

Planning & Development Services

Service Improvement Plan 2004/05 – 2006/07

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1. **Introduction**

The Planning & Development Services Service Improvement Plan sets out the actions proposed to bring all of the functions involved within the group up to a standard which will place Harrow within the higher performing authorities. It builds on the Best Value Review of Planning and Building Control in 2001 and the Improvement Plans which were agreed at that time. This is consistent with the Council's objective of being classified as a 'Good' authority in the next CPA.

Building Control is already within this category, having attained a '3 star' rating in its Best Value review, and the plan is intended to ensure the rating is secured and that the culture of continuing improvement is maintained.

For Development Control and Forward Planning, the Improvement Plan has the objective first and foremost of delivering against the national performance indicators set for the services. It then goes beyond those standards to take the Borough into upper quartile of Local Planning Authorities and avoid any future possibility of being designated as a 'Standards Authority' (see Section 2). However, it is not only about meeting performance indicators. Achieving these standards must go hand in hand with providing quality services to customers in all respects and many of the actions set out are designed to meet these broader objectives.

Development Control and Forward/Local Planning have made significant progress in the last year, as a result of a combination of some increase in resources and considerable commitment on behalf of existing staff, and these achievements are set out in the report. Sustaining the improvements achieved to date and meeting future targets will again require further resources, including reinvestment of planning fee income and Planning Delivery Grant, and the Plan sets out what resources are necessary and how and when they are to be secured.

Also on the Cabinet's agenda is a report on the Senior Management Structure, recommending the establishment of the post of Director of Strategic Planning, responsible to the Chief Executive. This post is intended to take on the role as lead officer for the authority on a number of key strategic planning issues, in particular the development of Harrow Town Centre. Currently this work is led by the Chief Planning Officer, but it is not considered sustainable for the Chief Planning Officer to undertake this role as well as implementing the Service Improvement Plan and managing the day-to-day work of the Planning & Development Service.

Splitting the roles will provide the necessary senior management capacity to ensure the Improvement Plan targets are achieved as well as reinforcing the role of planning as a key corporate function.

Further changes to staffing and structures may occur as the overall structures of urban Living and the Professional Services Directorate develop. It is not anticipated that this will have further significant impact on the shape of the Planning & Development Group, but the outcome of the Middle Management Review will determine gradings and salaries of the posts involved.

As pressures and demands on the service change, the Improvement Plan will be reviewed and further changes may result.

2. Development Control

Past Performance

For the past 10 years there has been a consistent increase in the numbers of planning applications received and determined by the Council, the totals for both doubling over the period. Over the same timescale the numbers of development control staff remained static until 2001/02, and the performance against the government target of 80% of applications determined in 8 weeks steadily declined from 73% in 1993/94 to 46% in 2000/01. Since then performance improved to 62% in weeks in 2002/03, although the Government targets were revised in 2001/02 to split major, minor and other applications and these are now the relevant Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). These trends are shown on tables 1 and 2.

Inevitably with a static staffing situation and increasing numbers of applications the caseload per officer has increased significantly, from 140 in 1994/95 to 210 in 2001/02. Two extra staff were appointed in 2002/03 following the Best Value Review reducing the caseload in 2002/03, but the rise in numbers of applications has brought this back up to 220 in the current year. The ODPM has adopted a figure of 150 applications per year as a sustainable average for a DC case officer, assuming they have no additional workload in particular on appeals. Members will appreciate that the current caseload in Harrow is some 47% above this figure, and the staff are expected to deal with appeals arising from their casework themselves.

The revised Government BVPI targets which set different targets for 'major', 'minor' and 'other' applications were introduced in 2001/02 and the Council's performance for 2001/02, 2002/03 and the current year to date is shown in the table below. Members will note that there has been a significant improvement in the current years performance compared with 2001/02 and 2002/03 except for minor applications. However, much of this improvement has happened in the second half of the year, as measures put in place started to take effect and unfortunately this was outside of the period used by ODPM to calculate Planning Delivery Grant and in assessing the performance of 'Standards Authorities'.

	Major		Minor		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
2001/02	25	24	292	37	1904	62
2002/03	31	32	344	37	2100	63
2003/04 (to Dec 03)	22	52	102	32	1371	79
BVPI target		60		65		80

Source : PS1 and PS2 returns

For January to March 2004, the estimated respective figures were:

	Major		Minor		Other	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jan-Mar 2004	9	69	59	51	491	83

Source : Ocella monitoring

Standards Authority Designation

As a means towards improving Development Control performance nationally the Government introduced the 'Standards Authority' initiative in 2002/03. This set BV performance standards in respect of the three categories of applications (major, minor and other) for authorities with a recent history of poor performance.

The Government's assessment of performance has been based on data available from statistical returns and therefore has been somewhat dated. Harrow was designated a 'standards' authority for 2002/03 based on performance in 2000/01, and subsequently has also been designated for 2003/04 and 2004/05.

The standards set and performance against them is set out below:-

Performance Standard			
	Major	Minor	Other
2002/03	Not designated (32%)*	50% (38%)*	65% (63%)*
2003/04	50% (57%)*	Not designated	Not designated
2004/05	52%	58%	Not designated

()* actual figures

On the basis of the current performance, the performance standard set for the current year 2003/04 for major applications should be met. Similarly, on current performance the standard for major applications for 2004/05 should also be met whereas it is unlikely that the standard for minor applications (58%) will be met unless remedial action is taken.

While the performance standards are important milestones against which ODPM will be judging the authority, the first objective remains the national BVPIs (60%, 65% and 80% respectively) and the Service Improvement Plan is directed to achieve and exceed these figures. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) will also be concerned with the comparative performance against BVPIs and other authorities. The Improvement Plan is therefore targeted initially at reaching the Government target thresholds and then to achieve upper quartile status, recognising the other authorities are also improving their own performance and the target will be moving upwards.

Current Year Performance

Two more detailed tables (3 & 4) showing current year performance against BVPI109 are set out in the Index of Tables which illustrate both quarterly totals and cumulative totals. Both tables also show the percentage of applications delegated to officers. The charts show a consistently good performance on 'other' applications, just short of the government target figure at 79%, a significant improvement on major applications, the last quarter running at 69%, while minor applications are still considerably below the target figure (32% compared with 65% target).

The improved performance in the current year has been as a result of the consolidation of the restructuring into delegated and committee teams, the appointment of additional permanent and temporary staff, and improved monitoring systems, in particular for major applications. Clear guidelines have been introduced in respect of negotiation on applications, which provide an opportunity for applicants to amend unsatisfactory

schemes but which stipulate that if amendments are not received within a set timescale applications will be refused.

The impact of revisions to the scheme of delegation have so far been marginal. However the problem area in respect of minor applications is affected by the numbers which are determined by Committee (30% in current year, 114 applications). It is difficult to meet the 8-week target where applications have to be determined by Committee. Whereas 70% of delegated minor applications are determined within 8 weeks, the figure for those which are decided by DC Committee is only 10%. Further revisions to the delegation scheme moving towards an 'exceptions' system where applications are delegated except for certain specific categories or where numbers request them to be brought before the Committee, will be necessary if this is to be addressed together with a focussed monitoring system for the minor application category.

Comparisons with other London Boroughs

For the last full year for which information is available (2002/03) Harrow's performance against BVPIs for dealing with planning applications showed the authority in the 3rd quartile for major development (22nd out of 33), the bottom quartile for minor development (30th out of 33) and the 3rd quartile for other development (21st out of 33). (See tables 5(a), (b) & (c)).

For the latest available quarter of 2003/04 (October to December) the comparative performance has improved in respect of major and other applications, but minor has slipped back further (tables 6(a), (b) & (c)).

For the first 3 quarters of 2003/04 the comparative performance against other London Boroughs for major and other decisions has improved, but the minor performance has slipped (see table 6b).

The percentage of decisions delegated to officers in 2002/03 ranked 23rd equal (85%). (See table 7).

The officer caseload per annum is not a statistic available from Government sources. The annual CIPFA planning and development statistics do record 'applications determined per development control staff', which includes case officers, managers and administrative support. The figures for the last three years available compared with 20 Outer London Boroughs are:-

	Harrow	OL Average	Rank
2000	117	104	9 th highest
2001	89	76	5 th highest
2002	106	84	3 rd highest

The absolute figures must be treated with some caution because of changes in definitions between years, but the comparison gives a clear indication that Harrow has a comparatively high caseload per officer compared with other Boroughs.

Consultants working for ODPM on the 'Standards Authorities' assessments put forward a figure of 150 as a reasonable average caseload, but this is based on the number of applications received, and relates only to DC case officers, not all DC staff. On this basis, the current workload is 220 applications per officer per annum.

Average figures do not provide an exact comparison, but, when put alongside the ODPM benchmark of 150, do show that Harrow's productivity rate is at the higher end of the scale. Improvements in efficiency have been clearly demonstrated over the past four years as performance has improved at the same time as the overall workload has increased. This is shown on Table 11.

Targets

The tables 8 - 10 below set out targets for DC performance for the next three years. These are aimed at achieving the national targets by 2005/06, and exceeding them by 5% in 2006/07. The ambition to exceed national targets is driven by the objective of placing the authority in the upper performance quartile, the need to introduce some excess capacity into the system to allow for unforeseen circumstances, and because the current planning delivery grant criteria rewards performance over and above the target figures. The CPA will be influenced by the Borough's comparative performance against other authorities as well as against BVPIs.

The targets also assumes increasing the level of delegation to 95% by amending the scheme to work on an exception basis as soon as possible. This is particularly relevant in meeting the targets set for minor applications, where the 8-week deadline is rarely achieved for committee cases.

In addition, it is necessary to set local PIs for the success rate on appeal, and for the enforcement function, to improve on negotiating and monitoring S106 agreements particularly in respect of affordable housing, and to have a more focussed performance management and service development framework in place. Improvements in IT will be essential to support all aspects of the improvement plan.

Table 8

2004/05 Targets			
	Local Target	Planning Standards target	National target
Major applications	60%	52% in 13 weeks	60% in 13 weeks
Minor applications	65%	58% in 8 weeks	65% in 8 weeks
Other applications	80%	N/A	80% in 8 weeks
Decisions delegated to officers	95%	N/A	N/A

Table 9

2005/06 Targets			
	Local Target	Planning Standards target	National target
Major applications	62%	N/A	60% in 13 weeks
Minor applications	67%	N/A	65% in 8 weeks
Other applications	82%	N/A	80% in 8 weeks
Decisions delegated to officers	95%	N/A	N/A

Table 10

2006/07 Targets			
	Local Target	Planning Standards target	National target
Minor applications	65%	N/A	60% in 13 weeks
Minor applications	70%	N/A	65% in 8 weeks
Other applications	85%	N/A	80% in 8 weeks
Decisions delegated to officers	95%	N/A	N/A

Quality of Decision Making

In the search for improvement in the speed of decision-making, it will be essential to ensure the quality of decisions is maintained and improved. Quality of decisions can be measured to an extent in terms of the authority's success at appeal, and a poor appeal record is now being used in the criteria for PDG to reduce the financial awards. The ODPM criteria for 2003/04 is that any authority which shows a record of losing appeals at more than 50% over the national average will have its PDG reduced by 10%. Harrow's current rate for 2003/04 is running at 31% of appeals allowed and the national average for 2002/03 is 36.1%. The Council is therefore performing well above the national average in this respect.

Factors which can influence this are having an up to date statutory planning framework and supplementary planning guidance, and training for both members and officers. Progress on the UDP and guidance is now well advanced, and member and officer training programmes are included in the Improvement Plan.

For the year commencing April 2004, the government is introducing a new Best Value Performance Indicator in the form of a Quality of Service Checklist. The authority will be scored against whether it has systems in place in respect of the following:-

- A. Written Guidance for applicants on a range of types of development
- B. The provision of pre-application advice

- C. The availability of specialist advice on design matters
- D. The availability of specialist advice on conservation matters
- E. Whether the Authority has a multi-disciplinary team approach to dealing with major applications
- F. Whether the Authority provides the capability for an electronic planning service

Each category has subdivisions against which a 'yes' or 'no' answer can be given and the authority will be scored against the total. This BVPI will be used as a criteria for assessing the authority's performance and therefore the Improvement Plan addresses these matters also. Harrow should score reasonably well against most categories but will fall short on electronic service delivery where the improvements necessary to enable applications to be submitted on-line, processed and accessed electronically will not be in place within the next financial year.

Processes and Structures

Meeting the set targets is dependant upon having reliable and timely processes as much as having the staff available. Performance management and monitoring is similarly essential if targets are to be achieved. While performance monitoring systems are in place, they fall short in not having a full range of consistent information readily available in the most useful format. This is a high priority requirement to facilitate the improvement plan. Making such information available to all staff on a regular basis will be an early objective for the proposed performance management team.

Monitoring systems have been put in place for major and other applications and have been a factor in the improved performance over the past six months. A robust system is needed for minor applications to provide similar results in this category.

Quality Assurance

The Planning Service has recently instructed external consultants to examine the DC procedures prior to seeking Quality Assurance to meet ISO9001 standards.

ISO 9001:2000 is an internationally recognised standard. It defines the elements of organisation required by a service to achieve and demonstrate the necessary skills required to quality manage their activities, products or services.

ISO registration is a measure of reliability, consistency and commitment to quality; it inspires the confidence of potential customers.

Quality Assurance will promote a more systematic approach to management, which will improve performance monitoring leading to continual improvement. The objective is to structure the system to achieve our objectives in the most effective and efficient way.

Throughout this process we will be examining and mapping our processes with a view to identifying where potential delays and blockages occur which impede performance against government targets.

An internal working group has also been set up to review the current vetting system, which is a key part of the process. This group be will reporting their views/findings to the Planning Management team in the immediate future.

The Quality Assurance process has begun and is projected for completion and registration by Summer 2004.

E-Government Targets

The objective is to achieve an electronic application processing system which allows electronic submission, electronic application processing and on-line access to live and historic planning applications. This will benefit applicants, the general public, consultees, and Officers and Members. It will also create efficiencies within the processing systems and reduce file storage requirements. £50,000 has been included in the Council's Capital Programme for 2004/05 to progress this work.

3. **Forward & Local Planning**

The main challenge for the Forward & Local Planning section in the coming year will be in managing the introduction of the new statutory planning system, which replaces Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) with Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). Legislation currently before Parliament will introduce the new system, and will set out a timescale for having the LDF in place by early 2007. It will also require Local Planning Authorities to agree with Government Offices a programme for the preparation of the LDF and a framework for monitoring progress against this programme. This will be a criterion in the allocation of future Planning Delivery Grant.

While the exact requirements and implementation of the new system have not been clarified in every detail, the need to completely review and process the planning framework within 3 years will be an onerous task. Requirements for community involvement in the framework's preparation will be subject to scrutiny and prior approval by the Government Office and will have a formal status as a 'Statement of Community Involvement' (SCI). In addition to core policies, all other aspects of the planning framework such as Area Action Plans (eg, for the Town Centre) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) will need to be developed in new or revised form within the 3 year period. The new system puts great emphasis on having survey information available at the start of the LDF process. The current research and information resources are more than fully utilised on a variety of corporate and planning services information functions, including decision monitoring and ODPM returns, maintaining property databases, housing development monitoring, Census analysis, dissemination and publication, vitality profiles, support for the New Harrow Project and the development and maintenance of the local land and property gazetteer. Additional resources will therefore be needed to properly support the LDF information needs. This work will also assist in the review and development of the Community Strategy, which will need to be more closely linked to the LDF process as it develops. The Section already contributes to corporate strategies on many fronts, including housing and regeneration, and these linkages will need to be continued and reinforced.

To enable the Council to meet these requirements it will be necessary to enhance the policy planning resources, initially by one senior planning post to augment the small policy team, together with a further research assistant. This may need to be reviewed as the implications become more apparent. Additional resources in this area will also enable the section to give better policy and information support to Development Control.

In addition, commensurate with the expansion of the development control caseload over the last few years (and the additional DC posts created), there now needs to be an additional post of Assistant Conservation Officer in the conservation team (currently 2 people). This will enable the conservation team to fully support the DC function, deal with LBCs, continue to provide major input to planning appeals concerning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, to revive the programme to complete the series of policy guideline statements for every conservation area and to be able to adequately resource a growing number of projects attracting external funding. A further five conservation areas should have draft policy guidelines by the end of 2004-05 and all should have up to date policy guidelines by the end of 2006-07. Conservation projects include the third and final year of the HERS project on Harrow on the Hill. The section is taking the lead on the Canons Park historic restoration project (HLF funded) and is closely involved in the restoration of Headstone Manor (EH funded).

Planning has a statutory role in setting the framework for the future development of the Borough, but more and more is seen by Government, both central and local, as a mechanism for delivering strategic objectives at a local, sub-regional and regional level. be they housing, regeneration or transportation. The Forward & Local Planning team in particular has been at the forefront in performing this role. The importance is now being recognised through the proposal to establish the post of Director of Strategic Planning who will be calling upon the Forward and Local Planning staff for support. There may be the need to further support this work with additional resources in the FP/LP team, and this will be reviewed when the new senior management arrangements are in place.

The section is fully involved in the current work on Harrow Town Centre, including the Masterplan and the processes flowing from it, preparation of development briefs for key sites, and the public realm strategy and strategic area treatment project. Another important area of work will be the preparation of feasibility studies for UDP proposal sites and Council disposals, and to support the undertaking of a boroughwide housing capacity study for the GLA. A programme of supplementary planning documents is planned and this will form an important part of the Local Development Framework, and may require additional resources in 2004-05 or 2005-06 and an additional post is included in the Improvement Plan's second year. A further area of work in the future may arise from the current school reorganisation debate, involving the section through local planning issues, feasibility and landscape design. Recently, additional resources in landscape have enabled a backlog of "blanket order" TPOs to be surveyed and re-served and this work will continue through 2004-05.

4. **Building Control**

Past Performance

During the past 10 years there has been a progressive increase totalling 65% in the number of Building Regulation applications received by the Council. The increase can be attributed to relatively steady economic growth throughout the period and the widening of the Building Regulations by the ODPM, to take under its umbrella replacement glazing and air leakage testing. Over the same timescale numbers of Building Control staff remained static until 2002/03. Since 1998/1999 there has been steady improvement on the national target set by the industry of plan vetting within 15 days from 72% to 96% in 2002/03. This has been achieved due to a highly efficient workforce and procedures.

The numbers of applications per officer has increased significantly from 118 in 1994/95 to 182 in 2001/02. An additional member of staff was employed in 2002/03 reducing the caseload to 171. From comprehensive London benchmarking Harrow currently has the sixth highest caseload per officer.

In November 2001 Building Control was awarded 3-star excellent service and 'likely to improve' by the Best Value Inspectorate. This recognition and continuing service improvement has enabled Harrow to limit penetration market by the private Approved Inspectors to 3%. This compares with an average of 7% within London.

Due to the increase in the number of applications over the past years and the limited loss of work to the private sector additional income has been generated to re-invest in the service as recommended by the Best Value Audit Commission.

From the national targets shown in Table 12, the percentage of sites inspected within the last three months is the only indicator for Harrow that is not within the upper quartile. The introduction of new staff should improve performance in this area.

Current Year Performance

Performance has improved in all areas over the last 12 months. Although the introduction of new staff via a career grade scheme has reduced the caseload by officer figure, in reality the short to medium term requirement of training new staff has increased the burden on the experienced members of staff. Currently four experienced senior surveyors have the responsibility of training and developing five trainees. It has been deemed necessary to employ through the career grade scheme due to failure to recruit qualified staff who at present are in short supply nationally.

The development of experience throughout the section should continue to improve performance throughout the next 12 months.

Comparisons with other London Boroughs

The London District Surveyors Association (LDSA) benchmarking is recognised by the Best Value Audit Commission. In 2002/03 Harrow was ranked third overall in London, taking into account a basket of indicators. This is an improvement from fifth place in 2001/02.

Table 12 indicates our position within London for each national indicator and includes targets for the next 3 years.

Quality Assurance

Building Control achieved ISO9001 recognition in 1996. In February 2004 it successfully converted to ISO9001 : 2000 which requires increased customer focus and continuing improvement.

E-Government

Similar to Development Control the objective is to achieve an electronic application processing and submission system on-line.

5. **Developing A 3-Year Service Improvement Plan**

The three-year improvement plan has as its first priorities achieving the development control targets set out earlier in the report, and meeting the timescale for LDF preparation by 2007.

The targets for electronic service delivery are important in their own right, to meet e-government targets by December 2005 and to improve the service to the public and applicants. They also play a role in assisting meeting the DC targets as they will enable more efficient systems to be put in place and reduce time spent on inquiries etc.

The Improvement Plan also addresses the need to improve the quality of service – to meet the Government Quality Checklist BVPI, to meet the Council's own aspirations as expressed through the New Harrow Project and address other identified service deficiencies.

Availability of Funding for the Improvement Plan

Planning Delivery Grant

The Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) was introduced in 2003/04, as a part of the Government's planning reform programme. £50m was made available and was allocated to those authorities which demonstrated improvements in development control performance against the government targets (BVPIs), over the period July 2001 – June 2002. The Council was allocated a sum of £252,000, based on improvement from a low point in 2000/01.

The allocations for 2004/05 have recently been announced and Harrow has been awarded £283,000. For this year £130m was available nationally, and the criteria included both development control and development plan performance. Development Control performance assessment was over the period October 2002 – September 2003, when there was only modest improvement and the Council received no money for this area. Fortunately progress on the UDP towards adoption resulted in an award of £238,000 and a further award was made to all authorities in the South East to assist with meeting pressures for housing development.

The £283,000 for 2004/05 was the fourth lowest in London, many authorities receiving over £600,000. Measures in the Improvement Plan aimed at sustaining and improving on the current DC performance levels should ensure a more substantial award for 2005/06. Criteria for 2005/06 will also include progress on the preparation of Local Development Framework (LDFs) and in meeting electronic service delivery targets.

Funding Sources

The following sources of funding are likely to be available for 2004/05. Any funding in excess of these would be a call on reserves or contingency.

Planning Delivery Grant: Of the £252k awarded in 2003/04, £164k was allocated to staffing which will need to be sustained into the next year to maintain current levels and performance. £52k of this was included as a growth item in the revenue budget for funding trainee posts, leaving a requirement for a further £112k. The PDG allocation for 2004/05 is £283,000. After making provision for the £112k ongoing costs this leaves a total of £171k available for additional staff etc.

DC Fee Income : In addition, the current level of fee income if projected throughout 2004/05 would result in a surplus of £110k. Taking this into account an additional £281k could be available. A further £60k is carried forward from the 2003/04 PDG allocation for IT improvements which have not been progressed pending the corporate IT Strategy review, making a total of £340k available for the planning functions. Use of this £60k will be confirmed in the 2003/04 budget outturn report.

Capital Funding : Provision of £50k has been included in the 2004/05 capital programme for e-delivery of planning services.

For 2005/06, if the Development Control targets set out above are achieved, together with good progress on the Local Development Framework, a more substantial PDG allocation can be expected. The Improvement Plan assumes that all additional resourcing for 2004/05 is carried through into 2005/06, and additional PDG will be available. At present there is no government commitment to PDG beyond 2005/06, so no assumptions can be made as to its availability.

The full Year 1 costs are £410k plus £50k capital. As much of the expenditure is on staffing, there will be a time lag in appointing staff to posts and the £340k available will be sufficient to cover the 10 month actual cost for 2004/05.

Fee Income (Building Control) : The current level of fee income if projected throughout 2004/05 would result in a surplus of £110k.

Achieving Development Control targets for Service Improvement

For 2004/05 it is proposed to increase DC staffing as follows:-

4 x DC case officers	£150k
1 x permanent senior case officer	£35k
1 x planner (enforcement)	£30k

In addition it will be necessary to increase the administrative staffing to support application processing by one post at a cost of £20k. The currently vacant Senior Administrative Officer post will be filled as an immediate priority.

Consultants acting for ODPM have set a benchmark for DC officer caseload of 150 applications per annum. This assumes case officers would not also have an appeal workload, and excludes managers. The current caseload within Harrow is 220 applications and those officers also deal with their own appeal work. The benchmark is obviously an average figure, and, for example, officers dealing with the more straightforward delegated cases can manage in excess of this whereas officers dealing with major applications would have a reduced capacity. Harrow does have a high proportion of 'other' applications which are usually easier to deal with compared with many authorities, and therefore an average caseload of more than 150 could be considered reasonable.

As can be seen from the charts, the numbers of applications received and determined has been increasing over a 10 year period, although the 2003/04 increase at 5% is lower than the previous 2 years. Assuming a 5% increase in 2004/05 would add approximately 150 applications in the workload.

The number of enforcement complaints has risen by 25% in 2003/04 to more than 790. Certificate of lawfulness applications are dealt with by the Enforcement team; 450 were determined in 2003 and more than 170 have been received this year. These applications

have a significant impact on the performance target for 'Other' applications, the majority being dealt with within 8 weeks. However, this has a significant impact on the enforcement function.

In order to develop this service it is proposed to increase the enforcement team by the addition of one Planner at £30k. Following the pending retirement of one of the Enforcement Officers in June it is intended to find an appropriate replacement as early as possible.

The sum of £150k for DC case officers assumes a mix of permanent and agency staff. This will provide the flexibility to:

- a) fill posts quickly with agency staff and;
- b) continue with temporary/agency staff if permanent recruitment proves problematic
- c) respond flexibly to any future downturn in workload
- d) move staff between Committee and Delegated Teams as necessary

The total additional staffing cost in DC would be £235k. The senior permanent case officer would be responsible for affordable housing and S106 matters, and would therefore not have a full application caseload. It is assumed that 50% of this officer's time would be spent on application processing.

On the assumption that all these staff can be recruited and current staff retained, the caseload would be reduced to 180 applications per officer per annum. There must be a question mark against the ability to recruit and retain staff next year, as there will be £18m from PDG available to London Boroughs which will undoubtedly have an impact on the planning recruitment market. If permanent staff cannot be recruited it will be necessary to use agency/short term contract staff.

To improve performance to the target levels on minor applications, two actions will need to be in place. Firstly, a focussed monitoring system and secondly a revised system of delegation. A review of delegation procedures will be submitted to the Development Control Committee in the near future.

Achieving Forward Planning Targets

To enable the Local Development Framework to be progressed to meet Government targets, for 2004/05 it is proposed to increase Forward Planning staffing as follows:-

1 x Senior Policy Planner for LDF work	£35k
1 x Research Assistant to support LDF work	£25k
1 x Assistant Conservation Officer	£30k

For 2005/06, in addition to maintaining the above staff further resources will be needed to augment LDF resources:

1 x Planner to support LDF preparation	£30k
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Achieving Building Control Targets

Currently Building Control officer caseload is 171, which from benchmarking is the sixth highest in London. Although high efficiency and a motivated workforce has ensured most performance targets are met, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain performance whilst training new staff. Qualified and experienced BC officers have been extremely

scarce over the last 2-3 years. It is increasingly necessary to ensure that existing staff and those being trained are retained.

The ODPM are proposing to extend the Building Regulations to include electrical installations in domestic properties and sound testing within the next 12 months. Additional technical staff will be required to deal with increasing workload and changes in legislation.

If additional staff are not employed in order to cope with the increased workload in order to maintain a high level of service, loss of income to private approved inspectors could result. It is generally assumed that it costs 10 times more to regain a lost client than it does to retain them.

An additional career grade trainee is in the process of being appointed at a cost of £20k.

The anticipated increase in workload will necessitate an additional technical post costing £35k. The establishment of this post will be held until September 2004 to allow time for the existing trainees to establish themselves.

The level of administrative support required is currently under review. The cost of restructuring and improving the level of staffing is anticipated to cost in the region of £20k. All of the above will be funded from additional income generated over budget.

Building Control has been assessed as a corporate pilot for home working and this should improve efficiency and thus enable resources to be redirected to weaker performance areas.

The implementation of electronic submissions and improvements to the Ocella software system and website will also increase efficiency and thus overall performance.

Performance Management & Monitoring Restructuring

It is recognised that in the current Management structure, insufficient emphasis is given to performance monitoring and management, which is of fundamental importance in meeting, measuring and maintaining service performance. The establishment of the post of Director of Strategic Planning will release capacity at the Group Manager level to focus on performance against the Service Improvement Plan.

The importance of establishing a central database of performance information, which will automatically produce regular monitoring is crucial to the service in establishing a constant awareness of performance and in responding to change. It will also function as the link between the service and the corporate performance management systems and provide the linkages between central and local objective and target setting and their monitoring.

The current management structure in Planning Services includes the post of Administration Manager which leads a team of 19 administrators providing support to the various professional/technical sections. This post also has responsibility for budget co-ordination, purchasing and the provision of all common resources to the service.

It is proposed to re-designate the post of Administration Manager to Performance Management & Monitoring Manager, with a responsibility of establishing a central performance database, producing regular reports to Planning Services Management

Team, to lead on the delivery of e-planning, and responding to the various Government agencies with accurate and consistent monitoring figures. The post will report directly to the Group Manager, Planning & Development.

It is proposed that the post be supported by an IT/systems specialist post, to review procedures and practices relating to the application processing system, and implement changes to secure improvement. It will also act as Relationship Manager with Harrow IT Services on all IT matters relating to the Planning Services, establishing good working relationships with HITS.

An additional post of Performance Monitoring Officer will also be required to support the operation to provide a systems development, research and liaison role within the section. This post will aid the Performance Manager in compiling reports and meeting statutory and BVPI deadlines. This section will also be responsible for the maintenance of the Planning and Development website. Recent improvements to the Council's website through the APLAWS initiative have created the opportunity to use the website much more proactively, but this will have resource implications which can only be effectively dealt with through dedicated responsible officers. The two posts will cost £40k each.

The section may require some administrative support, but at this stage the bulk of the existing administrative section will become dedicated to the Building Control and Development Control operational units in which they currently perform their duties, under the direct management of the operational section managers. Administrative support to Forward and Local Planning will in the first instance be provided from the Group Manager's administrative support team.

The establishment of the Performance section will not only focus the need to establish and provide good information and reporting systems, but will allow operational managers to concentrate on the running of the core services to meet targets and objectives.

Charts of the existing and proposed staff resources are attached at Appendix II.

IT Strategy for Planning & Development

By the end of 2005 the Planning Services objective is to provide systems which will enable its DC functions to be managed and accessed electronically. The external manifestation of this will be the ability to:

- Submit applications on-line
- Access information on planning applications currently available to the public on paper files electronically. This will include all correspondence, application forms, drawings, supporting information, reports and decision notices. This information will be updated and available throughout the life of the application.
- Correspond with internal and external users electronically
- Access the Planning Register
- Access published documents such as UDP, design guides, information leaflets, development briefs etc
- Interrogate the system by address, file number or GIS
- Access the National Planning Portal system
- Link with Planning Inspectorate systems
- Display information electronically at DC and other Committee and public meetings

Developing the planning system will also facilitate e-government targets for Building Control and Environmental Health.

The consultants, Hedra have been appointed to create an e-Planning strategy which will set out the improvements necessary to meet e-government targets by the end of 2005. The strategy will clearly:

- Define the Council's objectives.
- Incorporate a project plan detailing the steps that need to be taken to achieve the objectives
- Indicate the order in which the steps should be taken
- Provide indicative costings, representing Best Value to the Council
- Provides an indication of staff resource required
- Incorporate National Standards and Best Value in e-Planning

The consultants have carried out an on-site survey and met with all relevant personnel, including Members and interested external partners. A first draft of their report has now been received, which sets out a programme for the achievement of the IT objectives over the next two years. This will be a challenging task requiring departmental and corporate commitment.

Securing the objectives set out will require document imaging and workflow systems to be in place. At present this is being pursued as a corporate project but cannot be progressed until the Council has a Strategic IT partner in place. This is unlikely to happen until late 2004. In the circumstances, consideration should be given to progressing the Planning & Development project in advance of the corporate system. Funding of £50k for developing the system is included in the 2004/05 capital programme.

Planning Services has already signed up to Stage 1 of the Planning Portal, which is an ODPM sponsored database of Planning information and Local Planning Authority websites, and intends to sign up to a related service PARSOL.

PARSOL (Planning and Regulatory Services Online) e-gov project is also developing a range of guidelines, benchmarks, schemas, systems and toolkits to assist Local Authorities in building effective and transparent online planning and regulatory systems.

This brings real working benefits for service delivery and ultimately helps to provide both citizens and business users alike with faster and more effective services online.

The Project is run by a consortium of Local Authorities led by Wandsworth Borough Council and financed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Support is provided by key national organisations - IDeA, RTPI, CIEH, LACORS, Planning Officers' Society, SOCITM, The Planning Inspectorate through the Planning Portal Project, HSE and the Environment Agency. Further explanation of the e-government targets and their implications are set out in Appendix I.

Service Improvement Plan Costs for 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07

Year 1: The full year costs of implementing the 2004/05 action plan in Development Control and Forward Planning would be £410k revenue plus £50k capital. As most of the additional costs are staffing, there will be some time lag in recruitment and the £340k available will be sufficient to cover the year 1 funding requirement. The Building Control full year costs of £70k can be found from excess income over budget.

Year 2: For year 2 the full year costs of Year 1 would need to be rolled forward (£410k). A further DC case officer post is also included at £40k and a FP Planner for LDF work at £30k. Implementing the e-government improvements to meet the December 2005 deadline will be a further cost, as yet undetermined. To fund the Year 2 costs it will be essential to maintain the improvements in performance to ensure a substantial PDG allocation. The Plan will be reviewed when the 2005/06 PDG allocation is known.

Year 3: Year 3 costs will involve rolling forward the Year 2 ongoing costs plus any additional staffing as a result of further increases in application numbers. Until the future of PDG is clarified, funding sources cannot be identified.

6.0 Improvement Plan

YEAR 1 : 2004/05

Targets	Priority 1/2/3	Action	Timescale		Responsibility	Resources (Additional) (Existing) (Reallocation)	Comments
			Start	Finish			
60% Major applications within 13 weeks	1	Appointment of 4 additional case officers	April 2004	May 2004	DC Manager	£150k	
65% Minor applications within 8 weeks	1	Appointment of 1 additional support staff	April 2004	May 2004	DC Manager	£20k	
80% other applications within 8 weeks	1	Filling vacant senior admin officer	April 2004	April 2004	DC Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Review vetting process and implement recommendations	March 2004		DC Manager Performance Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Introduce monitoring system for 'minor' applications	April 2004	June 2004	DC Manager Performance Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Report on increasing delegation to DC Committee	June 2004	July 2004	Group Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Appointment of 1 additional career grade surveyor	April 2004	May 2004	BC Manager	Additional BC income (£20k)	
100% of full plans checked within 3 weeks	1	Appointment of 1 additional career grade surveyor	April 2004	May 2004	BC Manager	Additional BC income (£20k)	
90% of sites inspected within last three months	1	Review of BC admin support	April 2004	May 2004	BC Manager	Additional BC income (£25k)	
Retain 97% of BC market	1	Appointment of 1 additional Building Surveyor	Sept 2004	Nov 2004	BC Manager	Additional BC income (£25k)	

Targets	Priority 1/2/3	Action	Timescale		Responsibility	Resources (Additional) (Existing) (Reallocation)	Comments
			Start	Finish			
Improving Quality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain Appeal Success rate above national average Increase delivery of affordable housing Establish S106 protocol Establish local PIs for enforcement 	1	Establish Member Training Programme	June 2004	Dec 2004	Executive Director Group Manager	£5.0k	
	2	Establish Officer Training and development programme	Sept 2004	March 2005	DC Manager FP Manager	Existing budget	
	2	Appointment of additional Conservation Officer	June 2004		FP Manager	£30k	
	1	Appointment of S106 Affordable Housing Officer	June 2004		DC Manager	£35k	
	2	Establish Agents Forum with regular seminars to improve standards of applications	Sept 2004	Ongoing	DC Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Appointment of Enforcement Planner	April 2004	May 2004	DC Manager	£30k	
Progress LDF in accordance with Government timescales <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit LDS to GOL for approval Prepare SCI for approval Meet Programme Targets set in LDS 	1	Appoint Senior Planning Policy Officer	April 2004	June 2004	FP Manager	£35k	
	1	Appoint Information Officer	April 2004	June 2004	FP Manager	£25k	
	1	Prepare Project brief for LDS	April 2004	July 2004	FP Manager	Existing budget	
	2	Establish Project team	April 2004	June 2004	FP Manager	Existing	

Targets	Priority 1/2/3	Action	Timescale		Responsibility	Resources (Additional) (Existing) (Reallocation)	Comments
			Start	Finish			
Establish Performance Management and Systems Development function	1	Re-designate Admin Manager Post	April 2004	April 2004	Group Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Appoint IT Support Officer	April 2004	June 2004	Performance Manager	£30k	
	1	Appoint Systems Development Officer	April 2004	June 2004	Performance Manager	£30k	
	1	Seek ISO9001 accreditation in DC	Commenced	Sept 2004	DC Manager/ Performance Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Process mapping of application processes	June 2004	Sept 2004	Performance Manager	To be determined	
Meeting e-gov targets	1	Complete Planning IT Strategy	Commenced	May 2004	Group Manager Performance Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Prepare IT Implementation Plan	April 2004	June 2004	Group Manager Performance Manager	£50K	
	1	Review performance management information and monitoring systems	May 2004	Sept 2004	Performance Manager	Existing budget	
	1	Establish Website management procedures	April 2004	Sept 2004	Performance Manager	Existing budget	
Remote working	1	BC pilot for corporate remote working project	May 2004	Dec 2004	BC Manager	Existing budget	

YEAR 2 : 2005/06

Targets	Priority 1/2/3	Action	Timescale		Responsibility	Resources (Additional) (Existing) (Reallocation)	Comments
			Start	Finish			
62% Major applications within 13 weeks 67% Minor applications within 8 weeks 82% other applications within 8 weeks	1	Appointment of DC officer	April 2005	May 2005	DC Manager	£25k	
Maintain Appeal Success rate above national average	2	Continuing member and officer training programme				£5k	
Meet e-service delivery deadline	1	Project Plan implementation	April 2005	Dec 2005	Performance Manager	Not yet known	
Improvement enforcement performance against local targets	2	Establishing systems and report/monitoring mechanisms for enforcement	April 2005	June 2005	DC Manager Performance Manager	Within existing budget	
Meet programme targets for LDS	1	Appoint Planning Officer to support LDF preparation	April 2005	June 2005	FP Manager	£30k	
	1	Complete actions as set out in agreed LDS	April 2005	March 2006	FP Manager	Within projected budget	
Achieve 100% coverage of Conservation Policy Statements		Complete remaining 9 areas in 2004-06	April 2005	March 2006	FP Manager	Within projected budget	

Targets	Priority 1/2/3	Action	Timescale		Responsibility	Resources (Additional) (Existing) (Reallocation)	Comments
			Start	Finish			
100% of full plans checked within 3 weeks 90% of sites inspected within last three months Retain 97% of BC market	1	Appointment of 1 additional Building Surveyor	April 2005	May 2005	BC Manager	Additional BC income (£35k)	

YEAR 3 : 2006/07

Targets	Priority 1/2/3	Action	Timescale		Responsibility	Resources (Additional) (Existing) (Reallocation)	Comments
			Start	Finish			
65% Major applications within 13 weeks 70% Minor applications within 8 weeks 85% other applications within 8 weeks	1	Appointment of 1 additional case officer	May 2006	May 2006	DC Manager	£25k	
Score 100% against the BVPI checklist	1	Ensure e-govt target compliance	April 2006	April 2006	Performance Manager	Not yet known	
Maintain Appeal success rate above national average	2	Update of SPD Continuing Training programme		Sept 2007	Group Manager	£5k	
Complete LDF	1	Complete actions as set out in LDS	April 2006	March 2007	FP Manager	Existing budget	

Challenge: To produce efficient, accurate, up-to date, joined up system for information and communication, easily accessible to everybody as far as possible.

The Prime Minister's target: To reach 100% e-enablement of Government services by December 2005 (as measured by BVPI 157 for local government services).

It is proposed that local authorities will be incentivised through the IEG capital funding process for working on the local e-government priority outcomes in 2004/05 and 2005/06 and that progress in delivering the priority outcomes will be monitored through the IEG process.

£220 Million of e-Government funding is being allocated to support local authorities in England to e-enable their priority services by 2005.

"This money should assist all local authorities to deliver our shared target of e-enabling all priority services by end of 2005. We are beginning to see the results of the various projects across the country and this funding gives local authorities the support they need to deliver further improved e-services for the people in their area."

Each local Authority in England, after submitting a satisfactory IEG statement in 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 will receive £500k capital grant (£350k in 04/05 and £150k in 05/06). The IEG assessment will include a section on councils' plans for e-enabling agreed priority service outcomes. Councils not completing this section satisfactorily will be required to resubmit their IEG statement and risk losing the following year's allocation.

Planning is in a good position to take advantage of this allocation in view of its profile in terms of one-stop shops (first contact). A survey by Soctim shows that Planning is only second to job search in terms of hits on council websites.

ODPM are looking for 80% success rate for 1st time resolution of every query received.

By 31st December 2005 Planning Services at Harrow should have the necessary systems and infrastructure in place to enable a planning application to be submitted on-line.

There is a current corporate project working to implement a public interface via the internet to the Ocella systems and provide citizens with self-service facilities to satisfy the Council's targets of 100% enablement of Electronic Service Delivery in respect of Building Control, Planning and Environmental Health.

The development of Website and e-delivery of services is a key element of the service improvement plan In part to meet Central Government's e-Government targets and has been included in four phases:

(Phase I) - Scanning of historic files

(Phase II) - Internet access to Ocella

(Phase III) - Scanning of new application files, development of Website and e-delivery of services

(Phase IV) - Receipt of applications via Internet and integrated approach linked to Ocella and the Web interface.

Phase I is now in place with an accelerated programme of scanning history files in place. In the absence of a Corporate scanning contract a local firm is being used to scan the files on a common multi tiff format.

Following corporate deliberations a dedicated server was purchased (Saturn) for the storage of all archive data and for GIS use.

Phase II is progressing well. Ocella have loaded the test data and are now loading the pages (portlets) which have been developed to look like our website and we will be in a position to go live with them after initial consideration

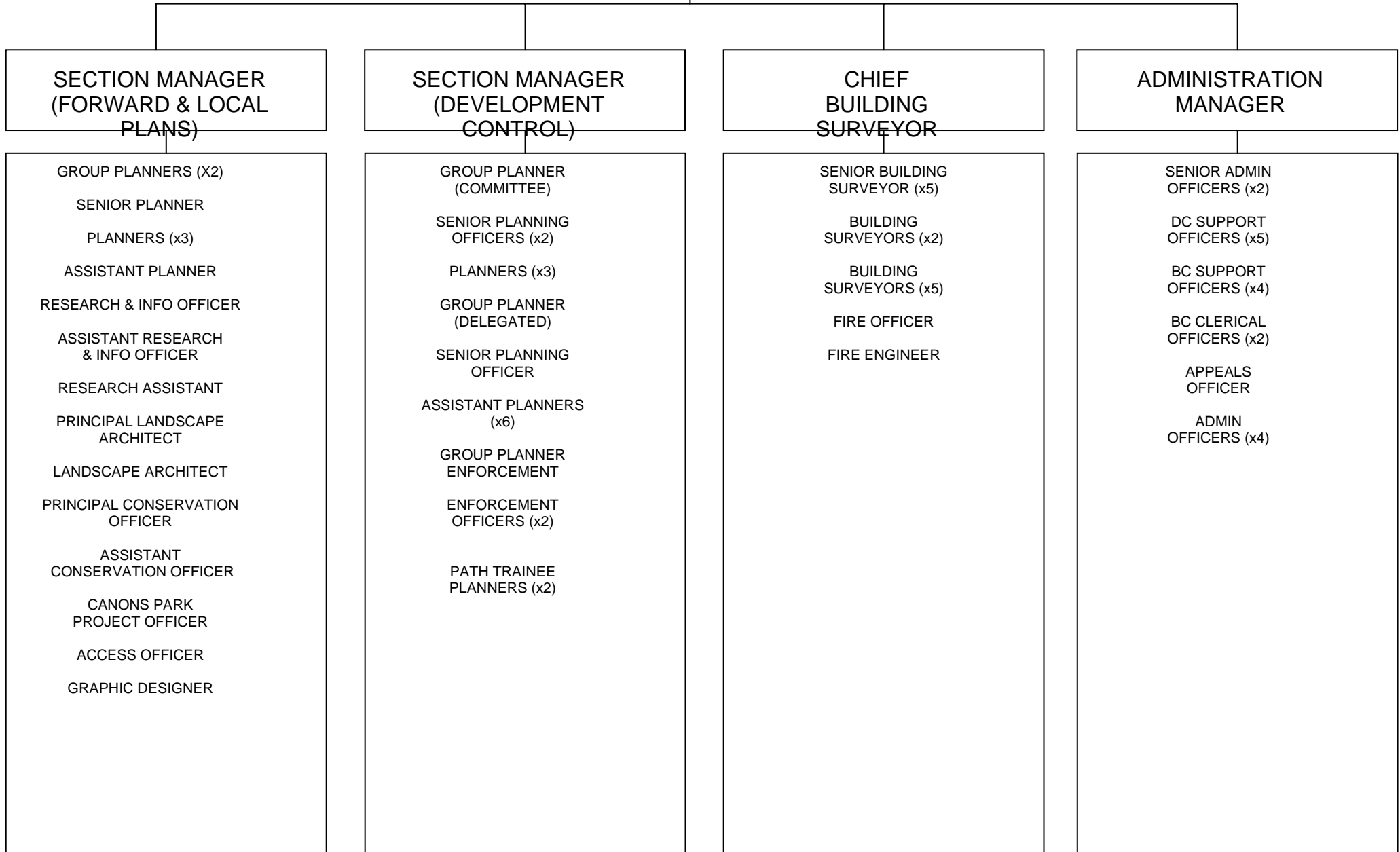
Phase III needs to be pursued in detail with Ocella to establish compatible Document Management/Imaging systems to enable the live applications to be viewed via the internet with the ability to take scaled dimensions from the electronic plans.

Phase IV is the key to meeting the requirements of the government's e-government targets and must include the ability to Make on-line payments via link to Radius Icon system.

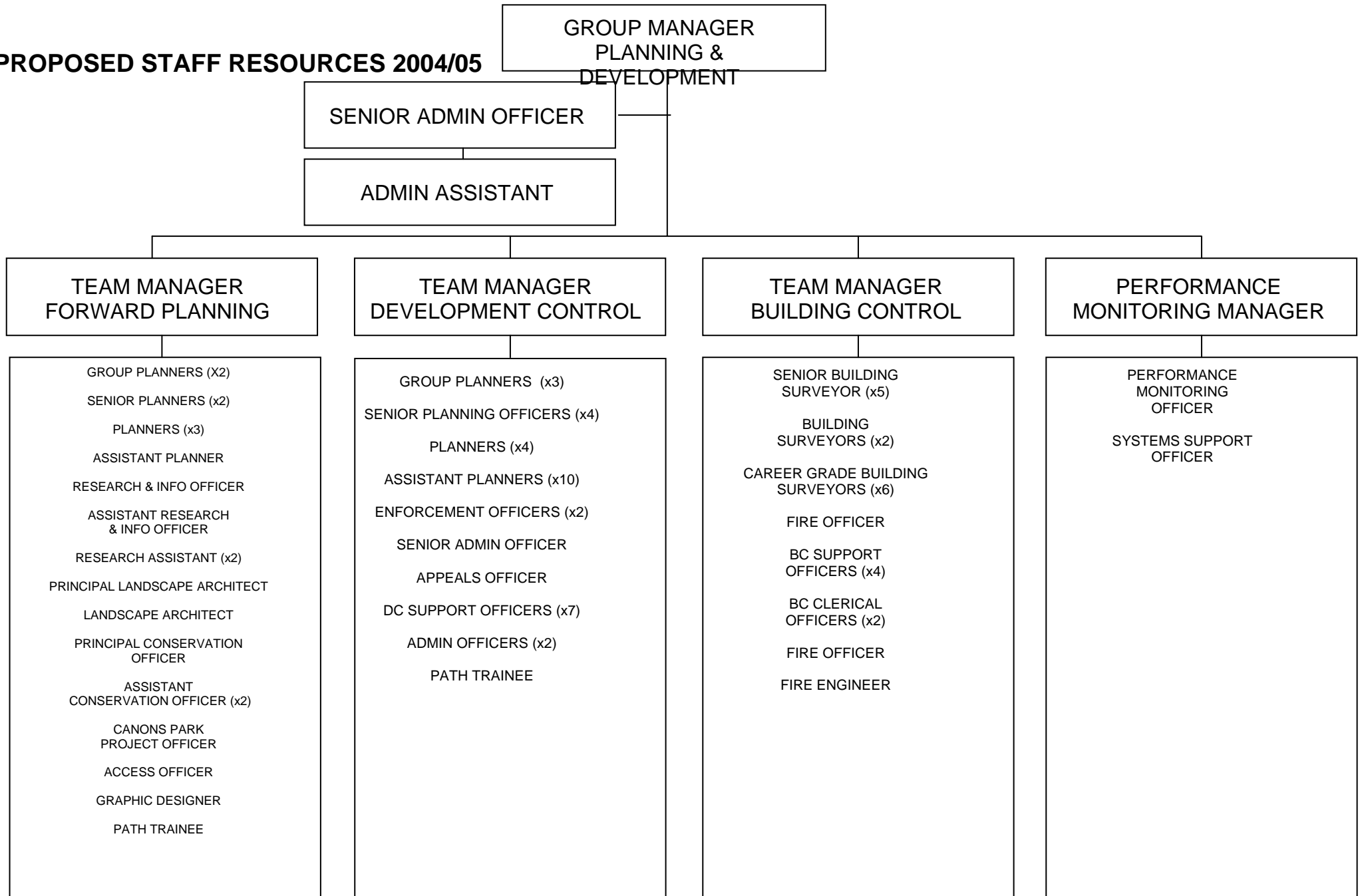
EXISTING STAFF RESOURCES

APPENDIX II

CHIEF PLANNING OFFICER



PROPOSED STAFF RESOURCES 2004/05

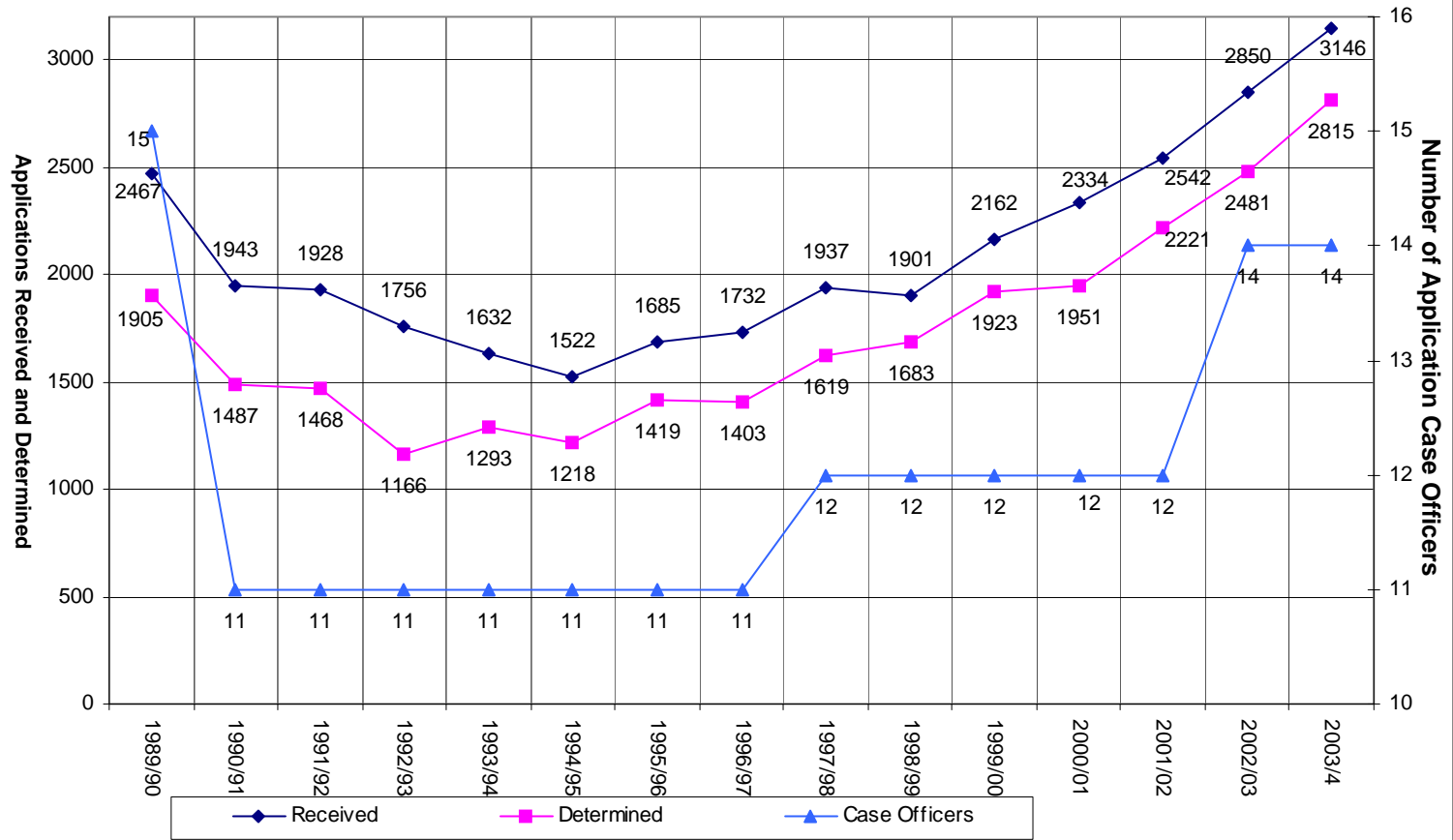


(Subject to review following detailed consideration and consultation)

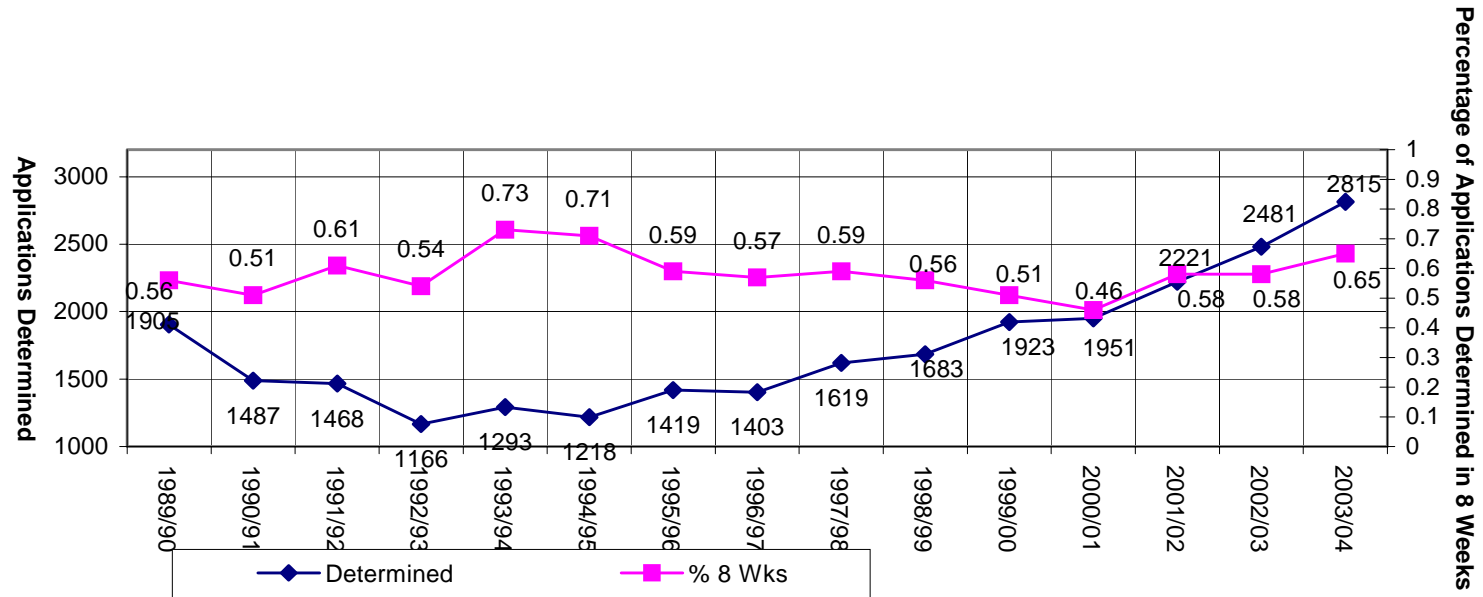
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**Table 1 - Harrow Planning Services
Development Control - Planning Application Workload 1989 - 2004**



**Table 2 - Harrow Planning Services
Development Control - Planning Application Performance 1989 - 2004**



**Table 3 - Harrow Planning & Development
BVPI 109 & Delegation Performance 2003/04
(Cumulative by Quarter)**

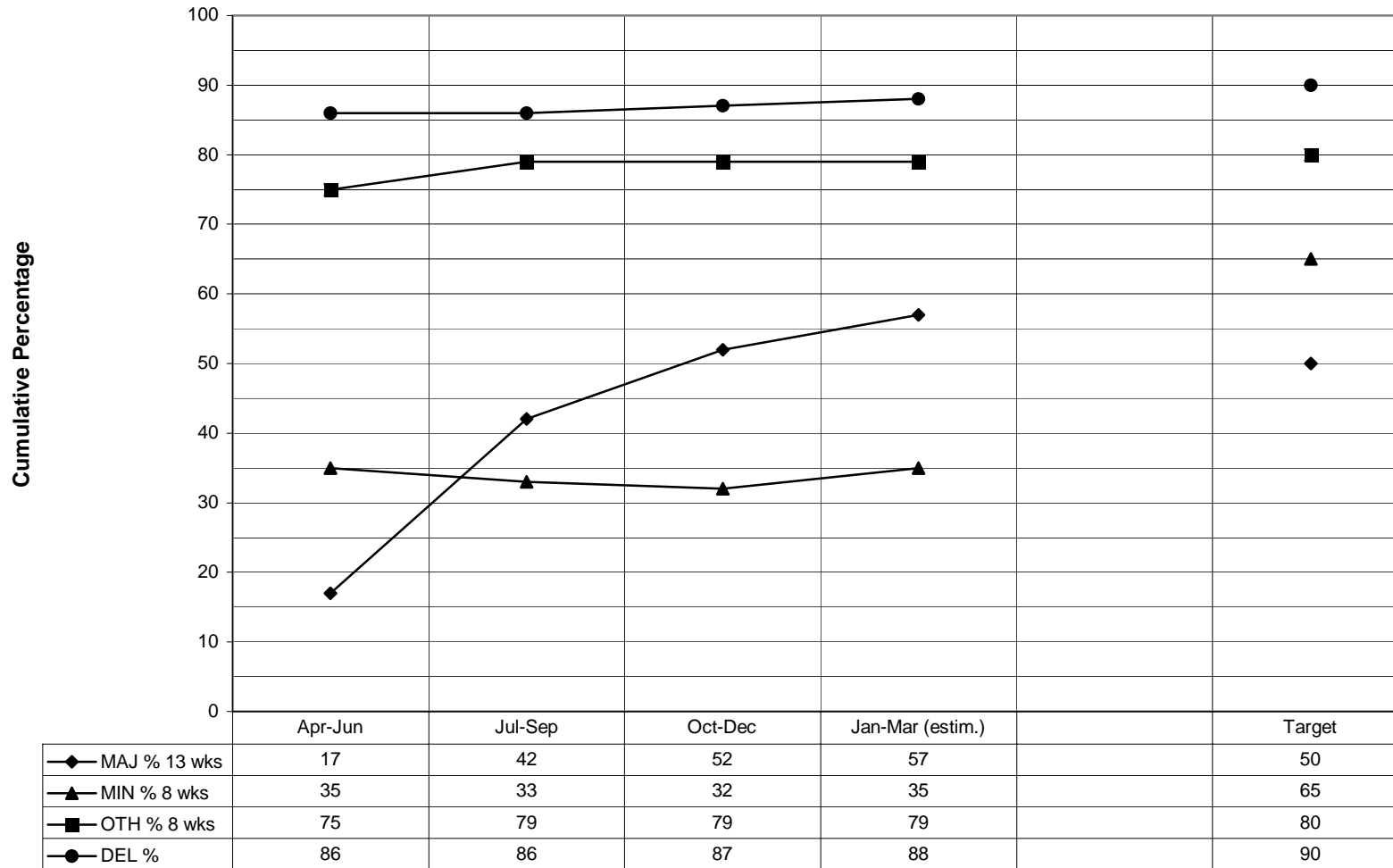


Table 4
Harrow Planning Services
BVPI 109 & Delegation Performance 2003/04
 (Quarterly Percentage)

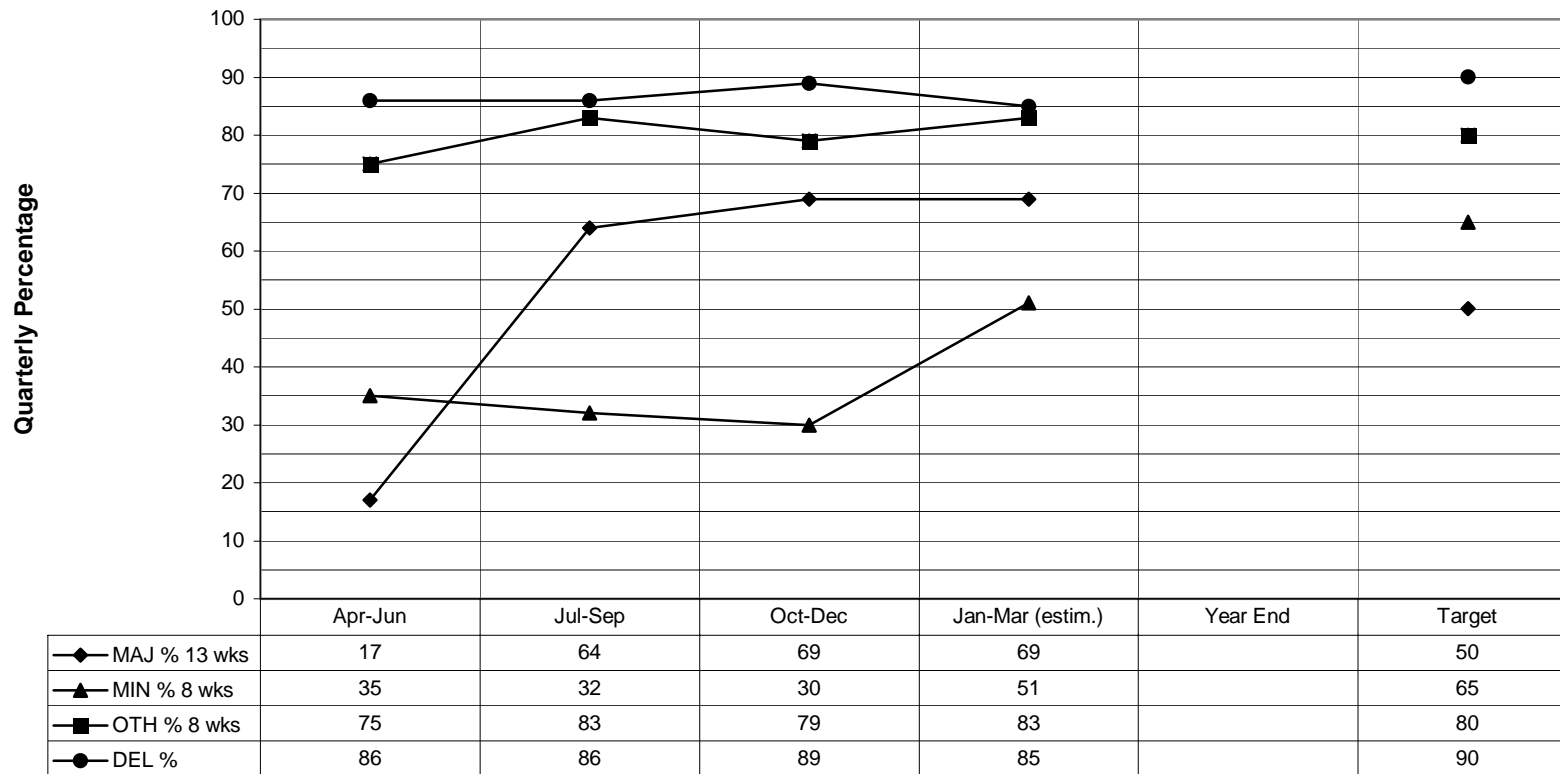


Table 5a
BVPI 109a Major Decisions 2002/03 - London

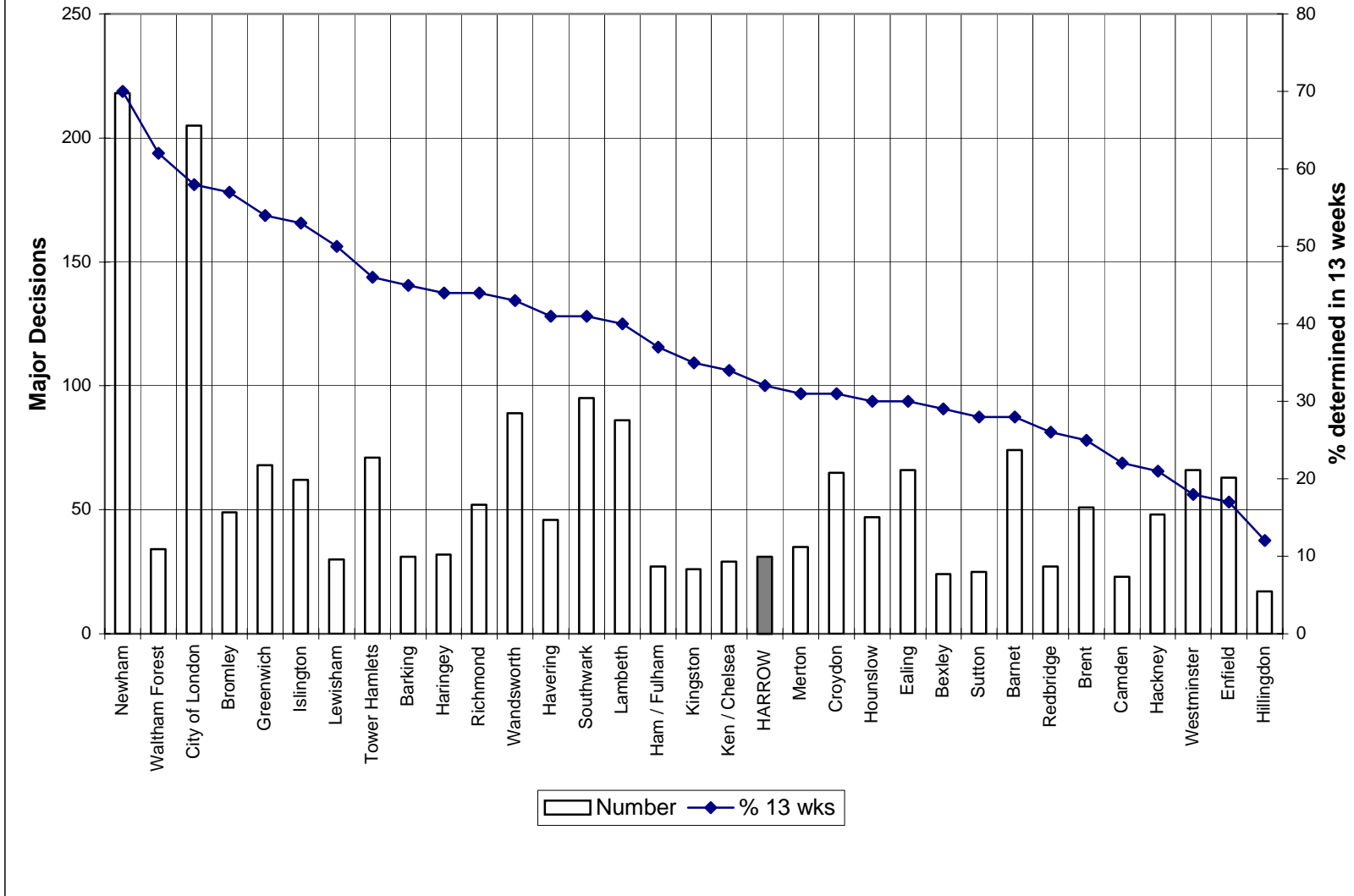


Table 5b
BVPI 109Bb Minor Decisions 2002/03 - London

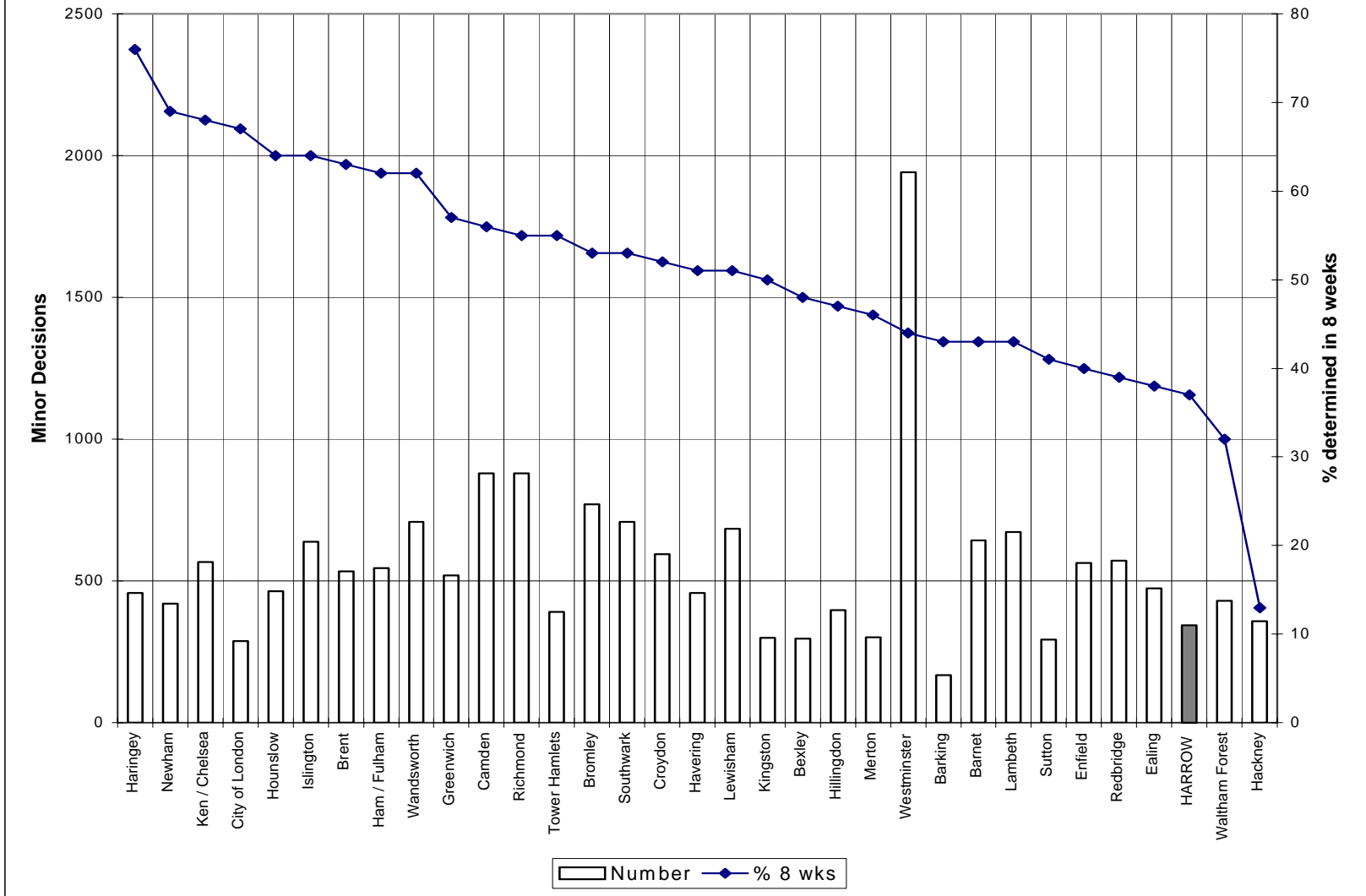


Table 5c
BVPI 109c Other Decisions 2002/03 - London

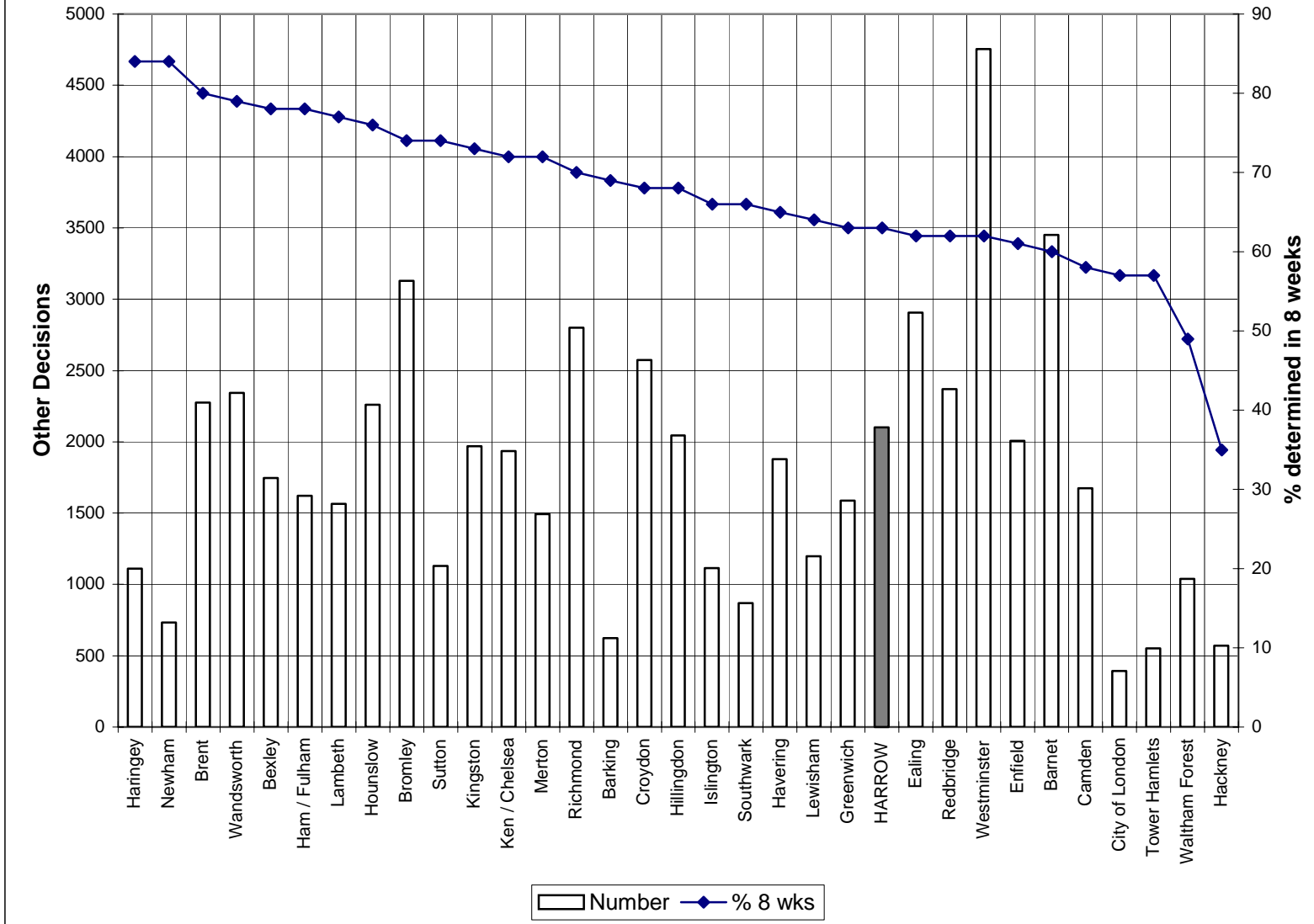


Table 6a
BVPI 109a Major Decisions Oct-Dec 2003 - London

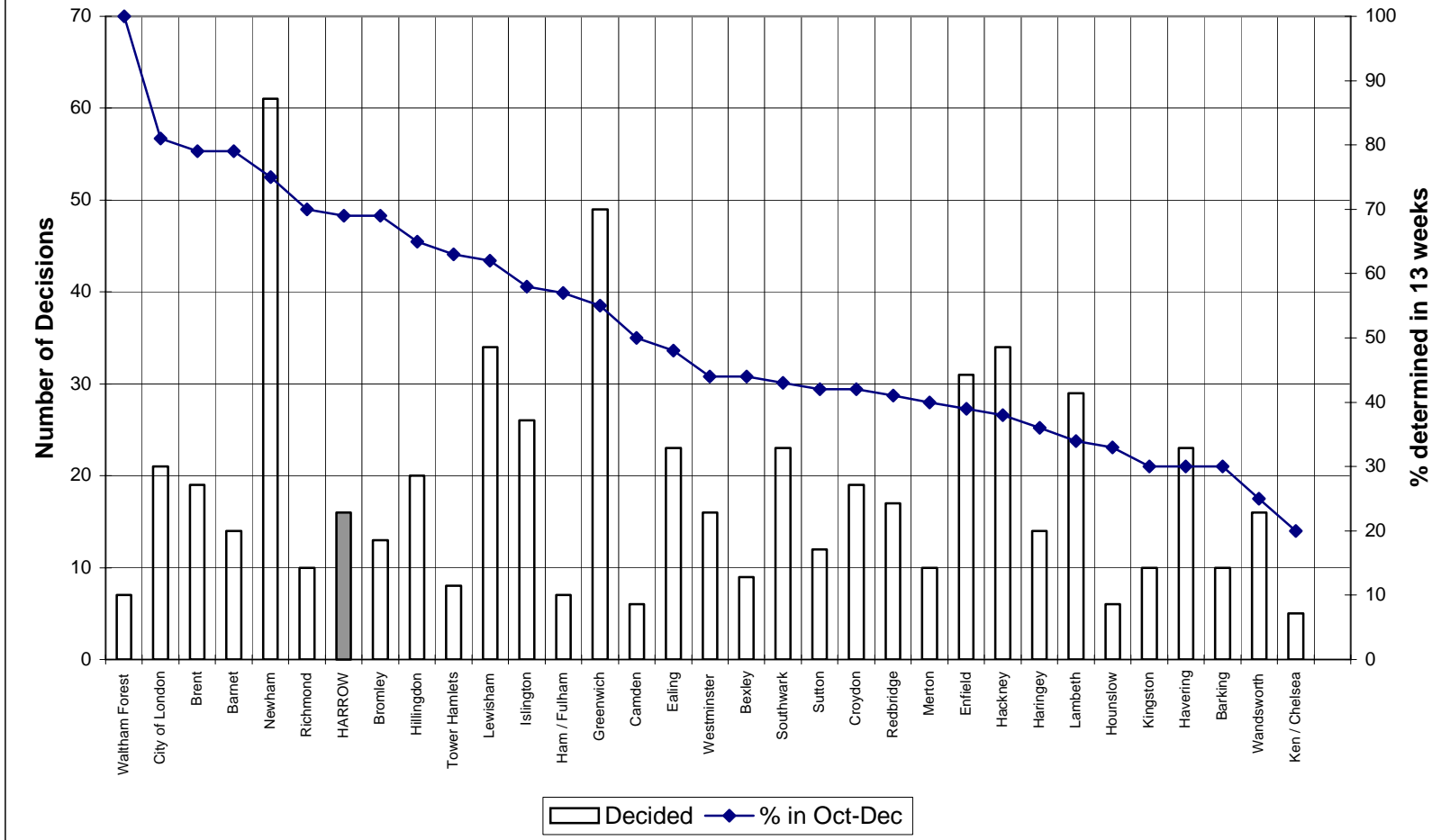


Table 6b
BVPI 109b Minor Decisions Oct-Dec 2003 - London

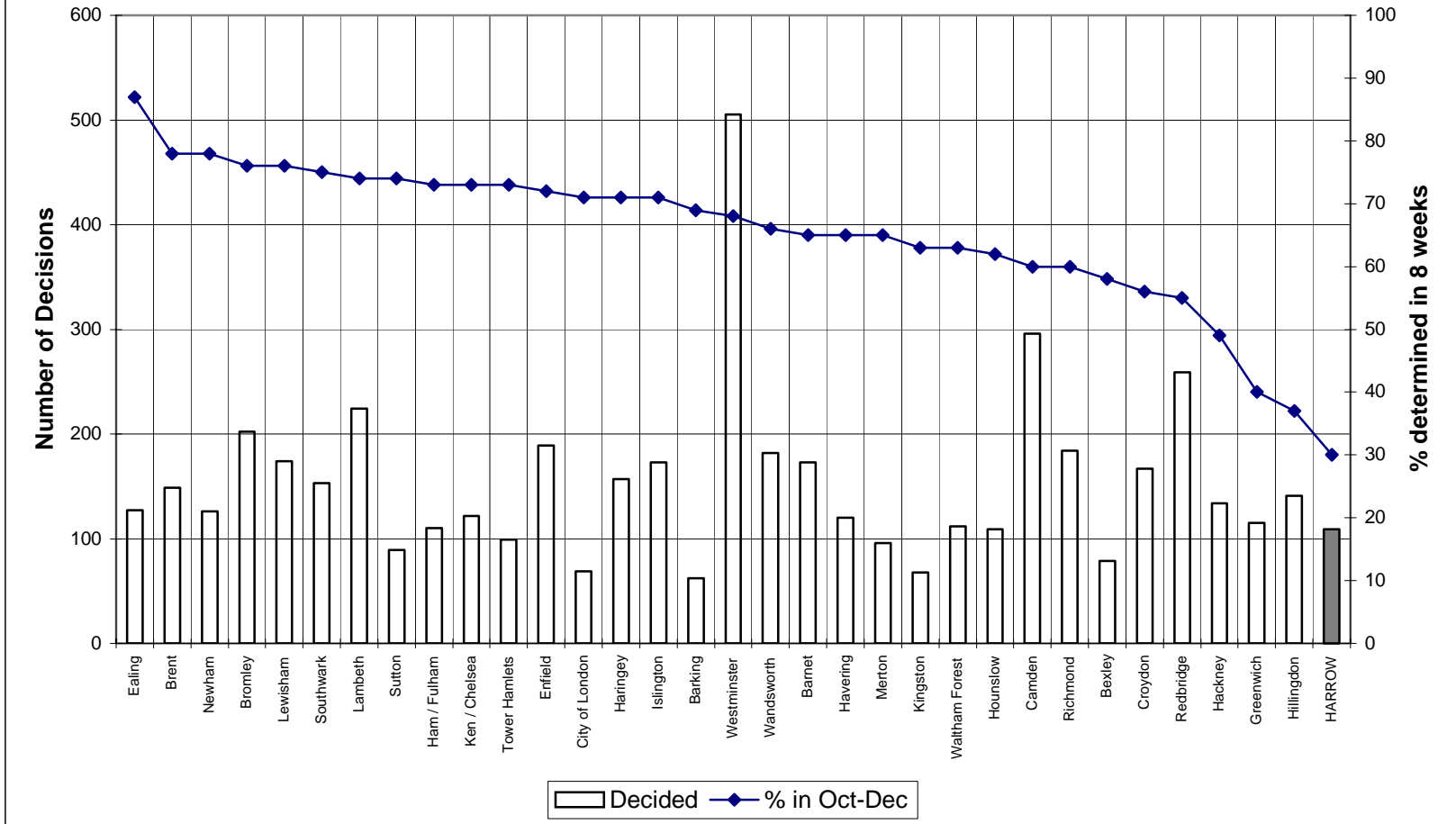
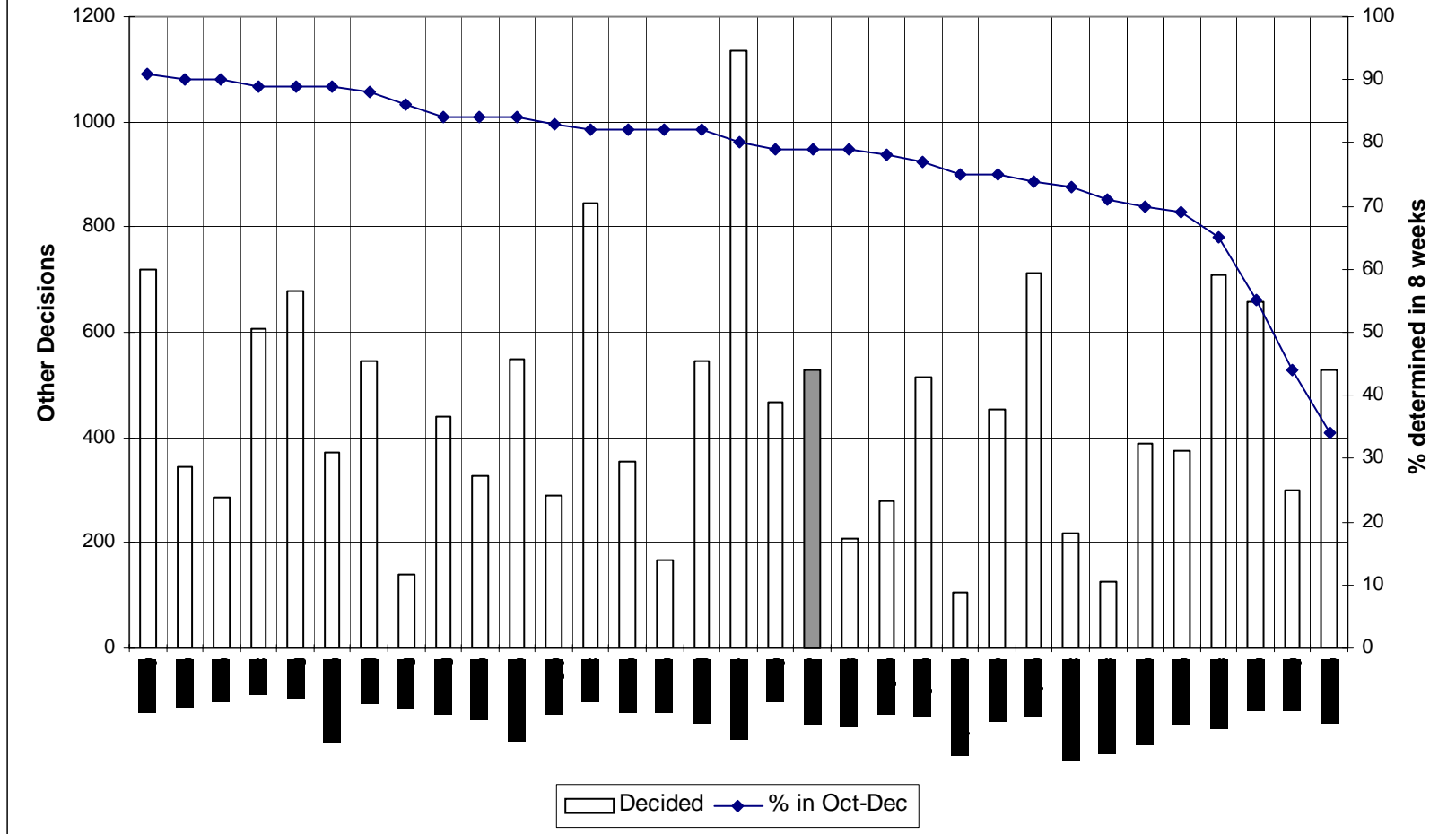


Table 6c - BVPI 109c Other Decisions Oct-Dec 2003 - London



**Table 7
Delegated Applications - 2003 - London**

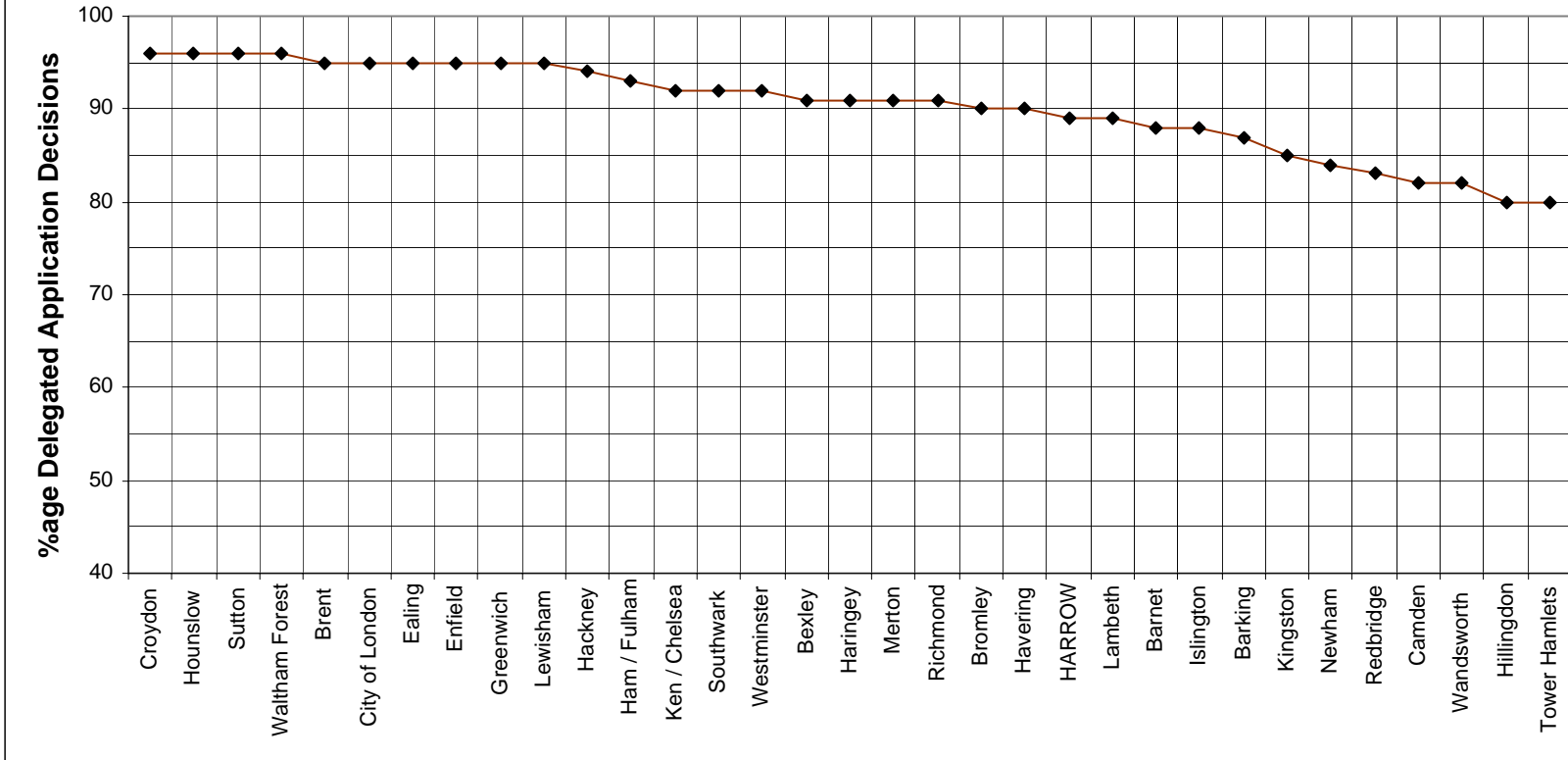


Table 8 Application Performance Targets 2004/05

2004/05 Targets			
	Local Target	Planning Standards target	National target
Major applications	60%	52% in 13 weeks	60% in 13 weeks
Minor applications	65%	58% in 8 weeks	65% in 8 weeks
Other applications	80%	N/A	80% in 8 weeks
Decisions delegated to officers	95%	N/A	N/A

Table 9 Application Performance Targets 2005/06

2005/06 Targets			
	Local Target	Planning Standards target	National target
Major applications	62%	N/A	60% in 13 weeks
Minor applications	67%	N/A	65% in 8 weeks
Other applications	82%	N/A	80% in 8 weeks
Decisions delegated to officers	95%	N/A	N/A

Table 10 Application Performance Targets 2006/07

2006/07 Targets			
	Local Target	Planning Standards target	National target
Minor applications	65%	N/A	60% in 13 weeks
Minor applications	70%	N/A	65% in 8 weeks
Other applications	85%	N/A	80% in 8 weeks
Decisions delegated to officers	95%	N/A	N/A

Table 11
Harrow Planning Services
Average No. of Planning Applications per Case Officer 1989-2004

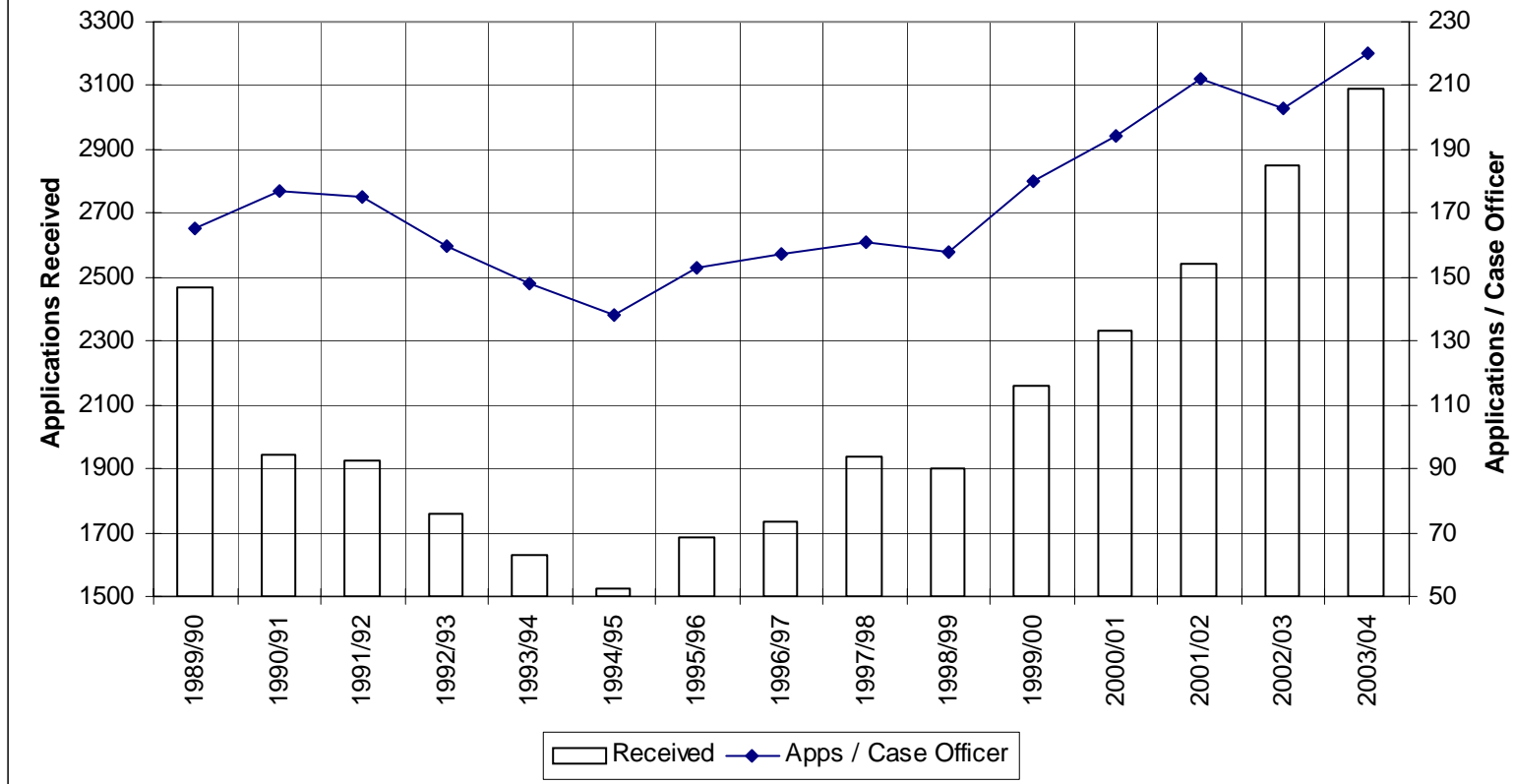


Table 12 Building Control Performance targets 2001 / 02 – 2006 / 07

Performance Targets	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Percentage of full plans checked within three weeks	90%	95%	98%	100%	100%	100%
Actual	95%	96%	96% (e)			
Position in London	8 th	6 th				
Market Share	98%	97.5%	97%	97%	97%	97%
Actual	97.4%	98.2%	97.1% (e)			
Position in London	4 th	1 st				
Percentage of sites inspected within last three months	65%	80%	90%	90%	90%	90%
Actual	61%	62%				
Position in London	12 th	14 th				
Net cost of BC per head of population	£0.28	£0.30	£0.85	£0.90	£0.95	£1.10
Actual	£0.20	£0.72				
Position in London	5 th	8 th				