

# **BUILDING STANDARDS CUSTOMER ANALYSIS**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012**



**East Ayrshire**  
COUNCIL

## **Introduction**

The Building Standards Service has a wide range of customers using the Building Warrant process. These customers extend from members of the public using the service for the first time, undertaking work to their house, to the developer constructing a new domestic or non domestic building. Irrespective of the type of customer using the system, the common theme from all parties is to secure an approved Building Warrant and Acceptance of Completion Certificate as soon as possible to ensure that the proposed works can be implemented and the building occupied.

In projects requiring planning permission, the application for building warrant is often submitted by the applicant's appointed agent after the planning decision has been finalised. This process is common in most projects, irrespective of size and complexity, or whether the application is for domestic or non domestic applications. Consequently, the time from commissioning the original design to the granting of the planning approval and then finally the building warrant approval can be several months. In larger projects this time can be considerably longer, all of which can be frustrating to the applicant irrespective of the size or complexity of the project.

Often the delay in determining a building warrant application is attributed to the quality of the submission, including architectural and engineering information and the intermittent submission of revised information to allow Building Standards to determine the application. The process can also impact on the local building industry and will affect the local economy. It is therefore important that the service delivery targets are detailed within the customer charter, reviewed with stakeholders, and service improvements introduced to enhance the overall service delivery.

## **Application Process**

On receipt of a valid application both the applicant and agent will receive an acknowledgement letter detailing the expected deadline for assessing the application. During periods of high volume of work this deadline will be amended to reflect the high workloads received. Similarly, target deadlines will be reduced as necessary, taking cognisance of the resources applicable at the time of the submission. During each stage of the verification process both the applicant and agent will receive correspondence on the progress of the application.

Consequently, it is important that the Building Warrant process has been streamlined to deliver an efficient and effective service delivery which is quality assured and that utilises customer feedback to progress the service response to all types of projects. Continuous feedback from customers provides invaluable information on areas where the system is either achieving or not achieving its aim, and establishes specific customer needs, therefore enabling improvements to be introduced to improve overall service delivery.

As part of Building Standards commitment to continuous improvement in the overall Building Warrant process, customers are actively encouraged to provide feedback to the Building Standards Manager following the issue of a Building Warrant and acceptance or issue of a Completion Certificate. All customers can, using the pre-paid envelope issued with the questionnaire at each decision stage, provide feedback relating to the service provided along with the ability to provide comments where the service did or did not meet their expectations. In addition, feedback is also integrated into the service review process directly from customers' comments and observations; via the stakeholders' focus group meetings and through the Council's complaints procedure.

The Building Standards customer charter details the prescribed standards to be delivered and performance targets for assessing and determining Building Warrants and Completion Certificates. During the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 the building industry within East Ayrshire declined significantly, due to the local and national economic impact, to a development value of £37 Million compared to £148.9 Million in the previous yearly period which was attributed to:-

- 1043 Building Warrant applications; and
- 1118 surveys for Completion Certificates.

The table below details the performance target response and actual figures for the period 1st April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 along with the comparison of performance from previous years.

Customer Charter Target	01/04/11-31/03/12	2010/2011	2009/2010	2008 / 2009	Comments
No of Building Warrant Applications received	1043	1064	1088	1174	The number of applications submitted has fallen by 21 compared with the period during 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2011.
No of Building Warrants responded to within 20 WD's	100%	99%	97%	80%	All Building Warrant applications were responded to within 20 days.
No of Decisions reached	880	1047	1061	1264	The number of decisions reached has fallen by 167 applications compared with the period during 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2009 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2010.
% of Decisions reached within 6 Days	97%	96%	96%	91%	A 1% increase in performance was achieved during this period.
No of Completion Certificates applied for	1118	1650	1320	1903	532 fewer completion surveys were carried out during this period compared with the period during 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2011..
Average time taken to respond to a request for a Completion Certificates	1.3 days	2 days	2 days	3 days	The performance of the previous year was improved further during this period.

<b>No of Completion Certificates Determined within 3 days</b>	92%	91%	85 %	75%	A 1% increase in performance was achieved during this period
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### Summary of Customer Feedback Results

The customer feedback questionnaires returned during 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 provided 112 Building Warrant questionnaires and 135 Completion Certificate questionnaires which equated to a 10.7% and 15.1% return with the specific results noted as follows:-

#### Feedback on Building Warrants

Customers were asked to identify their involvement in process:-  
66% of responses from Applicant  
31% of responses from Agents  
3% of responses from Contractors

Customers were asked whether they had visited an office:-  
36% visited an office  
64% did not visit an office

Customers were asked which office they had visited:-  
3% attended the Lugar Office, Cumnock  
97% attended the Croft Street Office, or JWB, Kilmarnock

Customers were asked whether there were adequate reception facilities encountered when attending the office:-  
44% Strongly agreed  
25% Agreed  
28% No opinion  
2% Disagreed  
1% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had received a letter following their Building warrant submission:-  
28% did not receive a letter  
72% did receive a letter

From the correspondence received customers were asked whether they understood the letter contents:-  
64% Strongly agreed  
22% Agreed  
10% No opinion  
3% Disagreed  
1% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by courteous staff:-  
79% Strongly agreed  
19% Agreed  
2% No opinion  
0% Disagreed  
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether there was sufficient guidance and site advice:-  
72% Strongly agreed  
25% Agreed  
3% No opinion  
0% Disagreed

0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by knowledgeable staff:-  
70% Strongly agreed  
27% Agreed  
3% No opinion  
0% Disagreed  
0% Strongly disagreed

**Feedback on Completion Certificates**

Customers were asked to identify their involvement in process:-  
85% of responses from Applicant  
13% of responses from Agents  
2% of responses from Contractors

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by courteous staff:-  
81% Strongly agreed  
19% Agreed  
0% No opinion  
0% Disagreed  
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether there was sufficient guidance and site advice:-  
68% Strongly agreed  
24% agreed  
8% No opinion  
0% Disagreed  
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had been dealt with by knowledgeable staff:-  
76% Strongly agreed  
22% Agreed  
2% No opinion  
0% Disagreed  
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether they had considered that there had been sufficient site visits.  
62% Strongly agreed  
27% Agreed  
11% No opinion  
0% Disagreed  
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked whether there had been appropriate responses to site visit requests.  
67% Strongly agreed  
24% Agreed  
9% No opinion  
0% Disagreed  
0% Strongly disagreed

Customers were asked how they rated Building Standards during the entire Building Standard Process  
71% Excellent  
27% Very Good  
1% Good  
1% Adequate  
0% Poor

Comparison of the 2010/11 figures against 2011/12 demonstrated that the service delivered an even higher standard of service to that of the previous year. In 2009 the service was subject to independent audit by the Building Standards Division of Scottish Government and achieved a rating of Excellent for the following 4 criteria comprising Public Interest, Internal Business, Continuous Improvement and Finance with an overall rating of Good for the Private Customer. The full report for East Ayrshire Council can be reviewed at:- <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards/publications/publa/verauditea>

Customer feedback provides a range of responses focusing on where the customer considered the service could be improved to the feedback congratulating the service and case Surveyor(s) on the service delivered. On receipt of negative customer feedback the Building Standards Manager shall review the comments along with the relevant application, consult the Surveyor, then contact the customer to hear first hand of the issues raised prior to identifying any service enhancements applicable. All service enhancements shall be considered in the decision making process by the Building Standards Management Team who shall identify how and when to progress the improvements. In cases when positive feedback is provided relating to an area of service or to a member or members of staff the Building Standards Manager shall discuss the comments with the appropriate Surveyor(s) and acknowledge the good service delivered. Service improvements can relate to the strategy, internal processes and development of staff.

A summary of the service enhancements for the period between the 1st April 2011 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 resulting from both written and verbal customer feedback and management analysis for this period are detailed as follows:

- Roll out of Customer Service Professional training course for front line staff;
- Maintain progress to reduce timescale in processing building warrants and completion certificates;
- Utilise a local performance indicator relating to the average response time to deal with a Building Warrant.

A sample of the positive feedback received from customers over this period is noted below:-

- All expectations were met, all staff I met and had dealings with acted in a very professional manner at all times. The assistance I received was excellent at all times.
- Very helpful and understanding member of staff helped guide me through the various problems encountered.
- Highly professional and helpful Senior Building Standards Surveyor highly diligent through out construction period and provided clear and comprehensive guidance where additional information requested.
- On my visits to Kilmarnock Building Standards office to clarify/request further information I was treated mannerly and professionally by staff

who had wealth of knowledge and spoke in laymen terms which made my application and works so much easier.

- Building Control Officer was totally on the ball, providing information and feedback at every state of the application process.
- Application was a complicated form however helpful staff talked us through it.
- The application was dealt with very promptly.
- Thanks again for dealing with this job so quickly, much appreciated.
- Staff friendly and understanding giving me time and advice.

### **Conclusion**

In the development of any service it is essential to understand the needs of the customer and to develop the service to meet those needs. Therefore, customer feedback is essential in the continuous improvement of the business processes and development of staff to deliver the service. As a result of customer feedback the balanced scorecard service plan has been developed to take cognisance of the issues raised and challenges Building Standards to meet these goals.

**Should you wish to provide comment on this analysis or provide feedback on the Building Standards Service please contact [david.mcdowall@east-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:david.mcdowall@east-ayrshire.gov.uk)**

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