

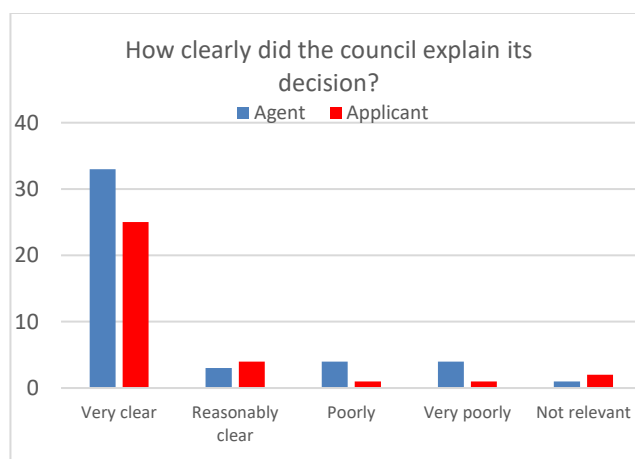
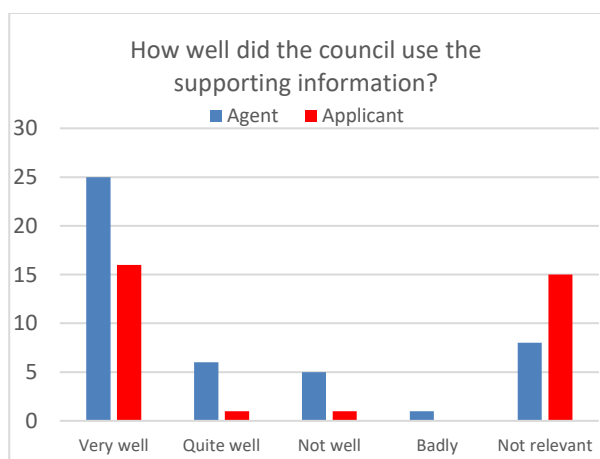
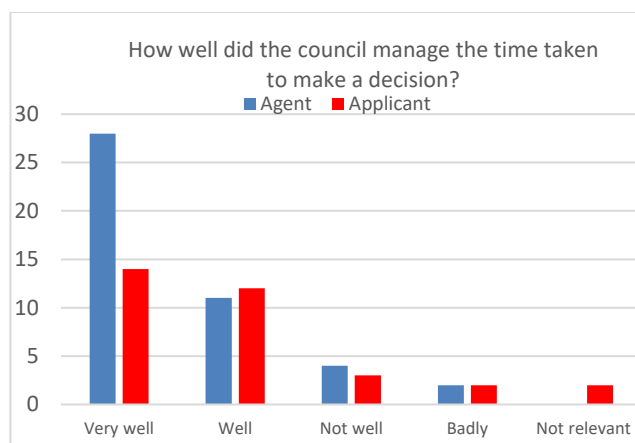
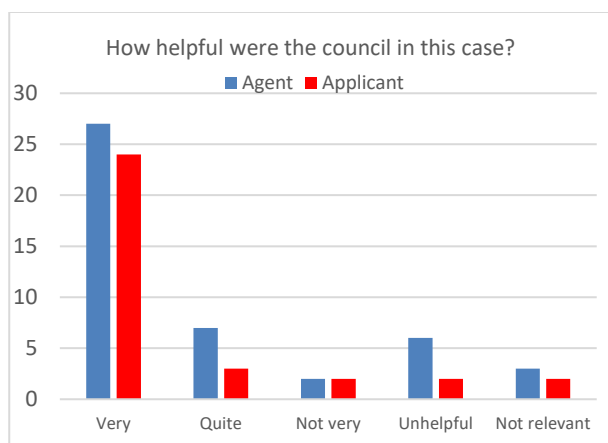
Planning Customer Satisfaction Survey – 6 month feedback

The Planning Department have been sending Customer Satisfaction Surveys to all Agents, Applicants and members of public who comment on applications and who have supplied an email address, for applications that have been closed, either permitted, refused or withdrawn, so that we can review their experience of the application process.

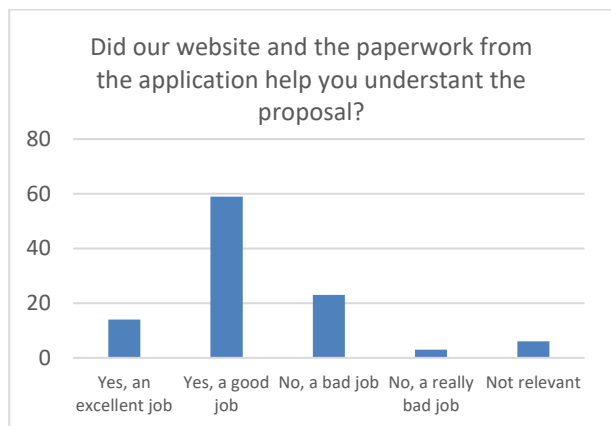
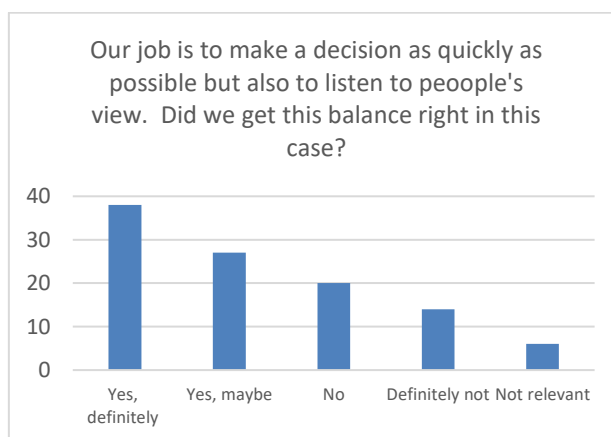
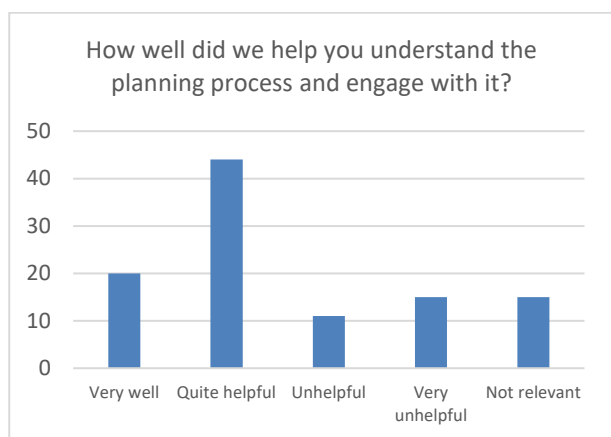
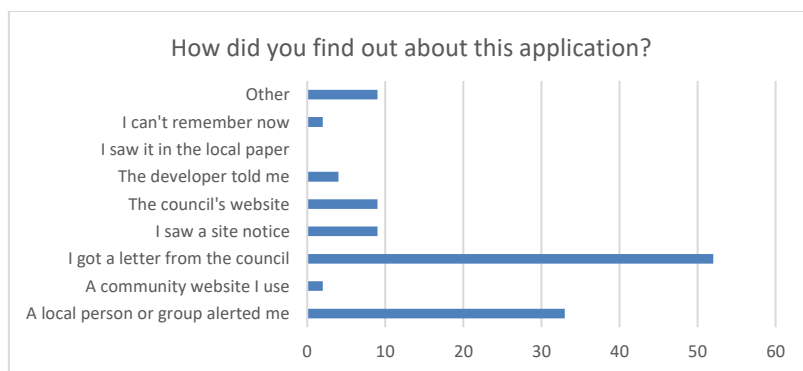
This report will provide the overview of the responses received between August and December 2019 and follows on from the previous report to Planning Committee 6 months ago. It will also give the areas that have been highlighted in the responses as areas to improve the customers experience with the Planning department.

We have sent out 1911 questionnaires within this period and have received 183 responses (9.5% response rate).

Agent and Applicant responses



Responses of Members of public who wrote in for applications



Positive Feedback Received

From the comments that were submitted as part of the responses the following points have been noted as positives for the Planning Department, Planning Committee and the Council.

- Kept informed of changes
- Professional, but friendly
- Fair, reasonable, supportive and helpful (even though clearly under pressure)
- Proactive, informative, efficient and interested
- Easy to contact/accessible

- Planning department that protects its communities and is in touch with local residents needs
- Well structured
- Committee meeting, Officer presentation, debate and reasons for decision are clear
- Officers able to handle difficult questions
- Online system was useful to see other comments and submit comments
- Website is clear and easy to use
- Email notification from online system when the application updated is brilliant
- Targets/expectations were met
- Timely decision
- Only have praise for the planners
- Neighbours comments considered before decision issued
- Able to understand all communication from the Council
- Look forward to working with ECDC again in the future

Adverse Feedback Received

As with all surveys there were also points raised that need to be reviewed and changes implemented. These issues have been reviewed and summarised into 5 main points below.

- Time
 - Officer response times
 - S106 negotiations
 - Lack of resource affecting time taken to reach decision
- Decisions/Conditions
 - Onerous
 - Refusal reason badly worded
 - Concerns raised weren't responded to or addressed in the officer report
 - No consistency
 - Officer didn't spend enough time getting to know the site
 - Members reason for refusal not based on planning merits but political
 - Irrelevant reason for refusal
 - No explanation for decision made
- Online system
 - Needs to be more user friendly
 - Labelling of documents not clear
 - Amended information not clear
 - Slow and unresponsive (or not working)
 - Difficult to read, understand measurements and sizes on plans
- Information, Communication & Processes

- No updates to applicant/agent
 - Consultations missed
 - Amendments not clear
 - Discrepancies on the drawings submitted
 - Not being fully aware of the application site
 - Unnecessary use of jargon
 - Unsure what acceptable grounds for objection
 - Appropriate information not received for surface water run off
 - Not made aware of next steps/committee process
- **General**
 - Planning system bogged down in bureaucracy
 - Inexperienced Planning staff
 - Committee meeting was 'almost hostile', unprofessional and uncourteous between Members
 - No support from Local members who didn't want to prejudice their position on Planning Committee
 - Enforcement should begin with an advice system before 'wading in'
 - Site notice posted too far away from application site
 - Confidence in Officer impartiality
 - Council needs to be 'joined up'
 - No checks carried out while development taking place

Proposed Actions

The following actions have been highlighted to improve the issues raised. These are repeated in the Action plan in Appendix 1 to show the progress which has been made to date.

- **Review of procedures**
 - To ensure standardised labelling is used when publishing documents on Public Access
 - To ensure correct neighbours are selected including those from previous applications on the same site
- **Review Templates**
 - Amend notification letter to include the revised/additional plans/information
 - Initial neighbour letter to include QR code to take neighbour to specific record on public access, where to find information regarding what can be taken into consideration and check clear explanation that individual letters will not be responded to but issues raised will be addressed in the Officer report

- Contributor (member of the public) acknowledgement wording to ensure recipient is clear on next steps and if email address provided then acknowledgement is sent via email
- Committee Notification letter to include more details about the Committee process and where to find further information
- Amend Decision outcome letter to inform where they can find further explanation on how the decision was reached
- **Staff behaviours & time**
 - To develop a way to maintain contact with key people during the application process
 - Continue with weekly meetings where Planning Officers take applications to discuss with other Officers the main points of the proposal and seek their opinions to improve consistency
 - Continue with training for Officers and Member Seminars

In relation to the points listed under Time, the department are working hard on improving the time delays within the process. Unfortunately with workloads and other aspects outside of the Officers control there will always be times where we don't meet the deadlines that have been set nationally or locally, but Officers have been advised that they need to keep relevant parties up to date in relation to delays.

Another report will be tabled in 6 months which will give updates on the actions above and summary of the feedback received from January to end of June 2020.

Arguments and Conclusions

Monitoring performance enables the planning department to highlight key responses to the surveys and provides an opportunity to praise members of the team for their work and to improve the service of the department.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications other than officer time attributed to this report and assessing the information received in response to these surveys.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Contact Officer

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APPENDIX 1

Action	Progress	Target completion	Date completed
Weekly meeting between Officers to discuss current Planning applications and to seek opinions	Plans & preapp organised for Friday mornings		Sept 2018
Planning Accountabilities – Discharge of Condition timescale target	Planning Officer accountabilities updated with DIS target		29/03/2019
Pre-commencement condition procedure	06c Procedure reviewed and amended to include completing the folder label with agreement date		13/08/2019
Working folder label to include pre-commencement agreement	Template amended to include date agreement sent to applicant agent and date agreement returned		19/06/2019
S106 instruction memo template	Work carried out with Legal and template updated in Uniform		15/02/2019
Reduce amount of paper used by the Department	Only print one copy of supporting reports for Parish, Planning Officers review these documents electronically		18/02/2019
	Email contributor (member of the public) acknowledgement letters (see below)	28/02/2020	
	Email notification of committee and Decision outcome to contributors – following successful coding on template above	31/03/2020	
	Parish consultation – email requests	30/09/2020	
Develop ways to maintain effective communication with key people during the application process	Sticker system implemented to draw attention to contact Local Member with any changes/discussions		Sep 2018
	Explore ways to introduce key milestones to contact Applicant/Agent	30/04/2020	
S106 template document	Work with Legal to create S106 template to speed up process of issuing the Legal Agreement	30/08/2020	
Notification letter for an invalid application	Template under review & standard paragraphs	31/03/2020	
	Amend wording	31/03/2020	

**AGENDA ITEM NO 9
[U162]**

Initial neighbour consultation letter to include QR code, clarification regarding what can be taken into consideration and the process	Template wording under review	31/03/2020	
	Amend wording and add QR coding	30/04/2020	
Contributor acknowledgement template	Coding tested in Uniform Test to email if email address supplied	28/02/2020	
	Review wording to ensure clear about next steps	31/03/2020	
	Amend wording and import email coding to Live system	31/03/2020	
Review Public Access to ensure clarity and openness	Review and update standardised labelling used for documents in document management system to ensure clarity for members of the Public using online system	28/02/2020	
	Review information shown on Public Access (ie – key dates, etc)	31/03/2020	
	Review procedures to ensure that relevant fields are completed in uniform by the appropriate person	30/04/2020	
Ensure correct people are consulted on applications	Ensure all constraint polygons are updated in Uniform to ensure correct consultees are consulted and policies considered	31/03/2020	
	Review registration procedures to ensure clarity in which address point to use when registering planning applications – this will affect which neighbours are consulted	30/04/2020	
	Review Consultation manual for when standard consultees are required	28/02/2020	
Contributor notification of Committee and Decision	Review wording of templates to include next steps and where further information can be found	31/03/2020	
	Amend wording of template and import email coding	31/03/2020	
Amendments are clear to customers	Review and update procedures to list new or amended information in the system	30/04/2020	
	Amend notification letters and file notes to include these documents listed	30/04/2020	

AGENDA ITEM NO 9
[U162]

Review training needs for Staff and Members	Review of skills database and highlight areas where further training needed	29/05/2020	
	Research and programme training plans for officers and relevant Member Seminars	29/05/2020	