

NOTE TO: JOINT SERVICES COMMITTEE

DATE: 12/05/2022

TOPIC: BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS UPDATE

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members regarding the progress of the partnership and contains no recommendations.

2 REPORT

2.1 Key Performance Indicators

The attached key performance data indicates the Partnership has had another strong performance this financial year.

The table also indicates the average time to first response on a full plans application being an average of 7.75 days. While this is slightly down on last year's figure of an average of 6.5 days it represents a significant achievement and this has been reflected in the market share the service currently commands.

KPI	Year	2020/21				2021/22			
	Target	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Building Regulation Full Plan applications determined in 2 months	95%	98%	99%	99%	97%	100%	98%	98%	100%
Building Regulation Applications examined within 3 weeks	95%	99%	100%	99%	98%	90%	98%	99%	96%
Average time to first response (Days)	10	5	7	7	7	8.5	7.5	8	7
Market Share - Number of applications %	75%	81%	82%	77%	81%	77%	80%	84%	79%
Market Share - New Housing Completions %	40%	32%	38%	42%	51%	47%	39%	42%	35%
Financial Position	Breakeven	9,506	20,499	55,094	92,546	51,929	81,775	102,703	TBA
Number of applications received	N/A	237	356	329	381	379	322	295	362

2.2 Market share

The overall market share has dropped slightly to 79% for quarter four, which gives us an average of 80% market share across the year 2021/2022. This level of market share is high for a local authority and can only be maintained if the service is able to continue to provide service at a level our customers expect.

The market share of new housing completions has normalised as more completions have come through from NHBC in the last quarter but remains at an average 35% giving an overall average for this financial year of 40%, which mirrors last year's performance figures.

Having sufficient resource to run this service is critical. If we are unable to resource the service correctly, a drop in our level of service is inevitable and this will significantly impact our market share and in turn our income potential.

2.3 Workload

Following the high numbers of applications received in January, numbers appeared to drop off in February but increased again in March 2022.

The table shows 1,358 applications were received 2021/2022 compared to 1,303 applications in the previous financial year, evidencing a slight upturn in the number of applications received on last year.

Workload has remained high for individuals since the retirement of one of the Building Control Surveyors in September 2021.

Our replacement Trainee Surveyor will not be able to make a positive impact of workload for the surveying side for some time to come yet.

Our Trainee is currently with our Technical Support Team learning the processes and systems so is contributing to the business on the administrative front.

Our Trainee is about to commence shadowing one of the Mid Devon Senior Surveyors and is currently awaiting confirmation of a place at Wolverhampton University to commence a Degree in Building Control Surveying in Autumn 2022, which will be funded by the apprentice training levee.

Covid has impacted on our on already reduced resource - despite continuing to work remotely, in the last quarter of 2021/22, four of the surveying staff contracted Covid and had time off sick and been self-isolating at home.

No replacement has been appointed for the vacant Building Control Manager's post which has led to significant pressure being placed on Technical Support Team Leader and the two Principle Surveyors.

Validation Training Programme Level 5 & 6 Surveyor. Impact on the BC resource is already being felt with Level 5 Surveyor training in progress for one of the Building Control Surveying Team members in North Devon. Training requires the Surveyor to attend an online full learning day every Wednesday for 10 weeks.

In June, the remaining Surveying Staff will be commencing validation training for Level 5 & 6 Fire Safety Training and Level 6 Enforcement Training. The details of this training are yet to be confirmed but it is understood each of the

surveyors will be required to attend online sessions for three hours a week (during the working day) on a Wednesday or Friday for a period of 20 weeks.

Morale is low amongst staff and this is mostly due to the uncertainty surrounding their concern at the lack of news regarding an appointment to the Building Control Managers vacant post. The low morale has been compounded in the last week or so by the news of the resignation of one of the Principle Surveyors which if not addressed will leave the service in a critical condition.

The combination of the factors listed above are now beginning to impact on our ability to deliver the quality of service our customers have become used to and expect.

2.4 Financial Position

To be reported by finance

2.5 Staffing

Additional 20 hour Technical Support Staff post has now been advertised, interview were undertaken by a suitable candidate was not found.

Building Control Manager retired end of March 2022. Covid impacted his last week. Post has been advertised but not filled.

The delay in this appointment has placed significant additional pressures on the building control management team and in turn the rest of the team. Inevitably this delay has contributed towards the resignation of the Mid Devon Principle Surveyor.

Principal Surveyor for Mid Devon has resigned in the last week or so.

A Senior Surveyor has returned from long term absence and is currently undertaking light duties under close supervision of his line manager.

Staff Appraisals have not yet commenced due to work pressures.

2.6 Building Safety Regulator

Surveyors signed up for Level 5 & 6 validation training with examinations due in spring and summer of 2023. Details addressed under workload.

2.7 Approved Document F, L and Introduction of Approved Document S

In June 2022, there are changes being introduced to Approved Document F, which relates to the requirements for ventilation to buildings and a new Approved Document S is being introduced, this will require Electric Charging points to be provided for new dwellings.

However, the most significant changes to report are those being introduced to Approved Document L, which relates to Conservation of Fuel and Power.

The changes to the requirements are significant and will require developers and home owners to provide designs and build buildings that are considerably more energy efficient than those required under the current regulations.

As with previous changes to the requirements the Government have advised on the transitional provisions proposed.

The transitional provisions allow an applicant to commence work on an application before 15th June 2023 and use the current standard as long as that application has been deposited before 15th June 2022.

Applications deposited on or after 15th June 2022 will need to comply with the new standard. Applications deposited before 15th June 2022, but have not commence by 15th June 2023 will have to meet the new standard.

The transitional arrangements will result in the inevitable spike in Building Regulation applications being received in the weeks leading up to the cut-off date in mid-June.

Therefore it is anticipated work load and demand for processing applications and plan checking is likely too significantly increase as a result of applicant's taking advantage of the transitional arrangements.

2.8 Short Term Measures, Recruitment & Retention

In the short term it is anticipated this shortfall in resource will in part be supported by the use of overtime to aid plan checking response times with a view to protecting our market share and income.

The teams may need a reshuffle and consideration given to enhancements to team members who are willing to step up on a temporary basis to until a Manager, Principle and additional Tech Support team member can be appointed.

With the anticipated spike in applications in June and the requirements for Surveying Staff to undertake validation training over the Summer and Autumn additional temporary surveying capacity will be needed to ensure our level of service and performance does not dip.

The Managers post and what will be a vacant Principle Surveyors post will require adverting at the current market rate to have a chance of attracting suitable candidates.

