



Building Control Partnership

Draft Business Plan 2010 to 2011

Director
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3
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Appendix 1 Organisational chart 2008/09

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 South Thames Gateway (STG) is a Partnership of three authorities (Medway, Swale and Gravesham) that was established on 1st October 2007 to build in resilience for the building control service across the Thames Gateway area and compete effectively, especially in the emerging market of sustainable construction and the reduction of energy costs for the built environment. STG has been operational for the past three years and this is the fourth publication of its business plan.
- 1.2 STG Building Control was founded on the extensive knowledge, experience, integrity and professionalism of the building control team. This has underpinned the development of the service and continues to be reflected in the partner councils' key objectives to be delivered over the next three years which can be seen on page 8.
- 1.3 STG Building Control has the autonomy to combine private sector flexibility and competitiveness with public sector rigour and professionalism.
- 1.4 We are committed to the regeneration of the Thames Gateway North Kent area. Our surveyors in STG add real value to householders, local builders, developers and house builders. We bring a wealth of local knowledge and invaluable relationships with other stakeholders in the process. It makes business sense to draw upon the skills and expertise of the people who know, live and work in Gravesham, Medway and Swale.
- 1.5 The main function of the STG Building Control Partnership service is the checking of building plans, the inspection of building work in progress and appropriate enforcement to ensure all relevant building work complies with the Building Regulations. The majority of plans submitted and building work inspected are altered and amended through the intervention of building control surveyors to achieve compliance with the building regulations. The service therefore provides significant value for our customers and stakeholders in achieving minimum standards of health and safety, sustainability, access for all in and around buildings and, importantly, protection through enforcement where necessary.
- 1.6 As STG is a Partnership of three authorities it is important that its values reflect those of the three Councils. Details of how STG contributes to these values can be seen in Section 6.
- 1.7 The Partnership has been heralded as an excellent example of "partnership working" by the Kent Improvement Partnership, a sub partnership of Improvement and Efficiency South East, who was impressed by the amount of joint working that was undertaken in the setting up of the Partnership. In particular, the effective working groups made up from finance, legal, HR, democratic services and operations. The model used has been widely praised.
- 1.8 STG is unique in the South East for centralising its business and transferring staff from the other authorities to the host authority (Medway).

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Building Regulations exist to ensure the health and safety of people in and around all types of building. They also provide minimum standards for energy conservation and for access and facilities for disabled people. STG responsibilities therefore impact on everyone within the areas of the three Councils it serves. Customers include applicants, agents, builders, developers and the general public.
- 2.2 Our aim is to provide a cohesive partnership offering a first class quality assured service demonstrated by our expertise, flexibility and professionalism in the interpretation of building legislation. To ensure the service continues to deliver value for money and excellent customer service these have been identified as a priority for this business plan and have been developed with staff to ensure that the application process and inspection regime are designed to cater for each individual project.
- 2.3 Our customer groups prefer to be helped in achieving compliance with the regulations through interpretation and communication rather than enforcement. This is a key work ethic of the STG Partnership.
- 2.4 Competition with the private sector has existed for this service in respect of housing since 1985 and in the commercial sector from 1997. Building Control is unusual in that it is a statutory function which has to compete on a daily basis with the private sector for the majority of work that it carries out. Bidding for work in the market place ensures the service remains competitive both in quality and value for money. This is reflected in our business plan objectives to enable the STG Partnership to be competitive. A marketing campaign will be established and the Building Control Consultancy will be developed in 2010/11 to compete with the private sector.
- 2.5 Building Control is a very busy service which dealt with 2,321 income related applications in 2008/09. This generated £1,058,000 of income and represented 74% of the overall workload.
- 2.6 There is a large proportion of non-fee earning work which the partnership still needs to carry out. This is resourced through the contributions from each Local Authority and equates to 26% of the Partnership staff time. This includes responding to dangerous structures, demolition notices, monitoring of Approved Inspectors, registration of self-certification schemes, general enquiries and pre-application advice. These areas of work are regularly monitored in accordance with the Constitution of the Partnership to ensure that the contributions of the Councils are cost effective and give good value for money.
- 2.7 The health, safety, welfare and convenience of our customers are paramount whether dealing with applications, dangerous structures, demolitions or unauthorised works. The service has been proven to provide excellent value for money and staff have identified that they would like to further enhance this by focusing on the consistency of service. An objective has been developed in this plan to review existing procedures to seamlessly align them with the supporting services i.e. development control, environmental health and private sector housing from all three councils.

3 BUDGET INFORMATION

- 3.1 In order to meet the timetable required by the Constitution, the first draft of the business plan is required to be presented to the Joint Committee in September 2009. Therefore the financial table below is a forecast for 2010/11 as the Plan is being developed using half yearly comparative data. Monthly financial monitoring is reported back to both the Steering Group and Joint Committee and revisions are therefore possible given more up to date information.
- 3.2 The contributions for each authority for non-fee earning work will represent 27% in 2010/11 of total activity rather than 26% in 2009/10. Recent time analysis reports suggest the split between fee earning and non-fee earning work is 70% / 30%, however, the latter is likely to fall as the number of building regulation applications increases.
- 3.3 There are further reductions in running costs and a small increase predicted in income for 2010/11 as the industry recovers from the recession.
- 3.4 Under the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 1998, the Partnership is required to estimate a reasonable amount that represents the aggregate of proper costs during a three-year period. It then needs to determine a fees and charges scheme, based on an estimate of the number of applications to balance out that cost. The outcome of the consultation on fees and charges due in late 2009 may provide a further opportunity to review charges during 2010/2011.
- 3.5 A business case will be presented by end of March 2010 to determine the viability of progressing the consultancy into a Local Authority Company. STG currently has two income streams, fees and charges under Building Regulations and the contribution from partners towards core and non fee-earning activities. Neither of these are appropriate for financing investigations into a consultancy arm of the Partnership. In respect of fees and charges, these are ring fenced for re-investment in the Building Control service should any surplus accrue, a situation which is not anticipated to arise in 2009/10 and 2010/11 due to prevailing economic conditions. The contribution to core and non fee-earning activities finances staff employed in those activities and any reduction in these contributions would adversely affect the trading position of the Partnership. Therefore any preparatory costs in relation to a consultancy service would require additional investment from partners albeit that it may be on an 'invest to save' basis.
 - 3.5.1 The business case will include details of the setup costs both legal and administrative, training costs for staff, insurance, IT requirements, advertising, marketing and financial advice. It will also demonstrate benefits to both customers and staff and include details of payback options and timescales.

	<u>2008/2009</u> <u>Actual</u>	<u>2009/2010</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2009/2010</u> <u>Forecast</u> <u>(September)</u>	<u>2010/2011</u> <u>Budget</u>
	£	£	£	£
Staff	1,440,451	1,333,041	1,281,876	1,277,085
Premises	90,051	91,700	91,700	95,624
Transport	58,184	62,571	59,021	58,940
Supplies & Services	131,099	173,645	186,858	169,373
Gross Expenditure	1,719,784	1,660,957	1,619,455	1,601,022
Fee Income	(1,061,797)	(1,233,199)	(1,118,713)	(1,168,746)
Contribution from partners for non-fee earning activities	(375,632)	(427,758)	(427,758)	(432,276)
Gross Income	(1,437,429)	(1,660,957)	(1,546,471)	(1,601,022)
Gross (Surplus) / Deficit	<u>282,355</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>72,984</u>	<u>0</u>
<i>Deficit allocation:-</i>				
<i>Medway</i>	53%	149,648	38,681	
<i>Swale</i>	27%	76,236	19,706	
<i>Gravesham</i>	20%	56,471	14,597	
		<u>282,355</u>	<u>72,984</u>	

Note:

The budget forecast for 2009/10 is based on information available through the September monitoring process and is correct at the time of writing (October 09). Every effort will be made to reduce the deficit over the following six months in order to reduce the allocations from the three partner authorities.

4 VISION, OBJECTIVES & KPI's

4.1 Vision

To provide an efficient cohesive partnership offering expertise, flexibility and professionalism in the administration of building legislation

4.2 Objectives for 2010/11

- By providing an effective and efficient administration and site inspection regime to improve customer satisfaction
- To develop a dynamic marketing campaign to increase our market share and raise the profile of STG
- Demonstrate consistence in the interpretation of the building regulations to ensure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of customers
- Develop the skills and knowledge of staff to meet the needs of the sustainability agenda and compete effectively with private sector competition through the establishment of a consultancy

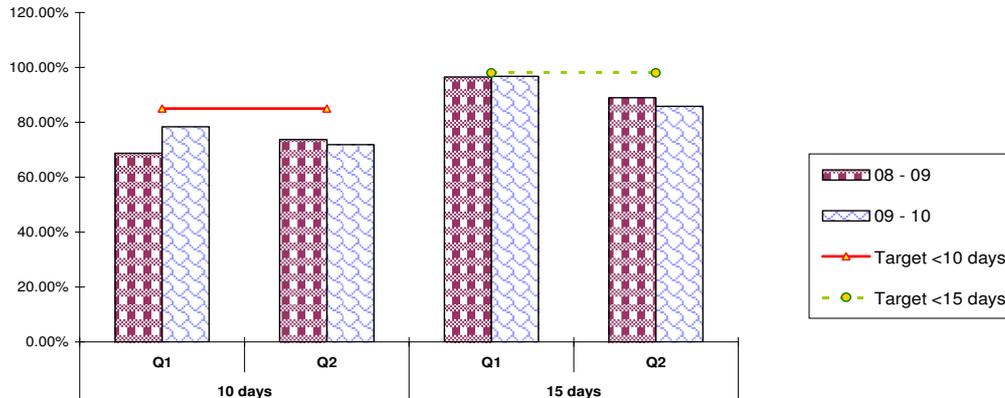
4.3 Key performance indicators

- Percentage of plans checked within 10 working days 85% of the time
- Percentage of plans checked within 15 working days 100% of the time
- Applications processed within 3 working days 100% of the time
- Overall revenue from fee earning applications to increase by 4%
- To increase income by £1,500 for each FTE
- Market share to increase 3% from 80% 08/09 to 83% by 10/11
- To establish an efficiency savings target by October 2010
- To increase overall customer satisfaction by 3% from 83% average 08/09 to 86% by 10/11

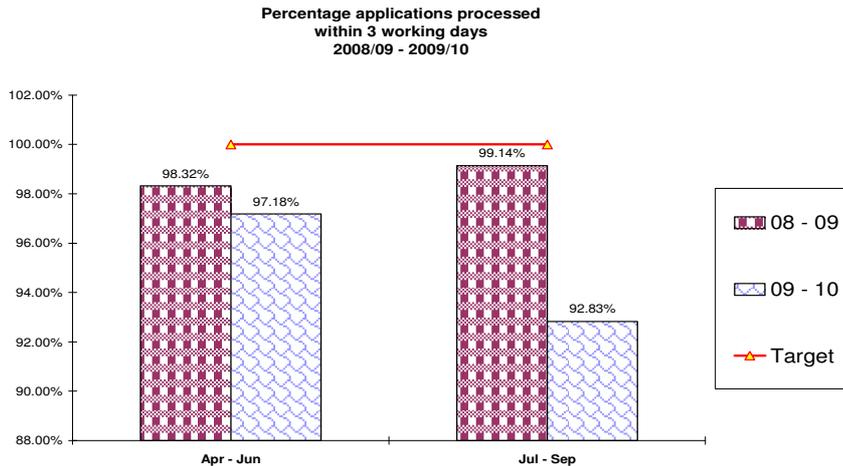
5 REVIEW 2009/10

- 5.1 Following the collapse of the construction industry in late 2008 there has been a slow and gradual increase in activity through 2009. The domestic market was the first to react with a small increase in the number of applications for this sector. Homeowners decided to extend and improve their existing property instead of moving, probably driven by the uncertainty in the housing market. We also saw an upturn in the number of Initial Notice applications for this type of work, as Approved Inspectors moved away from their traditional markets to target the smaller, more active, areas of work.
- 5.2 The sharp fall in the construction industry's economy adversely affected our income for 08/09. Due to a 22% reduction in the fee income received a decision was taken to reduce staff numbers by six (18% FTE). This also gave us the opportunity to re-structure the group so as to align ourselves better with the emerging markets of the lower value domestic markets and thus we reduced our area teams from four down to three. Please see Appendices 1 & 2.
- 5.3 The reduction in staffing levels combined with an increase in non fee earning work of 150% resulted in a pressure on the second quarter of the year in trying to achieve our target of 98% of plans checked within 15 working days. Performance targets were adjusted in the second half of the year so as to achieve our target of 100% by the last quarter of the year. The target set in the Quality Performance Matrix for plans checked within 10 working days remains at 85% and the change in working practices should enable this to be achieved by March 2010.
- 5.4 In the first half of 2009/10 overall application numbers were down by 11.3% compared to 2008/09 with income also down by 16.7%.
- 5.5 Commercial and industrial areas have been slower to respond to recovery. However, from research with our planning colleagues these types of application are proceeding through the planning process, making use of the quieter times and ensuring planning permissions are in place to take advantage of the recovery.

Plan Vetting
Percentage plans checked within set timescale



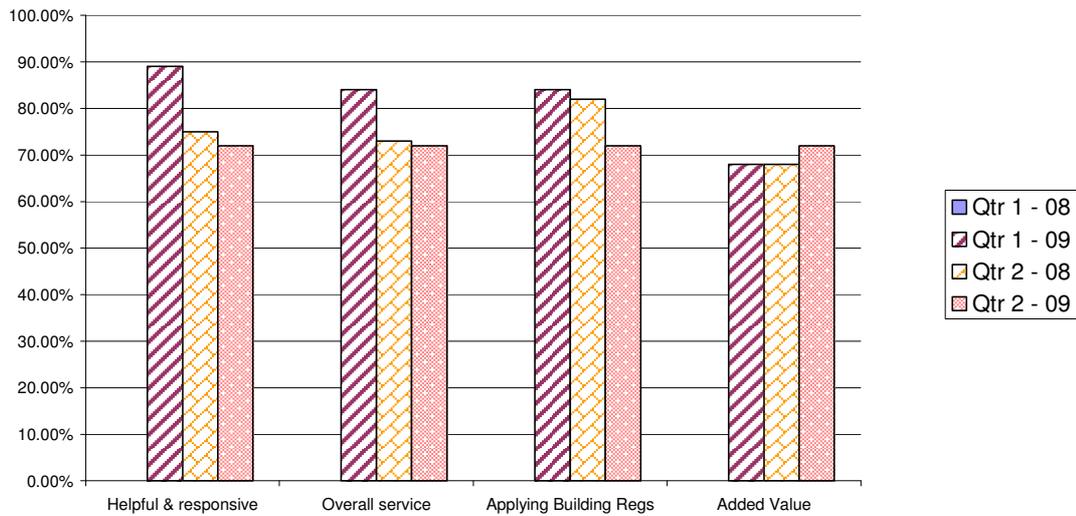
- 5.6 The original ethos of the Partnership was that it would cost the three participating authorities no more in contributions than it would to fund the individual services.
- 5.7 For 2006/2007, the final full year of operation prior to the establishment of STG, the partners reported gross costs of £1.86m to deliver the building control function. (Medway £926k, Swale £547k, Gravesham £387k). Even without taking account of inflationary increases, this is some £260,000 more than the gross costs of £1.6m proposed for 2010/2011.
- 5.8 There are demonstrable savings in operating as a Partnership rather than individual services as can be seen above even in these difficult economic times. For example, in pooling the supplies and services budget and transport budget savings were made of around £75k and £10k respectively in 08/09 against the 06/07 spend. Cost reduction measures were able to be introduced to reduce the cost base by 20% without adversely affecting service delivery. Clearly showing value for money in operating as a Partnership.
- 5.9 Due to the economic climate it was decided to delay the introduction of the consultancy operating as a local authority company until 2010/11 and a delivery plan to achieve this is shown in Objective 4.
- 5.10 One of the main drivers for forming the Partnership was to build in capacity where smaller operations struggled. We continue to carry out a same day response to requests for visits notified before 10am and give a wider range of times for visits in the early morning and late afternoon. Despite the reduction in administrative support staff we endeavour to ensure clients receive an early acknowledgement of their applications achieving on average a 95% record in validating and responding to agents within three days.



5.11 Our customer survey revealed an average 84% satisfaction rate between January 2008 and June 2009 showing a steady increase in satisfaction of the overall service. However, it was noted that there was a drop in satisfaction during the second quarter of 2009/10. An analysis of the results has shown that much of this was caused because completion certificates were not being sent out after final inspection. We have had to explain to customers that we cannot send the completion certificate until all competent person schemes appropriate to their development have been cleared. This normally requires certification from the governing body of either the electrical and/or gas installers. An explanation for this will be included in amended acknowledgement letters. The customer survey questions are provided by central government in an attempt to benchmark both public and private sector as they apply to all building control bodies. In discussion with many of our customers in the domestic market they find they are unable to fully respond to the last two questions (Applying Building Regulations and Adding Value to the Finished Product) in the survey as they would not be aware of the information requested. These would be more appropriate to large projects where the customers interests are being managed by a consultant or project manager.

5.12 As from 1 July 2009 we have gathered information on ethnicity as required in our diversity impact assessment through questionnaires sent out at commencement of works. We understand from other regulatory bodies that gathering this information is difficult and will assess the response rate and its impacts at the end of March 2010.

**Customer Satisfaction Survey
2008/09 - 2009/10**

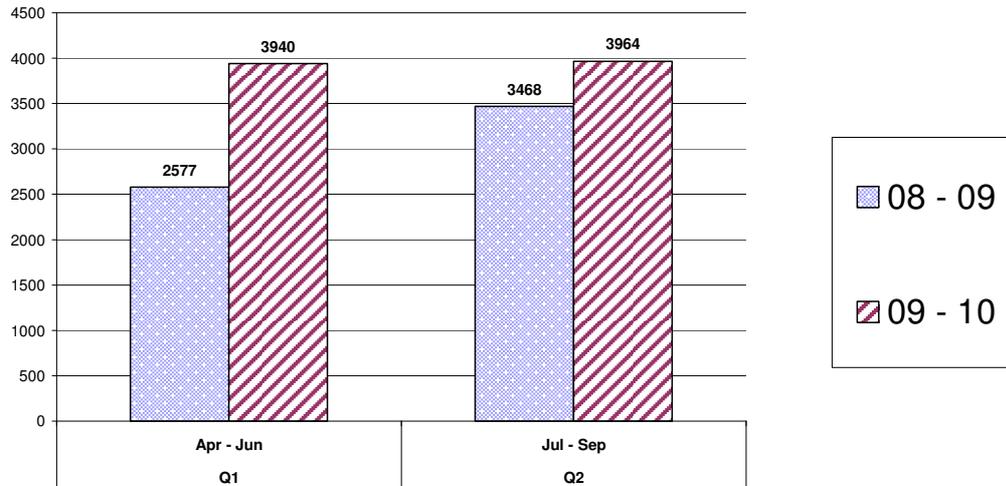


NB: Survey did not commence until July 2008; no statistics for first quarter of that year

5.13 We have been very successful in expanding our partner Authority scheme and have increased our partnering architectural practices from seven to fifteen in a year. Our partners give us valuable feedback on the areas they would like to see improved. One such area is that of consistency, due to the complexities of the Building Regulations, the accompanying Approved Documents and the secondary and tertiary guidance behind each requirement, it is not surprising that a number of differing interpretations can emerge. These inherent problems are accepted by our partners and one way of overcoming such issues is to have joint seminars on a number of topics so that we all learn together and can discuss variations on interpretation in an informed and informal basis. This has proved very successful and we have programmed for seminars to take place every three months.

5.14 With regard to site inspections we have continued to offer the same day service when notified before 10am. However, there has been a significant take up of the improved service we now offer regarding early morning visits. The comparative statistics for site inspections over the three areas are shown below and demonstrate a rise of 30% over the same period last year. This is as a result of a significant increase in non-fee earning work and greater enforcement activity.

Site Inspections
2008/09 - 2009/10



5.15 The Quality Performance Matrix was introduced in 2008. The matrix looks at nine key areas of building control performance:

Quality & performance Matrix for the Building Regulations Function 2008/09		
	Actual	Maximum
1. Enforcement and complaints	7.5	12
2. Quality Management and Financial	9	16
3. Accessibility of the service	5	6
4. Customer communication	4.5	8
5. Service initiatives	5	6
6. CPD, staff training and qualifications	8	8
7. Consultation, assessment of plans and archiving records	10	16
8. Site inspection, completion and archiving of records	10	16
9. Review of overall performance	10	12
Percentage Assessment Score	69.0	100.00

5.16 The Partnership reviewed its operation against each of these criteria through 2008/9 and has continued in 2009/10. The resultant score was 69 out of 100 and enabled a benchmark to be set in March 2009. This score will be compared to other Partnerships and other Kent authorities.

5.17 To address the areas above and deliver our stakeholders requirements we have developed delivery plans, which can be seen in Section 10, detailing how the objectives on page 8 will be achieved and success of each objective measured.

6 CONTRIBUTION & SUPPORT FOR PRIORITIES

6.1 As STG is a Partnership of three authorities, it is important that its values reflect those of the three councils.

Gravesham's priorities are:

- To work with people and partners
- To meet the needs and maximise opportunities for existing communities
- To positively shape the future of Gravesham In conjunction with the Government, other agencies and communities
- To provide services which are increasingly excellent in quality and value for money

Medway's priorities for the next three years are:

- A clean and green environment
- Safer communities
- Children and young people having the best start in life
- Older and vulnerable people maintaining their independence
- People travelling easily and safely in Medway
- Everyone benefitting from the area's regeneration

Medway Values

- Putting the customer at the centre of everything we do
- Giving value for money

Swale's priorities are:

- Regenerating Swale
- Creating a cleaner and greener Swale
- Promoting a safer and stronger community
- Becoming a high performing organisation

6.2 There are clear links between the three and all revolve around regeneration and sustainability, maximising opportunities for local communities and delivering quality services. These are also encompassed in the values of putting the customer at the heart of everything we do and giving value for money.

Regeneration

Linked to Council Priorities:

- In conjunction with the Government, other agencies and communities to seek to positively shape the future of Gravesham – Gravesham priority
- Everyone benefitting from the area's regeneration – Medway priority
- Regenerating Swale – Swale priority

6.3 Our consultancy is now able to offer a range of services to the major regeneration projects in the area. Early intervention in the design process will eliminate issues that could provide conflicts with legislation at a later date. Our range of services include:

Code for sustainable home assessment, SAP calculations, SBEM calculations, Energy Certificates, Access Audits and Fire Risk Analysis and reports.

- 6.4 We also work with colleagues in Private Sector Housing and Environmental Health to aid the transformation of areas through social regeneration, providing advice on bringing back into use empty and dilapidated properties, houses in multiple occupation and the refurbishment and repair of commercial premises. Through our unique and extensive database of historic records, we are able to work with many design projects to bring back premises in key areas to align with the regeneration policies of each authority.
- 6.5 STG is the gatekeeper for Kent Building Control's bid for the Schools for the Future programme over the next five years as well as offering the Design & Surveying team expertise in the design of Medway's new schools and academies. We also work with Medway Education and Business Partnership to assist in work experience for school leavers and are 'buddied' with Hundred of Hoo School, working on a pilot scheme for the new diploma in Environmental and Land Based Studies.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Corporate Consideration Workforce Development Action W1 (see page 39)
- Objective 4 (see page 36)

Sustainability

Linked to Council Priorities:

- In conjunction with the Government, other agencies and communities to seek to positively shape the future of Gravesham – Gravesham priority
 - A clean and green environment – Medway priority
 - Creating a cleaner and greener Swale – Swale priority
- 6.6 Building Control has a major part to play in ensuring the innovative designs for the regeneration of the area are still compliant with the Building Regulations. As sustainability is an important part of the Government's agenda to reduce CO2 emissions and reduce energy costs for everyone the adaption and renovation of buildings within the area together with control of new buildings will ensure the impact on the environment and energy bills are kept to a minimum.
- 6.7 The Government have stated:

"The Energy White Paper produced by the Government acknowledged the reality of climate change and stated a commitment to putting the UK on a path to cutting carbon dioxide emission by 60% before 2050 with real progress by 2020.

With around half of the CO² emissions coming from building energy use, the Building Regulations are a key part of Government efforts to tackle climate change through higher building standards. DCLG recognise that Building Control professionals are at the forefront of these efforts."

- 6.8 Whilst the changes to Part L will make an effective input into the design requirements of newbuild, it has been recognised that the greater part of the reduction target for CO2 emissions can only be delivered through effectual control of the existing building stock. There will also be changes in 2010 to the primary legislation of the Building Regulations to ensure that when most repair and maintenance work is undertaken to properties, consideration will have to be given to improving the energy status and airtightness of the building.
- 6.9 This key message from the Government and the demand from the construction industry for pre-application advice and discussion mean it is imperative that STG invest in continually training staff to provide the lead and the service that is required. This necessary training will ensure that sufficient qualified staff are available to provide a design service through the consultancy and a checking service through the administration of the Building Regulations without compromising the necessary checks and balances which need to be in place to ensure complete scrutiny in both the design and checking processes, similar to that which exists in private sector competition.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objective 4 Action 4.1 and 4.5 (see pages 36 & 37)

Maximising Opportunities for local communities

Linked to Council Priorities:

- To meet the needs and maximise opportunities for existing communities – Gravesham priority
- Children and young people having the best start in life – Medway priority
- Older and vulnerable people maintaining their independence – Medway priority
- Promoting a safer and stronger community – Swale priority

- 6.10 The adoption of the apprenticeship scheme is designed to provide opportunities for young people to train and embark on a career path to a professional qualification.
- 6.11 Through joint training, guidance and information sheets, together with builder and architect forums, the Partnership aims to support all of our customers in their building projects. This will assist in ensuring a consistent approach to the many challenges, the multitude of complex and interactive regulations now presents to every development.
- 6.12 Inclusive design is a paramount requirement of both newbuild and refurbishment works. Advising on compliance with the DDA and Part M of the Building Regulations is a major part of non-fee earning work. This not only delivers a more suitable environment for disabled people, but also transfers the benefits to the greater community, i.e. young families, older people and those caring for others. Applications for works to benefit disabled people increased by 115% in the first quarter of 2009/10, in comparison with 2008/09.

- 6.13 The majority of the work of the Partnership is concerned with protecting the community through health and safety requirements in the regulations or in other sections of the Building Act.
- 6.14 Important examples of health and safety requirements include fire safety (means of escape, fire spread and access for the fire service) structural safety and satisfactory drainage. In addition, the Partnership deals with dangerous structures, demolitions, dilapidated buildings and contraventions of the Building Regulations.
- 6.15 We assist with a number of local agents and private sector housing sections to ensure adaptations comply with the Regulations to enable older and vulnerable people to stay in their homes and maintain their independence.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

Objective 1 Action 1.1 (see page 28)

Objective 2 Action 2.2 (see page 31)

Objective 3 Action 3.2 (see page 33)

Corporate Consideration Workforce Development Action W1 (see page 39)

Delivering quality services

Linked to Council Priorities:

- To provide services which are increasingly excellent in quality and value for money – Gravesham
- Putting the customer at the centre of everything we do - Medway
- Giving value for money - Medway
- Becoming a high performing organisation - Swale

- 6.16 Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that building work complies with the Building Regulations (Section 91 of the Building Act 1984). If our requests to rectify contravention fail then, as a last resort, more formal action is used. There are two courses of action available:

Prosecution of the builder in the Magistrates Court under Section 35 of the Building Act 1984: in most cases, action must be started within six months of the contravention being discovered, the period of discovery being extended in 2008 to two years from the date the works were completed.

Notice under Section 36 of the Building Act 1984 requiring the owner to remove or rectify the contravening work: this Notice must be served within 12 months from the date of discovery of the contravention.

- 6.17 Most enforcement work is carried out by negotiation, and through 2009/10 the CLG asked authorities to demonstrate activity in this area. Prosecutions through the courts are an exception, but every day a number of the inspections carried out involve some form of intervention to either prevent or rectify work which was in contravention of the Regulations. We have worked with our software provider to design a way of capturing this information in the form of pre-contravention inspection reports, and will be working through 2010/11 to

enhance these so as to be able to report on the enforcement activity particular to a Regulation, i.e. fire safety, structural stability, thermal insulation.

6.18 As staff numbers have been reduced to lower the Partnership's costs, it remains important that a resilient and quality service is still in place. Therefore, alternative methods of working are being investigated to make more effective use of surveyors' time on site. Remote working will allow for a greater number of inspections to be carried out per surveyor. It will also allow for 'real time' information to be available at the back office so as to deal with enquiries more efficiently. This will also allow for better communication between office and site based staff.

6.19 As mentioned previously, consistency remains an important requirement identified by customers. We will be examining this area through the provision of training and shared experiences of staff and designers, the use of guidance notes and the use of comprehensive clauses, conditions and site notes.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

Objective 1 Action 1.1 – (see page 28)

Objective 1 Action 1.2 – (see page 28)

Objective 1 Action 1.4 – (see page 29)

Objective 3 Action 3.2 – (see page 33)

Objective 3 Action 3.4 – (see page 34)

Objective 3 Action 3.5 – (see page 34)

7 NATIONAL & LOCAL DRIVERS

- 7.1 On 1 September 2009, the Communities and Local Government published “The Future of Building Control: Implementation Plan”.
- 7.1.1 This Plan sets out key commitments, developed with stakeholders, to improve the building control system and compliance with the Building Regulations, and is the result of a Review of Building Control undertaken in 2007/08.
- 7.1.2 The Plan includes a new approach to inspections which will enable building control bodies to better target their inspections on more challenging or riskier projects.
- 7.1.3 It aims to help compliance by providing clearer guidance, including a series of industry-developed project guides covering the range of Building Regulations requirements relating to particular types of work.
- 7.1.4 The Plan also includes the first outline of the Periodic Review of Building Regulations. This will limit changes to the Regulations to every 3 years (2010, 2013, etc) and will help the construction industry to prepare for change and make it easier for designers, builders and owners to comply.
- 7.1.5 In response to the Future of Building Control consultation, the vision has been revised to reflect more clearly that the building control service is responsible for ensuring delivery of safe, healthy, accessible and sustainable buildings, rather than being directly responsible for ensuring that building work complies with building regulations. Such responsibility remains with the person carrying out the work and ultimately the building owner.
- 7.1.6 The vision is for a building control system which ensures buildings are safe, healthy, accessible and sustainable for current and future generations
- 7.1.7 To deliver this vision the Building Control Alliance and Communities and Local Government want to see a building control system which:
- is based on objective and fair standards developed through consultation and supported by clear guidance to aid compliance in common building situations
 - works with the customer to help them achieve a building project which meets both their expectations and building standards designed for the public good
 - works hand-in-hand with other regulatory systems to provide a coherent service to customers

- ensures that the level of inspection is appropriate to the risk and need
- gives local authorities the powers needed to enforce building standards
- ensures all building control bodies regularly assess and continually improve their own performance and effectiveness
- is served by a professional, well-trained and managed building control service which uses resources effectively and efficiently
- offers an effective means of resolving disputes about compliance
- includes communication and awareness raising in respect of both its purpose and the roles, responsibilities and expectations of its stakeholders
- monitors building performance and compliance levels to demonstrate its impact on the delivery of compliant buildings.

7.1.8 There is a need to be clear with customers that the building control service will:

- provide a checking service to help achieve compliance with building standards
- support and advise customers on how to end up with the result they want, but will not be a substitute for professional design and construction advice
- help with aspects of quality (workmanship and materials) where these affect compliance with building standards, but not where they do not affect compliance
- ensure that all building standards which are set in the interests of the wider public good have been complied with at completion.

7.1.9 There is also a need to be clear with customers that the building control service will not:

- be responsible for compliance – that is the duty of the person carrying out the work. If work is found not to comply with building standards the person responsible could be prosecuted and the owner of the building may be required to put the work right
- manage every stage of the construction process on-site – that is a matter for the contracts and arrangements between the client and builder
- address issues such as the finish and aesthetics of the final project where these are not relevant to compliance with building standards – these are a matter for designers, developers, builders and, to some extent, new home warranty providers
- deal with contractual problems between client and builder – this is a matter of contract law.

7.1.10 A priority of Communities and Local Government's Sustainable Buildings Division will be to implement this programme of reform. They are confident that this programme has highlighted the areas which will make the greatest difference in terms of increasing compliance and reducing burdens.

7.1.11 They are continuing to develop the package of procedural changes that were originally put forward in the Future of Building Control consultation. This work will culminate in further consultations on new and extended

enforcement powers and on building control procedures in 2010 which will be detailed enough to allow for full implementation to immediately follow.

- 7.1.12 There will be a more gradual evolution to a fully functioning periodic review programme, supplemented by clear and concise Approved Documents as the various parts are reviewed and streamlined. As part of this, they also expect building control bodies to think creatively about how they can meet the challenge to deliver buildings that reach the high standards that are demanded of them, and provide a strong customer-focused service.
- 7.1.13 They intend to review the effectiveness of this programme two to three years after implementation. In particular, they will be looking at the adequacy of the performance management system and whether it meets the needs of wider stakeholders. At this time they will consider what further changes may be required and whether more fundamental structural changes are needed, in order that all building control bodies uphold the same standards.
- 7.2 Another area that has influenced service and delivery is the introduction of National Performance Standards. In May 2009 the Partnership was able to submit its first return to the CLG and awaits publication of the national results around February 2010. The data has also set a benchmark against which we can measure our own output over the range of measures required.
- 7.3 The third external factor that has heavily impacted on the industry is the code for sustainable houses. There is a disparity on sites where affordable homes are being built to a higher thermal standard than private sector housing. However, many planning departments are requiring new developments to hit Level 3 or higher on new sites. Changes of Part L are due in 2010 that will raise the minimum standards of thermal insulation and ventilation requirements in line with Level 3 of the code.
- 7.4 The construction industry is slowly recovering from the recession and it is now predicted the recovery will be longer and slower than at first thought, but it is important that the Partnership is properly placed to compete for both work and staff.
- 7.5 The Partnership has to ensure it is in the best position to take advantage of an upturn in work, competing over the full range of services with the private sector. It is essential that through the careful workforce planning that has been undertaken we maintain the skills of our professional, experienced staff to deliver a first class service. The expertise of our staff must be put to best use in delivering alternative services through the consultancy and an investment must be made in training to ensure that they are fully equipped with the necessary skills to deliver a wider range of products to our customers.
- 7.6 Another priority of each of the Councils is the encouragement of young people to maximise their opportunities. Workforce planning is an essential tool to ensure the resilience of the Partnership and it has been identified that there is the possibility of four experienced surveyors retiring over the next five years. Apprentices have been introduced in 2009/10 to begin the process of training staff to meet any shortfall that retirements will introduce. Initially the apprentices

are at no cost for six months through a government training programme and, if suitable, they could transfer to a funded trainee position that has a detailed career path to professional qualification.

8 PERFORMANCE COMPARED TO OTHERS

- 8.1 As well as the comparative data which will be available through the National Performance Standards, which are due to be published in February 2010, the Partnership helped found a Kent Benchmarking club to review and compare activity between the Building Control units in Kent during 2010/11. It is proposed to roll this out over the southeast region of LABC to incorporate Surrey, Sussex and Hampshire.

- 8.2 The Partnership was reassessed and registered as a Quality Company under BS EN ISO 9001:2000 by BSI in December 2007 and was re-assessed and re-certified by strategic review in November 2008 and May 2009. Within the body of one of the assessment reports, the assessor wrote, "The lack of non-conformities and limited observations is mainly due to the organisation having an embedded quality culture which is evident in every aspect of the activity. This is noticed throughout the assessments that a complete understanding by staff of the importance of ensuring every activity which may affect product/service quality is measured." This is an indication of the staff's attitude towards providing a first class quality service to our customers.

9 SERVICE RISKS

Host Directorate: RCC		Service: STG Building Control			Manager: Tony Van Veghel		Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee		
Risk Title: Finance and Strategy					Description of Risk: Reduced income				
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners	Service Plan Ref.	Council Priority	
12/01/09	01	A2	Continuation of economic downturn resulting in low numbers of applications	10% fall in income	Insufficient income to cover expenditure on fee earning account resulting in extra pressure on each partner authority to fund the deficit in the agreed proportions.	Reduced expenditure to limit income deficiency. Look for alternative income streams through consultancy service.	1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.3, 3.2, 4.0	G4 MV2	
12/01/09	02	A2	Inability to sustain growth and acquire additional business.	All three schedules, residential, commercial and domestic show little sign of recovery in 2010/2011.	Surveyors carry out uneconomic site visits or transfer workload to additional non fee earning work. Increases in the latter would be unfunded from authority contributions.	Invest in training and development of staff so as to diversify resources into consultancy work. Increased time analysis monitoring to ensure agreed percentage split.	4.0	G2, 4 M1, 2 & 6 MV2 S1, 2 & 3	
12/01/09	03	C2	Current economic situation leading to increased debt arising from unpaid invoices.	Increased number of applicants unable to pay invoices.	Number and value of debtors increased affecting the budgeted income figure. Unpaid invoice provision within budget would need to be increased.	Careful monitoring of debtors list. Vigorous pursuit of large debts. Files clearly marked where invoice remains unpaid so as site surveyor can pursue on inspection. Taking over the functions of invoicing and dept collection from the finance department.	1.5, 1.6	G4 MV2	

Host Directorate: RCC			Service: STG Building Control		Manager: Tony Van Veghel		Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee		
Risk Title: Inadequate Staff Development					Description of Risk: Insufficient investment in staff				
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners	Service Plan Ref.	Corporate Priority	
12/01/09	04	C2	Failure to suitably develop staff to meet the needs of the business and match personal self improvement expectations.	The market is regularly changing to offer alternative services to clients which compliment building regulation work. The Partnership requires staff to be trained to deliver the same services and remain competitive.	Insufficient skill base would result in customers being more attracted to the competition with a resultant loss in work.	Ensure staff are well trained and able to compete with the services offered by the private sector. Develop training matrix to ensure staff development through PDR process.	1.3, 1.4, 3.2, 3.3, 4.1	G3 & 4 M1 & 6 MV1 S1 & 4	

Host Directorate: RCC			Service: STG Building Control		Manager: Tony Van Veghel		Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee		
Risk Title: Establishment of the Consultancy					Description of Risk: Ineffective consultancy				
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners	Service Plan Ref.	Council Priority	
07/08/09	05	D3	Lack of Council, member and officer support	Business case being presented to full Council and not being approved	Inability to repay set up contributions and no income to expand the service resulting in a decrease in the market share.	Discuss the development of the consultancy business case at joint committee quarterly.	4.5	N/A	

Risk rating key

Likelihood

- A. Very high
- B. High
- C. Significant
- D. Low
- E. Very low
- F. Almost impossible

Impact

- 1. Catastrophic (showstopper)
- 2. Critical
- 3. Marginal
- 4. Negligible

10 DELIVERY PLAN

Objective 1		By providing an effective and efficient administration and site inspection regime to improve customer satisfaction					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
1.1	To improve the efficiency of the inspection service using information technology	Phil Harris Operations Manager	Pilot of the MIS to be completed in June 2010 Establishment of an efficiency target by October 2010	Value for money	Pilot within current budget Potential cost of £3,000	Percentage increase of inspections per surveyor over comparable month in previous year Reduction in transport costs through less travel to main office	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings
1.2	To improve efficiency of the application and inspection process	Janine Boughton Head of Administration	Revised guidance notes published January 2011	Value for money	Within current budget	Processes identified by June 2010 Processes mapped by September 2010 Review options by November 2010	Fortnightly management meeting Quarterly Steering Group Meetings

Objective continued...		1 By providing an effective and efficient administration and site inspection regime to improve customer satisfaction					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
1.3	To reduce the number of abortive site visits	Phil Harris Operations Manager	Review the site booking process by July 10	Value for money	Within current budget	All technical staff to be training in frequently asked questions by Oct 10 Crib sheet developed by Oct 10 Number of abortive visits per month	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings
1.4	To improve the consistency of site visit notes	Phil Harris Operations Manager	Comprehensive list of standard clauses developed by Oct 10	Value for money Customer satisfaction	Within current budget	Review appropriate inspection site notes completed by Aug 10 All staff trained in new site visit notes by Oct 10	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings
1.5	To increase efficiency with invoice payments	Janine Boughton Head of Administration	To become self-sufficient in invoice distribution by May 2010	Value for money	Within current budget	Removal of function from Finance department by April 2010 % Of invoices being sent within 10 days	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings

Objective continued...		1 By providing an effective and efficient administration and site inspection regime to improve customer satisfaction					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
1.6	To reduce bad dept provision	Janine Boughton Head of Administration	To become self-sufficient in debt collection by May 2010	Value for money	Within current budget	Removal of function from Finance department by April 2010 To establish a contract with an external debt collection company by end April 2010 Decrease in bad debt by June 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings

In support of the Councils priorities:

- To provide services which are increasingly excellent in quality and value for money - Gravesham
- Value for money and putting the customer at the heart of everything we do - Medway
- Becoming a high performing organisation - Swale

Local Performance Indictors:

- Percentage of plans checked within 10 and 15 working days
- Applications processed within 3 working days
- Percentage increase inspections per surveyor
- Quarterly customer satisfaction survey

Rationale

- To improve the speed and quality of the application process
- To increase the number of relevant inspections to deliver the required inspection framework for each application
- To ensure continued improvement and customer satisfaction

Objective 2		To develop a dynamic marketing campaign to increase our market share and raise the profile of STG					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
2.1 & 4.2	Assess strengths and weaknesses of current marketing provision and identify areas of improvement to increase STG profile	Janine Boughton Head of Administration and Marketing Team	Marketing strategy published September 2010	Increase in market share	Within current budget	SWOT analysis carried out by May 2010 Revised current marketing strategy by June 2010 Draft proposal to Joint Committee by August 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings Marketing group meeting every six weeks
2.2	Review options for consultation and engagement with stakeholders	Janine Boughton Head of Administration	Review completed by June 2010	Customer Satisfaction	Within current budget	Options Appraisal by July 2010 Agreed consultation policy by August 2010 Focus groups setup by October 2010 A programme of engagement activity to be developed by November 2010	Monthly at team meetings Marketing group meeting every six weeks

Objective continued...		2 To develop a dynamic marketing campaign to increase our market share and raise the profile of STG					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
2.3 & 4.3	To understand who STG customers are by create a marketing profile	Consultant	Rebranded STG by October 2010	More targeted marketing campaigns to increase income	£3,000 for consultancy	Market research carried out by end May 2010 Marketing options identified in July 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings Marketing group meeting every six weeks
2.4	To ensure services provided by STG are easily accessible through information technology	Janine Boughton Head of Administration	Website developed and operational by October 2010	Customer Satisfaction	Within current budget	Pilot site available by June 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings

In support of the Councils priorities:

- To work with people and partners - Gravesham
- Value for money and putting the customer at the heart of everything we do - Medway
- Becoming a high performing organisation - Swale

Local Performance Indicators:

- Increased market share
- Monitoring usage of website through number of hits per quarter
- Increase in the number of services being accessed

Rationale

- To ensure we raise the profile of STG
- Retain existing customers
- Engage with new customers and increase market share
- Ensuring the widest marketing of the range of services now available through STG

Objective 3		Provide consistency in STG and National interpretation of the building regulations to provide all customers with a healthy, safe and convenient environment					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
3.1	To provide standard conditions available for both letters and inspection reports on site	Managing Surveyor	Comprehensive list of standard conditions available by July 2010	Customer satisfaction	Within current budget	Draft list of standard conditions for consultation by May 2010	Monthly team meeting
3.2	To review STG policy and procedures to ensure consistency	Phil Harris Operations Manager Janine Boughton Head of Administration	Publication of revised policy and procedures by March 2011	Value for money Customer satisfaction	Within current budget	Identify differences in interpretation through complaints procedure by May 2010 Identify a programme of continued monitoring through 2010/11 Training for all staff in new policy and procedures to be completed by April 2011	Monthly team meeting Admin meeting six weekly Technical meeting monthly Complaints meeting six weekly
3.3	Identify learning and development needs through PDR process and map in staff training matrix	Management team	All learning and development identified in the Matrix to be completed by March 2011	Customer satisfaction Value for money	Within training budget	PDR's completed by end of April 2010 Training matrix identified by June 2010 Publish a learning and development plan June 2010	Monthly team meeting Steering meetings

Objective continued...		3	Provide consistency in STG and National interpretation of the building regulations to provide all customers with a healthy, safe and convenient environment				
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
3.4	To engage with customers to obtain information on the consistency of service	Tony Van Veghel Director, Janine Boughton Head of Administration	Focus groups organised and customer champions identified by August 2010	Customer satisfaction	Within current budget	Market research carried out by May 2010 Focus groups organised half yearly	Monthly team meeting Steering meetings six weekly
3.5	To demonstrate to stakeholders the effects of the revised enforcement policy	Phil Harris Operations Manager	Increase in the number of enforcement actions	To protect the public's health, safety and well being	Within current budget	To record enforcement findings consistently in inspection reports by June 2010 To develop a procedure of engaging with the owner rather than a 3 rd party to discuss enforcement findings by March 2011	Monthly team meeting

Objective 3 continued...

In support of the Councils priorities:

- To provide services which are increasingly excellent in quality and value for money - Gravesham
- Value for money and putting the customer at the heart of everything we do - Medway
- Becoming a high performing organisation - Swale

Local Performance Indicators:

- The number of technical staff achieving their CPD requirements
- Reduction in number of complaints caused by interpretation of regulations
- The number of training days per FTE
- Increase in customer satisfaction

Rationale

- Increase customer satisfaction by reducing the number of conflicting interpretations of complex regulations and processes
- To provide for the continued development of staff and ensure they are up-to-date with legislative changes
- To interact with customers and clients to resolve areas of concern

Objective 4		Develop the skills and knowledge of staff to meet the needs of the sustainability agenda and compete effectively with private sector competition through the establishment of a consultancy					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
4.1	To assess the transferable skills and knowledge of existing staff to determine training needs.	Tony Van Veghel Director	Training needs assessment and associated cost report completed by June 2010	Being able to provide additional service and increase income and market share	To be identified through a cost report	Staff identified and encouraged to develop skills in specialist areas through PDRs to be completed by end April 2010 Research training options and costs by May 2010 Number of PDR and quarterly reviews monitored monthly	Monthly team meeting Steering meetings six weekly
4.2 & 2.1	Assess strengths and weaknesses of current marketing provision and identify areas of improvement to increase STG profile	Janine Boughton Head of Administration and Marketing Team	Marketing strategy published September 2010	Increase in market share	Within current budget	SWOT analysis carried out by May 2010 Revised current marketing strategy by June 2010 Draft proposal to Joint Committee by August 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings Marketing group meeting every six weeks

Objective continued...		4	Develop the skills and knowledge of staff to meet the needs of the sustainability agenda and compete effectively with private sector competition through the establishment of a consultancy				
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
4.3 & 2.3	To understand who STG customers are by create a marketing profile	Consultant	Rebranded STG by October 2010	More targeted marketing campaigns to increase income	Within current budget	Market research carried out by end December 2009 Marketing options identified in February 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings Marketing group meeting every six weeks
4.4	To establish a baseline to determine how much 'additional' consultancy work can be undertaken without affecting the building control service.	Tony Van Veghel Director	Baseline established by February 2010	Sufficient resources deployed to service the needs of customers and retain customer satisfaction levels	Within current budget	Establishing the processes and demands of each new service by February 2010 To calculated an estimated activity analysis of each new service March 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings Joint Committee quarterly
4.5	To gain Council and member approval for the establishment of the STG consultancy	Tony Van Veghel Director	Full Council approval by January 2011	Increased income and additional services for STG customers	Within current budget	Business case developed by March 2010 Business case presented to all three councils by May 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings Joint Committee quarterly

Objective continued...		4 Develop the skills and knowledge of staff to meet the needs of the sustainability agenda and compete effectively with private sector competition through the establishment of a consultancy					
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
4.6	To meet the legal requirements and register STG consultancy as a local authority company.	Tony Van Veghel Director	To establish STG additional services as a local authority company by September 2010	To be able to trade in the open market and increase income	To be determined through the business case	Legal approval by three authorities obtained August 2010 Business registration obtained from Company House by October 2010	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings Joint Committee quarterly
4.7	Attract new business through the STG consultancy	Tony Van Veghel Director	Market launch of STG Consultancy Services from October 2010	To establish new customers and increase income	To be confirmed once market research to develop the Marketing Strategy has been established in February 2010		Monthly at team meetings

In support of the Councils priorities:

- To provide services which are increasingly excellent in quality and value for money - Gravesham
- Putting the customer at the centre of everything we do - Medway
- Giving value for money – Medway
- Becoming a high performing organisation - Swale

Local Performance Indicators:

- Number of external qualifications obtained per FTE
- The % of consultancy work compared to current STG fee earning and non fee earning services
- The amount of income generated by the consultancy
- The % breakdown of the consultancies service provision to target appropriate markets

Rationale

- Supporting the current services of building control through a second source of income
- Effective use of development of staff skills
- More effective competition against private companies

11 CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Workforce Development (including recruitment, retention, development and equalities issues in staffing)							
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
W1	To provide development opportunities to members of the public to help retain knowledge and skills within STG	Tony Van Veghel Director	Number of opportunities given	Assisting the public into employment	Within current budget	Number of qualifications obtained Number of work experience placements Number of apprenticeships completed	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings
W2	See 1.3 above						
W3	See 1.4 above						
W4	See 3.2 above						
W5	See 3.3 above						
W6	See 4.1 above						

New Ways of Working and Value For Money issues

Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
N1	See 1.1 above						
N2	See 1.2 above						
N3	See 1.3 above						
N4	See 1.5 above						
N5	See 1.6 above						
N6	See 2.4 above						
N7	See Objective 4 above						

Data Quality

Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
D1	To ensure data quality and integrity within STG	Robert Wiseman	Data quality audits to be conducted on all system to the agreed schedule	Data security and improved quality	Within current budget	Data quality audit program to be implemented by 1 April 2010 The number of recommendations given after each audit	Monthly at team meetings
D2	See 2.4 above						

Fair access to service (equalities)							
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
F1	To ensure all policy, procedures and strategy provide fair access to service	Janine Boughton Head of Admin.	Appropriate staff to be DIA trained by May 2010	Equality and fair access to service for all	Within current budget	DIA training to be identified in relevant staff PDR DIA to be completed and reviewed to the agreed schedule	Monthly at team meetings

Customer Feedback and Consultation							
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
C1	See 2.2 above						
C2	To assess customer satisfaction with STG services by writing to customers at the end of the building control process	Janine Boughton Head of Admin	% of satisfaction with STG services	Improved services to meet the needs of STG customers	Within current budget	Number of surveys set out Number of surveys returned broken down by client group and equality	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings
C3	See 2.3 & 4.3 above						
C4	See 3.4 above						
C5	See 3.5 above						

Benchmarking							
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
B1	To assess efficiency and best practice by being members of the Kent Benchmarking Club	Tony Van Veghel Director	Number of new ideas adopted	Improved service delivery	Within current budget	Number of meetings attended Comparison year on year of the quality performance matrix Retention of ISO 9001 by BSI	Monthly at team meetings Quarterly Steering Group Meetings

Sustainability							
Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
S1	See 1.1 above reduction in transport cost would result in a reduction of mileage using various modes of transport			Reduction in CO2 emission			

Partnership Working

Action		Lead person	Output	Impact	Resources	Milestones/P.I.s	Monitoring
P1	To ensure public safety by working in partnership with the Fire and Rescue Service to ensure fire procedures meet the requirements before and after occupancy	Phil Harris Operations manager	Number of successful consultations that resulted in no further work for the occupant	Customer satisfaction	Within current resources	Number of consultations carried out Develop a joint customer satisfaction questionnaire July 2010	Monthly at team meetings Half yearly meetings with the fire service
P2	To work as part of the Kent Building Control Partnership to provide knowledge and skills to deliver the 'Schools for the Future Programme'	Tony Van Veghel Director	Number of successful bids	Value for money Customer satisfaction	Within current resources	Terms of reference to be developed for the partnership by May 2010 Number of bids	Monthly at team meetings Bi monthly KBC meetings