

## Planning Review

### Introduction

The planning review commenced in August 2015. The Director of Regulatory Services micro managed the planning department to ensure that the objectives outlined below could be met through changes both to the department and its processes, which were discussed at weekly meetings with all the senior officers.

An initial customer survey was sent to all agents and developers alongside individual applicants. The survey asked succinct questions on the service they had received and how they thought it could be improved. Where appropriate suggestions were included in the action plan and have been implemented. A follow up survey was sent to customers in January and comments received thus far indicate that customers have received a more positive service than previously.

The weekly meetings looked at the planning process from beginning to end from the customers' perspective.

The main objectives of the review were to ensure that:

- Members have restored **confidence** in the planning service and its processes,
- Customers receive a **consistent**, responsive and timely service where officers offer solutions rather than create problems, and,
- The service embraces a **strategic** role and is the catalyst in facilitating growth within the district rather than perceived as a blocker to development.

The last six months has seen the Planning Service undergo a period of transformation. As a result waste and duplication have been eradicated, officers have pride in their work and feel listened to and valued. Feedback from customers, agents, developers and members has been extremely positive with the majority commenting that the department has improved dramatically.

Whilst significant change has been made it is by no means the end. The initial review is seen as a platform which will continue to evolve and grow to enable the East Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Service to be both the best Planning Service and to embrace the Council's corporate priorities of East Cambs being the place to do business.

The Planning Service, though one team, is made up of individual components – pre-app and validation, planners, conservation, trees and enforcement.

Each week the Director (Regulatory Services) and her senior officers met to discuss the journey of each component and an action plan was created highlighting changes in the practices, processes and procedures. The action plan (attached at Appendix 1) included specific officers who would implement the change with target dates for completion. The plan was reviewed weekly to ensure deadlines were met.

The above had a plethora of advantages: officers were given an opportunity to make positive change, performance was monitored and shared amongst the team, officers took responsibility and ownership of the service and the invisible lines between the sections that made up the Planning Service were eradicated. The team started to support each other and to see themselves as one team who collectively wanted to provide a service that everyone could be proud of.

The changes gave officers greater confidence in presenting applications at Planning Committee. In turn Planning Committee has greater confidence in officers and recently congratulated the Planning Service on its professionalism and desire to embrace the Council's growth agenda. Part of the improvements included producing a monthly performance report which is presented at Planning Committee. This has been welcomed by the Committee as it can see at a glance how the department has performed for the previous month.

### **Main Highlights and Changes**

There have been a number of changes within the department; this includes both staffing and processes.

The team is now led by a new Planning Manager, Rebecca Saunt who has considerable experience in the local planning issues. Her team has been strengthened by gaining a third full-time Senior Planning Officer Barbara Greengrass who supports Andrew Phillips and Julie Barrow in managing the team. Two new Planning Officers have also recently joined the team who will start studying towards their Planning Masters in September. They join Oli Haydon, who is already studying towards his Planning Masters. Following the recent recruitment we now have a full complement of officers in the planning team. In addition, Lorraine Brown (Conservation Officer) is now studying towards a Masters in Urban Design which will also assist the team going forward. It is considered important within the department to grow our own and support Officers in studying for their Masters, whilst they gain practical on the job experience.

There has also been a reorganisation within the administration team to ensure that we have more consistent support to our officers. The Development Support officers will now assist a delegated team of Senior Planner and Planning Officers to ensure that the needs of our customers are met.

In-house training for all Planning Officers has been offered, to include:

- Management training for Senior Officers;
- IT training to include Uniform, Powerpoint and Access training;
- Presentation skills training;
- Time management;
- Compiling and presenting clear committee reports;
- Political management

We are presently reviewing the enforcement team, who currently comprise two part-time officers and one full time agency worker, on a temporary contract. We are looking into recruiting a third full-time officer to the team to strengthen this department. These officers will be managed by Senior Planning Officers.

Other improvements to our planning service include:

- Updated and improved website;
- Direct dial telephone numbers, email addresses and mobile numbers given to every applicant so they can speak directly to their planner, also direct dial numbers now given for the duty phone;
- Duty rota during office hours including telephone calls and all day surgery, and telephone call support for enforcement team;
- Blackberrys provided to senior officers and mobile phones for all officers so customers can gain easier access to them and officers can access their emails and calendars;
- Home working supported to enable greater productivity when required (e.g. writing Committee reports);
- Weekly performance management reports are produced for all parts of the Planning Service and are discussed, monitored and prioritised at the weekly Senior Officers' meeting;
- Voicemail facility set up for Trees team and will be set up for Planners by the end of March 2016;
- Training given to customer services advisers on basic planning matters;
- Introduction of updated planning leaflets, including a leaflet launched on pre-application advice to promote this service;
- A very successful agents' forum and newsletter;
- Validation time has gone from 20 working days down to 2.

More strategic improvements to the planning service are:

- No longer charging pre-app fees for charities or small businesses (5 employees or less);
- Introduction of one-of pre-app meeting with no written advice for a reduced fee;
- Introduction of a free follow up plan checking service for householder applications (where pre-app has been sought) – appointment based;
- Scale of charges has been amended to be more proportionate to the advice required;
- Bespoke, individual meetings with agents/developers to discuss development, CIL, S106 etc;
- Free initial consultation with Planner in partnership with the Economic Development Team;
- A more joined up service with County Highways, Environment Agency for more complex applications, the Planner leading on this, facilitating and chairing meetings with all agencies;
- Better and enhanced cross departmental relationships including Economic Development, Building Control, Housing, Environmental Health and Strategic Planning;
- Bespoke meetings with individual agents and developers to discuss what is important to them.

## **External Partners**

### **Planning Advisory Service**

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) met with staff from the planning department and selected Members during fact finding visits on the 14<sup>th</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015. A copy of the PAS report is attached at Appendix 2 for information, however, a summary of their recommendations can be found below.

The report received from PAS reinforced the path that the review group had embarked upon. The report was received on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2015, by which time a number of the recommendations had already been implemented and addressed since the review began in August 2015. The receipt of the report strengthened what the team were already doing.

PAS have continued to work with the team throughout the review and have benchmarked the planning department with 40 other Authorities. The report produced and the data analysis within the report compares the planning department with 4 other Authorities of a similar nature to show the comparisons. Communication with PAS has continued and they have advised that they are happy to continue to work with the department and now PAS sights East Cambridgeshire planning team as best practice to other Authorities.

1	Relationships between officers and members, and between members and the Council's Plan, need a helping hand to rebuild trust and to reassert commonly held objectives.	<p>The review of the council's plan represents an excellent opportunity for informal and wide-ranging discussions between cabinet, committee and ward members and with officers at all levels</p> <p>Implement member / officer relationship training. Improve the political awareness of officers</p>
2	<p>The improvement plan needs to be more focused on what will deliver the most customer benefit and is at a stage where focus needs to be on its delivery rather than keeping on adding new ideas.</p> <p>Completion of the improvement plan itself will not improve the service, focus on continuous improvement will.</p>	A service review will be appropriate in the future as part of new leadership / new plan and engaging staff
3	ECDC needs to deal with its problems recruiting staff. Creative, flexible approaches may be required to ensure it can compete in a recruitment market that is hotting up.	Short term this may require money. Longer term it would be prudent to develop staff rather than chasing a small number of professional staff.
4	The review of the service needs to be clear about what is required to effectively lead the service including capability, capacity and support. The service leadership needs a stronger managerial, rather than operational focus.	<p>Directors and Leaders need to be clear about the requirements of the post and ensure that the post-holder is supported to do the job.</p> <p>The council is quite clear about the delivery of a growth agenda and this should be a consideration in terms of experience and credibility as well ensuring that the right managerial training and support is available.</p>
5	Challenge whether there is a customer service problem. Work with the customers to identify the weak areas and address them.	<p>Regular customer surveys should be considered.</p> <p>Report on customer satisfaction / feedback</p> <p>Ensure key members are kept up to date on progress on the action plan.</p>

6	<p>Ensure that case officers and management can effectively manage their workload and manage performance.</p>	<p>Improve the quality and timeliness of the information that is available.</p>
7	<p>Enforcement service capacity is an acknowledged issue and a decision needs to be made about the appropriate number of staff required, who they report to and the level of administration support required.</p> <p>Enforcement cases need to be prioritised and the case closure process changed to give more authority to case officers. There may be a need to create an enforcement plan approved by councillors so that service levels and priorities are clear.</p> <p>Case officers should be given more power to close cases themselves in certain circumstances e.g. under a standing advice protocol) and or powers to close cases be delegated below head of service level.</p>	<p>Recruit to required level of FTE. Reporting line into head of planning isn't working due to capacity. Reporting into a senior should be considered. This will also help with consistency.</p> <p>Prioritise enforcement cases in line with clear enforcement plan.</p> <p>Take a more risk-based approach to case closure. A short review of how often officers 'get it wrong' will highlight the types of cases that need to go to senior management.</p>

The following performance highlights are based on the Planning Quality Framework findings data.

Performance Measure	Commentary
Days between cases declared valid to decision.	East Cambs demonstrates a positive picture - statistics show a planning service that makes decisions as early as possible rather than waiting until the last minute. Majors take 10 weeks on average, Minors and Conditions taking 13 weeks on average (worth keeping a weather eye on Minors due to Government performance focus on Minors).
Work arriving valid on day 1.	75% of applications arrive valid and are ready to work on. Significantly higher than national average of just below 50%.
Approval rate	Approval rate 92%. 70 in every 1,000 applications refused - mainly householders (24), minors (24) and prior notifications (18)
Delegation rate	Delegation rate 96%. Healthy, although trend slowly downward over 18 month from high of 98%. Possibly a reflection of more call-ins happening due to members wishing to be more pro-growth than existing policy allows. Numbers work out at 19 cases in every 1,000 decisions made going through committee – 90% of these are minors.
Withdrawn applications	Compares very favourably with comparators at only 3%.
Zero fee applications	11% of work done for 'free' - applications in the records that have no fee attached (after accounting for trees and heritage work). These cases if the correct fee is attached would normally represent 'free go' applications.

As you can see from the PAS report they have confirmed that our planning department is well-performing according to Government National Statistics. The majority of the recommendations from the report had already been identified and have been implemented as part of the review and the recommendations outlined in this report also addresses some of the above, particularly relating to the enforcement service. I believe that with the improvements we have made so far, together with future improvements going forward, that our service will provide an excellent service for our residents.

### **Chief Planning Officer and Development Managers Meetings**

The Planning Manager attends Chief Planning Officer meetings and Development Managers meetings, alongside colleagues from other Local Authorities across Cambridgeshire. The attendance at these meetings enables key issues to be discussed, the sharing of information and best practice, which can further help to improve the department and the service provided to our customers.

## **Agents Forum and Newsletter**

A quarterly agents' forum is held at the Council offices. This meeting is well attended, with approximately 30 agents attending. A quarterly agent's newsletter is also sent to all agents. The newsletter includes staff updates, updates to the planning service and any relevant information at the time of writing. As there have been a number of staff changes and a number of new staff joining the department, an agents' breakfast meeting is being held in March to enable all agents to meet the whole of the planning team; this includes the Planning Officers, Conservation Officer, Enforcement Officers, Tree Officers and the support team as well as Members of the Planning Committee. This will be an informal meeting and will further improve relationships with agents.

## **Continued Development**

Continued development is important and the Planning Manager holds weekly meetings with the senior officers to discuss the service and continued improvements and ideas as well as dissecting performance reports. The purpose of the meeting is to focus on the priorities for the week alongside identifying areas for improvement. A number of improvements are coming shortly and they include:

- Revision of all of our conditions to make sure they are up-to-date, valid and enforceable;
- Working on an online appointment service so customers can book appointment to see their planner;
- Web chat service so that customers can communicate with the Planning Team in real time;
- Introduction of video guidance on key subjects, including pre-app and the planning process;
- Streamlining processes within the enforcement team;
- More attendance by planners at parish council meetings;
- Introduction of a tracking service for customers to track the progress of their application to enable customers to see the status of their application and follow it every step of the way;
- Customer service questionnaires to agents, applicants, neighbours, Parish Councils and Local Members in conjunction with the Planning Advisory Service;
- Joint Planning Advisory Service and Officer pre application seminar;
- Consider the merits of incorporating a performance monitoring officer within the team/current job roles, who will research best practice, review and implement major changes within the team.



## Conclusion

The Team have made considerable positive changes within the Planning Service and many of the objectives have now been or are being met. In order to facilitate existing changes and to enable the department to meet our aspirations the following **recommendations** are proposed:

- The deletion of the Senior Enforcement Officer role, the Monitoring Officer role and a part time Support Officer role (these are vacant posts);
- The creation of a full time Enforcement Officer;
- Enforcement Officers to report to Senior Planning Officers;
- The creation of a Senior Support Officer, which will incorporate the roles previously carried out by the Monitoring Officer;
- The creation of a full time Support Officer.

The enforcement team has been reviewed and since December have been reporting to and managed by the Senior Planners. The processes within this team are also being reviewed, implemented and are time specific. These changes in practices and reporting arrangements plus the temporary full time agency Enforcement Officer has enabled the number of cases dealt with per officer to be reduced to a more manageable number. This has also allowed a number of the older cases to be reviewed and some closed down.

Looking at the improvements which have already been made, including the inclusion of the enforcement team within the planning office and through the management of the team by the Senior Planners, it is recommended that this should continue and the Senior Enforcement Officer post is deleted. This will allow the creation of a full time Enforcement Officer who can focus on the enforcement service on a full time basis and not the managerial side of the job, which will be carried out by the Senior Planning Officers.

The Office Supervisor's role has considerably changed, especially during the course of the review. One of the recommendations is the creation of a Senior Support Officer role (Appendix 3) which would report to the Office Supervisor. This role will also incorporate condition monitoring following the departure of the Monitoring Officer from the Authority, and the recommended deletion of this post. The creation of this role alongside the functions of the Office Supervisor will enable the department to continue to review and implement best practices to ensure efficiency and customer service is maintained while allowing continued performance monitoring.

Following the departure of a part time Support Officer, it is recommended that this role is deleted, and replaced with a full time Support Officer to ensure up to date validation and customer satisfaction throughout the planning process.

A staff structure chart (Appendix 4) is attached to this report showing the proposed organisation structure compared with the existing structure. The recommended structure would provide a saving to the Council of approximately £31,000 per annum.



Jo Brooks  
Director of Regulatory Services

1<sup>st</sup> March 2016

## PLANNING REVIEW ACTIONS BY TOPIC AREA

### **Action Area 1 : Website Improvements**

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
1.1 IT dedicated help to be provided	JB/LB		Meeting with Mark – notes circulated by email	Ongoing
1.2 External website & wechat to be designed. Planning to be pilot for council	LB		Work started. Planning to be pilot for Council website. 12.11.15 – spoke with Richard Quayle as Hetty not back until end of Nov. timescales for this much quicker than first thought – report going to Transformation Sub Committee on the 23 <sup>rd</sup> Nov & they are looking to have an fully functioning new website within 6 months – I suggested that perhaps we work within this timescale as not unreasonable and that planning be one of the first to 'cross over' – not sure what everyone's thoughts are on this?  LB met with RQ. Plan is to have a fully functioning website within 6 months therefore no reason for Planning to be pilot.	Meeting on 11 <sup>th</sup> Dec – Hettie, Annette, Oli, Lorraine
1.3 Meet the team web page	Jo LB	Quick win	Jo to confirm with RQ that Planning is to be first service area to be transferred across to new website. Photographs taken, service call raised to create. Not published as yet until concerns addressed.  Agreed to have a team rather than individual photographs.  30.11.15 Postponed until new team is in place.	Completed  Ongoing – Waiting to get all team together
1.4 Advertise changes	LB	End of review	We've updated the website with changes to pre-app, leaflets, contact details	Ongoing
1.5 Existing website to be updated for trees and enforcement	LB/Oli		New enforcement web pages on line and tree pages just finalised – waiting for IT to publish trees pages. 30.11.15	Completed

			Trees pages have now been updated and are on line	
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## Action Area 2 : Phone calls

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
2.1 Can planners diaries be linked with development services calendar	LB	Quick win	IT call raised to give Penny, Andrew, Sarah, Sue, Cathy, me administrator rights to do this from DS calendar to trial. If it works then will roll out to officers. Will update when call has been actioned.	Closed – not possible.
2.2 Capture enforcement calls in a report	LB	Quick win	Unfortunately had to conclude this is not possible. Meeting with enforcement – they already have a system of recording calls if not on CRM. They have no need of a spreadsheet as this would just be duplication.	Completed
2.3 Enforcement officers to trial diverting calls to duty officer line when out of office	SH/PW /SH	Quick win	SW and SP discussed and agreed not to trial diverting calls.	Completed
2.4 Phones and blackberries for officers	Jo	Quick win	Phones received, blackberries still outstanding. Jo has chased and should be received this week.	Completed
2.5 Voicemail for trees	Jo	Quick win	All phones received and set up. Jo to chase as IT issues – Jo chased should be sorted.	Completed
2.6 note pad to record calls as per trees	LF	Quick win	IT and BT are working on the issues. Lucy has designed one.	Completed - Sent to seniors 15.9.15
2.7 Voicemail for planners	Sarah	Within month	Office Services contacted and voicemails to be implemented by 7 <sup>th</sup> March.	Ongoing

## Action Area 3: Revised Leaflets/ Information (direct link with service plan)

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
3.1 Overarching leaflet to be produced with links to other leaflets	LB	End September	Template discussed and process agreed.	Completed
3.2 Priority for leaflet production to be prioritised	LB	End September	<p><b>30.11.15</b> Lorraine to work out priority and circulate before Planning Officers team meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> Dec</p> <p>Lorraine to circulate completed leaflet for checking and arrange for printing for Reception</p> <p>Due to officer workloads, Penny will start drafting the leaflets. Lucy offered to help with the typing.</p> <p>The leaflets that Penny was able to do are with LB and RS.</p> <p>Officers will need to get involved. SW suggested scheduling a day to draft.</p> <p>Leaflets completed by Officers, being checked by Seniors before being printed.</p>	Completed
3.3 Task of drafting other leaflets to be divided between all officers	LB/LF  All officers	End September	<p>Lorraine completed another &amp; Andy amended front page</p> <p>Will divide up at team meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> Dec</p> <p>To be finalised end of February</p> <p>Waiting on relevant leaflets to be produced</p>	Completed
3.4 Leaflets to be sent out with acknowledgement letters	SP		SW provided LB with copy to use. This has been put on the website (planning process page).	Complete
3.5 Flow chart of process	LB/SP(?)		Needs to be added to acknowledgement letters when sent out.	

**Action Area 4: Customer Contact Centre**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>Priority/timescale</b>	<b>Progress Note</b>	<b>Completed</b>
4.1 Regular liaison meetings	RS/SP	Ongoing		ongoing
4.2 Development of FAQ	RS/SP		Interactive house link provided. Met with Karen in IT. FAQs provided.	Completed 16.9.15

**Action Area 5 : Customer Satisfaction Survey**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer</b>	<b>Priority/timescale</b>	<b>Progress Note</b>	<b>Completed</b>
5.1 Survey	LB		Lorraine has analysed results which look really positive.  Need to consider whether to do a follow up survey or rely on PAS instead. Looking likely that will use PAS tool.	Finished – but likely follow up survey.
	LB		<b>30.11.15</b> Lorraine to organise January Survey Monkey to see if things have improved...question 'Have you noticed any difference in the level of service?'  Lorraine & Lucy to speak to Martin regarding use of peer review and how we go about setting these up.	Follow up survey sent out January
	LB/LF/RS		<b>17.02.16</b> Advise customers of surveys and set up system to automate surveys	Meeting with Martin to set up customer survey in association with PAS – 17.02.16 Ongoing

## Action Area 6: IT Improvements

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
6.1 Revisions required to letter templates	SP/RS		However issue discovered. The text of the letters also needs to be updated which is a much larger job.	Completed
	LF		SW spoken to IT who will do the updates when they change the signature.	Completed
			<b>30.11.15</b> Trees letters – issue with the phone number in the body of the text. Lucy to check	Completed
6.2 Sarah needs permissions from IT	Jo		Still outstanding, in Jo's absence SW will chase IT.	Completed
			<b>30.11.15</b> Jo has met with Richard to resolve this	
6.3 E-mails direct from Anite?	LB		Lorraine has met with IT. Unfortunately this is not possible with the current version of Anite.	Completed
6.4 Set up IT working party ( see service plan)	RS/LB		Agreed that the IT working part would comprise Andrew, Lorraine, Lucy, Cathy, Sue and Oli. First meeting in diary for end of October.	Completed (amended RS for SW)
			Due to sickness meeting didn't happen and will need to be rescheduled.	
			<b>30.11.15</b> Meeting set up for Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	
			Visited Bedford Council in January to review working with tablets. Meeting to be set up to discuss.	Ongoing
6.5 Enterprise	Jo LF		Jo to consider whether planning could use Enterprise	
			Lucy meeting with Mark in IT. Business case to be completed and agreed.	
			Waiting to see what is happening with IT review.	

## Action Area 7: Performance Reports

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
7.1 Work with IT to produce additional reports	SW	Short term	IT have fixed problem with case notes not pulling through to individual case reports. Issue of lack of Access skills raised and Lorraine, Lucy, Sarah to be trained more thoroughly on using reports so we have future resilience built in to department.  IT still have a number of reports to write – however service request closed until we have PAS review data.  <b>30.11.15</b> Lorraine to chase Martin for idea of timescales  January - Meeting with Martin to discuss anomalies in the data produced by PAS and reports to be re-run by beginning of March.	Joy arranging access training  Reports on hold until PAS data received
7.2 Reports to be circulated to team each week for review	SW	Ongoing	Training arranged on Access for Sarah and Lucy Circulated each week.  Will need to handover.	Ongoing
7.3 Team to ensure that reports only include current cases	all	Short term	Lists have been reviewed and updated, however, Enforcement Officers still need to try and close their old/completed cases.  Enforcement Officers now closed their old and completed cases – January 2016	Completed
7.4 Case Notes	all		Officers to include case notes... starting with their older applications	Completed – keep monitoring



## Action Area 8: Training Programme

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
8.1 Officer needs identified	Jo		<p>Training needs to be scheduled.</p> <p>Vince has now provided presentation training.</p> <p>Budget training 29 September.</p> <p>Powerpoint training to be provided by Oli.</p> <p>Cathy has received uniform training. 30.11 – Waiting on Karen producing some notes</p> <p>SW and SH received spatial training.</p> <p>Jo has discussed management training for Seniors with HR and is due to meet John Hill to discuss.</p> <p>John Hill to provide training on writing Committee reports plus political management at team meeting in November.</p> <p>Lack of money in training budget as its being used to fund our graduates.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>March</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>
8.2 Seminar for PCs and Members	All – SW coordinate		<p>Seminar to be provided 1 October 2015</p> <p>Content to include 5 year supply and planning process. SW circulated a suggestion for comment. Discussed with PM could use a case study. Meeting needs to be arranged to consider what to include in the presentation. (SW)</p> <p>Joy to check Member responses.</p> <p>Seminar provided</p>	Completed

# Appendix 1

## Action Area 9: PAS Review

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
9.1 data to be translated into required format so we can carry out benchmarking	LB/LF	Short Term	Issue with linked applications. Need input from IDOX. – this has been received but I'm not competent enough in Access...passed to Lucy to see if she can work out how to do this. Martin coming to meet with myself and Lucy on 17 <sup>th</sup> Nov  <b>30.11.15</b> Still having issues with data – see previous...Lorraine to chase Martin  January 2016 - Meeting with Martin to discuss data issues	Ongoing  PAS hope to resolve by beginning of March
9.2 Peer Review to be carried out	PAS		Officers have met with Nick Harding, who is due to return to the officers for another day. Nick has highlighted the need to speak to Members – 15 October proposed.  <b>30.11.15</b> Joy to speak to Nick to get timescale for feedback.  Report received.	Completed
9.3 PAS presentation for whole team	Joy		Agreed it would be helpful for Martin to present findings to whole team. Joy to organise.  <b>30.11.15</b> – See above 9.1  Meeting arranged for 9 <sup>th</sup> March	Ongoing

## Action Area 10 : Duty

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
10.1 Duty calls being logged in spreadsheet	all	ongoing	Spreadsheet set up and refined.	Completed
10.2 Advert in reception		End of review		

## Action Area 11 : Pre-applications

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
11.1 Martin to send us link to PAS advice on pre-applications	PAS		This information is readily available on the PAS website.  30.11.15 Lorraine to send link to Rebecca and possibly topic for discussion at team meeting as to whether we want to change anything or leave alone for a while	Completed
11.2 Plan checking service?	LB, PM	1 October	Meeting to be arranged with PAS to pursue Agreed 30 minutes to be provided for householder applications. Will need to amend website, amend pre-application template and set up procedure.  Possible use of on-line appointments. Lorraine to investigate this with IT. Support team to provide the service. Lorraine meeting Annette.  13.11.15 – meeting with IT – concerned about the cost as doesn't seem value for money and overly complicated solution presented by Firmstep. Believe it would work better in a similar way to the existing bulky waste appointments  30.11.15 IT now happy with proposal, subject to some minor changes. Email sent to Jo and Rebecca once finalised	Document checklist completed 16.9.15 SP  19.10.15 – meeting with Firmstep

# Appendix 1

			can be signed off and they can build.	
			<b>22.02.16</b> Meeting with Rebecca, Lucy, Sarah Lorraine, Annette, Sue and Karen and can produce what required, without the cost implications of Firmstep. To be completed by beginning of April.	
11.3 Fees for pre-applications to be reviewed	SW, PM, RS, Lucy	1 October	Revised charging schedule produced. Small businesses to receive free advice, agreed to also provide exemptions for CLTs and charities.	Completed
11.4 Pre-application letter to be amended to refer to other validation matters not just information requirements	RS	1 October	Ongoing	
11.5 Leaflet to explain pre-application process	PM	1 October	New Pre app template added to Uniform	Completed
11.6 Explore provision of coordinated pre-application service	AP	Review mid January.	As above	Completed
11.7 Pre-pre-application work with Darren on his new website and service to Members	RS		Interest from County and this has been incorporated within the revised fee schedule. Still waiting to hear from the Environment Agency.  Put on hold – mid January  Look at putting links to Highways and Lead Local Flood Authority pre-app forms on website  How best to explain to members?	Ongoing – not in place for 1 <sup>st</sup> Oct  Ongoing  Ongoing
11.8 Member involvement in pre-applications?	AP		AP has investigated what other Cambridgeshire authorities do.  <b>30.11.15</b> AP looked at Sth Cambs & City committee system. Also suggested inviting members to PC meetings where officers have been asked to attend for larger	

				schemes.	
				January 2016 Andrew to review again and see if we want to implement changes.	

## Action Area 12 : Appeals

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
12.1 Sarah needs to sit with Denise when we receive next appeal to understand process	SP	urgent	LP Plan policies being scanned in. LF and RS putting together a list of information requirements for appeals questionnaires	Completed
12.2 Need to review process to assess whether officers need more admin support	LF	Medium term	LF has reviewed procedures and will be meeting with RS to see what additional help support officers can provide.	Ongoing
12.3 Scanning documents	LF/RS		Difficulties accessing appeal documentation in public access. Need to ensure that correct documentation is being scanned. Also see if customer services can help.  Oli found a workaround to extract documents from Anite.	Completed
12.4 Committee overturns	Jo		30.11.15 Customer Services to be extracting documents from Anite for appeals processes and saving in the S drive for officers, as required. Give Committee opportunity to submit comments. Jo to speak to Josh to see if he will provide a collective response on behalf of the Planning Committee.	Completed
12.5 Reporting appeals to Committee	LF		Monthly reports to go to Committee, but need to consider format. Include as part of the monthly performance report.	Completed
12.6 Need appeal procedures	Jo/RS/AP/JB	1.11.2015	To produce first draft of procedures for officers	Ongoing

## Action Area 13: Staffing/Recruitment

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
13.1 Explore graduate entry post with funded masters	SW/JB	urgent	JB and SW have met with Nicole and funding for 2 graduate posts has been agreed.  Adverts to be agreed by SW asap.  Further funding for 2 more planning officer posts - Recent recruitment round appears to have been successful	Completed  Completed – Oli recruited  Completed – Gareth and Richard recruited
13.2 Do we need specialist officers/ access to eg ecologist, landscape architect	RS  AP		<b>30.11.15</b> Need to review if needs to go for external assessment (i.e. landscape/equine) and not wait for trees to advise if this is the case.  Officers contacted other Local Authorities to see if we could use services – on going discussions to work out requirements.  RS to speak to Maggie re. changes to procurement procedures/policy and to arrange training if required.  AP to speak to Oli and ask him to look at adding professionals to the contact list (approach professional bodies if required)	Ongoing  Completed
13.3 Consider whether admin support is required to carry out roles.	All	<b>14.09.2015</b>	SH and PW still need to discuss but would like more support. Trees need around 2 half days. Possible option – technician allocated to each team.  <b>30.11.15</b> Enforcement will be the pool (LB & Trees).  <b>15.02.16</b>	Ongoing  Completed – implement once full complement of staff

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	CW/JB		Support team now split between Planning Officer teams and the pool for enforcement, trees and conservation.	Completed
13.4 Melissa work loads	RS		Cathy to discuss with Sarah their requirements and Julie to put a list together of enforcement requirements RS to liaise with Melissa regarding her workload 30.11.15 Has emailed but not had a response – will chase	Ongoing
				Completed

## Action Area 14: Validation/Registration/Support team

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
14.1 Delay with applications going to finance re fees	JB/SP	Quick win	JB and SP have met with finance and agreed a process which will speed up process by ½ day.	Completed.
14.2 Trees applications.	CW	Quick win	Agreed to go direct to CW for initial checking.	Completed
14.3 Review validation checklist	RS, SP, Lucy	October 2015	Underway.  SW has met with CW re the trees section. 30.11.15  RS/LF to work on in the next few weeks to have draft before 13 <sup>th</sup>  Finalised and published on website.	Completed
14.4 Possible revised structure	Jo/LF/SP /SW		Team have concerns about the proposal. Both SP and SW have discussed these with Jo.	Completed

## Action Area 15 : Allocation of Applications and Consultation

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
15.1 Support team to identify consultations	SW	Medium term	Commenced drafting a guide for who to consult by constraint etc. Currently being trialled by SP and LF –	Completed

			seems to be working well.	
15.2 Investigate alternative ways of allocating applications.	RS		Agreed though that it is not the role of support to do the allocating only the adverts and consultations. Support team trialling doing consultations and allocations from 15.02.16 – review ongoing Trialling recording application type and location by officer.	Ongoing Ongoing

#### Action Area 16 : Members and Committee Process

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
16.1 Committee De Briefs	all	Meetings in diary day after Committee	First de-brief held.	Completed
16.2 Members to be updated using pigeon holes	all	End of process		
16.3 Risk identification	all	From November	Flag up risks if application overturned in reports for major applications. PM/RS to draft a standard paragraph.	Completed
16.4 Highlight application figures to Committee	LF	From October Committee	Provide update to Committee of applications determined, received, appeals, enforcement, etc	Completed
16.5 Scheme of Delegation	RS		To go to Full Council in January but Jo to discuss with Cllr Hunt first.	Completed – Went to leaders brief and so minor doesn't have to go to committee.

#### Action Area 17 Monitoring/ Application Progress

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
17.1 Progress wheel	LB		LB discussed with IT who have advised that it should	On hold until



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				be possible – would work perfectly with Enterprise. Need to ensure give sufficient information to avoid increased contact from customers.	decision made about Enterprise
17.2 Scanning of chasing e-mails	all			Doesn't look possible ... but Enterprise could do this. Seniors to check that their team members are doing this.	Ongoing
17.3 100 day limit	LB, Lucy			SW to send e-mail to team as not being done. Agents been advised	Completed
17.4 Investigate use of table template for householder applications	RS			Now on website. LF to produce a template – Sent to IT 21/09/2015	Ongoing
17.5 Consultee responses	LF			Template from Richard West – RS to find and circulate to the group to discuss.	Completed
17.6 Stamping plans approved	all			LF to investigate whether comments could be typed straight into uniform.	Completed
17.7 Amended plans process	SP/LF			Agreed unnecessary and will instruct officers to stop doing this and to also dispose of superseded plans. Send amendments direct to PLservices rather than reprographics.	Ongoing
				30.11.15 - not to be implemented until team changes have been made. Need to produce guidance on what is needed	
				January 2016 Guidance sent to Officers on what goes where.	
17.8 Need to work to Earliest decision date. Do officers need to use spreadsheets to monitor progress?	LF			LF to investigate whether we can make better use of the diary system in uniform.	Completed
	RS			LF – very cumbersome – could be solved with Enterprise Oli produced spreadsheet – could be shared? RS to review and discuss with team	Ongoing
17.9 When we make suggestions for design improvements ensure	LB			LB to draft paragraph to be added to pre-application template letter	Ongoing

include health warning				
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### Action Area 18: Conditions and Refusals

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
18.1 Feedback from regulatory Committee – can any DISAs be done in less than 8 weeks?	LF  RS/API/ JB/LB		Many are but cannot be measured as applicant can apply for more than one condition in an application.  LF to investigate possibility of measurement. Looking at possibly producing a report but not easy solution due to the way the applications can be processed. <b>30.11.15</b> LB suggested the use of the case notes facility to state when verbally given the go ahead or emailed but not completed on the system. Then we are monitoring on our own reports and can be produced if necessary. AP/JB to make officers aware and update	
18.2 Update standard conditions	RS/LB/ CW/AP	19.11.15	LF to look at legislation RS has met with CW to discuss tree conditions AP has met with Environmental Health. Concerns raised about the "SPD" they are using. SW advised that she had raised standard conditions at Cambridgeshire DM Forum and there had been agreement that it would be useful to have Cambridgeshire wide conditions.  LF has circulated a contamination questionnaire to consider.  Conditions forwarded to enforcement to discuss and to be finalised in March	Ongoing
18.3 Street naming and numbering	AP  Jo		Andrew to see if can get street naming and numbering to withhold addresses where conditions have not been discharged.  Jo to speak to Street Naming and investigate this	Completed – passed to Jo

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18.4 Monitoring conditions	SW		further	SW has shared the information that Peter left with Lucy.	Ongoing
	LF			Lucy needs to set up an alternative system – to be incorporated in the new role Senior Support Officer	
18.5 Encourage consultees to use our standard conditions	RS/LB/ CW/AP	After standard conditions have been updated.			
18.6 Support to identify consultees	LF/SP	After trial of registration consultation has been completed.	30.11.15	Been advised that LLFA being consulted when don't need to be	
18.7 Highways	AP	23.11.15	Andrew to complete the review of conditions with Highways		Completed
18.8 Procedures for DISAs	LF/SP	1.11.15	Lucy and Sarah to update procedures.		Completed
18.9 Refusals guidance	RS/AP PM/LB – to involve All team	19.11.15	Support team to invalidate when necessary and send consultations out.	Agreed that should contact applicant before refusing an application. Procedures to be drawn up. Once in place to promote to Members and include on website.	
	JB		30.11.15	Should be more guidance – should not be refusing applications without speaking to agents. One size does not fit all. Also need to make agents aware that when not listened to pre-app or not submitting amended plans then we will take a much harder line	
	LF			JB to put together something and circulate to the group. Circulated to seniors and officers to agree and sent to officers now to use.  LF to arrange for pre-app responses to be sent to the applicant as well as the agent.	

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## Action Area 19: Enforcement

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
19.1 Best practice to be researched	SH and PW	End September	Paul Johnson now in post. Lots of templates which he will share with us.  23.11.15 LF to produce new front sheet for enforcement files with checklist  30.11.15	Completed
19.2 Acknowledgement letter amended and put on Uniform	LB	Urgent	Letter written and circulated with enforcement. IT call to be raised to put onto uniform	Completed
19.3 File opening and closure	SH LF		Admin to close cases in uniform once signed.  LF to set up procedures for opening and closing cases. New files should have a checklist on the front sheet.  Procedures for opening cases completed.  Closing files to stay with enforcement.	Completed
19.4 Working with EH	SW/SH		Discussed with Jo and Liz and have invited Liz to attend one of our Monday meetings	
19.5 Need to draft additional letter templates and make better use of uniform.	LF  JB/SH/PW		Paul left us some examples. LF looking at enforcement process 1 <sup>st</sup> draft complete  JB/SH/PW – To draw up procedure for putting enforcement notices onto uniform	Ongoing
19.6 Security of files	SH		Pippa visited Kings Lynn to get examples. Do they need to be kept more securely?  30.11.15	

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	JB		Resounding yes – JB to speak to enforcement informally initially regarding clear desk policy.	
19.7 S215 notices	RS SW		RS to send general email regarding confidentiality SW circulated MPs note for consideration. To be discussed at next meeting. Vince mentioned that Fenland were using this power and that he'd been trying to meet with Simon King. SW contacted Nick Harding to see what Peterborough and Fenland do. No reply.  Discussed at meeting on 16/11/2015 agreed that it wasn't an immediate priority. SW advised MP of this.	Closed
19.8 Monitoring spreadsheets	LF		SW passed Peter's handover note about his spreadsheets to Lucy.	
19.9 Plotting of cases	SP/LF		Enterprise may be able to do this. To discuss with Denise how to try and plot enforcement cases better, by using google maps  30.11.15 Officers now update if incorrectly plotted and amendments made	Completed –
19.10 Searching for cases	SP		To produce note to provide guidance on how to search for enforcement cases.	Completed – constraints now being printed
19.11 Prioritisation	JB  RS		SW handed out copies of the Enforcement Plan so the team could consider whether we needed a better prioritisation scheme.  RS to look at job descriptions to address concerns regarding descriptions and responsibilities.  30.11.15	Completed

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			Enforcement officers are capable of determining priority of cases. Once review finished will need to go back and look at Enforcement plan and probably amend accordingly	Completed
19.12 Anonymous complaints	SH/LF		RS reviewed job descriptions and posts been regarded by HR – February 2016 Need to change form Need to discuss with Maggie re disclosing complaints at appeals.	Completed  Completed – wording of acknowledgement letter to say may be passed on
19.13 Expediency			Who needs to make the call? RS to look at policy to see if it states who makes the decision as to whether to take formal action or not. Julie Barrow now carrying out 1:1's or enforcement going to discuss with Rebecca Need to identify appropriate timescales for cases.	Completed
19.14 Timescales			30.11.15 – Where cases have been progressed to a certain stage, no need to keep files open for monitoring indefinitely. They can be closed and reopened at any point should the need arise. Should this be written into a procedure? Cases now closed where possible	Completed
19.15 Capacity of legal	JB		Only Maggie (Peterborough assisting). Everything to go through her... shouldn't sway our decisions in whether to take action or not.	No real action here – do we need one?
19.16 Overseeing of enforcement changes	JB		Julie offered to oversee the review of the whole process as she had previously worked in enforcement.	Ongoing
19.7 Enforcement to attend plans and pre-apps first 10 mins to discuss	SH/PW	January	This will be implemented in January	

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relevant cases			
19.8 Scanning of enforcement notices	LF/JB		
	LF		
		Need to be more stringent at recording information. LF/JB to look at getting the enforcement register on-line via public access.  LF looking at getting notices scanned and published on the website  Enforcement register/index produced in January 2016. Lucy to upload to website.  Enforcement Notices scanned in, need to upload to website and design searching mechanism	Ongoing

## Action Area 20: Liaison with Strategic Planning

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
20.1 Proactive/encouragement of growth	Jo		Joy to ask Jo for update	Completed
20.2 Feeding into the Local Plan update	RS		RS to establish timescales for LP review to ensure that officers have adequate input into the process	Completed
	RS/JB		Officers involved in working party.	Ongoing
	AP/all		Local Plan out for consultation at present – Andrew to set up document for officers to feed into and discuss at team meeting before forwarding comments to Strategic Planning	Ongoing

## Action Area 21 : Liaison with Open Space/Recreation

Action	Officer	Priority/timescale	Progress Note	Completed
21.1 Consulting on open	RS		RS to meet with Spencer to discuss what and when	Ongoing

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spaces on applications			he wants to be consulted Now being consulted on major applications in relation to open space.	
21.2 Consulting building control on planning applications	RS		RS to meet with Jason to discuss opportunities for better cross over between the two departments and to establish areas they can perhaps give more detailed advice on schemes  Meetings have taken place, but need to investigate further	Ongoing
21.3 s106 agreements	RS/CW		Look at possibility (discuss with Spencer) regarding implementation of 12 month 'handovers' through s106 negotiations for public open space. Similar scheme elsewhere in Cambs seems to work well	Ongoing
21.4 SuDS	AP		AP to meet with Spencer to discuss Water Management – looking at maintenance schedules and ways to get these managed.  AP met with Spencer, he is looking to adopt SuDS	Ongoing



# Planning Advisory Service (PAS)

## Review of East Cambridgeshire District Council's (ECDC) Planning Service Improvement Plan

4<sup>th</sup> December 2015

**Peers**

Nicholas Harding, Head of Development & Construction  
Peterborough City Council  
Martin Hutchings, PAS Improvement Manager

## **Introduction**

PAS has been asked to review the progress of ECDC's Development Management Service Review with a focus on the Improvement Plan. The Review is aimed at achieving the following outcomes:

1. Staff feel valued and listened to, able to contribute to improvement;
2. Members have restored confidence in the Planning Service, and its processes;
3. Customers receive a consistent, responsive and timely service;
4. The service embraces a strategic role and is the catalyst in facilitating growth.

This report follows 2 fact-finding visits on 14<sup>th</sup> September and 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Interviews were held with staff delivering the service and contributing to the improvement plan and ward and committee councillors. The interviews were focused on providing a critical friend review of the improvement plan, gauge how well staff understood their role in delivering it and to identify where additional or more focussed PAS support may be required.

This short paper outlines the findings and includes recommendations.

## **Findings**

### **Summary**

ECDC is a well-performing, well-regarded service with enthusiastic and customer-focused staff. The recent election saw the council move from no overall control to a Conservative majority. The service now finds itself trying to deliver a local plan (despite being adopted in April 2015) that is not regarded as being suitable to deliver the growth that members require. The plan has, more recently, been called into further question following a successful appeal on the basis that the council could not demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. There has also, perhaps as a consequence, been a recent increase in officer recommendations being overturned at committee.

These circumstances leave the planning service unclear about the strategic direction it should be taking. Officer recommendations overturned at committee are high profile and present a picture of a planning service that very publicly seems 'at odds with itself'. It is this perfect storm of external pressures, rather than any fundamental issue with service delivery or performance, that has led to members having a lack of confidence in the leadership of the service. This lack of confidence has resulted in the service being asked to carry out a review of the development management function. It is also actively reviewing the local plan, sensibly taking a member-led approach and involving policy and development management officers together.

We found it refreshing that development management staff have taken on board the challenge of its members, and, seeing it as an opportunity to demonstrate the value that the service adds, have put in place a team to create and deliver a service improvement plan.

### **The Development Management Improvement Project**

The service is well-performing according Government National Statistics. The processes and structures are currently under review to address the concerns of members as outlined above and taking the opportunity to identify waste and unnecessary bureaucracy. The approach to improvement and the focus of the improvement plan link well to the outcomes that members have asked for.

The review is looking across the service and focusing initially on:

- Improving the customer-focus of processing planning applications by assigning administration staff to 'follow' each application, rather than complete a task and then hand it off.
- Adding value to the pre-application service by reviewing how it is accessed and the charging structure. Both of these ideas have merit, the former will help the council strengthen relations with its developer community and the latter should mean that resources and skills are better spread across the department.
- The enforcement service – there are clear issues with the general approach (no prioritisation of cases, the case sign off / closure procedures causing bottle-necks), workloads (nearly half the annual workload is 'live') and capacity (is 2 part time FTE staff and the level of administration support appropriate?).

There is a good level of input and ownership of the improvement plan at a senior level. Some more junior staff, while understanding that there is work being done and meetings

held, do feel that they 'hear about what's happening after the decisions are made'. The improvement plan is at a stage now where focus needs to be on its delivery rather than keeping on adding new ideas.

The service also needs to be wary of focusing on what is important and what will deliver the most towards the improvement objectives. The current improvement action plan is full of good ideas but there is little sense of priority (the 'priority' column of the plan focuses more on timescale e.g. 'short term' rather than priority e.g. 'high'). We suggest a review of the actions to identify those that make the most impact on customers and prioritise them and narrow them down to 3 or 4 deliverable actions. An example might be to spend less time debating the merits of a team web page and focus the actions that make officers more accessible to customers and improving processes.

### **Relationships**

Officers overall enjoy good and supportive relationships with individual members. Recent committee overturns has meant that some less experienced officers feel less confident about making and defending decisions. The need to continually improve is understood by staff, and there is a high level of self-awareness among staff about where improvements are required. The 'lack of confidence' expressed in the service is felt by many staff to be due to the difficult job they have of delivering policies that are unpopular. Staff are keen to improve the elements of service delivery that are under their control.

There are some issues that will only be addressed once a local plan that has the full support of the membership is in place. This is not solely for the planning service to address but is a wider strategic issue for the council.

### **Councillor viewpoint**

Councillors agree that the service has turned the corner and is on the up and is responding the membership's desire to deliver growth. Some concerns remain about how to lead, encourage and nurture what councillors see as a 'young and ambitious' team. There is recognition among councillors of the importance of investing in existing staff and their career development.

Councillors speak positively about growth and its importance, and there is good self-awareness and an acceptance that maybe not enough attention was paid to the content of the recently adopted local plan.

Other general concerns of members included the over-use of conditions (being addressed in the overall service review), concern over the potential for developers to exploit the current local plan situation, and slow responses from consultees sometimes leading to problems at committee.

### **Recruitment**

Like many planning services, ECDC faces issues of recruitment and retention, increasing workloads and the day-to-day challenges of trying to improve the service. The council has already begun addressing its recruitment concerns and have found that introducing more of a 'career-grade' approach has attracted better quality candidates.

## Recommendations

1	Relationships between officers and members, and between members and the Council's Plan, need a helping hand to rebuild trust and to reassert commonly held objectives.	<p>The review of the council's plan represents an excellent opportunity for informal and wide-ranging discussions between cabinet, committee and ward members and with officers at all levels</p> <p>Implement member / officer relationship training</p> <p>Improve the political awareness of officers</p>
2	<p>The improvement plan needs to be more focused on what will deliver the most customer benefit and is at a stage where focus needs to be on its delivery rather than keeping on adding new ideas.</p> <p>Completion of the improvement plan itself will not improve the service, focus on continuous improvement will.</p>	<p>A service review will be appropriate in the future as part of new leadership / new plan and engaging staff</p>
3	ECDC needs to deal with its problems recruiting staff. Creative, flexible approaches may be required to ensure it can compete in a recruitment market that is hotting up.	<p>Short term this may require money. Longer term it would be prudent to develop staff rather than trying to join the chase for a small number of professional staff.</p>
4	The review of the service needs to be clear about what is required to effectively lead the service including capability, capacity and support. The service leadership needs a stronger managerial, rather than operational focus.	<p>Directors and Leaders need to be clear about the requirements of the post and ensure that the post-holder is supported to do the job. The council is quite clear about the delivery of a growth agenda and this should be a consideration in terms</p>

		of experience and credibility as well ensuring that the right managerial training and support is available.
5	Challenge whether there is a customer service problem. Work with the customers to identify the weak areas and address them.	<p>Regular customer surveys should be considered.</p> <p>Report on customer satisfaction / feedback</p> <p>Ensure key members are kept up to date on progress on the action plan.</p>
6	Ensure that case officers and management can effectively manage their workload and manage performance.	Improve the quality and timeliness of the information that is available.
7	<p>Enforcement service capacity is an acknowledged issue and a decision needs to be made about the appropriate number of staff required, who they report to and the level of administration support required.</p> <p>Enforcement cases need to be prioritised and the case closure process changed to give more authority to case officers. There may be a need to create an enforcement plan approved by councillors so that service levels and priorities are clear.</p> <p>Case officers should be given more power to close cases themselves in certain circumstances e.g. under a standing advice protocol) and or powers to close cases be delegated below head of service level.</p>	<p>Recruit to required level of FTE. Reporting line into head of planning isn't working due to capacity. Reporting into a senior should be considered. This will also help with consistency.</p> <p>Prioritise enforcement cases in line with clear enforcement plan.</p> <p>Take a more risk-based approach to case closure. A short review of how often officers 'get it wrong' will highlight the types of cases that need to go to senior management.</p>

## Performance Highlights (Interim Planning Quality Framework findings)

The following performance highlights are based on PQF data.

Performance Measure	Commentary
Days between cases declared valid to decision.	East Cambs demonstrates a positive picture - statistics show a planning service that makes decisions as early as possible rather than waiting until the last minute. Major Majors taking 10 weeks on average, Minors and Conditions taking 13 weeks on average (worth keeping a weather eye on Minors due to Government performance focus on Minors).
Work arriving valid on day 1.	75% of applications arrive valid and are ready to work on. Significantly higher than national average of just below 50%.
Approval rate	Approval rate 92%. 70 in every 1,000 applications refused - mainly householders (24), minors (24) and prior notifications (18)
Delegation rate	Delegation rate 96%. Healthy, although trend slowly downward over 18 month from high of 98%. Possibly a reflection of more call-ins happening due to members wishing to be more pro-growth than existing policy allows. Numbers work out at 19 cases in every 1,000 decisions made going through committee – 90% of these are minors.
Withdrawn applications	Compares very favourably with comparators at only 3%.
Zero fee applications	11% of work done for 'free' - applications in the records that have no fee attached (after accounting for trees and heritage work). These cases if the correct fee is attached would normally represent 'free go' applications.





## Proposed structure options

1. Office Supervisor to manage all Support Officers - Assistant Office Supervisor (to deputise)

## Responsibilities

<b>Office Supervisor</b>	<b>Time/frequency</b>
Line Management responsibilities for Assistant & Support Officers	
1-2-1 for Assistant and Support Officers	7x1hr/fortnight
Team Meetings	2x1hr/month
Staff appraisals	7x2hrs/year
Create and review standard letter templates in Uniform for Planning	2.5hrs/week
Planning Performance Committee Reports	2hrs/month
Implement the Service plan with other lead officers	2hrs/week
System supervisor for Uniform	1hr/week
Create any bespoke Access reports for the section	2hrs/week
Highlight and complete any improvement projects for the section including performance management software	5hrs/week
FOI's	1hr/week
Team update/briefing	1hr/week
Create and Review procedures for the planning section in light of legislation changes and service improvements	5hrs/week
Quarterly Agents Forum	5hrs/quarterly
Continually review work practices to ensure efficiency and customer service is maintained	10hr/week

<b>Senior Support Officer</b>	<b>Time/frequency</b>
Deputise in absence of the Office Supervisor	
Website updates and reviews	1hr/week
Complete CLG quarterly returns	5hrs/quarterly
Run monitoring reports and daily monitoring of applications	
~ Daily counts and reports	1hr/daily
~ Extension of time	2.5hr/week
~ 26 week	1hr/week
~ invalid applications	1.5hrs/week
~ Fee sheets	1.5hrs/week
Planning Committee Agenda	2hrs/month
Access Group	2hrs/fortnight
Undertake training of new staff & updates to existing	2hrs/week
Footpath consultations	0.5hrs/week
System supervisor for Uniform	1hr/week
Update and create access reports for section as needed	0.5hrs/week
Work closely with Customer care team	
Agents performance reports for website	4hrs/quarterly
Skills database and training programme	0.5hr/month
Finance for BC & Planning	2hrs/week
Run weekly advert	2hrs/week
Condition Monitoring – Interrogating BC and Planning data to ensure consistency between approved and built plans	10hr/week



# APPENDIX 4



