

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Lead Officer: Tony Pomfret – Development Control Manager

To inform Members of the findings of a customer satisfaction survey of users of the Development Control service for the period 1 April – 30 June 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. A copy of the questionnaire and accompanying letter is appended to this report. A pre-paid envelope was sent out with each questionnaire to encourage a good rate of response. 140 decision notices were issued within this 3 months period and 37 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 26%.

1.3 The following analysis reflects the questionnaire findings:-

Q.1 The applicant

- private individual 11 (30%)
- agent 23 (62%)
- own business 1 (3%)
- on behalf of employer 2 (5%)

Q.2 Type of Application

- householder 16 (43%)
- residential 10 (27%)
- business/industrial 5 (14%)
- non-material amendment 0
- listed building/conservation area 5 (14%)

- advert consent 0
- discharge of condition 0
- other 1 (2%)

Q.3 Most recent application

- granted permission/consent 36 (97%)
- refused permission/consent 1 (3%)

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

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Doesn't apply/don't know
Given help/advice needed	16 (43%)	14 (38%)	5 (14%)			2 (5%)
Kept informed about progress	12 (32%)	17 (46%)	5 (14%)	2 (5%)		1 (3%)
Queries promptly dealt with	19 (51%)	10 (27%)	5 (14%)		1 (3%)	2 (5%)
Understand reasons for decision	25 (67%)	10 (27%)	1 (3%)		1 (3%)	
Treated fairly and courteously	28 (76%)	6 (16%)	2 (5%)	1 (3%)		

Q.5 Satisfaction with service provided

- very satisfied 31 (84%)
- fairly satisfied 5 (14%)
- neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 1 (2%)
- fairly dissatisfied 0
- very dissatisfied 0

Q.6 Has overall quality of planning service:

- improved 15 (41%)
- worsened 0
- stayed the same 14 (38%)
- not applicable 8 (21%)

- 1.4 Respondents were also afforded the opportunity to provide additional comments, including suggestions for improvement. Sixteen (43%) respondents took up this opportunity. The vast majority of comments were complimentary of both individual members of staff and the service generally and included:

“All the officers were most courteous, helpful and efficient.”

“Excellent services from all involved. First class professional people.”

“I was given more than adequate information to allow me to complete my application form and procedures were explained thoroughly.”

“Very helpful staff – friendly and efficient.”

“There is a realistic approach to problem resolution. We find planners at Copeland respond in a personal way”.

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

“Applications and history could be stored on-line – more efficient for agents and less time consuming for the local planning authority”.

“Quicker query responses and better explanation of refusal reasons.”

“Payment through the Planning Portal didn’t work.”

“Certain officers are far better at responding to queries than others, resulting in a lack of consistency.”

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 92% of respondents stating that they are “very” or “fairly” satisfied and no respondents expressing dissatisfaction. Of those respondents who have used the service previously, almost half (41%) consider that the overall quality of the planning service has improved with no 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 is appended. All of the completed questionnaires are available for inspection in the Development Control Office

COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

The Copeland Centre, Catherine Street, Whitehaven, Cumbria. CA28 7SJ



LISTENING TO YOUR VIEWS

COPELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL : DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Dear

Copeland Borough Council is committed to providing quality services. I am therefore writing to you to ask for your help in monitoring the Development Management Service we provide.

As you have applied for planning permission to the Council within the past 12 months we are keen to hear your views about the quality of service you received in order that we can bring about any necessary improvements.

Your response will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used to monitor the Development Management Service.

Once you have completed the attached questionnaire please return it in the pre-addressed envelope provided. **You do not need to add a stamp.**

Thank you very much for your help in advance.

Yours sincerely

TONY POMFRET
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MANAGER

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The Council dealt promptly with my queries

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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I understand the reasons for the decisions made on my application(s)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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I felt that I was treated fairly and courteously and that my viewpoint was listened to

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Q5 Setting aside whether any individual application was successful or not, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by the Council in processing your application?
Please tick one box

Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6 If you submitted applications prior to the most recent one do you feel that the overall quality of the planning service has since:
Please tick one box

Improved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Worsened	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stayed the same	<input type="checkbox"/>

Any supporting and/or additional comments, including suggestions for improvement, in the box below would be appreciated

Thank you very much for taking part in the survey.

Please return your completed questionnaire in the pre-paid envelope provided within the next 21 days if possible.