

**REPORT TO: DUNDEE, PERTH, ANGUS AND NORTH FIFE
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AUTHORITY
JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING ON 26th MAY 2009**

REPORT ON: CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

**REPORT BY: PAMELA EWEN, STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
AUTHORITY MANAGER**

REPORT NO: SDPA011-2009

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report sets out the proposed customer service standards for the operation of the Strategic Development Plan Authority (SDPA). The 4 constituent Authorities have some different standards in respect of customer service standards, e.g. response times. This report sets out a proposed standard for the SDPA which draws from the most common elements of the 4 Authorities. Whilst this report relates to the administrative arrangements for the SDPA, which would not normally be the subject of a Committee Report, it is considered that in this instance it is required to provide clarity for SDPA customers and for performance monitoring.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that The Joint Committee:
- a) Agree to the adoption of the customer service standards, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 None.

4 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

- 4.1 Community engagement, equalities and customer service are three key themes for all four constituent Councils comprising the SDPA and will be important aspects as the TAYplan process develops. Although the preparation of the new Strategic Development Plan is a single function when compared to the multi functions of the constituent authorities there will be a considerable involvement of a wide range of customers and stakeholders through the development planning process and therefore customer care and equality will be of particular importance.

- 4.2 Planning Advice Note 81 Community Engagement – Planning with People (2007) establishes advice and guidance to planning authorities and developers on how communities should be properly engaged in the planning process. The ‘National Standards for Community Engagement’ from the guidance is reflected in the SDPA’s recently published Development Plan Scheme and Participation Statement (March 2009) and relevant in customer care. The SDPA will seek to ensure that:
- Arrangements for participation are as inclusive, open and transparent as possible;
 - Information is provided early and in a format that allows full consideration;
 - Communication is provided in a range of formats and locations, making use of electronic means including the SDPA’s website; and,
 - Representations are considered and reported to the SDPA.
- 4.3 In order to assist the work of The Joint Committee and Strategic Development Plan team the following paper within Appendix 1 sets out the customer service standards that are required. In general the standards are those already applied by the constituent Councils.
- 4.4 The paper also covers the general procedures relating to Freedom of Information, Environmental Information, Complaints Procedures and Equality and Diversity. All Councils have procedures in place dealing with these aspects however for the ease of purposes it is intended that the schemes established by Dundee City Council, as the administering Council to the SDPA, be adopted by the SDPA.

5 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 The Treasurer and Clerk to TAYplan, the Director of Infrastructure Services, Angus Council, The Director of Planning and Transportation, Dundee City Council, The Head of Development Services, Fife Council and The Executive Director (The Environment Service), Perth & Kinross Council have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Dundee City Council: Complaints Procedures.
6.2 Dundee City Council: Generic Equality and Diversity Scheme (2005).
6.3 Dundee City Council; Freedom of Information Scheme.
6.4 TAYplan Development Plan Scheme, SDPA, March 2009.
6.5 Planning Advice Note 81 Community Engagement–Planning with people; Scottish Government, 2007.

Pamela Ewen
Strategic Development Plan Authority Manager
18 May 2009

Appendix 1

SDPA CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An ongoing aim of the Strategic Development Plan Authority (SDPA) is to deliver an excellent level of customer services, focussing on the needs of customers when planning and delivering services. The recently published Development Plan Scheme (March 2009) sets out the general programme for preparing and reviewing the Strategic Development P (SDP). The scheme sets out in detail:
- A summary of the new development planning system;
 - A proposed timetable for preparing the Strategic Development Plan;
 - A summary of what's involved at the various stages of preparing this plan; and,
 - A Participation Statement with information on when and how interested parties can get involved.
- 1.2 The Development Plan Scheme will be updated at least every year to keep interested parties informed about the SDP's progress.
- 1.3 Community engagement, equality and customer service is at the heart of the development planning process. Many of the detailed aspects of the procedures required to prepare a strategic development plan are covered by planning legislation, regulations and circulars which have specific processes and associated timescales. The customer service standards set out in this paper compliment the already established statutory development plan procedures.
- 1.4 Planning Advice Note (PAN) 81 Community Engagement - Planning with People (2007) establishes advice and guidance to planning authorities and developers on how communities should be properly engaged in the planning process. The 10 'National Standards for Community Engagement' from the guidance are already reflected in the SDPA recently published Development Plan Scheme and Participation Statement (March 2009). This provides the focus of customer care.
- 1.5 The standards, as set out in section 2, indicate the minimum level of service which customers can expect when dealing with the SDPA.

2 Customer Service Standards

2.1 The Dundee, Perth, Angus and North Fife SDPA are committed to the provision of courteous and helpful service to our customers. These can most easily be defined as those who use our services or work with us to provide them.

2.2 Our customers are therefore colleagues, councillors, MPs/MSPs, representatives of partner agencies, community councils and voluntary groups as well as the thousands of businesses and citizens who make up the communities of the TAYplan area.

2.3 Our aim is to apply the same standards of customer care to our colleagues, within the four councils and partner agencies, as we do to external customers, and will:

- treat customers as we would expect to be treated
- be friendly and approachable
- listen to our customers
- deliver on our promises
- put things right when they go wrong
- be open and accountable.

2.4 Good communication with our customers is important to the SDPA. We aim to respond to your letters, emails and phone calls as swiftly as possible and have the following standards in place so you know what to expect from us.

- We will respond to your **written requests** (letters and e-mails) within 15 working days. If a full response cannot be given within that time you will be given a target date for a full response.
- We will answer **phone calls** as quickly as possible and any telephone message will be responded to promptly, wherever possible within one working day.
- Formal consultation/representation processes associated with the preparation of TAYplan will be subject to separate arrangements as set out by Planning legislation. The time periods and ways in which to respond will be notified at the time of the particular consultation process.

3 Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002

3.1 Timescales associated with requests for information are prescribed by the above Act. For the purposes of discharging this aspect of customer care the SDPA will adopt the Freedom of Information Scheme established by Dundee City Council.

3.2 The SDPA will respond to request within 20 working days following the date of receipt, but we hope to respond to your request an earlier date where possible. Further information relating the FOI Scheme and procedures can be found at:

<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/foisa>

4 Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations 2004

- 4.1 These Regulations came into effect on 1st January 2005 at the same time as the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002. The Scottish Government has issued a Code of Practice to cover these regulations
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/08/14104256/0> and further information is available at
<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/dundee/page.php?id=61>

5 Equality and diversity

- 5.1 For the purposes of discharging this aspect of customer care the SDPA will adopt the Equality and Diversity scheme established by Dundee City Council. Further information relating to the Scheme can be found at:
<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv>

6 Accessing documents

- 6.1 The use of electronic means of communication will be a key way in which the SDPA will communicate with its customers. The SDPA will make copies of the most up-to-date key documents relating to the production of the SDP available principally through its web site. Key stage documents will also be made available at each of the constituent local authority's headquarters, planning offices and public libraries.

7 Complaints Procedures

- 7.1 Complaint in respect of strategic development planning should preferably be made in writing to the Strategic Development Plan Manager. Oral complaints however will also be dealt with. The SDPA will adopt the existing Dundee City Council Complaints procedures. Further information on this can be found at
<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/complaints/>

The process can be summarised as follows. If you make a complaint, it will be dealt with in the following manner:

First stage

The SDPA staff will deal with the complaint initially and attempt to resolve the problem within 5 days.

Second stage

If the customer is still not satisfied the complaint if not already in writing should be formalised and will be dealt with by the Strategic Development Plan Manager. If the complaint remains unresolved the matter will be referred to the Head of Planning, Dundee City Council for further investigation.

Third stage

If the complaint is still not resolved, an officer from outwith the SDPA or City Development, Dundee City Council will investigate the complaint. The Chief Executive, Dundee City Council will normally be the appropriate person in such instances. If you are not satisfied with the final decision and you still wish to pursue the matter, you have the right to refer the complaint in writing to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

- 7.2 The Ombudsman offers an independent national service and while complaints can be made to the Ombudsman any time, an investigation will usually only be made if the complaint has been investigated by the council. Complaints should be made to:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh EH3 7NS

Or

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
FREEPOST EH641
Edinburgh EH3 OBR

Tel.: 0800 377 7330

E-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk

Website: Fill out an **online complaint form** at www.spsso.org.uk

- 7.3 **Contact point** for correspondence:
Pamela Ewen
Strategic Development Plan Authority Manager
TAYplan Strategic Development Plan Authority
Enterprise House
3 Greenmarket
DUNDEE
DD1 4QB

Tel.: 01382 307180

E-mail: contactus@sdpa-tayplan.gov.uk