

## ANNEX B

### VERIFICATION PERFORMANCE – AT END SEPTEMBER 2015 (END Q2 2015-16)

Name of local authority verifier: **Falkirk Council**

The feedback below on your performance covers the range of performance outcomes set out in the Building Standards Verification: Key Performance Outcomes Handbook. This framework was introduced as part of the re-appointment of verifiers from May 2011.

The Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on the evidence provided within the quarterly returns and looks at quarter on quarter progress and comparisons to the Scotland-wide picture. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided, a 'red' marking has been allocated.

KPO	Performance Outcome	RAG rating	Comments	Local Authority Comments/Actions
1	<b>Year-on-year reduction in the average time taken to grant a building warrant</b>	<b>Red</b>	<p>The average time to grant a building warrant has varied quarter on quarter. The times have been generally higher than the national averages. <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p>Local authority has not provided a breakdown of time taken by verifier. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p>	<p>Falkirk Council Building Standards service has the customer and economic drivers at the forefront of our service delivery and engages fully in striving to achieve customer expectations whilst taking account of the complexities of submissions through flexible engagement to deliver positive quality outcomes rather than non-engagement and resultant refusal. Falkirk has invested in modern technology to ensure robust performance monitoring and reporting arrangements to meet customers' expectations on quality, speed and maximisation of available resources but applicant / agent response times are outwith our control.</p> <p>The response / breakdown times are monitored at present, although not currently reported on and note that this is the current trend across the majority of verifiers but will be included on implementation of e-BS. Please refer to 'Any other Local Authority comments' section for further commentary on our future adoption on reporting this analysis and potential for customer impact and relations in how the process auditing will be measured following the roll-out of e-Building Standards.</p>

KPO	Performance Outcome	RAG rating	Comments	Local Authority Comments/Actions
2	<b>Increased quality of assessment and compliance during the construction process</b>	Red	<p>The % of CCNPs fully achieved has varied quarter on quarter. They have been generally below the national averages <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p>Local authority has not provided a breakdown of CCNPs fully achieved by relevant person or by verifier. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p>	<p>The reasons for failure of individual CCNP's are recorded and monitored. The reason for failure in all cases, being the lack of notification of commencement and / or specific stages by the applicant / agent / contractor. Building Standards have taken a range of measures to try and address the failure of individual customer's representatives to embrace the CCNP and lack of communication on commencement and notification of specific stages through the introduction of flyers, changes in working practices and we will continue to broaden our methods of engagement to increase buy-in from applicants / agents and contractors.</p> <p>The data is currently collected and monitored via our Uniform system and indicates that Building Standards achieve a 100% compliance with the CCNP on responding to all stages detailed therein. Reporting will be forwarded on commencement of returns for Q1 2016/17 now that it has been raised. Again, I would note that this was not a mandatory requirement and that currently only 8 of 32 verifiers provided this information. Please refer to 'Any other Local Authority comments' section for further commentary</p>
3	<b>Increased commitment to meeting customer expectations</b>	Green	<p>The % of first reports issued within 20 days has been consistently high (up to 100%). They have been significantly higher than the national averages.</p> <p>Local authority has not provided customer agreements.</p>	<p>Falkirk Council Building Standards are committed to delivering a comprehensive first response to all applicants immaterial of the scale or complexity of the proposal within the current 20 day performance protocol and have invested in modern monitoring and management tools to ensure this is delivered. We will continue to explore mechanisms to support the speed and quality of our first responses and engagement protocols to support customer expectations and economic growth within our area.</p> <p>Whilst Customer Agreements are highlighted as an option, where appropriate to our customers, there has been no request or approach to-date to provide a specific tailored customer agreement as our speed of response and engagement (all applications receive a full and meaningful response within the initial 20 day response time) is satisfactory to our customers. Priority request submissions are fast tracked well within the 20 day response period as required if deemed appropriate.</p>

KPO	Performance Outcome	RAG rating	Comments	Local Authority Comments/Actions
4, 5	<p><b>Adherence to service commitments of a National Customer Charter</b></p> <p><b>Improvement of the customer experience</b></p>	Red	<p>Customer charter published on local authority website. Last update October 2012.</p> <p>The 2015 customer survey indicates a lower overall satisfaction rating for your service (6.4) than your 2014 rating (8.1). <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p>Your 2015 rating (6.4) is lower than the national rating (7.1). <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p>Your customer response rate (13.6%) was lower than the national average (15.6%).</p> <p>The number of email addresses supplied by you was significantly lower than the national average.</p> <p>The number of responses was lower than the national average (20 responses). <b>RAG = Amber</b></p>	<p>The Local Customer Charter review is undertaken on a quarterly basis and amendments / changes being made as necessary to align with Local or National issues raised. The current edition dated October 2012 reflects the introduction of the National Customer Charter and changes to the verification reporting system introduced at that time. However, the current Charter whilst reviewed on a quarterly basis did not require to be amended further and remains the current version. Future upgrades will be dated as per the current version showing the most recent version, as and when required.</p> <p>We will continue to participate and promote the National Survey despite reservations on level of uptake and measurement criteria and would conclude that the overall indication for Falkirk is not reflective of our own continuous Customer feedback and conclusions based on such a small sample of responders is not a representative sample.</p> <p>Customer surveys conducted by Falkirk Council Building Standards on a regular basis show high degrees of customer satisfaction, quality of service and customer focus (99%). It is difficult to draw any conclusion why there should be a drop in satisfaction levels in this 2015 survey, given that we have maintained our level of performance and quality of service during the 2015 period and why there is a measured deviation from the 2014 results. As stated our own "live" feedback supports the first national survey undertaken in 2014.</p> <p>Given that we are a regulatory service it is inevitable that there may be occurrences when a customer's expectations and desires cannot be realised and result in dissatisfaction.</p> <p>It is noted that given such a small return, the sample breakdown indicates that as little as one individual's response has a significant impact on the scoring and as such questions the accuracy or reliability of the questionnaire in its current format.</p> <p>Customer response rates can be variable and driven by a wide range of factors. Whilst, many indicated their willingness to participate, they then for some reason failed to complete or engage with and return the questionnaire. This is outwith our control and was undertaken directly between applicants / customers and a third party and a matter of choice for the individual. The e-mail contact details supplied</p>

KPO	Performance Outcome	RAG rating	Comments	Local Authority Comments/Actions
				by Falkirk were in accordance with those individuals who selected not to “opt out” as per the agreed statement on the Building Warrant application form and agreed with the survey custodian. Again this is outwith our control. Many may have chosen to “opt out” for their own particular reasons all of which are unknown to us. Please refer to ‘Any other Local Authority comments’ section for further commentary
6	<b>Financial governance</b>	Green	<p>The % of fee income measured against verification staff costs has varied quarter on quarter. They have been consistently lower than the national averages.</p> <p>Fee income for the last quarter significantly increased (more than 150%).</p>	<p>Falkirk Council Building Standards supports strong and robust reporting and monitoring mechanisms on financial governance in delivering a quality customer focused service and one that is delivered providing value for money and maximisation of resources without detriment to our customers and we are committed to maintaining this strategy.</p> <p>The significant increase in fee income during September 2015 was due to an increase in applications being submitted ahead of the introduction of revised / amended guidance and standards coming into force on 1st October 2015. The impact of this and the variance in fee income over the reporting quarters is an external factor and outwith our control.</p>
REP ORT ING	<b>Improved partnership working underpinned by engagement with a National Customer Forum</b>	Not applicable		Falkirk Council Building Standards support and promote partnership working at Local and National level through Developer Workshops with our local Planning colleagues, Consortia Groups, LABSS, the BSD and Commercial / Business communities.
8, 9	<b>Development of an adherence to objectives outlined in balanced scorecard Commitment to continuous improvement</b>	Green	Balanced scorecard published on local authority website. Last update specified October 2015. Quarterly update of continuous improvement plan summary submitted on time.	Falkirk Council Building Standards are committed to listening to our customers’ expectations, transparency, continuous improvement, quality, consistency and speed of service to our customers by engaging and reacting positively to constructive feedback.

## Overall markings (total numbers for red, amber, green)

Red	3
Amber	0
Green	3

## Decision making timescales

KPO1	Average time to grant a building warrant	Red
KPO3	% of first reports issued within 20 days	Green

## Any other local authority comments

With reference to comments above I would comment as follows:

Falkirk Council Building Standards is committed to an ongoing process of 'Continuous Improvement in our Customers Journey'. The service has been pro-active for many years, introducing our own in-house e-Building Standards service ahead of a national solution and has worked closely with various building standards verifiers, Consortia members, LABSS and the Building Standards Division to develop Building Standards.

Falkirk Council Building Standards has worked with the Building Standards Division in supporting international seminars on Fire Engineering, e-Building Standards Project Board, the development of forthcoming Customer Journey guidance and improvements to deliver a modern service focused on the customer.

Falkirk Council has embraced modern technology and communication to the benefit of our customers with the introduction of a 24 hour e-Building Standards system ahead of a National solution at significant cost. Real time monitoring of Warrant application progress / status via the Council web site. Information advice, leaflets and guidance documents and accessibility to staff and free pre-warrant discussion service.

The responses from our customer surveys highlight a high level of satisfaction and confidence in the service we provide: However, we appreciate that we must continue to listen, improve and adapt to address customer expectations.

General statements from Customers responding to service have included:

- *"All aspects excellent"*
- *"Many thanks for all your help"*
- *"Always helpful and friendly when dealing with your service"*
- *"Excellent Service"*
- *"This has been one of the most straight forward applications I have dealt with in the last 18 months"*
- *"Big improvement on experience in 2006"*
- *"I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the Building Control team on the helpful and professional way in which they dealt with all aspects of this application. I was consistently treated with courtesy and good humour and would congratulate you on a job well done"*

- *“Site visit was very quick (next day)”*
- *“Sincere thanks for quick response”*
- *“Quiet impressed with the end user journey. The process was completed in good time and we are satisfied with the care and attention provided. Many thanks”*
- *“Dealt with impressive speed, efficiency and courtesy! Well done”*
- *“The project was an enabling project for us to decant staff from another building, in order for it to close. This was Phase 1 of our Estates Strategy. Building Standards were extremely helpful”*
- *“Thanks for all your help when our builders went into administration before applying for Completion Certificate”*
- *“Great Service”*
- *“First time dealing with Falkirk and looking forward to working with you again”*

Comments:

The context and nature of the report appears to promote a negative view towards the reporting of general performance criteria across the verification system rather than to acknowledge the improvements and customer benefits achieved and on-going since the introduction of the Performance Framework Agreement. A RAG measurement lacks the necessary quality, depth and analysis of findings or deviations and is not reflective of performance and sustained service delivery at a high level against that of a sustained but slightly improving poorer service.

As stated a potential marginal failure or a statement of satisfaction is marked down as a negative and is packaged in the same area as serious failure, this can distort outcomes presenting a negative flavour to the findings. It would be of greater benefit if a system of rating reflected the relevance or impact of change rather than the simplicity of the current system that marks down a satisfactory response.

A drop off in scoring from say an 8.1 to 6.4 may be quantified by a satisfactory outcome due to the customer being used to a high level of performance and being satisfied with that outcome and not raising their opinion to very satisfied as their expectations may have been realised over a period of time.

I would further conclude that customer expectation is key when analysed against or in comparison across building standards verifiers in order to gain a better understanding of common users across multiple verification providers.

The nature and simplicity of the data collection fails to recognise the journey and engagement a conscientious verifier will take with applicants and agents to bring about a satisfactory conclusion to their applications and aspirations. The recognition of customer interaction, readiness to listen, being amenable to issues beyond Building Standards that influence on decision timeframes and our willingness to play an active role in the design process is lost by such a simple statistic. The measurement of time alone irrespective of how that is divided between verifier or customer does not support or take account of engagement and partnership working or the quality of service provided but by measuring time alone it becomes a factor that can be influenced at the expense of the customer by a verifiers refusal to communicate, assist or develop fruitful outcomes by simply refusing an application as non-compliant.

I would further comment on the potential impact the proposed mechanism for establishing breakdown times taken by verifier/customer, as a result of “system” changes that will automatically record submitted information into our back office systems when the e-building standards roll-out goes live, is of some concern. The potential to cause friction / annoyance to applicants / agents / customers, who at present drip feed information as and when it’s available and is currently managed by us, to be able to send items through the portal may result in numerous e-mails from verifiers highlighting the obvious. i.e. that 1 item of 20 now received and 19 remain to be answered, then 4 items of 20 received and 16 remain unanswered etc. If this protocol is not followed then the clock will continue to run against the verifier and as a result the potential is there for overbearing administrative bureaucracy, with countless / repeat pieces of correspondence / e-mails to customers

stating the obvious. This has the potential to undermine the real time benefits resulting in the possibility of applicants asking why we are wasting our time replying to what they and we already know, with the consequences of resources being directed to address complaint handling rather than focusing on processing and assessing information and warrants.

## RAG MARKING CRITERIA

	RAG	MARKING CRITERIA BASED ON LAST 6 QUARTERS (TO END SEPT 2015)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2013-14 Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4;</li> <li>• 2014-15 Q1, Q2</li> </ul>
KPO1	Green	Below the national average – < 60 Days (National average =58 days approx.) Can provide breakdown of verifier time
	Amber	Close to the national average – > or = 60 days and < 65 days Cannot provide breakdown of verifier time
	Red	Above the national average – > or = 65 days
KPO2	Green	Above the national average – > 50% (National average = 52% approx.) Can provide breakdown of relevant person and verifier performance
	Amber	Close to the national average – > 45% and < or = 50% Cannot provide breakdown of relevant person and verifier performance
	Red	Below the national average – < or = 45%
KPO3	Green	Above the national average – > 95% (National average = 90% approx.)
	Amber	Close to the national average – < or = 95 and > 90%
	Red	Below the national average – < or = 90%
KPO4, KPO5	Green	National customer charter published on-line Customer survey rating – above 2014 LA rating Customer survey rating – above 2015 national rating (7.1) Email addresses provided – above 2015 national average (2x ave = significant) Number of responses – above 2015 national average (2x ave = significant)
	Amber	Customer survey rating – within 5% or 0.5 below 2014 LA rating Customer survey rating – within 5% or 0.5 below 2015 national rating (7.1) Email addresses provided – between 2015 national average and 50% average Number of responses – between 2015 national average and 50% average
	Red	National customer charter not clearly published on-line Customer survey rating – more than 5% or 0.5 below 2014 rating Customer survey rating – more than 5% or 0.5 below 2015 national rating (7.1) Email addresses provided – below 50% of 2015 national average (7.1) Number of responses – below 50% of 2015 national average (7.1)
KPO6	Green	% fee income against staff costs – > 120% and < or = 150% <sup>(1)</sup>
	Amber	% fee income against staff costs – > 100% and < or = 120% % fee income against staff costs – > 150% <sup>(1)</sup> and < or = 200%
	Red	% fee income against staff costs – < or = 100% % fee income against staff costs – > 200%
KPO7		Not applicable
KPO8, KPO9	Green	Balanced scorecard published on-line Submission of Summary CIP Q2 2015-16 – on time
	Amber	Submission of Summary CIP Q2 2015-16 – late
	Red	Balanced scorecard not clearly published on-line Submission of Summary CIP Q2 2015-16 – not done

<sup>(1)</sup> Note:

- Average 2014-15(Q1-4) – 151% (based on 4 quarters);
- Average 2014-15(Q1-4); 2015-16(Q1) – 155% (based on 5 quarters);
- 2015-16(Q4) ignored due to additional applications (and fees) submitted prior to October 2015 regulation changes.