

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 28 June 2011**

**Subject: Planning and Technology Portfolio**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Philip**

**Item: 6(g)**

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder be noted**

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## **Planning**

### **(a) Planning Performance**

The end of year KPI information is being presented to the Finance & Performance Management Scrutiny Panel on 21st of June. With the quarterly indicators only our appeals target was not met. In detail:

LPI 45 Appeals - The Q4 Target was 28.00%, but the Performance was 35.80%, so that doesn't meet the target. We will continue publicising the appeals performance at our Area Plans meetings so that members are aware of the successful appeals. The expectation is that for the current year we will track Appeal performance separately for Officer delegated decisions and for Committee decisions.

NI 154 Net additional homes - .Q4 target 180, performance 356. The target was met and was significantly up on last year's figures.

It is particularly pleasing to see that both Planning application processing targets have been met this year. I will be tracking this closely to see if the movement to a four weekly cycle of Area Committees is having a significant effect.

NI157a Planning application processing (majors) - Q4 Target 81.00% , Performance 84.62%.

NI157b Planning application processing (minors) - Q4 Target 80.00%, Performance 80.55%.

As far as the annual indicators are concerned we have achieved target in the supply of ready to develop housing sites, at 144% against a target of 100%. This is down on last year as a result of housing developments being completed. As we go forward we need to ensure that this supply remains available and will be part of the input into our Local Development Framework. On that front the LDF target was not met and I will be examining the options to bring this critical activity forward.

## **(b) Building Control**

Over the last year the ring fenced account for Building Control has delivered a small surplus. This is on top of a similar achievement the previous year. At that point we were one of only two Essex Local Authorities that achieved this. It is especially pleasing to have succeeded here in a climate of reduced building development. We expect this to be, again, the exception in Essex.

## **(c) Government Consultation on Gypsy Roma Traveller**

The Planning Scrutiny Panel discussed a response to the current consultation. A number of changes of detail and emphasis were raised and a report will be on the agenda for the Council meeting.

## **Technology**

### **(a) Disaster Recovery (DR)**

The current situation of two computer suites at the same physical location is recognised as not being a satisfactory DR solution. A secure location at Council's Careline facility in Loughton has been identified and agreed by Cabinet as a suitable external DR site. The project is progressing well with a feasibility study into cabled and wireless broadband solutions currently underway. It is expected that when implementation occurs there will be a significant improvement in our restoration time for critical services. This will help to ensure our business continuity

### **(b) Telephony Upgrade (VOIP)**

With a significant proportion of external communication with the Council being via the telephone system it has been identified that the current telephony switch is reaching 'end of life', with parts and maintenance charges becoming significantly expensive. We are examining the implementation of an expandable Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) solution, which will utilise the existing data network for connectivity. A number of meetings with potential suppliers have taken place to establish the best phased approach to migrate from this analogue to VOIP technology. The adoption of this approach will not only reduce costs, but will ultimately make a Disaster Recovery telephony solution more easily achievable.

### **(c) Information at Work (I@W) – Environment & Street Scene rollout**

The next stage of the implementation of the Corporate Document Management System is being planned. Benefits, Planning and Housing Directorates are already benefiting from this application, which improves document storage and availability. The next stage of the implementation will commence in the Autumn.

### **(d) Internet/Intranet replacement.**

The current intranet solution, which is based around a content management system, is no longer fit for purpose. A system based on open source software (free software) has been developed internally to replace this and is currently being trialled locally, with good feedback received. It is anticipated that this solution could be used in the development of a new website to replace the current implementation. The current solution is perceived to be very

inflexible and actually achieved a poor rating in the latest SOCITM (Society of IT Management) survey.