Action Plan For 2009/2011

Development Services Review

ACTION	H/M/L	RESP	MILESTONES/COMMENTS	DATE	Action Completed
MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONSHIPS					
To focus on Member/Officer Relationships and methods of working.					
To provide training for Members on planning matters, eg, Development Control Committee Member Training; KCC Highways advice; Member assessment of completed development; joint Member and Officer Training on new regulations and guidance; and training for Member roles and appropriate boundaries in respect of Officer relationships in conjunction with the Code of Conduct.	H	JK	Member/Officer visits to completed development – Members' Tour successfully carried out on 26th July 2010, based on adapted CABE Building for Life criteria to analyse development. Support for a repeat of this. Training carried out for DCC and other Members on a variety of topics.	July 2010	✓
Training on Planning Policy and Development Control should be compulsory for all new Members of the Development Control Committee and thereafter Members should be encouraged to keep their skills up-to-date. *Cabinet in conjunction with the Development Control Committee should set out an annual planning training programme for Members and should specify any compulsory elements therein, the content will be guided by*	M	JK	Proposed that Annual Training should include:- 1) Member/Officer visits to completed developments. 2) Compulsory Training for new Members of Development Control Committee. 3) Short Pre-Committee Training sessions for	September 2010	✓

best practice advice (eg Planning Advisory Service).			Development Control Committee Members. 4) Lessons from Planning Appeal decisions.		
Joint Committee/Officer training be held on the Council's Constitution as related to Planning, (including relevant protocols).	H	RM	Completed – August 2009.	Completed Aug 2009	✓
To introduce longer standard "hours of Officer availability" by telephone to Members and Customers.	H	RM	Completed April 2010.	Completed April 2010	✓
To expand the Planning Applications information available to Members and Customers on the Council Website.	H	RM	Part complete by October 2009. We now expect a further new version of the Planning Application information to be installed by (December 2010).	December 2010	✗
To continue to provide quarterly performance data to Development Control Committee.	H	RM	Quarterly Report, ongoing. This is sent to all Councillors.	From Nov 2009 Ongoing	✓
To undertake regular surveys of Customer Satisfaction in Planning, including public meetings, eg, the accommodation, layout and meeting interval of the Development Control Committee.	M	JK	Devised survey forms, based on former Best Value Indicator III. Commenced surveys in April 2010.	April 2010	✓
That declarations of lobbying and pre-determination must be made at the start of the Development Control Committee and request that copies of lobbying materials received are where practical, forwarded to the Case	H	JK RM	Ensure 'standard' agenda items at Development Control Committee are changed to include these declarations.	Completed Nov 2009 Oct 2009	✓

Officer or Head of Development Services.			Prepared short process for Officer accepting lobbying material and briefed Development Control Staff on this.		

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DELEGATIONS					
To review the Scheme of Delegation including; the efficiency and effectiveness of the current arrangements, current understanding of the operation of the Delegation Scheme and the Member/Officer protocol, monitoring arrangements and review of Planning Advisory Guidance.					
Establish a single Scheme of Delegation written into the Council's Constitution.	H	RM	Completed – in Constitution.	Completed July 2009	✓
Member Call-In Procedure will be clarified and simplified by setting out a clear deadline within which to request referral of an application to Development Control Committee.	H	RM	Completed – in Constitution	Completed July 2009	✓
Written planning reasons will be required to justify call-in.	H	RM	Completed – in Constitution	Completed July 2009	✓

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DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE					
The existing processes were mapped and scrutinised to establish which aspects currently work well and where opportunities for improvement existed.					
That consideration be given to introducing a three-weekly Committee cycle after the Development Services Review recommendations have been implemented, meanwhile the cycle is to remain at four-weekly.	L	RM	No change required at this time. Reconsider further in 1 year's time.	July 2010	✓
Improvement of the checking procedure to ensure that the completed agenda is checked prior to dispatch.	H	RM	Completed, now normal officer practice.	Completed July 2009	✓
Location plans only will be appended to reports.	H	RM	Completed, now normal officer practice. Site layout plan added.	Completed July 2009	✓
The electronic agenda will include hyperlinks to take readers directly to the relevant Public Access pages.	H	RM	Completed, now normal officer practice.	Completed July 2009	✓

Improve the appearance of the electronic presentation and provide two further screens in the public gallery to enable visitors to follow the presentation.	M	RM	Implemented without further screens due to budget constraints.	Completed Dec 2009	✓
Format of the meeting and structure of the debate will be simplified. This will include Officer introduction to items, clarity of Ward Member role in debates and removal of outdated procedures. (Proposals would replace the existing arrangements in the Development Control Committee procedures and Protocol).	H	RM	Completed, in Constitution.	Completed July 2009	✓

NEW PROPOSALS AT OCTOBER 2010					
To reduce the length and improve the efficiency and transparency of the meetings we will prepare informal guidance and training as follows:- *Officers – Length and sequence of agenda, content and length of presentations, officer attendance.* *Members – Scope for questions and time taken up by questions and debate at and before Committee, the stages of debate, putting a motion forward at Committee.*	M	RM	Prepare informal guidance notes and deliver a training and discussion opportunity by end of January 2011. Phase out current practise of one member (Chairman) proposing the motions. Fuller minutes of the meeting to be taken.	End of January 2011	✗

Attendance at Committee - Members should inform the Chairman upon leaving the room during the consideration of an application or if leaving before the meeting is closed.	M	RM	Informal approach – Chairman to request this at the start of a meeting.	Dec 2010	✗
All Officers to have name plates	M	RM	To be applied.	Dec 2010	✗
Local Members address to Committee:- *Give Local Members additional flexibility by altering the notice they need to give the Council from 5pm of the day of the meeting to the start of the meeting. The advance notice period of the use of visual aids would however remain the same.*	H	RM	Alter Constitution accordingly. Also clarify the definitions of Local Member, as in the Constitution Part 7 Section 3. Alter Appendix N accordingly.	Dec 2010	✗
Public speaking - greater flexibility be given to members of the public, so that the Chairman may allow late registration between 5pm and the commencement of the meeting, at his discretion.	M	RM	Alter Constitution Part 7 accordingly	Dec 2010	✗

Introduction of process note to aid visitors understanding of the format of the meeting.	H	JK	Drafted – September 2009. First use – Development Control Committee October 2009, now used by Chairman who verbally introduces the stages to visitors.	Completed Nov 2009	✓

Membership of Committee to remain at 19, (to be kept under consideration alongside the length of Committee cycle).	L	RM	No change required at this time. Reconsider in 1 year's time.	July 2010	✓
Pre-Committee Member training sessions to continue.	M	RM	Ongoing from July 2009.	July 2009	✓
Site meeting procedures to be replaced with a Pre-Committee Site Inspection comprising of a simple site visit without a debate.	H	RM	Completed, in Constitution.	Completed July 2009	✓
Minutes and actions arising from the Committee to be agreed on the Friday morning following the meeting.	M	RM	Completed, now normal officer practice.	Completed July 2009	✓
Officers to complete a procedure note covering the conduct of site visits.	M	RM	a) Completed draft procedure note, being trialled by offices. b) Agree with Development Control Committee. c) Train Development Control Committee.	July 2010 Nov/Dec 2010 Nov/Dec 2010	✗

ACTION	H/M/L	RESP	MILESTONES/COMMENTS	DATE	Action Completed
PLANNING APPEALS					
The scope of this topic area covered efficiency, including cost efficiency and effectiveness. Key issues included; gaining comparative performance detail from other Local Planning Authorities; assessment of other Local Planning Authorities' procedures and the impact this may have on the performance figures, and identifying variations in performance.					
Scan all Appeal documents with immediate effect.	M	LW	The documents are scanned – appeal questionnaire, statements, etc.	Completed Nov 2009	✓

Priority booking of the Conference Room for informal hearings and the Chamber for Public Inquiries.	M	LW	Now in operation.	Completed Nov 2009	✓
Deal with all planning appeals where practicable utilising in-house staff.	H	LW	Completed.	Completed July 2009	✓
Provide on-going training for in-house staff in both informal hearings and public local inquiries.	H	LW	1) Upon Induction for new staff – ongoing from July 2009. 2) Informal Hearings – completed July 2009. 3) Public Inquiries by March 2010.	Completed/ Ongoing Mar 2010	✓
Change job descriptions of all Development Control Staff to enable them to take part in public inquiries and hearings.	M	JK/RM	1) Found it is not necessary to change the Job Descriptions. 2) Monitor progress through Staff Appraisals (Ongoing).	Completed Dec 2009 and Ongoing	✓
Training for all Members on Appeals.	M	JK/LW	1) Now included in annual training programme. 2) To cover appeal process and lessons learnt from appeal decisions, especially local ones.	December 2010	

Quarterly reporting of Appeal statistics to Development Control Committee.	M	RM/ LW	1) Set format up – RM/JK. 2) Complete each quarter starting after Quarter 2, 2009/2010, to November Development Control Committee.	Ongoing from Nov 2009	✓

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RECRUITMENT					
To review key issues in recruitment and retention and to consider internal and external factors when looking at suggestions for improvement.					
Produce a retention and workforce training strategy for Development Control and Policy.	L	HR/JK	Linked to Kent Planning Officers Group (KPOG) initiatives, decided on shared training.	Completed Dec 2009	✓
Develop a bespoke training and development framework for all Kent Planning Staff in conjunction with the Kent Strategic Board.	L	HR	Delivered via KPOG, Sevenoaks District Council staff have attended.	Mar 2010	✓
Examine the merits of a bespoke on-line recruitment portal.	L	HR	Longer term due to change in job market.	June 2011	✗

Continue to benchmark Development Services Salaries and Benefits packages, with other comparable organisations.	M	HR	Ongoing – via Kent Price Book. (See Financial Advisory Group minutes, December 2009).	Completed Dec 2009	✓
Develop a detailed exit survey.	M	HR	Longer term due to change in job market.	Jan 2011	✗
Continue investigation and evaluation of cost efficient partnership initiatives both County-wide and with neighbouring Districts.	M	JK/RM	Sevenoaks District Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council – reports to Cabinet – September and December 2009 and ongoing.	Completed Dec 2009	✓

ACTION	H/M/L	RESP	MILESTONES/COMMENTS	DATE	Action Completed
USE OF CONSULTANTS					
To review the use of specialists; Consultants for appeals, the cost of Consultants, procurement issues and alternative options to the use of Consultants.					
Arrange compulsory training to increase the skills of existing staff in relation to design, urban regeneration and development briefs.	H	AS	Courses undertaken by all relevant staff on urban design, character appraisals and briefs and on planning for sustainable communities.	Completed August 2010	✓

Produce a retention and workforce training strategy for Development Control and Policy in line with the recommendation in the recruitment and retention strand above.		HR/ RM	See Retention and Recruitment strand – ongoing career training needed to ensure appeals and major application training, for example, is not a one off but part of an evolving scheme to support changes in staff and staff needs.		✔
Produce a procedure manual for dealing with major applications.	M	AS	Updating 2004 Major Development Protocol linking to SPD on Developer Contributions for LDF. To be completed for use when The Core Strategy becomes a material consideration for Development Control purposes.	December 2010	✖
Use Consultants for specialist tasks and recoup the costs of Consultants where justifiable.	M	AS/	1) Only using Consultants for specialist tasks from August 2009 onwards – completed. 2) A 'call on' tendered contract across Sevenoaks District Council could work well covering for example, retail specialists, engineers etc. However, there is no need for this type of expertise at this time. 3) Completed - re-coup costs where possible, (from August 2009).	Completed Mar 2010	✔

Investigate the use of Planning Performance Agreements.	L	AS	Has not been needed to date, but will cover this issue in the planned Major Development Protocol.	Timetable linked to LDF SPD	✖
Highlight options for dealing with windfall sites in Policy terms, eg, sites needing development briefs.	M	AS	This involves: 1) Those sites identified via LDF with briefs which will be done by the Policy team in discussion with Development Control. 2) Character Analysis and Concept Statements to be used to aid negotiations. To be undertaken by Development Control. Will not be SPDs, but these documents will be supported by existing Planning Policies. Draft copies circulated to Development Control Committee Members August 2010 as part of 'Assessing Character' training. Pilots to be done Autumn 2010. The aim is to circulate to Local Members and Local Councils for comment for each individual site.	Part completed Mar 2010. Autumn 2010	✖
Review procurement procedures in Development Control.	M	AS/RM	Action plan produced for current and ongoing contracts. The Development Control Manager to take this forward re: new tenders, ending contracts etc.	Done June 2009 – now ongoing.	✓

Key:

Priority -

H	=	High
M	=	Medium
L	=	Low

HR	=	Human Resources - Carrie Lloyd Hilary Holder
JK	=	Jim Kehoe
RM	=	Richard Morris
LW	=	Lesley Westphal
AS	=	Alison Salter

✓	=	Action completed, includes ongoing actions where applicable
✗	=	Action not completed, includes part completion and new proposals