

# Item no.

Report to: **Audit Committee**

Date: **25 January 2007**

Report of: **Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee**

Subject: **Planning I.T. System Downtime and Performance**

Ward: **All**

## 1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to feedback on a referral to the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee by the Audit Committee upon the impact of recent Planning I.T. system downtime upon Planning Service Performance.

## 2. **Consultation**

- 2.1 In preparing this report the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee have consulted with the Head of Planning and Building Control and the Scrutiny Support Manager.

## 3. **Background**

- 3.1 At a meeting of the Audit Committee on 30th November 2006, consideration was given to the report of the Principal Corporate Development Officer entitled "Quarterly Performance Report against Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's).
- 3.2 During consideration of the report, a member had asked if recent problems experienced with the new I.T. system in Planning and Building Control was having an impact on the service.
- 3.3 The Audit Committee resolved that the query in relation to problems experienced with the new I.T. system in Planning and Building Control Services Unit be referred to the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee.

## 4. **Position Statement and Option Appraisal**

- 4.1 At the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee on 11th December 2006, the referral was reported to members and the Head of Planning and Building Control was in attendance to answer members queries.
- 4.2 Members noted that on 20th November 2006, the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee considered the Head of Planning and Building Control's service position statement. At that time, the Head of Planning and Building Control had reported that there had been problems prior to September 2006 with the I.T. system which had adversely affected Planning performance.
- 4.3 However, these problems had been alleviated and Planning Performance was reported on 20 November 2006 as approaching the target levels identified within the service position statement.

- 4.4 For the Audit Committee's information, a copy of the aforementioned Service Position Statement for the Planning and Building Control Unit is appended in this report.
- 4.5 On 11 December 2006 the Head of Planning and Building Control reported that the Council's I.T. systems had been unavailable during the weekend of 25th and 26th November for essential maintenance.
- 4.6 On Monday 27 November 2006 the Planning and Building Control system would not reboot due to a problem with the server for that system. The system was less than a year old and still under warranty. As this was due to an external maintenance problem, replacement equipment was ordered. The system was down for 3 days until Wednesday 29 November when the supplier replaced the system.
- 4.7 The Head of Planning and Building Control reported that since the equipment had been replaced, the system had been operating to plan.
- 4.8 Members of the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee were also informed that the Planning Administration staff had relocated offices but that the I.T. ports were not operated in the new office. This had resulted in 2/3 days lost for receiving applications. These problems had also been addressed.
- 4.9 In analysing the consequences of the above, the Head of Planning and Building Control stated that the response time from the I.T. supplier had not been satisfactory. As a result, the supplier has agreed to improve the response time and introduce a 24 hour response mechanism should the Council experience any further problems.
- 4.10 The Head of Planning and Building Control stressed that turnaround times for receiving and validating planning applications had been 2 days, although the IT problems produced a backlog of 2 weeks of applications. Action was now being taken to deal with the backlog and achieve the previous performance levels.
- 5.0 **Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee - Findings**
- 5.1 The Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee are satisfied with the explanations given by the Head of Planning and Building Control for the downtime suffered by the Planning and Building Control I.T. system.
- 5.2 It is particularly noted that response times under the Planning I.T. system warranty are to be improved, meaning that system failure should be kept to a minimum.
- 5.3 A perhaps more far reaching concern is the issue of I.T. ports not being operational after a change in office accommodation and it was suggested that this should have been considered as part of the relocation to ensure that the I.T. systems were operational from day 1 of the relocation.
- 5.4 The Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee also noted that Planning Performance generally was being investigated by a Performance Improvement Team and as such, the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee would not wish to duplicate the work of that team unnecessarily.
- 5.5 The Head of Planning and Building Control will present his next service position statement to the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee on 12 March at which

time the planning performance will be further scrutinised and any findings of the Performance Improvement Team considered.

6.0 **Implications**

6.1 **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6.2 **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.3 **Policy Implications**

There are no policy implications arising from this report.

6.4 **Risk Implications**

A risk assessment has been carried out and the necessary actions required to manage the identified risks identified.

6.5 **Communications**

There is a communications issue arising from this report that there should be liaison between Service Units and the Council's I.T. Section when office relocations occur to ensure that all I.T. ports are operational when the move occurs.

7.0 **Corporate Implications**

7.1 **Corporate Plan and Priorities**

The report contributes to the Council's Corporate Objectives of "Quality Services for our people" and "Striving for excellence in the workplace".

7.2 **Equality and Diversity Implications**

There are no Equality and Diversity Implications arising from the report.

7.3 **E-Government Implications**

The E-Government Implications identified within the report centre around the adverse effects upon the performance of the Planning and Building Control Unit of the I.T. systems downtime.

7.4 **Procurement Implications**

There are no procurement implications arising from the report.

8.0 **Recommendations**

8.1 Members are recommended to receive the report and note the findings of the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee's investigation into the recent Planning and Building Control I.T. systems downtime.

**Background Papers**

1. Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee Minutes - 20 November 2006
2. Service Unit Position Report - Planning and Building Control - 20 November 2006
3. Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee Minutes - 11 December 2006

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