

Audit Committee – 28th October 2010

7. **Audit Review - Section 106 Planning Obligations and Commuted Sums Update**

Strategic Director: Rina Singh (Place & Performance)
Assistant Director: Martin Woods (Economy)
Service Manager: David Norris, Development Manager
Lead Officer: Neil Waddleton, Section 106 Monitoring Officer
Contact Details: neil.waddleton@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462603

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update on the computer system to aid the monitoring of financial and non-financial Planning Obligations.

Recommendations

That members note the report and endorse the actions taken in respect of the monitoring of Section 106 Planning Obligations.

Background

The Committee will remember that a key outcome from the Audit Review was to put in place an effective and robust computer system to manage and monitor S106 legal agreements.

The Idox Planning Obligation Tracker system was procured on the basis that it would allow us to monitor and manage S106 legal agreements. The package was highly recommended by the Royal Town Planning Institute and the Government funded Planning Advisory Service. Idox are a long established company that supply our existing database and there has never been any reason to question their efficiency or customer service or the reliability of their product.

A number of 'teething' problems soon became evident and following discussions with the account manager and other authorities it became clear that it was a very new system that was still very much in the process of development and therefore the functionality that had been demonstrated was not yet sufficiently refined.

A recent procurement assessment with the Procurement & Risk Manager and the Spatial Systems Manager, has led to the decision to postpone pursuing the Idox Planning Obligation Tracker on the basis that it currently does not provide the functionality that is required to effectively monitor and manage the council's legal agreements. It is however very likely that, in time, the fully developed system will prove to be an excellent database and the limited investment that has been made allows the council to benefit from the final product.

Progress Made

The Section 106 Officer recently attended a training session at Colchester where an alternative system was demonstrated. It was clear that this system would provide the required functionality and would be suitable for South Somerset's use. The benefits of this is that it has been designed and used by their monitoring team and can be easily maintained and progressed in house. It is a tried and tested system and will deliver all

the functionality desired from a monitoring package. Management and monitoring reports can be designed and extrapolated from the system.

Work has begun populating the new database and update reports will be taken to the four Area Committees in December.

The Colchester database came at no additional cost to this Authority.

Financial Implications

Initial outlay on the Idox System was £2,500, a large part of which was made up by a training event. However, a large part of this has been refunded.

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Background Papers: *Audit Committee reports for January and July 2009 and February and July 2010*