

**REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 18 APRIL 2002****MINUTE 168 – RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT CONTROL/BUILDING CONTROL BEST VALUE REVIEW – FINAL REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services outlining the final conclusions of the Best Value Review Member Working Group into Development Control and Building Control services and presenting a detailed action plan for service improvement.

The Committee discussed the action plan in detail and agreed with many of the actions proposed without amendment. The following were agreed by Members following further debate and minor amendments to the original proposals.

Page 6.11 – Introduce Member Training as a Pre-Qualification for Sitting on the Planning Committee

Members noted that it could be argued that training should be provided for functions other than planning, such as finance or the environment. Members were unaware of any Government publications which stated that planning training was mandatory.

The Committee suggested the following re-wording of the objective:-

“To encourage Members of the Planning Committee to have the requisite skills and understanding of planning to exercise decision making powers. Training sessions to run on a cycle to coincide with newly elected Members”.

It was additionally noted that this objective was dependent on the outcome of any decision relating to the size of membership of the Planning Services Committee.

Page 6.12 – Introduce a ‘Cooling-Off’ Period for the Planning Committee

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that, by deferring an application for a ‘cooling-off’ period, the authority could run the risk of appeal for non determination of the application. It was, however, perceived that such a risk would be small. It was the general consensus of the Committee that this proposal was a positive one, and that the wording should be altered slightly to read:-

“To avoid likelihood of decisions being made by the committee that may result in a costs award”.

Page 6.12 - Introduce a Procedure for Site Visits to be Made in Advance of Planning Committee Meetings

Responding to Member questions, Officers confirmed that no Member requests for site visits would be refused. It was therefore suggested that the wording of the objective should be altered, as follows:-

“To ensure that no unnecessary delay is introduced into the decision making process. Delegate to the Head of Planning Services to decide on site visits, but Members to be able to request visits within 14 days of the receipt of the Parish List. All requests for site visits will be granted. Members no longer able to request site visits at Planning Committee”

Page 6.13 – Review Level of Delegations

It was suggested that the wording of this objective should be amended to read:-

“To ensure that only major applications are considered by the Planning Committee in accordance with BVPI 188 – subject to a review of delegations”.

Page 6.13 – Internal IT Requirements to be Developed in a Phased Programme: Install Upgrade to CAPS – UNI-form Spatial, Including Planning and Building Control

Officers would provide Members with details of the costs associated with this objective.

Page 6.15 – Internal IT Requirements to be Developed in a Phased Programme: Improve the Availability and Scope of Information on the Intranet for Officers and Elected Members

It was suggested that the wording of this objective should be amended to read:-

“To make best use of information technology to provide information about planning and building control to Rochford District Council Officers and elected Members”.

Page 6.22 – To Evaluate and Utilise a Broad Range of Outlets to Publicise the Planning Service and to Provide Guidance on Planning and Building Control Issues Including Website – Weekly List, Parish List, Application Forms, Progress of Applications, Appeals Register, Local Plan Information, Links to other Organisations, Committee Agenda, Planning Schedules and Minutes

Members concurred that, in addition to availability on the Council website, paper copies should continue to be provided of all such Planning documentation.

Page 6.23 - To Evaluate and Utilise a Broad Range of Outlets to Publicise the Planning Service and to Provide Guidance on Planning and Building Control Issues Including Estate Agents Packs

It was noted that there might be sponsorship opportunities associated with this initiative in due course.

Page 6.26 – Introduce a Development Team Approach

It was noted that all Members should be kept updated on the progress of schemes that trigger this procedure, subject to developer confidentiality.

Page 6.28 – Remove Ward Member Names from Planning Schedule – Ward Members not Automatically Called as First Speaker in Committee

It was the general consensus of the Committee that a list of Members' names and wards should be included at the beginning of the Planning Schedule rather than Ward Members' details appearing with details of each individual application. Courtesy at meeting should also be observed in that Ward Members should be called first to speak.

Page 6.30 – Issues Relating to the Process for Dealing with Planning Applications, Including Time Taken to Reach a Decision on Applications

It was suggested that the wording of this objective be changed to read:-

“To introduce a significant change in the speed with which planning applications are processed by the authority beyond the national target of 80%”.

Page 6.31 – Issues Relating to the Process for Dealing with Planning Applications, Including More Closely Linking Neighbour Consultation Letters with the Issue of Site Notices

It was noted that there was potentially a problem in more rural areas of the District whereby neighbours may not necessarily receive consultation letters.

Page 6.35 – Review Contents of Neighbour Notification Letters

It was noted that all Members should be sent copies of updated neighbour consultation letters, once available.

The Committee was unable to make a positive recommendation on the following two actions, which Members felt should not be implemented.

Page 6.29 – Remove requirement for Ward Member Consultation when Agreeing Minor Amendments to Applications First Determined by the Planning Committee

There was concern that professional judgment in determining what were minor amendment requests could be queried by residents who might perceive certain minor planning amendments as more substantial. Members concurred that Ward Members could help to alleviate such a situation and therefore concluded that this proposed action should not be agreed.

Page 6.34 – Organise a Regular Focus Group on Planning

Members believed that this proposed action should also not be agreed.

Members concurred that the first proposal of the action plan, to reduce the size of the Planning Committee, should be referred to Full Council for determination, given the importance of this issue to all Members.

**Resolved**

That the objective to reduce the size of the Planning Committee be referred to Full Council for determination. (HPS)

It was further **resolved**

- (1) That the objective to organise a regular focus group on planning be referred to Full Council with a recommendation that this should not be approved.
- (2) That the objective to remove the requirement for Ward Member consultation when agreeing minor amendments to applications first determined by the Planning Committee be referred to Full Council with a recommendation that this should not be approved. (HPS)

The Committee further **Resolved** to **RECOMMEND** to Full Council:

- (1) That the objective relating to redesigning Planning Reception in Acacia House be deferred pending future asset management deliberations. (HPS)
- (2) That the revised action plan (appendix 1, attached to these Minutes) be approved. (HPS)

Head of Administrative & Member Services

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**Background Papers:**

None.

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**Appendix 1**

| <b>ACTION</b>  | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> | <b>RESOURCES</b> | <b>TARGETS</b>  | <b>OBJECTIVES</b>   |
|--|-----------------------|------------------|---|---|
| <b>1. Vision for planning and link to corporate objectives</b>                                   | HPS                   | Minimal          | Vision published and communicated to staff - Immediate implementation   | To develop a vision and linked key objectives for the Planning Division to be communicated to customers to ensure they are better informed about the planning service.  |
| <b>2. Introduce Member training as a pre-qualification for sitting on the Planning Committee</b> | Committee/HPS         | Minimal          | Members attend basic training prior to sitting on Planning Committee April 2003   | To <b>encourage</b> Members of the Planning Committee to have the requisite skills and understanding of planning to exercise decision making powers.<br>Training sessions to run on a cycle to coincide with newly elected Members.         |
| <b>3. Open committees – introduction of public speaking at Planning Committee meetings</b>       | Committee/HPS         | Minimal          | Protocol prepared by end of October 2002<br><br>Public speaking introduced at Planning Committee Meetings December 2002 | To ensure there is a participative, fair and transparent process for making planning decisions. To allow objectors, as well as applicants, an opportunity to put the case for and against a development directly to the planning committee. |
| <b>4. Introduce a 'cooling-off' period for the Planning Committee</b>                            | Committee/HPS         | Minimal          | Procedure incorporated into Code of Conduct September 2002  | To avoid likelihood of decisions being made by the committee that may result in a costs award   |

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| <p><b>5. Introduce a procedure for site visits to be made in advance of Planning Committee meetings</b></p>                            | <p>HPS</p>               | <p>Minimal</p>                         | <p>New site visit procedure introduced September 2002</p>                                       | <p>To ensure that no unnecessary delay is introduced to the decision making process.<br/>Delegate to the Head of Planning Services to decide on site visits, but Members to be able to request visits within 14 days of the receipt of the Parish List. <b>All requests for site visits will be granted. Members no longer able to request site visits at Planning Committee.</b></p> |
| <p><b>6. Review level of delegations</b></p>   | <p>DLPA/HPS</p>          | <p>Minimal</p>                         | <p>BVPI 188 – 90% of applications to be determined under delegated authority September 2002</p> | <p>To ensure that only major applications are considered by the Planning Committee in accordance with BVPI 188 – <b>subject to a review of delegations.</b></p>   |
| <p><b>7. Internal IT Requirements to be developed in a phased programme</b></p>  |                          |  |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install upgrade to CAPS – UNI-form Spatial, including Planning and Building Control.</li> </ul> | <p>IT Client Manager</p> | <p>Significant – agreed by Council</p> | <p>New systems in place and operating by July 2002</p>  | <p>To install the latest version of the UNI-form software which provides a more user-friendly map based interface for officers, is BS7666 compliant and is the first stage to</p>   |

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|   |                        |   |  | public access to information over the Internet.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All planning constraints (conservation areas, SSSIs, etc.) to be included in the GIS system</li> </ul>     | GIS Officer            | Minimal, but utilising existing staff resources   | All constraints available for on-line access<br>April 2003             | To develop the information base of the GIS system, including the replacement local plan and key policy links.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aerial photographs of the district available and linked to the GIS</li> </ul>                              | GIS Officer            | Minimal   | Photographs available on-line for all staff<br>March 2002              | To increase the availability of on-line information for use by professional officers  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development monitoring and land availability information obtained through GIS and CAPS software</li> </ul> | HPS                    | Training costs of officers to be determined   | New system operational to replace existing Access system<br>April 2003 | To provide more flexibility in reporting on land availability and to link system to GIS   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install UNI-form public access module (Phase 1)</li> </ul>   | HPS/ IT Client Manager | To be determined, but primarily related to training for officers. Funds from the E-Government grant | Public access to planning system<br>March 2003                         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide up to date information to the public, inc. status of planning applications, plans and drawings etc. and to assist in improving the accessibility of the service</li> <li>To fulfil the requirements of the</li> </ol> |

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|   |                        |  |   | E-Government strategy for the delivery of planning and building control services.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interactive planning internet system that enables planning and building control applications to be submitted on-line (UNI-form public access Phase 2)</li> </ul> | HPS/ IT Client Manager | To be determined   | System live March 2005                                  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To allow planning applications to be lodged at times convenient to the customer and to assist in improving the accessibility of the service</li> <li>To fulfil the requirements of the E-Government strategy for the delivery of planning and building control services.</li> <li></li> </ol> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the availability and scope of information on the Intranet for officers and elected Members</li> </ul>  | HPS/ IT Client Manager | Minimal  | To run parallel with improvement programme for internet | To make best use of information technology to provide information about planning and building control to RDC officers and elected Members.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Install a PC in the planning reception – available for use by members of the public to view application plans, maps, etc.</li> </ul>                             | IT Client Manager      | Cost of PC, software, installation and IT contract estimated at £2,500. Savings in rapid access for customers to information | PC installed and operational December 2002              | To enable customers to easily view application information and be better informed about the progress of applications and the planning service generally.   |



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| <p><b>8. Improve the level and timing of feedback of information to customers</b></p>  |                |  |  | <p>The level and timing of feedback to customers was identified as being a key issue in the Planning Satisfaction Survey carried out in 2000. The objective is therefore to improve feedback to customers, particularly during the time applications are being processed</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DC – Planning Applications</li> </ul>   | HPS            | <p>Providing more and regular information will have resource implications. Better IT systems and public access to application information will be key to improving availability of information</p> | <p>An improvement of 5% in the number of customers who considered they were kept fully informed<br/>March 2004</p> | <p>Improve feedback to customers during the application process</p>  |
| <p><b>9. Review of guidance leaflets, advice, etc. Applies to DC and BC. Review in two parts dealing with existing and then new leaflets/advice.</b></p> |                |  |  |  |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing</li> </ul>                                  | HPS                   | Minimal   | Revised leaflets available to the public (hard copy and Internet)<br>March 2002 | To explain the operation of the planning system and building control in simple user-friendly language.                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision Notice guidance on appeals, etc.</li> </ul> | HPS                   | Minimal   | Leaflets available to the public (hard copy and Internet)<br>March 2002         | To explain applicants right of appeal in simple user-friendly language   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flowchart to explain planning process</li> </ul>     | HPS                   | Minimal – cost savings resulting from reduced officer time spent in explaining the system | Leaflets available to the public (hard copy and Internet)<br>June 2002          | To explain to applicants and consultees the various stages that will be followed in determining a planning application |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dummy application form and plans</li> </ul>          | HPS                   | Minimal – cost savings resulting from reduced officer time spent in explaining the system | Displayed in planning reception (copy on Internet)<br>June 2002                 | To assist prospective applicants to submit a complete and high quality planning application                            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building Control customer commitment</li> </ul>      | BCM                   | Minimal   | Leaflets available to the public(hard copy and Internet)<br>April 2002          | To explain to customers the level of service they can expect from the Building Control section                         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning application checklist</li> </ul>            | HPS                   | Minimal – cost savings resulting from reduced officer time spent in                       | Checklist available to the public (hard copy and Internet)                      | To enable prospective applicants to prepare a complete and high quality planning application                           |

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|---|-----------------------|---|--|---|
|   |                       | explaining the system   | June 2002  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Control – Making an application</li> </ul>      | BCM                   | Minimal – cost savings resulting from reduced officer time spent in explaining the system | Leaflets available to the public (hard copy and Internet) June 2002  | To enable prospective applicants to prepare a complete and high quality application   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining the Local Plan</li> </ul>                     | HPS                   | Minimal   | Leaflets available to the public (hard copy and Internet) June 2002  | To help prospective applicants to understand the relationship between their proposal and the policies contained in the Local Plan.                              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Code of Conduct for Planning Matters</li> </ul>   | HLS                   | Minimal   | Updated code agreed by Full Council and published and issued June 2002   | To update the existing Code of Conduct to fully reflect the modernising agenda for local government   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Conduct for Planning Matters brochure</li> </ul> | Committee/HPS         | Minimal   | Brochure published (hard copy and Internet) – copy to all Members of the Planning Committee at first meeting in each new Municipal | To enable customers to better understand the special role of elected Members of the Local Planning Authority when they take decisions in the Planning Committee |

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|---|----------------|---|--|---|
|   |                |   | Year. Copies to Parish/Town Councils.<br>May 2002  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Code of Conduct for Planning Matters – summary version</li> </ul>                                      | HPS/HLS        | Minimal                                       | A4/A3 summary version of the code available to the public<br>June 2002                                 | To provide widely available a customer friendly summary of the code of conduct  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Code of Conduct for Planning Matters – summary version included in Planning Services Agenda</li> </ul> | Committee      | Minimal                                       | Include the summary version within the Planning Services agenda/schedule<br>June 2002                  | To include the summary version of the code in the Planning Services agenda/schedule for the benefit of Members and customers.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce new planning application forms – Essex-wide initiative</li> </ul>                            | HPS            | Minimal                                       | Application forms available in hard copy and downloadable form from the Council's website<br>July 2002 | To provide a new customer friendly application form that is capable of being downloaded from the Internet or completed on-line. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised application forms folder</li> </ul>  | HPS            | Minimal – publication paid for by advertising | Revised folder available<br>September 2002   | Improvement to public relations and expression of professionalism   |

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|---|-----------------------|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Building Control procedures manual</li> </ul>  | BCM                   | Minimal, but staff resource to prepare                            | Version 1 available in March 2003   | To improve consistency and quality in dealing with building regulation applications  |
| <b>10. To evaluate and utilise a broad range of outlets to publicise the planning service and to provide guidance on planning and building control issues including</b> | HPS                   |   | Initial evaluation to be undertaken by October 2002.  | To ensure that information and guidance on planning matters and building control is widely available   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rochford District Council publications</li> </ul>  | Corporate             |   |   | To ensure that all Council publications are used to best advantage to promote information about planning and building control  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website – weekly list, parish list, application forms, progress of applications, appeals register, local plan</li> </ul>         | HPS                   | Minimal since the majority of the information is already prepared | Information available and accessible on the website<br><br>Parish List and local plan information are | To develop the council's website into a key source of information about planning and building control. See also the sections of the Action Plan dealing with the development of IT |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>information, links to other organisations, committee agenda, planning schedules and minutes.</li> </ul> |                                 |  | available on the website. Update other information by July 2002.       |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Posters</li> </ul>  | HPS                             | Minimal  | Posters produced when required   | A simple cost-effective way to communicate information on planning and building control matters                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Libraries</li> </ul>  | HPS                             | Minimal  | To use libraries when appropriate for the dissemination of information | To make best use of the district's libraries for the dissemination of information to residents and customers                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Estate Agents Packs</li> </ul>  | Planning Manager                | Modest costs associated with producing information<br><b>Opportunities for sponsorship</b> | Estate Agents Packs<br>March 2003                                      | To be pro-active in providing information on the Council's Planning services to prospective customers                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citizens Advice Bureaux</li> </ul>  | Planning Administrative Officer | Minimal  | Information on planning and building control made available to         | To ensure that the CAB has available up to date information about the planning and building control services, including points |

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|  |                                     |           | CAB<br>December 2002   | of contact, email addresses, etc.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parish/Town Councils</li> </ul>   | HPS                                 | Minimal   | All new leaflets to be sent to Parish/Town Councils when available. Parish/Town Councils to be kept informed about the development of Internet services. | To ensure that Parish/Town Councils are kept fully up to date with planning and building control matters.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Legal Services Initiative</li> </ul>                          | HLS                                 | Minimal   | In place   | To provide flexible, responsive access to legal information.   |
| <b>11. Internal record keeping</b>   |                                     |           |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review policy for the recording and archiving of information</li> </ul> | HPS/Planning Administrative Officer | Minimal   | Policy reviewed and new arrangements in place.<br>March 2003   | To ensure that the Planning Division is making best use of available information and that the information is appropriately recorded, stored and easily accessible for future use |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce arrangements for recording pre-application advice using the UNI-form system</li> </ul> | HPS/Planning Manager | Minimal – it is expected that better use of information from pre-application will have resource benefits for the application process | Pre-application advice recorded and linked to future planning application(s)<br>June 2003           | To ensure that pre-application discussions are properly recorded, linked to a property record and available to officers when a planning application is submitted                    |
| <b>12. Staff training and Development</b>   |                      |  |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Team working and feedback</li> </ul>   | HPS                  | From within resources of training budget   | Training course for staff by September 2002.<br><br>Internal team building sessions from June 2002. | Provide staff with an enhanced toolkit of methods to improve team working and feedback mechanisms. This is in addition to training requirements identified through the PDR process. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development control clinics to review new applications on a weekly basis</li> </ul>              | Planning Manager     | Minimal, but savings resulting from early assessment of possible issues  | Fortnightly reviews from January 2002<br><br>Weekly reviews from May 2002                           | To identify any problem issues at an early stage and to contribute towards overall improved development control performance   |



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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better use of PDRs to establish training needs of staff and link to operational objectives of the division</li> </ul> | HPS                                 | Training budget   | Key performance targets assigned to individual case officers – target for percentage of recommendations made within 5 weeks of receipt of application to be Contained within Case Officer PDR's March 2003 | To ensure that training needs fully reflect the operational needs and objectives of the division  |
| <b>13. Introduce a development team approach</b>   | HPS and Operational Management Team | Minimal – may be a saving by providing an integrated approach for prospective developers. | Development Team Approach in place for larger schemes October 2002   | To provide new internal mechanisms for integrated service to customers proposing larger development schemes in the district. (More than 12 dwellings or 150 square metres floor area for commercial development). <b>All Members to be kept updated on progress of schemes that trigger procedure subject to developer confidentiality.</b> |
| <b>14. Review of the information presented in reception</b>  |                                     |   | Information reviewed and amended by September 2002   | To provide a more informative, professional & customer friendly environment in reception  |

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|--|-----------------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| • Performance standards  | HPS                   | Minimal                 | September 2002  |  |
| • Organisation and committee structures  | HPS                   | Minimal                 | September 2002  |  |
| • Members photos   | Committee             | Minimal                 | June 2002   |  |
| • Staff photos   | Personnel             | Minimal                 | June 2002   |  |
| • Performance indicator results for DC/BC and local plan                                       | Planning Manager      | Minimal                 | Quarterly   |  |
| <b>15. Introduce a customer feedback form to monitor ongoing satisfaction with the service</b> | HPS                   | Minimal                 | Form sent out with all decision notices from DC and BC seeking feedback on user satisfaction service delivery. Forms available in receptions September 2002 | To enable changes to be made to service delivery where applicable that will result in customer benefits  |
| <b>16. Undertake a comprehensive customer satisfaction survey as per DTLR requirements</b>     | HPS                   | Internal staff resource | 5% increase in customer satisfaction compared with survey results from 2000 – March 2004  | To demonstrate that improvements have been made in the delivery of the planning service within Rochford. |

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| <b>17. Include a general information note on the local plan in planning application packs</b>                             | Local Plans           | Minimal          | Information note published and included in packs July 2002  | To seek to demonstrate the links between the local plan and development control decisions  |
| <b>18. Remove Ward Member names from planning schedule – replace with list of Members at front of schedule</b>            | HPS                   | Minimal          | Direct name link to applications removed and list of Members included at front of schedule May 2002 | To avoid giving the public the perception that Ward Members are able to pre-judge applications (This is in conflict with the Code of Conduct)  |
| <b>19. Remove requirement for a 7 day Ward Member consultation when objections are received to delegated applications</b> | HPS                   | Minimal          | 7 day Ward Member Consultation requirement removed.<br><br>May 2002                                 | To ensure that delays in processing householder applications are kept to a minimum. Reduction in time taken to process delegated planning applications – local and national indicators apply |
| <b>20. Examine appropriateness of a fee for pre-application advice that would be</b>                                      | HPS                   | Minimal          | Decision taken about the introduction of a new charging arrangement.                                | To consider fully options for improving service delivery   |

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|---|------------------|---|--|--|
| deducted from a subsequent planning application   |                  |   | April 2003   |  |
| <b>21. Issues relating to the process for dealing with planning applications, including:</b>                        |                  | Minimal – part of ongoing process of continuous improvement | Reduction in time taken to process planning applications including registration and issue of decision notice           | To seek to remove wasteful procedures from the application process and enable trained staff to deal with other planning matters            |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time taken to issue decision notice after decision reached</li> </ul>        | HPS              | Minimal   | June 2002<br>New local PI  | To reduce the time taken to deliver a decision to the customer.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time taken by individual case officers to prepare recommendations</li> </ul> | Planning Manager | Minimal   | 55% of applications to reach recommendation stage within 5 weeks of receipt<br><br>From April 2002<br><br>New local PI | To provide a speedy service for customers and to ensure that local and national targets for processing planning applications are achieved. |

**PLANNING SERVICES DIVISION Development Control and Building Control  
Best Value Review ACTION PLAN April 2002**

**Appendix 1**

| ACTION  | RESPONSIBILITY   | RESOURCES  | TARGETS  | OBJECTIVES  |
|---|------------------|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time taken to reach a decision on applications</li> </ul>  | HPS              | Minimal  | The national target for all applications (excluding major and minor commercial) is 80% in 8 weeks.<br>New local PI of 55% of applications in 2002/03 and 60% in 2003/2004 in 7 weeks (excluding major and minor commercial). | To introduce a <b>significant</b> change in the speed with which planning applications are processed by the authority beyond the national target of 80%.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More closely linking neighbour consultation letters with issue of site notices</li> </ul>                          | Planning Manager | Minimal  | Consultation period no more than 21 days for any application<br><br>September 2002   | To avoid any extension of the consultation period   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove the need for Parish/Town Council to automatically be sent all plans for householder applications</li> </ul> | HPS              | Minimal – cost savings in staff time for what is a time-consuming administrative process | Remove current process for all householder application plans to be forwarded to relevant Parish / Town Council   | To reduce time spent on wasteful administrative processes. Note, Parish Councils are still consulted on applications. Introduction of public access to the planning system will enable plans to be viewed over an Internet connection |

**PLANNING SERVICES DIVISION Development Control and Building Control  
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**Appendix 1**

| ACTION  | RESPONSIBILITY   | RESOURCES   | TARGETS   | OBJECTIVES   |
|---|------------------|---|---|--|
|   |                  |   | June 2002   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedure note to advise applicants to show plans to neighbours</li> </ul>   | HPS              | Minimal   | Procedure note produced and issued to applicants June 2002  | To reduce the likelihood of neighbour objections on householder applications in particular                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The neighbour consultation process – publish details of the LPA's procedures</li> </ul>  | HPS              | Minimal   | Details published in a leaflet and on the website July 2002   | To explain the consultation arrangements followed by the authority for different types of planning application |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce new arrangements for handling of Building Control requests for planning consent checks by Development Control</li> </ul> | Planning Manager | Additional administrative costs arising from the checking procedure | Revised procedures for planning consent checks by Development Control in place July 2002                            | To ensure that customers do not start works without the appropriate consents                                   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing applicants with specific time-scales to submit revisions to plans</li> </ul>   | Planning Manager | Minimal   | Applicants provided with specific time-scales for the submission of revised plans - standard time would be 14 days. | To enable planning applications to be determined within a reasonable timescale.                                |

**PLANNING SERVICES DIVISION Development Control and Building Control  
Best Value Review ACTION PLAN April 2002**

**Appendix 1**

| ACTION   | RESPONSIBILITY   | RESOURCES  | TARGETS  | OBJECTIVES  |
|--|------------------|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Send a copy of plan amendment requests to both agents and applicants</li> </ul> | Planning Manager | Minimal  | May 2002<br>Plan amendment requests sent to both agents and applicants<br>May 2002 | To keep applicants informed of actions being taken in respect of planning and building regulation applications where an agent is the main point of contact. |
| <b>22. Issues relating to the process for dealing with building regulation applications</b>                            |                  |  |  |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultations with the Fire Service</li> </ul>                                  | BCM              | Minimal  | New procedure in operation by May 2002   | To accelerate the consultation process with the Fire Service  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic plan check of Building Notice applications</li> </ul>                     | BCM              | Minimal  | New procedure in operation from April 2002   | To improve the level of feedback to customers where plans are submitted with a Building Notice  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify sites not visited in the previous three months</li> </ul>              | BCM              | Minimal to identify sites, but staff resource issue for resultant visits | New procedure to use IT to generate list of sites by September 2002                | To ensure that customers are provided with a comprehensive set of inspection visits.  |
| <b>23. Provide a feedback summary of all planning appeal decisions on a monthly basis, with information</b>            | Local Plans      | Minimal  | Summary prepared on a monthly basis.<br>April 2002                                 | To provide details of appeal decisions to Members and residents   |

**PLANNING SERVICES DIVISION Development Control and Building Control  
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**Appendix 1**

| <b>ACTION</b>   | <b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> | <b>RESOURCES</b>   | <b>TARGETS</b>  | <b>OBJECTIVES</b>  |
|---|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| being published on the website.   |                       |  |   |  |
| <b>24. Review contents of neighbour notification letters</b>  | Planning Manager      | Minimal  | Updated neighbour consultation letters issued September 2002<br><br>Note: copies of revised letters to be circulated to Members | To ensure that neighbour consultees are provided with all necessary information to enable them to comment on planning applications       |
| <b>25. Inform neighbour consultees of the date applications are to be reported to committee</b>   | Planning Manager      | Additional administrative costs primarily resulting from staff time required to prepare and despatch letters | Neighbour consultees advised of the date applications to be reported to Committee July 2002                                     | To enable neighbour consultees to attend planning committee when applications are determined   |
| <b>26. Negotiate service level agreement with County Highways for the time taken to respond to consultations on major applications.</b> | HPS                   | Minimal  | SLA in place September 2002   | To ensure that highway information is provided in a timely fashion to enable major applications to be determined to an agreed timetable. |



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**Appendix 2**

| ACTION   | RESPONSIBILITY                                     | RESOURCES  | TARGETS   | OBJECTIVES  |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| <p><b>1. Redesign planning reception in Acacia House. Consultant advice required prior to building works</b></p> <p><b>TO BE DEFERRED PENDING FURTHER ASSET MANAGEMENT DELIBERATIONS</b></p> | <p>Property Maintenance &amp; Highways Manager</p> | <p>Consultant – est. £2,500</p> <p>Works – est. £20,000</p>      | <p>No action until Asset Review determined future of Acacia House</p> <p>Consultants report March 2003</p> <p>Improvement work completed Mar 2004</p>   | <p>To improve the customer interface, including private interview areas and IT provision, and to take account of the needs of the disabled (ambulatory, hearing, vision, etc.)</p>                            |
| <p><b>2. Reduce the size of the Planning Committee</b></p> <p><b>TO BE CONSIDERED BY FULL COUNCIL</b></p>  | <p>Committee/HPS</p>                               | <p>Minimal – Savings in Resources and increase in efficiency</p> | <p>Smaller committee agreed and operational. Propose a 13 Member Committee (in line with policy committees) with full executive powers<br/>May 2002</p> | <p>Aim for consistency in decision-making, to avoid wrong decisions being made, reduce the number of appeals, reduce paperwork and expenses, increase flexibility, simplify arrangements for site visits.</p> |

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**Appendix 2**

| ACTION   | RESPONSIBILITY | RESOURCES                           | TARGETS  | OBJECTIVES  |
|--|----------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <p><b>3. Remove requirement for Ward Member consultation when agreeing minor amendments to applications first determined by the Planning Committee</b></p> <p><b>TO BE CONSIDERED BY FULL COUNCIL WITH RECOMMENDATION THAT THIS NOT BE APPROVED.</b></p> | HPS            | Minimal                             | <p>Remove requirement for Ward Member consultation when agreeing minor amendments to applications first determined by the Planning Committee</p> <p>May 2002</p> | To ensure that a decision on minor amendment requests can be made as quickly as possible.               |
| <p><b>4. Organise a regular Focus Group on Planning</b></p> <p><b>TO BE CONSIDERED BY FULL COUNCIL WITH RECOMMENDATION THAT THIS NOT BE APPROVED.</b></p>  | HPS            | Estimate about £500 per Focus Group | Focus Group to be organised once p.a.  | To provide direct feedback on the delivery and perceptions of the planning service within the district. |