



East Northamptonshire Council

Scrutiny Committee - 17 June 2009

Development Control Improvement Plan Implementation

Summary

This report updates Members on the progress of the implementation of the Development Control Improvement Plan. In addition due to the anticipated poor out-turn performance for 2008/09 it considers future performance for all the main work areas in Development Control and concludes that there is likely to be a significant improvement.

Attachment(s)

1. Development Control Improvement Plan - Updated Version
 2. Graphs illustrating performance
 3. Results of customer satisfaction survey
 4. Detailed results of Member satisfaction survey
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1.0 Background

1.1 On 10 December 2007 the Policy and Resources Committee approved the Development Control Improvement Plan, including the creation of 4 additional posts and enhancements to the IT system (Minute 254 refers). It was resolved that progress against the Improvement Plan would be reviewed on an ongoing basis. A report was presented to Scrutiny Committee on 10 December 2008 (Minute 275 refers) Members resolved that:

(1) the progress made on the Development Control Service Improvement Plan be noted.

(2) the Committee be updated on progress in six months time.

1.2 The report highlighted that whilst some progress in the implementation of the Development Control Improvement Plan had been achieved it had been inhibited by recruitment issues. The second Principal Planning Officer (PPO) only commenced her employment in March 2009 and for the first time in over two years the Development Control team has a full complement of staff.

2.0 Review of the Improvement Plan

2.1 The Development Control Improvement Plan, presented to Scrutiny Committee in December 2008, has been reviewed and new comments have been added in bold, as shown in Appendix 1. Successes are noted and the requirement for further work outlined where it is needed for each outcome. Due to the recruitment issues noted above, effort has been concentrated on areas where the most significant improvements could be made in terms of the customer and Member experience.

3.0 Customer, Member and Parish and Town Council Satisfaction Levels

3.1 The main thrust of the Improvement Plan was to provide a higher quality of service rather than just meeting national performance targets for processing planning applications. It therefore contains a number of outcomes related to the relationship with customers, Members and Town and Parish Councils.

3.2 A customer satisfaction survey was carried out in May 2009. The headline results of

this are set out below, and the detail is included in Appendix 3:

- 87% of customers satisfied with service from Development Control and only 8% think it has got worse
- 98% satisfied with the duty desk service
- 18% think development control has improved in the last 6 months.

3.3 Overall the satisfaction levels are high. The target was for 85% of customers to be satisfied overall and this has been achieved. It represents an improvement since the date of the BVPI survey in 2005 when 76% of customers were satisfied with the development control process (caution should however be exercised with this comparison as the questions in the two surveys were not identical).

3.4 There are areas that require improvement:

- Only 71% of customers thought we kept them informed enough during the processing of an application
- Only 74% were satisfied with the time taken

Both of these areas were affected by the workload and recruitment issues and it is anticipated that it should be possible to improve upon these areas in the future.

3.5 A Member satisfaction survey was also carried out in May 2009. The headline results of this are set out below, and the detail is included in Appendix 4:

- 94% of Members satisfied with service from Development Control
- 88% of Members would like to become more involved in the pre-application process
- 80% of Members preferred to be contacted by e-mail.

Members made a number of positive suggestions about how the service could be improved. The intention is that the survey will be repeated every 12 months so progress is continually monitored, however Members views on this would be welcomed.

3.6 Parish and Town Council satisfaction surveys will be carried out in September 2009.

3.7 The first Agents' Forum was held on 15 February 2008 and a second Agents Forum was held on 20 March 2009. Agents raised a number of detailed issues relating to the application and pre-application process and this useful feedback will feed into the work that we are doing to improve the service. For example, they advised that they wanted more contact during the processing of applications and that where possible we request amended plans rather than refuse an application. This will be addressed by ensuring timely validation (see paragraphs 4.1 and 4.2) and also by Officers working to the earliest decision dates for applications (see paragraph 4.7). Agents also expressed concern about the pre-application process. Improvements to this area have already been carried out and increased attention is being focused upon it (see section 5.0).

3.8 Work has been progressing on the revision to the Development Control Charter. This will now be finalised taking into account the results of the customer and Member Satisfaction Surveys.

4.0 Planning Applications

4.1 It is essential that the "validation" of an application (where an application is checked to ensure that we have accurate plans, adequate information and sufficient fee), is completed in a timely manner. The Improvement Plan therefore included a target; that applications be validated within 5 working days. Attached Graph 1 shows that whilst

problems were experienced in 2008, applications are now consistently being validated within the target time.

- 4.2 To ensure that there is resilience in the future we have looked at why the backlog built up and considered measures to address this in the future, including how individual parts of the process could be carried out by temporary staff. In addition, the next Agents' Forum, which is to be held in September 2009, will look at common problems with validation with the aim of reducing the number of invalid applications to provide more capacity in the overall team.
- 4.3 Once valid, an application is passed to a Case Officer who has either 8 or 13 weeks to deal with an application.
- 4.4 Graph 2 includes performance against national targets per quarter for the year 2008/09 and a prediction for the first quarter of 2009/10. Recruitment issues in 2008/09 meant that a backlog built up which took some time to address. For information graphs 3, 4 and 5 provide a more detailed breakdown and include performance figures for April and May 2009, which show a significant improvement compared to 2008/09.
- 4.5 We have started the new year very positively. On the whole, the backlog has been cleared. The two new technicians are now fully trained. Having two PPOs in post means that the case loads of Development Control Officers can be more actively managed and Officer workloads are at much more manageable levels (on average an officer currently has 20 applications on hand, compared to this time last year when officers had around 50 applications on hand).
- 4.6 Whilst the Development Control Improvement Plan only included an outcome related to major applications, due to the recruitment problems and performance issues which have been experienced, it has been necessary to focus on improving processing of all types of applications. More work is still required to improve the processing of major applications. There are also a number of major applications which have a resolution to grant planning permission from Development Control Committee and decisions are pending on the signing of S106 Agreements (for example, Wharf Road Higham Ferrers, Whitworths, Irthlingborough and the Hotel in Irthlingborough). Appendix 1 sets out what we have done in relation to major applications. We are currently working on a Protocol and legal services are investigating the use of external legal advice with costs passed on to the developer for Section 106 Agreements.
- 4.7 Our aim is to determine, where possible, applications by the earliest decision date (ie as soon as the statutory notice period has expired), or to contact an applicant/agent in sufficient time to allow us to request and process amendments. Both of these actions should help us to address concerns that were raised at the Agents' Forum and help us to improve our customer satisfaction levels.
- 4.8 Graph 6 does however show that the number of applications received has risen in the last few months. (This reflects the national pattern, as according to research ahead of official figures, applications rose by around 18% in March compared to February.) It is vital that we will be able to respond to the upturn in the economy when it comes. It is essential therefore that we continue to streamline our processes through the techniques of continuous improvement that we have implemented with the Council's business analyst. In addition, staff continuity (one of the outcomes identified in the Improvement Plan) is important as knowledge of the local area is a clear advantage when processing planning applications. The level of experience within the team at Development Control Officer level is now much better than at the start of the implementation of the Improvement Plan, and this higher level of experience, together with the experience of the PPOs should make it easier to respond to the upturn.

5.0 Pre-Application Process

- 5.1 Before formal planning applications are submitted we encourage applicants and agents to seek informal advice from us. The purpose of this is to ensure the submission of better quality applications which can be processed more quickly. There are two outcomes associated with this element of the development control process in the Improvement Plan.
- 5.2 Graph 7 illustrates our performance in relation to pre-applications against our local target. When the Improvement Plan was written it was estimated that less than 10% of pre-application queries were answered within 20 working days. Performance has thus shown a step change improvement.
- 5.3 There remain issues to address. One is how to involve Members in the pre-application process. A Protocol is being drafted, but will require very careful consideration. The possibility of charging for pre-application advice is also being investigated.

6.0 Appeals

- 6.1 There has been a significant increase in the number of appeals over the last year as Table 1 shows, which has added significantly to the workload of the team.

Table 1 : No. of appeals received since 2006

Year	No of appeals
2006/ 2007	35
2007/2008	34
2008/2009	59

The reasons for this are unclear. It could be linked to the changing economic climate in that applicants have more time to appeal or they feel they have no other option.

- 6.2 We have not been refusing any more applications, as Table 2 demonstrates.

Table 2- Percentage of applications refused

Year	No. of apps	No. of apps refused	%
2006/2007	979	186	18%
2007/2008	845	200	24%
2008/2009	870	167	19%

- 6.3 The table below shows our success rate for appeals.

Table 3- Council's performance in relation to appeals by appeal type

April 2006- March 2009

Appeal Type	Allowed		Dismissed		Withdrawn	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Public Inquiry	1	7%	6	40%	8	53%
Hearing	10	59%	6	35%	1	6%
Written Representation	41	43%	52	54%	3	3%
Total	52	41%	64	50%	12	9%

There used to be a national BVPI target for appeals. The target was 40%, i.e. that

the number of appeals allowed should not increase beyond 40%.

- 6.4 Table 4 shows appeal decisions divided into delegated and Committee decisions. Whilst there have been more appeals allowed that were delegated decisions, the success rate of appeals against committee decisions is lower. This could however just be a reflection of the fact that it is often the controversial and more finely balanced cases that are considered by the Development Control Committee.

Table 4 Council's performance in relation to appeals by decision type

April 2006- March 2009

Decision Type	Appeal Allowed		Appeal Dismissed		Appeal Withdrawn	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Delegated	34	36%	52	55%	8	9%
Committee with recommendation	14	54%	11	42%	1	4%
Committee decision against officer advice	4	57%	1	14%	2	29%
Total	52	41%	64	50%	11	9%

- 6.5 More appeals have been allowed within East Northamptonshire than in the other Districts in North Northamptonshire as Table 5 shows. It is not however clear why this is the case.

Table 5-: Appeal Performance in North Northamptonshire

Authority	Appeals Allowed 2006/07		Appeals Allowed 2007/08		Appeals Allowed 2008/09	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
ENC	12	34%	16	47%	24	41%
Corby	2	40%	2	17%	Not available	
Wellingborough	5	56%	7	39%	5	38%
Kettering	17	49%	17	44%	28	21%

- 6.6 Whilst it would be desirable not to have any appeals the reality is that there will always be occasions when an applicant's proposal is unacceptable to the Council. Either because the principle of the proposal is contrary to policy, or because the applicant is unwilling to amend a proposal in an attempt to make it acceptable.
- 6.7 Work is being progressed with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Development Control Committee in relation to appeals. We are looking at whether additional evidence can be provided for appeals and the potential for Members to be provided with the opportunity to input their local knowledge into the process. A report will be presented to the Development Control Committee to explain the procedure in more detail by September 2009. The Scrutiny Committee's views would however be welcomed on whether we should have a session for all Members in relation to the basis on which decisions can be made and how appeals are handled.

7.0 Requests regarding whether planning permission is required

- 7.1 We respond to letters querying whether planning permission is required for proposed work. The target is for all such requests to be replied to within 10 working days. Graph 8 illustrates our performance.
- 7.2 This is an area of work which was not captured explicitly in the Improvement Plan as

at the time there were no issues in relation to performance. When the Government changed the legislation recently we immediately updated our householder advice leaflet. Following this change to the legislation a number of Councils no longer provide a free advice service regarding whether a proposal requires planning permission (as it is possible to make a formal application for this purpose for which a fee is payable). The potential implementation of an expert system to allow customers to “self serve” in relation to this was an outcome in the Improvement Plan which needs to be progressed.

8.0 Enforcement

8.1 An Enforcement Improvement Plan was endorsed by the Performance Committee on 4 September 2006. The actions in this have been completed apart from the finalisation of the updated Enforcement Policy, which was put on hold pending the introduction of the new condition monitoring system. This is now up and running and is being co-ordinated by the new Compliance and Monitoring Officer. The Enforcement Policy has now been re-written and will need to be presented to the Development Control Committee for approval by September 2009.

9.0 Conclusion

9.1 It is envisaged that performance in relation to applications and national performance targets will significantly improve over the next year. The main risk however still lies with major applications

9.2 Whilst a significant amount of progress has been made with the DC Improvement Plan there is still work to be done. It should be possible to complete the remaining tasks over the timespan of the Improvement Plan, which was a two year period, ending December 2009. However, it is likely that new work will come forwards as a result of the recent Killian Pretty Review of Planning.

10.0 Recommendation

10.1 Members are recommended to note the progress made to date and request a further progress report in three months.

Implications:		
Corporate Outcomes or Other Policy/Priority/Strategy		
Good Quality of Life	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Good Reputation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Good Value for Money	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	High Quality Service Delivery <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Effective Partnership Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong Community Leadership <input type="checkbox"/>
Effective Management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Knowledge of our Customers and Communities <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other:		<input type="checkbox"/>
Decision(s) would be outside the budget or policy framework and require full Council approval		<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial	There are no financial implications at this stage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	There will be financial implications – see paragraph	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is provision within existing budget	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may give rise to additional expenditure at a later date	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Decisions may have potential for income generation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk Management	An assessment has been carried out and there are no material risks	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Material risks exist and these are recorded at Risk Register Reference – 105,109,237 inherent risk score - residual risk score -	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff	There are no additional staffing implications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Additional staff will be required – see paragraph	<input type="checkbox"/>

Equalities and Human Rights	There will be no impact on equality (race, age, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation) or human rights implications <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
	There will be an impact on equality (see categories above) or human rights implications – see paragraph <input type="checkbox"/>				
Legal	Power: Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:					
Person Originating Report: Sue Wheatley - Development Control Manager - sjwheatley@east-northamptonshire.gov.uk					
Date: 29 May 2009					
CFO		MO		CX	

(Committee Report Normal Rev. 19)

Development Control Improvement Plan – Review of Progress June 2009

Note- Comments in bold are the new comments, the other comments were those reported to Scrutiny Committee in December 2008.

Outcome	Measure	Current Performance	Target	Actions	Comments
Improved Member experience of Development Control Process	% of Members satisfied with the Development Control Process	Not known	85% - 2008	Undertake training of DC staff on customer service and negotiation techniques. Mar 2008.	<p>All but 4 Members of the Development Control Committee spent a day in the office. The feedback received from Members was very positive.</p> <p>Members and Officers attended a course (“Managing Relationships”) facilitated by consultants in September 2008. The purpose of the course was to strengthen further the already positive working relationships between Officers and Members and to build upon this success. The consultants indicated that the relationship and level of trust between Members and Officers was far better at East Northamptonshire Council than at many other Councils where they had worked. The day included team working between Members and Officers and enabled barriers to be broken down and relationships to be built up. At the end of the day an Action Plan was agreed and work has already commenced on the key elements of this plan.</p> <p>Five members of staff have now undertaken customer service training and further training will take place in the New Year. The whole team recently attended an externally facilitated course in respect of negotiation techniques.</p>

Appendix 1

					<p>The next step in relation to this outcome is to carry out a survey of Members to establish their level of satisfaction with the service, which will be done in March/April 2009.</p> <p>A Member satisfaction survey was carried out in May 2009. The key results are included within the report to Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>A number of actions were identified following the Member/Officer seminar and these are being implemented and work is being progressed with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Development Control Committee. One project relates to improving communication. Now that we know the new structure of the Development Control Committee we intend to allocate each Member a specific member of the development control team to contact for general issues, we are going to provide members of DC Committee with photographs of the team and produce a flow chart of who does what. We also want to find out Members preferred communication style.</p> <p>How to involve Members better in the pre-application process is being investigated (see pre-application outcome).</p>
Improved customer experience of the Development control process	% of customers satisfied with the Development Control process	76% - 2005	85% -2008	Undertake training of DC staff on customer service and negotiation techniques. Mar	Improvements to the on- line "Public Access" system have been carried out to make it much easier for customers to view planning applications on-line. Initial work has also been carried out on the website and further work is currently underway as part of the

Appendix 1

				<p>2008.</p> <p>Provision of timely feedback to applicants throughout the application process, through development of Caps 'public access' and increased level of engagement with applicants during the process. Ongoing</p> <p>Update and re launch Development Control Customer Charter, June 2008.</p> <p>Introduce an agents' forum – link to launch of 1APP in January 2008. Improve, with customer contact centre, the duty planner service.</p> <p>Improve the user friendliness of the</p>	<p>Aiming for Excellence (A4E) "Website Improvement Project"</p> <p>An Agents' Forum was held on 15 February 2008 to launch the new national planning application forms (known as 1APP) together with the Council's Local Requirements, which sets out the information that an applicant is required to submit with an application. A further Agents' Forum is to be held in February 2009 which will look at common problems with the submission of applications to help our customers ensure that all the correct information is provided, so that applications can be progressed quickly.</p> <p>Regular liaison is held between the planning team and the customer contact centre, to ensure a high quality duty planner service, and the provision of the further elements of customer service training for the team, as set out above, will bring further improvements.</p> <p>Due to resource issues it has not always been possible for Officers to engage with applicants and neighbours as much as they would have liked, neither has it been possible to update the Development Control Customer Charter. This work is scheduled now to be completed by March 2008.</p> <p>Success against this outcome will be measured by the planned Planning Service satisfaction survey which will look at customer satisfaction with the range of work of the planning section. This is due to be carried out in 2009/10.</p>
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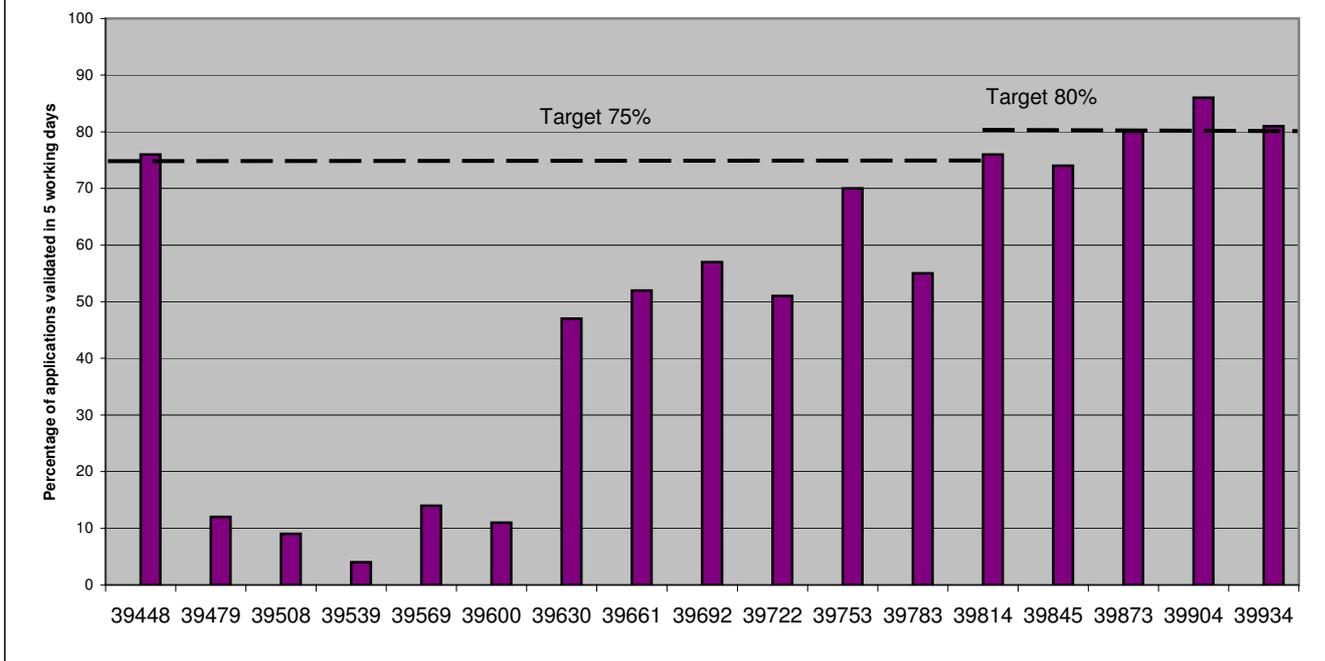
Appendix 1

				<p>planning web site. Jan 2008</p>	<p>A further Agents Forum was held on 20 March 2009. This included a presentation from the Condition Monitoring Officer, ENC Waste and the Police. In addition, the Agents were asked to identify how, in their view, we could improve development control. Agents Forums are to be held regularly and the next one is to be in September 2009.</p> <p>A customer satisfaction survey was carried out in May 2009. The key results are included within the report to Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Work has started on the revised DC Charter and will be finalised once the results of the customer satisfaction survey are known.</p>
<p>Increased ability of customers to self service</p>	<p>% of permitted development enquiries dealt with through 'Expert Enquiry' system</p>	<p>0%</p>	<p>10% 2008 15% 2009 25% 2010</p>	<p>Introduction of CAPS Expert Enquiry System. June 2008. This will require completion of uniform constraints project.</p>	<p>It was planned to introduce an Expert Enquiry System by June 2008 to enable customers to check on-line whether planning permission would be required for their development. However, the Government advised that it would be making significant changes to "permitted development" rights (the types of development which do not require the submission of a formal planning application) and therefore this project was put on hold pending their implementation. On October 1st the Government introduced these changes and it should now be possible to progress this project. However, the Planning Advisory Service</p>

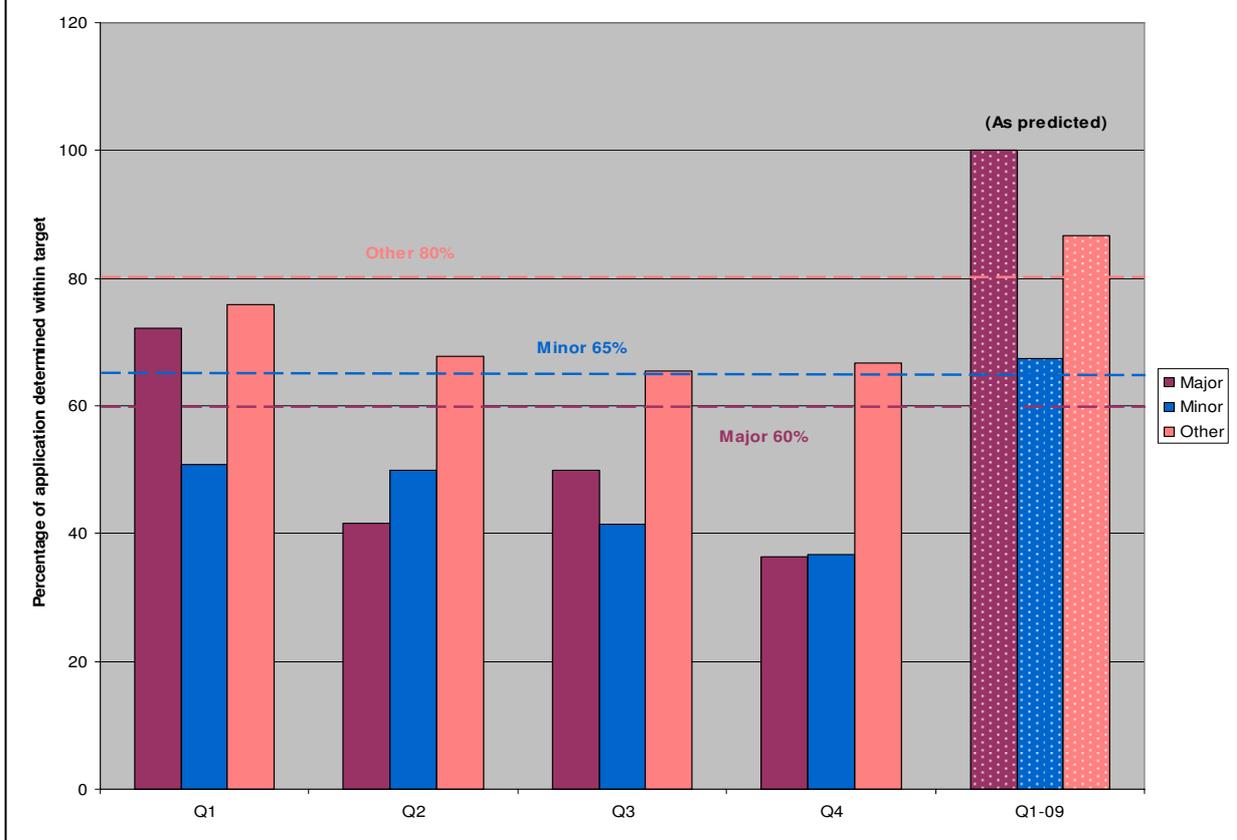
Appendix 1

					<p>(part of the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government) will first need to update the Expert System.</p> <p>Background work in preparation for this has already been carried out with IT. Constraints effecting development are to be included within the Planning Application system (Uniform) rather than a separate system, from the start of next year.</p> <p>The new constraint system using the planning applications system has now been implemented Work is however still required to implement an expert system to deal with enquiries regarding whether planning permission is required.</p>
Improvement to working arrangements with Town and Parish Councils	% of Town/Parish Councils' satisfied with the level of service provided	No quantified information	80% 2009	More proactive relationship. Closer liaison. Attendance at more Town and Parish Council meetings. Regular training sessions.	<p>Training in the planning process was provided, by external consultants, for Town and Parish Councils in October 2007, and this can be built upon in the future in association with the County Association (NCALC).</p> <p>The Head of Planning Services has attended a number of meetings throughout the course of the year as part of the "Improving Communication with Parish Councils" programme. Other Officers have also attended Parish Council meetings in Tansor, Yarwell, Ringstead and Raunds.</p> <p>A meeting with the Town Councils was held in September to discuss ways of further improving arrangements for their engagement in the negotiation and execution of S106 Agreements. This meeting was</p>

Graph 1 - Validation of Applications by Month 2008-2009

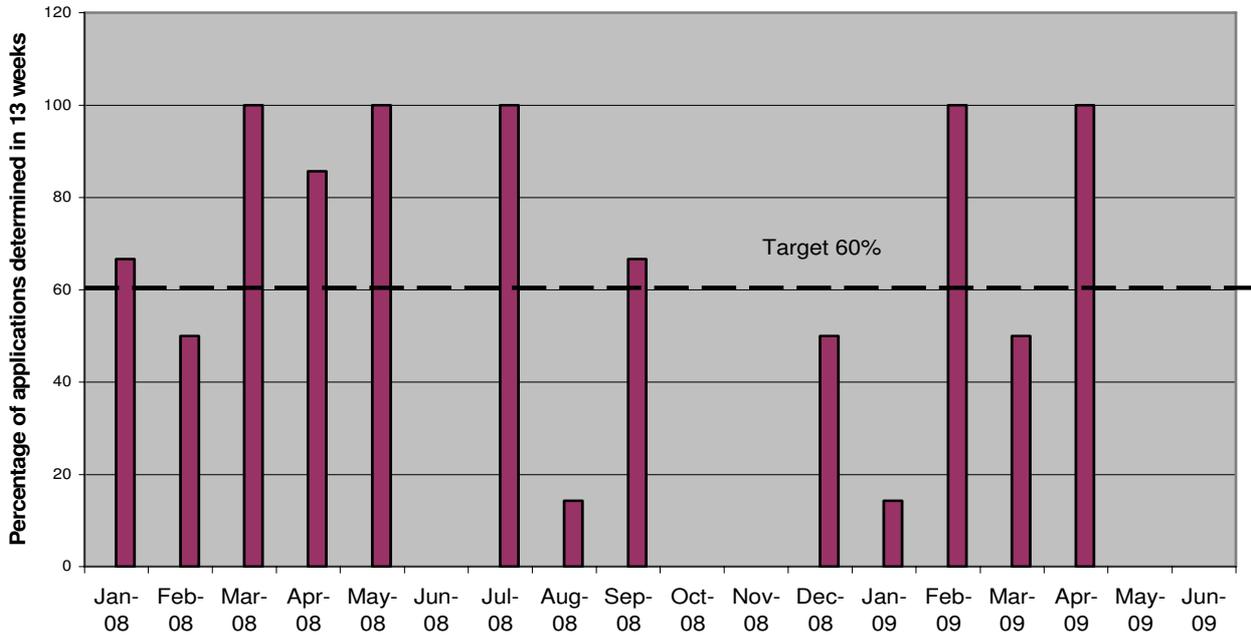


Graph 2 - Quarterly figures 2008-2009 and Prediction for First Quarter 2009-2010



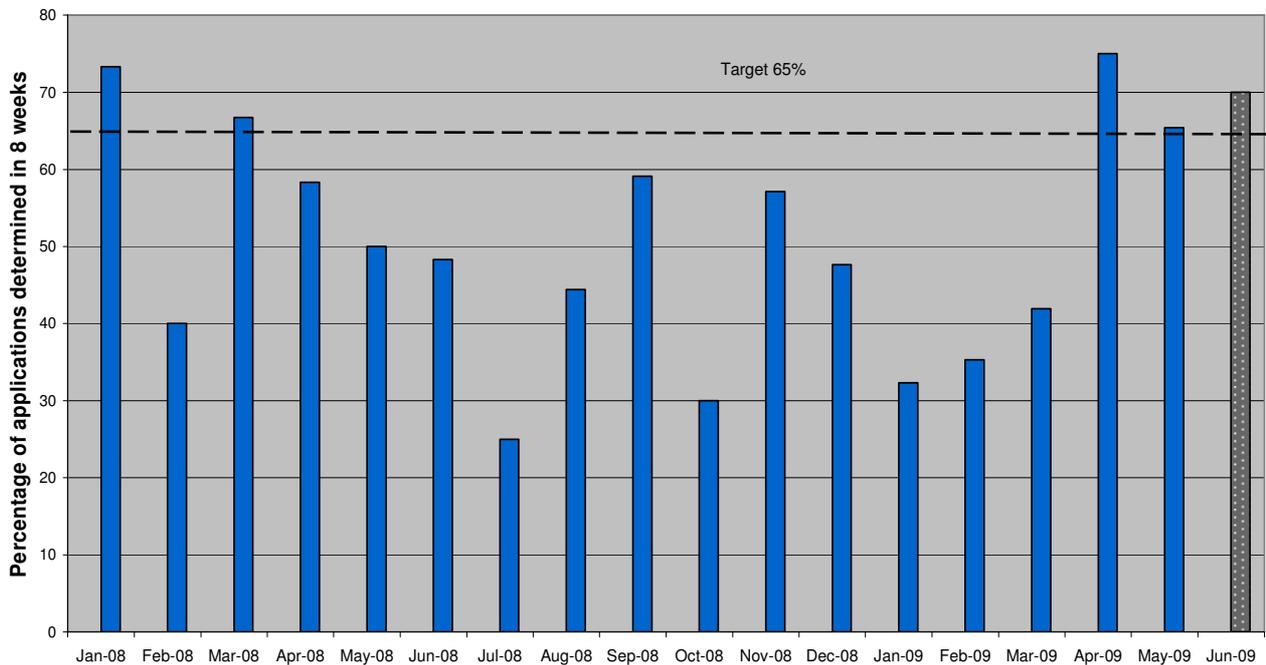
Graph 3 - Determination of Major Applications by month 2008-2009

(June figures are predicted)



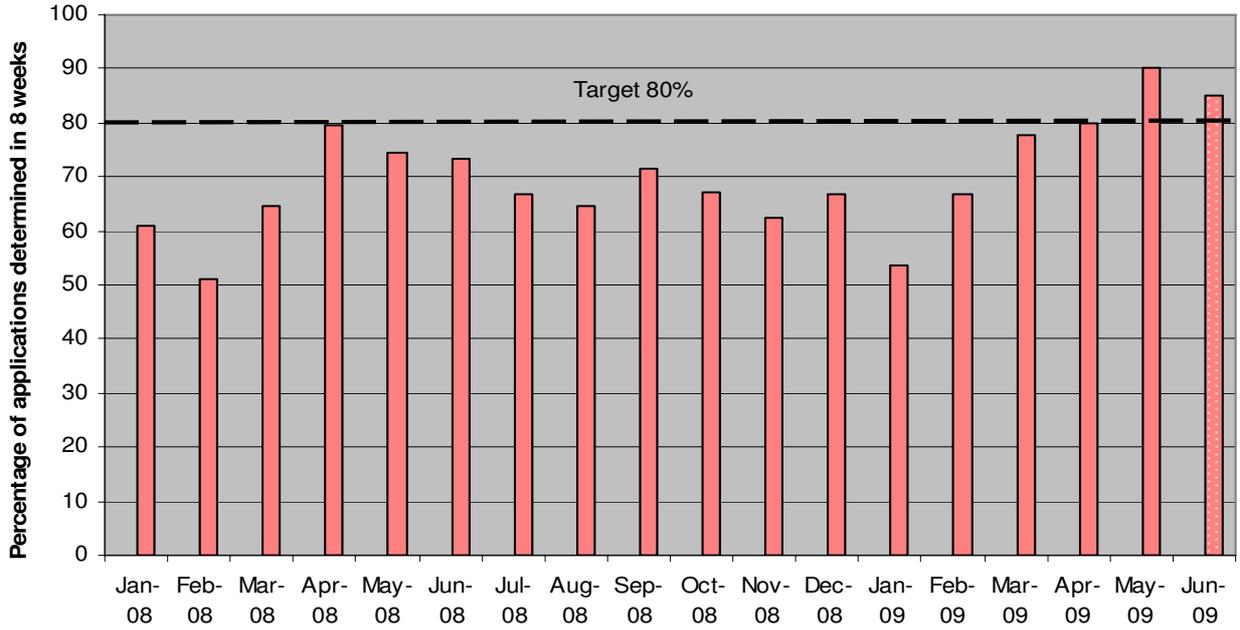
Graph 4 - Determination of Minor Applications by month 2008-2009

(June figures are predicted)

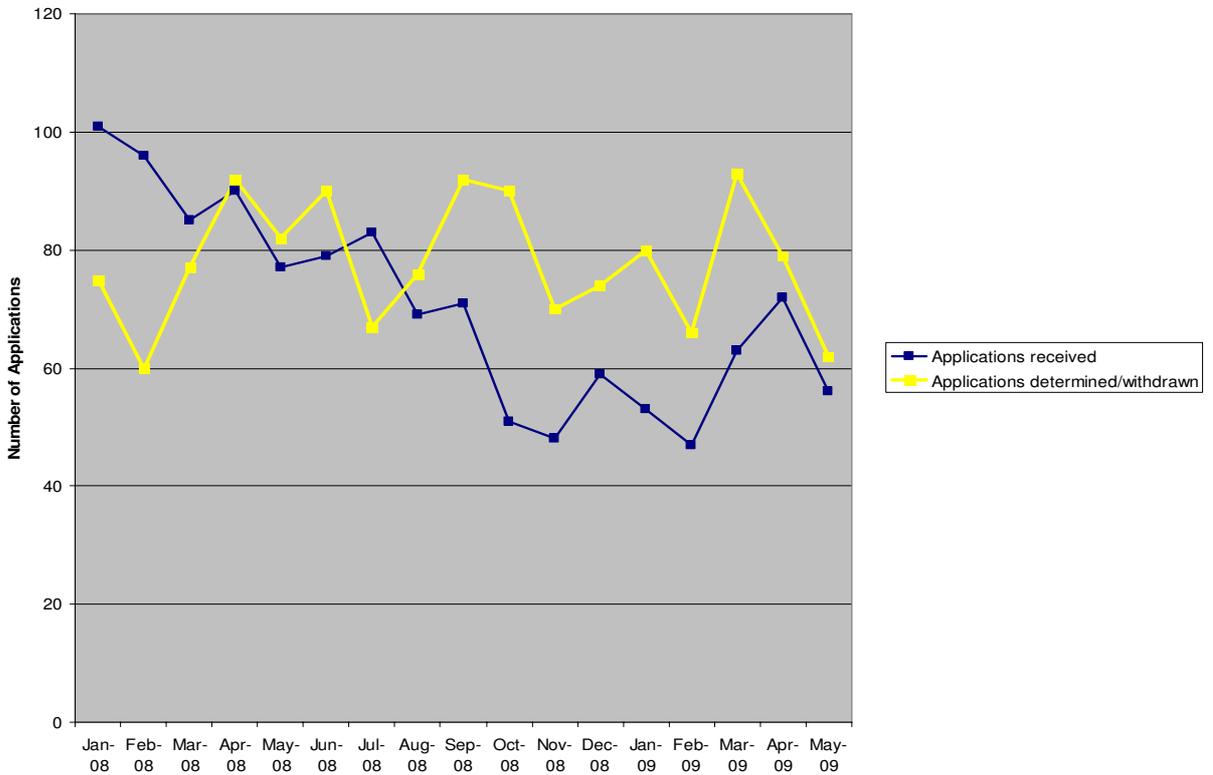


Graph 5 - Determination of Other Applications by Month 2008-2009

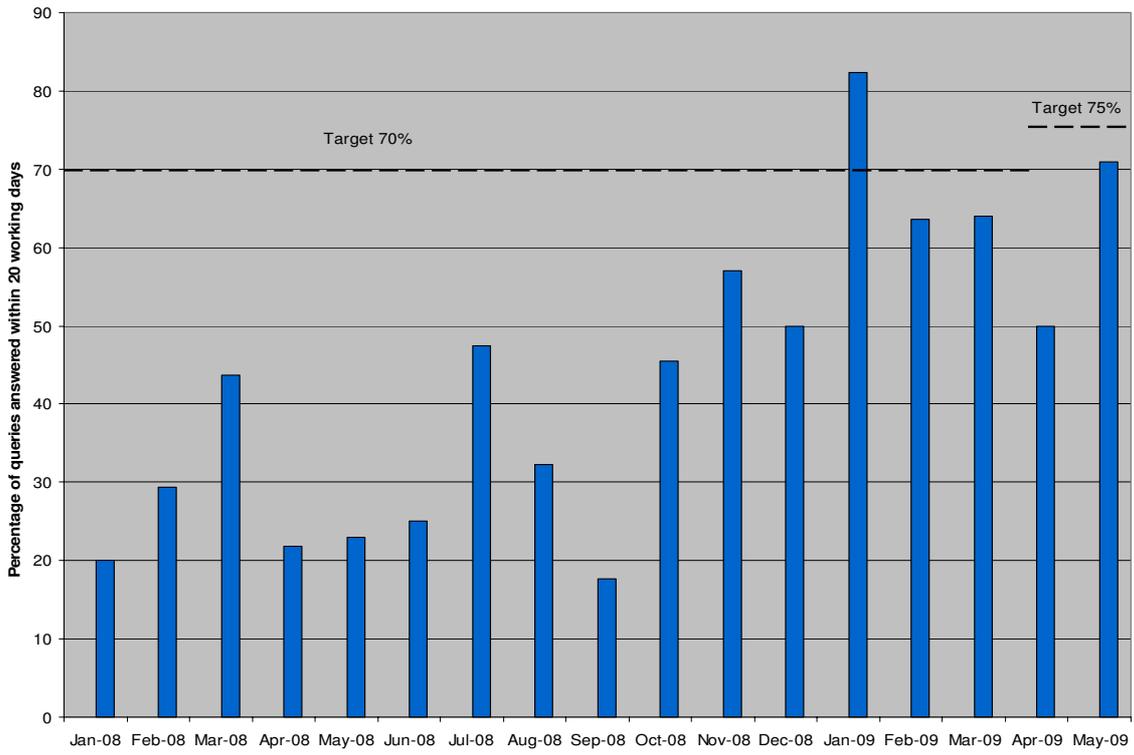
(June figures are as predicted)



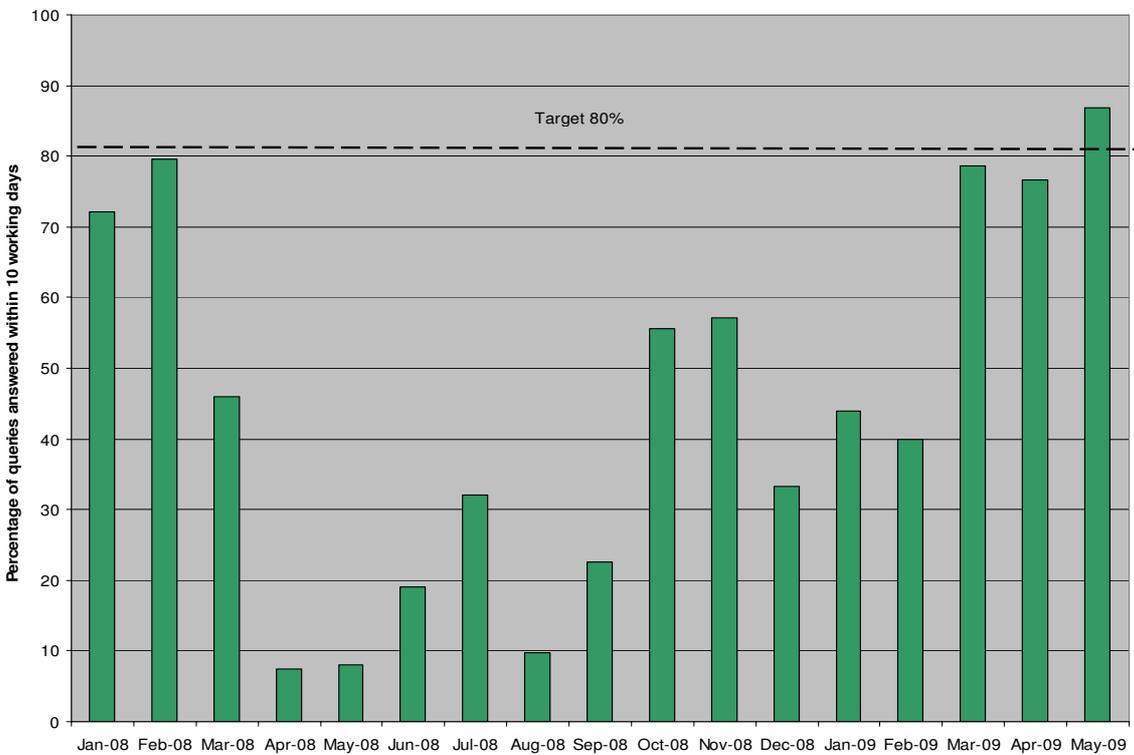
Graph 6 - Applications Received, Determined and Withdrawn by Month

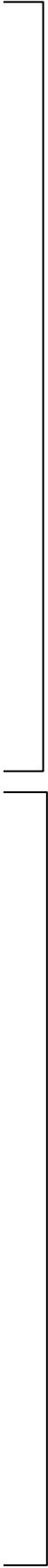


Graph 7 - Preapplication Performance Figures by Month 2008-2009



Graph 8 - Permitted Development Performance Figures by Month 2008-2009





Detailed Results of Customer Satisfaction Survey May 2009

General

- 87% of customers satisfied with service from development control (overall 32% very satisfied; 13% fairly satisfied and 42% satisfied)
- 98% satisfied with the duty desk service (overall 29% very satisfied; 11% fairly satisfied and 58% satisfied)
- 74% think the service has remained the same; 18% think that it has improved and 8 % think that the service has got worse in the last 6 months.
- 39% like to communicate by e-mail; 34% by telephone; 21% face to face and only 3% by post (other 3%)

Planning Application - Validation process

- Availability of staff – 94 % satisfied (overall 16% very satisfied; 39% fairly satisfied and 39% satisfied)
- Helpfulness of staff – 94% satisfied (overall 34% very satisfied; 26% fairly satisfied and 34% satisfied)
- Validation process- 81% satisfied (overall 21% very satisfied; 21% fairly satisfied and 39% satisfied)
- Kept informed – 84% satisfied (overall 18% very satisfied; 13% fairly satisfied and 53% satisfied)
- Validation Checklist – 89% satisfied (overall 24% very satisfied; 8% fairly satisfied and 58% satisfied)

Planning Application – Processing by Case Officer

- Availability of Staff – 82% satisfied -(overall 16% very satisfied; 8% fairly satisfied and 58% satisfied)
- Helpfulness of staff – 91% satisfied (overall 18% very satisfied; 34% fairly satisfied and 39% satisfied)
- Process time – 74% satisfied (overall 21% very satisfied; 16% fairly satisfied and 37% satisfied)
- Kept informed – 71 % satisfied (overall 16% very satisfied; 8% fairly satisfied and 47% satisfied)
- Access to information – 87% satisfied (overall 13% very satisfied; 3% fairly satisfied and 71% satisfied)

Pre-Application Process

- 63% request pre-application advice (of those who didn't seek pre-application advice this was not due to the quality of this advice provided)
- 89% think the Council should not charge for this advice

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL – MEMBER SURVEY MAY 2009

Results of Survey

General

- 94% of Members were satisfied with the service from Development Control. (Overall 35% very satisfied; 41% fairly satisfied and 18% satisfied)
- 84% of Development Control Committee Members were satisfied with the service received (17% very satisfied; 50% fairly satisfied and 17% satisfied)
- 100% of other Members were satisfied with the service received (46% very satisfied; 36% fairly satisfied and 18% satisfied)

Comments on what we do well

- The Duty Planner is a good idea
- Applications determined on time
- Officers available for liaison when required
- Good application to large caseloads
- Officers open and honest with information
- Positive help
- Day to day procedures appear efficient

Suggested Improvements

- Response times to Members queries without being prompted by a reminder
- Better plans available to Members
- More consultation with Town Councils
- That recommendations should not be made if the decision is not obvious
- Listening to the local knowledge of Members
- Pressing NCC Highways for more detail in their recommendations for addition to reports
- Alerting Members to contentious issues at an early stage
- More Member involvement in the pre-application process and with appeals
- Providing more information on appeals
- Sometimes non Development Control Members felt they don't get a say
- More detail in the Development Control minutes and the inclusion of maps with committee papers
- Better advice to Members

Contact

- 35% of Members contacted the Development Control Team on a frequent basis (67% for DC Members and 18% for other Members)

- 59% of Members contacted the Development Control Team on an occasional basis (33% for DC Members and 63% for other Members)
- Overall 80% of Members preferred to be contacted by e-mail
- 50% of contact overall was made with the Case Officer.
- 28% of Members preferred to contact Head of Planning Services and 10% Development Control Manager
- Only 8% made contact with the Duty Planner

Improved Member Involvement

- 88% of Members would be interested in becoming more involved in the pre-application process (100% for DC Members and 82% for other Members)
- Members were also interested in further information about:
 - Appeals
 - Progress of Major Applications
 - Planning Regulations
 - General Planning Information
 - The Development Control Improvement Plan

Development Control Office Visits

- 100% of DC Members would be interested in visiting the office again
- Members found the following of most interest
 - The role of the Planning Technician and validation
 - The amount of work involved for one application
 - Government guidelines
 - Getting to know each other

Further suggestions from Members

- Training sessions
- Officers to have tours of Wards
- Increased input into Appeal Statements
- Advise Members of delegated decisions before final approval
- Improved plans on website
- Inclusion in the pre-application process
- At Committee, provide technical/policy facts only and do not try to influence Members in reaching a decision