

D R A F T
Development Management Quarterly Measures Report
4th Quarter - January – March 2009 (and April – May 2009)

Introduction:

The identified Purpose for Development Management is to ‘Say Yes to good development’ and the measures that we have created for the service link to that purpose and to what matters to the customer. The customers/ applicants said that they wanted to be kept informed of progress with their applications and they wanted a speedy decision. We said ‘yes’ to 91.3% of planning applications between January and May.

In order to aid this we now offer the full service with the opportunity to take pre application advice, which we previously hadn’t been able to achieve and we now scan all incoming documents on planning applications which allows applicants and the public to access all information shortly after we receive it. The consequence of these actions is that satisfaction level of applicants has risen from 65% (national survey results in 2008/9) to 95% in this quarter. Our appeal record has also improved, suggesting that the right decisions are being taken.

There is greater overview now of all the workstreams in the teams at any one time and passage of the work through the system is regularly tested to ensure that no unnecessary delays are occurring. The performance for the E2E times of planning applications from (validation to decision) has improved by 8 days from the Jan-March quarter (57 days mean average) to the April-May figures (49 days mean average) and the former figure was a great improvement on the original figure measured during the ‘Check’ period of the Systems Review where the mean average was 76 days (8 weeks being 56 days).

The focus of the work is now principally on the value activity, with tasks that added no value for the applicant reduced as far as possible. That does not mean to say that others who have an interest in the outcome of any planning application are now excluded from the process and indeed the additional information we now provide on each case on the website has been of value, with the Parish/Town Council clerks expressing an 82% satisfaction rating for the service.

We have sought to reduce preventable demand coming into the service by guiding applicants and agents, through pre application activity and an Agents’ Forum and again by making sure that plenty of information was available on the website (even with its current limitations).

The test of a good measure is:

1. Does it relate to purpose and our knowledge of ‘what matters’ to our customers
2. Does it help us understand our service as a ‘system’
3. Is it used by those in the work and managing the work to improve the work?

We have developed two types of measures – leading and lagging.

Leading measures are the ‘real time’ indicators which tell us what is happening **now** in the system and are the key measures that help us lead change and improvement. Examples are:

1. Demand analysis (the type and frequency of customer demand)
2. Our ability to deal with requests/demand first time (one stop)
3. How long a process takes from start to finish (end to end times)
4. Understanding the split between preventable and value demand coming into the service

Lagging measures are the 'rear view' indicators which tell us what's happening in the system **after the event**. They tell us about the effectiveness of the service but will not necessarily help us to lead change. Examples are:

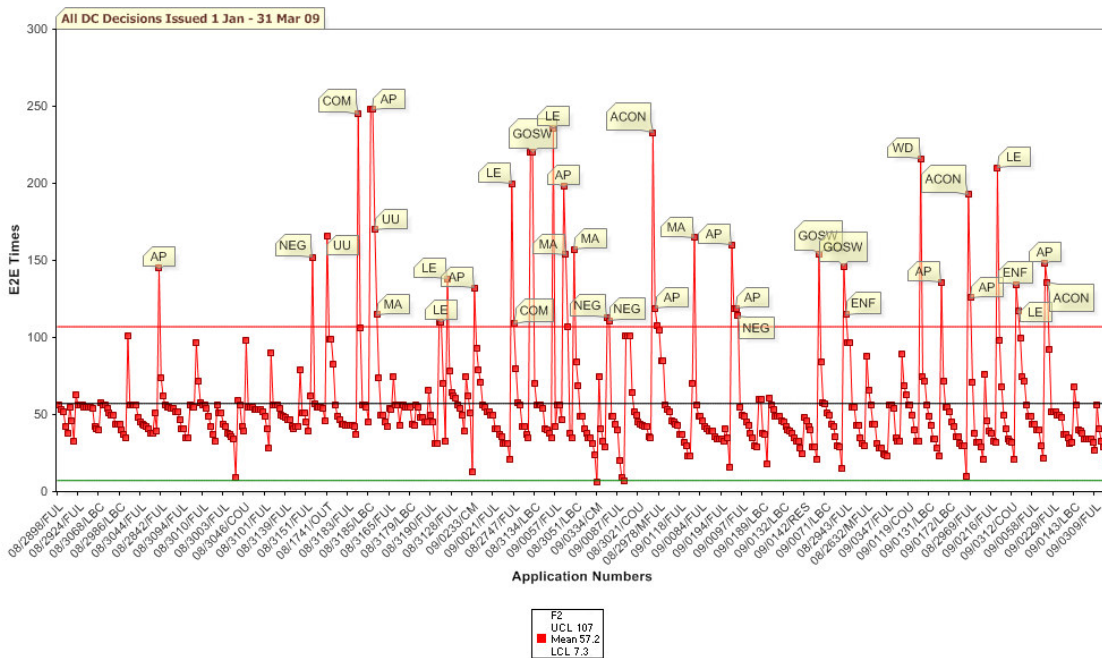
1. Budget monitoring
2. Customer satisfaction.

To deliver good results, the focus of management needs to be on the leading measures as the key drivers of improvement. If these levers for change are understood and used effectively then excellent results and customer satisfaction will follow.

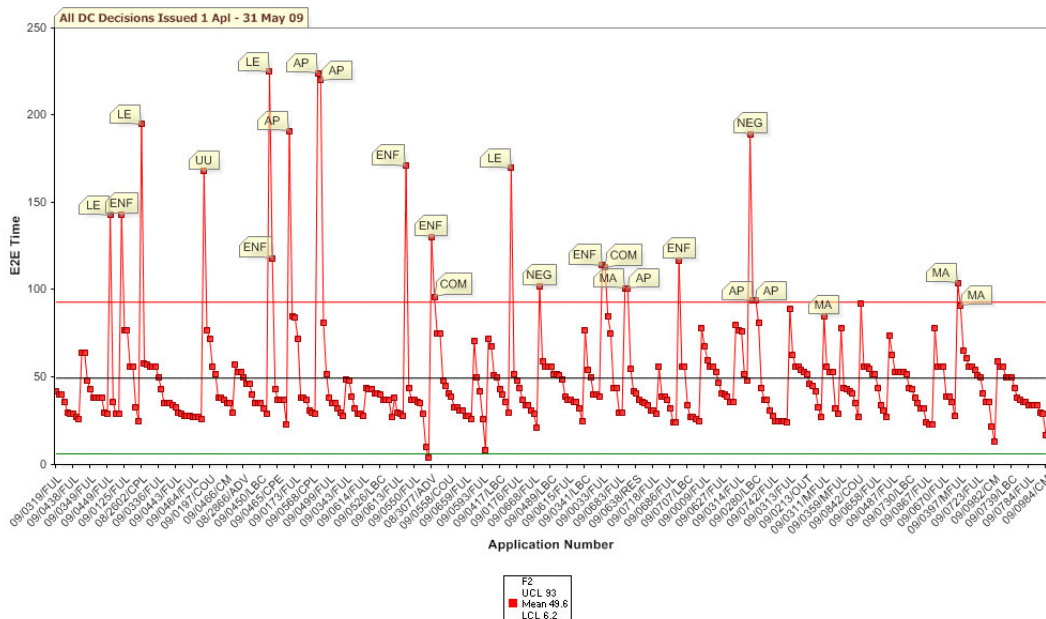
Leading Measures

E2E Times in the 5 Workstreams

Planning applications - (i) All decisions (major, minor and other) Jan-March 2009



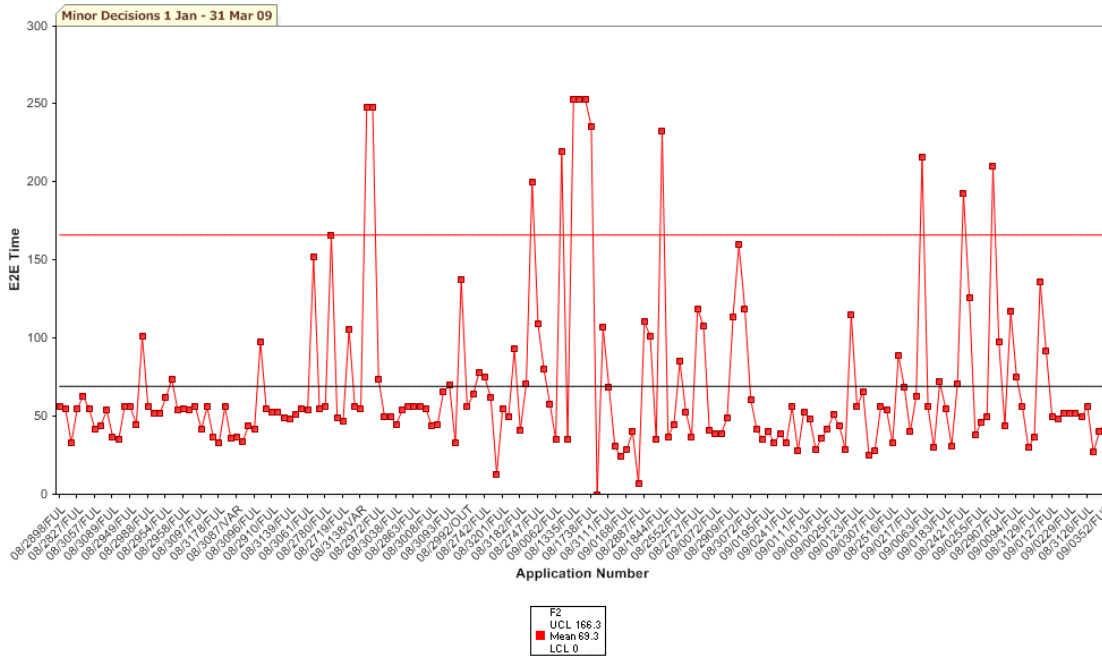
Planning applications - (i) All decisions (major, minor and other) April-May 2009



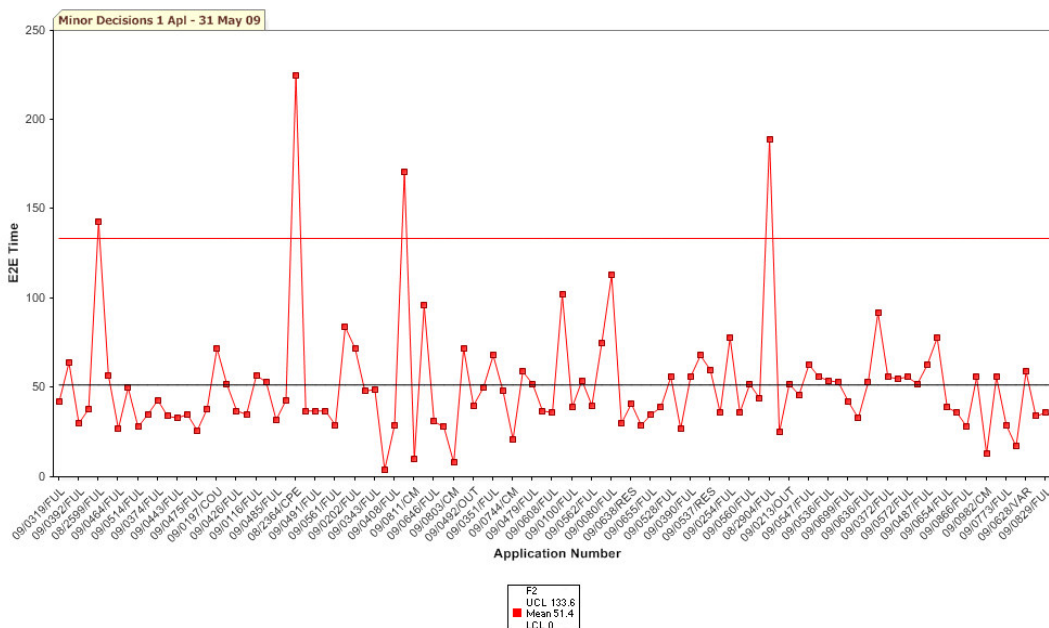
Tabs:

- ACON - Additional consultation needed
- AP - Amended Plans
- COM - Went to Committee
- ENF - Enforcement Application
- GOSW - Listed Building - final approval
- LE - awaiting Legal decision
- MA - Major Application
- NEG - Negotiated with applicant
- UU - awaiting Unilateral Undertaking
- WD - Withdrawn

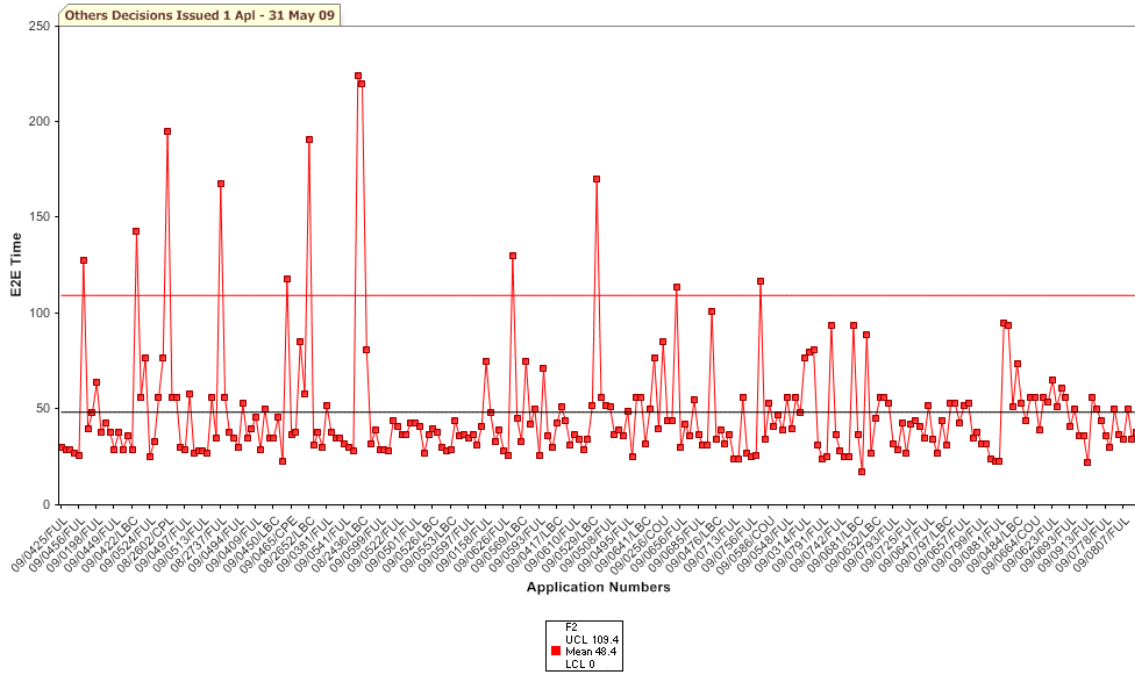
(ii) Minor applications Jan-March 2009



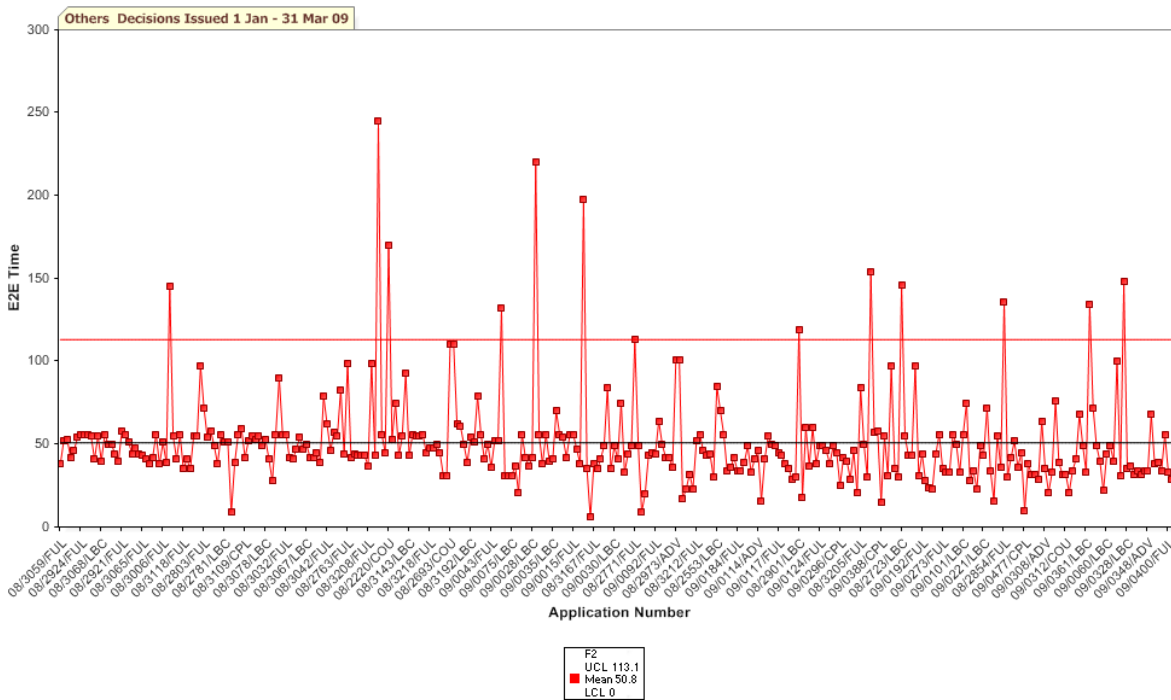
(ii) Minor applications April-May 2009



(iii) Other applications Jan-March 2009



(iii) Other applications April-May 2009



Analysis

The mean time taken for all planning applications in the quarter was 57days. By April -May the mean time taken had improved and now stands at 49 days. Minors remain the most variable but have reduced from 69 days (Jan-March) to 51 days (April-May). Comparing March to May last year with 2009, then only 13% of minor planning applications were dealt with within 40 days, whereas now it is 40% within 40 days. For householder and 'Other' applications for the same period, only 8% were dealt with within 40 days last year whereas the figure is now 60%. The mean for Others is fairly steady at between 48-50%.

Thus there has been a steady improvement in the end to end times, once clear of the January- March quarter as the backlog no longer skews the data and the teams are settling into their new routine. There were 356 applications on hand at the beginning of the year and 353 on hand at the end of May. Thus the teams are currently keeping on top of their workload and no backlog is building up.

The identified delays in reaching a decision are principally:-

- (i) Awaiting applicants to provide amended plans, either unsolicited following a negative consultation response or negotiated by a planning team to secure a better quality outcome or;
- (ii) The retrospective planning applications dealt with by the enforcement team and which have a controversial background.
- (iii) Applications awaiting a legal decision e.g. Certificate of Lawfulness.

Actions Taken

- (i) Applicants will be encouraged to return plans earlier or in difficult cases to withdraw the application and use the pre-application system.
- (ii) A Senior Planning Officer and a manager are working with the enforcement team to improve performance times and clear a small backlog of retrospective applications.

Pre Application Enquiries

The average time taken the Jan-March quarter was 20 days. In April - May it was 17.5 days.

Analysis

The number of pre-applications coming in been increasing during this quarter as agents take up the new service, but equally the teams have been getting them through the system and so the number on hand was 61 at the end of the quarter and reduced to 22 by the end May.

Actions Taken

None required.

Permitted Development Enquiries Jan-March 2009

These took 3.5 days during this quarter

Permitted development Enquiries April-May 2009

The figure has dropped to 2.6 days

Analysis

Easter and staff leave marginally affected the data during the Jan-March Quarter.

Actions Taken

None required.

Minor Amendments

The average E2E time for the quarter remains at 1 day.

Conditions Discharge

The average E2E time for the quarter was 13.7 days and by April-May it was 13.8 days.

Analysis

The number outstanding has increased from 28 at the end of the quarter to 56 now although the E2E trend has remained steady. This suggests the number being received has increased as there has been no slow down in actual turn around times.

Actions Taken

Nothing specific required – this workstream is not top priority and has to be fitted in around other activities.

Overall Analysis of the Workstreams

- This Planning Authority normally deals with 3,500 planning applications in a normal year, making it the largest in the Cornwall Devon and Dorset. Last year we received 3000 applications a fall of 40.% on the previous year. Numbers however are beginning to pick up and some large scale applications have been received e.g. Seaton Regeneration applications (3), Science Park, Flybe Academy, with several more large scale projects in the pipeline, in pre-application discussion.
- The quality of planning applications being received remains a problem with persistent reasons being agricultural holdings certificates not being signed and location plans not being correct.
- The majority of minor planning applications exceeding 56 days have been the subject of negotiations.

Actions Taken

- We have had a discussion with the Planning Portal about the new 1 App Planning form and changing the format to overcome the agricultural holding certificate problem. Research among

other LPAs in Devon reveals the same problem and the matter has thus been referred to the DCLG. It is now looking to remove the Certificate from the 1 App form and having it as a separate Certificate to be submitted only on agricultural applications.

- We held an agents forum at the end of May and raised the issue of the quality of plans and documents.

Value & Preventable Demand Survey

The survey took place between 2nd – 13th March 2009

	Check (March 2008) Value Demand	Mar 09 Value Demand	Check (March 08) Preventable Demand	Mar 09 Preventable Demand
Telephone	46%	63.3%	54%	36.7%
Post	98%	85.5%	2%	14.5%
Email	56%	75.1%	44%	24.9%

Analysis

Telephone: Preventable demand reduced by 17.3%/ 786 calls were received during the fortnight and the highest 'preventable' request was 'can you give me an update on my/my client's application – 127 instances.

Post: Preventable demand increased by 12.5% - principal reason for this increase related to the teams seeking more information either at validation or during the course of processing the application.

Email: Preventable demand reduced by 19.1% - 63 emails were received during the survey.

Actions Taken

- Agents Forum held to provide advice on how to improve application quality.
- Teams now also check at validation stage what other information they will require to determine applications and this is requested when confirming validation. It is not necessary information required to validate an application, it is usually supporting evidence that is missing.
- A review of the most preventable telephone call was done to check whether the planning support/technical officers were dealing with this request without passing it on to others (point of transaction capability):

	No. of Calls	%
One Stop	89	70%
Pass back	7	5.5%
Pass on	20	15.7%
Pull down	6	4.7%
Call back	5	3.9%

- However, more needs to be done to improve both the request coming in in the first place and if it does preventing it being passed on. Of course supplementary questions may necessitate the

pass on. During 'check' the CSC passed on two thirds of all incoming calls. This requires a re-survey.

- Our planning website is not as user friendly as we might hope (see above). It is due to be updated with a new functionality which allows an email alert to be set up for incoming planning application in a given geographical area or post code for anyone who requests it. We are also looking at providing Parish/Town Councils with an email alert on incoming amended plans.

Capability of Point of Transaction Survey

The survey took place between 2nd – 13th March 2009

	Phone Calls %	Post %	Email %
One Stop	66.9	90.5	89.9
Pass back	6.2	3.2	3.1
Pass on	21.8	5.7	7.0
Pull down	1.52	0	0
Call back	3.43	0	0

This compares with the data collected during check when.....

Analysis

62 of the emails received were from consultees, who cannot enter our back office data system directly. We have been designated a trial authority by the Planning Portal and English Heritage to try out the new National Hub System. Consultees send their comments to the Hub and it automatically down loads onto our data system, while sending an alert email to the relevant team. Software companies are currently developing the Portal connectors for this process.

Actions Taken

Nothing specific required at this time.

Lagging Measures:

Applicant Satisfaction Survey

Development Control: The survey carried out during this quarter showed a return of 95% satisfaction.

Other Surveys of Satisfaction

Parish/Town Councils: An overall 82% satisfied return. The key issues raised were the reduced advertising of planning applications, although there was no clear message about how this adversely affected the decision made and, accessing plans on the website.

Actions Taken:

Investigation has revealed at the CAPS data base and its link to the website can be improved by a new upgrade. The cost is in the order of £15,000

It is intended to set up a planning website users panel to gain a non-specialist users perception of how the website works and if necessary to redesign around this.

Staff Morale

A stress audit of the Development Control teams was carried out during the quarter, which will be reported on separately by the Head of Operational Development. No separate survey was therefore undertaken.

Budgets

This is the first quarter of the financial year and budgets are presently either on target or underspent. The issue of finding the £15,000 to upgrade the website will need to be found from savings.

National Indicator Returns

N157 a, b, c:

Type	Target	Last quarter Oct – Dec	This quarter Apr – May	Apr – May
Major applications	60% in 13 weeks	56.67%	16.6%	56.35%
Minor applications	65% in 8 weeks	64.15%	62.50%	74.34%
Other applications	80% in 8 weeks	85.90%	82.50%	85.25%

These statistics show a very crude representation of performance and do not accurately reflect the notable improvement in all the workstream activity. They focus only on certain categories of planning application and give a retrospective three month average.

BVPI 204 Appeals:

Target	This quarter Jan- March	Last Quarter Oct-Dec
Local	35%	43%

Appeals are a very volatile measure and the percentage can vary enormously in proportion to the number of appeal decisions received in the quarter. However we are now performing at the National Average.

The appeal statistics have been the subject of separate annual reports which dealt with the changes in process that have led to the improvement in performance.

Analysis

Our purpose 'say yes to good development' requires us to add value to the process and improve the quality of the development we approve, if appropriate. A customer/applicant based system will inevitably experience delays in decision making as applicants amend applications.

Future Projects

- Assessing the workload capacity of the teams in order to more accurately quantify an average workload per annum per officer to predict staff numbers against incoming work in all 5 work streams. Planning application numbers went down nearly 40% in 2008/09 but in the first quarter of 2009/10 went up 15%

- Working with the teams to use the measures more creatively as real-time indicators of where a team is with its workload at any given time.
- Setting up a lay persons web-users panel and developing the website and use of the National Hub.
- Setting up and introducing new system proposed by the Delegations Working Group to send draft reports to Members of 'other' category planning applications when recommendations differ and the DC Chairman's arbitration process for sending these applications for Committee.
- Re-running the Member Panel sessions of the future direction for Development Management.
- Devising and introducing pre-application charging system for major applications.
- A detailed analysis of the work flow for CLEUDS and CLUPODS.