

Analysis of Planning Complaints/Enquiries received by the Chief Executive in 2003/04

1. This note provides an analysis of the complaints and enquiries received by the Chief Executive in the year 2003/04. It does not include information about complaints and enquiries that may have been addressed directly to the Planning Department, since prior to 1 April 2004 only complaints and enquiries addressed to the Chief Executive were recorded and monitored. It should also be noted that the analysis comes with a 'health warning' in that it is based on data held on the Lotus Notes corporate complaints and enquiries database which prior to 1 April 2004 contained only brief details of each complaint and enquiry. The Lotus Notes system has since been improved and now captures information on complaints and enquiries addressed to all departments. An analysis of all complaints received in the first six months of 2004/05 will be presented to the Chief Officers Group towards the end of October.

2. In 2003/04 a total of 113 complaints and 26 enquiries relating to the Planning service were received by the Chief Executive. Of the 113 complaints, 2 related to property issues with the remainder relating to development control matters.

3. The following table provides an analysis of the development control complaints:

Subject of complaint	Number of complaints
Policy issues	5
Enforcement issues including the length of time taken to deal with enforcement complaints	30
Use of delegated powers	4
Failure to take into account objections to a planning applications	34
Poor handling of a planning application including length of time to process, delays in dealing with an applicant's queries	25
Poor quality of pre-application advice	6
Other issues	7

4. The following outcomes were recorded for the 113 complaints:

- 14 complaints were upheld
- 13 complaints were partly upheld
- 86 complaints were not upheld

5. The average time taken to respond to the 113 complaints and 26 enquiries was 22 working days.

6. The above complaints include 15 complaints on development control issues that were addressed to the Council by the Local Government Ombudsman. These complaints are summarised as follows:

- 4 concerned enforcement matters (one of these complaints was settled by the payment of compensation of £100)

- 9 (6 of which were from one person) concerned the alleged failure of the Council to take account of objections made to a planning application
- 1 concerned the failure of the Council to notify the complainant of a planning application (the Ombudsman proposed a compensation payment of £200 but this was not accepted by the complainant).
- 1 concerned the failure of the Council to take account of a local planning policy in determining an application (this complaint was withdrawn before the Ombudsman could determine the complaint)

7. Finally it should be noted that in addition to the 15 Ombudsman complaints relating to development control matters, another 32 complaints were made to the Ombudsman about the proposed East Street development in Farnham.