

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE 2009/10**

Chairman of the Development Control Committee: Councillor Catriona Morris

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This year has been an extremely busy year for Development Control, with many changes taking place. I would like to welcome our new Assistant Director – Planning, Nick Fenwick who has certainly made his mark very rapidly! I would like to thank Councillor Bristow for his help throughout the year, he has been extremely supportive and an excellent sounding board. I would also like to thank Councillor Galloway, there has been great teamwork between us this year working closely together with the public facing development control process and meetings, along with the thinking behind strategic planning.
- 1.2 The present Committee is comprised of the following Members: Councillors C Morris (Chairman), Bristow (Vice-Chair), McCall (Vice-Chair), Bint, Butler-Ellis, Edwards, Exon Fraser, Galloway and Klein. Named substitutes are Councillors Barry, Box, A Geary, P Geary, A Morris, Miles, White Williams and Wright.

**2. Review of Meetings:**

- 2.1 There will have been 27 meetings of the full Development Control Committee and Panels this year, with over 150 applications being determined by Members. There is still work to be done on the agendas as occasionally meetings are running well over four hours, but the majority of meetings are now ending at a more civilised hour. But on a very positive note, we do have lots of public engagement with many speakers at meetings.
- 2.2 We had a return visit from the Audit Commission who was extremely complimentary about the vast improvements both within the department and at the Development Control meetings. We still have things to do, a key area being the whole issue of value for money – and I must remember to refer to Members formally by their surnames and not their forenames! – but major improvements are apparent to all and particularly feedback from members of the public is far more positive. The most obvious improvement is to the Council Chamber and there is no doubt both members of the public and the committee are benefiting hugely from the investment in the facilities.
- 2.3 Member officer relations are vastly improved, and the confidence within both and about both is noticeably better. Members are now taking an active role in Appeals, and are well supported by officers. This last year we have dealt with an above average number of major and complex applications and officers should be congratulated on their professionalism.

**3. The Future**

- 3.1 So to the future - We are in the process of changing some of the procedures within Development Control to allow more public involvement and we are also adding to the functions of Development Control Committee to ensure Member involvement in the new policies starting to be developed from the Councils new Core Strategy. The Local Government Act 2000 is very clear that “a full exchange of information between the executive and any committee which takes development control decisions is essential”.
- 3.2 We have continued with the mandatory member training and an enhanced member training syllabus is planned, to ensure members feel well informed of changes as new polices emerge and also confident in decision making on some thorny issues – HiMO’s (Houses in Multiple Occupation) were this years key challenge, there will no doubt be many others to come. We are also in the early development of more training for Parish/Town Councils, those meetings that have already taken place have been seen as very successful from both the parish and council perspective.
- 3.3 We plan to review the officer delegated process, to see if there are areas that officers should be making decisions supported by members.
- 3.4 There is a distinct feeling that once a decision is made, members rather lose involvement, so we also plan to have regular reports, for information, on the Development Control Committee agenda, regarding progress of permissions granted, appeals, enforcement work and other areas that members have had involvement with.
- 3.5 Its been a very busy year, and certainly extremely fulfilling from a personal view, my grateful thanks to the officers who have been a major support to me this year – you know who you are! And I wish officers and members every success for the future in this vital service to residents.

**Annex A – Development Control Committee Year to Date Statistics for 2009/2010**

**Annex B – Development Control Statistics for 2009**

**Annex C – No. of objections from Town/Parish Councils**