

PLANNING SERVICE SERVICE PLAN 2007/10

1. SERVICE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

1.1 The service provides a range of statutory and non-statutory services to residents of the District and the development industry as follows:

- Planning Policy – preparation, monitoring and review of land use planning policies that comprise the statutory framework for development in the District. Officers represent the Council on various steering groups involving external organisations dealing with a variety of topics and issues. The section also advises and represents the Council on matters of National and Regional Planning Policy. It provides specialist advice and support for heritage and conservation of the built environment. This includes 105 Listed Buildings and 22 Conservation Areas to which modest repairs and improvement grant schemes are applied. The Council provides technical support for the Sharpes Pottery Museum. As part of developing the Council's Heritage Strategy the service publishes 'Heritage News' 3 times a year and arranges open days for historic properties. The section also provides a corporate graphic design service.
- Building Control – within the terms of a scheme of delegation appraises 100% of schemes and monitors building work that require Building Regulation approval. Some 883 applications were received last year and 5000 inspections undertaken. This work is won in competition with Approved Inspectors in the private sector and the retention of market share is critically dependent upon the total level of building and approved inspector activity. The section also allocates street names and numbers and deals with dangerous structures.
- Development Control – 1462 planning applications (including 69 for Listed Buildings and 100 relating to Trees) were processed last year of which officers, within a scheme of delegation, determine approximately 92%. Informal pre-application advice is also provided for any scheme and 444 permitted development enquiries were received. 528 formal complaints regarding matters of non-compliance with planning legislation were investigated last year with 84 complaints already received during the first 6 weeks of 2007/08. Rights of Way are also dealt with by the service and some 1000 general enquiries were dealt with last year.

1.2 The service currently works in partnership with the following for the provision of specific services:

- Derbyshire Wildlife Trust re ecological issues,
- Derbyshire County Council re biodiversity and archaeological matters,
- East Staffordshire Borough Council re arboricultural advice
- Derbyshire Constabulary re crime prevention design advice

A new post of Urban Designer is currently being recruited which will be part funded by North West Leicestershire District Council for whom the officer will work one day per week.

- 1.3 The main source of income is from fees (planning applications currently set by government and building regulation applications set locally) Since 2003/4 Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) awarded from the Government has provided a much needed injection of money enabling the recruitment of technical assistants, the specialist studies required for Local Development Framework documents to be undertaken, investment in providing services via the web and archiving of paper documents.
- 1.4 Implementation of capital projects has been enabled by match funding from Government and Regional bodies e.g. for the HERS (English Heritage) and the Woodville to Swadlincote Town Centre Area Action Plan (from the Derby and Derbyshire Economic Partnership). Money from Section 106 Agreements has also contributed towards the implementation of major capital projects such as the town centre public realm improvements.
- 1.5 Expenditure mainly relates to staff costs. Market supplements are currently applied to Building Control Officers due to recruitment and retention difficulties.
- 1.6 The service reports to Environmental & Development Services Committee on most matters of policy (other than the Development Plan which is a matter for full Council) the Development Control Committee deals with the determination of planning applications and enforcement and the Heritage Grants sub-committee oversees the allocations of grants to help restore historic buildings.
- 1.7 Staffing arrangements – The service comprises some 34 professional, technical and administrative staff. The workforce is supplemented from time to time by temporary staff, particularly in the administrative section but more recently by professional planners in order to enable the implementation of the re-engineering exercise.

2. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- 2.1 The Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) was introduced by the Government as a temporary expedient to improve performance in handling planning applications by enabling local authorities to invest in IT, training and staff and as an incentive for the preparation of Local Development Frameworks and e-planning. Whilst the money has been used by SDDC in the manner envisaged by the Government it is becoming increasingly more difficult to keep pace with BVPIs.
- 2.2 New staff at a junior level initially enabled the service to retain its standards but more drastic measures will be necessary if the service is to keep ahead of the game. Caseloads continue to be significantly higher than the national benchmark and it is for this reason that the re-engineering exercise is necessary, to ensure that processes are as streamlined and effective as possible thus enabling maximisation of staff time to ensure quality as well as quantity of decisions.
- 2.3 One specific challenge is the need to keep up with new technology and the Government's vision for e-planning. Whilst in the past this has been undertaken by existing staff as an addition to their normal duties, in future, more IT expertise will be required to actively develop systems. The use of tablet PC's and other remote

working devices is being investigated to enable the Building Control Unit to function utilising staff more effectively which is necessary given continuing difficulties of recruiting qualified and experienced staff. The Building Control Unit is required to be self-financing but not to be in substantial profit. There is currently a surplus on the trading account more of which will need to be reinvested in service delivery particularly the use of IT.

- 2.4 Work is progressing on the Local Development Framework introduced by new legislation in 2004 but far from speeding up the system the new legislation has introduced a greater level of complexity. The challenge for the Planning Policy Unit will be to ensure that milestones in the Local Development Scheme are met whilst at the same time ensuring that the plans produced are 'sound'. Furthermore, in order to demonstrate 'soundness', there is an increasing requirement to continually maintain up-to-date specialist technical background evidence which has cost implications e.g. flood risk assessments, , retail capacity studies, geotechnical studies etc. It is only as work progresses on the new style documents that better forecasting in terms of timescales for their completion and resource implications can be established. There is continuing speculation that the Government will seek further changes to the system, which will put staff under additional pressure to get up to speed and make it increasingly more difficult to engage the general public in the plan making process.
- 2.5 The service remains re-active (as opposed to being pro-active) with regard to checking compliance of planning conditions and carrying out enforcement and will remain so without further additional staff resources. The arrival of a new Senior Enforcement Officer will enable a review of cases and when appropriate the re-engineering of processes and procedures to maximise for example the use of IT.
- 2.6 The service is committed to maximising Customer First to improve the delivery of basic enquiries for services to the public and in order to free up professional staff time to deal with priorities. However, initial estimates of what items could be transferred have proven to be over ambitious which will result in lower capacity gains than originally envisaged.
- 2.7 Whilst performance of the service has been consistent the Government continues to introduce complex additions and changes to legislation and guidance thus pressure on the service is very likely to continue. Changes to permitted development rights meant to reduce planning applications will in fact increase the number of enquiries to ascertain whether planning permission is actually required. Time to reflect and learn is virtually non-existent.

3. KEY TASKS

The majority of the tasks undertaken by the service are statutory and as they are monitored by the BVPI's (see section 6) they are not listed here.

Ref. No.	Source	Actions	Expected Outcome	Measure	Timescale
P1	Service generated but reflects Corporate Plan Theme 3 – Higher Quality Services	Implement business re-engineering of the Building Control Service	Sustainable staff structure	New structure in place	Oct 2006 – Oct 2007

P2	Service generated but reflects Corporate Plan Theme 3 – Higher Quality Services	Implement business re-engineering of the planning applications process	Streamlined process, better use of staff resources, improved web access to service, appropriate services transferred to Customer First	BVPI 109 a-c in top quartile by 2008/9, full access to applications etc on line, customer satisfaction retained/enhanced	Oct 2006-Mar 2008
P3	Corporate Plan Theme 4 – Prosperity for all	Implement Phase 1 of the Swadlincote Town Centre Masterplan & investigate and secure funding and delivery for future phases.	Environmental improvements to Swadlincote town centre public realm	Works completed	2006 - 2017
P5	Corporate Plan Theme 6 - Stronger in the Region	Participation in the consultation process for the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy	The potential impacts of policies on South Derbyshire are articulated to the Regional Assembly	Policies in adopted RSS reflect as far as possible the Council's views on future development in South Derbyshire	2008

4. WORKFORCE PLANNING

The recruitment process for a new post of Urban Designer is currently underway. The post was identified via the process mapping part of the business re-engineering exercise, should ensure that 100% of the quality of service checklist is achieved and assist the achievement of top quartile for the determination of planning applications whilst ensuring quality of development.

Recruiting Building Control Surveyors remains difficult and a vacancy is temporarily being covered by a retired officer on a part time basis. Working in partnership with neighbouring local authorities is currently being investigated.

Two junior officers will complete their formal training this year and become fully qualified town planners. Such posts were introduced as a 'grow your own' principle following difficulties in previous years recruiting qualified and experienced planners.

5. MANAGING RISKS

RISK	CONSEQUENCES	CONTROLS IN PLACE	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED (including timescale)
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Judicial review of planning decisions	Criticism, time and cost of having to defend our position, possible costs awarded against the Council.	Periodic review of procedures, early identification of high-risk cases, counsel opinion sought when necessary.	Further review of statutory procedures, continued advice from counsel when required.
Legal challenge to decision on planning or building regulations application	Criticism, time and cost of having to defend our position, possible costs awarded against the Council.	Periodic review of procedures, early identification of high-risk cases, counsel opinion sought when necessary.	Further review of statutory procedures, continued advice from counsel when required.
Loss of market share re: Building Regulations	Income less than predicted, service no longer self financed, staff cuts, service declines.	Careful attention to forecasts in setting budgets. Maintaining staffing level and customer service at a level sufficient to deliver the service and continue to promote it.	Implement business re-engineering of the Building Control Service (October 06 to October 07).
Reliance on contractors to deliver some services	Inability to provide the service, cannot formulate robust policies.	Existing partnerships monitored, new ones investigated.	Service development proposal bids when necessary.
Accidents or injuries on public footpaths, including footpaths officer	Complaints, insurance claim, award of costs, incapacity of officer.	Health and Safety policy - lone working, issue of safety equipment. Necessary repairs undertaken before accidents occur.	Keep H&S Policy up to date.

6. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TARGETS

Best Value Performance Indicators

Best Value Indicators	Actual 2006/07	Target 2007/08	Target 2009/10	Quartile 2005/06
106 – % of new homes built on previously developed land	86.23%	80.00%	60%	T 96.74% M 81.50% B 62.52
109a - % of major applications determined within 13 weeks	77.19%	65.00%	69.00%	T 74.90% M 66.66% B 62.52
109b - % of minor applications determined within 8 weeks	76.40%	85.00%	85.00%	T 81.07% M 75.00%

109c - % of other applications determined within 8 weeks	87.84%	90%	92%	B 69.00% T 91.39% M 87.80% B 83.37%
200a – Did the LPA submit the Local Development Scheme by 28 th March 05 and thereafter maintain a rolling programme?	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
200b - Has the LPA met the milestones which the current LDS sets out?	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
200c – Did the LPA publish an annual monitoring report by 31 st December of each year	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
204 - % of appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse planning permission. (figures have resulted in additional award in recent PDG)	28%	25%	25%	T 25.0% M 30.5% B 36.1%
205 - Score against the quality of service check list.	83.3%	100%	100%	T 100% M 94.0% B 83.3%
170a – The number of visits to/useages of LA funded or part funded museums per 1,000 population	928	1060	1283	T 958 M 382 B 133
170b – The number of those visits to LA funded museums that were in person per 1,000.	586	684	828	T 523 M 247 B 87
170c – The number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups (including visits to schools)	509	550	800	T 8156 M 2603 B 641
219a – Total number of Conservation Areas in the LA area.	22	22	22	N/A
219b - % of Conservation Areas with an up to date character appraisal (Work almost completed. Tender required for remaining 50%)	54.54%	100%	100%	T 31.81% M 10.00% B 0.00%
219c - % of Conservation Areas with published management proposals.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	T 7.70% M 0.00% B 0.00%

Local Performance Indicators

Please use the following table

Local Indicator	Actual 2006/07	Target 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10
Retain market share of Building Control	92%	90%	88%	87%
Development Control Charter				
• Application site visits within 15 working days	55%	75%	85%	95%
• Permitted Development enquiries answered within 10 working days	27%	85%	100%	100%
• Decision Notices sent out within 2 working days	99%	100%	100%	100%
• Complaints regarding breaches of control investigated within 15 working days	97%	100%	100%	100%
The above may change and new LPIs established on completion of the business re-engineering exercise.				

7. USEFUL CONTACTS

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