

PLANNING SERVICE SERVICE PLAN 2006/09

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 including individuals, companies and governmental organisations with an interest in development and environmental conservation and enhancement as follows:
- 1.2 Planning Policy Unit – undertakes preparation, monitoring and review of land use planning policies, which in turn comprise the Development Plan a 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 the Council on developments in National and Regional Planning Policy and neighbouring Plans and 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.
- 1.3 Building Control Unit– appraises schemes and monitors building works that require Building Regulation approval. Some 936 applications were received last year and over 6,500 inspections of work were carried out. This work is won in competition with Approved Inspectors in the private sector. The section also allocates street names and numbers, deals with dangerous structures and enforces the Building Regulations.
- 1.4 Development Control Unit– processes some 1500 planning applications per year of which officers, within a scheme of delegation, determine approximately 90%. Informal advice is provided to developers and householders. The service has a good record of winning appeals against decisions with only 19% being lost last year. An average of over 500 complaints are investigated each year with a view to enforcement action. The service also covers tree preservation and operates the rights of way function on behalf of the County.
- 1.5 Budgets – the service's budget comprises mainly staff costs however expenditure is incurred in relation to the preparation of policy documents and there is a small Historic Buildings Grant budget. The budget has been supplemented over the past few years by Planning Delivery Grant. It has enabled additional staff to be appointed in the policy and development control units and use of specialist consultants for one off studies e.g. open space and employment Land. Implementation of capital projects has been

enabled by match funding from Government and Regional bodies e.g. for the HERS (from English Heritage but this has now ended) 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 Masterplan.

- 1.6 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. Additional temporary support will also be needed during 2006/7 in order to enable the implementation of the re-engineering exercise.
- 1.7 Partnership working – regular advice on specialist matters is provided as follows:
 - wildlife - bought in via a service level agreement with the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust,
 - archaeology and biodiversity - via a partnership with the County Council
 - arboriculture - via sharing of a post with East Staffordshire Borough Council.
- 1.8 The Environmental & Development Services Committee decides most matters of policy (other than the Development Plan which is a matter for full Council) and the Development Control Committee deals with the determination of planning applications and enforcement. Finance and Management Committee is responsible for deciding responses to consultations on policy documents from other organisations.

2. OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

- 2.1 The Planning Delivery Grant 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. The new staff enabled the service to retain its standards but more drastic measures are 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 the quality of decisions. PDG however is expected to end in 2007/8 and the key challenge will be to ensure that there is no decline in service delivery as a result.
- 2.2 One specific challenge is the need to keep up with new technology and the Governments 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 will 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.

- 2.3 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 background evidence which sometimes has cost implications e.g. urban capacity studies, employment sites reviews, flood risk assessments, open space audits, retail capacity studies etc. It is only as work progresses on the new style documents that better forecasting in terms of timescales for their completion can be established and therefore changes to the Local Development Scheme will be unavoidable. 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.
- 2.4 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.

3. KEY TASKS

- 3.1 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	Environmental improvement to Civic Way boundary of town centre	Works completed	May 2007
P4	Corporate Plan Theme 2 - You at the Centre & Theme 5 – Rural South Derbyshire	Establish protocol for Member involvement in S106 agreements	New development meets the needs of the community	Protocol in place	March 2007
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	May 2008

4. WORKFORCE PLANNING

Issue	Action	Expected Outcome
Continuing recruitment difficulties in Building Control Unit likely to continue due to national shortage of qualified and experienced staff/change in age profile	Retention of market supplements and welcome payments. Implement remote working Work towards delivery of service through partnership arrangements Introduce new structure Promote the Council's family friendly policies and maximise flexible working	Impact on service delivery minimised
Transfer of functions to Customer First	Keep all members on the At Risk Register informed of progress	Successful introduction of new job descriptions and staff structure. Staff taken off the At Risk Register
Increasing need for specialist staff e.g. Urban Designer	Service Development Proposal bid, maximise partnership working	Specialist advice secured - quality of design in new developments raised
Lack of career progression	Ensure that as far as possible	The service benefits from

for staff undertaking courses leading to professional qualifications	priority is given to existing staff when new vacancies occur.	'growing its own'.
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5. MANAGING RISKS

Risk (current rating)	Consequences	Controls in place	Further action required (timescale)
Judicial Review of planning decisions B3 Medium	Criticism, time and cost of having to defend our position, possible costs awarded against us	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 C3 Low	Criticism, time and cost of having to defend our position, possible costs awarded against us	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 C3 Low	Income less than predicted, service no longer self financed, staff cuts, service declines	Careful attention to forecasts in setting budgets Maintaining staffing level & customer service at a level sufficient to deliver the service & continue to promote it.	See Key Task P1
Reliance on contractors to deliver some services D3 Low	Inability to provide the service, cannot formulate robust policies	Existing partnerships monitored, new ones investigated	Service development proposal bids when necessary
Accidents/injuries on public footpaths, including footpaths officer C3 Low	Complaints, Insurance claim, award of costs, incapacity of officer	Health & 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 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Target 2007/08	Target 2008/09
106 – % of new homes built on previously developed land	65% (est)	60%	60%	60%
109a - % of major applications determined within 13 weeks	56%	61%	62%	63%
109b - % of minor applications determined within 8 weeks	70%	71%	72%	73%
109c - % of other applications determined within 8 weeks	87%	82%	83%	85%
200a – Did the LPA submit the Local Development Scheme by 28 th March 05 and thereafter maintain a rolling programme?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
200b - Has the LPA met the milestones which the current LDS sets out?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
200c – Did the LPA publish an annual monitoring report by 31 st December of each year	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
204 - % of appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse planning permission. (figures have resulted in additional award in recent PDG)	11%	<25%	<25%	<25%
205 - Score against the quality of service check list. (Securing a greater score is dependent upon achieving permanent and continuing Design Advice, options for which are proving difficult but still being investigated and upgraded software from the supplier to enable applications to be monitored on line).	78%	83%	100%	100%
170a – The number of visits to/useages of LA funded or part funded museums per 1,000 population	574	583	635	699
170b – The number of those visits to LA funded museums that were in person per 1,000.	342	374	406	447
170c – The number of pupils visiting museums and galleries in organised school groups (including visits to schools)	291	375	450	450
219a – Total number of Conservation Areas in the LA area.	22	22	22	22
219b - % of Conservation Areas with an up to date character appraisal (Work almost completed. Tender required for remaining 50%)	50%	60%	100%	100%
219c - % of Conservation Areas with published management proposals.	0%	0%	0%	0%

Local Performance Indicators

Please use the following table

Local Indicator	Actual 2005/06	Target 2006/07	Target 2007/08	Target 2008/09
Retain market share of Building Control		65%	65%	65%
LPIs determined as part of the business re-engineering exercise will be included in future reports				

7. USEFUL CONTACTS

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