



FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL



Meeting Agenda

**Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee
Kirkham Council Chamber, Moor Street, Kirkham
Wednesday 27 February 2008 7:00pm**

The main doors will be open to the public at 6:40pm

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP

CHAIRMAN - Councillor Keith Hyde
VICE-CHAIRMAN – Councillor Christine Akeroyd

Councillors

Craig Halewood

John Singleton

Ken Hopwood

David Chedd

Cheryl Little

Kathleen Harper

Linda Nulty

Contact: Peter Welsh, St. Annes (01253) 658502, Email: peterw@fylde.gov.uk



CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

The Council's investment and activities are focused on achieving our five key objectives which aim to :

- Conserve, protect and enhance the quality of the Fylde natural and built environment
- Work with partners to help maintain safe communities in which individuals and businesses can thrive
- Stimulate strong economic prosperity and regeneration within a diverse and vibrant economic environment
- Improve access to good quality local housing and promote the health and wellbeing and equality of opportunity of all people in the Borough
- Ensure we are an efficient and effective council.

CORE VALUES

In striving to achieve these objectives we have adopted a number of key values which underpin everything we do :

- Provide equal access to services whether you live in town, village or countryside,
- Provide effective leadership for the community,
- Value our staff and create a 'can do' culture,
- Work effectively through partnerships,
- Strive to achieve 'more with less'.



A G E N D A

PART I - MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

ITEM	PAGE
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: <i>If a member requires advice on Declarations of Interest he/she is advised to contact the Legal Services Executive Manager in advance of the meeting. (For the assistance of Members an extract from the Councils Code of Conduct is attached).</i>	4
2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES: <i>To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee held on 24 January 2008 Attached at the end of the agenda.</i>	4
3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS: <i>Details of any substitute members notified in accordance with council procedure rule 25.3</i>	4
4. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT	7-45

Personal interests

8.—(1) You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where either—

(a) it relates to or is likely to affect—

(i) any body of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority;

(ii) any body—

(aa) exercising functions of a public nature;

(bb) directed to charitable purposes; or

(cc) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union),

of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management;

(i) any employment or business carried on by you;

(ii) any person or body who employs or has appointed you;

(iii) any person or body, other than a relevant authority, who has made a payment to you in respect of your election or any expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties;

(iv) any person or body who has a place of business or land in your authority's area, and in whom you have a beneficial interest in a class of securities of that person or body that exceeds the nominal value of £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital (whichever is the lower);

(v) any contract for goods, services or works made between your authority and you or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi);

(vi) the interests of any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25;

(vii) any land in your authority's area in which you have a beneficial interest;

(viii) any land where the landlord is your authority and you are, or a firm in which you are a partner, a company of which you are a remunerated director, or a person or body of the description specified in paragraph (vi) is, the tenant;

(xi) any land in the authority's area for which you have a licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy for 28 days or longer; or

(b) a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting your well-being or financial position or the well-being or financial position of a relevant person to a greater extent than the majority of other council tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward, as the case may be, affected by the decision;

(2) In sub-paragraph (1)(b), a relevant person is—

(a) a member of your family or any person with whom you have a close association; or

(b) any person or body who employs or has appointed such persons, any firm in which they are a partner, or any company of which they are directors;

(c) any person or body in whom such persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or

(d) any body of a type described in sub-paragraph (1)(a)(i) or (ii).

Disclosure of personal interests

9.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraphs (2) to (7), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you attend a meeting of your authority at which the business is considered, you must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

(2) Where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect a person described in paragraph 8(1)(a)(i) or 8(1)(a)(ii)(aa), you need only disclose to the meeting the existence and nature of that interest when you address the meeting on that business.

(3) Where you have a personal interest in any business of the authority of the type mentioned in paragraph 8(1)(a)(viii), you need not disclose the nature or existence of that interest to the meeting if the interest was registered more than three years before the date of the meeting.

(4) Sub-paragraph (1) only applies where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the personal interest.

- (5) Where you have a personal interest but, by virtue of paragraph 14, sensitive information relating to it is not registered in your authority's register of members' interests, you must indicate to the meeting that you have a personal interest, but need not disclose the sensitive information to the meeting.
- (6) Subject to paragraph 12(1)(b), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority and you have made an executive decision in relation to that business, you must ensure that any written statement of that decision records the existence and nature of that interest.
- (7) In this paragraph, "executive decision" is to be construed in accordance with any regulations made by the Secretary of State under section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000(d).

Prejudicial interest generally

- 10.—**(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a personal interest in any business of your authority you also have a prejudicial interest in that business where the interest is one which a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.
- (2) You do not have a prejudicial interest in any business of the authority where that business—
- (a) does not affect your financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in paragraph 8;
 - (b) does not relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or any person or body described in paragraph 8; or
 - (c) relates to the functions of your authority in respect of—
 - (i) housing, where you are a tenant of your authority provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
 - (ii) school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
 - (iii) statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of, such pay;
 - (iv) an allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
 - (v) any ceremonial honour given to members; and
 - (vi) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

Prejudicial interests arising in relation to overview and scrutiny committees

- 11.—** You also have a prejudicial interest in any business before an overview and scrutiny committee of your authority (or of a sub-committee of such a committee) where—
- (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by your authority's executive or another of your authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
 - (b) at the time the decision was made or action was taken, you were a member of the executive, committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee mentioned in paragraph (a) and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken.

Effect of prejudicial interests on participation

- 12.—**(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2), where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority—
- (a) you must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting considering the business is being held—
 - (i) in a case where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence;
 - (ii) in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at that meeting;
 unless you have obtained a dispensation from your authority's standards committee;
 - (b) you must not exercise executive functions in relation to that business; and
 - (c) you must not seek improperly to influence a decision about that business.
- (2) Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority, you may attend a meeting (including a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee of your authority or of a sub-committee of such a committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.

REPORT



REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
STRATEGIC PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT	PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	27 TH FEBRUARY 2008	4

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Public item

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

Summary

The report provides for member consideration a report by the Planning Advisory Service that includes a diagnostic of current performance and recommendations for improvement.

Recommendation

Committee is asked to consider the report and make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder.

Cabinet Portfolio

The item falls within the following Cabinet portfolio:

Development and Regeneration: Councillor Roger Small

Report

Previous decision

At the last meeting members agreed to set up a special meeting of the committee to examine the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) report recommendations and the performance of BVPI 205 in respect of planning best practice. Members agreed that this meeting should be held before the next scheduled meeting of the committee on March 20th 2008 to allow time for the planning service to implement any outcomes in time for the new financial year.

Background

Members will recall the low performance in the speed of planning application determinations during the 2006/07-year as a result of the difficulties in recruiting replacement DC staff. Since the vacancies were filled performance has significantly improved although due to the volume and complexity of applications it is still below targets set. As a result your officers have been working hard to improve capacity in the DC team and have met with the Planning Advisory Service (PAS)¹. During October Addison and Associates on behalf of PAS visited Fylde to undertake an assessment and interviewed key managers, staff and members to identify where and how the service could be improved. The outcome of their work is a report with recommendations backed by a diagnostic framework, which are attached to this report.

Key facts and current performance

Speed of determination: The table below lists the three main indicators for speed of determination:

Table 1		All England Top	All England Average	All England Bottom	Fylde Actual 2006/07	Progress to January 31st 2008	Target 2007/08
BVPI 109a)	The percentage of major commercial and industrial planning applications determined within 13 weeks.	74.9%	64.92%	57.08%	44.44%	52.94%	65%
BVPI 109b)	The percentage of minor commercial and industrial planning applications determined within 8 weeks.	81.07%	74.23%	69%	45.70%	70.09%	75%
BVPI 109c)	The percentage of other planning applications determined within 8 weeks.	91.39%	86.49%	83.37%	61.41%	81.13%	90%
BVPI 205	The Authorities score against a 'Quality of Planning Services' checklist.	94.5%	89.8%	83.3%	77.7%	77.7%	80%

¹ The Planning Advisory Service helps the local authority planning sector in England and encourages continuous improvement and the promotion of a culture of self-sustaining change and learning. PAS is part of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA).

Volume of applications: In 2007 (calendar year) the service received 1,314 planning applications, this is the highest number of applications received in one year at Fylde.

Capacity available: During 2007 there was an average of 6 full time equivalent officers (FTE's) to deal with this workload, which works out at 219 applications per officer. Based on an industry benchmark of 150 applications per officer/year the service should have 8.76 case officers to deal with this workload (an increase of 2.76 FTE's). In addition the post of Conservation Officer has been frozen for the past two years and the post of Enforcement Officer unfilled for the past few months due to budget pressures.

Quality of planning service checklist (BVPI 205): Table 1 above shows that this currently stands at 77.7% (the higher the figure the better) and is a complex calculation. Members at the November 2007 meeting asked for further information on how the PI was calculated and what was being done to improve performance. The full checklist is appended to this report and shows those areas where points could be picked up. Three further points could be gained for having an in-house dedicated full time Conservation Officer that would result in a revised score of 94.4%. The previous Conservation Officer left the authority to take up employment elsewhere at the end of 2005 and the post has not been filled since due to budget pressures. In addition a further point would be gained from adopting a project management approach to managing activities in relation to the applications. Members are advised that this particular PI will no longer be required to be recorded from April 2008.

Appeals (BVPI 204): The percentage of appeals allowed against the Council's decision to refuse planning applications is considered to be a measure of the quality of decisions. The all England top quartile currently stands at 24% (the lower the figure the better), average at 30.1% and bottom quartile at 37%. Fylde's performance as reported in the Corporate Plan in 2005/06 was 56% and in 2006/07 38.9% (note there is some discrepancy with the figures quoted in the PAS report in 2b2). This was the subject of previous consideration by the Performance Improvement Community Forum at the end of 2005 when Task and Finish group looked at under performance with this PI. Officers will provide a more detailed analysis of appeals performance for the meeting.

User satisfaction survey (BVPI 111): This is a perception survey carried out every three years and measures satisfaction with the handling of planning applications. It is sent to applicants and agents that have interacted with the service within a defined 6 month period. When the survey was last carried in 2006, satisfaction with the planning service had decreased to 52% from 79% in 2003. This is a fall from almost top quartile to bottom quartile.

Officers had planned to carry out the survey again in accordance with the guidance but that the sample period covers October 1st 2007 to March 31st 2008 as this would be an exact mid point between the 2006 survey and the 2009 one. Following a report to PISC in November 2007 members agreed this approach.

There are pros and cons to undertaking another survey at this time. All indications are that it is likely to show some improvement in the previous rating of 52% although is unlikely to be anywhere near the previous figure of 79% achieved in 2003/04. To send out a new survey to around 600 contacts would require internal staffing time to send out and collate returns. It would also require some external cost for postage and to employ a company to enter the data and run a report using specialist software.

Recently the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has announced details of its consultation on the new Place Survey. This will replace the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey (and also the Planning, Benefits and Library surveys). More details are expected to be announced in April with Local Authorities required by the autumn to have run the survey. In the light of this change and the focus on improvements identified in the PAS report your officers now recommend that an interim re-run of the planning survey would be an ineffective use of resources at this time.

Cost of planning: The Audit Commission compares the cost per head of population for various services. Some key facts for 2006 (latest year available) are:

- Fylde spent £7.42 per head, which is very low; whilst the highest cost authority South Cambridgeshire DC spent £34.63 per head.
- Only 17 authorities across England (out of 238) spent less on planning than Fylde in 2006.
- Across the Lancashire County area, Chorley was the highest at £17.53 per head and only Lancaster at £6.24 was lower than Fylde.²

Current issues

The service is facing several pressures from a number of areas:

- Increasing number of residential planning applications following a review of planning policy on residential development.
- Increasing number of major applications for specific long anticipated schemes e.g. Queensway
- Keeping abreast of changes in legislation e.g. scheme of validation, changes to permitted development rights, planning performance agreements to manage large scale applications, etc.
- Managing local expectations such as the need to increase enforcement (a recent scrutiny recommendation) at the same time as balancing budget pressures.
- Retention and development of staff.
- Capacity to work with neighbouring authorities on initiatives such as the Growth Point Bid and Multi Area Agreement.

Consideration of PAS report

Members are asked to consider the findings of the PAS report and make recommendations to the Portfolio Holder. To assist a summary table is appended to this report that contains each of the PAS recommendations, the observations of officers and space for members to comment on each.

² Lancaster have recently addressed this underspend by considerably increasing the staffing resource within their planning service.

Attached documents –

Appendix 1 - Final BVPI 109a report on proposed support for Fylde Borough Council – December 2007

Appendix 2 – ‘Quality of Planning Services’ checklist.

Appendix 3 – Recommendations summary table

Implications	
Finance	No direct implications
Legal	No direct implications
Community Safety	No direct implications
Human Rights and Equalities	No direct implications
Sustainability	No direct implications
Health & Safety and Risk Management	No direct implications

Report Author	Tel	Date	Doc ID
Paul Walker	(01253) 658431	18th February 2008	

List of Background Papers		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Report to Performance Improvement Community Forum	21 st November 2005	http://www.fylde.gov.uk/committeemeeting.aspx?id=SX1055-A781D021
The new Place Survey consultation - DCLG	December 2007	http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/612732

Final BVPI 109a Report on proposed support for Fylde Borough Council – December 2007



Planning Advisory Service

Final BVPI 109a Report on proposed support for Fylde Borough Council

December 2007

Recommendations

Following the review, we recommend that support is provided in the following areas, listed in order of priority:

- **R1:** Assist with the preparation of an improvement strategy.
- **R2:** Review existing processes and systems in order to provide advice on appropriate re-engineering and establish a process/procedure/work-flow for planning applications:
 - from initial contact to submission of an application
 - from submission of an application, validation and registration, through to decision-making and issuing the decision for major, minor and other applications
 - post decision activity including s106, appeals, compliance monitoring and enforcement.
- **R3:** Arrange joint training for officers and Members (including the Portfolio holder, cabinet members and Development Control Committee members) on:
 - the modernised planning system
 - the cultural changes necessary to provide a quality planning service
 - the performance agenda and performance management
 - dealing with major applications
 - the role of committees and their relationship with parish councils
- **R4:** Facilitate one-to-one mentoring/capacity building for the Head of Development Control.
- **R5:** Map and set up performance and project management systems to assist with the overall control and management of workloads and to project manage individual applications.

In addition the authority should also:

Final BVPI 109a Report on proposed support for Fylde Borough Council – December 2007

1. Provide published pre-application guidance, including validation guidance, and/or SPD on planning obligations.
2. Review arrangements for the Development Control Committee, including time of day (e.g. late afternoon or evening), frequency of meetings and size of agendas (as a result of increased delegation), in order to make it more attractive to a wider range of members.
3. Consider the provision of additional development control staff or consultant support to:
 - a) deal with the anticipated increase in major applications
 - b) allow existing staff time to address performance improvement issues
 - c) allow senior staff more time for mentoring and appraisal.
4. Work with members to develop an improved scheme of delegation to officers and how to develop member trust in officers.
5. Investigate further opportunities for combining development control teams and/or sharing specialist services with adjoining authorities.
6. Set up a training programme for parish councils to increase their understanding of their contribution to the planning process.
7. Analyse the reasons why the success at appeal is low
8. Prepare a procedures manual

Current performance

The council had not previously been named as a standards authority for the periods between 2001/02 and 2006/07 but has been designated as a standards authority for 2007/08 for major, minor and other applications as a result of its poor performance in the year ending 30 June 2006. Since that date, its performance deteriorated further to a position at the end of Q3 in 2006/07 where its annualised performance for major, minor and other applications was 35%, 38% and 56% respectively, against targets of 60%, 65% and 80%. Since the recruitment of two senior members of staff at the end of 2006, it has considerably improved its performance in relation to minor and other applications so that the annualised performance to the end of Q2 of 2007/08 is 67% for minor and 76% for other applications. The trajectory indicates that the latter will meet the target soon. However the performance on major applications remains poor with an annualised figure for Q2 of 2007/08 of 35% decided within the 13 week target.

The profile of applications over the last 2.5 years up to Q2 of 2007/08 has been about 2% major, 19% minor and 79% other applications, which is higher than the national average proportion of other (mainly householder) applications (70%) and lower than the national average proportion of major and minor applications (3% and 27% respectively). Major applications are few in number, with 17 decided in 2006/07 and 7 so far in 2007/08, but there are indications that their number will increase significantly in the near future, many from a single local developer. The total number of applications is also projected to increase significantly in 2007/08, to about 1400. Caseloads are already over 200 and significantly above the 150 benchmark figure

Final BVPI 109a Report on proposed support for Fylde Borough Council – December 2007

and unless staff resources are increased to cope with the increase workload it is difficult to see how performance on the minor and other applications will be sustained and the national target for major applications reached.

Performance in relation to the quality checklist (BVPI 205) is 14 out of 18, but is static and does not appear to be continuing to improve. The authority is one of the worst performers in the country against BVPI 204, which measures percentage of appeals allowed. This is understood to be accounted for mainly by members overturning officers' recommendations.

Summary of key issues

Based on the information available it would appear that the key issues inhibiting the Council's ability to meet the BVPI 109a national target are:

A *Processes/Procedures*

- A1: A project planning approach is not in place in any formal way. There is no procedures manual and no system for tracking major planning applications.
- A2: Lack of published guidance to developers on pre-application discussion, information requirements for major applications, and section 106 agreements and of internal written guidance notes or guidance for planning officers or technicians, including no validation checklist.
- A3: Need for process mapping and possibly re-engineering to ensure that current, long-established processes are efficient and effective and to explore whether there are ways in which duplication, error and waste can be reduced.
- A4: The current delegation arrangements result in too many minor and non-controversial applications going to Committee. Increased delegation to 90% could lead to a reduction in frequency and/or length of Committee meetings and less pressure on staff.

B *Performance management*

- B1: There is no up to date detailed service improvement plan in place and proposals for improvement in the Service Plan within the corporate system have not been progressed, due to pressures on management time.
- B2: The monitoring of performance by members and senior officers is not sufficiently intensive and frequent.
- B3: There is inadequate management of performance at individual officer level by either the Head of Development Control or the Principal Planning Officer.
- B4: The appraisal system is not being operated effectively and there is inadequate attention given to staff motivation and communication by senior management.

C Capacity and use of resources

- C1: The service is under-resourced as the caseloads for 2006/07 were around 200, expected to rise to 233 with the projected caseload for 2007/08, well above the 150 benchmark and includes officers doing appeals and team leaders having full caseloads.
- C2: The Council is a low spender on planning services, reflecting marginalisation (both physical and political) of, and low priority given to, the service in the past (despite its potential to secure significant infrastructure funding).
- C3: As a result of poor performance, Planning Delivery Grant has been low, and has not been fully devoted to service improvement or indeed to the planning service. However the development control service is not dependent on PDG income.
- C4: Training for staff, management and members appears to be inadequately resourced and its effectiveness for some members is questioned.
- C5: Working conditions for staff are poor and overcrowded.
- C6: Current resources for enforcement are too low and the service suffers from lack of in-house conservation and ecological advice.
- C7: Joint working with Blackpool and Wyre, which has started with the LDF timetable, joint House Extensions SPD, and the agents' forum, could be explored further in relation to development control, particularly for major applications.

D Member/community engagement

- D1: Need for further development of political leadership at Cabinet level and for improved managerial leadership, communication and motivation.
- D2: Need to improve trust and teamwork between Members and officers, including improved member understanding of policy, technical and legal constraints, less open criticism of officer recommendations and widening of committee membership.
- D3: Limited provision of, or proposals for, SPD, e.g. for section 106 agreements, and/or other pre-application guidance for major development, including validation guidance, either published or on-line.
- D4: Need for improved political consensus on sustainable objectives for major development and for further development of a partnership approach with key developers.
- D5: Low levels of customer satisfaction with the handling of planning applications and high levels of Ombudsman complaints relating to the planning service.

Interviews and documents used in the preparation of this report

The authority was visited by Keith Reed and Jane Doyle, GO representative on the 10 October 2007. The visit included meetings with:

Final BVPI 109a Report on proposed support for Fylde Borough Council – December 2007

Councillor Dr. Trevor Fiddler	Chair of Development Control Committee
Paul Walker	Executive Manager Strategic Planning & Development
Mark Evans	Head of Development Control
Helen Hockenhull	Principal Planning Officer
Tony Donnelly	Head of Planning Policy
Alan Oldfield	Executive Manager Corporate Performance;

A subsequent interview was held with Councillor Roger Small, Portfolio Holder on 29 October 2007

The following documents were examined:

1. Audit Commission Best Value Review- Development Control and Building Control, January 2003
2. Audit Commission Environment Service Inspection, July 2006
3. Audit Commission CPA Progress Assessment Report, December 2005
4. Fylde Borough Council Local Development Scheme, March 2007
5. Fylde Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement
6. Revised Scheme of Delegation July 2004
7. Internal Budget Book for Strategic Planning and Development 2007-08
8. Strategic Planning and Development Service Plan 2007-08
9. Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee Agenda July and January 2007
10. Various Development Control Committee agenda
11. Audit Commission Value for Many Toolkit (web-site)
12. Fylde Borough Council –The Satisfaction Survey Results.
13. Ombudsman's Annual Letter for 2006-07
14. Staff structure chart
15. Draft House Extensions SPD.

Part A: Final Diagnostic Framework BVPI 109a: Major applications

Name of authority: Fylde Borough Council

Date of visit: 10 October 2007

Theme 1: Achieving outcomes effectively and sustainably

The planning service works to deliver good quality and sustainable development outcomes for the area that are identified by the local authority. It manages the delivery process to this end. The Planning Service Benchmark (April 2006 v1.4) considers this theme under three elements: efficient and effective processes; partnership working and sustainable stewardship. This diagnostic simplifies these themes to focus upon achieving BVPI 109a.

- A) **Efficient and effective processes** – planning processes are **orientated to achieving outcomes** sought, within available resources
- B) **Effective partnership working** – the service proactively addresses the differing views of stakeholders balancing private interests against the wider public interest through partnership working and conflict resolution
- C) **Delivering sustainable stewardship** – the planning service acts as a facilitator of the management of change ensuring sustainability and is an effective custodian of the area - this is visible on the ground (note: there are few key issues to explore for the BVPI 109a simplified diagnostic because these are implicitly included under other headings)

Theme 1A Efficient and effective processes		
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
<p>1. Is a project planning approach taken to handling major applications? Is the progress of each major application tracked?</p>	<p>1.1 Is there an up to date procedures manual setting out the processes for dealing with major applications?</p> <p>1.2 Is information readily available on the proportions of major, minor and other applications received and the profile of major applications?</p> <p>1.3 Are early distinctions made between straightforward and complex/controversial applications?</p> <p>1.4 Are key milestones identified and targets set for their achievement? e.g. registration/validation within 5 days, consultation/notification within 5 days; case officer's site visit in the first week; draft report; delegation/committee date, despatch of decision notices within 24 hours of decision.</p> <p>1.5 Is performance against these milestones and targets regularly monitored?</p> <p>1.6 Is a development team approach taken to dealing with all 'major' major planning applications at pre application stage and post submission i.e. regular discussions with key internal and external stakeholders in a systematic way?</p> <p>1.7 How is the progress of each application tracked? I.e. is regular monitoring (weekly or at most fortnightly) of performance on applications carried out at key stages in the process?</p> <p>1.8 How does ICT support the tracking of these applications?</p>	<p>The project planning approach is not in place in any formal way. There is no procedures manual. Information was available on the split of applications, although I was not provided with any details of the type/size of major applications.</p> <p>Information is available on the profile of applications received.</p> <p>Major planning applications are distinguished at registration stage by the principal or senior planning officer being involved in decisions on validation and consultation. Various other suggestions for distinguishing major applications (e.g. different colour folders) have not been implemented.</p> <p>Progress against milestones is monitored informally by the Principal Planning Officer, working back from the anticipated committee date to define milestones, but there is no project management system in place. The PPO and the Head of Development Control have attended the PAS project management training but have not been able to implement any of the actions emerging due to pressure of work.</p> <p>There is no formal development team within the authority. Teams are assembled on an ad hoc basis to deal with pre-application discussions on complex major development. The composition of the team varies depending on the likely issues. There is no system for tracking major planning applications, although the PPO project manages major applications informally. She deals with most of the major applications herself, since they are limited in number.</p> <p>The Accolaid system provides key dates in the form of a list, but not as a Gantt chart - this has been requested. The system currently gives the Committee date before expiry but not</p>

Theme 1A Efficient and effective processes		
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
		deadline date for report.
2. Is there a clear procedure for pre-application discussions in place?	<p>2.1 Are there agreed procedures for pre-application discussions, including guidance publicly available and agreed consultation procedures on all major applications?</p> <p>2.2 Are written and retrievable records of advice for pre-application discussions kept?</p>	<p>There is no published guidance for developers on pre-application discussions, but Fylde's willingness to enter into them is publicised through the local agents' forum.</p> <p>Records of pre-application discussions were previously kept on paper files, but are now recorded on the IT system, as part of the planning history. Usually the same officer who deals with the pre-application enquiry will deal with the application to ensure continuity.</p>
3. Are the information and details required with the submission of a major planning application made clear to applicants? Are efficient registration and validation procedures in place?	<p>3.1 Are the procedures clear and supported by internal guidance notes for staff and published advice for applicants?</p> <p>3.2 Are the procedures in line with the DCLG best practice guidance published in 2005? E.g. is validation within 5 working days of receipt of application and is there a checklist in place?</p> <p>3.3 Are the procedures appropriate to the type of application? e.g. is there professional input on complex major applications to ensure early identification of missing information</p> <p>3.4 Do ICT systems support registration and validation e.g. with good GIS, specialist data and site constraints plotted?</p>	<p>There are no internal guidance notes or published guidance for major applications.</p> <p>A two day target for validation and registration of applications is met in over 90% cases, by the team of 2+ technicians (NB not admin. staff). However they are dependent on officer input for checking description and consultees and for assessment of the quality of the information provided. At the time of the visit there was no validation checklist. One-App and its associated validation criteria are awaited for this.</p> <p>The principal or senior planning officer is involved in decisions on validation and consultation. GIS is undeveloped.</p>
4. Is the authority clear about its section 106 requirements? Are there effective arrangements for section 106	<p>4.1 Does the authority have published guidance on section 106 agreements? Does the advice include the use by the LPA of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulae for calculating contributions, • draft heads of terms with applications 	<p>Most major applications are subject to a Section 106 agreement. There is no published guidance on section 106 agreements or requirements, the members having merely "noted" the document jointly produced by the County Council and the District Planning Officers. It was considered too biased towards County Council interests. As a result it is not transparent to developers what is likely to be required.</p>

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

<p>agreements?</p>	<p>4.2 Are a range of contributions covered e.g. education, highways, open space, affordable housing and is the basis for contributions clearly set out for major and minor applications? 4.3 Are there standard written procedures for handling section 106 agreements and unilateral undertakings? 4.4 Are model agreements or standard clauses used where appropriate? 4.5 Are there clear liaison arrangements with a legal service for the provision of advice e.g. service level agreement, protocol or outsourcing arrangement? 4.6 How is the progress of each S106 agreement tracked and monitored to ensure action?</p>	<p>Contributions are sought for affordable housing and public open space, although some Members on the committee have opposed seeking contributions for the latter, seeing it as unnecessary (already enough) and as extra taxation. Highways contributions are often considered too high and not adequately justified. However the Cabinet is clear that Section 106 contributions are important, especially for affordable housing and social infrastructure of all kinds.</p> <p>There are standard templates in place for housing, public open space and granny flats. These follow national best practice. Agreements are drafted in-house.</p>
<p>5. Are there good consultation arrangements in place?</p>	<p>5.1 Does the Council have in place timely arrangements for consultation with regular statutory consultees e.g. highways, environmental health, parish councils? 5.2 Do case officers actively ensure responses are received? 5.3 Are neighbours given timely clear information about proposals e.g. does neighbour notification/site visits/press adverts take place at an early stage and is information provided about how neighbours can make representations? 5.4 How does ICT support the consultation arrangements e.g. use of GIS to identify neighbours, generation of consultation letters etc?</p>	<p>Generally consultations do not cause a problem. Some issues with English Heritage due to their lack of resources, but has improved recently. There are occasional problems with technical information required by the MoD and Blackpool airport, but this is usually overcome by asking the applicant to withdraw and re-submit. Relationships with the highway authority are good, despite some concerns about the level of and justification for highways contributions.</p>
<p>6. Are there efficient decision making processes leading to expeditious decision making?</p>	<p>6.1 Are standard report formats used for delegated and committee items? 6.2 What use is made of standard conditions, reasons for refusal and reasons for approval? Are they used appropriately or indiscriminately?</p>	<p>Standard report formats are in place and include all the required information. Appropriate use is made of standard conditions, which are printed in full in Committee reports.</p>

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

	<p>6.3 Does the timing of any member site visits facilitate efficient decision making?</p> <p>6.4 Do the reports identify the relevant policies and include an assessment of the proposal, consultee comments and other material planning considerations?</p>	<p>Site visits are not generally made but when they are this is after consideration at committee which does involve delay. Such visits mainly impact on non-major applications.</p>
<p>7. Do delegation arrangements ensure that the committee(s) only deals with complex and /or controversial applications and around 90% are delegated to officers?</p>	<p>7.1 Do the delegation arrangements enable decisions to be taken regularly and ensure that targets are met?</p> <p>7.2 Is there a member call in procedure and how does it operate?</p> <p>7.3 Does it allow for only proposals that are normally delegated to be called in to committee if they are controversial?</p> <p>7.4 Are the mechanisms for referring applications to committee clear and trigger referral both early in the process and for appropriate reasons (i.e. for planning reasons)?</p> <p>7.5 Is it overridden? I.e. are high numbers of simple applications being called in to committee for decision?</p>	<p>Delegation stands at about 86%, which is below the 90% target and low given the profile of applications. The delegation scheme is available on the web-site and is clear. It was revised following the Best Value review in 2003, but not fully in accordance with officer recommendations.</p> <p>Under the scheme all applications where the officer recommendation is contrary to a Parish Council comment are required to go to Committee. Further consideration is being given to this, following a legal opinion (St. Albans DC) that this may be ultra vires.</p> <p>Members can call in applications within 21 days of the weekly list being published, and there is some abuse of this system. The Portfolio holder is supportive of more delegation and of resistance to pressure for items to go to committee outside of the 21 day period. However the Chairman of Development Control would prefer less delegation and reversion to the old "List 1, 2 and 3" system; he does not believe that delegation improves performance.</p> <p>All major applications go to Committee regardless of their nature.</p>

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

<p>8. Do committee arrangements ensure targets can be met?</p>	<p>8.1 What is the cycle of Committee(s) and does it ensure that BVPI 109 targets can be met? Is it frequent enough for complex minor and major decisions to be made within target?</p> <p>8.2 What are the reasons for decisions missing the targets?</p> <p>8.3 Are both the presentation and agenda requirements, including timing of preparation of reports, conducive to both speedy decision making and members having the information to make the decision?</p> <p>8.4 Is there appropriate liaison and briefing with members prior to Committee?</p> <p>8.5 What is the deferral rate? (If this is more than 10% then it is high).</p> <p>8.6 Is the overturn of officer recommendations by the committee on applications a small proportion of total decisions? (As a guide, more than one per meeting on a regular basis should be followed up, 0.5 – 2% of decisions at committee is considered healthy).</p> <p>8.7 Is this increasing /decreasing?</p>	<p>Three weekly cycle is sufficient to allow most major applications to go to committee within the 13 week time frame. During the current calendar year an average of 12 applications has gone to each committee meeting, ranging from a low of 5 to a high of 19 per meeting. These comprise mainly minor and other applications as a result of the delegation arrangements. However, this has a limited impact on BV109a since the chairman and key members are briefed on major applications and very few are deferred. Deferrals are less than one per committee (0.9 or 8.9% in 2006-07) – mostly minors/others and the main reason is for a site visit.</p> <p>Consideration has been given to morning site visits followed by afternoon meetings, but the additional cost and time is not seen to be worth the gain. The Portfolio holder would prefer evening meetings in order that a wider range of Members could consider being on the Committee.</p> <p>No information was supplied on numbers of overturned recommendations, although anecdotal information suggests that this is high. One recent example related to one of the major applications coming to committee – an office scheme in Kirkham</p>
<p>9. Is the committee structure appropriate to the workload and resources of the service?</p>	<p>9.1 Is the number of committees manageable for the resources of the service in terms of staff and systems? E.g. an area committee structure which is well resourced and the service is achieving BVPI 109 targets is an acceptable combination.</p>	<p>Given the resource problems facing the development control team, a reduction in frequency of Committee meetings, which could be achieved with a higher level of delegation, would assist.</p>
<p>Theme 1b Effective partnership working</p>		
<p>Key issues to explore</p>	<p>Evidence</p>	<p>NOTES</p>

<p>1 Are there mechanisms in place to resolve conflicts of interest that occur between development control and other council services or key delivery partners?</p>	<p>1.1 What partnership agreement protocols and terms of reference are used? e.g. pre application discussions/development team approach with regeneration and conservation agencies, flood risk assessment with environment agency and infrastructure provision with the highways agency.</p> <p>1.2 Is there a mechanism in place for prioritising section 106 requirements on a scheme both corporately and externally with key stakeholders e.g. highways, education contributions?</p>	<p>No agreements or systems, but not really an issue, except between the County and district in relation to priority for highways contributions v. affordable housing.</p> <p>No mechanism, but the Portfolio holder and Chair of Development Control committee are clear that the highest priority is affordable housing, followed by social infrastructure.</p>
<p><i>Theme 1c Delivering Sustainable outcomes</i></p>		
<p>1. Is the authority clear about its pursuit of sustainable development in its requirements for major developments?</p>	<p>1.1 Does the authority set explicit local success criteria for development that seek sustainable development and express them to developers in their pre application guidance? E.g. for design quality, community benefit, eco-building standards?</p> <p>1.2 Does the authority negotiate to achieve these success criteria?</p>	<p>Sustainable development is key goal at Cabinet level but this is not always translated into decisions by Committee. There is some scepticism from some of its members (including the Chairman) about its practicality and even in some quarters about climate change.</p> <p>While there is evidence of concern about design quality, there is no great emphasis on eco-building standards.</p> <p>There are no explicit local success criteria and no written pre-application guidance to guide developers. Attempts are being made to coordinate aspirations in relation to major development through regular monthly meetings between the Portfolio holder, Chairman of Development Control Committee, Chairman of Policy Scrutiny Committee and senior management.</p>

Theme 2: People, performance and resource management

The development control service is actively managed to ensure that resources are employed effectively and efficiently to deliver the speed and quality of service required, and the outcomes, staff are appropriately supported and utilised, and improvement of the service provided is continuous.

- **Capacity and the use of resources** – ensuring the development control service has adequate staffing, financial resources and skills to meet its objectives and to deliver the required outcomes
- **Performance management** – the development control service has systems in place, and uses them, to ensure effective use of capacity and in meeting its objectives
- **Learning and supportive culture** – the development control service recognises the inherent conflict in planning activity and the complex nature of the planning process and responds to this positively and supportively

Theme 2a Capacity and use of resources																													
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES																											
1. Are staffing levels appropriate?	<p>1.1 What is the average FTE case officer (include planners and technicians carrying caseload) caseload per annum. How does it relate to the 150 benchmark? (Refer detailed definition at Footnote 1). If above 150 are caseload levels sustainable in relation to the profile of cases and committee structures (i.e. proportion of major/minor/other applications received by the authority compared to the national average profile of 3% major, 27% minor and 70% other applications and the decision making processes in operation) and look to see whether it is static, increasing or decreasing over a period of the last 2 years and that projected for forthcoming year.</p> <p>1.2 Is there a backlog of applications (<i>see backlog definition footnote 2</i>) and is it static, growing or declining? What measures are in place to clear</p>	<p>There were 6 FTE case officers for 1200 applications received in 2006-07, expected to rise to 1400 in 2007-08, i.e. 200 - 233 per case officer which is significantly above the 150 benchmark even bearing in mind the profile of work. The 6 FTEs includes a part-time consultant and a 32.5 hours person. It also includes all the time of the PPO (deputy head of Development Control) who has management responsibilities. Appeals are handled by the same staff.</p> <p>The profile of applications determined for the last few years is as follows:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Total No.</th> <th>Major</th> <th>Minor</th> <th>Other</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2004-05</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1132</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3.1%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">19.7%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">77.2%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2005-06</td> <td style="text-align: center;">949</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2.4%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">18.4%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">79.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2006-07</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1109</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1.5%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">16.1%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">82.3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2007 (½ year)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">730</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1.8%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">23.4%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">74.8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The proportion of major applications has therefore fallen from the national average (they had also been at this level or higher in previous years) to well below. The percentage of other applications is significantly higher than the national average</p>			Year	Total No.	Major	Minor	Other	2004-05	1132	3.1%	19.7%	77.2%	2005-06	949	2.4%	18.4%	79.1%	2006-07	1109	1.5%	16.1%	82.3%	2007 (½ year)	730	1.8%	23.4%	74.8%
Year	Total No.	Major	Minor	Other																									
2004-05	1132	3.1%	19.7%	77.2%																									
2005-06	949	2.4%	18.4%	79.1%																									
2006-07	1109	1.5%	16.1%	82.3%																									
2007 (½ year)	730	1.8%	23.4%	74.8%																									

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

	<p>it?</p> <p>1.3 Is the proportion of administrative support staff appropriate to the number of case officers and the scale of the work?</p> <p>1.4 How are appeals and enforcement work staffed in terms of administrative support and case officers? Bearing in mind the 150 guide for case officers excludes appeals work.</p>	<p>(having been much lower than this prior to 2004), and minor applications therefore lower.</p> <p>With the exception of 2 quarters, applications received have exceeded those determined over the last 2.5 years, but there is no overall backlog. The number of applications carried forward at the end of each quarter for the last 4 quarters has been well below those received – this represents good practice. There are a number of major applications which are very old and attempts have been made to treat these applications as withdrawn.</p> <p>The 3 FTE technical staff also deal with appeals and land searches (the priority for one of them). Although most routine queries are dealt with by the one-stop shop, this is considered to be a low number. However there is no evidence that any problems are being caused.</p> <p>In addition to the above there is an enforcement officer.</p>
<p>2. Has the development control service achieved the range and mix of skills needed to deliver its aims and objectives? Are there any gaps in skills/ experience?</p>	<p>2.1 What is the experience profile of staff in relation to caseload profile e.g. if there are large numbers of complex major applications are there adequate numbers of senior, experienced staff? If there are a large number of listed buildings, is there adequate expertise?</p> <p>2.2 Are there adequate management, technical, administrative and project management skills as well as planning skills?</p> <p>2.3 Have there been any changes to the FTE posts in development control in the last year? Are any changes planned?</p>	<p>There are two experienced case officers in addition to the Head of Development Control, which is considered adequate given the relatively small number of major applications. The other 4 staff comprise 3 relatively inexperienced graduates (1 qualified, 2 studying for RTPI) and one more experienced, but unqualified officer (former technician). There is also part-time support from a consultant who deals with a range of applications and appeals.</p> <p>The Head of Development Control and the Principal Planning Officer have been on project management courses - the issue is not so much skill levels as time to implement project management systems.</p> <p>Fylde has experienced considerable recruitment problems since the loss of 3 experienced members of staff in 2005, leaving them with the Head of Development Control as the only experienced planner. This was partly as a result of friction between the former Built Environment Manager and members, arising from overturned recommendations.</p>

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

		<p>This situation has recently (Nov-Dec 2006) been rectified. In addition a bid is being made to increase the number of enforcement officers from 1 to 2 in order to deal with 400 complaints p.a.</p>
<p>3. Is access to external services appropriate?</p>	<p>3.1 Is specialist advice permanently available for design, highways, conservation, arboricultural, and ecological advice either in-house, from another authority or group of authorities, from a public body, or from the private sector? (Relate to performance on BVPI 205)</p> <p>3.2 Are staff deployed flexibly to tackle peaks in workload?</p>	<p>There is in-house design advice (plus a design panel and a contract with a local architect) but no conservation officer (frozen post). As a result none of the conservation areas have an up to date character appraisal or published management proposals.</p> <p>Good support is provided by the County on highways issues. The lack of in-house ecological advice causes some problems. There are insufficient total numbers of experienced staff to do this. There is concern that there will be insufficient resources to deal with high number of major planning applications expected in the near future and, as part of the budget process, consideration is being given to bringing in external resources, funded from planning fees.</p>

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

<p>4. Does a recruitment and retention strategy exist which manages the vacancy and turnover rates experienced by the service?</p>	<p>4.1 What are the vacancy rates for case officers and administrative staff? 4.2 Is there a corporate or service recruitment and retention strategy? 4.3 What are the staff turnover rates? 4.4 Have vacancy and turnover rates affected service performance? 4.5 Does the authority consider there have been any recruitment and retention problems in the last 18 months? 4.6 How many posts have been advertised and vacancies filled during that period? (Look at case officers, administrative staff, technical staff and management posts). 4.7 What measures are in place to manage vacancies? e.g. use of consultants, temporary appointments, agency staff, procedure for advertising 4.8 Is the service over reliant on temporary staff i.e. Are key positions or a high proportion of positions held by temporary staff or as temporary posts? What are the reasons for this? 4.9 What flexible employment conditions are on offer to retain staff such as compressed hours, flexi time, home working etc?</p>	<p>At the time of the visit there were no vacant case officer posts but there was a vacancy for an enforcement officer as a result of the recent promotion of the post holder to Planning Assistant. There is no written corporate or service recruitment strategy, but action has been taken to improve terms and conditions to help recruitment and retention. Market supplements were paid to attract and retain 2 planning officers Turnover has not been an issue for admin/technical staff which is very stable. As described above vacancies at a senior level seriously affected service performance during 2005-06. The serious recruitment and retention problems have been described above. They were made worse by adverse publicity from an article in Planning newspaper (13 January 2006). No response was received to 2 advertisements for Principal Planning Officers but, following a redefinition of roles and an increase in salary, appointments have now been made. . A consultant was put in place to deal with these problems and is still assisting. Not an issue.</p> <p>Not investigated in detail.</p>
<p>5. Does a training and development strategy exist that meets the needs of the service?</p>	<p>5.1 Is training for committee members compulsory, held frequently and comprehensive in its coverage? 5.2 Are staff sponsored on planning courses to develop their skills?</p>	<p>Training is required for Committee members and their substitutes, although the effectiveness of the training for some members, particularly those who are long-standing and set in their ways, is questioned. The Portfolio holder considers that more regular refresher training on emerging policy issues would be beneficial. Two Assistant Planning Officers are being sponsored on the planning course at Liverpool John Moores University.</p>

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

	<p>5.3 Is there an active developmental approach to staff e.g. linked to staff appraisals?</p> <p>5.4 Are links with local universities made to attract graduates?</p>	<p>Expenditure on staff training is low – a sum of £1000 for the whole unit of 50 staff has been put in the revised estimates for training seminars but there is no other provision. No details of any training strategy were available. There is no budget for basic refresher training in order to keep up with changes in legislation. Appraisals should be undertaken annually with a 6 monthly review, but the Principal Planning Officer had only recently been appraised for the first time since arriving in November 2006.</p>
<p>6. Are tasks allocated at suitable levels so that case officers are able to concentrate on assessing applications and technical and administrative work supports the handling of applications?</p>	<p>6.1 How is each stage of the application process divided up between administrative, technical and case officers?</p> <p>6.2 Are case officers carrying out unnecessary administrative duties?</p>	<p>It is felt that case officers probably carry out more administrative work than they need to, although specific examples were not given. Equally it was felt that the technicians could take on more responsibility for checking quality and accuracy of applications and possibly for other matters.</p> <p>There is a concern that the Head of Development Control continues to be involved in planning applications while also not being available for face to face contact due to involvement at high level meetings in support of the Executive Manager (a non-planner).</p>
<p>Theme 2b Performance Management</p>		
<p>Key issues to explore</p>	<p>Evidence</p>	<p>NOTES</p>
<p>1. Is the level of performance achieved satisfactory with regard to:</p> <p>BVPI 109?</p> <p>BVPI 205?</p>	<p>1.1 How does performance with regard to BVPI 109a, b or c, stand in relation to the standards set for standards authorities and the national targets?</p> <p>1.2 Has performance with regard to BVPI 109a, b or c declined or improved over the last two quarters, and the last year?</p>	<p>As indicated by the following table, performance was below the national target and the locally set thresholds for major, minor and other applications in 2006/07 and this accounts for Fylde's designation as a standards authority for BVPIs 109 a, b and c for 2007/08. Performance improved significantly in the last quarter of 2006/07 and in the first two quarters of 2007/08 in relation to minor and other applications and was above the national targets. However performance in relation to major applications (BVPI 109a) remains poor and in Q1 and Q2 of 2007/08 was well below the national target.</p>

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

	<p>1.3 What is the current performance on BVPI 205. (Score out of 18: up to 8 poor, 9 – 12 average, 13 or above good).</p> <p>1.4 Has the score increased from that achieved in 2005/06? If not, what are the reasons for poor performance?</p>	<p>Performance in relation to BVPI 205 (quality checklist) was at 77.7% for both 2005/06 and 2006/07, i.e. a score of 14, which</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1312 201 2123 480"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2"></th> <th rowspan="2">Target</th> <th colspan="2">2006/7</th> <th colspan="2">2007/8 so far</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Thres-hold for 2006/7</th> <th>Perform-ance</th> <th>Thres-hold for 2007/8</th> <th>Perform-ance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(a) Major decisions % in 13 weeks</td> <td>60%</td> <td>50%</td> <td>41%</td> <td>55%</td> <td>38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(b) Minor decisions % in 8 weeks</td> <td>65%</td> <td>55%</td> <td>46%</td> <td>60%</td> <td>77%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(c) Other decisions % in 8 weeks</td> <td>80%</td> <td>70%</td> <td>62%</td> <td>75%</td> <td>84%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>is good but static.</p>		Target	2006/7		2007/8 so far		Thres-hold for 2006/7	Perform-ance	Thres-hold for 2007/8	Perform-ance	(a) Major decisions % in 13 weeks	60%	50%	41%	55%	38%	(b) Minor decisions % in 8 weeks	65%	55%	46%	60%	77%	(c) Other decisions % in 8 weeks	80%	70%	62%	75%	84%
	Target	2006/7			2007/8 so far																									
		Thres-hold for 2006/7	Perform-ance	Thres-hold for 2007/8	Perform-ance																									
(a) Major decisions % in 13 weeks	60%	50%	41%	55%	38%																									
(b) Minor decisions % in 8 weeks	65%	55%	46%	60%	77%																									
(c) Other decisions % in 8 weeks	80%	70%	62%	75%	84%																									
<p>2. Has performance on BVPI 109 been achieved without recourse to actions that potentially reduce the quality of service?</p>	<p>2.1 What is the trend in refusal rates and how does it relate to the national average?</p> <p>2.2 What is the trend in withdrawal rates and is this in line with the national average?</p> <p>2.3 What is the appeals record and is it in line with the national average of 67% appeals upheld for 2004/05?</p> <p>2.4 What is the BVPI 204 score and is it in line with the national average? NB the national averages change; the most up to date figures should be used.</p>	<p>The refusal rate for 2005/06 was 13% and this rose to 23% in 2006/07 which is well above the national average. There are signs of this decreasing as it had dropped to 16% in the Q2 of 2007/08.</p> <p>Withdrawal rates have been consistently at about 5% for the last 3.5 years up to the end of Q2 of 2007/08.</p> <p>Fylde's appeal record is poor with only 56% appeals dismissed in 2005/06 and 41.2% in 2006/07. The Audit Commission web-site shows the figure of appeals allowed to be 48% in 2006/07, which was the 7th highest (i.e. worst) of all district councils in England.</p> <p>The Council has evidence that this is accounted for entirely by applications overturned by members against officer recommendations.</p>																												
<p>3. What is the magnitude of improvement?</p>	<p>3.1 What is the percentage point change in performance on BVPI 109a, b and c in the last year?</p> <p>3.2 If performance has improved is this a result of planned improvements?</p> <p>3.3 Is performance in line with the improvement trajectory?</p> <p>3.4 Has the number of applications, appeals or enforcement complaints risen in recent years? How has the service coped with such rising workloads?</p> <p>3.5 Has the profile of applications changed in</p>	<p>Between 2005/06 and 2006/07 there was a deterioration in performance of 2 percentage points for major applications 26 percentage points for minor applications and 21 percentage points for other applications. However between the end of 2006/07 and the first half of 2007/8 there has been a 31 percentage point and 22 percentage point improvement respectively for minor and other applications, but a continued decline in performance on major applications of 3 percentage points</p> <p>This improvement for minor and other applications, if sustained, would be significantly in excess of that expected by the improvement trajectory.</p>																												

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

	recent years?	Applications received rose steadily during the first 5 years of the decade, dropped slightly in 2005/06 but increased to its highest ever level (1209) in 2006/07. If current trends persist, this figure will increase to 1400 in 2007/08, including an increased number of anticipated major applications. See above for changes in profile.
4. Is the performance of the service being actively managed?	<p>4.1 Does the Chief Planning Officer, supported by CEO and members drive performance towards BVPI targets?</p> <p>4.2 Do managers and key members (e.g. portfolio holder and chair of planning committee) meet regularly to discuss performance and potential barriers to improvement?</p> <p>4.3 What regular performance reporting to SMT, Cabinet and DC committee is undertaken? Which BVPI's and local PI's are included?</p> <p>4.4 Is up to date performance against national and local PI's readily available?</p>	<p>There are quarterly reports to the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee, followed by a report to Cabinet, covering all BVPIs and including planning. Senior officers from the Development Control team and the Portfolio holder have been brought before the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet to explain poor performance in the past. The Portfolio holder has fortnightly meetings with the Executive manager at which development control performance is usually the main item.</p> <p>There are no local PIs.</p>
5. Is regular monitoring of individuals, teams and the overall position with regard to BVPI 109 targets taking place?	<p>5.1 How is individual, team and service performance monitoring and management with regard to BVPI 109a, b and c achieved? It should be both monitored and followed up where performance is lagging at individual, team and service level.</p> <p>5.2 Is this included in appraisal?</p>	There is currently no regular monitoring at individual or team level, although the Principal Planning Officer is anxious to introduce this.
6. Is the service improvement plan and process fit for purpose?	<p>6.1 Is there an up to date improvement strategy and is it regularly reviewed?</p> <p>6.2 Has the Council recently reviewed its processes for the handling of major, minor/other applications; enforcement; section 106 agreements; appeals?</p> <p>6.3 Has this review identified (through process mapping or otherwise) the main causes of delay in processing applications, blockages, the actions required to make improvements</p>	<p>There is no up to date improvement strategy. Various actions for improvement are included in the Service Plan but little progress has been made on them. Some of the recommendations of the Best Value review in 2003 have been implemented but others have fallen away.</p> <p>There has been no recent review of processes. The need to do this is recognised. A student has been looking at existing processes.. The NW Improvement Network is also looking at corporate procedures.</p>

	<p>to the service, and set out the resources required with a realistic timescale for implementation?</p> <p>6.4 Does the service improvement plan format include the elements set out in the PAS good practice guidance?</p> <p>6.5 Does the service plan or improvement strategy address the key issues for the service? e.g. local demands on the service such as high growth or significant levels of listed buildings.</p> <p>6.6 Does the service improvement plan include measures to manage significant risks?</p> <p>6.7 What are the proposals for future improvement and do these address the main causes of delay identified?</p> <p>6.8 What examples of action have been taken as a result of process review or issues arising from performance management?</p>	<p>Not relevant due to the absence of an Improvement Plan.</p>
<p>Theme 2c Learning and supportive culture</p>		
<p>Key issues to explore</p>	<p>Evidence</p>	<p>NOTES</p>
<p>1. Are positive working relationships between the staff and members within the Council and with its partners maintained?</p>	<p>1.1 Do staff work positively across service boundaries? E.g. is the development team approach considered to be effective?</p>	<p>Relationships between staff and members were at a very low point in 2005, leading to the departure of 3 senior and experienced members of staff. They have “improved immensely” since then but are still perceived as in need of further improvement. Members at Committee are challenging of officers’ opinions and look to find loopholes in reports. This is particularly a problem with long-standing members, less so with new ones.</p> <p>There has also been a culture of marginalisation of the planning service, which was not highly regarded by the previous Chief Executive. This situation has improved with a new Chief Executive and movement of staff to the Town Hall from Wesham.</p>

2 Do staff share good practice and experience?	2.1 Are there mechanisms for learning from experience in dealing with major applications that enable collective learning from individual experience to improve the way the service processes major applications?	There used to be regular reviews of decisions and an annual design award but this is no longer done, for financial reasons.
--	--	---

Theme 3 Leadership and corporate engagement

The planning service provides clear leadership with respect to spatial planning within and outside the council by working with and supporting partners in its implementation. The development control service is linked effectively with the council's strategic and corporate planning processes. The diagnostic considers this theme under three elements: vision and direction; integration of policy and delivery; and decision making process and scrutiny.

- **Vision and direction** – the development control service is clear about what it wants to achieve and how it will get there
- **Integration of policy and delivery** – the service's vision and direction reflect the councils policies and priorities
- **Decision making and scrutiny** – the service has an effective and transparent executive decision making process which ensures probity through appropriate checks and balances

Theme 3a Vision and direction		
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
1. Does the development control service have effective champions at officer and member level?	1.1 Does the head of service clearly lead the service? 1.2 Does the portfolio holder responsible for planning and chair of development control committee provide direction for the service? 1.3 Is there corporate management team and	Leadership is provided by the Executive Manager who, although not a planner himself, is striving to improve the image and status of planning within the Council. The Head of Development Control gets drawn into the details of applications and into higher level meetings both of which take him away from the office for lengthy periods. The service would benefit from more availability and visibility by the Head of Development Control in terms of managing and leading staff. The committee chairman has a clear understanding of planning issues. The portfolio holder admits to be not an expert on planning but clearly understands its potential to deliver wider objectives. He has opened up a dialogue with major local developers and understands the importance of working in

**PART A: Final Diagnostic framework BVPI 109a Fylde Borough Council
December 2007**

	member support for plans to improve the service?	partnership while abiding by the Code of Conduct. The Executive Manager (Performance) has some clear and firm ideas on how improvements could be made to the management of the service.
2. Does the budget process ensure that service priorities drive the resource allocation for the development control service?	<p>2.1 Is the service adequately resourced? For example, is fee income or PDG supplemented if needed to make or maintain improvements in service?</p> <p>2.2 Is the service reliant on PDG for sustainability of the service?</p> <p>2.3 Is there an exit strategy post PDG e.g. a 3 year budget strategy?</p> <p>2.4 Is the service being subject to budget cuts?</p> <p>2.5 Is the improvement plan adequately resourced in terms of preparation and delivery?</p>	Only a limited amount of PDG has been received for 2007/08. £60k was given for plan-making but nothing for development control performance. It has been spent on LDF evidence gathering and on development control consultancy to cover for staff shortages. In previous years £55k has been taken away by the Finance department. Although PDG is a high proportion of the budget, its loss will not cause a problem for development control because it has been used for LDF evidence gathering. The Council is in the lowest quartile for spending on planning. (The Audit Commission shows its expenditure to be £7.42 per head in 2006-7: 14 th out of 16 in relation to its nearest neighbours and 18 th lowest of all English districts. Contrary to the general trend, it has declined from £10 per head, the national average, in 2003)
Theme 3b Integration of policy and delivery		
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
1. Is there an up to date framework for the development of the area rooted in a locally distinct vision?	1.1 Is the adopted Development Plan/LDF up to date?	The Local Plan was adopted in 2003 and updated by an alterations review in 2005 to bring it in line with the Structure Plan to 2016. A draft Interim Housing Policy has been proposed in order to address the removal of the housing moratorium by the RSS and cover affordable housing needs. Members are only just beginning to understand the implications of the 300+ annual housing target in the proposed RSS (which could go even higher). The Portfolio holder is not convinced that the previous housing moratorium policy was correct and considers there is a need to streamline policies and make them more understandable. The Core Strategy is at an early stage and there is concern that the Development Control Committee Members are not committed to implementing a vision based on sustainable development objectives. However this is a minority view and the argument

	<p>1.2 What SPD is available and is it up to date? 1.3 Is SPD, policy and guidance easily accessible to applicants and other stakeholders including S106 guidance? 1.4 Does this guidance reflect corporate ambitions and development issues for the local area?</p>	<p>over sustainable development has been won at Cabinet level. Their key objective is to secure a new link road. As a result a large number of major applications are expected from the major land-owner in the Borough (Kensington Developments) which has a “stranglehold over developable land” and may seek to influence the Core Strategy. A joint SPD on House Extensions has been prepared with Blackpool and Wyre Boroughs. This reflects the large number of householder applications received. There is no SPD/SPG on section 106 contributions and no other SPD is proposed in the local development scheme, although the Head of Planning Policy recognises the need for section 106 guidance.</p>
--	--	--

Theme 3c Decision making and scrutiny

Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
<p>1. Are decision-making arrangements between the Executive and development control committee clear with distinct responsibilities?</p>	<p>1.1 Is there an up to date delegation scheme which identifies those applications that can be determined by the appropriate officer under delegated powers or the development control committee? 1.2 Have these arrangements been recently reviewed (last 18 months)? 1.3 What is the delegation rate? (around 90% delegation is good but could it be higher given the case profile?) 1.4 Are any changes proposed to the current scheme (in the next 6 months?) 1.5 Is guidance/training provided to members with respect to expediting clear decision making reflecting local circumstances?</p>	<p>See above comments on the delegation scheme.</p> <p>Training has been provided to Members with respect to clear decision making but there are still perverse decisions taken (for instance refusal of an office development on traffic grounds despite no objections from the highway authority). There is concern that certain, long-established members of the Committee are not susceptible to training or to taking on new policy approaches. The Portfolio holder would like more new blood on</p>

		the Committee but cannot achieve this because of afternoon meetings, which many younger, working members cannot attend because of meetings during the working day
--	--	---

4. Customer focus and community engagement

The development control service understands the needs of its full range of customers: individual applicants; the neighbourhood; the wider community; external and internal stakeholders and the business community. It understands the community and customers needs, who they are, and is organised to inform and engage the community and stakeholder at appropriate stages. The diagnostic considers this theme under three elements: transparency of process, accessibility and responsiveness to users

- **Transparency of process for users**– stakeholders are clear about how they can engage in the development control process
- **Accessibility** – services can be accessed in ways and times that are convenient and in such a way that stakeholders can effectively engage
- **Responsiveness to users**- information received is fed into the design of the service and development of policy explicitly

Theme 4a Transparency of process		
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
1. The factors taken into account in decisions and the path of the decision-making process is clear	1.1 The basis of decision-making is clear in committee reports and correspondence, policies and procedures are explicit E.g. in consultation, the role of public meetings and procedures for their smooth operation.	There are no concerns, except in relation to overturned recommendations.
2 Stakeholders are clear about their role in the decision making process and are provided with the information to engage effectively	2.1 Applicants and consultees understand what involvement they can expect and at what stage 2.2 Requirements for section 106 are transparent 2.3 Committee reports include details of representations and the factors weighed in coming to the recommendation, as well as assumptions and evidence, whilst minutes are clear.	See above comments about Section 106 agreements and need for guidance to applicants.

Theme 4b Accessibility		
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
<p>1. What information and service is available online and offline?</p> <p>Is the service accessed by users in ways and at times and locations suited to their needs?</p>	<p>1.1 What PARSOL standards are being met?*</p> <p>1.2 What is the availability of information off line?</p> <p>1.3 What is the availability of information and service at reception/one stop shop/duty planner?</p> <p>1.4 What was the most recent Pendleton score? If it was above 15 then the service is likely to be good, if below 15 likely to be poor. If all 21 criteria are met then this aspect of delivery is excellent.</p> <p>1.5 Has the Council met BVPI 157 (planning only)?</p>	<p>Not considered to be a major issue. No time to pursue this in detail.</p> <p>Information at 2 one-stop shops in Lytham and Kirkham.</p> <p>The Service publishes a range of planning information, such as conversion of traditional farm buildings, new flat developments, shop front design guides for the Lytham conservation area and village appraisals and plans. However, a number of these are dated and some documents have been in draft form for a number of years. The Service has adopted supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for significant developments.</p> <p>The latest Pendleton score is 21.</p> <p>In terms of BVPI 111 satisfaction with the handling of planning applications, the number satisfied in 2006/07 was only 52%, down from 78% in 2003/04 and 77% in 2001/02.</p>
Theme 4c Responsiveness		
Key issues to explore	Evidence	NOTES
<p>1. Do the diverse range of stakeholders have easy access to a responsive service</p>	<p>1.1 Is there access to a responsive service e.g. availability of advice at reception, one stop, shop etc; information on the web including clear advice to applicants about the processing of applications and to consultees, feedback to consultees etc.</p>	<p>There is an agents' forum shared with Blackpool and Wyre which meets regularly. The public are allowed to speak at Development Control Committee meetings. Public exhibitions are held for major applications.</p> <p>66% Ombudsman complaints (12 out of 18) relate to planning matters, which significantly exceeds the national average of 23%. Response to Ombudsman complaints is slow (average of 40 or 55 days)</p>

Footnote 1: Definition of Caseload

This has been calculated using the number of applications received in a year (those included in the PS1 return) and divided by the number of established FTE posts for that year. A sustainable caseload has been taken to be around 150 applications per case officer and takes into account input into other work e.g. pre-application meetings, appeals and applications not included in the PS1 return. A sustainable enforcement caseload has been taken to be around 150 complaints per case officer per annum.

Footnote 2: Definition of Backlog

An authority is considered to have a backlog of applications where, in the last quarter, it did not determine at least as many applications as it received, and the number on hand at the end of that quarter exceeds the number received or the number determined (whichever is greater) by more than 10%. In order to determine whether there is a static backlog, declining backlog or growing backlog the trend is reviewed over the last two years taking account of the number of applications on hand at the end of a quarter/year and the relationship between the number of applications determined and received in a quarter. However, the last four quarters are considered to be the most important period for this purpose. This definition may change.

* Revised PARSOL standards for a planning service published in June 2006

'Quality of Planning Services' checklist.

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Points</u>	<u>Notes</u>
A. requirements for submission of applications under the Planning Acts, reflecting the different types of development.		
1. Is the guidance accessible in writing?	1	
2. Is the guidance pre-prepared?	1	
3. Does the guidance reflect the size and types of the development envisaged in the development plan?	1	
B. Whether the authority provides pre-application advice.		
4. Is the pre-application advice available for all types of applications under the Planning Acts reflecting the size and type of the development envisaged?	1	
5. Does the advice have regard to the history of the site* of the proposed development where relevant?	1	
6. Is the advice accessible through written, electronic media or verbally during reasonable office opening hours reflecting the needs of different users?	1	
*Site history' includes details of previous applications for the site, details of any development plan proposals for the site and details of previously stated views from all significant and relevant parties and statutory bodies where necessary.		

C. Whether, in addition to what is offered by CABE and English Heritage, the authority has local arrangements to access specialist advice on design* in the preparation of the LDP, planning guidance and in determining all types of applications under the Planning Acts.		
7. Is there specialist advice available in-house, from another authority or group of authorities, from public bodies, or from the private sector?	1	
8. Is the advice used for the preparation of the LDP, planning guidance and the determination of all types of applications under the Planning Acts?	1	
9. Are the arrangements for securing the advice permanent and continual?	1	
*Specialist advice on design' includes advice from a qualified architect, urban designer or landscape architect.		
'Design' includes all aspects of design with reference to paragraph 14 of Planning Policy Guidance note 1 (ISBN 0 11 753368 8). (NB. Planning Policy Statement 1 is likely to replace PPG1 during the course of the financial year. Consideration should be given to any subsequent guidance on design contained in the new document.)		
Arrangements are permanent and continual if they are available in house or under a standing arrangement such as a call-off contract with an outsourced provider. Heritage, the authority has local arrangements to access specialist advice* on the historic environment in the preparation of the LDP, planning guidance, and in determining all types of applications under the Planning Acts.		
10. Is there specialist advice available in-house, from another authority or group of authorities, from a public, or from the private sector?	0	

11. Is the advice available for the preparation of the local development plan, planning guidance and all types of applications under the Planning Acts?	0	
12. Are the arrangements for securing the advice permanent and continual?	0	
**Specialist advice' should include advice from appropriately qualified specialists in conservation and archaeological techniques.		
Arrangements are 'permanent and continual' if they are available in-house or under some standing arrangement such as a call-off contract with an outsourced provider.		
E. Whether there is a multidisciplinary team approach to determining major planning applications.*		
13. Is this an approach which integrates the contribution of different appropriate disciplines in a way which reflects the size, scale and complexity of the development?	1	
14. Are lead officer/s available (including at pre-application stage) to manage and co-ordinate development advice and information and subsequent application processing?	1	
15. Is there a project management approach to managing activities in relation to the applications?	0	
*For the purposes of this question 'major applications' are all applications for more than 50 houses or 10,000m2 of industrial, commercial or retail floorspace and smaller 'major applications' (i.e. applications smaller than the definition above but no smaller than 10 houses or 10,000m2 of floorspace) in		

which more than one council department has an interest.

F. Whether the authority provides the capability for an electronic planning service.

Authorities score points according to the level achieved against the 21 Pendleton Report Survey criteria. E.g, an authority that meets 11/21 criteria gains 1 point. The levels are as follows:

21	3 points	3	
15-20	2 points		
11-14	1 point		
0-10	0points		

An authority which integrates with the Planning Portal to deliver e-planning services can achieve up to 11 of the Pendleton criteria, which will attract a score of 1 point. The Pendleton self-assessment criteria and guidance on how to integrate with the Planning Portal can be found at <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/lpa/bvpi>

Please note that criteria 8 – Period of time covered by the decision register is not included in the 21 criteria:

The checklist is drafted so that each numbered question from 1 – 15 requires a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answer.

A ‘Yes’ answer attracts a score of 1;

A ‘No’ answer attracts a score of 0.

Section F is scored according to the level of performance achieved against the Pendleton 21 criteria as above.

The BVPI will report the score as a percentage of the possible total of 18

TOTAL FYLDE BOROUGH COUNCIL SCORE = 14/18 = 77.7%

APPENDIX 3 - PAS Recommendations	Officer observations/comments	Scrutiny Committee Member's comments
<p>1. Assist with the preparation of an improvement strategy.</p>	<p>This action pulls together the whole plan and a Consultant funded by PAS will be assisting with this.</p>	
<p>2. Review existing processes and systems in order to provide advice on appropriate re-engineering and establish a process/procedure/workflow for planning applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • from initial contact to submission of an application • from submission of an application, validation and registration, through to decision-making and issuing the decision for major, minor and other applications • post decision activity including s106, appeals, compliance monitoring and enforcement. 	<p>This work has started using the initial assistance of a Consultant funded by PAS.</p>	
<p>3. Arrange joint training for officers and Members (including the Portfolio holder, cabinet members and Development Control Committee members) on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the modernised planning system • the cultural changes necessary to provide a quality planning service • the performance agenda and performance management • dealing with major applications 	<p>A training proposal funded by PAS has been accepted by the Member Development Group and is being delivered before the end of March 2008.</p>	

APPENDIX 3 - PAS Recommendations	Officer observations/comments	Scrutiny Committee Member's comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role of committees and their relationship with parish councils 		
<p>4. Facilitate one-to-one mentoring/capacity building for the Head of Development Control.</p>	<p>PAS are to provide some relevant local authority contacts.</p>	
<p>5. Map and set up performance and project management systems to assist with the overall control and management of workloads and to project manage individual applications.</p>	<p>This may be provided by PAS later in the year.</p>	
<p>6. Provide published pre-application guidance, including validation guidance, and/or SPD on planning obligations.</p>	<p>This has been required for sometime and it is essential that capacity in the team be released to undertake this work.</p>	

APPENDIX 3 - PAS Recommendations	Officer observations/comments	Scrutiny Committee Member's comments
<p>7. Review arrangements for the Development Control Committee, including time of day (e.g. late afternoon or evening), frequency of meetings and size of agendas (as a result of increased delegation), in order to make it more attractive to a wider range of members.</p>	<p>Meetings start at 9.30am and often last into the early afternoon and have an average of 12 items per agenda. The current frequency of meetings every three weeks is demanding on resources to service and administer.</p>	
<p>8. Consider the provision of additional development control staff or consultant support to:</p> <p>a) deal with the anticipated increase in major applications</p> <p>b) allow existing staff time to address performance improvement issues</p> <p>c) allow senior staff more time for mentoring and appraisal.</p>	<p>Budget growth bids were submitted for additional DC staff as part of consideration of the budget for 2008/09 funded from substantial increases in planning application fees.</p> <p>There are currently vacancies for the posts of Conservation Officer and Enforcement Officer.</p>	
<p>9. Work with members to develop an improved scheme of delegation to officers and how to develop member trust in officers.</p>	<p>Delegation currently stands at about 86%, which is slightly below the target of 90%.</p>	
<p>10. Investigate further opportunities for combining development control teams and/or sharing specialist services with adjoining authorities.</p>	<p>Officers have discussed with neighbouring authorities the scope for assistance at times of peak workload.</p>	

APPENDIX 3 - PAS Recommendations	Officer observations/comments	Scrutiny Committee Member's comments
<p>11. Set up a training programme for parish councils to increase their understanding of their contribution to the planning process.</p>	<p>This should be dealt with at the same time if any changes are proposed to the delegations.</p>	
<p>12. Analyse the reasons why the success at appeal is low.</p>	<p>Previous work by a member Task and Finish group looked at this.</p>	
<p>13. Prepare a procedures manual.</p>	<p>Covered under recommendation No. 2 on the earlier page.</p>	

**Performance
Improvement Scrutiny
Committee**



Date	24 th January 2008
Venue	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members	Christine Akeroyd (Acting Chairman) Linda Nulty, Kathleen Harper, Ken Hopwood, Craig Halewood, Cheryl Little
Other Councillors	Tony Ford, Dawn Prestwich, Fabian Craig-Wilson
Officers	Allan Oldfield, Alex Scrivens, Paul Walker, Simon Kularatne Carolyn Whewell
Others	Susan Fazackerley, Paul Rigby

Prior to the start of the meeting, Councillor Linda Nulty was nominated to act as Vice-Chair for the duration of this meeting.

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any personal/prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22nd November 2007 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitutions were reported under council procedure rule 22.3:

Councillor Dawn Prestwich for Councillor Keith Hyde
Councillor Fabian Craig-Wilson for Councillor John Singleton
Councillor Tony Ford for Councillor David Chedd

4. The Data Quality Policy

Allan Oldfield (Executive Manager, Corporate Policy and Performance) presented a report detailing the Fylde Borough Council Data Quality Policy. The Data Quality Policy has been in place since August 2006 and is subject to inspection by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission recommended that the Data Quality Policy is subject for review every 18months and as such the next review date is 2009.

The Data Quality Policy was designed to ensure that the Council has a clear approach to ensuring that any information or data produced, used and published was reliable, accurate and authorised. The policy outlined the approach that the council has taken in the management of all information and data that is used in service delivery.

Mr Oldfield reported that the Policy had a significant impact on all the performance information that is produced by the council and that Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee members should be conscious of the objectives and standards of the policy. The policy outlines the importance of ensuring that the data used meets the following criteria:

- It is accurate and consistent (reliable)
- It is available to those who need it (availability)
- It is available when it is needed (timeliness)
- It has a valid structure and format (useable)
- It truly reflects the event or activity that it relates to (integrity)
- It is monitored, reviewed and checked prior to publication / use (validity)
- It is protected from unauthorised access (secure)
- It contains all relevant data without duplication (completeness)
- It is needed (useful)

An action plan was included with the policy and this was due to be reviewed in 2009 along with the policy. The action plan was taken from the recommendations made by the Audit Commission in November 2007 and covered all the key areas required to improve data quality at Fylde.

Members questioned how the new set of national indicators will affect the quality of the data presented to the committee. Mr Oldfield advised that many of the indicators, although worded differently were similar to the data that was required currently.

Following the debate, it was RESOLVED:

1. That the committee agree the revised Data Quality Policy and the 2008 - 2009 Action Plan for Data Quality that is included as Appendix B in the policy.
2. That the committee apply the principles and objectives of the Data Quality policy in all their future scrutiny of performance information and data.

5. Escendency -Performance Management Software System

Alex Scrivens (Performance and Efficiency Officer) provided a practical demonstration of the new performance management system Escendency.

Escendency is an online Performance Management System currently being used by several local authorities to collate and link performance information and data to responsible officers throughout the organisation. Escendency allows individuals to monitor performance and targets in real time and understand the contribution the service makes to the wider strategic objectives. The system presents performance data in an

easy to read format colour coding targets according to whether they are under achieving, on target or over achieving. Officers in individual service areas are responsible for entering the performance data on time. Members were advised that they could access and log on to the Escendency System via the Council's intranet site.

Mr Scrivens advised that officers had developed the Escendency system over the last six months working closely with the developers to ensure that Fylde's strategic map is correctly in the system. The system is currently used for to collect and manage all the performance data for both local and national indicators. Several service areas have been using the system to develop and monitor strategic action plans that cut across all service areas e.g. Audit and Risk Management. Mr Scrivens advised that approximately 20% of office based staff are using the system and it is intended to roll this out further.

During 2008, the Escendency system will be developed to collate and manage the new national performance indicators, incorporate all the business unit actions plans and for reporting performance online to members and other stakeholders.

Members sought clarity on how much officer time is saved through using the Escendency system. Mr Scrivens advised that this was very difficult to measure and was different for each department although it had been estimated that for Internal Audit alone, the approximate time saving was 5-10 hours a month.

Members questioned the cost of the system and training provided to officer to support the use of Escendency. Mr Scrivens further advised that the annual cost of the system was £5000 which allowed for 500 user licenses. Training has been provided in house by Mr Scrivens with the only costs being officer time; The Performance Management System in other councils such as Blackpool can cost in excess of £40,000 per annum.

It was requested that, in addition to two committee members working with Mr Scrivens, a workshop be arranged for later in the year to explain the Escendency system in more detail for Members

Following the debate, it was RESOLVED

1. That the committee appoints Councillor Cheryl Little and Councillor Craig Halewood to work with the Performance and Efficiency Officer to establish how the system can be most effectively used to present and report data to the committee and other stakeholders.
2. To organise a workshop for Members on the Escendency Performance Management System for later in the year.

6. Third Quarter Performance report

Allan Oldfield (Executive Manager, Corporate Policy and Performance) presented a report detailing the performance of the key best value performance indicators (BVPI's). The report highlighted those indicators where performance was significantly above or below the target for the third quarter of the financial year (performance until December 31st 2007).

Mr Oldfield reported that overall performance at the end of the third quarter was very good with the majority of the indicators on or above target for the current year with few exceptions.

The sickness and absence figure BVPI 12 had experienced a poor three months between October and December 2007 and was now on target to be bottom quartile performance at the end of the financial year current trend continued. Mr Oldfield advised that the files of long term sick employees had now been passed on to the Blackpool HR service for review. Members questioned whether the sickness figures increased during certain seasons. Mr Oldfield advised that as Fylde Borough Council employed a disproportionate number of manual workers, it was likely that due to the nature of the work, sickness figures would rise during the winter months.

The planning performance BVPI 109b and 109c had demonstrated significant improvement on the same period 2006/07 figures for the same period highlighting the impact of the changes made. However, performance was still below target and the planning service performance had recently been subject to an independent review by the Planning Advisory Service. Members of the committee agreed to arrange a special meeting to review the recommendations of the review.

Members questioned what measures could be taken to communicate the low levels of crime (BVPIs 126, 127a and 127b) to residents of Fylde through the use of the press service. Fylde was an area with low levels of recorded crime yet Members felt that fear of crime was high amongst residents. Mr Oldfield advised that he would refer this to Mr Paul Norris.

Following the discussion, it was RSOLVED:

1. That the committee agree to receive a report on the Equality Standard for Local Government at their next meeting as part of the internal declaration process.
2. That the committee agree to setting up a special meeting of the committee on the 27th February 2008 to examine the Planning Advisory Report recommendations and the performance of BVPI 205 in respect of planning best practice.

7. Annual Asset Management Report and Capital Asset Update

Mr Paul Walker (Executive Manager, Strategic Planning and Development) and Mr Simon Kularatne (Corporate Property Officer) presented a report detailing the Annual Asset Management Report and Capital Asset Update.

Mr Walker reported that the Annual Asset Management was a five-year rolling plan showing how the council used its property and other assets to deliver services it has agreed to provide. The Plan provided members with a retrospective review of the previous year and a summary of plans for the future.

Mr Walker further reported that the Council had entered into a partnership with Wyre Borough Council to provide building maintenance service for Fylde. Fylde currently buys in the equivalent of approximately 1.5 technical officers to provide for all Council Assets the following:

- Day to day repairs and maintenance
- Annual servicing and repairs and maintenance
- Planned repairs and maintenance
- Asbestos management and control
- Legionella management and control
- Additional specialist advice and assistance as requested.

Members questioned whether this arrangement provided the best value for money for Fylde. Mr Walker advised that the cost included administration support, specialist advice and the procurement power of buying services jointly with Wyre and Lancashire. Mr Walker further advised that this arrangement expires at the end of September 2008 and an evaluation of the benefits of work to date and future options will be carried out to assess whether the service provides the best value for money for Fylde.

Mr Kularatne advised that Fylde had also entered into a framework agreement along with Wyre BC with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) buying solutions for the supply of energy. Although the trend is for higher energy prices this new approach means we are taking advantage of the joined buying power of the Government which is below the general market rate. This has resulted in a saving of approximately 5.8% in comparison with the cost of buying the same amount of energy as a stand alone council.

Mr Walker reported that the plan detailed the future plans including the allocation of a 200k grant from the Tourist Board to invest in improvements to St Annes, the retender of the Farmers Market and the Blackpool Wyre and Fylde Multi Area Agreement. Members sought clarity on the reasons for retendering the Farmers Market. Mr Walker advised that Fylde Farmers had pulled out of running the market. Since then, a single operator had been running the market and charged stallholders for the use.

The Plan detailed the current position in relation to the local property indicators where Fylde was significantly behind the benchmark targets for repair and maintenance costs per square metre, % accommodation vacant or unused, annual running costs per square metre, space utilisation, annual running costs per employee and staff satisfaction in relation to accommodation.

Members questioned how long these higher costs per employee were likely to continue. Mr Walker advised that the cost would continue until the new Council offices were built. Projected timescales were largely dependant on how long it takes to seek tenders to build the site and ensure the Council best value for money. Mr Walker further advised in response to a query that the new accommodation project planned 163 work stations for 209 staff although this was still in a state of flux.

Following the discussion, it was RESOLVED

1. For the Performance Improvement Scrutiny Committee to continue to monitor the local property indicators as part of the regular performance reports.
2. For officers to report back on the buildings and maintenance contract partnership with Wyre after the evaluation process in September 2008.

:

© Fylde Borough Council copyright [2006]

You may re-use this document/publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Fylde Borough Council copyright and you must give the title of the source document/publication. Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This document/publication is also available on our website at www.fylde.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at the Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes FY8 1LW, or to listening@fylde.gov.uk.