

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

DRAFT SERVICE PLAN FOR: PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES 2010/11 to 2012/13

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1. About Our Service

Statutory Services

Planning Policy

Its main role is delivering the Local Development Framework (LDF) as required under section 17 of the 2004 Planning Act, and this includes one of the largest growth agendas in the country. The Act also imposes a statutory requirement to produce an annual monitoring report which must be submitted to the Secretary of State. It also services the recently established section 29 Committee.

Development Control

Its main role is to determine approximately 2,000 applications (including almost all the major applications with the exception of those relating to the major growth sites) and 1,500 significant amendments to these applications. Our customers have varied agendas ranging from applicants and developers, to neighbours, interest groups and Parish Councils. In an extreme case we received and processed over 30,000 individual representations on one application. It also includes sub-sections responsible for defending the Council's case at appeal and enforcing and monitoring development within the District, as well as High Hedge applications.

Building Control

Its main role is to enforce building regulations by determining building regulation applications and carrying out site visits to check the works at specified stages of the development. As well as being concerned with building safety, accessibility and thermal efficiency building regulations are the most significant tool for delivering the Government's sustainability agenda and carbon reduction commitment. The sub-section also provides a dangerous structure service and provides advice and guidance on related issues.

Design and Conservation

Its main role is to protect and improve the historic, natural and built environment and it covers landscapes, trees, wildlife habitats and species, historic buildings and areas of national and local importance. The service deals with listed building and tree applications and provides conservation and design input to Planning Policy, Development Control and New Communities. It helps create sustainable development and environmental and other wellbeing (statutory responsibility and power).

Non-Statutory Services

Services include supporting community action to improve local places and public involvement in and enjoyment of people's culture, heritage and environment. They deliver national and LAA indicators, the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Council's wellbeing power and Council aims, approaches and actions.

- Duty officer service
- Formal pre-application advice service
- Pre-application charging
- Forums: Planning Parish Forum, Agents' Forum & Parish and Housing Association Forum
- Provision of tourist advice, working with Cambridge City Council
- An urban design team that has enabled improved quality of development through working with the policy, design and development control teams, as well as advice to the Growth team.

2. The Context for Our Plan

a) External Drivers

Political

The Government's growth agenda continues apace, and there will be continued pressure to deliver housing over and above the Local Development Framework.

Political change locally or nationally could have a significant impact on the growth agenda and appear to point to the strengthening of local powers. Change in government could lead to the loss of regional authorities and plans and a return to county structure plans.

The importance of climate change within the wider political framework has and will continue to make this an important area of work for the Council. Building Control has a strong role to play in delivering more sustainable development. The Government is planning step changes to the regulations to new house build to reduce their carbon footprint. The natural, historic and built environment has a key role in reducing the causes and impacts of climate change.

Changes in legislation result in:

- Variations for the need for planning permission
- Requirements to make an application
e.g. new General Development Order and legislation on Biodiversity (NERC Act 2006).
Building Regulations.

The new PPS 15 Planning for the Historic Environment will give the Council extra responsibilities and challenges such as requiring an integrated approach to heritage backed by record systems and increasing the need for detailed pre-application discussions.

Increased support for localism and involving the voluntary (or third) sector.

Economic

We are having to address the shortfall in housing completions following the effects of the credit crunch on the development sector through the LDF process and could be an issue for planning appeals. The single issue review by the RSS re Traveller and Gypsy sites has determined how many sites the Council will have to plan to provide.

Delivery of growth is highly dependent on appropriate progress being made by our key partners. Transport is particularly key to this and any delays in delivering transport infrastructure such as the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus or the improvements to the A14 will have significant impact on this service and its ability to deliver.

Green infrastructure including the natural and historic environment is a key component of growth and strongly supported by the RSS. Reduction in HGF (housing growth fund) support increases the need to gain funding through other means including community infrastructure levies or tariffs.

We are working with Cambridgeshire Horizons and other local authority partners to maximise the contributions from development to fund improvements in services, facilities and infrastructure which will not only benefit the development areas but the rest of the community.

Socio-Cultural

The local population has heightened expectations about its rights and ability to influence the planning process. Increased availability of information through the Internet continues to impact on officers' time. The press continues to be quick to pick up on planning issues and in most cases there will be one party not satisfied with the outcome of a planning application; it can be a productive area for stories.

Technological Environment

The use of the planning portal and continued use of Devcon continue to impose demands on staff e.g. scan plans. The lack of an integrated corporate IT system makes this more difficult across the service. The demand for information and an expectation of an instant response also continues.

Managing environmental data is key to informed decision making and E government. Accurate, digitised information and public access is required. Information is held and managed by this authority and by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Records Centre and other partners.

The challenge to find a new and efficient planning system is currently being addressed through the procurement process.

The planning policy consultation system continues to deliver economies in manpower and efficiencies in handling public consultations.

b) Our Key Partners

Partnership working is integral to the Planning service with a number of organisations, including other statutory partners, businesses, and third sector organisations. Key partners include, but are not limited to, the following:

- EERA (East of England Regional Assembly)
- Go-East
- Greater Cambridge Partnership
- Cambridgeshire Horizons
- Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cambridge City Council
- Parish Councils
- Building Control teams in other districts
- Developers
- Agents
- Partnerships e.g. Cambridgeshire Green Vision, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership
- National Agencies e.g. Natural England, English Heritage, CABE
- Voluntary Sector e.g. Cambridge Past, Present and Future
- Local Groups e.g. River Mel Restoration Project
- Make Cambridgeshire Count.

For our major partnerships, robust partnership arrangements are in place and have been checked through the corporate review of partnerships and corporate partnerships register. For example, our relationship with Cambridgeshire Horizons and others working on growth is shaped by Cambridgeshire Horizons Board and managed through the Senior Officer Board that regularly review progress, risks and issues.

Voluntary sector and other partnerships provide excellent value for money with high outputs achieved with relatively small inputs. Local authorities complement the type of contribution made by the voluntary sector and other partners e.g. by providing specialist professional input.

c) Our Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths

- Skilled, experienced and motivated staff across service area
- Duty Officer System
- Planning Parish Forum & Agents' Forum

Strengths continued ...

- Pre-application protocol and charging
- S106 monitoring officer, developing database and chasing obligations
- Application determination rates achieving Government targets
- Improved website information including delegated reports
- Efficient and effective Appeals and Enforcement service
- Quality of Building Control service, continuing to hit targets and signing two partners
- A planning policy team with a proven record in delivery (secured over £1m in PDG in 2008)
- Joint working with other Cambridgeshire local authorities and with service and infrastructure providers
- GTDPD in preparation
- NW Cambridge Action Plan being adopted
- Good framework of Supplementary Planning Documents e.g. for Trees, Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Biodiversity, Landscape and Design
- Contribution to housing growth sites e.g. Orchard Park landscaping
- Ability to attract funding and deliver ambitious enhancement schemes such as Trumpington Meadows wildlife/landscape scheme
- Ability to deal with demanding casework loads and achieve quality results
- Engaging local communities, supporting volunteers and improving local places through a range of schemes
- 100% tree applications being turned round on time.

Weaknesses

- Lack of comprehensive IT system
- Unsupported IT system in Building Control
- Need to continue with Devcon2 until new planning system is procured, leads to:
 - Continued daily system errors and delays in planning process
 - Difficulty generating reliable statistics
- Slow IT system speed continuing to cause delays in the registration process.

Opportunities

- Improve delivery of affordable housing by setting up a Forum to include Parish Councils and Housing Associations
- Enhance pre-application advice and having input for better quality applications and determinations
- Increased income through pre-application charging, effective 5 October 2009
- Achieving better quality applications through adoption of design guides
- Review of delegation system
- Statutory consultee and third party comments on the web
- Implement fully electronic Appeals service
- Building Control has Marketing Representative on East Anglia Group
- LABC Award Scheme and closer work with planning
- Cambridgeshire green infrastructure e.g. review of strategy
- Supporting local people to establish community orchards
- Targeted training programme to build knowledge and skills
- Fully electronic appeals service
- New planning IT system will:
 - Deliver a more linked up and effective service; enable service area to meet targets more effectively; include Appeals and Enforcement database
- Working with the Contact Centre and providing regular training to improve service
- Systems Thinking review to deliver a more efficient and effective service to meet the needs of the customer
- Partnership working
- High value put on historic villages, countryside and access to wildlife given by public
- High value given to historic villages, countryside and access to wildlife given by the public
- Political and other support for volunteering and importance of local places and actions.

Threats

- Large savings to be found resulting in loss of staff and other budgets:
 - Threat to services, peoples' livelihood's and morale
 - Threat to delivery of strategic objectives and actions e.g.
 - Council's Aims and Approaches
 - Sustainable Communities Strategy
 - Local Area Agreement
 - National indicators
 - Threat to integrated and complementary statutory and discretionary services, and council's community leadership and place shaping roles
- Continued work pressures and meeting deadlines
 - Currently at and above capacity for a number of services; what happens when development takes off again in 6 months time?
- Continued high level of casework for Conservation & Design and stretching range of commitments to meet including housing growth and policy
- Lack of investment in data and electronic systems
- Possible increased workloads and threats to targets due to review of delegation protocol
- Working from home and mobile working may be limited due to Gov.Connect
- Loss of experienced staff
- Low staff morale/stress
- Less income via applications
- Less income via HPDG
- Pre-application charging could result in less pre-application discussions which could lead to poorer developments
- Response to downturn
- Increased legislation
- Customers expectations
- ICT mend and make do approach leads to further costs in the long run
- Costs of printing from the Planning Portal
- Reduction in training opportunities and personal development.

3. The Council's Objectives

The Council has set a Vision, Values and Aims, Approaches and Actions for 2010/11. The Council also works to achieve the South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Community Strategy and the county-wide LAA.

1. We are committed to being a listening council providing first class services accessible to all
 - Listening to and engaging with our local community
 - Working with voluntary organisations, Parish Councils and Cambridgeshire County Council to improve services through partnership and achieve real improvements on the ground
 - Making South Cambridgeshire District Council more open and accessible
 - Achieving improved customer satisfaction with our services
 - Ensuring that the Council demonstrates value for money in the way it works
 - Promoting health and fitness through green infrastructure.
2. We are committed to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for you and your family
 - We are enabling provision of additional areas of play in new developments including safety elements through our policies
 - Building Control working to ensure safe developments.

3. We are committed to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live
 - Making affordable housing more available to local people
 - Ensuring that affordable housing is in balance with the community
 - Achieving a sustainable future for the Council's housing stock
 - Taking account of climate change in all the services we deliver
 - Promoting low carbon living and delivering low carbon growth through the planning system.
4. We are committed to assisting provision for local jobs for you and your family
 - Promoting policies for the protection and encouragement of job opportunities
 - Supporting cultural heritage which generates tourism and helps local firms.
5. We are committed to providing a voice for rural life
 - Working more closely with Parish Councils and local Groups
 - Implementing planning policies to achieve successful and well designed new communities
 - Maximising planning gain for neighbouring communities
 - Playing our part in improving rural services including transport links
 - Protecting and enhancing our villages and countryside.

The Council Actions that will be undertaken by our service area in 2010/11 are:

- We will contribute to achieve Customer Service Excellence accreditation by 31 March 2011
- We will promote the relocation of Marshalls within Cambridgeshire in order to meet the district's requirements for new homes and retain job opportunities
- We will support local people to establish community orchards
- Improve delivery of affordable housing by setting up a Forum to include Parish Councils and Housing Associations
- Provision of retirement homes in new major developments
- Innovative working with developers.

Values

The Council has also adopted a set of Values that will be embedded in the service in 2010/11 through behaviours agreed across the Council:

Customer service; Mutual Respect; Trust; Commitment to Improving Services

Systems thinking and improvements to web pages will also contribute.

4. Our Service Objectives

- To ensure the preservation and enhancement of the district's natural and built environment and achieve high standards of sustainable design on major growth sites and other developments throughout the district
- To increase people's engagement in and enjoyment of their heritage and environment and achieve real improvements to local places
- To influence the plans and projects which have an impact on South Cambridgeshire, its statutory service provision responsibilities as well as the environment, economy and community life
- To deliver the LDF and all its component parts in accordance with the agreed program
- To deliver an improved development control service that meets all its statutory requirements and improves response rates to customer enquiries
- To deliver an improved building control service that meets all its statutory requirements and improves market share
- To enable enhanced electronic use of the planning service
- To ensure the quality and success of development is maintained through increased monitoring
- To deliver high standards of design
- To enable provision of affordable housing to meet local needs
- To ensure that new developments are designed to take into account climate change.

5. Our Customers

Our services impact upon everyone within the District, especially through the Local Development Framework.

How needs are changing

Customer demand and expectations have increased over time, as has the quality of response provided. Although planning applications have decreased over the past year by almost 15%, customer's expectations have increased. Conservation & Design has not had a decrease in planning and other casework.

In order to improve our services and two-way communication and meet the expectations of Parishes, we have introduced a Planning Parish Forum that meets every six months to discuss specific planning issues whilst providing Parishes with training on new Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and any other items they request. This Forum is attended by approximately 60 people over 40+ Parishes, has proved successful and with positive feedback.

The need to obtain and implement a new planning system is essential to providing an efficient planning service.

A number of additional factors impacting how needs are changing are:

- Bringing in more alternative energy e.g. windfarms
- Economic development will continue to be a challenge
- Review of website to incorporate large projects
- Consider different working arrangements including shared services in light of the need to find savings and the Make Cambridgeshire Count project
- Record management, electronic access
- Support for business and others through recession
- Emphasis on localism and supporting voluntary sector
- Ageing population.

Results of consultation/engagement in the last year

Customer satisfaction surveys are in place for users of Development Control, Building Control and Conservation; feedback on these services is generally positive. To ensure future customers' needs and aspirations are taken into account, Agents' Forums for both Building and Development Control were introduced. Attendance at both forums continues to grow, as does the positive feedback.

We continue to engage with Parish Councils during consultation whilst also providing additional advice and training at the Planning Parish Forum meetings held every six months.

The Duty Officer System was introduced on 1 February 2009 which to date has proved an extremely successful service. Members of the public, Agents and Members, have welcomed this as it provides a direct line to a planning officer for general planning advice. All planning officers including, seniors and principals are on duty on a rota basis for half a day at a time; this enables the planning officers to continue with their day-to-day responsibilities whilst being able to provide an improved customer service.

In addition to the Duty Officer System, pre-application charging was introduced on 5 October 2009 to increase revenue due to loss of income through reduced planning applications and promoting and encouraging better quality applications. By providing formal pre-application advice, it has provided the Applicant with a more detailed and helpful service whilst providing advice on external consultations that may be necessary prior to submitting an application.

We are reviewing the delegation protocol in response to Parish Councils' concern over delegation.

Customer service standards and how these are being delivered

The Council has set the target to achieve the Customer Service Excellence standard and in 2010/11 all services will be contributing to the corporate project to meet this standard.

Planning will continue to contribute to plans to improve customer service to meet the Customer Service Excellence Standard in 2010/11; Paul Knight is taking this forward for the Council.

Complaints and how we have learnt from them

Reports submitted to SMT have shown Planning as having the highest percentage of complaints:

- July 09 for period April - June 09 had 11 complaints with 63% being sent within the set response timeframe
- October 09 for period July - September 09 had 9 complaints with 88% being sent within the set response timeframe.

Planning has appointed a champion to ensure response turnaround times are improved. Although the response rate has improved, further work is needed with the Performance Manager to reduce the number of avoidable complaints received.

Avoidable complaints have been received due to lack of response, lack of communication and the customer not being kept informed. Measures taken to prevent further complaints being received are:

- Providing more information about the progress of applications and enquiries on the web
- Encouraging officers to respond to correspondence when received rather than working to the 10 day turnaround time
- Introduction of Anite for correspondence received within planning to monitor and store all correspondence and replies; this will be trialled in Conservation effective November 2009
- Acknowledgement letters sent when cheques are received for planning applications, discharge of conditions and formal pre-application advice
- Introduction of Duty Officer System, general planning enquiries are satisfied.

6. Are we meeting the needs of all our community?

What are the main equalities issues facing the Service?

The population of the district is undergoing a transition. South Cambridgeshire has an ageing population. The percentage of the population aged 65 or above is expected to rise from 14.8% in 2001 to 23.5% by 2021. Conversely, the percentage of under 20-year olds is forecast to decrease from 25% in 2001 to 22.6% by 2021.

The Gypsy and Traveller population is also growing from the last known figure of 1.330 (1% of the total population in the District) in 2005 and the Council needs to find an additional 88 pitches by 2021 to accommodate growth. There is also information to suggest that the District has one of the highest populations of migrant workers in the country, but details are not accurate at the current time. Do you know the composition of the people who use your services and whether the needs of all service users are being met?

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The equalities data of all service users is not currently known, although Planning Policy have developed an equalities monitoring form, which is used during consultations on the (LDF?). This is an example of effective equalities mapping and once developed further, this will provide a useful tool to evaluate service delivery. This is a corporate issues for the Council, which is being developed in conjunction with the EQIA process.

What are the findings of EQIAs carried out in the last year? Did they point to any actions that need to be undertaken? What EQIAs will be carried out next year?

All High and Medium risk EqlAs should be completed by 31 March 2010 (4 in total). Planning & Sustainable Communities have also completed an additional 6 EQIAs this year on new or revised policies, which is an example of good practice for the rest of the Council. 2010/11 will focus on Low risk EqlAs (3 in total). All new and revised policies and services will be impact assessed as a matter of course and any report presented to Cabinet or Council without an EqlA will not be considered.

A number of key actions have been identified from the EQIA process, which are specific to the policy, function or practice being assessed. The key theme to emerge from all EQIAs is the need to improve monitoring of equalities data across the Council.

At the current time there have been no full EQIAs carried out, as the partial EQIAs completed so far have not identified an adverse impact on different groups of the community.

Are there any other actions for your service in the Comprehensive Equalities Policy? The Gender, Race or Disability Equality Schemes? or the Gypsy and Travellers Community Strategy?

From April 2011, the Council will look at developing a Single Equality Scheme to cover age, disability, gender, race, religion/faith and sexual orientation - and perhaps a 7th strand of equalities, called 'rurality.'

- The Gender Equality Scheme will be reviewed from April 2010
- The Race Equality Scheme will be reviewed from April 2011
- The Gender Equality Scheme will be reviewed by March 2010
- The Gypsy and Traveller Community Strategy will be adopted by January 2010. Officers from Planning Policy have been instrumental in putting this Strategy together as it aligns with the GT DPD.

Officers from Planning & Sustainable Communities will continue to inform the above via the Equality and Diversity Steering Group.

Actions to promote equality and diversity in 2010/11

It is hoped that the Council's membership of Stonewall will continue in 2010/11, but this depends on the outcome of the overview of the Council's financial position. As a Stonewall Diversity Champion, we work with Stonewall to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace. In 2009 we joined their Workplace Equality Index - the definitive national benchmarking exercise showcasing Britain's top employers for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff. It provides us with valuable feedback and allows us to measure improvement.

The Council will participate in the following national and international events during 2010/11:

- Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month - June 2010
- Disability Awareness Day - July 2010
- Black History Month - October 2010
- International Day of Older People - October 2010
- Holocaust Memorial Day - January 2011
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans History Month - February 2011
- International Women's Day - March 2011.

Identify any safeguarding children actions in 2010/11

The Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and vulnerable adults. All services are represented at the safe guarding group and will ensure:

- Safer recruitment and employment practices are followed; relevant officers are aware of safeguarding reporting policies; appropriate safeguarding training is given.

7. Our Performance and Plans to Improve

Performance to date:

- Building Control achieved all its statutory time limit targets
- Building Control won at the Cambridgeshire LABC Awards and this went through to the National award but was unsuccessful
- Building Control continuing to work without a supported IT system; to be included in the new planning system to provide an integrated service
- Conservation & Design – strong performance across most performance indicators (details can be added) Difficulties delivering some work areas and meeting deadlines because of wide ranging and demanding input to housing growth sites, enhancement/community schemes, policy and development control, and continuing high volume of casework.
- Full team within Enforcement; enabling efficient monitoring and enforcement
- S106 officer employed; S106 area of Planning Parish Pack updated
- Performance management role filled and helping to deliver services e.g.:
 - Planning Parish Forum - effective January 2009
 - Duty Officer System - effective 1 February 2009
 - Formal pre application advice - effective March 2009
 - Pre-application Charging - effective 5 October 2009
 - Improvements made within the Contact Centre; updating business rules, scripts and process trees - effective October 2009
- Development Control continuing to work well despite not having a planning system
- Supplementary Planning Documents continuing to be delivered; training to Parish Councils via Planning Parish Forum
- Planning policy has made good progress in putting in place the planning framework to steer development. This has been recognised by one of the highest awards of Planning Delivery Grant
- Policy team works jointly with Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council to produce plans for cross boundary plans - now formalised with the creation of the Section 29 Cambridge Fringes Joint Committee
- Customer satisfaction up to 80%
- % applications delegated >90% Government ambition.

The main areas for improvement in 2010/11 are:

- Purchase and implement new planning system; need to provide accurate stats, true reflection of planning file, electronic payments, audit trail etc
- Reduce the time taken to register and validate applications
- Reduce the number of conditions applied to planning applications:
 - Working with developers to provide detailed information
 - Looking at how we can negotiate S106 agreements before planning decisions are issued and concentrating on pre-application advice
- Reduce the number of complaints received; predicting customer demand
- Improve response rate to correspondence
- Complete review of planning within the Contact Centre
- Advertise services of Building Control to increase revenue
- Continue to promote the Partnership service in Building Control
- Better management of joint and listed building applications
- Improvement in work processes across planning e.g. using Systems Thinking
- Reduce journeys for site visits across the service area, helping reduce CO₂ emissions
- Review of pre-application charging after six months could lead to implementing charging in other areas
- Help reduce CO₂ emissions e.g. reducing site visits
- Promoting sustainable travel; promoting liftshare/camshare and alternative modes of transport
- Review of web pages to provide:
 - Easy reference tool and Information available to meet customer demand
- Delivering a quality, more customer focused service.

Ian Salter to provide PI performance table

8. Our Resources

Budget and estimated outturn for 2009/10 and budget for 2010/11 will be included when agreed by Council in February 2010.

A Systems Thinking review is underway across Registration and the DC planning process which it is hoped will result in areas for improvement and reduction in waste. This is an ongoing project which is aimed to be rolled out across the service area.

Significant reductions in budgets will lead to loss of services, levels of services and performance.

Budget cuts will prevent progress in dealing with existing problems such as lack of capacity in some services (e.g. Conservation & Design) and failure to invest in scanning and electronic record systems.

Reductions in capital budgets could have a damaging impact on community grants and partnership support and delivery of national indicators, the LAA and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Revenue and capital reductions will severely reduce the ability to deliver the Council and LSP's community leadership and place shaping roles.

9. Do we provide Value for Money?

The recent Place Survey showed low levels of the public believing that the Council provides value for money; SCDC was in the third quartile being ranked at 132 out of 201 district authorities, for value for money.

Benchmarking assessment needed.

Value for money achieved through grant schemes which achieve outputs worth, for example, six times, cost of input. Value for money also achieved by pulling in significant external funding (e.g. HGF and other grants for Trumpington Meadows scheme) and in partnerships with third sector which benefit from volunteering and other community contributions.

The introduction of the new planning system will promote a more efficient planning process and enhance value for money with applications being determined in a shorter timeframe. The Duty Officer System is a non charging service providing a direct line to a planning officer, meeting customer demand and again, providing value for money.

- Opportunities to use external resources to fund services have been maximised e.g. Cambridgeshire Horizons funding of the new Urban Design Team.

Benchmarking figures will be provided.

10. Workforce Overview

The workforce across our service area is:

1 x corporate manager
1 x performance manager

Planning Policy

1 x policy manager
2 x principal policy officers
2 x senior policy officers
1 x junior policy officer
1 x policy admin
1 x planning technician

Development Control (including Appeals)

2 x team leaders
3 x principal planning officers
6 x senior planning officers
8 x junior planning officers
5 x planning admin (one on 20 hours per week and one on reduced hours, working 3 days a week)

Building Control

1x building control manager
1 x principal building control surveyor
4 x senior surveyors
2.6 x admin assistants

Enforcement

2 x senior enforcement officers
1 x junior enforcement officer
1 x S106 monitoring officer

Design and Conservation

1 x conservation & design manager
1 x principal conservation officer
1 x historic buildings officer
2 x conservation assistants
1 x trees and landscape officer
1 x trees and landscape assistant
1 x landscape design officer
1 x landscape assistant
1 x ecology officer
1 x administrative assistant

Registration

1 x registration manager (office manager)
5 x registration technicians

Land Charges

1 x land charges officer

Shared Support

3 x typists
1 x office assistant

We have a highly skilled workforce from a range of technical backgrounds and the majority have at least one qualification at degree level. We have a number of long-serving staff and staff participating in training one day per week. The retirement of the DC Manager has meant that there has been a decrease in experience and an increased mentoring role for the remaining experienced staff. Development of individuals remains a high priority, with a focus on both increasing professional skills and on developing management and leadership capacity.

Conservation is catching up with a backlog of work, particularly on policy and conservation area documents. Need to provide maternity cover in conservation team with statutory services with high workload.

Gaps in the teams that were previously difficult to fill due to skills shortages have now been filled e.g. urban designers, conservation and performance management.

With efficiency savings of £475,000 recruitment has been frozen with essential posts filled internally where possible. To find the savings amount assigned to Planning, vacant posts will not be filled and staff leaving will not be replaced.

Potential reduction in staff could lead to a reduction in quality of service, an increase in appeals, less effective enforcement and impact on ability to determined applications within timescales.

With savings having to be found, the capacity of our workforce cannot be enhanced and will be reduced in 2010/11.

11. Risk Overview

There are risks facing the service in the coming year that have a short or medium term impact on the ability of the service to deliver on its priorities. However, given the long-term nature of the projects in which this team is involved, there are also very significant longer-term risks, which could be mitigated or worsened by actions taken and leadership.

Current, short and medium term risks:

- Economic slow-down, and non availability of credit results in the non-delivery of new housing areas, affordable housing and the ability to negotiate a suitable or satisfactory S106 agreement
- Failure of core strategy due to economic slow-down
- Loss of market share to approved inspectors and decline in income leading to decline in service standards
- Failure to meet traveller and gypsy demand for sites could continue to lead to new breaches of planning control
- Lack of capacity in support services e.g. ICT could lead to inability of team to deliver
- Inability to recruit and/or retain appropriately skilled staff - loss of staff because of lack of secure employment
- Reduction in staff due to efficiency savings could result in some services not being delivered/poor quality
- Under funding from application fee income could reduce resource in Development Control and jeopardise the delivery of high quality services
- Loss of experienced staff through retirement
- Changes to Government policy on Heritage Protection and Biodiversity result in increasing demands on specialist staff and resources which are already stretched and require investment in record systems
- Inability to deal with range and volume of conservation service work
- Lack of investment in environmental systems and ensuring accurate information leads to damage to environment, poor public service and inefficient working
- Loss of funding reduces or prevents delivery of LSP, Council and Service objectives
- Workload and training requirements with introducing new planning system reduces time for service delivery
- Failure of new system in total or to meet requirements, including through lack of council funding to exploit the system's potential
- Failure to improve planning systems mean extra workload for services, lack of co-ordinated working, inefficiencies and poorer service
- Lack of a supported Building Control System is a significant risk to the service
- If our service delivery reduces, private Building Control will cherry pick the lucrative work
- Delay in new planning system being implemented will continue to delay the registration process of applications
- Low staff morale could result in increased sickness levels/lack of motivation.