

High Level Improvement Plan

Issue from Report	Planned Action	Target Dates	Responsibility	Action Taken
<p>Community Plan The Community Plan is still in draft. It is not clear that the aims are realistic or that the implications are owned by the Community. Until the community plan is agreed the regeneration strategy and LDF will not be able to properly reflect community aspirations</p>	<p>The Community Plan is currently being revised for consideration by the Council and the LSP before consultation</p>	<p>Draft for comment to LSP late Nov-early Dec.</p>	<p>MSU/LSP</p>	<p>Community Plan publication agreed by LSP on 27 June 2005 for consultation.</p>
<p>Quality Assurance Process and procedures do not include a quality assurance (QA) system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement agreed elements (process improvements) of consultants report • Develop system to monitor qualitative and quantitative performance targets, including quality of life targets. • Assimilate into service balanced scorecard. 	<p>April 2005</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration / Head of Development and Building Control / support from MSU</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most of the agreed changes have been implemented. ▪ Checklist monitoring achievement of targets and compliance with procedures. ▪ A draft list of new indicators has been prepared and is to be discussed with MSU. ▪ A revised balanced scorecard has been incorporated in the Department's Service Plan. ▪ A system of sample checking of decisions and quality of decisions/developments is to be introduced. ▪ A tour of approvals for Committee and members is to be introduced on an informal basis.
<p>Access to service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning service is not fully e-enabled (applications cannot yet be submitted on-line) • Access to the service is limited to office hours at the Civic Centre • Documents are not available in languages other than English. • No attempt is made to analyse customer response whether different sections of the community experience the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement electronic delivery of service action plan (funded 2004/05 by Planning Delivery Grant) • Undertake review/feasibility of area based service delivery and/or access. • Publicise availability of translation services. • Implement proposals for a users/customer 	<p>Commence October 2004 Complete April 2005</p>	<p>Head of Development and Building Control / ICT Section (for electronic delivery implementation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Portal have been informed the Department will be able to receive planning applications electronically from 1st July 2005. • SX3 have to make a few adjustments to Public Access and once completed it will be possible for the public to view on-line the Planning Register, applications and to make comments. ▪ Software has been received recently which will enable Building Regulation applications to be submitted on line. ▪ In the months since the Inspectors published their report the development control team has experienced major staff changes and high workloads. During this

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<p>service differently or have differing needs which service needs to consider</p>	<p>panel</p>			<p>time it has found it difficult to maintain the duty officer system whilst striving to meet targets. It was not a realistic proposition to put a further burden on the team to send staff to satellite offices on a frequent basis. The team is too small to cope with this demand, when sickness and holidays have to be accommodated. Although the Council may have vacant office space at Old Bank Chambers in Bishop Auckland and at Stanhope Town Hall, no investigation has been made into the feasibility of using the buildings, the cost of doing so, a risk assessment of basing staff in these buildings, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extended hours would also be difficult with current resources. ▪ Translation services are available on request. Service to publish availability. ▪ Plan to set up user/customer panel soon.
<p>Role of Councillors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors giving undue weight to non-material planning considerations may reduce the level of confidence in the service. • Informal contact arrangements between officers and Councillors are not always efficient – lack of a protocol. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member/ officer protocol already in existence. • Continued programme of training for members on planning matters • Raise awareness within staff of content and operation of the member/officer protocol • Develop summary officer and member guidance notes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member training on-going. • Staff awareness training commence October 2004 Complete December 2004. • Guidance notes by Apr 05. 	<p>Head of Development and Building Control / MSU / Committee Section</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Protocol on Planning agreed 31 March 05 that sets out the role of members and officers in the planning process. ▪ Training has been arranged for 11 July 2005 and there will be further training in September. ▪ Officers have been provided with copies of Protocol. A briefing is planned.

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<p>RSS Conflicts A major issue is to resolve the conflict between community aspiration and the emerging RSS, around which there has been little community or political debate</p>	<p>Continue representative role within RSS Management Group and seek to influence the content of the draft. Co-ordinate the views of other Durham districts in this process. Produce full response to the consultation draft RSS at the appropriate time.</p>	<p>Commence consultation December 2004 / January 2005.</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration</p>	<p>Response made on behalf of the Council and Durham Districts. Formal consultation on RSS to be undertaken by GONE in July/August/September 2005.</p>
<p>Quality of Life Indicators Whilst overall monitoring of PI's is good, the overall impact of the service on quality of life is not measured systematically.</p>	<p>Expand current BVPI performance monitoring to develop and include set of quality of life indicators. Draw on national best practise to agree set of indicators.</p>	<p>Commence October 2004. Include within draft Service Plan by end of October 2004.</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration / Heads of Service / MSU</p>	<p>The list of indicators has been reviewed. There are no quality of life indicators on the Audit Commission web site for development control. Consideration is being given to corporate indicators.</p>

SUPPORTING PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

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<p>Affordable Housing The Council is not following Government policy, which advocates integrating affordable housing into all the larger housing development schemes to achieve balanced communities.</p>	<p>Review of policies to be undertaken in production of LDF.</p>	<p>Draft for core LDF strategy April 2005</p>	<p>Head of Planning and Environmental Policy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Priority given to the production of a Housing DPD within first round of documents to be produced as part of the LDF which will seek to address this issue. ▪ Commencement of joint working with other Durham Districts to carry out a Housing Market Assessment to inform policy preparation.
<p>Section 106 Agreements Section 106 agreements are taking too long to prepare and agree.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to prepare S106 agreements concurrently with the determination of planning applications. • Undertake review of resources considered necessary for S 106 workload. 	<p>April 2005</p>	<p>Head of Development and Building Control, and Head of Legal Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ At present resources are adequate. However, the situation will have to be reconsidered when the Head of Legal Services leaves the authority. ▪ Protocol to be prepared (Aug 2005) to ensure Head of Legal gets all documents/info required on time.

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Enforcement Activity Enforcement activity is still reactive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement agreed elements of consultant's report. Seek additional resources for enforcement work (growth bid being prepared for consideration in Council budget process). 	April 2005	Director of Regeneration / Head of Development and Building Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The agreed elements of the Trevor Roberts report have been implemented. Disruption caused when AB/AJ left. More resources agreed by Council 28 April 2005. New enforcement officer took up post in June 2005.
Customer Satisfaction Customer surveys do not include consultees and other users of the service (Only includes applicants)	Continuous survey of applicants/ users of the service be undertaken	Commence April 2005	Head of Development and Building Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveys to commence but staffing resources remain a problem.
Performance Information Performance information on Development Control is not available to customers to reflect the Customer Charter	Develop information system to publicise performance on Customer Charter	Commenced September 2004 Implemented from April 2005	Head of Development and Building Control / IT Section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Charter revised and tabled. New indicators to be measured and it is proposed to publicise information on the Council's website, in Wear Valley Matters and in reports to Regeneration Committee.
Population Growth Politicians and community have not considered the implications of population growth.	Implementation of the Council Plan	Early 2005.	MSU / Corporate Management team	Work completed by MSU on determinants of population trends May 2005.

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<p>Recruitment There remains fragility around the council's ability to recruit and retain staff.</p>	<p>Monitor staff turnover. Full implementation of PDP and resulting training programme. Growth bid for additional resources for training being prepared for consideration in Council budget process.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration / Heads of Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover remains a problem. The Principal Planning Officer (DC) and the Planning Officer (Policy) have left the Council. Recruitment processes now complete. • Training needs have been identified in PDP's and implementation of training has begun. • On 28 April 2005 an additional 4 posts were agreed. Interviews have been held and the posts have been filled. It is anticipated that staff will be in place within 2 months. In the interim agency staff have been engaged. • The bid for additional funding for training was not successful. It is proposed to recommend that some of this year's PDG be used to increase the Department's training budget.
<p>Conservation Resources Resources for work on conservation aspects of the service have not increased to take account of increased number of applications.</p>	<p>Undertake review of conservation work and resources in the Council. Potential growth bid for expansion of the service to be included for consideration in the Council budget process.</p>	<p>Commence October 2004. Conclude December 2004.</p>	<p>Director of Regeneration / Head of Planning and Environmental Policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bid for an additional Conservation Officer was not successful. • The possibility of jointly funding a Conservation Officer with Durham County Council and other District Councils is under consideration. Also I am considering whether to recommend that a full time post be funded out of the PDG.