

## The role of the service

### Development Management (D.M.)

- To ensure that all decisions on planning and associated applications are made in line with the Development Plan, Non Statutory Wealden Local Plan, Government Guidance and other adopted policies, including affordable housing and sustainability.
- To maintain and improve, where possible, the Council's performance when determining all planning applications over and above the Government's national and Council's local Performance targets, with no loss of quality in decision making.
- To defend those planning applications which are taken to appeal.
- To ensure a high quality of professional planning advice and a high level of service to the Council and its customers, and to improve quality in the planning decision-making process and its outcomes.
- To take a comprehensive approach to providing planning advice through the Development Team Approach
- To safeguard and enhance the environment whilst delivering quality affordable housing and protecting the local economy.

### Building Control (B.C.)

- To provide a competitive and efficient plan vetting and site inspection service meeting all published timescales; with good levels of customer care.
- To provide a comprehensive access officer, and a dangerous structure and structural engineering service.
- To ensure an adequate level of health, safety and welfare is maintained when any construction work is undertaken within the District.

### Planning Enforcement (P.E.)

- To ensure, within the framework of the adopted Enforcement Strategy, that all development that takes place is carried out with the necessary approvals and in compliance with conditions imposed without undue demonstrable harm to the amenities of the District.
- To defend those enforcement cases which are taken to appeal.

### Land Charges ( L.C.)

- To maintain the Local Land Charges Register for the Council and to continue to respond promptly and accurately to Search enquiries for registered information on land and property.

## **The service is planning to achieve the following outcomes by March 2011:**

- Maintain NI 157 performance in top quartile (determination of major, minor and other planning applications)
- Maintain comprehensive pre-application advice service including Development Team Approach (DTA)
- Completion of all key targets of the Planning Improvement Plan 2009/11
- Monitoring of process review programme following Addisons Report 2009 on the Process Review of the Development Control Service as part of the Council's Transformation Programme.
- Manage and monitor the specialist input on planning applications in line with the Transformation Programme.
- Continue to monitor and work to ensure case load for Development Management officers is maintained below between 150 and 160 and for Building Control officers below between 135 and 145
- Maintain costings to ensure Land Charges and Building Control fee earning budgets are maintained within 10% of break even target for 2009/10.
- Deliver programmed service improvements and savings as part of process review.
- Have in place new Partnership arrangements for new Building Control Partnership as part of Transformation Programme.
- Continue to implement Transformation Programme change for DM process review objectives.
- Have operational a fully electronic consultation process with Town/Parishes for planning applications and roll-out to parish councils.
- Maintain ongoing assessments on development scheme viability to improve housing delivery.
- Develop a new Business Plan strategy of Development Management.
- Deliver training sessions to the Town/Parishes on planning related matters.
- Implement fully and monitor the changes for pre-application advice with a view to maintaining a Development Manager (for preapplication work) role on a permanent basis.
- Seek to maintain 15 BC Partnership initiatives with local agents/developers.
- Ensure appeals allowed do not exceed 35% and/or that allowed appeals do not exceed numerically 2009/2010 levels.
- Ensure Local Government Ombudsman does not find against the council for any maladministration cases.
- Implementation of new part G of the Building Regulations for Sustainable use of water in buildings.
- Maintenance of Sustainability check list for Planning Applications.
- Identification of the key risks and opportunities to service delivery and infrastructure associated with current and future weather and climate events by September 2010.
- Identification and incorporation of appropriate adaptation actions into the Council wide Adaptation Action Plan and service specific strategic planning by March 2011.

## What have we achieved in 2009/10?

### Putting People First

Providing Quality Services  
Health, Prosperity and Community Safety

- Ensured Development Management (Development Control) is still maintaining its performance in the top quartile of Planning Authorities for NI 157.
- Improvements in customer satisfaction levels
- Maintained Charter Mark for the service
- Introduction of a full Development Team Approach
- Improved enforcement on Building Regulations in relation to compliance for sustainability.
- Greater encouragement for sustainable homes – Code 3
- Improved design guidance in relation to local distinctiveness.
- Greater use of e-technology.
- 10 parish training sessions on planning related matters have been delivered along with the Annual Parish (Planning) Conference
- Ensure that Local Government Ombudsman complaints where they are investigated, no maladministration is found

### Pride Of Place

Sustainability  
Place Shaping

- Maintained an appropriate level of Building Regulation inspections on building projects and maintained a 90% 24 hour request for site inspections.
- Maintained a Dangerous Structure call out service (24 hours on call) for inspection.
- Meet Planning Enforcement targets, WL1/DC01/2/3 (resolution of cases within 4/6/8 weeks)
- Maintained Development Team Approach for all major or significant planning schemes and improved scheme designs (pre application).
- Implemented new enforcement pointers for Building Regulations in relation to compliance with Energy Conservation measures for new buildings.
- Improved sustainability and design of construction of new buildings via planning process and improved use of sustainability check lists.
- Improved access to the Planning Service in pre-application discussions to achieve improved design and quality of development.
- Involvement of local Members and Parishes and Towns in significant planning schemes at an earlier stage, both in relation to the proposals and possible planning gain.

## Purpose Through Partnership

Improving Performance and Efficiency  
Strong Community Leadership

- Undertook training and ongoing working relationships with Parish and Town Councils.
- Balanced agreed levels of income for the Planning and BC Service with Resources
- Worked to develop further streams of income via e.g. partnership, Development Team Approach, etc.
- Improved value for money based on the opinions of our customers and when our performance is compared to other local authorities
- Working more efficiently, meeting agreed key priorities, and cutting 'red tape' wherever possible.
- Further training for Parish and Town Councils up to 100 parish councillors trained.
- Enhance partnership working with developers and local designers which has reduced the number of overall planning appeals.
- Developed agreed pre-application charges.
- Worked with developers on viability assessments to ensure development sites are delivered.
- Value for money efficiency savings of £68,000 achieved.
- Agents Panel (Group of Local Architects/Consultants acting as a customer panel) have been encouraged to comment on and suggest changes in the P & BC (Planning & Building Control Service).
- New Partnership for Building Control Service have been developed where by local Architects can have all of their work checked by Wealden even if this was outside of the district.

## What we plan to improve

The five key issues for 2010-2013 identified within the Corporate Plan are

- Efficiencies and Budget (Transformation)
- Local Development Framework
- Community Support
- Recycling and Waste Minimisation
- Sustainability

The targets below show what we intend to achieve under each of the three Corporate Objectives including any specific links to the five key issues above.

Target for 2010/11	What will be achieved	When it will be done	Who will do it
<b>Putting People First</b>			
Maintain customer satisfaction levels for Development Management	75%	On-going	HPBC
Provision of Online submission of Building Regulations	Electronic Submission	April 2010	HPBC
Full electronic consultation on planning applications	Efficiency savings	December 2010	HPBC
<b>Pride Of Place</b>			
Implementation of new planning legislation on Permitted Development for Non Householders applications	Implement New PD Guidance and Regulations	October 2010	HPBC
Introduction of New Part G of the Building Regulations - Water Conservation and Efficiency	Implement New Regulations	April 2010	HPBC
Member audit of completed developments	Maintenance of improved quality levels	October/ November 2010	HPBC
Reduced paper consultations with Statutory consultees reducing paper requirements.	Savings	December 2010	HPBC
<b>Working Together With Partners</b>			
Joint working with Developers (partnerships) - Building Control	Increase from 12 to 15	March 2011	HPBC
Parish Training	9 training sessions provided	March 2011	HPBC
Agent Training Workshops	2 sessions provided	March 2011	HPBC
Electronic consultation with Town/Parishes	75% of Town/Parishes consulted electronically	December 2010	HPBC
Implement Pre-Application charges for Development Management	Increased Fee Income	April 2010	HPBC
Develop Building Control service partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council	Improved efficiency of service and customer satisfaction	Structure of new partnership agreed by October 2010	HPBC

## **Risk**

Generally Planning and Building Control service areas have been affected by downturn in construction industry.

### **Development Management:-**

Applications have fallen by 12% in 09/10 along with income ; this is lower than the national average of 20% . Staffing levels will continue to be balanced with income , currently economic uncertainty continues for 10/11 . Planning Fees are set by central government which has already announced there will be no increase in 2010/2011. Due to the low level of appeals received there is now a greater likelihood for variance in the appeal performance as only one or two appeal decisions can significantly impact on the councils performance target of 30%.

### **Building Control:-**

Caseloads have not fallen as significantly as Development Management, but staffing levels have still been reduced to accord with workloads. Income has fallen due to hesitation of applicants wishing to start on site. Again 2010/11 general building activity levels are going to be a difficult to predict. Enforcement activity is however up on previous years.

### **Landcharges:-**

The collapse of the housing market in 2008/2009 has had a significant affect on the number of land charge searches being received and as a result, staffing has been reduced to compensate for this fall in workload. Some recovery has occurred 2009/2010 and income levels have bounced back .It is going to be a difficult to predict how the housing market will fare in 2010/2011, given the uncertainty of the general economy .

### **Planning Enforcement:-**

Planning Enforcement cases are up, and it is anticipated case loads will remain high. The service is unable to react to all requests and is continuing to monitor workloads. Lack of budget provision will affect the services ability to respond effectively in some cases.

## **Customer Satisfaction**

Building Control and Landcharges satisfaction levels remain high. The National twice yearly review of satisfaction with planning services related only to applicant satisfaction levels. The Authority is monitoring all sectors of its customer base and is striving to introduce a range of improvements in the way it meets customer aspirations within its resources. Changes in pre application arrangements, reduced reliance on specialist inputs, streamlining and simplifying conditions along with maintaining quick turn rounds in decision making will all assist in improving satisfaction ratings. Recent customer satisfaction levels for Agents rose to 70%.

## **Customer Involvement**

Customer Involvement is mainly provided via Parish Panel/ Agents Panel. Also through Parish and Agent seminars and conferences.

The introduction of a Development Manager for the Planning Service has provided a strong feedback mechanism from our developer/agent customers.

Regular programme of surveys of customers is also undertaken e.g. neighbour letters/surveys.

## **Access to Services**

The Planning and Building Control website provides extensive guidance and information and provides direct access for our customers for our services eg: submission of online planning applications.

New process review improvements as part of the Transformation Programme will further assist electronic access to the service.

## **Value for Money**

The service for Planning Management has, in the past, been rated below average in terms of 2008/09 cost per household. However, costs of dealing with planning applications are in line with the national average.

Recent benchmarking for our Building Control service has indicated that Wealden Building Control is one of the few self funding services in East/West Sussex.

## **Workforce Priorities**

Mechanisms have been introduced to balance demand and resources available for Development Management and Building Control and Land Charges..

## **Learning & Development**

Regular CPD (Continual Professional Development) events are held internally and officers are encouraged to look at appropriate CPD events externally where appropriate.

## **Equalities and Diversity**

Equality is embedded in all aspects of the service. We strive to be fair and transparent in the way that we provide our services and ensure that they are accessible to all in our communities. This is reflected in our Customer Charters and in the Council's Statement on Values. Our Action Plan is the outcome of our Equality Impact Assessment.

## **Sustainability**

Improved enforcement for breaches in Conservation of Energy via Building Regulations.

## **Rural impact**

The Development Management Service is to undertake training for all of the (DC) planning officers to assist them further in understanding the needs of the rural economy. It also employs the services of qualified (specialist) Agricultural Estates Surveyors to advise of planning applications related to the Rural economy.

## **Communication**

The Development Planning and Building Control website is proving to be a significant tool in provided information to our customers. A quarterly newsletter has also been developed for Agents/developers. Agent & Parish panels provide an invaluable mechanism for liaising with their two key stakeholder groups. Parish and Town training forums are undertaken each year.

## **Health and safety**

Health and safety is a key consideration and taken very seriously in the way we provide and run our service. Working practices take proper account of the health and safety of our employees and work in ways which minimise the risk to lone workers and of violent incidents associated with various roles in Development Management/Building Control and Planning Enforcement.

The Building Control Service provides in its own right an important health and safety service in the way buildings are designed and constructed particularly in relation to Fire and Structural safety. This is also provided through the provision of the Dangerous Structure service which supports the Councils Emergency Planning Response and on a daily basis the safety of the residents of Wealden.

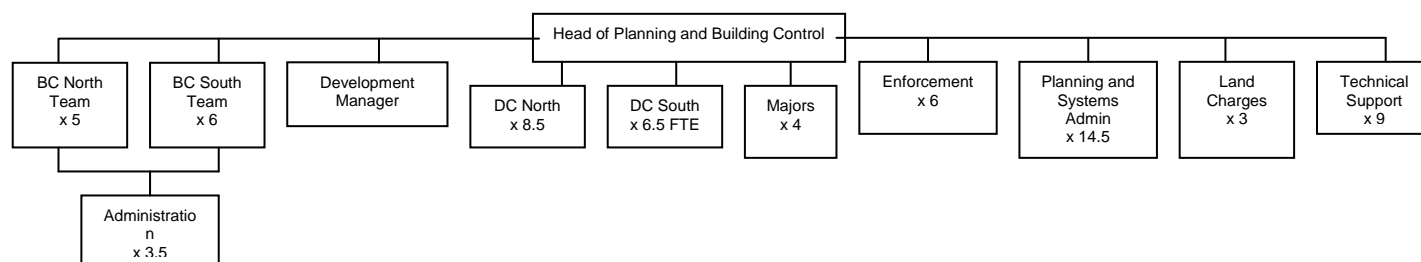
## **Standards**

Building Control Level of Service Guidance endorsed by Central Government, Local Authority Building Control and Construction Industry Council.

National indicator 157 Development Management now at the top of the Councils CIPFA comparator group.

## Resources and budget

### Staff Organisation Chart (68 FTE)



### Budget

	2010/11 £(000))	2011/12 £(000)	2012/13 £(000)
Head of Planning & Building Control	133	133	133
Development Management	798	789	789
Planning Appeals	58	58	58
Enforcement	237	235	235
Building Regulations	54	52	52
Local Land Charges	(95)	(96)	(96)
	<b>1,185</b>	<b>1,171</b>	<b>1,171</b>

### Performance indicator targets

The National Indicator Set was introduced from 1 April 2008. In 2008/09 we gathered baseline data which has been used to set targets for subsequent years.

PI No.	Description	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Target	2011/12 Target
NI157	Processing of planning applications as measured against targets for 'major' 'minor' and 'other' application types a) Majors b) Minors c) Others		80%	80%
WLI1104	% of planning applications registered within 5 working days		98%	98%
WLI1105	Percentage of planning decisions delegated		90%	90%
WLI 1106	Standard land Searches processed within 10 days		100%	100%
WLI DC 04	% of Planning Appeals Allowed		35%	30%
WLI DC05	Satisfaction with Planning Service		75%	75%
WLI DCO1	% of planning Enforcement cases resolved in 4 wks		45%	45%
WLI DCO2	% of planning Enforcement cases resolved in 6 Wks		65%	65%
WLI DCO3	% of planning Enforcement f cases resolved in 8wks		85%	85%
WLI BC01	% of Building Regulation Applications vetted in 3wks		65%	65%

PI No.	Description	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Target	2011/12 Target
WLIBC0 2	% of Building Regulation Applications vetted in 5weeks		98%	98%

Previous years' performance data can be viewed on the Council's website

## How this Service Plan will be monitored

The Council's performance management framework is critical to monitoring and reporting the achievements of the Service and as a catalyst for improvement when targets are not achieved.

In the same way that targets cascade down to individual appraisals, the achievement of those targets is managed at individual, team or service level. Day to day management is used to identify good performance and also those areas where delivery is slower or below the standard expected. There is an underlying principle of "no surprises". The Directorate of Environmental Services employs a Performance Management specialist who prepares detailed reports for consideration at each monthly Departmental Management Team meeting chaired by the Corporate Director.

At the end of each quarter, performance against key targets is collated and reported to a directorate management meeting. Based on the above system, management should already be aware and have taken appropriate action to improve a situation subject to the availability of appropriate resources. This quarterly meeting and information review should allow the Corporate Director to balance the outcomes from each of the service areas for which they are responsible and take appropriate action within their directorate.

A quarterly report is prepared by each directorate which is then collated by the Policy Officer with responsibility for Performance Management. This report then forms an appendix to a Cabinet report, with portfolio holders commenting on performance for their respective portfolios and recommending any improvement to Cabinet. The Cabinet report is circulated to all Members. Cabinet recommendations are then implemented by officers.

In the Scrutiny cycle following Cabinet's consideration of performance, the three Scrutiny Committees review the decisions of Cabinet and scrutinise the actions taken to improve performance and whether these have been effective.

At the year end, provisional outturn figures are prepared and considered by Cabinet. These must then undergo a process of data quality checks internally and validation by the Audit Commission prior to final publication around June 2011.

## **Other key reference documents for the service**

**Corporate Plan** - setting out the Council's overall strategic direction and priorities

**Performance Management Framework** - the Council's arrangements for monitoring and acting on performance information and ensuring data quality

**Wealden Sustainable Community Strategy** - Wealden Local Strategic Partnership's visioning document formally adopted by Wealden District Council as part of the East Sussex Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy. It sets the overarching local framework for improvement of quality of life in the District, informing and aligning strategic and operational planning in organisations working together for the good of the district.

**East Sussex Local Area Agreement** - a three-year agreement between East Sussex County Council on behalf of service providers, including Wealden District Council, and central government which identifies priorities for improvement in East Sussex and how they will be delivered.

**East Sussex Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy** - a profile of East Sussex and its communities as it is now and a vision for improvement over the next 20 years, with key priorities for people in East Sussex

**Communications Strategy** - the Council's approach to communicating with people in the district and local and national media

**Wealden Sustainability Strategy** - how the Council will seek to enable the current needs of the district to be met without compromising the ability of future generations living in Wealden to meet their own needs

**Community Engagement Strategy** provides a framework for co-ordinated and effective engagement of stakeholders and individuals by the Council in its decision-making.

**Wealden Equality Scheme 2007-2010** sets out how we will ensure that all our services and employment opportunities are provided with equity and fairness to everyone.

## **Other key reference documents for the service**

### **Planning Enforcement Strategy**

The document sets out the strategy by which the Planning Enforcement Team undertake planning enforcement work for the District.

### **Communication Strategy**

The service specific document sets out the strategy for allowing the most effective and efficient way

Members of the public can contact and gain advice from Planning.

### **Planning Business Plan 2008/2011**

The document outlines the Planning Services strategy for improving its performance and is updated regularly see for example report to March 2010 Cabinet.

### **Building Control Folder**

Document outlines the service provided and Customer Charter.

### **Planning and Building Control Website**

Provides a full range of interactive information and guidance for the service.

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