



## **Building Control Service Delivery Plan 2024 to 2025**

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### **Overview of the service**

The principal role of Building Control is to provide a service to the construction industry, residents, architects and agents, other professionals and internal customers. It is a statutory service, which administers legislation relating to the built environment and operates in such a manner as to establish and maintain a high reputation for both itself and the Council. It therefore aims to provide a responsive service, which is of a consistently high standard and gives value for money to all its customers. To this end, the fees review conducted during 2022 brings all fees into one holistic hourly charge rate, which shows value for money and gives transparency to all. The next rate review is scheduled for Spring 2025.

The service has two elements, which are described as fee earning and non-fee earning work. The building regulation aspect of the service is income generating and in accordance with The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 and CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting) accounting requirements. This aspect of the business must be self-financing over a continuous three-year rolling period. The non-fee earning part of the service is funded by the council tax payer and includes dealing with dangerous structures, enforcement, demolitions, support for the safety advisory groups and consultancy services to other Council services.

#### **Fee earning work (income generating)**

Validating and registering building control applications, checking applications for compliance, issuing statutory notices, carrying out site inspections and issuing completion certificates. All within statutory time limits and new BSR Guidelines.

Providing technical and professional guidance to members of the public, external agencies and other departments within the Council and externally where appropriate, including building regulations compliance and warranty inspection notes.

## **Non-fee earning work (Council funded)**

Includes:

- responding to dangerous structure reports including co-ordinating the response of external bodies such as structural engineers or statutory undertakers
- process demolition notices
- carrying out enforcement action
- providing technical and professional support to the safety advisory groups and consultancy services and to other departments within the Council

Local Authority Building Control is subject to significant competition from private sector building control bodies (approved inspectors or AI's) operating both regionally and nationally. This competitive scenario is applicable across all types of developments providing applicants a clear choice between the Local Authority Building Control service (LABC) and private sector building control Approved Inspector (AI) services. Competition has ensured that the service provided must compete effectively both in terms of level of service and cost. Nationally, there are 150+ registered Approved Inspectors. This number has levelled off in the past couple of years due to insurance issues and the rules and regulation changes coming into force post Grenfell. Government and BSR (Building Safety Regulator) Legislation and Regulation coming into force from April 2024 will bring uniformity to LABC and AI services including validation assessments, registrations, operational standards and Codes of Conducts.

However, the Local Authority retains the statutory duty of the enforcement of the Building Regulations in its area. Approved Inspectors have no statutory authority to perform this function and sites which cannot be signed off by AI's revert back to local authorities for enforcement. Thus, irrespective of workload and income, Local Authority must retain a building control service at some cost to the authority.

The service is also subject to a continuous programme of both administrative and technical legislative change. This means that management objectives and priorities may change at short notice. The coming year will also see the introduction of a newly revamped n exhaustive set of new validation criteria for surveying staff to accomplish. In addition, April 2024 sees the introduction of new Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), Operational Standard Reporting (OSR) and the Building Inspector Competence Framework (BICoF) via Government and the BSR (Building Safety Regulator)

The BSR have introduced a register for all building control surveyors across the country. Every single building control surveyor will need to pass validation at one of three levels and then apply to be on the formal register. Validation effectively means passing a 3 hour review module (similar to a theory driving test – mixture of multiple choice and longer questions) which will validate your competency level at either residential, general/commercial or complex building levels. Anyone not validated by October 2024 will not be able to carry out site visits or plan checking until they do pass.

## Cost of service

The cost to run the service is £575,885 per annum.

### **Building Regulation fee earning service**

This service is concerned with determining compliance with Building Regulations by assessing plans and carrying out site inspections at different stages of the building process. Customers are advised of contraventions of the building regulations and how they may be overcome. Legislation allows prosecution in the magistrates' court for contraventions of the Building Regulations but it is generally used as a last resort where negotiation has failed.

This element of the service's work is subject to competition by the private sector.

The estimated income generation for 2024 to 2025 is £345,000.

### **Non-fee earning work**

Building Control provides a number of services which are necessary as part of a local authority service. These include:

- dangerous structures
- enforcement of building regulations
- demolitions
- registering AI Initial Notices and Competent Person Scheme works
- processing disabled person's applications
- providing advice to other council services
- safety advisory group and safety at sports ground
- general pre-application and building regulations advice

These elements of building control work do not require payment of a building regulation charge and are not required to be self-financing. The estimated cost of the non-fee earning work in 2024 to 2025 is £130,750.

## Staffing Information

As we enter 2024/25, Building Control is made up of the following staff members.

Building Control Manager 1 full time

Senior Building Control Surveyor 2 full time

Building Control Surveyor 1 part time (0.6 full time equivalent FTE) – currently vacant

Assistant Building Control Surveyor 1 full time

Building Control Admin Manager 1 full time

Trainee 1 part time (0.6 FTE) on secondment from LABC national office for 3 years – no cost to department in terms of wages.

## Forward planning for Councillors

<b>Proposed item</b>	<b>Proposed date of decision</b>	<b>Committee</b>
Half year report 2024 to 2025	November 2024	Operational Services
End of year report 2024 to 2025	March 2025	Operational Services
Service Delivery Plan 2025 to 2026	March 2025	Operational Services

## Building Control Service Delivery Plan 2024 to 2025

This Service Delivery Plan describes what Building Control will be doing to deliver continuous improvement (service objectives). Each performance measure relates to the Council's strategic outcomes and Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027.

**Council's strategic outcome:** Maintain sound finances. Improve systems and practices.

**Building Control's strategic objective:** Actively market and promote the building control service to maintain market share.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound Financial Management

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
Maintain/Increase market share of local authority building control (LABC) services for all applications submitted in the East Cambridgeshire district	Minimum 80%, annually	Market share stood at 77.9% up to February 28 2023.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor (2) Building Control Admin Manager Assistant Surveyor
Achieve a break-even budget for the fee earning account and be self sufficient	Break even budget annually	Budget likely to be around 12% overspend by end of March 2024– income has dropped more than anticipated throughout the year. Planning applications decreased, knock on effect to Building Control. Cost of living hangover means people still holding fire on starting their building work – decrease seen and evidenced industry wide, not just ECDC Building Control – our drop still less than competitors and majority of LA's..	Building Control Manager Management Accountant
Review/improve the Building Control area of the Council website to ensure the information available is up to date and relevant for all customers	As identified, annually	Website improvements delayed due to further upgrades required in April 2024 following BSR changes. Will be conducted in first half of 2024/25 in conjunction with COMMS team and web team.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor Web team

**Council’s strategic outcome:** Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

**Building Control’s strategic objective:** Provide a dedicated high quality technical service to our customers.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sustainable Communities

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
Register 85% of building regulations applications within 3 working days of submission and 100% within 5 days of submission and where initial plan check payment is made	85% for 3 days and 100% within 5 days: annually	Currently 91% for registrations within 3 days and 99% within 5 days for 2023 to 2024 as at 28 February 2024. Only delay due to applicant mis-information.	Building Control Manager Building Control Admin Manager
Ensure compliance with building regulations by carrying out plan checking within 3 working weeks, making decisions with 5 or 8 weeks as determined on application and aim to check applications for compliance within 3 working weeks	90%, annually	95% of applications plan checked within 3 working weeks - 73% actioned within 1 week and 82% within 2 weeks.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor Surveyor/Assistant Surveyor

**Council’s strategic outcome:** Customers are at the heart of everything we do.

**Building Control’s strategic objective:** Determine building regulations applications and carry out site inspections within specified statutory timescales.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sustainable Communities

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
To ensure all of the required Government and BSR KPI’s, OSR’s and the Building Inspectors Competence Framework measures are accurately recorded and provided within specified time-frames.	100%, quarterly to BSR annually to committee	No baseline – new requirement from April 2024.	Building Control Manager Building Control Admin Manager Senior Surveyor Surveyor/Assistant Surveyor
Carry out site inspections the next working day if requested before 4.30pm the day before and within 2 days for large completion inspections	100%, annually	94% for 2023/24.	Building Control Manager Building Control Admin Manager Senior Surveyor Surveyor/Assistant Surveyor

**Council’s strategic outcome:** Be an excellent employer.

**Building Control’s strategic objective:** Maintain a full and professionally qualified team that is technically up to date with current and emerging legislative changes.  
Ensure that the Council’s corporate risks are managed effectively and mitigations are put in place to reduce impact.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sound financial management.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
<p>Identify training needs across the service by following effective performance management processes, ensure succession planning is in place and maintain a full professionally qualified (applicable to post) team</p>	100%, annually	Training courses successfully completed for 3 members of team during 2023/24 – All staff will have completed validation training by 20 March 2024. All staff booked on further training courses in 2024/25, both job specific and wider training on the system to further electronic working.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor Building Control Admin Manager Assistant Surveyor Trainee
<p>Conduct regular team meetings, ensure they have the correct structure to be valuable and warranted, including training, legislation, workloads; 1-2-1's and appraisals to be completed regularly</p>	As required, annually	Regular team meetings and 1-2-1 meetings take place continually – appraisals conducted and signed off for 2023/24 on 27/02/24.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor
<p>To regularly review risks associated with Building Control, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Safety Regulator/Register – keep abreast of all new requirements in terms of new Surveyor Register being implemented during 2023, all surveying staff need to pass validation and register by April 2024</li> <li>• Building Safety Levy – probability that BSL will be allocated to Building Control from Autumn 2024.</li> <li>• cost of living crisis - to be aware of cost of living rises impacting on people delaying building projects, rise in materials or lack of them, increased number of repossessions, increased labour costs</li> <li>• training/validation - to keep abreast of all legislation changes and in turn update our partners and architects, ensure staff are given enough time to complete validation training</li> <li>• updated SWOT Analysis - identify current threats to the service</li> </ul>	Minimum annually, annually	<p>All risks reviewed and mitigated during 2023 to 2024 as far as can be realised.</p> <p>Key performance indicators (KPI), Operational Service Requirements (OSR) and Building Inspector Competence Framework (BICoF) requirements come into force 01.04.24 and need to be implemented – significant changes to the way we work and report. Needs to be continually appraised.</p>	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor Surveyor Building Control Admin Manager Assistant Surveyor

**Council’s strategic outcome:** A clean, green and attractive place.

**Building Control’s strategic objective:** Ensure the provision of a safe and healthy environment.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Sustainable Communities

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respond to 100% of demolition notices within 4 weeks (statutory requirement 6 weeks) in order to ensure compliance with statutory legislation and support customer needs.</li> <li>Respond to 100% of dangerous structures within statutory timeframes.</li> <li>Attend and provide technical guidance at all applicable Safety Advisory Group meetings both internally and externally</li> </ul>	100%, annually	100% attended within timeframe for 2023 to 2024.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor Surveyor Assistant Surveyor Customer Service Team

**Council’s strategic outcome:** A clean, green and attractive place.

**Building Control’s strategic objective:** Undertake activities which help to mitigate/adapt to climate change.

**Link to Corporate Plan:** Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire.

Performance measure	Target and reporting timescale	Baseline/output from 2023 to 2024	Owner and co-owners
Implement further digitisation of our service in order to reduce paper use and postage/printing costs (specifically in 2023 to 2024, send all acknowledgement letters by email only, rather than post, and investigate other measures to further reduce paper/printing/postage usage	Implement line of business system (IDOX Uniform) audit by March 2025	Digitisation started in January 2023 – too early to see benefits yet – hoping to see savings in excess of £3K in 2023 to 2024.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor Surveyor Building Control Admin Manager Assistant Surveyor
Reduce the number of business miles by putting in place measures within the team whereby officers reduce both the number of site visits to those which are strictly necessary, and combine site visits to a single journey where this is practicable	As identified, annually	New performance measure. This should reduce the overall mileage undertaken by officers - baseline to be established - resulting in both a financial saving and carbon emissions saving for the Council.	Building Control Manager Senior Surveyor Surveyor Building Control Admin Manager Assistant Surveyor