

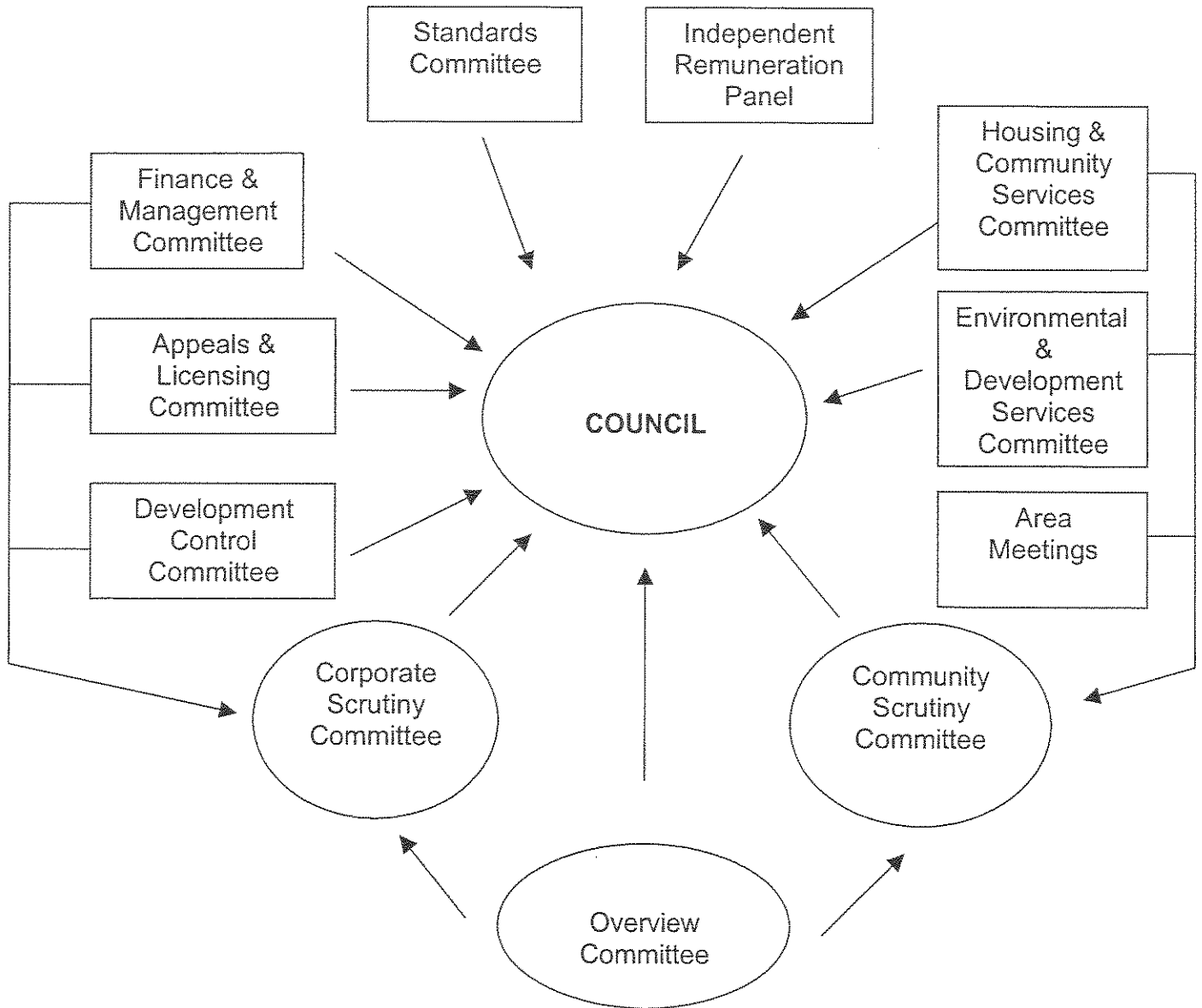
**ANNEXE C:
BEST VALUE REVIEWS – REVISED FIVE YEAR PROGRAMME (2000/01 TO 2004/05)**

Year 1 (2000/01)	Year 2 (2001/02)	Year 3 (2002/03)	Year 4 (2003/04)	Year 5 (2004/05)
Development Control (completed)	Financial Services (underway)	Environmental Planning and Control	Democratic Renewal	Corporate Planning & Communication
Cash Collection Services (completed)	Housing Services Part 1: Strategic Housing (underway)	Customer Services and Electronic Service Delivery	Technical Services	Legal Services
Sheltered Housing & the Warden Service (completed)	Asset Management (underway)	Housing Services Part 2: Landlord and Tenant Function	Regeneration	Partnership Working
Cleansing the Environment (completed)	Human Resource Management (underway)	Community Safety (Joint Review with County Council)		
Financial Management & Control (completed)	Bretby Crematorium (Review by Joint Committee)	Procurement		

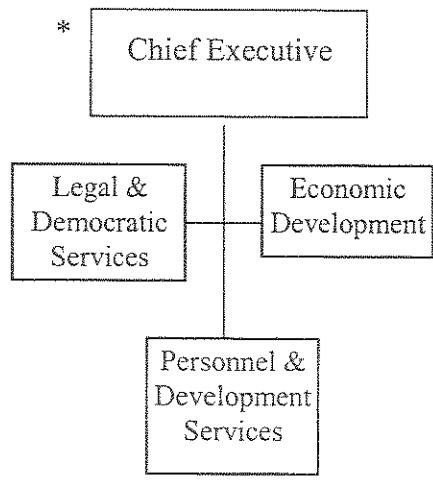
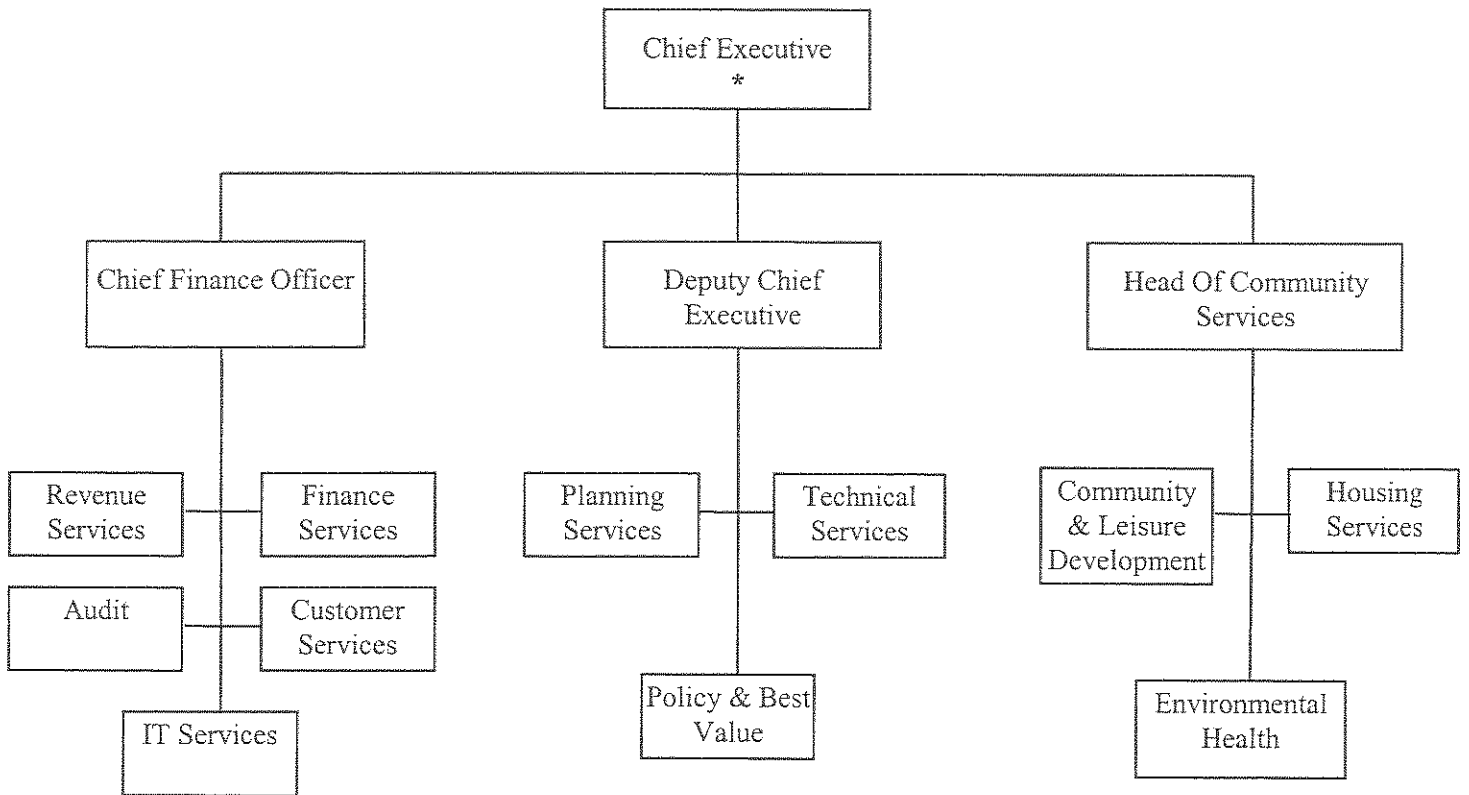
New Political Structure

In May 2002, these arrangements were reviewed and the new structure has been confirmed. This comprises 6 policy committees, 2 scrutiny committees, an overview committee, 2 regulatory committees and a Standards Committee. In addition, Area Meetings are held in each of the six county wards. The new structure is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 - The Modernised Committee Structure



SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL STRUCTURE



Development Control Best Value Implementation Plan Report for Best Value Inspectors on Progress to October 2002

Introduction

This document sets out our progress on actions contained in the Implementation Plan compiled following your review. They have been grouped together under a 'planned action' heading with subsections in italics for ease of reporting. They also take account of your comments that the report should concentrate on public facing improvements. A summary table together with evidence of the outcomes is presented in tabular form at Annexe A. The subsections are described as follows:

- Planning the service
- Deploying resources
- Engaging the public
- Producing the local plan
- Enforcement
- Other involvement
- Conclusions

Planned Action

Planning the Service

Action 1: Integrate service delivery with Corporate and Community Plans

The Service Plan incorporating the appropriate elements of the Best Value Implementation Plan was put in place by November 2001. It aligns planning service goals with those set out in other departmental and corporate plans and strategies and it identifies the contribution that the planning service makes to wider corporate objectives. Figure 2.1 sets out the relationship of the various council plans and strategies.

Action 2: Apply Performance Management to resources and outputs

Service priorities were defined in the Improvement Plan. These have been adjusted to meet circumstances as and when they arose. In practice, efforts have focussed on:

- meeting Government and local Performance indicators (PI's)
- production of the Local Plan (See separate heading below)
- maintenance of service levels generally.

The eight week period for determining applications has been maintained at the mid 70% range despite increases in workload until mid 2002 when staff turnover impacted adversely. The planning applications caseload has increased by an average of 5% year on year since 1997/8. This represents a 20% increase overall (See Table1). The increase since April this year to date

is 8%. Considering the inherently low staff/application ratio (Table 2), the performance represents a considerable achievement which benefits applicants through the receipt of timely and qualitative planning decisions.

Table 1 Total Number Of Application Received

Year	Number
1997/1998	1023
1998/1999	1034
1999/2000	1126
2000/2001	1180
2001/2002	1291

Table 2 Authority	Development Control Staff		AS AT PRESENT 2001/2			
	Case officers and Technicians	Total staff /support and associate staff	Apps/ case off	Apps/ D C staff	% in 8 Weeks 2001/2	Cost/ 1000 popul.n.
Amber Valley	5	13	232	89	74	2293
Bolsover	3.5	11.5	143	43	66	1346
Chesterfield	5	9	128	71	69	2633
Derbys. Dales	7	20	108	38	75	4827
Erewash	4	11	221	80	67	?
High Peak	4.5	11	187	76	72	2782
N.E. Derbys.	7	20.5	155	53	75	?
S. Derbys.	4	11.2	287	118	74	1770
N.W.Leics.	6	11	175	95	56	?
E.Staffs.	11.5	18.3	107	67	64	4757
Daventry	7	16	158	69	69	1855
E.Northants.	7	11	133	85	63	?
Forest of Dean	11	22.75	124	60	79	5631
Lichfield	8	20	114	46	58	3354
Mid. Beds.	13	30	123	53	55	5346
N. Kesteven	5	16	260	81	69	1835
N. Warwicks.	7	13	111	60	65	4136
Rochford	6	15	142	57	79	?
Staffs. Moorlands	8	16.5	123	60	64	3228
	Upper quartile		181	81	74	1965
	2nd quartile		142	67	69	3005

Source: survey +CIPFA returns

Performance indicators as required by Government were reported in the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) and audited by the District Auditor (DA). Difficulties arose on accessing information from the planning database. These have recently been overcome and improved reporting facilities have now been enabled.

The task remains one of monitoring performance to enable staff resources to be directed to prioritised areas of work without losing sight of other necessary objectives, all in a customer focussed manner. We achieve this through regular team meetings to review performance and constantly revise procedures. The meetings accommodate occasional guest speakers from outside the service.

Deploying resources

Action 3 prioritise staff deployment in core delivery areas

Action 4 Employ additional BCO to improve access, security, energy consumption, and waste recycling in buildings

Staffing levels were an area of weakness identified by the previous inspection and the service was judged to be vulnerable to loss of highly experienced staff. Since the review the following staff changes have occurred.

- Two Area Planning Officers (APOs) replaced
- New Development Control Manager appointed
- Local Plans Officer left (two separate occasions) and replaced twice (2nd not yet in post).
- A support Service Assistant was re-deployed as a Building Control Technician and replaced by a new recruit.

As a result of these changes staff were re-deployed in an effort to continue to meet performance targets, especially the eight-week turn around of planning applications. During this period a retired Development Control Officer was also employed temporarily to help maintain performance. However staff turnover and vacancies have affected performance to some degree. Later, as the staffing situation improved the opportunity was taken to refocus staff resources and give attention to lower priority areas of work e.g. updating supplementary planning guidance.

The appointment of a new Development Control Manager made available an additional competency in the use and development of the planning computer system and to help redress the longstanding inability to make more effective use of the planning software especially its reporting facilities. This helps us to manage performance more effectively and to respond more speedily to customer enquiries.

With the replacement APOs the opportunity was taken to disperse responsibility for tree matters amongst all APOs. This redistribution has

broadened the knowledge base in the subject and made it more readily available to customers.

Since the review, additional staff resources have been secured which include an admin/support worker and a ½ time Enforcement Assistant. The appointment of a Development Control Technician is also under consideration. However a Service Development bid for an additional Building Control Officer (intended to develop the team approach to service delivery, especially in relation to sustainability) was not successful. These additional resources together with the transfer of the footpaths officer to the Economic Development Unit has strengthened the service's ability to improve it's performance and help with increasing work loads.

Other areas in which resources have been deployed to advantage are in procuring consultancy advice namely:

- The Council now has an arrangement with East Staffordshire Borough Council to supply an arboricultural Officer one day per week providing advice to APOs.
- The Contract with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust was enlarged from £6000 pa to £14000 to facilitate production of the Local Plan and to assist with dealing with relevant matters on applications.
- A new police liaison visit weekly to facilitate designing out crime builds on the long standing weekly visit by and liaison with the County Council Highways Engineer, to collect and discuss applications for their attention. This helps to support the council's crime and disorder strategy.
- As of 1 November 2002 the Council has procured the services of an Archaeological Development Control Officer from the County Council to provide expert advice on applications where relevant.

The prioritisation of staff deployment has also involved a development team approach for larger applications. Initial and subsequent meetings with developers have been co-ordinated as between Planners, Arboriculturalists, Building Control, Environmental Health Officers, Highways Officers and the Environment Agency. In one case a public forum of invited householders, Members, Planners, Environmental Health Officers and the applicants met to resolve a number of issues and concerns relating to a proposed concrete plant. This sort of activity is responsive to customer demand and provides them real benefits in the processing of their applications.

By comparison with other Local Planning Authorities however, our planning service remains under resourced (See Table 2). We have learned however that even with very low staff numbers we can maintain high output levels in a timely manner if we remain as flexible as possible in operational matters and reduce duplication of effort to the minimum. This requires dedicated and well-trained staff, exercising high levels of professionalism to meet customer

expectations, with maximum delegation of responsibility and minimal second checking. The downside of occasional mistakes and lack of consistency needs to be worked through. We reduce these to an acceptable minimum by peer group networking, regular team meetings, occasional tours of the district to review and evaluate results on the ground and maximum support from senior managers, bolstering morale.

Action 5: Complete and maintain staff reviews and implement training

The staff performance and development review scheme (PDR) has been successfully implemented. Objectives and training plans have been developed for all employees. The second review was completed in March 2002. Staff indicate that they appreciate the effort put into the process and welcome the opportunity to discuss issues with managers.

Engaging the public

Action 6: Review Delegation Agreement

Our priority has been to review the delegation agreement and to use it as a means of gaining service efficiency and improved customer service. The Delegation Agreement has a two year review period and was reviewed in April 2002. The agreement already provided for high levels of delegated decision making of 85%. The 2002 review has enabled the Government target of 90% to be achieved, with the result that there is more time to deal with other matters, such as informal advice to prospective applicants and their neighbours. Prospective applicants can now obtain an informal view on the need for planning permission by completing a form outlining the development they wish to undertake.

Action 7 Disseminate customer charter and plain English versions of all Supplementary Planning Guidance for comment

The customer charter was published in April 2001. It was sent to all Parish Councils and made available over the office counter. (The charter is shortly due to be published on our Web site which will afford a greater opportunity for public comment). The response to the charter has been limited but no criticism or adverse reaction of any material note has been received. The lack of adverse re-action could indicate a basically well run service and a satisfied customer base.

Of the eleven published supplementary planning guidance documents, 6 have been revised/written in plain English and 5 are in course of revision. One is in course of preparation.

Other indicators of customer satisfaction are responses to consultations on planning applications. These provide an opportunity for interested parties to voice their views not only on specific planning issues but also on the planning process. The level of official complaints on the manner of dealing with applications, is however very low. This chimes with the general feedback

officers experience on a daily basis that the service compares well with that provided in other authorities.

The Government PI 112 re-introduces a formal satisfaction questionnaire survey for the coming year. Using this as a base we will carry out a wider examination of satisfaction levels on a more formal basis.

Action 8: Review all documents in the light of feedback from stakeholders

Forms, notices and standard correspondence have been revised and standardised. Notes for neighbours on how to respond to consultations have also been reformatted and made simpler to follow. In all cases the new documents have been rolled out and modified in the light of feedback from the public. This has simplified the process from the public's point of view. Documents can be down loaded from the Web. Following consultation with other LPA's, the Committee resolved to adopt guide lines for Section 106 Agreements in April 2001. All the necessary notices for enforcement and a proforma Section 106 Unilateral Undertaking have also been reviewed and are in regular use. The latter has helped to speed turnaround of decisions. (Sample documents are included in Annexe B)

Action 9: Produce policy for public to address Committee site visits

As a consequence of an incident during a Committee site visit, where one party was inadvertently excluded from taking part in an onsite address given to Members, rules for site visits were amended in January 2002 to exclude any form of address by other than Council Members and Officers. (See Committee report)

Resource implications in widening access and the need for similar consideration at other Committee Meetings have inhibited progress in allowing the public to speak at meetings where planning applications are determined. Further consideration of this issue will take place in the future in accord with the Review of Political Arrangements Action Plan.

Action 10: Develop Council's web page/internet access and advertise it

Internet access has been improved by placing the Local Plan on the Web. Also revised application forms and guidance notes for applicants can now be down loaded. Lists of applications received and determined are published and updated regularly. E-mail responses are regularly accepted both from Parish Councils and the general public. These innovations have been introduced progressively, the latest in April 2002. The Web site was advertised in a pamphlet called 'Know your District Council' sent to every household late in 2001.

The Council's Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) statement commits it to improved internet access and new features are being introduced progressively. The next step change being considered for the planning service is the electronic handling of all correspondence by scanning it into the

system. Digitised plans and drawings will require scanning equipment or an agency arrangement for outsourcing the work. Receipt of digitised plans over the internet will require CAD software capable of reading data from many different initiating sources. These matters are currently being given consideration in relation to a new software release from the Council's planning system software supplier.

Producing the Local Plan

Action 11 Prepare and implement a project plan for the Local Plan review

A published timetable agreed with Government Office East Midlands (GOEM) all in accordance with guidance contained in PPG12 has been produced for reviewing the Plan (See Annexe C). The timetable includes targets for the completion of each stage in order to meet the envisaged completion date and this has subsequently become the de facto project plan. The majority of the target dates were met despite staff changes during this period. The only targets which have varied have been those which it was recognised needed to be flexible from the outset. Publication of the 1st Deposit was accomplished within a month of the target date of January 2002 and publication of the 2nd deposit is imminent (November 2002).

Action 12 Implement consultation on the Local Plan

Some 1500 representations have been received in response to the formal consultation, 1200 of which are objections. This process is governed by statutory procedures but all objectors have subsequently been written to in order to clarify whether or not their objections have been properly summarised and ensure that they address relevant policies in the Plan. The proposals map, written statement and objection forms have also been made available on the council's Web site. Between 18 February and 22 April the site had 2401 hits. This use of the web generated more interest than any other means of publicity.

A comprehensive database of objections has been compiled that will greatly assist in dealing with objections at the forthcoming Inquiry, planned for May 2003. The Local Plan has been produced far closer to target than its predecessor and to an acknowledged tight timetable. This is in spite of staff vacancies. A statement of consultation is attached at Annexe D. In addition to the formal consultation on the local plan an informal questionnaire has been produced for use with a citizens panel; this awaits an opportunity to be sent out.

The Development Control section played an instrumental part in the plan preparation process. The Local Plans Manager organised meetings to discuss draft policies prior to publication and amendments were made to the plan as a result of this additional consultation. Furthermore, all APOs now have desktop access to the draft deposit plan available on their PCs and the Planning software system records spatial policies of the Local Plan in relevant application records as they are plotted on the GIS system.

Enforcement

Action 13 Prepare an Enforcement priority policy

A relatively low priority was placed on this activity pending employment of a second Enforcement Officer who is now in post. However a draft policy document has recently been completed with a view to it becoming formal Council planning service policy. Parish Councils are to be consulted on this first. The Council is proud of the achievements of its Enforcement Officer in the light of the caseload experienced. To further enhance this area of work a computerised enforcement system has been created which aids the processing of complaints and, importantly, allows monitoring of performance.

Some of the Senior Enforcement Officer's time has been hitherto devoted to the supervision of the Footpaths Enforcement Officer. However, as stated earlier, this position has been re-deployed to the Economic Development Function in August 2002. Efforts will now be re-focussed on monitoring planning conditions in addition to dealing with complaints received from the public

Action 14 Produce and negotiate policy with Parish Councils for them to monitor breaches of Planning Control

We are consulting with Parish Councils on the possibilities of their involvement in reporting enforcement matters. It is hoped that future discussions will result in a more proactive approach being developed.

Other Involvement

Action 15 Active involvement in review of financial and accountancy services

Managers in planning services are involved in many corporate activities. Networking with other officers strengthens lines of communication and leads to greater collaboration on matters related to respective services, e. g.

- The Planning Services Manager has been a member of a panel reviewing the Council's Financial Information system that has selected a new suite of software In October 2002. New working practices were instituted early in 2001 to prevent overspending of the magnitude that led to the Council's previous severe financial difficulties.
- The Local Plan Manager is involved in formulating the Council's Housing Strategy, which includes monitoring the provision of affordable housing in accordance with the council's local plan policy. This in turn informs negotiations between APOs and applicants and the resulting planning decisions which facilitates affordable housing in the district.

- Managers have been members of Best Value working parties on financial management, financial services and procurement in addition to contributing to The Housing Strategy. In each case rolling out the recommendations and strategies will lead to service improvements both within the section and in the wider council.

Conclusions

The Implementation Plan has been useful in directing developmental activity in a structured way resulting in measurable improvements. A summary of the progress and outcomes is attached at Annexe A.

The whole Planning Service is to be incorporated in a cross cutting review with relevant aspects of Environmental Health in the New Year. Consideration will be then given to a further review of the Implementation Plan for Development Control.

ANNEXES



South Derbyshire District Council

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Householder Planning Application Form

This form is appropriate for all development within the grounds of a dwelling house. **Please edge your plot in red on a location plan** (normally 1:2500 scale Ordnance Survey map). Please send the **FOUR sets** of the form and plans with the fee of **£110.00** to:

Planning Department, South Derbyshire District Council, Civic Offices, Civic Way, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 0AH.

1	Name and address of applicant and agent	
	Applicant	Agent (if any)
	Name.....	Name
	Address.....	Address.....

	Tel No.....	Tel No
e-mail address	e-mail address.....	

2	Proposed development		
	Address of site if different: to 1 above:-		
	(a) Erection of a storey house extension/outbuilding/conservatory/car-port/garage/porch/wall/fence/access/change of use of garage to living accommodation * (* delete as appropriate)	yes	no
	(b) Do you propose to alter any vehicle/pedestrian access to the property?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	(c) Please specify the materials to be used to construct the walls/roof		
	(d) Is there a designated public footpath next to your house?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(e) Will you need to fell any trees? If yes, please indicate them on the plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	