

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL JOINT COMMITTEE

13 December 2012

MONITORING REPORT SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER

Report from: Tony Van Veghel, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

Summary

This report updates the Joint Committee on the current forecast for the 2012/13 financial year and gives details against the progress of the objectives of the Business Plan 2011/2014.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Joint Committee requires the preparation of monitoring reports to be reported to the Officer Steering Group and Joint Committee.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report gives an overview of the position of both the budget and the progression against the objectives shown in the Business Plan 2011/2014. Building Regulation applications have fallen by around 10% compared the same period last year (April to October inclusive), however, income levels have only fallen by 4% over the same period. This small pressure has been mitigated by an increase in income from the consultancy and resources have been moved to provide capacity within that area.
- 2.2 The original budget for 2012/13 showed a surplus of £46,000, however, given the lack of recovery in the construction economy the income targets over the next five year period have been realigned to provide a balanced budget. Over the next four months, every effort will be made to mitigate further pressure by reducing costs and generating additional income through the consultancy with an aim to achieve a balanced budget by year end. Details of applications and income received compared against the last two years are shown in Appendix 1. A budget monitoring statement for November is included in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 The new five year draft Business Plan was presented to Members on 20th September. A number of areas were discussed including consistency of approach, reducing costs, increasing revenue and the impact of changes to the Building Regulations. The plan has now been out to consultation with

stakeholders in each authority and is to be presented to Joint Committee for agreement and then taken back to each authorities Cabinets.

3. Delivery Plan Summary Update

- 3.1 Work on the Decent Homes programme will reduce for the second half of the year with our involvement reducing to 2½ days per week. Discussions have taken place with Medway Housing in respect of assisting with responsive repair surveys which would supplement the Decent Homes programme. Medway Housing condition surveys may commence from January 2013. In order to operate a new system which is being implemented by the Housing section our surveyors will require relevant training which should include Health and Safety (HHSRS) training and also training on the provision of energy status for each property.
- 3.2 With regard to the possibility of expanding the partnership discussions with Tonbridge & Malling have been delayed as they are presently reviewing their management structure but it is expected that the review of building control will continue in the New Year. We have also carried out a presentation to Canterbury City Council who have engaged consultants to review their building control service. The consultants will be arranging meetings with the partnership's management team of the partnership early in the New Year to discuss proposals which could be included in their options appraisal.
- 3.3 With a drop in building regulation applications resources have been redirected into carrying out increased enforcement activity. Proposed changes by the Government to the enforcement powers of Local Authorities are outlined in the draft Business Plan and these could include the power to serve fines and stop notices on the worst examples of poor construction. Continued targeting in this area will ensure we are prepared for the changes in legislation when they are introduced in 2013.
- 3.4 Further meetings have taken place with IT and Procurement to develop a specification for the new IT system. The revised specification and invitation to tender was sent out in December so that a new system would be available for installation and testing in time for implementation in April 2013.
- 3.5 As part of the improvements to our website and to allow customers to carry out some of their own research, all of the Initial Notices that have been received by the partnership since 2007 have now been published. Under the Building Act, Local Authorities are required to keep this list as a public register and this has allowed us now to maintain the details in electronic format.

4. Use of resources overview

- 4.1 Whilst we redirect staff time into the consultancy we have to ensure sufficient resource remains to deliver a first class building regulation service to customers. A six month review was undertaken to determine if our current arrangement delivers the most equitable service in respect of plan vetting and maintaining target times.

- 4.2 The review also looked at how by moving resources we could target non-chargeable works such as demolitions, dangerous structures, unauthorised works and applications affected by the approved inspector legislation. Each have been affected by the downturn in the economy. Whilst there have only been 13 demolition notices served this year we are still monitoring over 90 notices from previous years. Many have stalled because of a lack of investment in the replacement development and there is a concern that the buildings will deteriorate into derelict or dilapidated conditions.
- 4.3 Given the economic circumstances planned maintenance is often overlooked and the general condition of properties and associated structures often deteriorates. The number of dangerous structures has increased this year with 127 reported to mid November and over 170 being monitored from previous years.
- 4.4 There has been a 9% increase in the number of unauthorised works investigated this year and these can compromise the health and safety of people in and around buildings. Our increased enforcement activity will help to address this situation and deter substandard construction.
- 4.5 There has been a 9% fall on the number of initial notices served on the partnership by approved inspectors this year this again reflects the poor economic conditions. We are also finding an increase in the number of cancellations of initial notices due to work not commencing and reversions where work comes back to the partnership if an approved inspector cannot resolve a contravention of the Building Regulations.

5. Performance Risks/Emerging Issues

- 5.1 Whilst building regulation income remains below expectation it is important to maximise income from other areas, however, with this reduced number of applications there is also a similar reduction in applications for energy calculations from the consultancy. Through this second half of the year we will need to concentrate on the internal markets of the three partner authorities where additional work and income can be generated.

6. New ways of working and value for money

- 6.1 Procurement of a new IT system is fundamental in delivering the objectives of the new five year business plan. Included in the revised specification is the ability to provide real time mobile working so that records can be updated on site and data can be transferred and downloaded to provide an improved service to customers. Also included in the specification will be the facility for greater customer self-service allowing property searches online and application tracking by owners and architects. Whilst this is included in the specification the customer self-service is not likely to be available until later in 2013/14.
- 6.2 STG have been trialling an android tablet which would allow the capture and transfer of Housing data required for the condition surveys for Housing group. Should we be successful in being awarded the condition surveys which will begin in January, training will be required on this new software. The data capture on site

will obviate the need for double-key entries of the information and automatically update records with the energy status of each property.

7. Workforce Development

- 7.1 Dangerous structure and demolition inspections are carried out on behalf of all three authorities and we have been able to offer a 365 day call out service for emergencies since our inception. Health & Safety requirements for such emergencies are constantly being updated and one of our senior surveyors attended a course dealing with both procedural and operational requirements in such emergency situations. A workshop was held for all surveyors in order to share this information and further workshops have been held between October and December to ensure the most up-to-date procedures are in place.
- 7.2 Training on the interaction between building control and LABC Warranty providers was attended by surveyors at a technical meeting and a useful dialogue has been set up between the two organisations. A new technical manual is available giving construction details and accepted methods of construction which should be adhered to by both parties wherever possible.
- 7.3 A recent review of the BCPSAG National Standards identified that non-qualified staff at STG are receiving below the national average of hours for personal development. This will be addressed through the next PDR process between January and March 2013.

8. Data Quality

- 8.1 BSI audit review carried out in November found the areas assessed to be 'effective'. No issues or areas of concern were identified with respect to compliance with system and ISO 9001 requirements. Documents and records witnessed provided evidence of suitable and appropriate management and control of activities. Next audit review to take place on 30 April 2013.

9. Fair Access to Services

- 9.1 The customer survey along with the ethnicity section was reported to Members in September. Consideration of the findings was considered by management team and it was concluded that there were no impediments to a fair access to the service identified from the survey. The consultation process with Medway Access Group continues successfully with consideration of Medway's planning application on a fortnightly basis with planning officers raising "access" issues with their applications as necessary based on the outcomes of the consultation.
- 9.2 A member of the technical administration team is undertaking a Vision2Learn Equality & Diversity Level 2 (NCFE) course in their own time as part of their personal development plan.

10. Customer Feedback and Consultation

- 10.1 Details of the results of the customer survey were presented to Members in September. They revealed high levels of satisfaction with the service however, they also highlighted further work requires to be done on consistency and marketing of the consultancy services. These results have been examined by management team and it has been agreed to develop better consistency both through the PDR process and the Seniors Group.
- 10.2 A consultancy brochure will be produced through the last quarter of the year ready for distribution in March 2013.

11. Benchmarking

- 11.1 Details of the benchmarking statistics are shown in Appendix 3 which now shows revised targets agreed at Joint Committee. The targets have been realigned with reference to the DSA document on workload/establishment on which the original target times were based. In general given our workload and chargeable income we should have 16 FTE project surveyors to deliver that part of the service, however, we have 12.1 FTE's and this has now been reflected in the workload/establishment formula.
- 11.2 The Building Control Performance Standard Advisory Group (BCPSAG) recently published a revised national benchmarking questionnaire to be completed by both public and private sector building control bodies. STG completed their return and will await publication of the national results due in February 2013.

12. Key Workstreams for the Next Quarter

- Further work with potential partners regarding expansion of the partnership.
- Dispatch of tender document including revised specification.
- Bid for responsive repair surveys and condition surveys.
- Increase enforcement activity and regularisation applications.
- Amended draft business plan to be submitted to each authorities Cabinet in January so that the financial plan for 2013/14 can be agreed for inclusion in their respective budgets.

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1 The financial implications are as set out in the report.

14. Legal Implications

- 14.1 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

15. Risk Management

- 15.1 There is a risk that there will be a further call on contributions from the three partner authorities if applications and income remain low for the remainder of the year.

16. Recommendation

16.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

17. Suggested Reason for Decision

17.1 The Constitution requires Joint Committee to maintain a monitoring role on the progress of the Partnership.

Lead officer contact

Tony Van Veghel, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership,
Compass Centre, Chatham Maritime, Kent, ME4 4YH

Tel: 01634 331552

E-mail: tony.vanveghel@stgbc.org.uk

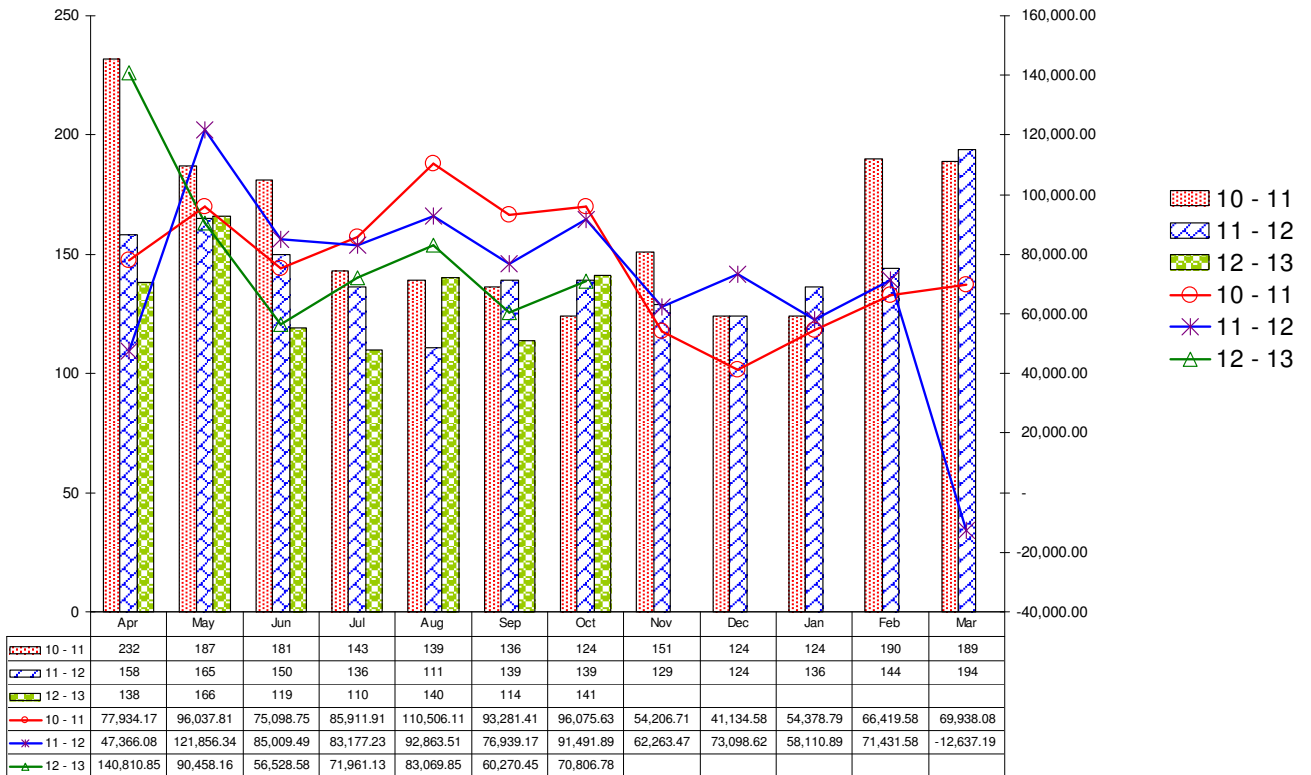
Background papers

None

Appendix 1

Fee Earning Applications Received against Fee Income

Fee Earning Applications Received against Fee Income
2010/11 to 2012/13



November 2012 Monitoring Statement for STG Building Control Partnership

Subjective Description	Current Year Total Budget	Total Actuals and Commitments Year to Date	Manager's Forecast	Manager's Variance
Admin Staff	1,065,590	599,375	1,027,179	(38,411)
Prem Retire Added Lump Sum	0	0	0	0
VDU/Eye Tests	0	0	0	0
Medical Referrals	0	0	0	0
Clothing Allowance	2,000	152	500	(1,500)
Call Out Fees	9,819	6,334	11,000	1,181
Employee Related Insurance	1,601	1,601	1,601	0
Staff Training	7,000	1,359	3,500	(3,500)
Staff Training STG Consultancy	7,000	975	1,500	(5,500)
Staffing	1,093,010	609,796	1,045,280	(47,730)
Repairs Maint Buildings Gen	3,500	0	3,500	0
Electricity	5,500	0	5,500	0
Gas	3,500	0	3,500	0
Rents External	55,282	0	55,282	0
Non Domestic Rates	25,000	0	22,000	(3,000)
Water & Sewerage Charges	2,000	0	600	(1,400)
Contract Cleaning	6,000	2,859	6,000	0
Window Cleaning	700	0	600	(100)
Trade Refuse	164	43	400	236
Premises Security	0	0	0	0
Premises Insurance	700	0	700	0
Premises	102,346	2,902	98,082	(4,264)
Vehicle Insurance	330	330	330	0
Public Trans	500	226	500	0
Park Fees	250	34	250	0
Staff travel -Leased Mileage	9,000	4,561	6,500	(2,500)
Casual User	500	48	500	0
Essential User	38,000	20,078	38,000	0
Transport	48,580	25,279	46,080	(2,500)
Equip/Furn/Mats	1,500	0	0	(1,500)
Equip Rental Leases Licences	5,900	1,867	2,500	(3,400)
Equip Annual Maintenance	0	1,534	1,600	1,600
Books/Pubs/News0	2,500	0	500	(2,000)
Bottled Water Coolers	400	130	250	(150)
Refreshments at Meetings	800	101	200	(600)
Printing Stat & Gen Off Exps	0	72	100	100
Printing	2,000	1,551	2,000	0
Printing STG Consultancy	2,000	416	500	(1,500)
Printing Public Protect	500	0	0	(500)
Stationery	3,200	2,554	4,000	800
Stationery STG Consultancy	1,500	0	500	(1,000)
Stationery Public Protect	500	0	0	(500)
General Office Expenses	500	51	100	(400)
Microfilming	500	0	0	(500)
External Audit Fees	2,712	(3,000)	2,000	(712)
Agency Staff Security	1,400	601	1,200	(200)
Consultants Fees	6,000	471	2,500	(3,500)
Consultants Fees Non Chargeabl	0	1,368	1,368	1,368
Consult Fees Part P Electri	1,000	3,360	7,491	6,491
Consultant FeesSTG Consultancy	6,000	5,009	6,000	0
Consultancy Public Protect	1,000	0	500	(500)
Consultants - HR Approved	0	0	0	0
Land Registry Fees	1,000	197	400	(600)

Subjective Description	Current Year Total Budget	Total Actuals and Commitments Year to Date	Manager's Forecast	Manager's Variance
Pager Mobile Phone	1,400	555	1,400	0
Call Costs	130	63	130	0
Line Rental	270	136	270	0
Postage	7,000	4,520	6,000	(1,000)
Postage STG Consultancy	3,000	172	500	(2,500)
Computer Hardware	2,000	1,365	1,500	(500)
Computer Software	25,200	23,325	25,200	0
Subsistence	2,000	0	1,500	(500)
Subscriptions	7,000	6,348	8,000	1,000
Subscriptions STG Consultancy	2,000	130	500	(1,500)
All Risks Insurance	1,030	1,030	1,030	0
Officials Indemnity Insurance	500	0	500	0
Publicity	7,500	226	2,500	(5,000)
Publicity STG Consultancy	2,000	443	1,500	(500)
Publicity Public Protect	500	148	200	(300)
Miscellaneous Expenses	0	170	170	170
Advertising	500	0	500	0
Contribution to I.T. Reserves	2,000	0	2,000	0
Contributions to Bad Debt Prov	0	0	0	0
Supplies & Services	104,942	54,909	87,109	(17,833)
Fin Mgmt SLA	8,100	0	8,100	0
Exchequer SLA	5,200	0	5,200	0
HR SLA	3,416	0	3,416	0
Org Dev SLA	2,534	0	2,534	0
Adv & Cons SLA	954	0	954	0
HR Ops SLA	742	0	742	0
HR Resource SLA	962	0	962	0
H&S SLA	1,002	0	1,002	0
IT Comp SLA	25,200	25,200	25,200	0
Legal SLA	10,100	0	10,100	0
Support Services	58,210	25,200	58,210	0
Conts from OLAs	(351,772)	(351,772)	(351,772)	0
Contributions From Partner Authorities	(351,772)	(351,772)	(351,772)	0
Fees & Charges General	(4,500)	(3,566)	(4,500)	0
Land Charges Fees	(25,000)	(6,385)	(25,000)	0
Building Control Fees	(992,552)	(539,334)	(821,580)	170,972
BldCtFeeConsultSTG Consultancy	(50,000)	(54,669)	(85,000)	(35,000)
Bldg Ctrl Regularisation	(30,000)	(30,858)	(40,000)	(10,000)
Bldg Cont Fees Part P	0	(3,540)	(3,540)	(3,540)
BldCtFees PartPPart P Electric	0	(2,951)	(2,951)	(2,951)
Advertising Income	0	(352)	(352)	(352)
Miscellaneous Receipts	0	(66)	(66)	(66)
Other Income	(1,102,052)	(641,720)	(982,989)	119,063
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,407,088	718,085	1,334,761	(72,327)
TOTAL INCOME	(1,453,824)	(993,492)	(1,334,761)	119,063
TOTAL RECHARGES	0	0	0	0
TOTAL NET	(46,736)	(275,407)	0	46,736

Appendix 3

Benchmarking

Quarterly Benchmarking

	% plans checked within 15 days	% plans checked within 10 days	% determined within 5 weeks /or 2 months	No of PCI's (Pre-Contraventions Interventions)	% completion certificates sent within 5 days of completion	Reg & Acknow within 3 days	% LC Searches - Medway within 3 days	% LC Searches - Swale within 3 days	HIPs (Building Information Searches) - within 10 working days
2010-11	Target 85%	Target 70%	Target 100%		Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%
Q1	87.89%	70.70%	98.32%	n/a	59.89%	81.73%	100.00%	99.70%	90.63%
Q2	85.81%	64.19%	100.00%	n/a	73.39%	80.41%	100.00%	100.00%	69.37%
Q3	84.50%	68.42%	99.53%	33	71.79%	86.85%	100.00%	100.00%	96.72%
Q4	88.69%	77.37%	99.26%	65	97.12%	99.65%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
2011-12	Target 85%	Target 70%	Target 100%		Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%
Q1	88.85%	53.38%	90.79%	25	99.10%	88.82%	100.00%	99.66%	91.78%
Q2	88.34%	71.43%	99.47%	377	98.48%	97.54%	100.00%	100.00%	92.78%
Q3	90.79%	70.39%	100.00%	319	99.32%	99.71%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Q4	96.63%	75.96%	100.00%	411	100.00%	95.22%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
2012-13	Target 85%	Target 70%	Target 100%		Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%	Target 95%
Q1	91.45%	69.14%	100.00%	203	99.66%	99.80%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Q2	97.06%	84.03%	*	166	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Q3									
Q4									

* unable to provide data until 8 weeks following quarter end