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Cambridgeshire
District Council

Pre-application advice

Agents Forum 20 October 2014





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Background

- c900 p.a. (c2500 plan apps). Means it is resource hungry
- Why we want to engage in pre-application advice
- Why we are here
- Have sought feedback
- Listened



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What you have said

- Takes too long
- No consistency in advice given
- Quality and timeliness of advice should improve
- Poor history in giving listed building advice



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- Proposed fee increases too high
- Pre-app advice should be free
- New fee for householder pre-apps is too high – service won't be used
- Advice for rural exception sites should be free



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- Remove target times for applications, thus allowing more time for pre-apps
- More resources are required
- Officers need to be better skilled
- Members should show more trust in their professional officers
- Pre-app service can represent value for money



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Ongoing applications

- Culture shift
- Backlog reduced from 300 to 150. Aim to reduce further
- Contact with customer to confirm level of advice required
- Close down enquiries



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New Applications

- Staff workshops
- Re-establish priorities
- “Soft” re-launch of service
- From 1 October 2014



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Key Changes

- Quicker allocation
- Formal Acknowledgement
- Early customer contact
- A more tailored service
- Revised template letters
- Improved monitoring



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Case Officer

By Day 8 the Case Officer is expected to:

- PICK UP THE PHONE and agree:
- Precisely what level and sort of advice is required
- Need for a site visit and when access will be available
- Timescales for delivery of the advice and project management where appropriate
- Encourage the use of a PPA (where appropriate)



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Outcomes?

- Quicker
- More proportionate
- Better quality
- Consistency – same officer throughout
- Become better skilled e.g. listed building advice



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In the future?

- One-off meetings?
- New website advice, application form
- More resources – 3 new PPOs?
- Fees – draft proposals



What Next?

- 20 October 2014 – Feedback from Agents Forum to inform November PfH meeting
- 1 November 2014 – One-off meetings introduced?
- 18 November - Planning PfH meeting – Service update. Includes new fees if appropriate.
- 2 January 2015 – Any new fee increases introduced



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Conclusion

- Want to improve
- Don't pretend we have got it right, or all will be ok overnight
- Step in the right direction
- We will continue to listen