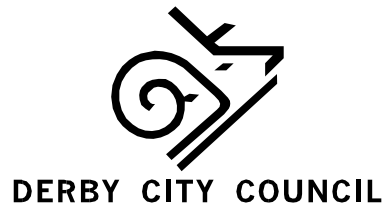


APPENDIX 2



Best Value Review of Development

Final Report and Improvement Plan

Derby's Approach to Best Value

Best Value Reviews help Derby City Council find out how good our services really are. They are an opportunity for us to tackle the real issues facing our services. We use them to identify the things we need to do to deliver real service improvements in the future.

Year 4 reviews started in April 2003 and have followed a format, which addresses issues raised by the Audit Commission in Best Value inspections as well as by the Improvement and Development Agency - IDeA.

This report aims to capture the key elements of the review, concentrates on the issues identified during the scoping phase and considers options to address these issues in the future.

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

This is the Final Report and Improvement Plan of the Best Value Review of the Development service operated with the Development Division of the Department of Development & Cultural Services.

The Development service is composed of the Building Consultancy & Development Control services which are headed by separate business unit managers.

The two sections already work closely together, but, in the interests of improving upon the service that the two units provide, particularly to the development industry and to those who are affected by new development, we wish to adopt a more integrated approach to service delivery.

Both business units are located at Roman House, Friar Gate and are supported by administrative staff in Business Support, accommodated in the same premises.

2. Scope of the review

The scope of the review was centred round six key issues across the two services. These issues were derived from discussions with a range of stakeholders who are involved with the Development service. They were also risk-assessed by the stakeholders and the Review Team.

3. Challenge

Through the means of a Challenge Event, attended by the Review Team and stakeholders, the service was challenged in terms of its purpose, aims, objectives, why it is provided, who has access to it, why we should continue to provide it and in response to other questions on a Challenge Checklist.

As well as challenging the service itself, we undertook a challenge of the key issues; identifying those matters which we felt were of concern, against a background of the need to improve service delivery. Once these were identified, we went on to specify how we felt the issues could be resolved.

4. Consultation

Consultation was an integral part of the review process in that stakeholders were involved in scoping the review and challenging the service. However, more specific consultation took place - by questionnaire survey of customers of the Development service, questions put to the Derby Pointer Panel and by feedback from a Reflector group of the Panel. In so far as results and responses applied to the six Key Issues, these informed the Options Appraisal.

5. Comparison

The six key issues formed the focus of our Comparison Event, where we identified a substantial list of what we regarded as good practices operated by other Local Authorities. The only key issue on which we had some difficulty in examining good practice from other authorities was sustainability of new development.

Comparison served, in part, as the bedrock for generating options for improvement.

6. Competition

Using the information we obtained from our baseline assessment and the outcomes of challenging, consulting and comparing, the Review Team subjected the Development service to scrutiny under seven options for future service delivery. The advantages/disadvantages associated with each option varied, depending on whether we were considering the Building Consultancy or Development Control sections. We felt we had no choice but to consider the two arms of the service in this way, for this particular purpose, because Building Consultancy already operates in a competitive climate, whereas Development Control does not.

The outcome of this exercise was instrumental in our identifying the need to examine charges for non-statutory elements of our workload and the 'review-within-a-review' of how the Building Control service is provided, both being put forward in the Improvement Plan.

7. Options Appraisal

With the benefit of the service analysis we had undertaken, we identified a series of key options for action which would improve the services operated by Building Consultancy and Development Control. The appraisal looked at options under the six key issues.

How users access the Development service...

- Integrating administrative support to the Building Control function to the team.
- Better electronic means of accessing or delivering our service.

Securing more effective consultation with the users, the public and stakeholders...

- Improving the means by which we liaise with our statutory, and non-statutory, consultees, especially electronically and the ways in which we notify and advise the public, especially on planning applications.

How the service is marketed and publicised...

- Better information provided to stakeholders about the various aspects of our joint service, centred particularly round a formalised Development Team Approach to pre-application discussion, a Marketing Strategy and an award scheme for high standards of development. We feel an award scheme could underpin a strategy.

The decision-making process in terms of speed, quality and costs...

- Having appropriate staffing levels to do the casework.
- Flexibility, if in competition with the private sector.
- Maintaining service level standards, against those of other service providers.
- Offering written guidance so that applicants can submit applications that stand a better chance of approval.
- Seeking our users' views and feeding these back into service improvements.
- Adopting and maintaining procedural standards.
- Charging for work we are not statutorily obliged to do.

Sustainability of new development...

- Adopt a proactive stance to develop best practice in encouraging developers' awareness of the sustainability agenda in development projects.

Monitoring of development...

- A better site inspection regime.
- Revisiting developments when implemented and learning from successes or failures, measured against aspirations - in co-operation with those living or working there.
- Closer attention to compliance, overall, with approvals and with conditions that have been imposed.
- Raising awareness of other legislation, which we have no powers to implement but which impinges on people's lives.

8. Improvement Plan

At the end of this report is the Improvement Plan. In it we specify what needs improving and how we intend to do this and measure and monitor the success of these improvements.

Introduction

1.1 Background to the review

The Building Consultancy and Development Control services have different functions to perform and they operate under different statutory provisions. They also share certain common ground, particularly in relation to the customers they serve, in particular the development sector of the local economy and those who are consulted on development proposals. Both come under the Development Division of the Department of Development and Cultural Services.

The Development Division wishes to place stronger emphasis on a more integrated approach to the control and implementation of development, in the broadest sense, and also the specific controls exercised in the interests of public safety, making access for disabled people better and the effective use of fuel, power and other resources.

It was decided to undertake a review of the Development Service drawing together the common threads in the work and objectives of both services and aiming to improve the service that we provide for the development sector and other shareholders.

The Building Consultancy provides building control services and disabled people's access advice to the Council and citizens of Derby. Building Consultancy also provides services to other sections and departments within the Council. The term building control covers a wide sphere of services including the core business of Building Regulations, public safety issues like dangerous structures, the licensing of sports grounds and access for disabled people.

The Council, acting as the Local Planning Authority, has a statutory duty to deal with all applications for planning permission and other types of consent submitted within its area. Since becoming a Unitary Authority in 1997, this duty also includes applications for mineral extraction and the use of land for the deposition of waste materials and related development. We have an obligation to deal with all applications that have been submitted in a valid form and with the appropriate, nationally set, fee.

1.2 Scope of the review

A Scoping Session was held on 17 February 2003 and involved around 50 stakeholders including Councillors, officers of the Review Team from various service units, and a range of external stakeholders and other agents who have a link with Development Control and Building Consultancy.

As part of the Scoping Session and at subsequent review team meetings, the key issues were identified. Key risks that were associated with each issue were also identified. These risks were assessed against the Council's risk assessment framework and their relative importance was measured against the impact on the following:

- community
- finance
- Council objectives
- organisation.

The key issues shown in Table 1 were presented to and approved by Cabinet on 1 April 2003. The key issues are listed showing the risks associated with each of them, from highest to lowest.

The methodology and key findings from the work completed under the 4C's, challenge, consult, compare and compete, are outlined in Sections 2-5. In Section six, Options Appraisal, each issue is considered in detail and proposed solutions identified and assessed against a number of key criteria.

Table 1 – Key issues and associated risks.

Key Issues	Risk Level 1 - highest 6 - lowest	Identified Risks	What would be affected
How users access the development service	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad public and media relations. • Dissatisfied customers. • Not meeting e-government agenda. • Inequality of access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community • community • Council objectives and new BVPI 205 • Council objectives
Securing more effective consultation with the users, the public and stakeholders	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer dissatisfaction. • Disproportionate influence by particular pressure groups. • Unrealistic expectations on the part of the public. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community • community • community
How the service is marketed and publicised	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in unauthorised development. • Loss of developments. • Business will go to the private sector. • Lack of understanding of the services available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community • Council objectives and BVPI's • finance • community
The decision-making process in terms of speed, quality and costs	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of planning delivery grant • Not meeting statutory duties and government agenda • Businesses could go to the private sector • Quick decisions that are not properly considered • Developer may take development to another authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finance • Council objectives • finance • organisation • Council objectives
Sustainability of new development	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unacceptable effects of development • Not meeting Local Agenda 21 policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council objectives • Council objectives
Monitoring of development	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased incidence of contraventions • Customer dissatisfaction • Increased number of claims • Increased incidence of unauthorised development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community • community • community • community

1.3 The current service

Because the Development Service is delivered by two business units, the nature of the respective services is best described separately.

Building Consultancy

1.3.1 Legislative Background

The Building Act 1984 which applies in England and Wales exists to ensure the Health and Safety of people in and around buildings. It also provides for energy conservation and for access and facilities for disabled people.

The Building Regulations define what amounts to building work, specify what is exempt, set out notification procedures and set out the requirements.

The Act introduced requirements in the Building Regulations couched in functional terms, these functional requirements being backed by Approved Documents that show one acceptable way of complying. Any other proposal made must be considered and could be accepted if they met the functional requirements.

The Act also introduced the possibility of private sector Approved Inspectors – AI's controlling building work. Thus, those wishing to carry out building work have the choice of going to a Local Authority or employing an Approved Inspector.

As a unitary authority the Council has, since April 1 1997, been responsible for the issuing of safety certificates for sports grounds under the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975 and the Fire Safety and Safety at Places of Sport Act 1987.

In Derby this involves Pride Park Stadium under the 1975 Act and a 'regulated stand' at Moorways under the 1987 Act.

1.3.2 What are Building Consultancy's statutory requirements?

Building control services can be provided by Local Authorities or by AI's. Prior to 1984 Local Authorities held a monopoly.

The enforcement aspect of building regulation work however remains exclusively within the local authority, and the Council has a duty to respond to reports of unauthorised work. Local authorities must also deal with contraventions referred to it by an AI's who has been unable to secure compliance. Local Authorities only can deal with applications to relax or dispense with regulations and applications for regularisation. Local authorities have to keep a register of all work by AI's. Unlike an AI, a local authority cannot turn away any work submitted to it.

There is no requirement to give pre-application advice, where customers can see if the work they are proposing requires them to submit a Building Regulation application.

Our service to the citizens of Derby however would become extremely difficult if we could not give them this basic help.

Providing advice to citizens, and those involved in the development process on inclusive design, and accessibility for disabled people is a vital function. There is however no statutory requirement upon the Council to provide this service. Advice is also provided to local service providers, and users on Disability Discrimination Act compliance.

Development Control

1.3.3 Legislative Background

The City Council has a statutory duty to determine all applications for planning permission and other types of consent, under the following primary pieces of legislation:

- the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- the Planning and Compensation Act 1991
- the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990.

There are also numerous Regulations governing the way that we undertake our duties.

The 1991 Act introduced a new section – 54A into the Town and Country Planning Act which means that we have a duty to determine applications in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Government Planning Policy Guidance affects planning control and this carries increasing weight in the recommendations that are made on planning applications.

In the interests of transparency and openness, it is now a requirement of Local Planning Authorities to give reasons for granting permission (with reference to relevant policies) as well as reasons for refusing.

1.3.4 Application Types

The Development Control and Land Searches Business Plan gives details of the types of applications dealt with by Development Control; in summary these are:

- full planning applications
- approval of reserved matters applications
- listed building consent applications
- conservation area consent applications
- applications to fell/prune trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order
- notifications to fell/prune trees in a Conservation Area not covered by a Tree Preservation Order
- advertisement consent applications
- notifications from telecommunications operators about telecommunication masts or other equipment
- applications for certificates of lawfulness
- applications for certificate of alternative development
- discharge of planning conditions.

1.3.5 Planning Enforcement

Much enforcement work is reactive, in the sense that we act upon complaints, mainly received from members of the public. In recent years we have adopted a more proactive approach to enforcement, especially in relation to monitoring compliance with conditions.

Planning enforcement can involve Officers attending court as witnesses when an offence has been committed in the following circumstances...

- Non-compliance with an enforcement notice or with a notice that makes it clear a condition of planning permission has been breached.
- Unauthorised works to a listed building, failure to comply with a listed building enforcement notice, unauthorised demolition of an unlisted building in a Conservation Area and failure to comply with a Conservation Area Enforcement Notice.
- Unauthorised works to trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order or failure to notify the Council of intent to do work to a tree in a Conservation Area.
- Displaying advertisements in contravention of the Advertisement Regulations.
- Contravention of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990.

1.3.6 Appeals

Appeals can be made to the First Secretary of State against refusal of planning permission or other types of consent, or against conditions imposed on permissions/consents. Enforcement notices can also be appealed against.

We have to substantiate the Council's decision in the form of a written statement, attendance at an informal hearing or by attendance at a public inquiry to present expert evidence.

1.3.7 Area Panels

Since the City Council's New Constitution came into operation, it has become apparent that the Development Control service has a part to play in reporting to the Area Panels. Officer presence at panels is usually with the purpose of explaining the background and nature of locally contentious planning proposals.

1.3.8 Publicity

We publicise planning applications in a number of ways:

- weekly list in the Derby Trader
- weekly list on all Council notice boards
- statutory press and site notices in relation to certain types of applications
- discretionary site notices
- individual letters to neighbouring properties.

We have made explanatory comments about a planning application and conveyed the decision on it by taped recorded message for the benefit of a visually impaired person.

All representations received, assuming they raise valid planning points, are taken into account, either by Officers under delegated powers or by Planning Control Committee before a decision is made.

1.4 Service Objectives

1.4.1 Building Consultancy

Our overall objective is to deliver high quality services at a competitive price. Our collective objectives are to retain existing customers, attract new customers, and widen our customer base.

Provide an improved service using the Development Team Approach - DTA, free pre-application advice, providing free advice to customers on the improvement of access for disabled people, both as good practice and to introduce new legislation to customers, consultation with our customers, partnerships, and quality assurance under ISO 9001-2000.

Ensure the provision of access for disabled people through compliance of Part M of the Building Regulations in relation to access and use of the built environment by disabled people.

Ensure provisions for health and safety within the built environment are met by:

- dealing with dangerous structures and demolitions
- enforcement of the Building Regulations.

1.4.2 Development Control

Our aim is to provide advice in a helpful, welcoming and responsive manner and by involving all appropriate players in pre-application discussion, adopting a Development Team Approach, particularly in relation to major projects.

The advice we give is intended to ensure that the future applicant is aware of what the chances are of an application being successful, what constraints may influence our decision and what the likely timescale is. This should make it easier for an applicant to submit an application that is more likely to be successful.

Once made, our aim is to be as efficient as possible in dealing with an application. Nevertheless, we need to balance the need of speed against the need for an outcome that has accrued added value, as appropriate, as a consequence of negotiations to improve the nature of a proposal.

We also aim to have involved all stakeholders in the process, even if the outcome is not in their favour.

In terms of efficiency, we aim to improve still upon our measurable service delivery and to meet both our locally set targets and those set by Central Government.

1.5 Service costs

1.5.1 Building Consultancy

The Building Regulations element of the budget is controlled through a 'Trading Account'. It allocates the appropriate costs to the building regulations function. This allows the costs and income to be accounted for separately and to demonstrate a reasonable correlation between income and Building Regulations related expenditure.

It should be noted that the Building Consultancy income is made up of two main elements being:

- income from building regulations
- income provided from the Council funds and allocated in order to provide other building control services, for which there is often no element of cost recovery.

Only a proportion of the Building Consultancy's costs relate to the fee-earning building regulation work. In line with guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Financing and Accounting – CIPFA, only those elements relating to fee-earning work are included in our building regulations trading account.

The income from charges must cover all building regulation expenditure attributed to the operation of the plan examination and inspection service and Local Authorities are required to achieve self-financing of their building regulation service. This means breaking even over a three-year rolling period.

It is not intended that Local Authorities would operate a subsidised service and, through this, pursue unfair competitive practices. However, the requirement to achieve self-financing is a further challenge, which Building Consultancy will face in the future.

The consultancy's disabled peoples access service is funded from the corporate centre, along with other functions such as dealing with dangerous structures, safety at sports grounds and demolitions.

In the Financial Year 2002-2003 we produced an operating surplus. This is largely due to staff shortage associated with recruitment and retention problems. In this Financial Year, 2003-2004, we expect to break even but this depends on the level of construction activity which will affect income and the ability to recruit staff.

Table 2 – How much does Building Consultancy Cost?

How much does Building Consultancy Cost?				
£'s	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Gross expenditure	719345	755501	685219	719536
Income	543246	518536	470240	550913
Net expenditure	176099	235964	214979	168623
Memo; included in gross exp				
Employee costs £	407400	425581	396526	434955
Support services £	220579	201085	181434	192452
Employee cost % of gross exp	57	56	58	60
Support services % of gross exp	31	27	26	27

A high percentage of overall budget relates to employee cost as the service is staff dependant.

Building Control is subject to a legal requirement to be self-financing within the area of fee-earning account, over a three-year rolling period. This requirement is being met.

Table 3 – Building Consultancy's current financial performance.

Current Financial Performance				
	1999/2000 £0000's	2000/2001 £0000's	2001/2002 £0000's	2002/2003 £0000's
Expenditure	496	504	467	505
Income	(543)	(500)	(451)	(543)
(Surplus)/deficit	(47)	4	16	(38)
Expenditure includes reinvestment in the service		14	19	16

The breakdown of the section costs is 70% fee earning and 30% non-fee earning. This split is based upon data gained from a timesheet exercise, which is over three years old.

1.5.2 Development Control

The budget for the Development Control service is split between Officer controlled and uncontrollable elements. The latter is mainly accounted for by support services. Certain employee and transport costs are also not within the control of the Head of Development Control and Land Searches.

Table 4 shows how gross expenditure has varied over a number of years and how, depending on income received from planning fees and other services, the net cost of the service has also varied significantly over the four years illustrated. In 2002/03, employee costs amounted to 50% of the service expenditure, followed by support services.

Table 4 – Development Control income and expenditure

	1999/2000 (£)	2000/2001 (£)	2001/2002 (£)	2002/2003 (£)
Expenditure	775,435	871,834	831,028	850,231
Income	(479,027)	(611,255)	(497,098)	(715,675)
Net Expenditure	296,408	260,579	333,930	134,556
Memo:				
Included in Gross Expenditure Employees Costs £	331,873	382,059	405,214	424,099
Support Services £	329,678	313,912	317,342	281,671
Employee Costs as Percentage of Gross Expenditure	43%	44%	49%	50%
Support Services as Percentage of Gross Expenditure	43%	36%	38%	33%

Income is received on the basis of fees that are set nationally by Central Government for the processing of planning applications. Development Control therefore has no autonomy over charge setting, unlike Building Consultancy. The fee chargeable for any particular category of application is prescribed by the Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications & Deemed Applications) Regulations 1989, as subsequently amended. There are some exemptions from fees but these are very infrequent.

Table 5 shows the dramatic increase in income received during 2002/03 compared to previous years. That year saw an extremely large increase in the number of planning applications received compared to the previous year. This partly accounted for the

increase in income, particularly in relation to householder applications. Additional income was also the result of Central Government setting an increase of 14% for planning fees during 2002/03.

Table 5 – Development Control – Income and Applications

	1999/2000 (£)	2000/2001 (£)	2001/2002 (£)	2002/2003 (£)
Income (Fees and Charges)	468,982	554,956	480,823	696,402
Applications (Fee Earning)	1,488	1,756	1,659	1,928
Per Application	315	316	289	361*

* 14% fee increase - £317 comparable

Fee Earning Applications	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003
Change of use	182	148	154
Householder	589	708	1,090
Major	64	55	57
Minor	921	748	627
	1,756	1,659	1,928

1.6 Organisation and Staff Structure

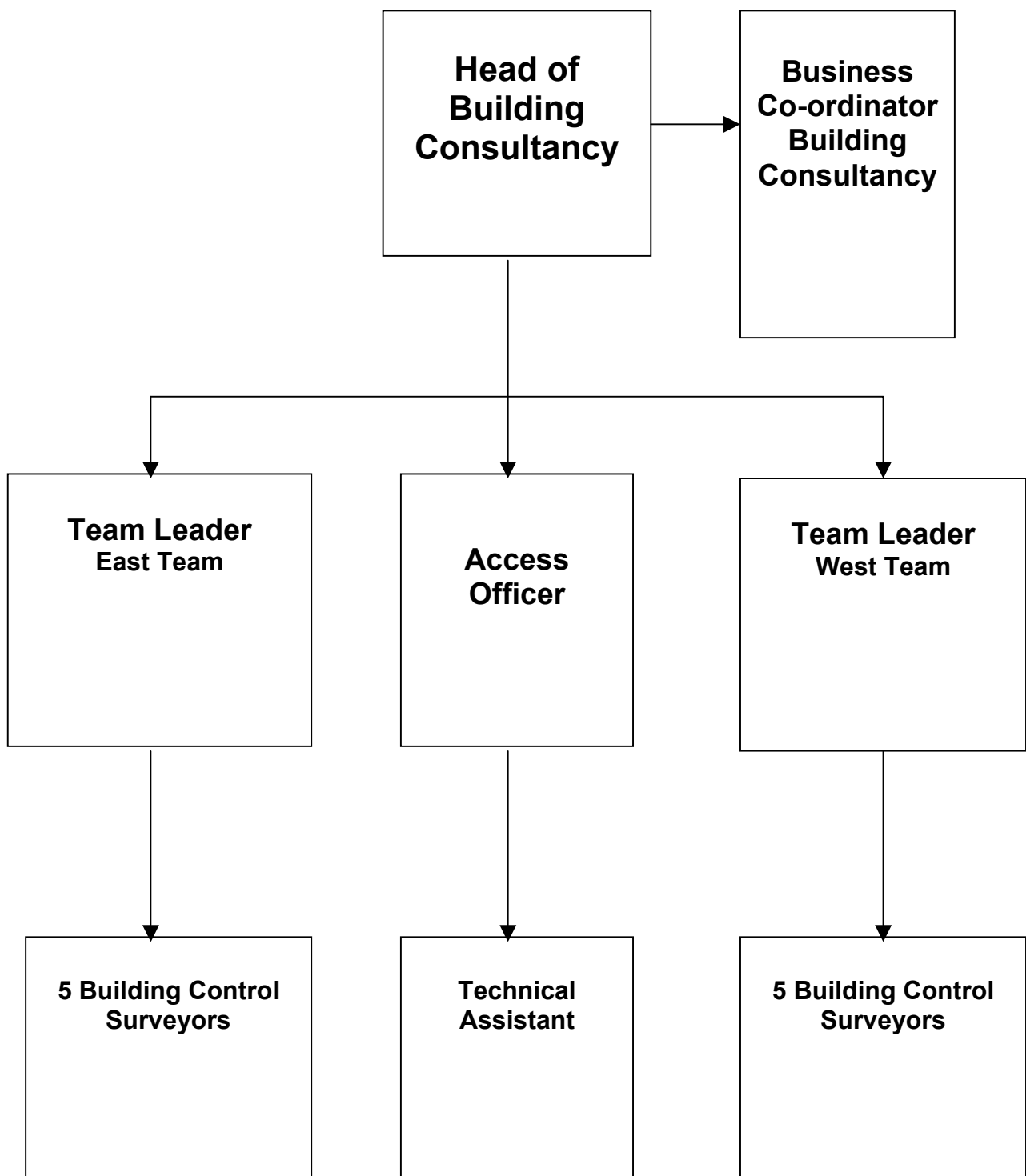
The two services that make up the Development service each have a head of service, responsible to the Assistant Director - Development, who in turn, to the Director of Development and Cultural Services' Administrative support is given by staff who are part of Business Support services.

1.6.1 Building Consultancy Organisation

The Building Consultancy has two teams of East and West, with an equitable level of work in each, in relation to the size of the team. The teams are divided into Ward areas. Technical assistance is provided mainly for the Access Officer.

A customer liaison/business support role exists in the team in the form of a Business Co-ordinator.

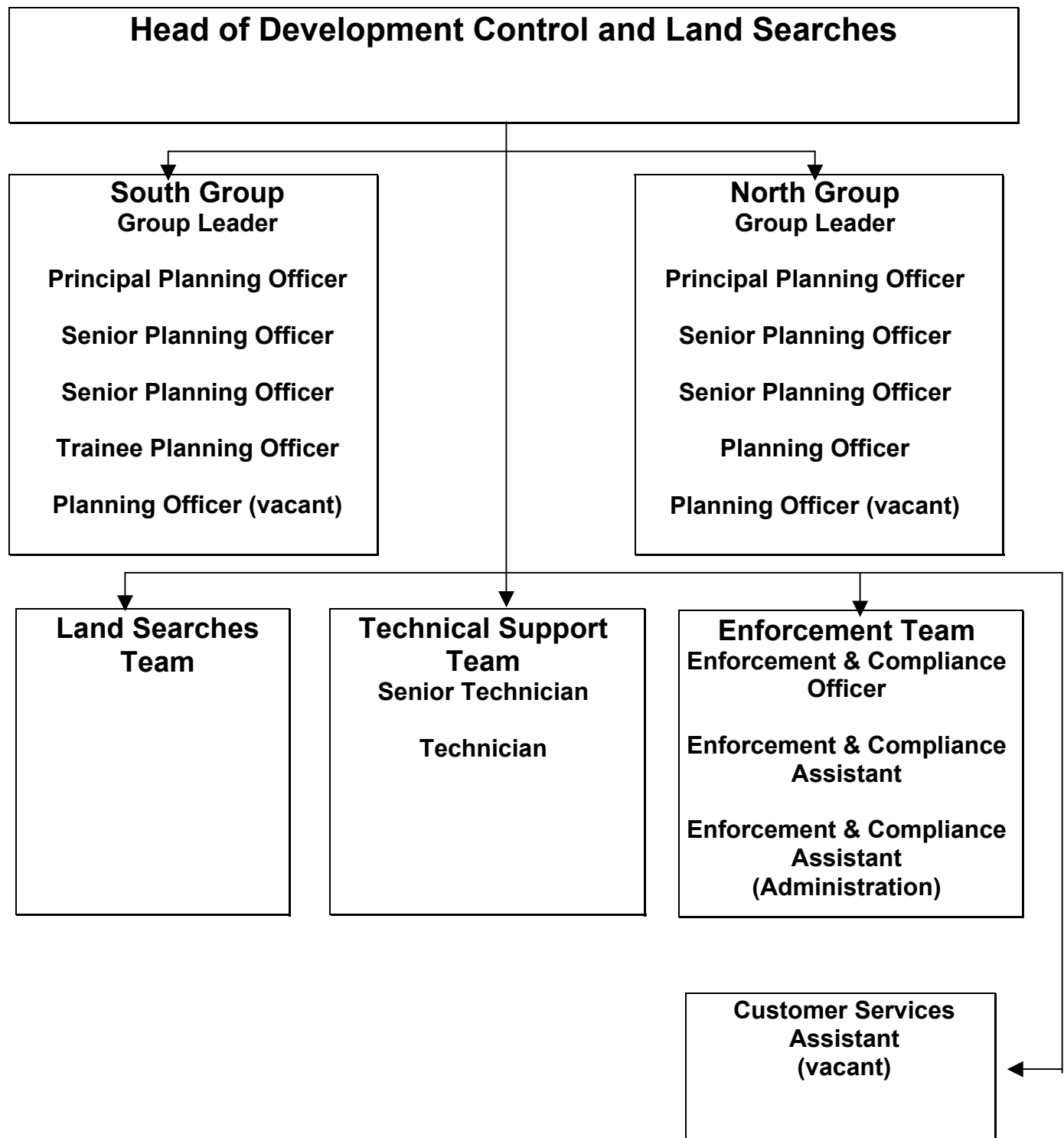
Chart 1 – Building Consultancy’s staffing structure



1.6.2 Development Control's organisation

The Development Control Section is managed by the Head of Development Control and Land Searches with Group Leaders heading two area teams, North and South. Enforcement is carried out by an officer, his assistant and an Administration Assistant. Technical Support is provided by two technicians.

Chart 2 –Development Control's staffing structure



2.0 Challenge

Challenging the service has been a fundamental element throughout the review process, from scoping the review, consulting stakeholders, assessing competitiveness and considering alternative options for future service delivery.

The Review Team completed a Challenge Checklist as part of the process and this was, in turn, challenged by stakeholders in a workshop at a Challenge Event held on 5 June 2003 at Mackworth Enterprise Park. This event was attended by 20 key stakeholders.

The Challenge Event gave stakeholders the opportunity to challenge how and why the service is delivered in the way it is as well as look at the key issues identified in the Scoping Event affecting the service.

2.1 Challenge Checklist

The following is a summary of the responses provided to the questions on the Challenge Checklist:

1. What is the main purpose of the Development service?

To ensure health, safety and accessibility of people in and around buildings and, with regard to Building Regulations, the effective use of fuel, power and insulation. To control all development requiring the City Council's approval, balancing the nature and impact of the development against amenity, environmental and other material considerations. To control unauthorised development within the City Council's area.

2. What are the main aims and objectives of the Development service and what is it trying to achieve?

Our aim is to provide advice in a helpful, welcoming and responsive manner and by involving all appropriate stakeholders in pre-application discussion. Once the application is made, our aim is to be as efficient as possible in dealing with it but balancing the need for speed against an output that is accurate or output that has accrued added value, as appropriate, as a consequence of negotiations to improve the nature of the proposal. We also aim to have involved all stakeholders in the process, even if the outcome is not in their favour. Our overall aims are to deliver a high quality service at a competitive price and to improve our measurable service delivery and to at least meet our own locally set targets.

3. Does the Council have to provide this service? Is there a legal requirement to provide the service?

Yes, in administering the Building Regulations and associated legislation. No, with regard to access, advice and information.

Yes, Development Control does have to provide a service to process planning applications under certain primary legislation. No, in relation to planning enforcement and advice giving, which are not statutory requirements.

4. Do we need to continue providing the Development service in the same way, or is there an alternative way that may be more effective and efficient?

No, for Building Consultancy possible alternatives could include:

- the service could be bought in
- we could operate in a partnership with the private sector
- the service could be provided jointly with other Councils as part of a consortium.

and for Development Control possible alternatives could include:

- employing agency staff to speed up the process
- outsourcing application processing to an external agency
- outsourcing the complete service.

5. What do customers want from the Development service?

A speedy and cost-effective service with easy access both in terms of physical access to buildings and by contact through a variety of methods such as the telephone, e-mail and internet. A speedy turnaround and a fair hearing if making representations regarding applications.

6. Who has access to the Development service and who uses it?

- anyone for schemes within the City boundary or, through partnership working, for any schemes in England and Wales
- individuals/companies/builders/agents/Council making planning applications for development
- people making general enquiries.

7. Are there particular trends that will increase or decrease the need for the Development service in the future?

Building Consultancy

- Increase - The increasing complexity of Building Regulations.
- Increase or Decrease - Partnership working.
- Decrease - An increase in competition from the private sector for Building Regulations work.
- Decrease - The amount of work carried out by credited installers such as CORGI – Council for the Registration of Gas Installers and FENSA – Fenestration Self-Assessment Scheme.

Development Control

- Economic trends.
- Changes in legislation.

8. Is the service provided at times and in places convenient to users?

Predominantly, Yes, but some users may prefer weekend inspections and out of normal office hours access. Service currently provided during normal office hours including lunchtime. Location of office may not be convenient to all users but more consultation required.

9. Does the service contribute to corporate policies and if so, how?

We have a positive role to play in contributing to the Council's theme, 'A Great Place to Live' and 'Prosperity for All'. There is also a contribution to 'Success Through Learning', 'Safer & Healthier Communities', 'A Sustainable Environment' and 'Value for Money'.

Out of the Council's six priorities, the Development service makes a significant contribution to three:

- enhancing the economic vitality of our City to produce more business and jobs
- improving the physical environment of our City and streets, and
- safeguarding and enhancing the natural environment.

10. Why is it important for the Council to continue providing the service in the future either internally or through an external provider?

We have a statutory obligation to ensure health, safety and accessibility for people in and around buildings and to process planning applications. Increase the awareness of access issues for people of Derby. To maintain the high level of service currently provided. Private service providers can turn work away. Planning enforcement - environmental and amenity reasons.

11. What would be the consequence if the Council reduced the level of the Development service in the future?

- Poorly constructed buildings that do not meet the minimum standards of building construction.
- Customer dissatisfaction.
- Increased negligence claims.
- Lack of awareness of access matters.
- Would not reach Government targets.
- Loss of Planning Delivery Grant in future.
- Corporate implications for future CPA outcomes.
- May affect future economic development prospects.

12. Who currently provides the Development service and why?

The Council's Building Consultancy section through an historic development linked with the duty that legislation has imposed on local government - except County Councils.

The Development Control service is provided in-house, although some aspects of legal work are provided externally. There has been no requirement to consider outsourcing in the past.

13. Why should the current service provider/s continue to provide the Development service?

Building Consultancy

- It is an impartial, democratically accountable service, non-profit making and is self-financing, in terms of building control work.
- It is a no cost service to the Council, with regards to Building Regulations.

- It enforces the regulations without fear or favour and is a quality service.

Development Control

- Expertise within the Section.
- Experience.
- Knowledge of the City.
- Provides wide range of advice and information beyond statutory requirement.

14. What, if any, are the advantages and disadvantages if the Development service was to be supplied externally?

To the user:

- Advantages - It brings cost competition.
- Disadvantages - The supplier can reject some work and is not solely motivated by a desire to protect the user.
- Disadvantages - The supplier can reject some work and is not solely motivated by a desire to protect the user.

To the Council:

Advantages

- Would bring reduced costs and increase the amount of office space available.

Disadvantages

- Accessibility to the service would suffer, the council would still need client control and enforcement would not be as effective.
- Loss of direct control.
- Loss of impartiality.
- Lack of experience and expertise.
- Loss of cross-service working.

15. Is there any scope for achieving economies of scale by developing a consortia approach or merging services supplied by nearby Councils?

Yes, examples of this could include:

Cross boundary working, a county consortium and a pooling of resources to deal with fluctuations in the flow of work. There is limited cross-working with other Councils in Development Control, more scope is possible but further investigation is needed.

16. How can the cost of the Development service be justified?

The building control service is self-financing and at no cost to the Council, with regards to Building Regulations. The access service is provided by the Council to meet the needs of the community. Apart from the statutory justification for the Development Control service, there are good amenity and environmental reasons that justify the costs.

17. **How would introducing new technology improve the way the Development service is delivered and what parts of this service are capable of being delivered electronically either now or in the future?**

Building Consultancy

- Handheld PCs would help speed up inspections
- Electronic transfer of plans
- Improved ICT would reduce the cost of administration
- Scanning in all applications would cut down the amount of paper and increase the speed of the service.

Development Control

- Speed up application process
- Reduce paper usage
- Improve accessibility to information
- Improve consultation processes

2.2 Challenging the Issues

The following challenges of the key issues and how they might be resolved were considered in the second workshop at the Challenge Event.

1. How users access the service

There is a need for inclusion of the public in the Building Consultancy/Development Control process. There is difficulty of accessing Officers by phone or reception. There is a limited amount of internet access. The service should demonstrate convenience, equality of access and openness. Access to the service should be considerate of potential commercial inconvenience and efficient in the interests of all stakeholders.

How can this issue be resolved?

- By making available information about applications on the Internet, including the case officer.
- Having a duty officer to deal with general enquiries.
- Better use of ICT services, specifically information on the Internet site and intranet.
- Other e-services.
- Operating a local surgery or representation at local offices.
- One stop shop/First stop shop similar to the Housing Options Centre.
- Duty officer on a helpline out of normal office hours.

2. Securing more effective consultation with the users, the public and stakeholders

There is a perception that consultation could be improved. There is a need to clarify stakeholders' expectations, particularly where there is pressure to involve other organisations and bodies. There is some lack of understanding about the procedure for notification and consultation. Some consultees would like to be consulted at pre-application stage. Some consultees do not respond.

How can this issue be resolved?

- Service level agreements could be entered into with internal and external consultees, both statutory and discretionary. A public service agreement with the community could be entered into. We could enhance the Development Team Approach.
- By exploring other methods by which consultation could be undertaken, such as meetings rather than standard forms and correspondence.
- By implementing electronic methods of consultation.

3. How the service is marketed and publicised

It is in the interests of the Development Service to promote and maintain an in-house Building Consultancy service to satisfy statutory requirements. There is a need to improve the public perception of what Development Control and Building Control do. Marketing and publicising should cover more than potential applicants. Marketing and publicity need to be properly targeted, including people making representations.

How can this issue be resolved?

- By identifying who we want to target and the methods of doing so, where, how and when.
- Targeting those who need to know and, potentially, call upon marketing expertise.

4. The decision making process in terms of speed, quality and cost

There is an issue concerning speed of decisions, and communication with applicants. Building Consultancy has statutory targets to meet. There is a perception that the Council never takes consultations into account. There is a need for speed, clarity, transparency, consistency and confidence in the process.

How can this issue be resolved?

- By ensuring staff resources are adequate to meet service levels.
- By employing additional staff to deal with domestic extensions.
- By partnership working with other local authorities who may have surplus capacity to deal with our peaks in workload.
- Continuing professional development of staff.
- Better guidance documents for applicants and other stakeholders.
- Guidance on the relationship between the Local Plan allocation of land and the planning application process.

5. Sustainability of new development

There is a lack of awareness amongst some developers of the need to use best practice with regard to sustainability. There is no guidance issued during the pre-application discussion and development processes.

How can this issue be resolved?

- By seeking advice on sustainability in the development process and offering guidance to applicants.

6. Monitoring of development

There is a perception that development is not adequately monitored and controls are not properly enforced; this can give an impression of unfairness. There is also a concern that, as a consequence, there is a lack of attention to environmental, safety and amenity aspects of development.

How can this issue be resolved?

- By improving monitoring and inspection of work on site.
- By carrying out post-development assessment.
- We could improve our monitoring of compliance with planning control.
- Promoting greater awareness of the need for compliance with permissions/conditions.

3.0 Consultation

Apart from the consultation that was a part of the Scoping Event and Challenge Event, we undertook further consultation by three separate means:

- A questionnaire was sent to 100 customers of the Development Control and Building Consultancy services. The customers included not only those people who had made planning or building regulations applications but also people who had made representations about planning applications on which they had been notified. The survey asked 34 questions based on the 6 Key Issues that are the subject of the review and there was also an opportunity to add further comment.
- We put 25 questions to the Derby Pointer Panel. These were not based on the Key Issues because, at the time when the questions were asked, the terms of reference of the review had not been finalised.
- The Heads of Building Consultancy and Development Control attended a reflector group meeting of people recruited from the Pointer Panel. The group consisted of eight people from five different Wards in the City. There was an equal split of males and females.

3.1 Results of Customer Satisfaction Survey

The feedback from the survey of 100 customers is summarised below, under each Key Issue:

How users access the Development Service

- There was a high level of satisfaction with current opening hours, although over half would like Saturday opening if we extended our hours.
- Most initial contact was by 'phone, which was the preferred means.
- Most people found it easy to contact the right person and found staff very or fairly helpful.
- Over three quarters had Internet access, mainly at home and the majority were aware of the Council's website.

Securing more effective consultation with the users, the public and stakeholders

- Two thirds of planning applicants felt they were effectively notified throughout the process.
- Some comments were made suggesting improvements to the notification process.
- People were aware of planning applications by the following means in order of awareness...
 1. notification letter to neighbours
 2. statutory press advertisements/Derby Trader weekly list
 3. site notices
 4. information boards around the City
- There were suggestions regarding publicising planning applications on-line.

How the service is marketed and publicised

- In relation to both services there was a perception that neither service is effectively marketed or publicised.
- With regard to all the means of publicising planning applications, most people found it fairly or very easy to understand the method.
- The Internet as another means of publicising the service.
- Less than half were aware of pre-application advice from the Development service.
- Few people were aware of the products and initiatives from the Building Consultancy.

The decision-making process in terms of speed, quality and costs

- Only a third felt that the speed of decision was fairly or very effective.
- Only about a quarter thought we were fairly or very effective in negotiating during the process of dealing with an application.
- Over a third felt the information provided by Officers was fairly or very effective
- Almost half felt the decision was fairly or very effective.
- Less than a quarter considered post-decision support and advice fairly or very effective.
- Two thirds felt the Case Officer was accessible. Only a small number felt he/she was hard to contact.
- Less than a quarter perceived the decision-making process to be complicated.
- Only just over a quarter perceived that they were not treated fairly or included in the decision-making process. A small number thought communication was a problem.
- Over three quarters said we could not improve on our method of informing applicants of decisions.

Sustainability of new development

- Over a quarter felt the Development service was responding to sustainable development.
- Only just over 10% were aware of the existence of Local Agenda 21.

Monitoring of development

- Nearly a half thought we were effective in dealing with any conditions on the permission/consent.
- Almost a third considered that our monitoring and enforcement procedures were fairly or very good.
- Only 5% had complained about unauthorised development or works. There was very little comment about speed of response or how effectively the complaint was dealt with.
- There was only a very small response to comments requested on their experience of the service.

3.2 Results of the Derby Pointer Panel Survey

This summary of the results includes the views of the Reflector Group

3.3 Development Control Services – DCS

Purpose of Development Control Services

- Overall, half of respondents either gave no response to this question or stated that they did not know.

Use of Development Control Services

- Only seventeen percent of respondents stated that they had used or contacted the DCS. Of that proportion, 30% indicated that they had used this service within the last 12 months.

Publicity about potential developments

Only 19% had ever had experience of being told about potential developments.

Thirty nine percent of those people felt that the procedure used by DCS for informing neighbours about relevant developments was either good or very good.

Of the 35% who gave a response the main improvements to publicity suggested were:

- ensure proposals are given to residents
- provide written specifications and dates for work proposed
- ensure proposals are given to a wider area of residents
- create a procedure for public objections/agreement.

This issue of awareness of planned developments created much discussion in the reflector group, there being a general consensus that there needs to be improved publicity.

Guidance Materials

Only a small number of respondents (4%) stated that they had ever seen any published guidance material from the DCS.

From those who had seen guidance material, 11% said it was very good, 74% said it was good and the remaining 16% felt it was adequate.

A member of the reflector group noted that the pamphlets they had received from DCS could have been plainer and felt that they were very technical and that they should be put in more layman terms.

Satisfaction with Service

Thirty percent were either fairly or very satisfied with the Council's control of building development.

Specific examples of concern raised in the reflector group were...

- One person said that there had been some disasters e.g., they felt that there was no demand for a multi-storey car park by the bus station, this and furthermore the car park is an absolute eyesore.
- Another person said that there were some pretty poor buildings.
- Another said that they had opposed the building on green belt, particularly on football grounds.
- One person noted there were a new set of traffic lights at Normanton that they felt did not work.
- Another person commented on an Indian restaurant that had apparently set on fire and collapsed.
- Derelict buildings in the Centre and those near the train station where all the windows had fallen out were noted and they thought that these buildings are currently unsafe and that the Council should do something about it.

3.4 Building Consultancy – BC

Use of/contact with the Council's Building Consultancy Service

Just over half of respondents either gave no response to this question or stated that they did not know.

There was confusion with the names of the two services in the reflector group primarily revolving around the fact that Development Control relates to Planning and the use of 'Consultancy' by Building Regulations.

Only 8% of respondents had ever used or contacted the Council's BC. A high proportion of respondents (89%) had never used or contacted BC.

Thirty nine percent of those who said they had had contact had done so within the last 12 months.

Building Consultancy Services guidance materials

Only a small percentage of respondents had seen any guidance material from BC.

From the respondents who had seen information, 72% said it was good or very good.

Attitudes towards Derby buildings being safe and well constructed

Thirty eight percent of people either agreed or strongly agreed that buildings in Derby are safe and well constructed.

Preference for the supply of this service between Public and Private sector

Eighty percent of respondents stated that they would prefer to obtain advice from Derby City Council, and only 4% would prefer a private company. The reflector group endorsed this view.

Complaints

The majority of respondents 95% stated that they had never made a complaint about any of these services.

Of the 12 respondents who said they had complained, the main reasons for this were...

- That they were not informed on local developments.
- That the services in question failed to respond to correspondence they had sent.

- That plans had not been adhered to.

Disabled People

Thirty percent indicated that either they were, or had family or friends who are disabled people.

Table 6 shows those locations that were rated as having poor access for disabled people.

Table 6 – Locations that were rated as having poor access for disabled people

	%
Public transport (not covered by DCS or BC)	27
Pubs and clubs	24
Derby City Centre/shops	19
Sports facilities	12
Council offices/buildings	10

The view of the reflector group was that, overall, it was getting better, but there is still scope for improvement.

4.0 Comparison

The Review Team held a Comparison Event on 8 September 2003 to compare the performance and operating of the Development service against other Local Authorities.

The first exercise extracted good practice from a series of documents to identify how other authorities currently tackle similar issues.

These documents included Best Value reports from other authorities, Best Value inspection reports, Best Value Performance Indicators and other relevant information.

The event was attended by representatives from other local authorities, including the Chair of Local Authority Building Control. This was helpful in setting the issues in a wider perspective.

The second exercise involved generating options to improve the service relating to the Key Issues.

The following is a digest of work practices that were identified, with examples of best practice categorised according to the key issues.

How users access the development service

Face to face contact

- Service reception staff with enhanced skills to deal with specific queries.
- Dedicated support staff integral within the service.
- Duty rostering and awareness of peak demands.
- Telephone assistance with completing forms.
- Specialised reception areas.
- Re-focussing of Business Support duties, to be more service-specific.

Electronic means

- Website development.
- Improvements to electronic submission of applications and progression to paperless process.
- Devolved control of software database provider, from Business Support to the service.
- Telephone and on-line facilities for fee payment.
- On-line contact from other Council premises utilising the Authority's equipment.

General

- Offering a variety of service methods.
- Utilising non-council outlets for 'surgeries' and for promotion of the service.

BVPI 156 measures the percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people.

Table 7 – BVPI 156

BVPI 156	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004
%	48%	44%	42%

Due to further more detailed advice on eligible buildings from the Audit Commission, the returns suggest a reduction in accessibility, this is not the case. The level of accessibility of our buildings has remained mainly constant. Increases are however anticipated in the 2004/05 as a result of DDA adjustments, and accommodation rationalisation.

Securing more effective consultation with the users, the public and stakeholders

- Running focus groups for builders, developers and architects/agents.
- National organisation (LABC) helping local authorities to facilitate consultation with stakeholders.
- Improved notification of planning proposals to neighbours.
- Electronic consultation with outside agencies who we consult.
- Decision feedback to consultees.

How the development service is marketed and publicised

- Quality award schemes for new development.
- Seminars/surgeries at commercial outlets.
- Use of a Marketing Officer.
- Guidance information on services produced.
- Service charter and priorities.
- Advice notes and leaflets.
- Better informing public on service standards/levels.
- Attendance at Area Panels.
- Service re-branding.
- Separate service marketing budget.

The decision-making process in terms of speed, quality and cost

- Monitoring decision quality by reference to the Authority's appeal and success rate and awards of costs.
- Involvement of legal sections at early stage in decision-making process.
- Two-tier decision-making service; same day Building Regulations approvals.
- National agreements between building control and large developers.
- Cross-boundary working agreements.
- Better recruitment and retention packages.
- Use of agency staff at times of high workload.
- Team-building initiatives.
- Officer awareness of colleagues' casework, for better continuity.

- Standardised S106 Agreements to reduce workload for staff.
- Address the office-working environment.
- Speed of decision making for planning applications in relation to our comparator group was identified as below in Table 7.

Table 8 – Speed of decision making for planning applications

2001/2002	Derby	Comparator Average	Comparator Lowest	Comparator Highest
% of applications determined in 8 weeks – BVPI 109	64%	65%	46%	79%
Average time taken to determine all applications - BVPI 110	9.3 weeks	10.4 weeks	7 weeks	16.4 weeks

The Baseline Assessment for this Review provides greater detail on comparative performance rates for other Best Value Performance Indicators.

- In terms of costs per head of population the planning service, in 2001/02 was £7.41 in Derby, compared to a low of £5 for the comparator group.

Sustainability of new development

- Addressing the sustainability agenda by taking the lead in relation to such matters as house design and layout.
- Promoting the incorporation of sustainable features in new development, with regard to conserving energy and resources.
- Issuing relevant guidance to encourage developers to address environmental issues.
- Use of specialist advice in creating awareness amongst potential developers.

Monitoring of development

- Monitoring of completed developments to better inform the quality of outcomes.
- Audit Commission suggestions include:
 - monitoring of appeals decisions
 - sample decision audits
 - working partnership with building control and strengthen enforcement
 - risk-based enforcement systems, looking at the decisions which may pose the maximum risk.
- Enforcement procedures that incorporate better links between building control and development control.
- Monitoring of Disability Discrimination Act implications on development.
- Better building control inspection regime.

The comparative information that this exercise revealed was used in forming the basis for the options that would later be developed at the Options Event.

5.0 Competition

5.1 Background

The Review Team has considered the advantages and disadvantages of each of the seven options for future service delivery as outlined in the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions DETR Circular 10/99. These options are as follows:

1. Stopping all or part of the service.
2. Creating a public-private partnership, through a strategic contract or a joint-venture company, for example.
3. Transferring or externalising the service to another provider with no in-house bid.
4. Market testing of all or part of the service - where the in-house provider bids in open competition against the private or voluntary sector.
5. Restructuring or repositioning of the in-house service.
6. Re-negotiating existing arrangements with the current providers where this is permissible.
7. The joint commissioning or delivery of the service.

Each option has been considered using the information gathered during the baseline assessment, challenge exercise, comparison activities and consultation exercises. Details of the Review Team's conclusions are outlined below.

5.2 Stopping all or part of the service.

Both business units provide services, listed below 1-4, that are discretionary and the Review Team considered the advantages and disadvantages of not providing these.

Building Control

1. Pre Application advice
2. Post-submission advice
3. General advice
4. Access advice

Advantages of stopping the discretionary elements of the service:

- Provides cost savings to the authority.
- Reduces Officer time spent giving advice and information.

Disadvantages:

- Applications could become less well presented and stand less chance of being approved
- An increasing amount of Officer time would be spent on applications
- Increasing customer dissatisfaction in not being able to access advice
- The image of the Council would suffer as a result of negative publicity
- Business may be lost.
- There would be an increase in determinations and the cost of these would also increase.

Development Control

1. Pre Application advice
2. Post-submission advice
3. General advice
4. Enforcement

Advantages of stopping the discretionary elements of the service:

- Provides cost savings to the Council.
- Reduces Officer time spent giving advice and information.

Disadvantages:

- Applications could become less well presented and stand less chance of being approved.
- An increasing amount of Officer time would be spent on applications.
- Increasing customer dissatisfaction in not being able to access advice.
- The image of the Council would suffer as a result of negative publicity.
- There would be an increase in appeals and the associated increased cost of these.

5.3 Creating a public-private partnership, through a strategic contract or a joint-venture company.

Building Control

There are already two examples in existence:

1. Locally - in Derbyshire, an agreement to carry out cross-boundary checking of plans.
2. Nationally - Six partners, including a developer, architect, agent and house builder, work together in terms of plan checking.

Advantages:

- Gives flexibility to meet targets in times of need.
- Can contribute to the marketing of the service.
- Helps maintain market share nationally.
- Provides additional income.

Disadvantages:

- We can lose income to plan checking authority
- There may be other income loss to the authority.

Development Control

There is the possibility of cross-boundary working with other Councils.

Advantages:

- Gives flexibility to meet targets in times of need.

Disadvantages:

- Other local authorities may not be familiar with local constraints, policies and procedures and Officers from other authorities would not have the benefit of many years of local experience. All these factors would impact on the quality of decision-making.

5.4 Transferring or externalising the service to another provider with no in-house bid.

Building Control

Advantages:

- Could be savings in terms of overheads such as accommodation.

Disadvantages:

- There would be a loss of part of the service to the public.
- The service may lose its impartiality.

Development Control

This is not possible as legally the Local Planning Authority has to provide some aspects of the service

5.5 Market-testing of all or part of the service (where the in-house provider bids in open competition against the private or voluntary sector).

Building Control

Building Consultancy is already in open competition for the majority of the building control service that it offers.

Development Control

In terms of enforcement and appeals

Advantages:

- There could be savings in terms of overheads; up to a point it depends on the usage of this aspect of the service.

Disadvantages:

None identified.

5.6 The restructuring or repositioning of the in-house service.

Building Control

We could look at introducing specialised teams for plan checking and site inspections.

Advantages:

- There could be cost efficiencies with this reorganised service.
- New structure would provide greater control of support services.

Disadvantages:

- If plan checking and site inspection were split, both would suffer with regard to continuity of casework.

Development Control

The section undertook a restructuring in April 2003 as a result of the award of Planning Delivery Grant.

Advantages:

- New structure has provided greater assistance to support services.
- Improved performance has emerged through more effective ways of working.

Disadvantages:

- Improvements to service delivery may not have been achieved.

5.7 Re-negotiating existing arrangements with the current providers where this is permissible.

Building Control

We could have service level agreements with:

- Business Support.
- Structures Design.

Advantages:

- This would provide clear parameters of work areas.
- These agreements would raise expectations of service levels.
- Allows corrective action to be taken if service level is not meeting standards.
- The service providers have clear guidance on levels of responsibility.

Disadvantages:

- If not set up correctly, then provider and receiver may be unsure of their responsibilities.

Development Control

We could have service level agreements with:

- Business Support.
- Parks, Commercial Services.
- Legal Division, Corporate Services Directorate.

Advantages:

- This would provide clear parameters of work areas.
- These agreements would raise expectations of service levels.
- Allows corrective action to be taken if service level is not meeting standards.
- The service providers have clear guidance on levels of responsibility.

Disadvantages:

- If not set up correctly, then provider and receiver may be unsure of their responsibilities.

5.8 The joint commissioning or delivery of the service - same as Option 5.3 above

See Option 5.3.

6.0 Options Appraisal

We held an Options Appraisal Event to identify which key options, generated by the findings from the work under the 4C's of challenge, consult, compare and compete could be carried forward as improvements to those parts of the service represented by the six key issues.

The Options session, which took place over a whole day, was split into two parts. The first of these involved identifying a range of possible options and the second was a critical appraisal of the options. This resulted in some of them not being chosen. This was either because the consensus was that they were not necessary or that they were not radical or helpful enough in terms of tackling the key issues that are the subject of the review. The options not taken forward were...

- Revision and development of customer charters outlining levels of service.
- Training and support for frontline staff to develop greater specialist knowledge.
- Direct service control by the Development service of the IT system that supports the service.

Cabinet and Planning Environment Commission have had an opportunity to comment and the results of the appraisal form the basis of the Improvement Plan.

The various options chosen under the six key issues are set out below.

6.1 How users access the Development Service

Stakeholders, Members and Officers involved in the review consider that improvements to the ways in which people access our service are crucial to stakeholders being more informed about the services we provide. Under this Key Issue, Cabinet/Commission agreed the following options for improvement...

- The administration support to the Building Control function would be more able to respond to the needs of the Building Consultancy's customers in its competitive environment by being dedicated to, and integrated within, the team.
- It is essential to better service access that we take steps to improve the way our service operates electronically. Various means of achieving this aim have been identified.
- It is important that electronic service access is open to all, irrespective of whether people have immediate entry to website technology. We intend, therefore, in conjunction with the current Service Access Best Value Review, to explore the possibility of facilitating access at other Council designated locations.

6.2 Securing more effective consultation with the users, the public and stakeholders

Improvements to our means of consultation are important from the point of view of enhanced public participation and in terms of the efficiency with which we involve our various consultees as part of the application process. We will implement the following better methods of engagement...

- Expansion of our current means of information exchange.
- Setting up electronic methods by which consultation with the various outside bodies could be achieved.

- Wider notification about planning applications, improved ways of making comments on them and guidance about what matters we can take into account.

6.3 How the service is marketed and publicised

We intend to improve the way in which we advise our stakeholders and customers about the nature, quality and variety of the services provided by the Development Division. Central to this will be a formalisation of the Development Team Approach to pre-application advice and a Marketing Strategy to better inform potential users of what we can offer. In conjunction with a Marketing Strategy we wish to celebrate and recognise high standards in development projects, by the development of an award scheme, possibly in association with the Review of Social Inclusion and the Physical Environment.

6.4 The decision-making process in terms of speed, quality and costs

The services provided by the Development Division are required to make decisions on a number of different types of applications. The speed of some of the decision-making processes are subject to performance targets and customer demands. The Development Service will respond to this in a number of ways by...

- Maintaining a stable staff establishment.
- Allowing flexibility where the service is in competition with the private sector.
- Examining the future of how the Building Control service is provided.
- Ensuring service levels stand comparison with the private sector and other local authorities.
- Producing design guidance which should help potential applicants to submit better quality proposals.
- Having regard to the opinion of our service users.
- Adhering to a standard in the procedures we undertake.
- Ensuring that additional, peripheral work carried out by the service is properly reimbursed.

6.5 Sustainability of new development

The Review has identified a need for the service to be proactive in promoting better use of materials and methods which will contribute to securing a more sustainable environment. To make progress in this area, we will...

- Seek guidance from interested parties, and
- Formulate guidance for service users.

6.6 Monitoring of development

We intend to monitor the outcome of our service in terms of the quality achieved against that which could reasonably have been expected and use this as a means to improve on the standard of development within the City. We will do this by...

- Improving site inspection.
- Reflecting on the final form of development work.
- Closer attention to compliance with requirements and imposed conditions.
- Minimising problems arising from lack of awareness of other associated legislation.

6.7 Improvement Plan

The Improvement Plan specifies the actions involved in taking the review forward by implementing the options that were chosen.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Aim	To improve users' access to the Development Service.						
Objective	To respond to the competitive environment which now exists within the Building Control function of the service.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
Administrative support is provided currently by a separate business unit and remote from the service it serves. Users do not directly liaise with the service itself.	Consult staff and develop a pilot scheme to devolve the Building Consultancy administrative support to the point of service delivery.	A change to line management responsibility £2000. Accommodation and IT equipment c. £5000.	Director of D&CS to approve implementation plan by October 2004.	Produce a Report to Director of D&CS.	Heads of Building Consultancy and Business Support.	6.1	
	Implement the pilot scheme.		Commence scheme October 2004.	Line management changed.	Heads of Building Consultancy and Business Support.		
	Monitor and review the outcome of the pilot scheme with a view to permanent retention.	One-off set-up costs and on-going revenue cost including training will be contained within existing budget.	Report to Director of D&CS October 2005.	Yes/No Staff satisfaction levels.	Heads of Building Consultancy and Business Support.		
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	Report to Department Director. Part of Business Planning process.						
Public outcome	A more focused service unit responding to customer need.						

Aim	To improve users' access to the Development Service.					
Objective	To achieve Government targets for electronic service delivery.					
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference
The current standard of electronic service delivery needs improving in line with expectations following technological advancements in this type of communication.	<p>Investigate available systems in conjunction with ICT and Performance, Chief Executives - Finance Directorate and outcomes of the Service Access Best Value Review.</p> <p>As part of the Business Process Review being carried out as part of the Planning Delivery Grant programme through the E-planning Services Working Group. Implement improvements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • website • electronic submissions • plotting of applications • on-line tracking • moving towards a paperless office environment • links via other designated locations • underlying business processes. 	<p>It is envisaged that the majority of costs can be met through existing IEG and Planning Delivery Grant funding. Costs are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one-off equipment costs • electronic plotting and scanning equipment • archiving • training • consultant's . <p>Likely to be some savings in terms of printing costs and process efficiencies.</p>	<p>April 2005</p> <p>April 2007</p>	<p>BVPI 157, Implementing Electronic Government - IEG 4 statement (including ODPM's priority based outcomes) and Corporate IEG delivery programme and BVPI 205.</p>	<p>Assistant Director - Development in conjunction with Assistant Director of Performance and Information and Communication Technology .</p>	6.1
Monitoring	Through Performance Management & Department & Service Business Plans.					
How will improvements be monitored?						

Public
outcome

Customers will find the service far easier to access.

Aim	To improve consultation and notification with the public and other stakeholders.					
Objective	To broaden the methods by which consultation is undertaken, including the use of Information Technology and to increase the awareness of the public in the notification of planning applications.					
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Progress against action and outcomes
Information exchange between our key stakeholders.	<p>We will contact relevant stakeholders including agents, area panels & local communities to improve upon current methods of information exchange with the purpose of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting up agents' forums • presentations at Area Panel meetings • going out into the local communities to explain the service • assessing the feasibility of electronic consultation. <p>Implement wider use of electronic consultation.</p>	<p>Officer time, within existing budgets.</p> <p>Costs are likely to be met by those outlined in the e-government section in the previous objective. Limited savings would come from existing costs of stationary, printing and postage.</p>	<p>Contact agents and agree forum meetings October 2004.</p> <p>Arrange presentations at Area Panels with administrators October 2004.</p> <p>Identify local community groups April 2005.</p> <p>Engage with outside consultees and agree method of implementation April 2005.</p> <p>Bring electronic method into use April 2007.</p>	<p>Minutes of Inaugural meeting - %invitees' attended/% satisfied with involvement.</p> <p>Minutes of meetings.</p> <p>List of groups contacted.</p> <p>Consultees sign up with this method.</p> <p>% usage of this method by consultees.</p>	Heads of Building Consultancy, Development Control & Searches.	6.2
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	Through the Business Plans for Building Consultancy & Development Control/Searches.					
Public outcome	Improved engagement with our professional service users and the community at large in locations more accessible to them.					

Aim	To improve consultation and notification with the public and other stakeholders.						
Objective	To broaden the methods by which consultation is undertaken, including the use of Information Technology and to increase the awareness of the public in the notification of planning applications.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
The current methods by which the public are notified of planning applications.	By amending the neighbour notification arrangements for planning applications.		October 2004.	Report to Planning Control Committee.	Head of Development Control & Searches.	6.2	
	Introduce the new procedure.	Could involve at least half an administrative post circa £7,000 & additional postage costs.	October 2004.	Report to Planning Control Committee.	Head of Development Control & Searches.		
	Produce guidance to making representations on planning applications, including on website.	Officer time.	April 2005.	Guidance produced.	Head of Development Control & Searches.		
	Produce form for making representations.	Officer time.	April 2005.	Form agreed and in use.	Head of Development Control & Searches.		
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	By measuring responses against the number of notifications sent out.						
Public outcome	Greater public satisfaction in being involved in the planning decision-making process.						

Aim	To improve the ways we market & publicise our service.						
Objective	To improve the awareness of the public & stakeholders of the services that we provide.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
The clarity of the different functions carried out within the service as a whole.	Develop a joint protocol outlining how a Development Team Approach – DTA to pre-application advice and discussion will be undertaken on major development schemes. This would specify parameters for the involvement of all the key stakeholders at appropriate stages.	Development time from Directorate of Development and Cultural Services, Directorate of Corporate Services and Directorate of Commercial Services.	Complete a DTA protocol April 2005.	Yes/No.	Assistant Director - Development in conjunction with Heads of Building Consultancy & Development Control/ Searches.	6.3	
	Implement the protocol, involving all appropriate business units.	Development time from Directorate of Development and Cultural Services, Directorate of Corporate Services and Directorate of Commercial Services.	Implement the protocol April 2006.	Customer satisfaction levels.	Assistant Director - Development in conjunction with Heads of Building Consultancy & Development Control/ Searches.		
	The development of a Marketing Strategy will add a more commercial approach to the delivery of the service.	Officer time including Marketing Officer within existing budgets. Marketing materials & equipment - £1500 from existing budget.	Complete Marketing Strategy April 2007.	Produce a report on completion of marketing strategy to Director of D&CS.	Heads of Building Consultancy & Development Control/ Searches.		
Monitoring	By progress reports and part of Business Planning process.						
How will improvements be monitored?							
Public outcome	A more knowledgeable public and customer base.						

Aim	To improve the ways we market and publicise our service.						
Objective	To encourage and celebrate a higher quality of development projects.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
The way in which we encourage and celebrate a high standard of development project.	Investigate and develop a suitable quality award applicable to the services we provide.	Marketing, publicity, development and the award will involve additional costs, such as Officer time, venue for presentation and prizes if applicable.	Director to approve proposed award scheme April 2005.	Report to Director.	Heads of Building Consultancy and Development Control/ Searches.	6.3	
	Introduce a quality award for new developments, to include the quality of the process undertaken.		Implement award scheme April 2007.	Yes/No.			
	Monitor quality award scheme.		April 2007.	Measure and increase number of developments that meet quality award criteria.			
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	By progress reports and part of Business Planning process.						
Public outcome	Better quality of development.						

Aim	To improve the decision-making process in terms of speed, quality & cost.						
Objective	To ensure sufficient key personnel are available to deliver the Council's statutory obligations.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
Service delivery within statutory time limits in key service areas.	Identify and implement an innovative recruitment and retention package to ensure continuity of staffing.	Costs of implementing the package, contained within budget.	Agree with Director of D&CS and Personnel department in Corporate Services. To have key personnel in post to deliver the service April 2005.	% of suitable applicants shortlisted.	Head of Building Consultancy.	6.4	
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	Progress report and part of Business Planning process.						
Public outcome	More efficient service delivery.						

Aim	To improve the decision-making process in terms of speed, quality & cost.						
Objective	The building control aspect of the service to be more competitive with the private sector.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
The ability of the Building Consultancy to compete with the private sector.	By investigating and analysing options for the future of that part of the Building Control Service which is in direct competition with the private sector.	Officer time on investigation and analysis. Future resource implications would only be established once the options available have been investigated. Significant staff time, which could result in re-prioritising staff resources.	Report to Director April 2007.	Yes/No.	Head of Building Consultancy.	6.4	
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	Progress report and part of Business Planning process.						
Public outcome	Satisfaction that the service is retained as a local authority function.						

Aim	To improve the decision-making process in terms of speed, quality & cost.						
Objective	To achieve a nationally agreed level of service for the Building Control function.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
Building Consultancy's ability to deliver the Building Control function to a nationally agreed service level.	Assess the implications of adopting the Building Control national performance standards.	Officer time.	Report to Director on implications April 2005.	Yes/No.	Head of Building Consultancy.	6.4	
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	Progress report and part of Business Planning process.						
Public outcome	Consistency of service level.						

Aim	To improve the decision-making process in terms of speed, quality & cost.					
Objective	To update the current development guidance documents to assist the applicant in submitting a better quality of proposal.					
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference
The current development control written design guidance for house extensions, residential layouts, and shopfront security, which is out of date and of inconsistent quality.	By developing and updating the design guidance to reflect current standards and practices applied to applications for house extensions, residential schemes and shopfronts. Improved guidance would have the effect of improving the quality of planning proposals.	Existing resources would have to be redirected. Possible appointment of consultant £50,000; there is no budget provision; could be funded through Planning Delivery Grant.	Completion of design guidance April 2007.	Produce a guidance document.	Head of Development Control/ Searches.	6.4
Monitoring	Part of Business Planning process.					
How will improvements be monitored?						
Public outcome	Improved quality of planning proposal to assist in quicker turnaround.					

Aim	To improve the decision-making process in terms of speed, quality & cost.						
Objective	To gauge the customers' level of satisfaction with the decision-making process.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
Our current methods of gauging customer satisfaction levels.	By reviewing our current methods of assessing customer satisfaction and developing new methods as appropriate.	Officer time including that of Customer Services Assistant, already budgeted for.	April 2005.	% of customers satisfied with service as measured through surveys.	Heads of Building Consultancy & Development Control/ Searches.	6.4	
	By assessing the feedback obtained and building new ideas into our improvement process.	Officer time including that of Customer Services Assistant, already budgeted for.	April 2007.	Produce a report in Business Plan on benefit of feedback to the improvement process.			
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	Part of Business Planning process.						
Public outcome	Service tailored to stakeholders' aspirations.						

Aim	To improve the decision-making process in terms of speed, quality & cost.					
Objective	To introduce a Quality Management System into the Development Control service.					
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference
The formalisation of procedures and practices in the Development Control service.	By implementing a Quality Management System to an approved standard.	Resources would be required to set up the system. Ongoing staff time to maintain compliance with the scheme. Consultancy costs could amount to £3000 and an additional £1000 per year for certification, reallocated from existing resources.	Implement a Quality Management System to an approved standard. April 2007.	% adherence to quality standard.	Head of Development Control/ Searches.	6.4
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	On implementation, the system would be independently assessed.					
Public outcome	Assurance that we would be working to an approved standard.					

Aim	To improve the decision-making process in terms of speed, quality & cost.						
Objective	To seek reimbursement for any non-statutory work which deflects from the statutory aspects of the service.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
The concentration of effort on the statutory aspects of the service.	Establish which functions of the service can legally be charged for.	Staff time.	April 2005.	Produce a report for Cabinet.	Heads of Building Consultancy & Development Control/ Searches.	6.4	
	If applicable, implement charges scheme for information provision and discretionary services.	Staff time in setting up charging system. Subject to an investigation of charges, the income generated could pay for the services provided.	By April 2005, report to Cabinet on any chargeable work being established.	Produce a report for Cabinet.	Head of Business Support.		
Monitoring How will improvements be monitored?	Part of Business Planning process.						
Public outcome	Potential for slight reduction in some service costs.						

Aim	To carry out monitoring of ongoing development and assess the effect against expectations of development projects.					
Objective	To ensure building works are adequately inspected.					
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference
The arrangements for site inspections of building work under the Building Regulations.	By developing a risk-based Building Control site inspection regime, notwithstanding statutory requirements.	Officer time, within existing resources.	April 2005	Produce report/ document by April 2005.	Head of Building Consultancy.	6.5
	By introducing a structured notification procedure that can be entered into with the developer.	Officer time within existing resources.	April 2005	Produce guidance document by April 2005. Distribute document April 2005.	Head of Building Consultancy.	
Monitoring	Part of Business Planning process.					
How will improvements be monitored?						
Public outcome	A mutually beneficially system for inspecting the progression of building works on site.					

Aim	To carry out monitoring of ongoing development and assess the effect against expectations of development projects.						
Objective	To assess the final form of development against design criteria and expectations.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
The assessment of the outcome of the development process.	By revisiting a sample of completed developments to establish, not only from the Council's perspective but also from that of the community, whether the final form of development has met design criteria and expectations.	Officer time, within existing resources and those budgeted for.	April 2007	Produce a report.	Head of Development Control/ Searches.	6.6	
Monitoring	Part of Business Planning process.						
How will improvements be monitored?							
Public outcome	A contribution to a better standard of development.						

Aim	To carry out monitoring of ongoing development and assess the effect against expectations of development projects.						
Objective	To secure improvements to the planning enforcement system.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
The liaison between Building Consultancy and Development Control sections.	By introducing a more structured method of ensuring compliance with planning control, Building Regulations and planning conditions.	Existing resources within the planning enforcement team.	April 2005.	Produce a report that covers the key stages of development.	Heads of Building Consultancy and Development Control/ Searches.	6.6	
Monitoring	Part of Business Planning process.						
How will improvements be monitored?							
Public outcome	A more controlled form of development.						

Aim	To carry out monitoring of ongoing development and assess the effect against expectations of development projects.						
Objective	To raise awareness of civil legislation which may be applicable to certain developments adjacent to boundaries.						
What needs improving?	How will it be improved?	What resources will be required including financial resources?	Target including timescale	Performance indicator	Responsible officer	Reference	Progress against action and outcomes
Applicants' knowledge of legislation not administered by the local authority. There is limited awareness by applicants of the implications of the Party Wall Act.	We will issue information to all relevant applicants.	Information booklets are, at present, available free of charge. Limited postal charges.	April 2005.	Produce and distribute an information booklet.	Head of Development Control/ Searches.	6.6	
Monitoring	Enforcement staff reporting to Head of Development Control/Searches.						
How will improvements be monitored?							
Public outcome	Reduction in complaints related to boundary disputes and neighbour-related problems arising from adjacent development.						

