

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS REPORTS AND PEER GROUP ASSESSMENT WORK

APPENDIX 1

A. Audit Commission Report 2008	Actions	Expected Outcome	Commentary
<p><b>Rec. 1</b></p> <p>Evaluate all internal processes and amend as appropriate.</p>	<p>1 Review validation process to ensure internal consistency between teams.</p> <p>2 Review opportunity to create an enhanced career grade/technician role for Customer Services staff.</p> <p>3 Consider a business process improvement review.</p>	<p>1 Remove duplication; inefficient and ineffective procedures. Improve the perception of the service.</p> <p>2 Allocate actions to the appropriate officer. Represents a proportionate approach in accordance with Development Management (DM) approach.</p> <p>3 Remove duplication; inefficient and ineffective procedures. Improve the perception of the service.</p>	<p>1. <b>COMPLETED</b> - Reviewed two years ago and amendments introduced. A review of the process may be appropriate now to evaluate the changes made and ensure that consistency is maintained.</p> <p>2. The creation of technician career graded posts was to have been implemented through the 2010 Planning Service Review. The concept of creating such posts is strongly supported. The main issue will no doubt be addressed within the wider Council service review following the appointment of the new Chief Executive and any changes in light of austerity planning.</p> <p>3. <b>COMPLETED</b> – There is also the opportunity to re-look at issues as part of introduction of Development Management approach.</p>
<p><b>Rec. 2</b></p> <p>Train officers and Councillors to improve understanding of the role that the Planning Service should be playing</p>	<p>4 Member training events.</p> <p>5 Bi-monthly Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training sessions.</p>	<p>4 and 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skills and competence to improve the quality and consistency of advice.</li> <li>• Improve the perception of the service.</li> <li>• Applications are determined by the appropriate body (i.e. committee or officer)</li> </ul>	<p>4. <b>COMPLETED</b> initial phase of training – Action on-going. Over the past two years twenty four Member training sessions have been held on a wide variety of subjects. This has included joint training with Colchester and Ipswich Council Members. A further 3 training sessions are planned for 2010. Further training needs to be planned for new Member training in May 2011.</p> <p>5. <b>COMPLETED</b> – Action on-going.</p>
<p><b>Rec. 3</b></p> <p>Increase user focus by providing published user standards and written advice notes</p>	<p>6 Publish advice notes on the making of planning. Applications and the processes involved (including FAQ).</p> <p>7 Publish a range of Conservation advice notes in written and web form.</p> <p>8 Publish a pre application procedure following further consultations.</p> <p>9 Review the Customer Service Standards and publish new version.</p>	<p>6 to 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better quality and consistency of advice.</li> <li>• Clarity for the public on the standard of service they can expect to receive.</li> <li>• A library of advice to which less experienced officers can refer.</li> <li>• Improve the perception of the service.</li> <li>• Clearer pre-application advice and involvement in accordance with DM approach.</li> </ul>	<p>6. <b>COMPLETED</b> - Planning advice notes have been prepared and are available on the Council's website. There are a wide range of helpful guidance notes available. A review of these advice notes may be appropriate following possible changes to the Development Team protocol and the introduction of a Development Management approach.</p> <p>7. <b>COMPLETED</b> - A new range of user friendly conservation and listed building leaflets are now available on both the website and in paper form. This has been very successful with customers, hence a further two supplementary leaflets are currently in production.</p> <p>8. <b>COMPLETED</b> - A pre-application procedure note was prepared by the Assistant Chief Executive in 2009. This is likely to require updating in view of possible charging for this service in the future and the lessons learnt from best practice elsewhere.</p> <p>9. <b>COMPLETED</b> - Customer Service Standards have been reviewed and published. A review of these Standards may be appropriate following possible changes to the Development Team protocol; the introduction of a Development Management approach and a proactive enforcement approach.</p>
<p><b>Rec. 4</b></p>	<p>10 Improve the feedback and evaluation systems on the</p>	<p>10 and 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging appropriate behaviour by</li> </ul>	<p>10. <b>COMPLETED</b> - Processes and procedures are maintained electronically on the Service Knowledge page and are constantly updated in accordance with new issues and</p>

<p>Strengthen the approach of management to ensure protocols are applied</p>	<p>delivery of processes and procedures.</p> <p><b>11</b> Review the senior management arrangements and reporting lines.</p>	<p>both officers and councillors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A more consistent, confident service.</li> <li>• Clear lines of reporting for staff</li> <li>• Improve the perception of the service.</li> </ul>	<p>legislative changes as these arise. This has enabled the Service to adapt to procedural and legislative changes when necessary and is kept under constant review. An overall review of these may be appropriate following possible changes to the Development Team officer protocol and the introduction of a Development Management approach. <b>In order to provide a more consistent and confident service it would be appropriate to consider a one team approach pending the wider Council service review following the appointment of the new Chief Executive and any changes in light of austerity planning.</b></p> <p><b>11. COMPLETED</b> - Recent measures have been taken to simplify service reporting structures and the process for clearing Planning Committee reports. The fully revised Planning Service structure and senior management arrangements have not been taken forward pending the wider Council service review following the appointment of the new Chief Executive and any changes in light of austerity planning.</p>
<p><b>Rec. 5</b></p> <p>Ensure delegation arrangements operate effectively and make explicit the criteria for Chairman's referrals</p>	<p><b>12</b> Carry out review of effectiveness and report the conclusions to the Planning Committee and Council.</p>	<p><b>12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete clarity and openness for officers, councillors and service users.</li> <li>• A more efficient and effective planning system using proportionate resources in accordance with DM approach.</li> <li>• Improved performance in the time taken to determine applications.</li> </ul>	<p><b>12. COMPLETED</b> - The 2009 Constitutional changes addressed the previous Chairman's referral process. This process is due to be further simplified as part of the 2010 Constitutional changes. The proposed changes have been agreed by Informal Cabinet – 1 September 2010.</p> <p>With the changes introduced in the Councils constitution in 2009 the referrals process has enabled very clear, transparent decision making by both officers and the Planning Committee. This issue has been addressed but could be improved upon by the introduction of advice notes on the call- in procedure. An overall review of these may be appropriate following possible changes to the Development Team procedure note and the introduction of a Development Management approach. The outcome should be reported to Planning Committee in line with the Haslam Report recommendation.</p> <p>The determination time for all categories of planning applications has been maintained in line with Central Government targets.</p>

<b>B. Haslam Report 2009</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<p>Planning Committee Reports</p>	<p><b>1</b> Revised template for reports to be adopted.</p> <p><b>2</b> Bullet points to report views of consultees.</p> <p><b>3</b> Comment is made on consultee views.</p> <p><b>4</b> Specialist design advice is sought where design is an</p>	<p><b>1 to 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More focussed and structured reports providing Members with clear advice on policy and relevant material considerations (including summarised consultee responses; legal agreements and conditions) and the appropriate weight to be attached to each issue.</li> <li>• Improve decision making process.</li> <li>• Improve the perception of Planning Committee (PC) and the service.</li> </ul> <p><b>4 and 5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete clarity and openness for</li> </ul>	<p><b>1. COMPLETED</b></p> <p><b>2. COMPLETED</b></p> <p><b>3. COMPLETED</b></p> <p><b>4.</b> Specialist design advice from ECC for one day per week will be provided up to end March 2011. This is not sufficient to address the requirements identified as being</p>

	<p>issue.</p> <p>5 Where members wish to refuse on design grounds the application is automatically deferred for appraisal by the council's independent design advisor.</p> <p>6 Conditions and Sec 106 requirements summarised.</p> <p>7 Constraints status in title box deleted.</p>	<p>officers, councillors and service users.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased specialist resource needed</li> </ul> <p><b>6 and 7</b> See 1 to 3 above</p>	<p>needed by the Haslam Report. Again this was an issue which was to be addressed within the Planning Service review and will be dependant upon either the wider Council review or addressed through a three year contract using HPDG monies. This would provide members with a design officer available at all appropriate Planning Committees where required.</p> <p><b>5.</b> The Service has taken a different approach to address this issue by considering design issues at the pre-application stage for major applications. Active use is being made of the Essex EDI (architects peer group assessment process) which is helping to improve the design quality of such schemes. Examples of where this have been used are, the Former Lighthouse Building, Clacton; Tesco Manningtree; St Osyth Priory; Thorpe Maltings and further events are planned for a revised Tesco scheme at Manningtree and another major application at Walton. Recommendation to be reviewed.</p> <p><b>6. COMPLETED</b></p> <p><b>7. COMPLETED</b></p>
Consistency of Advice to Planning Committee	<p>8 Responsibility for signing off reports delegated to Executive Manager and delegated to senior colleagues where appropriate.</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocate actions to the appropriate officer.</li> <li>Represents a proportionate approach in accordance with Development Management (DM) approach.</li> <li>Clear lines of reporting for staff</li> </ul>	<p><b>8. COMPLETED</b> - With the retirement of the Assistant Chief Executive delegation arrangements have been streamlined with only the most complex planning applications being passed up to the Executive Manager for sign off.</p>
Operation of Planning Committee	<p>9 Executive Manager or nominated Team Manager to attend all Planning Committee meetings.</p> <p>10 Review of Planning Committee Procedures note.</p> <p>11 Referral of all applications refused on design grounds against officer advice to be referred to independent design consultant.</p>	<p><b>9</b> A single consistent source of advice for Planning Committee Members.</p> <p><b>10</b> Clarity for the public on the standard of service they can expect to receive. Encouraging appropriate behaviour by officers; councillors and members of the public.</p> <p><b>11, 13 and 14</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete clarity and openness for officers, councillors and service users.</li> <li>Increased skills and competence to improve the quality and consistency of design making.</li> <li>Increased specialist resource needed and in house training.</li> </ul>	<p><b>9. COMPLETED</b> - Currently this is being undertaken by the Interim Head of Planning. This matter was to have been addressed through the Planning Services Review with the establishment of a Development Management Manager. <b>Depending on future changes it is clear that even with a smaller Planning Committee this role will still be required.</b></p> <p><b>10. COMPLETED</b> – A further review may be appropriate following the introduction of the Development Management programme and possible changes to Planning Committee.</p> <p><b>11.</b> The Service has taken a different approach to address this issue by considering design issues at the pre-application stage for major applications. Active use is being made of the Essex EDI (architects peer group assessment process) which is helping to improve the design quality of such schemes. Examples of where this have been used are, the Former Lighthouse Building, Clacton; Tesco Manningtree; St Osyth Priory; Thorpe Maltings and further events are planned for a revised Tesco scheme at Manningtree and another major application at Walton. Recommendation to be reviewed.</p>

	<p><b>13</b> Training sessions for members in design.</p> <p><b>14</b> Increased resources to reflect the importance members give to design.</p> <p><b>12</b> Details over overturned recommendation to be minuted in detail.</p> <p><b>15</b> Amend the Council's standing orders/Financial Regulations to require that officers report the financial implications of the decisions they are making.</p> <p><b>16</b> Consideration to the reduction in the size of Planning Committee to 9 or 11 members.</p> <p><b>17</b> Annual review to examine those applications that have been over turned.</p>	<p><b>12</b> Complete clarity and openness for officers, councillors and service users.</p> <p><b>15</b> Complete clarity and advice for Members to improve the quality and consistency of design making.</p> <p><b>16</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More focussed and structured DC's</li> <li>• Improve decision making process.</li> <li>• Improve the perception of Planning Services.</li> </ul> <p><b>17</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skills and competence to improve the quality and consistency of design making.</li> <li>• Monitor progress in raising the standard of design.</li> </ul>	<p><b>13.</b> Training for Members in design will be dependant upon the availability of a training budget being available.</p> <p><b>14.</b> Currently there is no budgetary provision for design advice beyond end March 2011. This is a matter to be addressed within the budgetary review process and Members have asked for a report to be brought forward for them to consider. Report on urban design resource post April 2011 to be prepared for Cabinet consideration.</p> <p><b>12.</b> To be implemented.</p> <p><b>15.</b> To be considered later in the programme. Member training to be implemented in the meantime.</p> <p><b>16.</b> To be considered by Cabinet in autumn 2010.</p> <p><b>17.</b> To be implemented (including site visits) possibly incorporated into new Planning Committee format.</p>
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<b>C. Development Management with training provided by the Planning Advisory Service and Planning Officer's Society.</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
	<p><b>1.</b> Branding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduces the concept of DM which represents a proportionate approach to planning in accordance with PAS and POS advice</li> </ul>	<p><b>1.</b> To be implemented.</p>
	<p><b>2.</b> Processes for handling planning applications</p>	<p>Clarity for the public, developers and members on the standard of service they can expect to receive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging appropriate involvement by officers; councillors; developers and</li> </ul>	<p><b>2.</b> To be implemented.</p>

		members of the public.	
	3. Staff and management structures:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allocate actions to the appropriate officer.</li> <li>• Represents a proportionate approach in accordance with Development Management (DM) approach.</li> <li>• Improved perception of the Service within the Council</li> <li>• Potential source of revenue</li> </ul>	3. To be implemented.
	4. Training programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skills and competence to improve the quality and consistency of decision making.</li> </ul>	4. To be implemented.
	5. Briefing and information flows:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging appropriate involvement by officers; councillors; developers and members of the public.</li> </ul>	5. To be implemented.
	6. Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represents a proportionate approach in accordance with Development Management (DM) approach.</li> <li>• Potential sources of revenue</li> <li>• Potential cost savings/service sharing</li> </ul>	6. To be implemented.
	7. Monitoring and review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring impacts and order to inform further improvements to the service.</li> </ul>	7. To be implemented – via annual review of decisions and quality of outcomes.
	8. Probity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraging appropriate behaviour by officers; councillors; developers and members of the public.</li> <li>• Clarity for the public on the standard of service they can expect to receive.</li> <li>• Complete clarity and openness for officers, councillors and service users.</li> </ul>	8. <b>COMPLETED</b> – Action on-going.
	9. Visions, objectives and policy framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that DM links with the Council's Corporate Plan and the LSP SCS to provide a joined up approach.</li> <li>• Improve the perception of the Service</li> </ul>	9. To be implemented.

within the Council and with its partners.

D. Member Planning Committee Peer Review	Actions	Expected Outcomes	Commentary
Training:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Member training on changes to planning system</li> <li>2. Training to officers and Planning Committee on the policy framework established by the Core Strategy</li> <li>3. Briefing note on Core Strategy and Cabinet issues</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skills and competence to improve the quality and consistency of design making.</li> <li>• Increase awareness of Core Strategy vision and objectives</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>ONGOING</b> – Programme for rest of 2010 established.</li> <li>2. Autumn 2010 programme established.</li> <li>3. <b>COMPLETED</b> - Completed July/Aug/Sept 2010.</li> </ol>
IT/Equipment/Document : Amendment of call in procedure for members	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. IT upgrade needed and IT support to be present</li> <li>5. Improved microphone system</li> <li>6. Map quality needs improving</li> <li>7. Air conditioned chamber</li> <li>8. Timing public speaking – clock too distracting</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved presentations</li> <li>• Improved perception of the Service</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. To be reviewed/implemented.</li> <li>5. New microphones have been acquired by the Council for use.</li> <li>6. To be implemented – via GIS.</li> <li>7. Not possible to implement due to austerity budget.</li> <li>8. Reviewed completed.</li> </ol>
Processes and Procedures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Rename to Planning Committee</li> <li>10. Reconsider the timing of Planning Committee to include a site visit to all agenda item sites and then the Planning Committee meeting</li> <li>11. Senior Planner at Planning Committee</li> <li>12. Security presence at Planning</li> <li>13. Pro-active meet and greet presence at Planning Committee</li> <li>14. Public leaflet</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity for the public on the standard of service they can expect to receive.</li> <li>• Increased awareness and understanding of sites under consideration to improve the quality and consistency of design making.</li> <li>• A single consistent source of advice for Planning Committee Members.</li> <li>• Encouraging appropriate involvement and behaviour by officers; councillors; developers and members of the public.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. <b>COMPLETED (subject to changes to Constitution being agreed).</b></li> <li>10. To be considered by Cabinet in Autumn 2010.</li> <li>11. Interim Head of Planning Services attending Planning Committee since August 2010.</li> <li>12. Recommendation to be implemented via introduction of Risk Assessment and officer protocol.</li> <li>13. Committee Clerk already provides this service.</li> <li>14. <b>COMPLETED</b> – needs to be reviewed following introduction of Development Management approach and possible changes to Planning Committee.</li> </ol>

	<p>15. Introduce explanatory section e.g. material considerations</p> <p>16. Officer protocol for Green Sheets</p> <p>17. Standard chairman's introduction</p> <p>18. Neighbour notification review</p> <p>19. Remove portfolio holders announcement from agenda</p> <p>20. Remove information items from agenda</p> <p>21. Agree items without debate</p> <p>22. Separate questions from debate</p> <p>23. Moving motions – mover to give a clear indication why decision is being taken</p> <p>24. Revise agenda order to facilitate public speaking items first</p> <p>25. Numbered paragraphs in report</p> <p>26. Member access to officers and offices</p>		<p>15. <b>DRAFT COMPLETED</b> – to be implemented October 2010 onwards.</p> <p>16. To be implemented (Autumn 2010).</p> <p>17. <b>COMPLETED.</b></p> <p>18. Not to be undertaken at present.</p> <p>19. Not to be undertaken.</p> <p>20. <b>COMPLETED.</b> From 5 October 2010 this has been moved to the back of the Committee report.</p> <p>21. <b>COMPLETED.</b></p> <p>22. Not undertaken.</p> <p>23. <b>COMPLETED</b> – Action on-going.</p> <p>24. To be implemented - via review of Planning Committee procedure note.</p> <p>25. <b>COMPLETED.</b></p> <p>26. To be reviewed as part of the Councils response to the ethical governance report.</p>
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E. Enforcement	Actions	Expected Outcomes	Commentary
	<p>1. Procedures and processes mapped</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarity for the public on the standard of service they can expect to receive.</li> </ul>	<p>1. <b>COMPLETED</b> - The Planning enforcement team has an up to date comprehensive planning enforcement manual which incorporates best practice. Both the planning enforcement pages of the website and the monthly Service monitoring provide guidance on the standards; priorities and approach the Council will take in relation to investigation and follow up work. This should be reviewed in light of the proposal to introduce proactive enforcement.</p>

	2. Guidance notes provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity for the public on the standard of service they can expect to receive.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. COMPLETED</b> - Two planning enforcement leaflets have been prepared and been made available via the Planning Enforcement pages on the Councils website. These are entitled:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A guide to the actions available to the Council, and;</li> <li>• A guide for Owners and Occupiers.</li> </ul>
	3. Harm assessment when implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased skills and competence to improve the quality and consistency of decision making.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. COMPLETED</b> - The Harm Assessment to enable more to be achieved within the available resources was introduced in 2009.</p> <p>Member training and information on this will take place early in the new year.</p>
	4. Report to Planning Committee on progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of progress</li> </ul>	<p><b>4.</b> To be implemented.</p>