

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
Economic and Community Regeneration Scrutiny Committee

3rd March 2017

Report of the Head of Planning and Public Protection

Nicola Pearce

Matter for Monitoring

Wards Affected: All

Building Control – Report Card

Purpose of Report

1. To present for Scrutiny the Report Card for the Building Control Service.

Executive Summary

2. In accordance with the approved Divisional Business Plan for Planning and Public Protection each Business Unit within the Division is required to complete a Service Report Card for each Financial year.
3. This interim report updates Members on the progress made over the current financial year and in particular outlines:
 - The ongoing performance against last year's Action Plan and Targets;
 - The ongoing challenges and opportunities faced in the short and medium term; and
 - The progress being made in respect of the actions and targets for the 9 months from 1st April 2016 to 31st December 2016.
4. The Report Card, set out in Appendix A, summarises the service priorities, key measures and key actions for the Building Control Service.

Consultation Outcome

5. Employees within the individual services and external customers where relevant have been consulted in the development of the Report Card.

Financial Impact

6. The work delivered is fully covered by a combination of existing revenue budgets and fee income.

Equality Impact Assessment

7. Not applicable.

Workforce Impacts

8. These are covered in the appended report card.

Legal Impacts

9. Not applicable.

Risk Management

10. A Risk Matrix for the Directorate has been prepared which incorporates the significant risks within this service area.

Recommendation

11. This item is for monitoring purposes.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

12. Not applicable.

Implementation of Decision

13. Not applicable.

Sustainability Appraisal

14. The activities of the Environment Directorate have an impact on all themes of the Corporate Performance Plan. Operational Business Plans contribute to service improvement by setting out service specific priorities for the next 12 months and how they will be met. Managers are required to consider corporate policies such as equalities and health when determining how they meet their service priorities.

Appendices

15. Appendix 1 Building Control Report Card.

List of Background Papers

16. Business Plan for the Planning and Public Protection Section covering the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017.

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Service Report Card 2016-2017

Building Control Service

Section 1: Brief description of the service
<p>The term “Building Control” refers to the execution of the provisions of the Building Act 1984 (under Section 91) and the Building Regulations made there under, together with other areas of activity normally linked to or carried out as part of this role. The unit sets out to safeguard public health and safety by the implementation and enforcement of statutory functions under The Building Act, The West Glamorgan Act and the Safety at Sports Grounds Act. The unit has a varied customer base providing a service for customers within the Authority as well as those outside. Customers range from individual house owners to multinational organisations, each placing a different level of demand on the service. Work load of the section can be split into fee earning and non-fee earning work. It is a legislative requirement that fee earning work is carried out on a cost neutral basis. The service is delivered by six full time, qualified Building Control Surveyors with a further two full time Technical Support Officers based within the Business Support Unit. The service forms part of the LABC (Local Authority Building Control) organisation that facilitates collaborative working and shared services across all LAs in England and Wales. The service has a large portfolio of commercial partners who use the service to obtain Building Regulations approval through the LABC</p>

Partner scheme for developments across England and Wales.

Section 2:
Overall Summary of Performance for 2015-16 Financial Year

The service reports to Welsh Government on two performance measures, BCT 004 measures the Percentage of “Full Plans” applications checked within 15 days and BCT 007 – Percentage of “Full Plans” applications approved first time. At the close of Q4 2015-16 the section reported performance figures of BCT004 – 95.12% and BCT007 – 99.02%.

The service is legally required to deliver its fee earning functions on a cost recovery basis. This was achieved and a modest surplus was carried forward into the next financial year. This surplus is used to cover the cost of providing a service on projects that continue into the next financial year.

The service surveys all customers on completion of a project and as a result is able to accurately assess levels of customer satisfaction. From the returns the service is able to report that in seven key areas over 90% of our customers report high levels of satisfaction. The section did not receive any complaints that were not resolved by the Directorate Complaints Officer.

The section has reported sickness absence lower than the council average, all staff have received relevant technical training and all staff had an EDR during the year.

**Section 3:
Service Priorities 2016-17**

Priority	Actions to deliver priority	Officer Responsible	Timescale	What will be different? Measures and/or Outcomes
(1) PM27 – Deliver the Building Control service on budget	The fee structure is designed to ensure that fee income covers the cost of service delivery in accordance with the strict CIPFA rules. ie it is delivered on a cost neutral basis.	PD	Ongoing	The revenue budget allocated to the service is only required to cover the statutory non fee earning responsibilities of the service ie Dangerous Structures, Safety at Sports Grounds etc. The cost of delivering the service does not therefore impose significantly upon the Council's budget. The final out turn for the service will be the appropriate measure. Current figures suggest that the budget will be balanced.
(2) PM28 – Smooth	The recent legislative changes	PD, RT, SA,	Ongoing	Officers will be able to

implementation of the recent Building Control legislative changes introduced in December 2015	and transitional provision relating to other legislative changes are impacting on the ground. Officers will need to be appropriately trained to support the construction industry. Changes of note include sprinkler requirements and the controls relating to the increased roll out of broadband.	JE, CH, CQ		assist builders on site more readily. Their proactive approach should lead to a retention or even an increase in the council's market share of construction projects both within and outside Neath Port Talbot. The share of the market will be the appropriate measure.
(3) PM29 – Improve the marketing and accessibility of added value services provided by the Building control section.	Added value services are currently delivered by Building Control. Knowledge of their availability is currently reliant upon word of mouth. An online presence which will include a list of fees and charges and the ability to negotiate such fees will be developed	PD, RT, SA	September 2016	The improved online presence should increase the number of added value services delivered which will result in an increase in fee income. An increase in fee income from added value services will be the appropriate measure. Urgent work to comply with Welsh language legislation was required and took priority. This will now be completed by the end of Q4.

(4) PM30- Sponsorship is secured to cover the cost of delivering the annual Building Control Awards	Extensive marketing is undertaken at an early stage to secure the money and thus ensure that the awards are delivered to a high standard	PD, SA, RT	October 2016	The annual Building Control awards are an important marketing tool to secure work from local and national builders for the Council's Building Control section. They have also been successful with many entries going through and winning at the regional and national events, thus lifting the profile of Neath Port Talbot. The delivery of a successful awards, which will in turn feed through to winners at the national events will be the appropriate measure. Sponsorship has been secured and the awards are to take place February 2017.
(5) PM31- Develop an in-house Building Control submission portal which integrates with our back	Building Control officers to work with IT to enable builders to submit applications on line and to request site inspections via	PD	March 2017	An increased use of internet technology will reduce the demands upon both the Building Control

office system	an app on their phones			Officers and the support staff in terms of inputting hard copy building Regs submissions onto our back office system and dealing with telephone requests for inspections. Staff time can be re-invested in delivering a better cheaper service going forward. The development and implementation of the new technology is the appropriate measure. This work is currently on hold due to The Planning Portal developing a similar nationally available system.
(6) PM32 – Develop a procedure to deal with Building Over Sewer Agreements	Welsh Water are intending to revise procedures and are considering a withdrawal of the formal building over sewer requirements. The intention is to place the onus upon Building control services. A new procedure is required which will	PD, SA, RT	March 2017	Welsh Water have a reputation of obstructing development projects due to their unnecessary intervention. Whilst their withdrawal from the process will place a greater burden upon

	ensure protection of the sewers without causing undue delay to developments			<p>Building Control, it will also speed up the development process. The appropriate measure will be that the speed in the delivery of projects affected by sewers will increase.</p> <p>In practical terms the new WW procedure has had little effect on our customers, negative or positive.</p>
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Section 4: Service Performance Quadrant 2016-17

Progress on Service Priorities.....

PM27 – Deliver the Building Control service on budget - This is measured at end of year and previous years accounts are variable so it is difficult to predict but examination of the accounts has indicated that a balanced budget is forecast.

PM28 –Smooth implementation of the recent Building Control legislative changes – Changes have been implemented smoothly through officers educating and keeping customers informed. The changes have not resulted in any complaints being made against the service. Market share is swayed by many issues but will be measured at the end of the financial year.

PM29 – Improve the marketing and accessibility of added value services provided by the Building control section. – Following on from a report by the Welsh Language Commissioner it was necessary to carry out urgent works to the Building Control web pages. This was given priority and the advertising of added value services will follow.

PM30- Sponsorship is secured to cover the cost of delivering the annual Building Control Awards. This was achieved and the 2017 awards took place on 3rd February and were a big success.

PM31- Develop an in-house Building Control submission portal which integrates with our back office system. Initial works were carried out on this and the project is 60% complete. On a national level LABC have been working collaboratively with The Planning Portal and the release of a nationally available product is imminent. Work on our

own portal has therefore been suspended but customers are able to electronically request an inspection.

PM32 – Develop a procedure to deal with Building Over Sewer Agreements. This has been done and the new procedures put in place without any disruption to our customers.

Although still at a very high level of performance it is regrettable, though understandable, that a drop in performance in relation to BCT004 and BCT007 is reported. The section has lost numerous experienced members of staff, some of whom have not been replaced due to the need for the section to contribute to the council's FFP. It is credible that in the current climate of being asked to do more with less, the section continues to report excellent performance figures.

Measure	2014-15 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	Comparative Performance	2015-16 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)	2016-17 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)
Service Measure 1: BCT 004	100%	95.12%	If available	95.19%	93.90%
Service Measure 2: BCT007	96.55%	99.02%	If available	98.08%	95.12%
Corporate measure (CM01):	0	0		0	0
a) Number of transactional services fully web enabled					
b) Number of transactional services partially web enabled	Not Recorded	Not Recorded	If available	Not Recorded	Not Recorded

**Section 5:
Financial Quadrant 2016-17:**

Despite reducing budgets year on year and fierce competition from Approved Inspectors, the quality of the service together with successful marketing has ensured that fee income has been maintained. More efficient working practices have also enabled us to retain sufficient employees to deliver a quality and efficient service which is wholly delivered within available budgets. For this reason the service is operating 100% within the projected budget.

Measure	2014-15 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2016-17 Qtr. 2 (projected to year end)
Corporate Measure (CM02): % revenue expenditure within budget	100%	112% over/underspend	100%
Revenue Budget £	£80,614	£65,511	£74,737

Corporate Measure (CM03):

Amount of FFP savings

Amount of FFP savings at risk

£

Zero

Zero

**Section 6:
Employee Quadrant 2016-17**

It is acknowledged that sickness has increased compared to the same quarter last year, but this is due to one officer requiring surgery for a medical problem. That said the figures reported are still low and are significantly lower than both the council and directorate averages. Unplanned departures are always disappointing, especially when significant resources have been allocated in the development of those people. However in both cases the members of staff moved onto similar positions elsewhere while being offered significant increases in salaries.

Measure	2014-15 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 QTR. 3 (cumulative)	2016-17 QTR. 3 (cumulative)
Corporate Measure (CM04): Average FTE (Full time equivalent) working days lost due to sickness absence				
Service: Building Control				
Total Service FTE days lost in the period	21	83.6	3	27
Average FTE working days lost per employee.	2.3	7.8	0.4	2.5
Directorate:	9.8	10.2	7.3	8.3
Council:	9.4	9.7	6.8	7.3

	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 QTR. 3 (cumulative)	2016-17 QTR. 3 (cumulative)
Corporate Measure (CM11): Staff engagement Measure			
Corporate Measure (CM05): % of staff who have received a performance appraisal during 2016-17 (Target 100%) Number of staff who have received a performance appraisal during 2016-17	100	0	0
Corporate Measure (CM06): Number of employees left due to unplanned departures	1	0	2

Section 7: Customer Quadrant 2016-17

The section has an enforcement role, and it is highly likely that complaints will be received. It is encouraging that no complaints about the service have been received this year.

The service does not record compliments, but does survey all of our service users, the results of which are summarised below and demonstrate very high levels of customer satisfaction.

Measure	2015-16 Actual (Full Year)	2015-16 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)	2016-17 Qtr. 2 (cumulative)
Corporate Measure (CM07): Total number of complaints	0	0	0
Internal	2	1	0
External (from the public)			
Corporate Measure (CM08): Total number of compliments	0	0	0
Internal	0	0	0

External (members of the public)			
Corporate Measure (CM09): customer satisfaction measure/s	The section surveys all customers on completion of a project and asks that we are scored on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best) on certain areas (return rate 52%). Below are the percentages of customers that scored us at 4 or above.		
	Speed of Initial Receipt	98%	
	Speed of Building Regs Approval	93%	
	Promptness of Inspections	98%	
	Quality of Advice Given	90%	
	Helpfulness of Officers	100%	
	Attitude of Staff	95%	
	Overall value for money	85%	

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