

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Lead Officer: Tony Pomfret – Development Control Manager

To inform Members of the results of the customer satisfaction survey of users of the Development Control service for the period 1 July – 31 December 2011 and to invite feedback

Recommendation: That the report be noted and feedback from Members welcomed

Resource Implications: Cost of pre-paid envelopes for the return of questionnaires is met from the development control budget for 2011/12

1.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.1 The Council has rightly been proud of its top quartile performance in the speed of determination of planning applications in recent years. However, the quality of the planning decisions is arguably more important than the time taken to reach a decision.

1.2 It was therefore decided to test customer satisfaction by way of a simple questionnaire sent out with every decision notice issued. The results of the survey for the first quarter of the year, 1 April – 30 June 2011, were reported to Members on 20 July 2011 and were found to be very favourable. This report covers the second and third quarters combined, 1 July – 31 December 2011. During this period 225 decision notices were issued and 93 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 41 %.

1.3 The following analysis reflects the questionnaire findings:-

Q.1 The applicant

- private individual 14 (15%)
- agent 71 76(%)
- own business 5 (6%)
- on behalf of employer 3 (3%)

Q.2 Type of Application

- householder 44 (47%)
- residential 15 (16%)
- business/industrial 11 (12%)

- non-material amendment 0
- listed building/conservation area 6 (6%)
- advert consent 5 (6%)
- discharge of condition 0
- other 12 (13%)

Q.3 Most recent application

- granted permission/consent 89 (96%)
- refused permission/consent 4 (4%)

Q.4 Experience of the Council's handling of your application(s) in the last year

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Stongly Disagree	Doesn't apply/don't know
Given help/advice needed	42 (45%)	34 (37%)	4 (4%)			13 (14%)
Kept informed about progress	40 (43%)	45 (48%)	6 (7%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	
Queries promptly dealt with	56 (60%)	32 (34%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	
Understand reasons for decision	61 (66%)	27 (29%)	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	
Treated fairly and courteously	62 (68%)	24 (26%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)		

Q.5 Satisfaction with service provided

- very satisfied 76 (82%)
- fairly satisfied 14 (15%)
- neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 2 (2%)
- fairly dissatisfied 1 (1%)
- very dissatisfied 0

Q.6 Has overall quality of planning service:

- improved 15 (16%)
- worsened 1 (1%)
- stayed the same 60 (65%)
- not applicable 17 (18%)

1.4 Respondents were also afforded the opportunity to provide additional comments, including suggestions for improvement. Twenty two (24%) respondents took up this opportunity. The vast majority of comments were complimentary of both individual members of staff and the service generally and included:-

“Copeland are an excellent LPA to deal with. Very helpful and interested in getting the best for the Borough”.

“Great to see an easy to use and straightforward process”.

“Standard of service is excellent”.

“Extremely polite and helpful. Very good customer service”.

However, suggestions for ways in which the service could be improved were also received, including:-

“The Council’s website does not allow the tracking of applications. This needs to be updated”.

“The Council must get up to date in terms of IT information relating to planning applications”.

“Copeland would benefit from a full time Conservation Officer”.

“Whilst I found officers very helpful, the CBC website now feels very out of date and lacking in the basic elements most LPA’s have”.

“Reduce the number of these surveys!”.

All the responses are available for inspection in the Development Control Office.

1.5 **CONCLUSION**

Overall the survey results and additional comments received are testimony to the high quality of service provision, with 97% of respondents stating that they are “very” or “fairly” satisfied. Of those respondents who have used the service previously, 81% consider that the overall quality of the planning service has improved or stayed the same with only one respondent stating that the service has worsened. Comments for service improvement will, however, be afforded close scrutiny in order that appropriate actions may be implemented.

Contact Officer: Tony Pomfret – Development Control Manager

Background Papers A copy of the questionnaire and accompanying letter together with all of the completed questionnaires are available for inspection in the Development Control Office