



BEST VALUE REPORT OF THE BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report is based upon a full review presented to the Best Value Review Board on 27th November 2001, which was produced by the Building Control Self-Assessment Team.
- 1.2 The intention of this abridged report is to inform Members about the service itself; the process used to undertake the review and the outcomes from the review. Importantly it seeks approval to an Action Plan for continuous improvement over the next five years.
- 1.3 The report draws on inputs from the Self-Assessment Team, customers, stakeholders, Members and the Best Value Board.

2. THE SERVICE – IN BRIEF

- 2.1 The primary role of the Building Control Group (BCG) is the regulation of the built environment to protect and ensure public health and safety. This is highlighted by the section's mission statement that appears in the current Business Plan as 'a safe built environment for all'. The Business Plan forms an integral part of the section's Quality System under ISO 9002, which is registered with the British Standards Institution.
- 2.2 The main focus of the BCG is the enforcement of the Building Act 1984 with specific regard to the Building Regulations which objectives are:-
 - Securing the health, safety, welfare and convenience of persons in or about buildings and of others who may be affected by buildings or matters connected with buildings.
 - Furthering the conservation of fuel and power.
 - Preventing waste, undue consumption, misuse or contamination of water.

- 2.3 Under Section 91(2) of The Building Act there is a statutory duty placed upon the local authority to enforce Building Regulations within their district.
- 2.4 Building work controlled by the Building Regulations must be made the subject of an application, with plans and details submitted by an applicant and accepted by an appropriate Building Control Body (BCB), before commencement of that work can take place.
- 2.5 At present 30% of the work of the BCG, especially within the housing and commercial sector of the market, is open to competition between Local Authority Building Control and that offered by a private Building Control Body i.e. National House Building Council.
- 2.6 Whilst at present the remaining 70% of current work, primarily affecting alterations and extensions to domestic property, is not subject to competition, recent changes introduced by Government will eventually subject all work to competition.
- 2.7 On the commencement of building work and at a number of key statutory and non-statutory stages, the BCG, to ensure compliance with Building Regulations is achieved, undertake site inspections.
- 2.8 On the satisfactory completion of a project by the BCG a completion certificate is issued to confirm compliance with Building Regulations.
- 2.9 The Building Regulation service is self-financing from fee income paid through charges levied at specific stages. The BCG are required to balance expenditure against income over any rolling three year financial period.
- 2.10 Further functions of the BCG, accounting for 25% of workload, include the provision of technical and professional advice to the general public, the monitoring of demolitions and control of dangerous structures, the 'eyes and ears' site monitoring process for Development Control and licensing inspections for the Community Services Directorate.
- 2.11 Funding for these no-fee related services is either directly by way of Community Charge or Service Level Agreements.

3. THE REVIEW – KEY ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 The Self-Assessment Review Team comprised the following individuals:-

Councillor Tim Droogleever – Portfolio holder Economy and Planning
 Councillor Robin Harrison – Shadow Portfolio holder
 John Rainbow – Head of Consultancy Services
 Stuart Gange – Principal Building Control Surveyor (Team Leader)
 David Wise – District Building Control Surveyor
 Peter Jameson – Assistant Building Control Surveyor
 Nick Cross – B.V. mentor
 Becky Bailey – Audit
 Tom Gibbons – Unison
 Adrian Summers – Customer representative (Almansa Construction)

- 3.2 The review process undertaken by the Self-Assessment Review Team hinged around subjecting the Building Control service to the criteria of the four C's as follows:-

CHALLENGE

- 3.3 Challenge is the key element of the review process; especially considering the overall primary objective of the best value process is for continuous improvement. The main area of building control work revolves around the enforcement of Building Regulations either in assessing deposited plans or the site supervision of building work in progress. In this respect, the main challenge concentrated upon the different ways the following services could be provided by considering the:-

- Examination of plan assessment principles and evaluation of externalisation of the service.
- Site inspection procedures and adoption of improved performance standards.
- Building Regulation fee levels and income generation.
- Role of structural consultants.

CONSULT

- 3.4 Consultation was undertaken with builders, developers, architects and surveyors, our normal everyday customers, as well the general public, those ultimately affected by our service. Development Control formed part of our 'in house' survey in respect to the 'eyes and ears' role that the Building Control Group play in the planning process, and views from building control staff survey were also sought. Consultation was thus undertaken with:-

- Customers via a Customer Questionnaire Survey in May/June 2001, which allowed comparisons to be undertaken of the Building Regulation service with a similar survey, undertaken 1999.
- Customer Focus Group made up of builders, architects and surveyors - quarterly meetings since January 2001.
- Development Control Questionnaire September 2001, regarding the 'eyes and ears' site-monitoring role exercised by building control staff.
- Staff Consultation Questionnaire - to obtain views on service provision/development.

COMPARE

- 3.5 Comparisons of service using local performance indicators were undertaken with local benchmarking authorities, national groups and by listening to the views of our Customer Panel as follows:-

- Information gathered from the Hampshire and Dorset Benchmarking group.

- Building Regulation fee details from Approved Inspectors, (National House Building Council) and adjoining Local Authorities.
- Process information in respect to other local authority service providers.

COMPETE

3.6 Competition of the building regulation function has existed since 1985 for the Building Control Group, on a day-to-day, job-by-job basis. Initially only in respect to housing this has now extended to the commercial sector and will soon incorporate all sections of building work. The work of the Building Control section is therefore in daily competition from private Approved Inspectors in respect to new housing and commercial projects. Fee levels and service provision have been analysed whenever possible to ensure effective competition is being maintained. As such the ability to win and retain customers is in itself increasingly a test of competition.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF KEY OUTCOMES

Cost Savings Or Income Generation And Review Costs

- 4.1 The overall cost of the service is currently £580,110.
- 4.2 Efficiency savings of £40,000 over five years have been identified as possible.
- 4.3 External income of £484,000 per annum has been identified as achievable.
- 4.4 The estimated total cost to date of undertaking the review is £8,262. This estimate accounts for officer time during normal working hours but does not include the considerable amount of time spent in home working undertaking research and report preparation.

Savings In Consultant Engineer Costs

- 4.5 Challenging the role of engineering consultants, who at present are employed to assess the majority of structural details submitted in accordance with Building Regulations, has resulted in projected savings of £8,000 per annum based upon present levels of work.
- 4.6 This has been achieved by re-negotiating with the Council's insurers, St. Paul, an amended procedure with respect to the level of structural checking undertaken on submitted calculations, which will negate the need to examine every scheme in close detail.
- 4.7 A revised checking procedure will be agreed with the Council's insurers as part of the improvement plan process.

Income Generation – Building Regulation Fees

- 4.8 The fees from Building Regulation charges are estimated at £480,000 for the current financial year based upon present levels of work.
- 4.9 The budget figure for fee income for 2002/2003 is again estimated at £480,000 but clearly dependent upon activity in the construction market continuing at present levels. Estimating levels of income generation beyond 2003 is impractical.

- 4.10 The scale of charges for the Building Regulation function is based upon recommendations made by the Local Government Association, with this Council's fee structure and level being comparable to that of adjoining Authorities.
- 4.11 Whilst some flexibility exists for varying fee levels the overriding consideration is that income from charges must balance expenditure over any rolling three year period.
- 4.12 The projected surplus for the initial three year cycle ending March 2002, is £197,654.
- 4.13 Guidance on surplus income from the DTLR is that it should be kept to a minimum with recommendations that it be used to improve levels of service.
- 4.14 Improvements in service provisions, as suggested by the Self-Assessment Team, are contained elsewhere in this report.

Income Generation – Land Charge Fees

- 4.15 Proposed alterations to the Land Charge search enquiry procedures in respect to property transactions from April 2002 will require new additional questions on Building Regulation matters to be answered by the Building Control Group.
- 4.16 The additional income from this work is estimated at £4,000 for 2002/2003, at no extra cost.

5. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

- 5.1 The Self-Assessment Team considered and recommended service improvements in the following key areas:-
- Examination of deposited plans.
 - Site inspection.
 - Action in respect to dangerous structures.
- 5.2 An essential part of the review process and in the consideration of improvements to service delivery were the views of customer/stakeholders on present service provision.
- 5.3 Consultations were undertaken as follows:-
- Customers – professionals and end users of the service e.g. householders.
 - Development Control – on the site monitoring 'eyes and ears' process.

Customer Consultation

- 5.4 A questionnaire was distributed in May/June 2001, to a comprehensive range of customers of which 206 replies (30%) were returned.

- 5.5 The overall result was that in broad terms customers considered the building control service as good or very good with 42% of regular users considering the service had improved, 58% thought it unchanged, with none considering it had worsened.
- # 5.6 Comparisons of service can be made with that provided in 1999, when a similar questionnaire consultation process was undertaken. Details are as shown in Appendix 1.
- 5.7 As a result of the customer consultation process the following service improvements have been suggested:-
- The development of a 'Customer Welcome Pack' specifically designed to be passed to owners/occupiers at the commencement of building work to advise in detail the building control process and what they can expect from it e.g. level and frequency of inspections, completion certificate, enforcement procedures etc. It will also be an ideal time to provide information on other matters such as energy efficiency, environmental protection, and recycling/LA 21 issues.
 - The examination of 90% of plans submitted under the Building Regulations within 10 working days of deposit, currently 87% examined within 15 working days.
 - The issue of 90% of completion certificates within five working days from undertaking a satisfactory inspection of the project. Currently only being achieved 52% of the time.
 - The reduction in time of structural consultant checking from 15 working days to 10 working days.

Consultation with Development Control

- 5.8 The 'eyes and ears' site monitoring role that Building Control play on behalf of Development Control is recognised as an important part of the overall Planning process.
- 5.9 The present service offered by building control surveyors is that work is monitored at key stages, from commencement to completion, on occasions when building control staff are undertaking site inspections for Building Regulation purposes.
- 5.10 Following consultation on the level of service the following improvements were identified:-
- Regular training to be undertaken with new planning team members on the 'eyes and ears' process as administered by building control.
 - Improved monitoring of site inspections undertaken on behalf of Development Control.
 - Improved notification process of planning irregularities to Development Control.
- 5.11 These improvement areas would need to be developed together with the planning team officers as appropriate.

Site Inspections

- 5.12 The assessment team challenged how the site inspection process could best be achieved.
- 5.13 The undertaking of site inspections of building work in progress is considered fundamental to the building control process and critical in ensuring work is constructed in accordance with the Building Regulations.
- 5.14 It is also a statutory function under the provisions of Section 91(2) of the Building Act, requiring Authorities to enforce Building Regulations within their district.
- 5.15 The present level of inspection is such that all statutory notifiable stages of construction are implemented as requested but with little capacity to extend inspections to that of a routine or ad-hoc nature.
- 5.16 Recommendations on the appropriate levels of site inspections have been produced by the DTLR in a document entitled 'Building Control Performance Standards', which, if fully implemented would substantially increase the number and frequency of inspections preventing non-compliance of Building Regulations whenever possible.
- 5.17 The key service improvement identified by the Assessment Team in respect to site inspections was therefore:-
- The introduction of improved levels of site inspection into the Section's Quality System based upon the DTLR Building Control Performance Standards.
- 5.18 It was recognised by the Review Team that any increase in inspection levels would result in a demand for additional staff resources at a time when there is an acute shortage of trained and qualified personnel.

Examination of Deposited Plans

- 5.19 The key challenge aspect of service delivery in respect to the examination of deposited plans for compliance with the Building Regulations rested with a rigorous assessment of the service being provided by either:-
- Existing 'in house' staff;
 - External consultants; or
 - A mix of both.
- 5.20 The same statutory duty on the Authority of enforcing the Building Regulations in respect to deposited plans exists, as for implementing site inspections, with the added complication that plans must be either 'approved' or 'rejected' within two months from the date of deposit of details.
- 5.21 Whilst the review process considered it unworkable and impractical to administer site inspections by using consultant's staff, the examination of deposited plans did not present the same management and supervisory difficulties, and indeed was considered to have a number of advantages.

- 5.22 Due to acute shortages of qualified and experienced staff over the past six months, the use of external consultants to undertake selective plan examination has been tried during this period in order to help maintain existing performance targets and to reduce the workload on remaining staff.
- 5.23 This has enabled a first hand assessment to be made of the use of consultants in this important area of work with the acknowledged benefits being as follows:-
- Level of performance - target of undertaking initial plan examination within 15 working days of deposit maintained in 90% of cases.
 - Customer satisfaction – positive feedback from customers on consultant performance.
 - Cost effective – whilst slightly greater than 'in house' costs, overall they are comparable.
 - Site inspection – levels of site inspection have been maintained as a result of reduced plan checking by 'in house' staff.
- 5.24 The disadvantages of using consultants have been identified as:-
- Increased administration time and cost.
 - Increased management responsibility.
 - Lack of local knowledge of consultant.
 - Remoteness from office for face to face contact.
- 5.25 The overall assessment by the Review Team was that the use of external consultants to share the plan examination workload offers a practical solution in the face of the non-availability of appropriate qualified staff and increasing workload to maintain and possibly improve the level of service.
- 5.26 Whilst the use of consultants directly affects plan examination their continued engagement will enable 'freed up' time to be spent on maintaining and improving essential site inspections, including those for Development Control.
- 5.27 The implications of increased cost will need to be considered with respect to future levels of building regulation charges and the use of existing surplus income.

Dangerous Structures

- 5.28 Under the requirements of the Building Act, the Authority has a duty to respond to dangerous structures to ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent members of the public being put at risk as a result of buildings or other structures becoming hazardous.

5.29 The assessment team considered the service could be improved by adopting the following measures:-

- Introduction of a two hour maximum response time to all dangerous structure notifications. At present only 'emergency' requests are responded to within this time period.
- The introduction of a 'call out' rota when staff levels permit.

6. KEY POLICY CHANGES

6.1 The Building Control Group (BCG) operate within a competitive environment with changes by Central Government likely to increase competition by Approved Inspectors to all areas of Building Regulation work administered by the Section, rather than just the housing and commercial sectors as at present.

6.2 As such the assessment team considered it essential that the BCG develop a sound marketing policy and strategy to retain and develop the Building Control market.

6.3 In this respect the following policy initiatives have been suggested for development or for future appraisal:-

- ISO 9002 – Quality Assurance – existing registration to be updated in accordance with ISO 9001:2000, a scheme which is closely related to the concept of Best Value i.e. a customer driven process of continuous improvement.
- Formation and introduction of a 'Customer Charter' clearly setting out the objectives and targets of the Building Control Group in respect to the Building Regulation function and included within a 'Customer Welcome Pack' specifically designed for domestic end user customers giving essential advice on the total building process.
- Introduction of a more flexible but robust pricing policy in respect to fee charges for commercial work in order to remain competitive in the face of growing numbers of Approved Inspectors.
- Develop the policy of flexible payment of Building Regulation fees with the introduction of credit/debit card facilities.

7. SERVICE PERFORMANCE TARGETS – KEY OBJECTIVES

7.1 The Assessment Team as part of the review process have recognised the importance of site inspections to the overall service provision, a fact endorsed by the DTLR in their document Building Control Performance Standards and highlighted during customer consultation.

7.2 One of the key objectives contained within the performance plan is that of improving the maximum 90 day interval of inspections on sites actively under construction from 68% at present to 90% by the end of 2003 to achieve a top quartile position.

7.3 This would benefit all customers in ensuring greater compliance with Building Regulations, demonstrating better value for site inspection fees as well as offering a greater 'eyes and ears' service to the planning function where appropriate.

7.4 This would be an addition to maintaining the existing service level of undertaking all inspections on the same day if requested before 10.30am, or if notified later, within 24 hours.

7.5 Other key performance targets to achieve a top quartile rating are as follows:-

- Plan examination – improve plan examination times to 90% within 10 working days of deposit by end of 2003, currently 87% in 15 days.
- Completion certificates of building work – improve issue of certificates to 75% within five working days by end of 2002, currently 45% issued within five working days.
- Structural consultant response time – improve response time for checking submitted structural details to 70% within 10 working days by mid 2002, currently 80% within 15 working days.
- Dangerous structures – instigate rota system by April 2002 and improve response time to 100% within two hours of being notified by April 2002, currently 90% within two hours.

7.6 Key performance issues compared with authorities within the Hampshire and Dorset Benchmarking Group areas shown in Appendix 2.

8. IMPROVED CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

8.1 The self assessment team considered that the Building Control Group contribute to corporate objectives and will continue to do so in the following areas:-

Make Use Of New Technology

- Continued development and update of Building Control website for the benefit of customers.
- Investigation and introduction of electronic plan submission.
- Payment of Building Regulation fees by use of credit/debit card.

Work With Partners And Public

- Continuation of Customer Panel to respond to views and demands of professional users of the service.
- Provision of technical seminars.
- Maintain linkage and support to New Forest Liaison Access Group on disability issues covered by the Building Regulations.

Social Well Being

- Ensure buildings are constructed safely and that appropriate action is taken in respect to dangerous structures.

Environmental Well Being

- Development of website to enable individuals and firms to advertise re-usable but unwanted building materials and thus reduce quantity of dumped materials – ‘Skip Busters’ scheme.
- Promotion of energy efficient schemes and improvements to thermal insulation of buildings either through the Building Regulations or by other agencies or initiatives e.g. HECA, DSA.

9. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF BEST VALUE BOARD

Best Value Process

- 9.1 The Best Value Board has independently inspected the review. A number of additional issues were added at the planning stage for inclusion in the review.
- 9.2 Councillor Mrs P Wyeth has acted as the lead scrutiny Member for this review and was satisfied that the process was undertaken in a robust, open and honest way.
- 9.3 The Board recognises that the review has been undertaken at a time when the service has been struggling to retain staff, not helped by the retirement of two long serving officers.
- 9.4 The review process was co-ordinated by the Principal Building Control Surveyor and the methodology adopted has broadly followed the corporate process.
- 9.5 All key elements have been covered in sufficient detail for the Board to conclude that the review has been rigorous and comprehensive.

How Good Is The Service?

- 9.6 The Board believes the service provided is fair to good for the following reasons:-
 - Satisfaction levels of customers have been consistently high over the last two years with 86% of respondents to the customer satisfaction survey rating the service as good or very good.
 - Performance when compared to others both locally and nationally generally falls within the middle to upper quartiles. There are however some results lying in the lower quartile. These have been identified and are included in the improvement plan under references A1, A3 and D1. These particular improvements should be relatively easy to achieve.
 - The service provided has an emphasis on delivery and responsiveness to customers on site. This is seen as the core of the business and where the team can most effectively deliver its mission statement of 'a safe built environment for all'. Feedback from builders confirms that 96% considered the quality of the service to be good or very good.

Improvement Potential

- 9.7 There are clearly areas of the service that need to be improved, these have been identified within the report and are included in the improvement plan.
- 9.8 The improvement plan is ambitious and whilst the Board supports the content there are concerns as to its achievability bearing in mind the difficulties experienced in recruitment and retention of staff and the Council's current financial position.
- 9.9 Realising these improvements will, to a large extent, be reliant on the section being fully resourced with experienced officers. The commitment of employees to the improvements included in the action plan is vital, particularly as many of the existing staff had little or no involvement in the review process itself.

- 9.10 Interviews with a number of BC officers support the view that employees are committed to the delivery of a high quality service. Commitment to achieving the service improvements identified should not therefore be an issue.
- 9.11 Whilst performance has been measured in the past, there is little evidence of performance measurement and management having formed an integral part of the daily operation of the service. New initiatives have recently been introduced that will allow more accurate and timely reporting of performance. This improved ability to monitor performance on a more regular basis should introduce a culture of continual improvement.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- # 10.1 The sustainability assessment undertaken by the service has resulted in a number of areas for improvement. These have been incorporated within the improvement plan (Appendix 3) as appropriate with the key action points being:
- Monitor and publicise the website in respect to the materials exchange 'SKIPBUSTERS' scheme.
 - Production and distribution of good practice guides for householders in respect to better use of building materials and how to avoid wastage.
 - Promotion of energy efficiency schemes.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The sustainability assessment recognises the importance of safe and secure communities.
- 11.2 This service impacts on public safety with respect to dangerous structures and licensing of public functions.

12. CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1 The best value process has provided an ideal opportunity to evaluate and assess the key business of the Building Control Group and identify a number of areas for improvement.
- 12.2 The Best Value Review Board have concluded, along with the Assessment Team, that critical in effecting the measures described within the improvement plan, is the employment and retention of appropriately qualified staff which are at a premium at this juncture.
- 12.3 An essential element in maintaining and improving service delivery is the continued partnership working with external consultants in the area of plan examination, allowing the freeing up of essential time to tackle the critical part of the service, that of undertaking site inspections.
- 12.4 The ever increasing level of new and more complex building legislation compounds this issue.

- 12.5 It is essential the service remains cost effective with income matching expenditure and with surplus fee income being used to enhance and improve the level of service in line with customer requirements.
- 12.6 The improvement plan, together with the sections commitment to providing a quality service by the continued adoption of ISO 9002:2000 Quality System, should ensure continuous customer focused improvement over the next five years.

13. **COMMENTS OF ECONOMY AND PLANNING REVIEW PANEL**

- 13.1 The Economy and Planning Review Panel have supported the recommendations in this report. They suggested that Item C5 in the Improvement Plan should be reworded to read "Parish and Town Council's instead of Parish Clerks".

14. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the following recommendations:

- 14.1 the action plan for continuous improvement of the building control service, as set out in Appendix 3, as amended by Economy and Planning Review Panel, be approved.
- 14.2 those actions not requiring additional resources be implemented in accordance with the timetable.
- 14.3 those actions requiring additional resources either be met by efficiency savings, or are not implemented until sufficient budgetary provision is provided.

For further Information:

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Background Papers:

Scoping Review report
Report to Review Board

**BUILDING CONTROL CUSTOMER QUESTIONNAIRE
ANALYSIS OF RESULTS BETWEEN 1999 & 2001 SURVEYS**

	1999	2001
Number of Questionnaires distributed	480	694
Number of Questionnaires returned	151(31.4%)	206(30%)

QUESTION	1999 % V. Good/Good	2001 % V. Good/Good
How would you rate time taken to approve plan examination	71	70
Service offered at planning reception desk	82	78
Unannounced visits to office - speed of response	95	92
Unannounced visits to office – quality of response	82	86
Communication with satellite offices sites (Ring, NM, Lym)	83	80
Response time from remote office	81	82
Flexibility from remote office	82	83
Communication with Lyndhurst office	87	90
Response time from Lyndhurst office	86	88
Flexibility from Lyndhurst office	86	88
Tech value of lunchtime seminars	97	95
Value for Money of Plan Examination fees	80	79
Value for Money of Site Inspection fees	82	85

APPENDIX 2

Comparisons of key performance indicators with other authorities within the Hampshire and Dorset Benchmarking Group.

	New Forest B.C.	Average	Best of top 25%
Unit cost per Building Regulation Application	£239	£308	£239
Income per Building Regulation Application	£279	£343	£420
Quality Performance Matrix (i.e. overall assessment of performance considering a number of critical service areas)	65	65	84
Applications checked within 15 days of submission	87%	82%	100%
Decisions issued on applications within statutory time limits	100%	98%	100%
Same day inspections undertaken when requests received by 10.30	100%	97%	100%
Site inspection undertaken on active site every 90 days	68%	65%	88%
Dangerous structure call outs responded to within 2 hours	90%	90%	100%
Commercial market share	95%	92%	99%

BUILDING CONTROL

5 YEAR IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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- H - Sustainability
- J - Benchmarking
- K - Income

Officer Responsibility

- SJG - Stuart Gange, Principal Building Control Surveyor
- AMF - Andrew Foster, Senior Building Control Surveyor
- RB - Robert Braid, Senior Building Control Surveyor
- DP - Dianne Paddock, Office Manager
- CE - Chris Elliott, Head of Development Control
- KK - Keith Kensley

IMPROVEMENT AREA A - General								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
A1	Certificates of completion of building work	Introduce computer monitoring system	Review existing arrangements to enhance the level of information contained within certificates and issue within set time period. Present performance 45% issued within 5 working days	75% to be issued within 5 working days by end of 2002/03. 100% within 5 working days by 2003/04	Report to E & P Review Panel in March 2003	High	DP	Within existing resources
A2	Response times to general correspondence	Use of e-mails where appropriate	Monitor and review mail logging system. Encourage use of emails and telephone to save officer time	90% of correspondence to be responded to within 10 days. Currently 84%	Review monthly from 1 st January 2002	High	DP	
A3	Dangerous Structures	Introduce a 2 hour maximum response time to all reports of dangerous structures	Introduce rota system for out of office hours call outs	Introduce rota	01/04/02	High	SJG AMF RB	Within existing resources
A4	Dangerous Structure Contractors (emergency work)	Set up a Council wide list of firms willing to undertake emergency work	Update and enhance contractors list to ensure all areas of district adequately covered	Investigate and implement Contractors list to link with Council wide system	2002 and ongoing	High	SJG AMF RB	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA A - General								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
A5	Performance measurement and management	Set up computer based collection of performance data	Implementation of report systems to analysis data for plan examination, completion certificates, decision dates, inspection frequency	Collect & monitor information quarterly & report to employees and review panel	Quarterly from June 2002	High	SJG KK DP	Within existing resources
A6	Development Team Approach		Evaluate benefits of D.T.A. in respect to major complex developments in conjunction with the Planning Service	Review & Report	2003	High	SJG CE	May require additional resources
A7	Acknowledgement of 'Full Plan' applications	Acknowledgement undertaken within 2 days of receipt	Review procedures to improve efficiency	Same day acknowledgement of receipt of applications	Review and implement by 01/06/02	Medium	DP	Within existing resources
A8	Reception Desk	Customer Survey enquiries on level of service	Monitor and review level of enquiry and availability of professional staff during office hours	Monitor and report during 2002/03	Report to E & P review Panel March 2003	Medium	DP	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA A - General								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
A9	Partnership working other (L.A.'s)	Previous working arrangements with Bournemouth and East Dorset	Explore and develop scope for further joint working and sharing of resources between adjoining authorities	Investigate and report	2004/05	Low	SJG	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA B - Plan Examination								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
B1	Partnership working	Initiated the services of an external consultant to undertake limited plan checking	Monitoring and assessment of performance in terms of cost and service delivery to ensure best value is being achieved. Currently 90% in 15 days	Improve plan examination times to 90% achieved within 10 working days of deposit	End of October 2002	High	SJG JBC (Partner)	Cost met from fee earning budget

IMPROVEMENT AREA C – Working with stakeholders								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
C1	Development Control eyes and ears site monitoring	Introduce new monitoring pro-forma	Review and examine site monitoring process and repeat D.C survey to staff biennially	70% of active sites visited within 90 days. 90% of active sites visited within 90 days	End of 2002/ End of 2003	High	SJG AMF RB	Will require additional resources
C2	Defect notification to Development Control	Introduce monitoring system	Redesign P40 defect notification form	P40 form redesign	End of June 2002	High	SJG DP	Within existing resources
C3	Customer Panel	Set up Customer Panel	Elicit greater member support and involvement. Survey panel members on usefulness. Create publicity to generate more feedback through group members	Review and report to E & P Review Panel March 2003	2002 and ongoing	High	SJG	Within existing resources
C4	Working with Development Control	Daily regular working contact as necessary with DC on planning issues	More formal/regular meetings with DC to improve working relationships/service delivery	Documented working procedures and work instructions	Quarterly meetings from October 2002	High	SJG CE	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA C – Working with stakeholders								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
C5	Monitoring Groups	Links with Access groups and Parish Clerks	Identify other monitoring groups that would benefit by being better informed of Building Control's aims and intentions	Investigate and report to E & P Review Panel as appropriate	2003/04	Low	SJG DP AMF RB	Within existing resources
C6	Partnership working	Members of Local Authority Building Control partnership scheme	Investigate 'partnering' a local firm of architects and undertake plan examination on behalf of other Local Authorities for nationwide projects proposed by the partnered firm	Investigate and report to E & P Review Panel	October 2004	Low	SJG	May require additional resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA D – Site Inspections								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
D1	Increased level of site inspections	Instigated procedures for implementation of DTLR Performance Standards	Fully implement within quality system procedures, increase staff resources and undertake training	70% of active sites visited within 90 days. 90% of active sites visited within 90 days	End of 2002/End of 2003	High	SJG AMF RB	Additional resources but within fee income

IMPROVEMENT AREA E - Marketing								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
E1	Customer Service information	Produce a Building Control folder setting out basic service provisions	Produce a 'Customer Welcome Pack' to hand out to domestic customers on commencement of work to explain the service provided in detail and other information	Investigate content of 'Welcome Packs'	2002/03	High	SJG AMF RB DP	Additional resources but within fee income
E2	Marketing of service	Introduced Quality System Business Plan, Technical Seminars and 'Insite' Magazine	Develop and adopt marketing plan in response to increasing competition from private Approved Inspectors	Maintain market share of building projects	2002 and ongoing	High	SJG AMF RB	May require additional resources to implement
E3	Quality System	Introduce Quality System to ISO 9002	Update and revise procedures to meet revised ISO9001-2000 Quality System	Introduce new Quality System Procedures	2003 and ongoing	High	SJG	Within existing resources
E4	Introduction of Customer Charter	Introduce concept of Customer Panel	Formation of 'Customer Charter' strategy and develop sustainable and achievable goals and targets	Investigate and report to E & P Review Panel	March 2003	Medium	SJG	Implementation may require additional resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA E - Marketing								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
E5	Payment of fees		Investigate introduction of credit/debit card facilities for Building Regulation submissions	Corporate initiative	2003	Medium	SJG	Within existing resources
E6	Electronic Plan Submission	Produce web site for application form information download	Investigate introduction of electronic plan submission and monitoring facilities for Building Regulation applications	Investigate and build into E-Governance programme	2005/06	Low	SJG	Will require additional resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA F – Staff Issues								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
F1	Staff security	Introduction of mobile telephones and working procedures	Ensure H & S policy regarding working alone is followed	Measure and Report to Head of Consultancy Services/Director of E.S.	2002	High	SJG	Within existing resources
F2	Staff questionnaire	Staff surveyed as part of Best Value assessment process	Annual questionnaire forming part of PDI process	Annual questionnaire	2002 and ongoing	Medium	SJG	Within existing resources
F3	Working from home	Local service provided by area offices	Review opportunities for working from home in line with corporate initiatives	Investigate and report in line with corporate initiative to E & P Review panel	2005/06	Low	SJG	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA G – Structural Checking								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
G1	Checking policy procedures with Consultant Structural Engineers	Undertaken structural checking on all deposited structural details submitted under Building Regs.	Agree revised policy with Council's Insurers on level of checking in order to reduce consultant checking costs	Report to be produced and agreed with Council's Insurers	October 2002	High	SJG	Cost saving
G2	Structural consultant response time	Existing turnaround time for checking 15 working days	Examine and review existing service provision	Improve turnaround time to 10 working days for 70% of submitted schemes	June 2002	High	SJG	Within existing resources
G3	Selection of Structural Consultants	Existing consultants retained on basis of experience and past performance	Evaluation and review of existing service together with market testing of alternative providers	Report to be produced for E & P Review Panel	March 2004	Medium	SJG	Within existing resources
G4	Monitor deposit of structural details	No previous monitoring	Examine and review submission of structural details by chartered and non-chartered firm and individuals	Review and analysis	2003	Medium	SJG DP	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA H - Sustainability								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
H1	Environment issues	Introduce recycling scheme for unwanted building materials	Monitor and publicise the website in respect to 'Materials Exchange' scheme and produce 'good practice' guides for householders	Investigate and report to E&P Review Panel as appropriate	2003 and ongoing	High	SJG AMF RB	Within existing resources
H2	Energy Efficiency	Publicise energy saving schemes produced by HECA and others (LABC, DSA etc)	Ensure service users are aware of new legislation in respect to energy saving requirements	Undertake seminars for customers	2002 and ongoing	High	SJG AMF RB	Within existing resources
H3	Corporate policies	Identify corporate issues that BCG can contribute to.	Ensure opportunities to contribute to corporate sustainability policies are considered as part of the cross cutting reviews	Report to E & P Review Panel	2002/03	Medium	SJG	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA J - Benchmarking								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
J1	Benchmarking Group	Member of Hants & Dorset benchmarking club	Process analysis with benchmarking partners and high performing service providers to establish best practice	Investigate and report to E&P Review Panel as appropriate	2002 and ongoing	Medium	SJG DP	Within existing resources
J2	Local indicators	Produced a range of local indicators in order to compare with other authorities	Improved indicators to measure cost, budget and outcomes of service delivery	Further investigation with benchmarking colleagues	2002/03	Medium	SJG	Within existing resources
J3	National Best Value Indicator	Development of Quality Performance Matrix in conjunction with DSA	Regular measurement of performance using QPM and comparison with other Hampshire Authorities in Benchmarking group,	Current rating of 65% to be improved by Implementing Improvement plan areas especially site inspection and plan vetting	2002 and ongoing	Medium	SJG	Within existing resources

IMPROVEMENT AREA K - Income								
No.	Improvement Area	What have we done?	What else needs to be done?	Performance Measures/targets	Milestone Dates	Priority	Responsibility	
							NFDC Officer	Resources Allocation & costs
K1	Building Regulation fees (General)	Introduce fee structure for Building Regulation applications	Monitor income and expenditure to ensure break even occurs on 3 year rolling programme	6 monthly reports to Portfolio holder	2002 and ongoing	High	SJG	Within existing resources
K2	Charges for copying	Implement charges as set out in Environmental Services policy	Develop and introduce a standard charge service level in respect to the production of copy documentation for official Building Regulation notices	Investigate and report to Director E.S.	2002/03	High	SJG DP	Within existing resources
K3	Fees for Commercial Work	Introduce fee structure	Investigate a more flexible but robust pricing strategy for commercial work to combat competition	Investigate and report on introduction of pricing matrix to Portfolio Holder	2002/03	High	SJG	Within existing resources