

### ANGUS COUNCIL

#### COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 19 JANUARY 2016

#### E-DEVELOPMENT.SCOT PROGRAMME

### 1. CURRENT POSITION

- 1.1 The current ePlanning Scotland portal launched in April 2009, and was part of a wider transformational change programme to modernise the planning system and deliver an efficient and accessible service across Scotland. The portal enables online submission of planning applications & appeals and is operated as a shared service run by the Scottish Government Planning and Architecture Division on behalf of all Scottish authorities.
- 1.2 The ePlanning Scotland service has a strong established reputation, reflected in excellent take up by customers. In 2014/15, 63% of all planning applications made in Scotland were submitted through the portal, compared to original business case projections of 33% at the equivalent period. There continues to be a steady increase with the last quarter take-up figures approaching 70%.
- 1.3 In Angus, in the period since 1 April 2015, 57% of all applications were submitted on-line. For September (2015) 70% of all applications were submitted on-line.
- 1.4 The figures noted in 1.2 and 1.3 above demonstrate a gradual increase in the number of on-line applications submitted demonstrating the popularity of the on-line service with customers of the planning service.
- 1.5 The contract with the commercial supply company to operate the current ePlanning Scotland portal will expire in March 2016. In 2014 the eDevelopment.scot programme team began work to replace the current ePlanning portal, securing future service provision, and to expand into online Building Standards. These new services are being built in-house by the Scottish Government's IT Division, marking a change in delivery approach that will achieve best value for money and greater control over the asset. The services have been developed with a fresh name and branding, eDevelopment.scot, to reflect the ePlanning and eBuilding Standards services currently being built and allow for possible future expansion into other relevant online services.

### 2. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The eDevelopment.scot programme is primarily a change and transformation initiative built around the move to a digital service. The programme delivers technology in the form of a replacement ePlanning online service and new eBuilding Standards service, however achieving the wider benefits relies upon addressing the culture and business change aspects. A considerable focus of the programme is on ensuring the adoption of best practice in e-service delivery and supporting partners in the move towards digital business operations.
- 2.2 The programme is a partnership with planning and building standards authorities across Scotland and the Scottish Government's Planning and Architecture Division (PAD), Building Standards Division (BSD) and Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA). It is co-ordinated by the eDevelopment.scot programme team but relies heavily upon partner participation and involvement to achieve successful programme delivery and outcomes.

### **3. PROGRAMME DELIVERABLES**

The eDevelopment.scot programme aims to provide the following deliverables to local authorities:

- a) An updated online portal for the ePlanning service and associated forms
- b) An uninterrupted and controlled transition service from the current ePlanning Scotland portal to ePlanning.scot
- c) A new online portal for Building Standards applications and associated forms
- d) Collaborative procurement of 'connectors' allowing data transfer into authorities back office systems
- e) Overarching eDevelopment.scot service, allowing future development of e-services supporting the Scottish Government's overall digital strategy
  
- f) Co-ordination of business change activities and support for the consistent move to electronic working methods across Scotland
- g) Management of the support, maintenance and improvement of the portal on behalf of authorities

#### **Angus Council – Current Position**

A project board has been formed to lead the project with staff from Communities – Planning and Place & Business Support, Resources – Transforming Angus, Information Technology & Finance. The board has met on a number of occasions since its formation in March 2015. The board is tasked with delivering the various elements to the project in relation to the new portal. In addition and in order to deliver the maximum benefits to Angus Council a number of deliverables are required to be undertaken to ensure that cost savings to customers from using the portal are not transferred as costs to the Council.

#### **Angus Council – Deliverables**

If the Council is to gain maximum benefit from the introduction of the new eDevelopment.scot portal it is essential that it:-

- Seeks to refine processes and procedures within the planning service to maximise service delivery by electronic means.
- Seeks to introduce processes and procedures to the building standards service whereby services are delivered electronically.

In order to permit the above, there requires to be wholesale changes to processes and procedures. Work is underway with staff in Planning using lean techniques to ensure the most effective practices are adopted.

Work, through the Project Board, has already commenced and in some instances have been completed.

- Information relating to the payment engine to allow electronic payments of both planning and building warrant fees has been provided to the Scottish Government.
- Information with regards the ICloud Connector that permits data transfer between the eDevelopment.scot portal and the back office systems of the Council has been provided to the private sector contractor developing same.
- A number of 24" monitors have been purchased for both building standards and development management to permit the on-screen assessment of proposals.
- A trial in the use of electronic tablets is due to commence to permit officers to carry out site visits without the need for paper files.

There are a number of workstreams which have not begun but which will require to be carried out as the project reaches a conclusion. These are:-

- allocation of day to day work to officers electronically;
- the electronic approval of building warrant drawings and returning same to agents.

Work continues, both nationally and within the Council to deliver these workstreams.

### **Financial Implications**

The full financial implications of the eDevelopment.scot portal have not been formulated. Whilst there are and will be set up costs there are undoubtedly savings to accrue from the Council promoting the use of the portal.

As indicated previously the national figures are that on average 70% of planning applications are submitted on-line. If building warrant applications in Angus can achieve this at an early date, the potential for savings in registering / scanning applications is large. In addition, the move to electronic file storage will save on storage costs. The advent of the new portal and the planning / building standards services engaging fully with same, developing new practices fits well with the Council's "Transforming Angus" agenda and its shift to delivering services digitally.

As indicated above there are set up costs accruing to the Council and these are difficult to quantify at this time. These are development costs to the Scottish Government for the portal, new software and hardware to allow officers to assess planning and building warrant applications without the need of paper files. At the present time these costs are being met from the revenue budget of the planning service.

Contact for further information  
Len Murray, Building Standards Manager  
Email: [MurrayLAG@angus.gov.uk](mailto:MurrayLAG@angus.gov.uk)