

Planning (Development Control and Support) Service Review

Findings of the Review Team
19th October 2007

1

Overview

- The Service
- The Objectives
- What we did
- What we learned
- What we are going to do
- Any Questions?

2

The Review Team

Staff from:

- Planning Support
- Development Control
- Assisted by various colleagues and Councillors who facilitated meetings and gave us the benefit of their thoughts

3

The Service

- Deals with pre-application discussions
- Receives, registers and processes planning applications
- Provides a defence to planning appeals
- Affects everyone living within and visiting the District

4

The Objectives

- Improve Customer Focus
- Enhance Efficiency
- Ensure Focus on Priorities

5

How We Prepared

Preparation work

- Meetings with staff - SWOT analyses
- Benchmarking

6

What we did

- Monday – Meetings with internal staff, representatives and representatives of amenity groups and Parish Councils
- Tuesday – Meetings with external consultees, agents and Councillors
- Wednesday – Visit to Waverley Borough Council, Godalming
- Thursday – Reviewed information gathered and agreed objectives
- Friday – Presentation of findings then the production of the Improvement Plan

What we learned

Survey and benchmarking results showed:

- The service is generally considered good and has improved over recent years except in applicant customer focus
- The external IT systems (UK Planning) are well regarded
- The Service is meeting National Targets for determining applications

BUT there is always room for improvement

Main Themes for improvement

- Communication
- Processes
- Technology
- Customer Access
- Member Involvement
- Training and Development

Other issues

There are a number of other issues that were raised – these have not been forgotten and will be taken up in the future.

Most effective with maximum impact

Significant Issues Outside Scope of Review

- S106 Planning Obligations
- Fleet & Church Crookham Planning Advisory Group
- Links with Legal Services
- Joint working – co-operation with other LPAs
- Transport Matters

What we are going to do - Communication

Short term

- Improve internal communication
- Refocus Planning Forum – learning and understanding
- Improve neighbour notification letter & leaflet

Long term

- Review Pre-application process
- Making better use of Hart News and press releases

Processes

Short Term

- Undertake a Business Process Review
- Seek to resolve short-term workload issues
- Revise Team Structure
- Improve Committee presentations

Long Term

- Change approach for (pre-)applications service to Development Management approach
- Offer Planning Advisory Service as pilot approach

13

Technology

Short Term

- Decision Notices – need to be reformatted
- Enhance UKPlanning/PublicAccess
- Update Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

Long Term

- Improve Website content and links to the Planning Portal
- Portal Exchange – consultee responses

14

Customer Access

Medium Term

- Review Reception with regard to users of Planning services - i.e. access to information
- Options for providing alternative out of hours facilities

15

Member Involvement

Short term

- Resume Planning Working Party
- Enhance pre-applications service

Long term

- Compulsory Training
- Alternatives to formal Committee procedures
- Development Management

16

Training and Development

- Planning Officers and Support staff
- Members
- Parish Councils and Amenity bodies

- Guidance for Agents and Applicants

17

Summary

- We listened and will continue to do so
- We have a better understanding of the issues
- We welcome the challenges ahead
- We have some really good ideas
- We need to work together more

18

**THANK YOU
&
ANY QUESTIONS ?**
