

## Development Management Quarterly Measures Report 2nd Quarter July - September 09

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### Introduction:

The purpose of Development Management is to 'Say yes to good development' and doing so we meet the needs of our applicants. This quarter we improved on the satisfaction level of our customers scoring 97% (95% last quarter) and our refusal rate has gone down from 14.7 % to 6.7% which means in turn that we only received 28 free resubmission applications during the last year compared to 265 in the same period last year (1<sup>st</sup> Jan – 30<sup>th</sup> Nov). That is a significant reduction in preventable demand on our system and means that we do not carry the cost of the resubmitted applications.

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 as exemplified above. 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 this quarter we have been working with selected members of the public to test whether our website, which is the most used part of the Council's website, is accessible and user friendly. We are currently responding to the relatively few points of concern raised.

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.

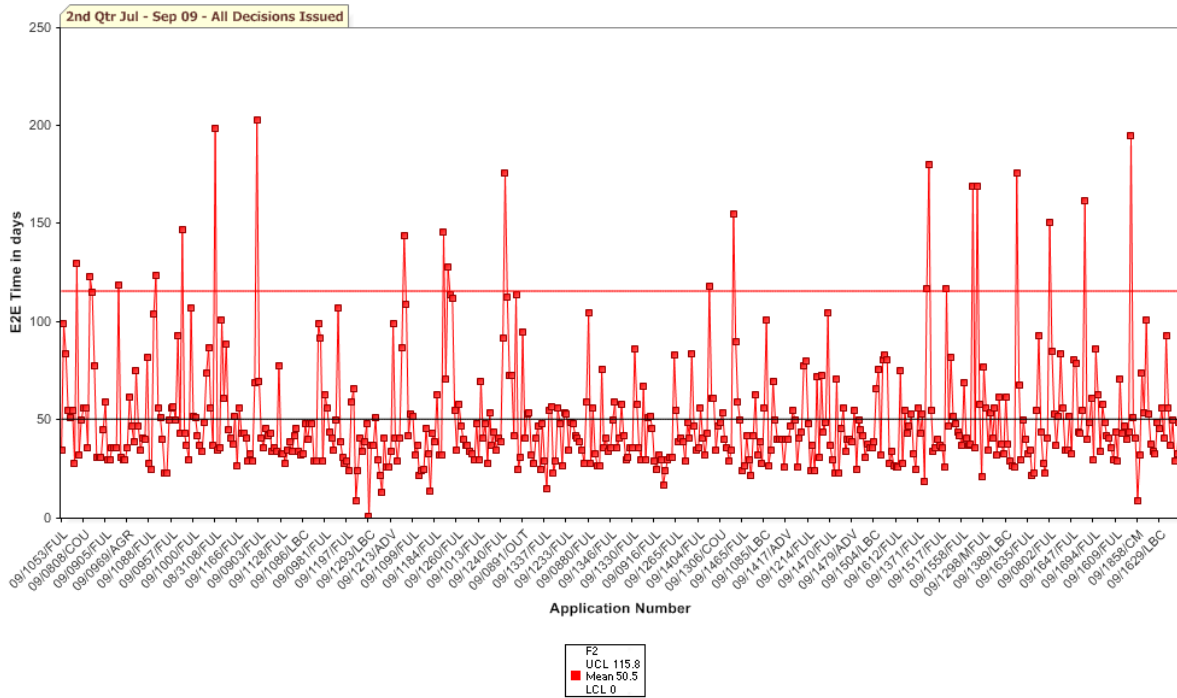
To deliver good results, the focus of management needs to be on the leading measures as the key drivers of improvement. If these levers for change are understood and used effectively then excellent results and customer satisfaction will follow.

The leading measure, 'End-to-End times for all planning applications' has stayed steady at 50 days mean average (49 days last quarter). This figure encompasses not only those applications that travel through the system smoothly but also those that have to go to Development Management Committee (for whatever reason) and those which require a Section 106 agreement, both of which inevitably add time to the process.

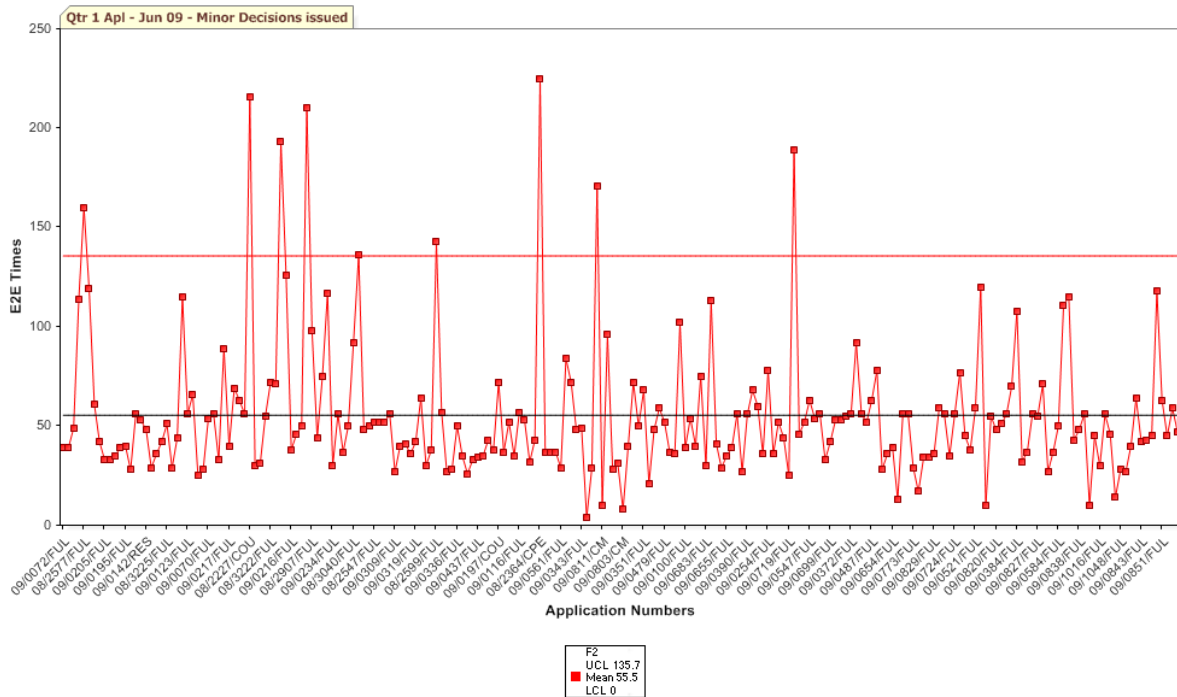
# Leading Measures

## E2E Times in the 5 Work streams

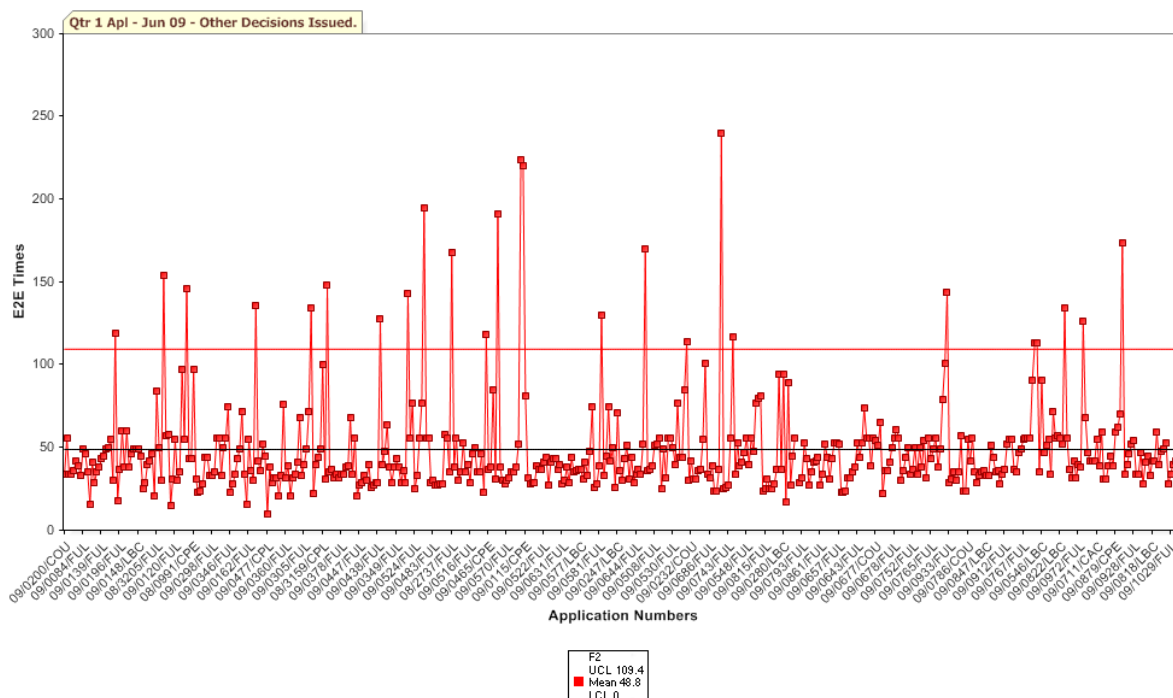
### Planning applications - (i) All decisions (major, minor and other) Jul - Sep 09



### (ii) Minor Applications Jul – Sep 09



### (iii) Other Applications Jul - Sep 2009



#### Analysis

The mean average time taken for all categories of applications this quarter was 50 days which indicates a steady level of performance, with last quarter standing at 49 days. Whilst this is a clear improvement from where we were before the systems review we do seem to have plateaued in the time taken to process the applications and this is consistent across the three sub teams – East, West and Central. The system is now well embedded and regular team meetings are keeping the system ‘live’ and evolving.

Whilst there is a need to keep a constant watching brief on times taken in processing there are a very wide range of applications in the system and a notable number of major applications were determined during the quarter, including the three Seaton applications and major applications inevitably take longer to deal with given their complex nature. Indeed under the previous target based assessment major applications were permitted longer timescales than the minor and other categories

**In E2E times the following is a summary of performance set against the previous quarters**

#### All applications

A mean of 50.5 days compared to the previous quarters of

48.8 days (Apr-Jun 09)

57.2 (Jan-March 09)

#### Minor applications

A mean of 53.5 days compared to

55.5 (Apr-Jun 09)

69.3 (Jan-March 09)

## Other applications

A mean of 45.3 days compared to

48.8 (Apr-Jun 09)

48.4 (Jan-March 09)

However the wide range of variation showing up in the Capability charts above, in the 'minors' and 'others' categories of applications, needs assessment – a recent quick check revealed that it is often amended plans (either being awaited or being readvertised) that delay applications. Sometimes these are unsolicited from the agent having tracked the consultee Responses coming in and sometimes they are at our request. Where they are the latter, we need to ensure that they are being asked for early enough in the process.

Overall we have received the following numbers in the 5 work streams:

### Work Streams Qtr 2 Jul – Sep 09

Work Stream	On hand	Received	Actions	Outstanding
Applications	331	504	498	337
Pre Apps	46	331	311	66
PD Enquiries	19	448	436	31
Minor Amend	17	66	60	23
Con Discharge	39	152	117	74

The number of refusals has reduced significantly to 6.7% of the total number of applications and the number of appeals has likewise reduced and those that have gone to appeal have been less successful in overturning the Council's decision – we are successful in over 80% of cases. The following statistics on the number of applications re-submitted (following a refusal) are noteworthy.

#### 1 Jan - 30 Nov 08

Refused: 407 (14.7 % of decisions)

Withdrawn: 92

Re submitted: 265

#### 1 Jan - 30 Nov 09

Refused: 146 (6.7 % of decisions)

Withdrawn: 42

Re submitted: 28

From the above figures, it clearly shows that we are working with our customers as the number of refused, withdrawn and resubmitted applications are greatly reduced. Preventable demand caused by the old ways of working look like a thing of the past. This new approach is greatly valued by agents and customers alike as evidenced from the recent agents' forum.

The added knock on effect, is that we are now only losing 19.6% of appeals down from 35%. The Government target on appeals is 33% of appeals upheld. East Devon is therefore performing extremely well on the appeal front.

Overall then whilst there has been a drop in applications performance when all applications are combined, this is balanced by the improvement in minor and other applications which is the bulk of the workload. The principal areas of delay tend to be when seeking amended plans, consultation responses (some internal and some external) and when applications have to be submitted to GOSW for final approval. In addition applications are delayed when a section 106 agreement is required. Some agreements are very complex and can take some months to resolve.

Improvements to the Delegation Scheme will be introduced in the New Year as agreed by Council in December 2009.

### **Pre Application Enquiries**

The mean average time taken in Jul - Sep quarter was 15.7 days, the previous Quarter being 16 .1 days. Again notwithstanding the improvement teams are being asked to ensure an even work flow rather than batching work. The recent agreement to charge for pre application advice will need to be supported by a customer charter which should be ready for inspection early in the New Year setting basic levels of service and our standards of what we expect to receive from applicants and what we will deliver in return.

Agents welcome such advice albeit there may be resistance from some agents when charging is introduced. This will need to be monitored and action taken as appropriate if agents start to refuse to enter into pre app and use the re-submission of applications (with no fee) as a route for achieving their approvals.

### **Permitted Development Enquiries**

These took 2.5 days during this quarter, up slightly from 2 days on the previous quarter. Whilst the figures are up this is only a marginal drop in performance on a work stream which is of less importance than applications and pre application advice. The service being offered is still excellent compared to pre Systems Thinking when such applications took much longer.

### **Minor Amendments**

The average E2E time for the quarter remains at 1 day. An excellent service has been sustained in this area. In addition the introduction of minor amendment approvals by central government allowing planning authorities for the first time to give such permissions is helpful, but this has lagged behind East Devon's long standing practice not to be bureaucratic and insist on new applications, as has been the case in neighbouring authority areas.

### **Conditions Discharge**

The average E2E time for the quarter was 12.5 days, a reduction of 1 day on the previous quarter. Again an improvement which the teams will build on.

### **Value and Preventable Demand Survey**

The survey took place during 2<sup>nd</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> Jul 2009

	<b>Qtr 1 Value Demand</b>	<b>Qtr 2 Value Demand</b>	<b>Qtr 1 Preventable Demand</b>	<b>Qtr 2 Preventable Demand</b>
Telephone	63.3%	62.8%	36.7%	37.2%
Post	85.5%	90.3%	14.5%	9.6%
Email	75.1%	69.7%	24.9%	30.3%

**Telephone:** Top 3 preventable demands:

1. Can you give me an update on my/clients application – 78 Calls (15.78%)
2. New general enquiry – 73 calls (14.77%)
3. Do I need planning permission – 60 calls (12.14%)

There is some issue here as to whether the second and third reasons are actually preventable or not. The assumption at the moment is that the information is generally available on the website and so there is no reason to ring in, but it is not unreasonable for a new potential applicant to seek direct information from an officer. If then these two categories were transferred from the preventable to the value category there would be an improvement on 26% in the value category and a corresponding decrease in the preventable category.

**Post:** Preventable demand reduced by 4.9% - Volume of letters has reduced from 255 to 124. Principal reason for this reduction is the use of email.

**Email:** Preventable demand increased by 5.4% - 191 emails were received during the survey, of that 107 were representations direct to the teams.

### **Analysis**

Our highest preventable demand was from Agents and applicants asking how their application is progressing. In addition many of the calls requesting updates are made by agents following the end of the 21 day consultation period. At the recent agents' forum agents were asked to track their applications but not make unreasonable demands on the planning teams by phoning on day 22 asking where there permission was. Agents were also specifically asked not to submit unsolicited amended plans when officers had not asked for them because on occasion this has led to delays as officers feel obliged to reconsult potentially affected parties.

### **Actions Taken**

New planning website went live in Oct 09, with vastly improved search and tracking facility. Agents can now get automatic emails for their applications. This has been highlighted at the Agents forum in November. Should see a reduction in the top preventable demand for both telephone and email.

### **Capability of Point of Transaction Survey**

The survey took place between 13<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> July 2009

	<b>Phone Calls %</b>	<b>Post %</b>	<b>Email %</b>
One Stop	77.9%	99%	93.1%
Pass back	6.4%	0	1%
Pass on	10.3%	1%	5.7%
Pull down	4.25	0	0
Call back	1%	0	0

## **Analysis**

On Capability at Point of Transaction, ie how well and quickly to we deal with incoming contacts, in the 'one stop' action (the officer receiving it deals with it) we have improved in all three categories with 3% for emails, 9% for post and 10% for phone calls.

## **Actions**

None necessary

## **Lagging Measures:**

### **Applicant Satisfaction Survey**

The survey carried out for this quarter showed a return of 97% satisfaction, with 90% scoring the service 8 or above. This is a 1% increase on the previous quarter. The total number of applicants contacted was 70.

Some of the general information and comments from our survey.

### **Top priority to our customers when submitting application:**

38% wanted an approval

31% wanted a speedy approval

### **Top priority whilst application is being processed:**

28% Internet was very helpful

14% Speedy decision

14% Thought the feedback/communication from EDDC was good

### **Scores:**

Overall satisfaction: 97%

90% scoring us over 8

1 person scored us '0' (given wrong advice from Councillor and Agent)

### **What would we have to do to get 10 out of 10**

22% Scored us 10

31% didn't give a reason

12% Quicker decision

### **And a few negatives .....**

Found the whole process very daunting just for a conservatory.

Had to change our design, told it was too big!

Couldn't believe we needed a design statement for a shed.

## **Staff Morale**

Following the recent Happy Healthy Here audits it is pleasing to note that many of the issues put forward following the Systems Thinking review have been resolved. Staff are now settled and the messages coming out of the teams is that staff feel able to get involved in more complex applications than in the past.

Workloads at present are manageable but work is still needed on reducing the backlog of applications still further so that the teams are in a good position to move forward when the credit crunch comes to an end and applications start to rise to pre credit crunch levels. As at 12 December 2009 the number of outstanding applications stood at 320 which compares favourably with the number outstanding at the end of June which was 371.

The Systems Thinking review of Conservation needs to be concluded as does a review of the Appeals team. The enforcement team are coming to the end of their experimental period with their new ways of working.

In addition the enforcement team will lose two of its senior figures in the retirement of Ray Steer Kemp and Dave Collings in the January to March 2010 period. This will create challenges with the potential introduction of new staff

The Eastern team will also be losing one of its senior planning officers (Rod Harrington) on a 9 month sabbatical starting in February 2010. This will inevitably bring challenges to that team which will need to be managed.

## Budgets

Whilst planning fees have still not returned to their pre credit crunch levels the budget generally is in a good position – the end of year budget predicted position is that the net position will be £50'000 of the estimated end of year figure, although the budget estimate was reduced to take account of the expected downturn in income. The fees are therefore no longer covering the salary budget as was the case previously.

Any increase in budgets brought about by the pre app charging system will allow the enhancement of the service by the introduction of a major project officer to deal with the large scale applications, currently in the pipeline as pre application work.

## National Indicator Returns

### N157 a, b, c:

Type	DCLG Target	Quarter 1 Apr - Jun	This Quarter Jul - Sep
Major applications	60% in 13 weeks	50%	52.17%
Minor applications	65% in 8 weeks	72.46%	71.32%
Other applications	80% in 8 weeks	82.68%	81.97%

Whilst these figure show that the minor and major applications are meeting the Government targets (the major category is better suited to an annual return) they are a very crude representation of performance and do not accurately reflect the notable improvement in all the work stream activity. They focus only on certain categories of planning application and give a retrospective three month average.

### BVPI 204 Appeals:

Target	This quarter Jul - Sep	Last Quarter Apr - Jun
Local/national 35%	27.3%	22.2%

These figures show the percentage of appeals allowed in the appellants favour.

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 significantly above the National Average. All refusals now have to be passed by the appeals officer to ensure the reasons for refusal are robust. In addition officers regularly discuss important appeal decisions at their monthly meetings and adjust future decisions accordingly. As the figures above show the number of successful appeals over a longer period is moving in the right direction.

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. In addition a monthly digest of appeal decisions is given to the Development Management Committee with an analysis given of those noteworthy appeal decisions which may have implications for future decisions of the Council.

### **Future Projects**

- Complete and implement any necessary changes following the Systems Thinking review of the Conservation Team.
- Complete and implement any necessary changes following the Systems Thinking review of the Enforcement Team.
- Consider the results of a capacity exercise undertaken to provide evidence of how long typical work stream elements are taking and what resources may be needed
- Undertake an evaluation of added value on planning applications to try and identify where planners have added value to the outcome.
- Undertake a review of Section 106 agreements which are outstanding
- Review the variation in times taken in processing applications particularly in relation to date of site visit and receipt of amended plans.
- Undertake a review of standard planning conditions
- Undertake a further review of standard letters particularly in the light of the council's decisions to change to a standard font size of Arial 12 pt. This will have implications for many of the 80 standard letters employed by the planning service.
- Improvements to planning web site to provide a simplified and more intuitive tool for customers