

Version 1

South Kesteven DC

Pro-forma for Service Plans

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Period of the Plan | 2005—2007 Detailed for year 2005 and indicative for years 2006 and 2007 |
| Service: | Building Control Services and Land Charges |
| Service Manager: | Stuart Vickers |

Corporate Context

The LSP – The Joined-up Approach

As a leading member of the South Kesteven Local Strategic Partnership, the Council has worked closely with representatives of the business, voluntary and public sector to profile the needs of the area. This has resulted in the LSP adopting the following long-term vision:

To ensure that by 2020 our residents live in one of the ten most desirable locations in the country and are proud that they have the skills necessary to participate in sustainable communities that are safe, healthy and economically vibrant".

In order to translate this vision into action, the LSP has approved the following four priorities, which will guide the new Community Strategy currently being prepared:

- a) **Community safety and health.**
- b) **Housing and sustainable communities**
- c) **Town centres and economic development**
- d) **Improved transport and access.**

SKDC – The Vision

The District council's vision complements and supports the vision of the LSP it is:

'To ensure that the residents of South Kesteven are proud of their district and their Council'

This concept of "Pride" is articulated as a series of five steps detailed in a series of leaflets:

- a) **Performance and Priorities**
- b) **Respect and recognition for diversity**
- c) **Informing and Involving**
- d) **Developing Communities**
- e) **Empowering and enabling**

SKDC - Strategic Alignment

In making strategic choices regarding service delivery the Council has taken account of the shared priorities that have been agreed at national level between representatives from Local Government and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). These are:

Sustainable Communities and Transport
Safe and Strong Communities
Healthier Communities
Older People
Children and Young Persons

Both these shared aspirations, and the priorities of the LSP, are incorporated into the Council's four ambitions:

Economic Development
Community Safety
Healthy Environment
Community Engagement

SKDC – Operational Alignment

To ensure that all our services are assessed against, and reflect, these ambitions the Council has undertaken a comprehensive service prioritisation exercise using a four-fold classification of service priorities.

The linkage between these new ambitions and our current priorities, which were reviewed in May 2005, is demonstrated in the following table:

| Proposed Ambition: | Priorities that it incorporates | | Shared national priorities that it reflects |
|------------------------------|--|--|--|
| | Category A | Category B | |
| Economic Development | Town-centre regeneration | Business Development Planning Car Parks | Sustainable Communities and Transport |
| Safer communities | Anti-social behaviour | Diversity. Vulnerable Persons Housing Management Affordable Housing | Safer and Stronger Communities |
| Healthier Environment | Street Sweeping Recycling | Public Toilets | Healthier Communities |
| Engagement | Access | Communications LSP and Community Strategy | Children and Young People Older People |

Full details of the categorisation of all services can be found in this report

Socio-economic Profile

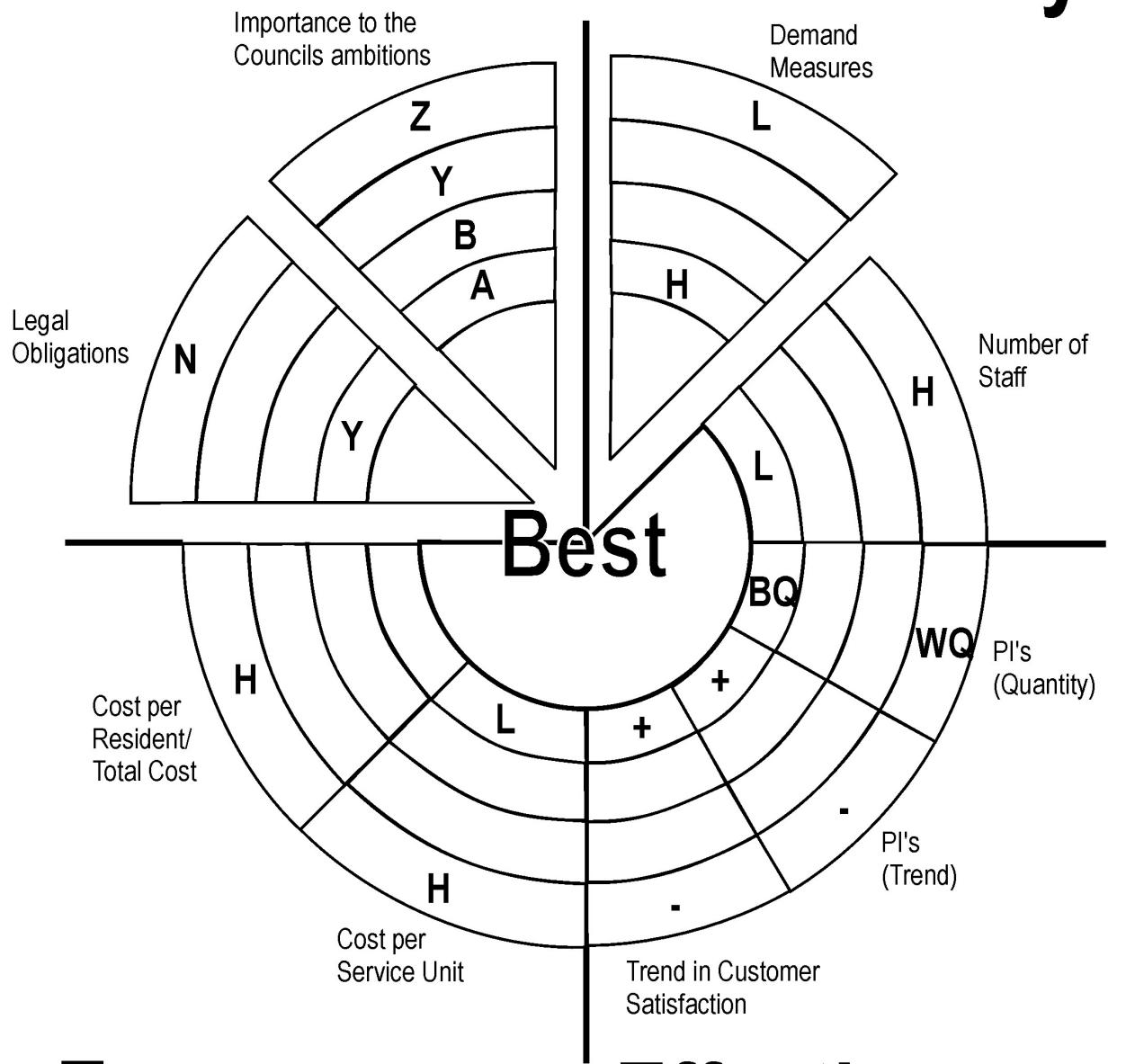
A full area profiling of the District was undertaken and reported to the LSP by the Economic Development team in the summer of 2005. A copy of this report is available to assist managers in the preparation of their service plans.

Value for Money and Performance at a Corporate Level

Using data recently made available by the Audit Commission the Corporate Management Team are currently preparing a full Value for Money assessment of the Council which will be available in September. This will assist managers in understanding how the Council compares at a corporate level and also provide a source of data for drawing comparisons at a service level and populating the balanced scorecard.

Relevance

Efficiency



Economy

Effectiveness

Section 1 – Setting the Scene - The context, drivers and reasons for service provision

1.1 Remit of the Service – Brief Overview of the service:

To ensure that building work complies with the requirements of the Building Regulations and other relevant legislation and standards in order to provide reasonable standards of health, safety, the conservation of fuel and power and provide access/facilities for disabled people, in or about the built environment. The carrying out of duties relating to Dangerous Structures and Ruinous and Dilapidated Buildings as prescribed in the 1984 Building Act. To provide a monitoring service for the Development Control Service to ensure permission compliance under the Town and Country Planning Act and to ensure applications under the Planning Acts and Building Regulations have a proper correlation.

The service also has the responsibility for the council under the Public Health Act 1925 for the provision of street naming and street numbering.

The maintenance of the Land Charges Register and the processing of Local Searches.

1.2 How does the service contribute to the Vision Priorities and Values of the Council?

The councils vision is:

“To ensure that the residents of South Kesteven are proud of their district and of their Council” –

Building Control will contribute to this by ensuring the health and safety of people both in and around buildings and by taking action to prevent dangerous structures and ruinous and dilapidated buildings seriously affecting the amenity of the area. The section will work with the cabinet member responsible for Building Control Services to ensure that it contributes fully to the council’s vision.

Building Control Services has been identified as a “Y” priority service, however Building Control contributes indirectly to the category A priorities of

Recycling: - Approved document H6 is linked to the environmental protection Act 1990 and requires consultation with the waste collection authority for the enforcement of suitable design and construction to allow adequate space for recycling receptacles for both new household and commercial premises. Any change in the form of receptacles may require new design principles to be adopted.

Access: - Building Control, is fully operational with a portal site, which enables applicants to submit Building Regulation Applications electronically. Customers are also being able to access useful information relating to the building control service on the SKDC web site.

Members of the public are able to access the sewer records of the Anglian Water Authority (as required by Approved Document H4) via “Digdat” and a terminal for this web based method is available in the Building Control and Development Control reception.

Town Centre Redevelopment: - Problems with Ruinous and dilapidated buildings in the town centres can be addressed by use of section 79 of the

Anti –Social behaviour: -The Sustainable and secure Buildings Bill which has passed its second reading and became law at the end of 2004. The legislation which is being developed now will require Building Control to apply crime reduction measures to buildings as a matter of course.

The section also contributes to the category **B** priorities of

Planning and Conservation: - the section performs the monitoring role ensuring all construction works comply with the approved planning permissions. Building Control provide the professional expertise

Street naming and numbering is carried out for new developments. The land charges section is responsible for the land Charges register and this includes such things as tree preservation orders and the conditions of planning permissions.

Affordable housing: - through the submission of Building Regulation applications and the development of partnership agreements with the councils preferred Registered Social landlords.

1.3 Key Drivers for the Service

National/Regional

Under the framework of the Building Act 1984 (Section 91 – 2) it is the function of local authorities to enforce building regulations in their areas subject to sections 5 (3), 48 (1) and 53 (2).

The street naming and numbering section fulfils the authorities obligation under section 17,18,19 of the public health Act 1925

- The land charges section operates under the Local Land Charges Act 1975
- Building Control Performance Standards
- External competition from the Approved inspectors
- PARSON
- The need to break even on the BRFE account
- OFT and ODPM guidance

Local

- Local performance indicators
- Partnership Authority Scheme (Partnered with 9 local Companies)
- Access and DDA advice to the private sector
- Customer needs and requirements

Section 2 – Where are we now?

How does the service meet Customer expectations?

Customer surveys are carried out with the Agents and end users. The results of the survey show that in excess of 90% consider the service to be good or very good. Level of service which can be provided is communicated to the customer.

Annual Partner review meetings

Seminar held for customers on Regulation changes

Promotion of Value added products from LABC

How does the service meet its objectives?

Local performance indicators have been set in line with the DSA Building Control Performance Standards and in line with the Best Value Review.

| Local Performance indicator | PI | SKDC 04/05 | Target SKDC 05/06 |
|---|------|------------|-------------------|
| 1..To respond to reports of dangerous structures in working hours within 1 hour | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 2.To respond to reports of dangerous structures outside of working hours within 2 hours | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 3. To visit all active building projects at least once every 13 weeks | 72% | 62% | 68% |
| 4. To notify applicants/agents of amendments required on applications within 15 working days of receipt of an application | 90% | 32% | 50% |
| 5. To make decisions on all applications within the statutory time scales | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| 6. To carry out requests for inspections the same day if that request is made before 9.45am on any working day | 100% | 100% | 100% |

The target for providing a self financing Building Regulation service has been continuously met

Successful Partnering with local Agents, and marketing of the service have provided additional income.

Improvements to the LPi's 3&4 are being sought and monitored

Key achievements and outcomes

High customer retention in the face of external competition based on quality customer focused delivery of the service.

Recognition from the Employers association in a national report about how SKDC has responded to the shortage of BC surveyors.

High customer satisfaction

Building Control portal developed allowing electronic submissions

How does the service compare:

<http://vfm.audit-comission.gov.uk/HomePage.aspx>

To other service providers?

Private sector competition in the form of Approved inspectors which have been around since 1985

SKDC through its service standards and marketing retained 97% of Building regulation applications in 2004

Land charges retained 74% of the total number of searches carried out in the district .

To other Councils?

The latest benchmarking data available from the Lincolnshire benchmarking group show SKDC to have the lowest cost per head of population for its service at 32p /person compared to SHDC which at £2.32 / person is the most costly.

With 83% of the activities being fee earning this is the highest percentage in the county

Section 3 – Where do we need to be?

Swot Analysis

Strengths

A skilled flexible workforce with many years experience in Building Control and good customer relationships. Local knowledge provided by local people who are accessible.

Building Control is a service, which complies with the government's requirements to break even in the charging account aspects. Customer satisfaction and hence customer retention is high.

Weaknesses

Government restraints on Building Control charges do not allow a "level playing field "with the Approved Inspectors. Recruitment and retention of qualified staff is likely to be a recurring future issue. Terms & conditions/ salaries are significantly adrift from the private sector.

This has been evidenced by the loss of a PBCO in March 2004 to the private sector for better terms and conditions then we could offer. The vacant post was advertised and we did not receive any interest in the position.

A national shortage of qualified staff.

Opportunities

Marketing of the service to major contractors could lead to an increase in business and more use should be made of the Development Team Approach.

New technology must be assessed and embraced to achieve better and more effective service delivery to our customers. It is easier to retain customers than to win them back once they have opted to use another service provider.

It is expected that this year will see the launch of a Local Authority New Housing Warranty to compete with the NHBC for new dwellings.

Other methods of delivering the service have been looked at especially during the Best Value Review. This involved contacting Approved inspectors to see if partnering was attractive to them but met with no response. In 2000 SKDC took part in the Newchurch Study into the viability of collaboration with an approved inspector (NHBC) .The findings showed that there were more benefits to the Approved inspector than there were to the Local Authorities that took part in the study and therefore it was not progressed further.

CMT has authorised the Building Control Manager to explore alternative methods of delivery, which may include home working, formation of an arms length company and revisit of partnership working.

Exploration of alternative forms of delivery of Building Control could ensure the sustainability of the service and aid future recruitment of qualified staff.

Threats

Approved Inspectors in the area of commercial work, not only the loss of projects, which would lead to a loss of income but also the loss of staff to these organisations; which would lead to the loss of performance and perhaps the inability to deliver this statutory service. If statutory timescales are not met repayment of fees received should be made and the work is also deemed to comply even though contraventions may be shown.

Political (National and local)

The duties of the authority under the 1984 Building Act are delegated to the Building Control Manager and as such are largely unaffected by political changes either internally or externally. There is evidence however that the Building Act is to be more widely drawn to encompass wider issues of energy efficiency, waste and recycling, and crime and disorder considerations. This is likely to impact upon the service.

The Sustainable and secure Buildings Bill has passed its second reading and became legislation late in 2004.

The Act elevates sustainability to the highest level for the purposes of the Building Act 1984, by adding three new purposes for which Building Regulations may be made under the Act:

- 1)** To further protection of the environment;
- 2)** To facilitate sustainable development;
- 3)** To further the prevention and detection of crime.

In addition the Act also includes the following

- To cover services outside of buildings.
- Regulations covering demolitions
- Continuing controls over designated matters, also allied to changes of occupancy and ownership.
- Removal of exemptions of Crown, statutory undertakers, etc

To date we await what the outcome will be from this Act coming into force, but it would seem that the Act will enable the government to increase the responsibility of the Building Regulations and hence the workload on the section is expected to increase.

Economic

The volume of applications and hence the fee income can vary due to changes in the economy. Commercial pressures from Approved Inspectors due to uncompetitive charges or practices can also affect workloads. Recruitment and retention of qualified Building Surveyors remains a key issue. There is evidence

of increased penetration of Approved Inspectors in the district. This potentially affects income levels and increases vulnerability due to the poaching of experienced staff. A corporate approved inspector has recently opened an office in the South Kesteven area. Evidence of the increased activity is shown by the increase of initial notice applications, which have to be submitted to the authority although the value of these applications is unknown.

Social

The cost of land and housing has led to more multi storey development and the complexity of the design has increased the responsibility and workload of Building Control. This trend is likely to evolve into more complex and innovative designs requiring greater input from Building Control both in the office and on-site. The range of issues that will be covered by Building Regulations appears likely to expand to cover broader social issues such as crime and disorder.

Technological

Compliance with E government targets, and the need to improve service delivery, has resulted in a portal site being implemented to allow electronic submissions and inquiries. The need to embrace new technology and explore different ways of service delivery to remain competitive with the Approved Inspectors is paramount. The future use of remote technology by Building Inspectors is being examined.

Legal

Changes in legislation now seem to have a greater impact on resources. This is recognised in the regulatory impact assessments published by the ODPM , which accompany all major additions to the Building Regulations. The full implementation of the Disability Discrimination Act in October 2004 has resulted in additional building work being undertaken.

Section 4 How do we get there?

| Objective | Link to Corporate/Community objectives | Key tasks | Lead Officer | Output Target | Targeted Outcome | Monitoring Arrangements | Risk to achievement | Resources Required | Timescales & Key Milestones |
|--|---|--|--------------|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|
| Explore other ways of service delivery | "Y" service Improved service delivery for same or less cost | Investigate ALMO possibilities and partnership working | S Vickers | Alternative delivery options costed | Impact assessment of alternative delivery options | • Time scale to be decided | Insufficient resources allocated to assess options or unsuitable partners | External consultants which would be funded from the Building Control surplus | Study to be complete by mid 2006 |

Section 5 – Gershon - Efficiency

| | 2005/6 | 2006/7 | 2007/8 | |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Target 5% | | | | |
| Non-Cashable Efficiency Gains | | | | |
| | 2005/6 £ | 2006/7 £ | 2007/8 £ | Evidence |
| “Much more for a little more” <i>Proportionately more outputs or quality for an increase in resources</i> | | | | |
| “More for the same” <i>Increasing performance level (quantity &/or quality) for same inputs</i> | Increase in electronic applications for B/Regs Implementation of electronic submission for land Charges Explore remote working options | Increase in electronic applications for B/Regs Implementation of electronic submission for land Charges | Increase in electronic applications for B/Regs Implementation of electronic submission for land Charges | Compliance with PARSON standards Use of on-line system by local solicitors Additional IT for remote working funded from the BC surplus account |
| Cashable Efficiency Gains | | | | |
| “More for less” <i>Achieving improved performance level by reduced costs (procurement, labour costs etc</i> | Same number of staff to implement and enforce increased legislation Cancellation of O2 contract saving £1200 annually | Go out to tender for consultant structural engineer services No Increase in overall budget for supplies and services | | |
| “The same for less” <i>Achieving same performance level by using fewer inputs</i> | | | | |
| Other Savings | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| “Less for even less” <i>Scaling down outputs and inputs</i> | | | | |
| “Full disinvestment” <i>Stopping doing something</i> | | | | |
| Totals | | | | |
| (%) of service budget | | | | |

| Section 6 – Financial Summary | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 6.1 Resources Estimates | | | | | |
| | Rev Budget | Budget | Indicative changes | | |
| | Current | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | |
| Staff number of FTE by broad pay band s1-11 £11k - £23.5k PM1-8 £24k - £35k Hay £35.9k 0 £46K | 15 4 1 | 14 5 1 | 11 8 1 | 9 10 1 | |
| Finance - Capital Major Asset acquisitions & improvements or key projects - Revenue Employees Premises Transport Third Party Payments Supplies & Services Support Services | £K See attached budget sheet | £ K See attached budget sheet | £K See attached budget sheet | £K See attached budget sheet | |
| Information Systems Requirement for investment and development of ICT | New IT hardware and software to enable remote working (funded from BC surplus) | | | | |
| 6.2 Explain the major procurement options and proposals over the next three years? | | | | | |
| No identified major procurement at present .Any identified in the future likely to be funded from the BC surplus. One major deviation from the budget is being costed .This is for the provision of a new A0 scanner to facilitate the electronic storage of Building Regulation applications | | | | | |
| 6.3 What are the training and development requirements of this Service Plan? | | | | | |
| Provision for CPD requirements identified in PDR's and in budget 3 assistant BCO's attending University to obtain professional qualifications | | | | | |

Changes in legislation and regulations require additional training. This training is often available on one-day workshops but considerable travelling to attend the venues is not uncommon.

2 assistant BCO's are taking an NVQ in Building Control

| Section 7 - Risk | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7.1 What significant risks to the service have been identified and how will they be managed? | | | |
| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Action |
| Loss of staff and/or business to the private sector | High, Medium, Low Medium | High, Medium, Low Medium | Continue active marketing of the service and seek novel recruitment and retention methods |
| Inability to recruit qualified staff leading to failure to deliver the service to customer requirements and legal obligations | High | High | As above and adopting a policy of “grow your own” |
| Failure to meet statutory time scales resulting in repayment of fees | High if above not addressed otherwise low | High if above not addressed otherwise low | Ensure staff resource maintained |
| Loss of local land search income to personal search groups | Medium | Medium | Promoting the service to local solicitors, developing a means of electronic delivery, and embracing national initiatives such as NLIS |