

**AGENDA ITEM**

**7.1**

**COMMITTEE: PERFORMANCE, RESOURCES AND ASSETS SCRUTINY**

**DATE: 29TH MAY 2008**

**SUBJECT: REFERENCE FROM ENVIRONMENT AND NON  
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -  
ACTIONS ON IMPROVING PERFORMANCE IN  
DETERMINING PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

**REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE - (HEAD OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY)**

**CONTACT OFFICER: SUSAN ROWLAND 546036**

**IMPLICATIONS:**

<b>LEGAL</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>COMMUNITY SAFETY</b>
<b>EQUALITIES</b>		<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>
<b>FINANCIAL</b>		<b>CONSULTATIONS</b>
<b>STAFFING</b>		<b>OTHER</b>

**WARDS AFFECTED: ALL**

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**PURPOSE**

1. To report the actions proposed by the Head of Planning to improve the performance in determining planning applications in the Development Control section as requested by Performance Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2. **Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the action being taken by the Head of Planning in the Development Control section to improve performance in determining planning applications.**

## **BACKGROUND**

3. At its meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2008, Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee discussed the Performance and Finance Reporting (Quarter 3 2007/08). It was noted by the Committee the low number of major and minor applications determined in 13 weeks and other applications determined in 8 weeks. Performance continues to fall due to 3 primary reasons but inter related reasons – staff shortages, sickness absence and public access. Despite recruitment drives, the service had failed to fill vacant posts.
4. The Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee raised concerns at the continued poor performance in determining planning applications and the difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified staff and requested that:-
  - (i) Environment and Non Executive Functions Scrutiny Committee agreed to scrutinise the continuing poor performance of major and minor planning applications.
  - (ii) Investigate why it was proving so difficult recruiting suitably qualified staff.
  - (iii) Report its findings of (i) and (ii) above, back to the Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee.

## **REPORT**

5. Environment and Non Executive Functions Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008, the new Head of Planning was in attendance and accepted that the handling of planning applications had declined. To address this decline the Head of Planning was in the process of preparing an improvement plan for Development Control.

6. He anticipated that from June 2008 onwards the figures should steadily improve. Problems had been experienced with staff recruitment and retention in Development Control to overcome this situation the salaries of 3 posts had recently been increased along with improved recruitment and retention packages in order to become competitive in the wider market.
7. The aim of the Head of Planning was to ensure that the Development Control service recovered sufficiently to deliver at least second quartile by the end of the year. By 2009/10 the service was aiming to achieve the top quartile.
8. The Head of Planning agreed to monitor the progress made within the service once the extra resources and staffing were in place and report back to Environment and Non Executive Functions Scrutiny Committee the progress achieved in 6 months time.
9. Environment and Non Executive Functions Scrutiny Committee resolved:-
  - “(i) That the Head of Planning report back on the progress achieved in the Development Control section in six months.
  - (ii) That Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee be informed of the actions being taken to improve performance in determining planning applications.”

### **PROPOSAL/OPTION**

10. Performance, Resources and Assets Scrutiny Committee are requested to note the action being taken by the Head of Planning in the Development Control section to improve performance in determining planning applications.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

11. There are/are no legal implications to this report and this has been agreed by Mary Cormack in Legal Services on 14 May 2008.

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS** **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D**

PRA Report 10/2B/08  
Minute No 10/28/02  
ENS Report 7.1/4/08  
Minute No 20/03/04  
ENS Report 11/5/08  
Minute No 29/01/05