



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# Audit Commission & ODPM Planning Inspections

Feedback to Staff

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# ‘Fair one-star service with uncertain prospects for improvement’

- Argued robustly for ‘Good’.
- Conflict between two reports.
- Will implement recommendations.
  
- Following is what the Audit Commission report said:



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# Why Fair?

- Customer Satisfaction fell between 00/01 and 03/04.
- Slow speed of determining planning applications.
- Limited, not accessible guidance for applicants.
- Users not engaged to inform service delivery.
- No regular user forum.
- No user charter.
- Little Member training on planning specific issues.
- Public not allowed to address committee



# Why uncertain prospects? (1)

- Serious capacity issues, council financial position.
- Staff striving to manage significant challenges.
- Little contingency for additional pressures.
- No clear succession planning.
- External funding used for essential planning posts.
- PDG ends in 2008 – what then?
- No clear understanding of value-for money.



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## Why uncertain prospects (2)

- Transformation Project – Benefits unclear.
- Business Process Reviews – Not clearly defined.
- Senior Strategic capacity reduced.
- Strategic skills/capacity for challenges?



# Why almost 'Good' (1)

- Enables development that meets local, regional and national priorities:
  - New settlements,
  - Affordable housing,
  - Sustainability.
- Constructive approach to growth agenda:
  - Maximises benefits to local community/environment,
  - Minimises adverse impacts.



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## Why almost 'Good' (2)

- High quality development encouraged.
- Specialist advice available.
- Key planning documents being prepared to guide future development.
- At forefront 'nationally' in LDF preparations.



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## Why almost 'Good' (3)

- Quality and commitment of planning officers:
  - Recognised internally and externally.
- Councillors/Senior Officers appreciate pivotal role planning plays in achieving corporate objectives.





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## Why almost 'Good' (4)

- Speed of determining applications improved in 05/06: - Baroness Andrews OBE said:

South Cambs is making excellent progress.

Please accept my congratulation on your success to date.

I see no reason to continue to scrutinise closely the activities of your authority.”



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## Why almost 'Good' (5)

- Good collaborative working within Council and with external partners.
- Significant investment in new technology.



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## What next?

- Share findings with staff – today.
- Will implement recommendations – see Project Plan

We will:

- Address Capacity Issues
- Improve Customer Focus
- Direct Resources at priorities & need
- Use Systematic Value for Money Approach
- Address Committee/Member Capacity



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# Questions?