



Performance Update Report

April to September 2016

Date of Report: 06th October 2016

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Civicance Ltd is an agent for Cheshire East Council (CEC) and is owned and controlled by CEC
Registered Office: Westfields, Middlewich Road, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 1HZ



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Civicance Ltd provides a number of statutory regulatory services on behalf of Cheshire East, some of which are chargeable functions and open to a competitive marketplace.
- 1.2 The services Civicance Ltd undertake currently include the following;
 - Building Regulations fee earning
 - Building Regulation non fee earning
 - Response to report of Dangerous structures
 - Monitoring of Demolitions
 - Local land and property searches
 - Street naming and numbering
 - Planning administration and application registration
- 1.3 All of the work undertaken by Civicance Ltd involves, at one stage or another, interactions with residents of Cheshire East on a daily basis. Services offered need to be responsive and prompt, whilst being efficient.
- 1.4 Through the inaugural stages of the activity the members of Civicance Ltd have focussed efforts significantly to achieve the requirements as set out within the agency agreement between Cheshire East Council
- 1.5 This report provides a summary of operational performance between 01st April 2016 and the 30th September 2016 against the requirements of the agency agreement.

2.0 Operational achievements

- 2.1 The company operates within a competitive marketplace particularly focused on the fee earning Building Regulation and land charges areas. This business activity relies on quality service provision and service user relationships.
- 2.2 The greatest asset of the company remains its employees. Over the recent 6 month period a number of key support staff have retired or left employment. This has left a significant lack of resources, requiring a robust recruitment campaign, which is continuing at the time of the report.
- 2.3 The initial indicators are positive, however it is clear that the company will need to invest significant time and funding into training and development over the next few months to ensure that a quality service can be maintained. It is anticipated that this should be manageable without affecting performance against the agreement obligations.

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- 2.4 Competitor activity remains fierce, with approx. 30 private sector building control bodies operating within the boundaries of Cheshire East. This has meant that the team continue to drive forward the services offered under the agency agreement, delivering a responsive service whilst continuing to market and promote their delivery.
- 2.5 The company has undertaken a number of activities to promote the activities operated on behalf of Cheshire East Council under the agreement, these include;
- Become a member of each Chamber of commerce, attending network events
 - Continued to promote the functions through social media
 - Attended both the Royal Cheshire show and the Nantwich shows
 - Continued to issue monthly e-shots, providing key information to Cheshire East customers on a monthly basis
 - Developed a new informative booklet "A Guide to renovating your home"
 - Discussing options associated with media advertisement
- 2.6 To support income levels against the agreement requirements the Company now support neighbour Authorities including Staffordshire Moorlands and High Peak Councils, undertaking Building Control work on a daily basis.
- 2.7 To ensure that the functions of the company remain fit for purpose Civicance Ltd has also driven forward a number of business improvement initiatives;
- Continued to review and improve operational procedures
 - Provided direct contact support for Planning officers through the customer co-ordination team
 - Continued to register planning application within 5 days, and improving to under 2 days
 - *Improved the registration of valid prior application within 1 working day from 54% to 100%*
 - *Improved the performance of land charge searches completed within 5 working days. This has been achieved through the development of staff enabling them to determine the answers to Question 4 of the Con29, as question previously requiring input from Development Management.*
 - *The company now support the Enforcement team, logging enforcement complaints when received. This is seen as a temporary measure to support this team, whilst a direct web link solution is developed by the ICT Strategy team*

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- The company now contact over 60% of applicants submitting planning applications within 5 working days to ensure they are satisfied with the service at this point which also provides an opportunity to further promote the Building Regulation services provided.
- 2.8 The Company have also provided advice and support to the “Big Mill” dangerous structures project, which has been demolished under the dangerous structures legislation.
- 2.9 In particular over the 6 month period the company has;
- Registered 1350 Building Regulation applications, which includes 379 from partnership arrangements and 85 from neighbour Authorities. Although this demonstrates an overall increase on applications, the number of Cheshire East applications has reduced by 55 compared with the same period last year.
 - Received 3237 applications under planning legislation and registered 3079.
 - Responded to 60 dangerous structures, including a large demolition project within the centre of Congleton
 - Registered 1054 initial notices
 - Registered 9,752 competent persons notifications
 - Responded to approx. 4844 land charge search requests
 - Continued to respond to request for Building Regulation site inspections the same day when requested before 10.00am.



3.0 Performance Framework

3.1 A number of Key Performance Indicators have been included within the agency agreement that require the Company to monitor performance against. The following tables highlight the required performance expected of the Company as part of this agreement:

Action	Reason	Benefits to the Company	Benefits to the Customer
Monitor Performance of Planning Application Registration	As required under contract agreement. Monitor Performance levels to clearly indicate areas for improvement.	Data can be used to forecast future work trends, staffing requirements and to identify performance against agreement targets	Performance set against the contract and associated guidelines to achieve what the company sets out to achieve. Improve customer service delivery of planning applications

Service Level Indicator	2014 – 2015 Cheshire East achievements	Target set for 2015 – 2016	Target Set for 2016 - 2017	Schedule 1 KPI	Schedule 6 KPI	Possible Penalties	Target Achievement for the period
April - September 2016							
Valid Application registered within 10 working days	57%	100%	100%	Yes	Yes	No	99%
Valid Planning Applications registered within 5 working days	3%	80%	90%	Yes	Yes	Yes	97%
Registration of valid Householder applications registered within 2 working days	22%	90%	90%	Yes	Yes	No	98%
Registration of valid prior applications within 1 working day	29%	100%	100%	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
Neighbours and consultees notified within 1 day of registration of applications		90%	100%	Yes	Yes	No	100%
Requests for additional information, amendments or corrections to invalid applications sent out within 5 working days of receipt		90%	90%	Yes	Yes	No	u/a
Issue Decision Notices within 1 day of Decision being produced		95%	95%	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%

Commentary: The company has focused on the improvement in terms of speed of registration and over coming months will now undertake a review of quality associated with this function

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Action	Reason	Benefits to the Company	Benefits to the Customer
Monitor Market activity together with performance relating to Fee Earning activity under the Building Regulations	<i>As required under contract agreement. The data can also be used to forecast future workload and staffing requirements. The number of applications reflects fee income</i>	Data can be used to forecast future work trends, staffing requirements and to identify marketing potential.	Performance set against the contract and associated guidelines to achieve what the company sets out to achieve.

Service Level Indicator	2014 – 2015 Cheshire East achievements	Target set for 2015 – 2016	Target Set for 2016 - 2017	Schedule 1 KPI	Schedule 6 KPI	Possible Penalties	Target Achievement for the period
<i>April - September 2016</i>							
Number of Fee Earning Applications received	1962	2200	2200	Yes	Yes	No	1350
Number of Initial Notices	1348	1400	1400	No	Yes	No	1054
Number of all LA Apps as a % of all notices received	59%	70%	70%	No	Yes	No	56%
Percentage of Full Plans checked within 15 working days	84%	94%	94%	Yes	Yes	Yes	90%
Percentage of inspections carried out the same day where requested before 10.00am	100%	98%	98%	Yes	Yes	No	100%
Percentage of Decisions issued within 2 months		98%	98%	Yes	Yes	No	98%

Commentary: Performance associated with work received remains at a high standard. Significant marketing activity has been undertaken by employees who are predominantly frontline customer facing employees. Currently, market analysis has revealed the activity of **approximately 30 companies** that are now regularly submitting notices within the Cheshire East region competing for “fee earning building regulations element” business in this area. Feedback also reveals that fees and charges are lower compared with those set by Cheshire East which gives competitors a commercial advantage.

Whilst the efforts of the company to identify new income streams to support the volume of Building Control applications supports the level of market share, the market share within Cheshire, when comparing simple application volumes has declined. Analysis demonstrates that the areas where applications are being lost are within the lower end of the working operations. i.e. those projects that do not require planning permission.

Performance against “Full Plans checked” etc is influenced by resources available, and where resources are required to attend unforeseen emergencies such as “Dangerous Structures” this will affect this figure. It is clear that over the last 6 months the number of such reports has increased significantly compared to the same period last year, and the contribution to the “Big Mill” demolition has also impeded general progress.

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Action	Reason	Benefits to the Company	Benefits to the Customer
Monitor Performance of processing correspondence and PD enquiries	As required under contract agreement. Monitor Performance levels to clearly indicate areas for improvement.	Identify performance against others.	Performance set against the contract and associated guidelines to achieve what the company sets out to achieve. Improve customer service delivery of planning applications

Service Level Indicator	2014 – 2015 Cheshire East achievements	Target set for 2015 – 2016	Target Set for 2016 - 2017	Schedule 1 KPI	Schedule 6 KPI	Possible Penalties	Target Achievement for the period
April to September 2016							
Response to Permitted Development enquiries issued within 21 days		95%	95%	Yes	No	No	n/a
Acknowledgement of correspondence received sent out, scanned, indexed and filed in system within 2 working days		90%	90%	Yes	Yes	No	n/a

Commentary: Processes are not yet available to enable reporting of this target. This forms part of the processes review. Further discussion with the client will be necessary relating to the service level indicator for the acknowledgement, indexing of correspondence, as the whole function relies on the performance of the clients scanning bureau. Performance targets against permitted development enquiries should be available for the next quarterly report.



Action	Reason	Benefits to the Company	Benefits to the Customer
Monitor the turnaround of Local searches	As required under contract agreement. Monitor Performance levels to clearly indicate areas for improvement.	Identify performance against others.	Performance set against the contract and associated guidelines to achieve what the company sets out to achieve. Improve customer service delivery of planning applications

Service Level Indicator	2014 – 2015 Cheshire East achievements	Target set for 2015 – 2016	Target Set for 2016 - 2017	Schedule 1 KPI	Schedule 6 KPI	Possible Penalties	Target Achievement for the period
April to September 2016							
All Local searches turned around within 10 working days		100%	100%	Yes	Yes	No	100%
All Local searches turned around within 5 working days		95%	95%	Yes	Yes	Yes	98%
Expedited Searches turned around within 1 working day		100%	100%	Yes	Yes	Yes	100%
Standard Searches received (LLC1 and Con29)		5300	5300	Yes	No	No	2999
Non Standard Searches (LLC1, Con29R and Con29O)		1200	1200	Yes	No	No	568
LLC1 Only		2200	Tbc	Yes	No	No	1277
Supplementary Questions		50	Tbc	Yes	No	No	u/a

Commentary: One particular question used to require input from the Development management team which caused some delays. Civicance staff have now been trained in this area and now undertake this work. This is working well, and has allowed the improvement of searches completed within 5 working days from 78% to 98%

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Action	Reason	Benefits to the Company	Benefits to the Customer
Process requests for Street Names	Performance measures required under Agency agreement	Ensure satisfactory monitoring of performance.	Meet customer needs and expectations.

Service Level Indicator	2014 – 2015 Cheshire East achievements	Target set for 2015 – 2016	Target Set for 2016 - 2017	Schedule 1 KPI	Schedule 6 KPI	Possible Penalties	Target Achievement to end of month
Production of informal cabinet reports within 10 working days		100%	100%	Yes	No	No	100%

Commentary: None

4.0 Contractual Finance position

- 4.1 The table below demonstrates the financial position at the end of Sept 2016 and relates the performance of Civicance Ltd against the requirements of Schedule 6 of the Agency agreement.

Civicance & CEC contract position	Target £	Forecast £	Variance £'000
Contract payment under the agreement	1,755,634	1,755,634	0
Income generated under the terms of the contract received by CEC	(1,755,634)	(1,701,000)	54,634

- 4.2 The company are expected to manage expenditure to ensure their obligations against Schedule 6 are met, and the variance of £54,634 reduced to a net nil position for the Authority.