13	2..13	82% 93%	93%	69% 80%
Helensburgh & Lomond	210 200	211 157	109 133	107 133	60% 72%	72%	2.52 3.56	3.56	73% 90%	90%	83% 93%	93%
Mid Argyll Kintyre/Islay	220 266	218 180	185 168	185 168	81% 93%	93%	1.44 1.32	1.32	80% 95%	95%	89% 82%	82%
Oban, Lorn & Isles	241 280	240 206	101 110	101 110	95% 87%	87%	2.71 4.23	4.23	95% 90%	90%	97% 96%	96%
All	855 976	850 731	500 515	498 515	82% 83%	83%	2.16 2.69	2.69	83% 92%	92%	85% 83%	83%
Target					80% 85%	85%	3 3	3	80% 85%	85%	80% 85%	85%

*2003 figures shown in bold.

3.6 Appendix 1 to this report sets the requirements of the Scottish Executive and Audit Scotland and clearly defines meanings for the actions and times.

Audit Scotland has not specified a target number of days for a response to a completion certificate preferring to accept the statutory requirement that an application for a completion certificate be determined within 14 days and requiring that 80% be issued within 3 days. The geography of Argyll and Bute therefore is a major constraint and causes additional expense in achieving statutory requirements with limited resources to produce "best value".

The acceptance last year of a period of 3 days as the targeted average response has proved to be correct.

3.6.1 **Bute and Cowal** area offices successfully responded to 81% of applications within 15 days, building warrant applications increased to 230, up 25%, with applications for and issue of completion certificates remaining almost the same, when compared to the same period last year. The average number of days to respond to an application for Completion Certificate increased to 2.13 and is explained by the increased number of applications for warrant requiring a greater allocation of resources of time and manpower. The increased percentage of warrants issued within 6 days after all available information to allow determination, (93%) and the increased percentage of completion certificates issued within 3 days, (80%) is a result of better use of manpower and improved communication, which matters were highlighted as a problem area in last year's report.

3.6.2 **Helensburgh and Lomond** area office received a slightly lower number of applications for building warrant, (200), but a substantially increased number of applications for completion certificate, (133), numbers of warrants issued during the period were reduced but completion certificates applied for and issued increased by some 24%. The percentage response to a building warrant application was raised to 72% from 60%, due in the main to the replacement building control officer resource, this is below the Council target of 85% due to the high number of site visits associated with certain of the current applications. The increase in the average number of days to respond to an application for completion certificate can be explained by the increase affecting previously programmed work tasks. The increased percentage in both warrants issued within 6 days, (90%) and completions within 3 days, (93%) can be explained by improvements in administrative processing within the area team.

3.6.3 **Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay** offices in Airdrishaig and Campbeltown received 266 applications for building warrant, an increase of 21%, with applications for and issues of completion certificates reduced by some 9%, when compared to the same period last year. Staff has successfully responded to 93% of applications within 15 days and reduced the average number of days to respond to a completion certificate application to 1.32 days. The percentage of warrants issued within 6 days has improved to 95% but there has been a reduction to 82% in the percentage of completion certificates issued within 3 days, explainable by greater resource demands from an increase in warrant applications.

3.6.4 **Oban, Lorn and the Isles** continue to exceed both Council and Audit Scotland targets by achieving 87% response to building warrant applications within 15 days. Although this is an apparent reduction from the previous year the number of applications increased to 280, or 16% on the previous year with applications for and issue of completion increasing to 110 or some 9%. The increased average number of days to respond to an application for completion certificate of 4.23 days is an indication that with current resources concentration on one part of the building control service is at the expense of others.

3.6.5 **Argyll and Bute** as a whole has received an increase of 14% in building warrant applications, to 976, and an approximate 3% increase in applications for and issue of completion certificates, to 515, compared to the first 6 months of last year. The percentage of applications responded to within 15 days is comfortably above the Audit Scotland requirement of 80% but does not meet the Council aspiration of 85%. The increased average number of days to respond to a completion certificate request can be offset against the increase in applications for warrant but is still within the council's aspirational target. The percentage of building warrants issued within 6 days exceeds both Audit Scotland and Council targets and although the average percentage of completion certificates issued within 3 days exceeds Audit Scotland it fails to meet the Council target of 85%. Similarly to Warrants the numbers of completion certificates issued over the same period were slightly greater at 427. It is projected that the numbers of building warrant applications for the year 2003/4 will be of the order of 2000.

3.7 Each area office has a variable workload and this table is a reflection of the period from 1st April to 30th September.

3.8 The national performance figures required by Audit Scotland show only part of the story and therefore broad interpretation masks the diversity of the offices, areas, travelling, inspection regimes and staffing resources.

4 SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

4.1 In the current service plan there are three main items for attention by Building Control, as follows:-

- (i) Implementation of Uniform 7 Spatial – The move to version 7 of the software for Building Control took effect from 01/08/03. Minor difficulties have been addressed since that time but the move to this version appears to have been the least problematic of all such upgrades of the system so far undertaken. It does however appear that all of the benefits of this upgrade may not be achieved because of infrastructure restrictions between area offices and central servers.
- (ii) Electronic Delivery of Building Control Services – With successful application of the Planning weekly lists on the web a similar format has been submitted for weekly Building Warrant application lists and these should be made available “on line” shortly. It is furthermore intended that down-loadable application forms will be made available until fully “interactive” on-line forms are available but this proposal is likely to be at least 2 years away.
- (iii) Greater Involvement in Section 23 Licensing Certificates - A consultation paper has been submitted to the Head of Legal Services and dates for a meeting are awaited. Thereafter a joint report will be submitted to both Licensing Boards.

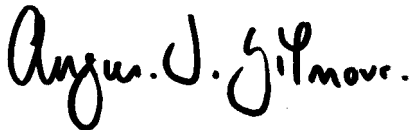
4.2 Preparations have been made and consultations carried out for the first of our open sessions with agents wishing further clarification on particular problem areas of the Building Regulations The first of these is likely to be Dunoon in December 2003 or January 2004. Customer satisfaction questionnaires continue to be issued with warrant approvals and the current rate of satisfaction with the Building Control Service is 98%.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Availability of appropriate staff resources at all and every stage of warrant and completion certificate processing is essential to meeting both statutory performance targets and customer satisfaction. Overall the service is performing to the targets set by Audit Scotland.

6. IMPLICATIONS

Policy	In accordance with "Best Value" objectives
Financial:	Additional funding for staff resources may be required if the service is to be improved
Personnel:	Additional building control resources will be required if members desire further reduction in processing times and to better regulate the outcomes from the four area offices. Additional resources will allow for the better management of periods of staff vacancy.
Equal Opportunity:	None



Angus Gilmour
Head of Planning
Development Services

06.10.03
ACW/BC

For further information Contact Gary Wilson Building Control Manager.

Appendix 1

Building Warrant and Completion Certificate Applications

Indicator 1: Building warrants and completion certificates.

- a) The percentage of requests for a building warrant responded to within 15 days.
- b) The average time taken to respond to a request for a completion certificate.
- c) The percentage of building warrants issued (or otherwise determined) within 6 days.
- d) The percentage of completion certificates issued (or otherwise determined) within 3 days.

Definitions

The Scottish Executive has set national targets for the times to deal with building warrants and completion certificates. The new national targets are that:

- 80% of applications for building warrants should be responded to within 15 days
- the time to respond to a request for a completion certificate will continue to be the average time (working days).
- 80% of building warrants should be issued within 6 days 80% of completion certificates should be issued within 3 days.

(Part a) The time to respond to a request for a warrant is the period from receipt of a **valid application** by the council to the date of response to the applicant, which may include:

- issuing or refusing the warrant (warrants which do not require contact with the applicant because there are no reasons why a building warrant cannot be issued should be recorded under this part of the indicator with the first response being the date of issue of the warrant. Part c) of the indicator has been amended to reflect this).
- informing the applicant of statutory requirements not met in the initial application (i.e. the council, having carried out a full technical/procedural appraisal of the proposals will only then inform the applicant of all reasons why a building warrant cannot be issued).

An acknowledgement letter or some other form of holding letter should not be used for the purposes of this part of indicator. The indicator measures the performance of the service not merely the administrative function, the service relates to the notification of the results of a full technical/procedural appraisal of the initial valid application.

A valid application is defined as an application which is accompanied by plans and the prescribed fee.

(Part b) The time to respond to a request for a certificate of completion or an authorisation of temporary occupation/use is the period from receipt of a formal application (form BA8) together with a duly completed Compliance Certificate for Electrical Installation (form BA9), if appropriate, to the date of an inspection being carried out to determine whether or not a completion certificate can be issued.

A letter to the applicant requesting access **does not count**, however, in exceptional circumstances where sites are inaccessible or where properties are empty, a telephone call, calling card left or letter requesting access would be deemed as an authority's first response.

Final inspections carried out (prior to receiving the prescribed application form and or Certificate of Compliance of the Electrical Installation) to determine whether or not a certificate of completion or authorisation of temporary occupation/use should be reported against part d) of the indicator.

(Part c) The time for issuing a warrant is the period from receipt by the council of all necessary information following notification to the applicant of reasons why a building warrant cannot be issued, together with an application which meets the requirements of the Building (Scotland) Act 1959, to the date of issue of the warrant.

Where a building warrant application is accompanied by an application for a relaxation, the time to issue the warrant remains as stated in the definition. It is recognised that the period from receipt by the council of all necessary information will be the date following the statutory 14 day (approximately 10 working day) draft period which is allowed for representation.

Warrants which do not require contact with the applicant because there are no reasons why a building warrant cannot be issued should not be recorded because they will have already been recorded at part a) of the indicator.

(Part d) The time for issuing a completion certificate or an authorisation of temporary occupation/use is the period from the date when the council is satisfied that the building work has been completed in accordance with the approved warrant as far as can be reasonably ascertained, and the council are in receipt of the prescribed application forms which meets the requirement of the Building (Scotland) Act 1959 to the date the completion certificate or an authorisation of temporary occupation/use is issued.

Final inspections carried out (prior to receiving the prescribed application form and/or Certificate of Compliance of the Electrical Installation) to determine whether or not a certificate of completion or authorisation of temporary occupation/use should be reported against this part of the indicator. The time for issuing the certificate is the period from the receipt of the prescribed application forms which meets the requirements of the Building (Scotland) Act 1959 to the date the certificate of completion or an authorisation of temporary occupation /use is issued.

Reporting Period

Where the determination of an application for warrant or certificate of completion does not fall wholly within a reporting period, the information relating to that warrant application should be included in the reporting year in which the application is granted or otherwise determined.

All periods should be measured in working days (excludes public holidays).

'Building warrants' is the total number of warrants issued or applications otherwise determined (i.e. includes withdrawn or refused applications) in the reporting year.

'Certificates' is the total number of temporary and final certificates of completion issued or otherwise determined in the reporting year. Temporary completion certificates should be counted for each occasion application received.

Source

Building control records.

Interpretation

The extent to which councils prepare guidance to applicants on any deficiencies with any application for a building warrant following its submission may influence the time taken to respond to an application.

In accordance with Building (Procedures) (Scotland) Regulations 1981, councils are required to either issue the completion certificate or notify the applicant of the reasons for not doing so, within a statutory 14-day (approx. 10 working day) period of receipt of an application for a certificate.