

## DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PERFORMANCE

**Report By: Director of Environment**

### Wards Affected

County-wide

### Purpose

1. To report progress against the Government's BV109 targets for 2005/06 and any outstanding actions in order to achieve the targets.

### Financial Implications

2. Failure to meet the targets will result in reduced Planning Delivery Grant in future years.

### Background

3. The Government's targets for Development Control are focussed on the speed of processing planning applications and are:

Performance Indicator	topic	Target
<b>BV 109 a</b>	% Major applications determined in 13 weeks	60%
<b>BV 109 b</b>	% Minor applications determined in under 8 weeks	65%
<b>BV 109 c</b>	% Other applications determined in under 8 weeks	80%

### Current Position

4. Out-turn figures for the past three years are:

Ref	Target	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	Performance 2005/06		
					Apr-Jun	Apr-Sep	Apr-Oct
<b>BV109a</b>	<b>60%</b>	42%	53%	46%	41%	44%	46%
<b>BV109b</b>	<b>65%</b>	62%	<b>67%</b>	51%	56%	53%	56%
<b>BV109c</b>	<b>80%</b>	77%	76%	64%	64%	67%	70%

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from P. J. Yates,  
Development Control Manager, tel 01432 261782

5. The 2004 out-turn performance for BVPI 109 and performance from April to June 2005 (directly attributable to loss of staff, recruitment difficulties and MVM issues) have been sufficiently under target that the Council is being proposed as a Planning Standards Authority for all three elements of BV 109 for 2006/07
6. The potential impact on the CPA Service Block is that whilst Environment will score 2 for 2005 the fact that the Council is a Planning Standards Authority will restrict the maximum score for the Service Block to 2 for 2006 if we do not meet the BVPI 109 targets.
7. Councils are being identified as Standards Authorities for 2006/07 based on 12 months performance from July 2004 to June 2005. The categorisation is therefore based on old data which does not fairly reflect current performance. In detail performance within the current year shows a clear trend, thus:

**Direction of Travel – April to November 2005** (figures in **bold** where targets achieved)

Type	April – June 2005	July - Sept 2005	Oct – mid Nov 2005
Major	42%	43%	<b>63%</b>
Minor	42%	61%	<b>73%</b>
Other	61%	74%	<b>87%</b>

8. In the light of the recent upturn in performance I am optimistic that the targets for BV109 b and c will be met during 2005/06 taken as a whole. The more problematic area is the one of major planning applications, i.e. BV 109 a, which typically require section 106 agreements and are the more complex to deal with in all respects. Efforts for the remainder of 2005/06 need to be focussed on this area of work. This is reflected in the updated Improvement Plan for Development Control Performance.
9. A significant reason for the lower performance figures in the first two quarters of 2005/06 is that key vacancies existed in the Enforcement Team, and the Manager post was vacant from March until mid-August. This had the effect that planning officers, and especially the Area Team Leaders, had to spend a lot of time on enforcement and complaints thereby reducing significantly the time available for dealing with planning applications.
10. It should also be recognised that the Development Control Team still has some key vacancies. The vacant post of Principal Planning Officer for one of the three sub-divisions of the Northern Area has not been filled having been advertised three times in the past four months. Furthermore, in September 2005 one Senior Planning Officer and the Team Leader for Minerals and Waste also resigned. There are, therefore, currently three vacancies in the Team (with the minerals and Waste post being especially significant). The remaining officers still have caseloads on average at over 200 cases per officer per year. This is significantly in excess of the 150 cases per officer which is now recognised, nationally, as a suitable figure for efficient and effective operation of the development control service.
11. Herefordshire Council is by no means alone in facing these difficulties. 70 local planning authorities have been named as Standards Authorities for 2006/07 for major

planning applications including Unitary authorities with large rural areas such as Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council and the Isle of Wight Council. Other large rural unitary authorities are also named as for Minor and Other categories including, for example, North East Lincolnshire Borough Council. The table below sets out some comparator authority figures, firstly comparing three large rural unitary authorities and then three urban unitary authorities. Where Councils have met the BVPI targets the percentage figure is shown in **bold**.

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>Large Rural Unitary Authorities</b>			
<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Herefordshire Council</b>			
<b>Performance</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>	<b>2003/2004</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>
Major decisions	46	63	57	82
% in 13 weeks	52%	42%	53%	46%
Minor decisions	893	921	946	1191
% in 8 weeks	58%	62%	<b>67%</b>	51%
Other decisions	1941	2119	2070	2155
% in 8 weeks	67%	77%	76%	64%
Total received		3456	2844	3646
	<b>North Lincolnshire Council</b>			
<b>Performance</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>	<b>2003/2004</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>
Major decisions	58	51	47	53
% in 13 weeks	<b>66%</b>	47%	45%	<b>61%</b>
Minor decisions	564	673	668	768
% in 8 weeks	60%	48%	35%	64%
Other decisions	734	888	1941	1311
% in 8 weeks	77%	67%	59%	<b>86%</b>
Total received		1757	1927	2142

	<b>East Riding of Yorkshire Council</b>			
<b>Performance</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>	<b>2003/2004</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>
Major decisions	148	146	135	179
% in 13 weeks	52%	52%	49%	55%
Minor decisions	1261	1321	1404	1435
% in 8 weeks	59%	58%	52%	59%
Other decisions	2371	3044	3597	3573
% in 8 weeks	76%	77%	<b>80%</b>	<b>83%</b>
Total received		4948	4511	5813
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>Other Unitary Authorities</b>			
	<b>Birmingham City Council</b>			
<b>Performance</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>	<b>2003/2004</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>
Major decisions	208	163	298	243
% in 13 weeks	27%	27%	38%	50%
Minor decisions	1034	1330	1475	1440
% in 8 weeks	40%	45%	<b>65%</b>	64%
Other decisions	4544	4366	4920	5304
% in 8 weeks	61%	68%	<b>80%</b>	<b>81%</b>
Total received		6782	6280	7570
	<b>Newcastle City Council</b>			
<b>Performance</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>	<b>2003/2004</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>
Major decisions	61	82	63	64
% in 13 weeks	43%	42%	56%	53%
Minor decisions	349	382	440	390

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% in 8 weeks	60%	44%	58%	60%
Other decisions	1282	1785	1867	2041
% in 8 weeks	65%	53%	77%	70%
Total received		2467	2524	2612
	<b>Warrington Borough Council</b>			
<b>Performance</b>	<b>2001/2002</b>	<b>2002/2003</b>	<b>2003/2004</b>	<b>2004/2005</b>
Major decisions	70	67	70	86
% in 13 weeks	44%	30%	44%	46%
Minor decisions	295	358	378	442
% in 8 weeks	38%	37%	60%	<b>66%</b>
Other decisions	1473	1592	1773	5304
% in 8 weeks	74%	62%	68%	79%
Total received		2082	3708	2530

### Future Action

- 12 The Development Control Improvement Plan is kept under constant review, with adjustments being made as appropriate. Most recently a review of arrangements for Section 106 agreements has commenced. This is being progressed jointly with the Legal Services Manager and will result in Heads of Terms for section 106 agreements being set out in reports to the Area Sub Committees and include setting out strict timetables for completion of agreements. Further minor adjustments to office practices have also been introduced, for example, to expedite the issue of Decision Notices once planning decisions have been made.
- 13 Further progress with recruitment to the three vacant posts in the team is required.
- 14 The commencement of scanning plans and publication of application details on the Council's website will require further changes to office practice which, in the short term, may have adverse effects in order to set the new systems up effectively. However, in the medium term this should result in benefits to the service, for example, by enabling electronic consultation with statutory consultees rather than relying on posting multiple copies of paper plans.
- 15 A further area for improvement is in the quality of planning application submissions. A planning application validation SPD is due to be included in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The Statement of Community Involvement will also place requirements on the developers of major applications at pre-submission stage which should result in

planning applications being better prepared before submission. A further future development would be the expansion of the current supplementary planning application guidance, for example, to include a residential design guide. This, however, can only be considered in the context of the LDS as a whole.

- 16 The Development Control Improvement Plan is appended to this report at **Appendix 1**

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT Members note and comment on, where appropriate, the implementation of the Improvement Plan.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- None identified.