

ATODIAD 3 – YMGYNGHORIAD GYDA CHYNGHORAU ERAILL (POSW)

Yr ymgynghoriad a yrrwyd ar y 30 Gorffennaf 2015

Annwyl Bawb / Dear All,

In addition to your planning responsibilities (and various others) I know that some, if not most of you, will also be responsible for Building Control.

The situation in Gwynedd is that Building Control is not within the Planning Service nor within the same Department as Planning. Within the context of savings and budget cuts, the Council is considering whether there would be financial and or operational and customer service benefits of having Building Regulations and Planning within the same Service. As part of this I have said that I would consult with POSW for some feedback.

Having worked for an Authority where Planning and Building Regulations was within the same Service my take on this is that merging these areas of work could :

1. provide efficiencies (although minimal) in the back office / technical support side of things
2. provide more scope to facilitate a closer day to day working relationship between planning officers and building control officers that could improve customer service

I would be grateful for any views on what you consider the advantages and or disadvantages are in having planning and building control within the same service, whether you currently manage both or not. Furthermore, I would also be grateful if you could provide views on how much contact / joint working there is between planners and building control officers within your Authority area.

It would be very helpful if you could send me your views by Monday 10 August 2015.

Thanks

Gareth

Gareth Jones

Uwch Reolwr Gwasanaeth Cynllunio, Amgylchedd a Gwarchod y Cyhoedd (Dros Dro) /

Senior Manager Planning, Environment and Public Protection Service (Interim)

Yr ymatebion a dderbyniwyd i'r ymgynghoriad

Gareth

If I could suggest it would be a good idea – here in the Park we have very limited contact as we don't have any Building control services within the Park Authority it causes frustration and annoyance. A closer working relationship would be of benefit to all concerned – enforcement too.

Cheers

Jane

Jane Gibson

Director of Park Direction and Planning / Cyfarwyddwr Cynllunio a Chyfeiriad y Parc

Hi Gareth,

You get the benefit of buy one get one free advice from me!

At Monmouthshire, I do not currently manage BC (although suspect this might change in the future). However, DM and BC sit alongside each other and the working relationships are positive and effective. One minor area that has recently cropped up is a change of back-office IT system, where BC seem reluctant to join us. Single management might resolve that?

In my previous role at Newport, I managed both. We had a joint Technical Support team and although staff tended to keep their original specialism (depending if pre-merge they were DM support or BC), this did help to an extent with resilience when staff were off ill. Working relationships were arguably less integrated at Newport than in Monmouthshire, but I would say that was down to one or two individuals rather than the structure.

So my advice is that the most important thing is the individuals concerned, their mind-set and their physical working relationship (being physically close together seems to help). However, given a choice I think management within the same area makes a lot of sense and is the best approach. It just isn't the solution to all challenges!

Hope this helps.

Mark

Mark Hand MSc, PGCert, BSc (Hons) MRTPI

Head of Planning / *Pennaeth Cynllunio* Monmouthshire County Council / *Cyngor Sir Fynwy*

Hi Gareth,

I am responsible for both planning and building control and in addition to the efficiencies you mention below, the building control officers also undertake some enforcement duties (compliance) for development control, which has resulted in us being able to reduce the size of the enforcement section.

Cheers Nic

Nicola Pearce

Head of Planning

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Hi Gareth

I manage Planning & Building Control and find that the services complement each other well. The main benefits are those that you have outlined i.e. back office efficiencies and resources as well as closer day to day working relationships, but I would also highlight the following points:-

We moved offices 3 years ago so the Planners and BC officers now also sit in the same room and so have daily contact and often pick up on conversations. BC officers often offer advice on appropriate roof pitches, materials etc which has been useful to more junior staff in negotiating with developers. It also provides BC with the opportunity for early engagement (often following an introduction by Planners) with larger developers so that they use the LA BC service as opposed to approved inspectors.

We use the BC officers to check that HH developments have been built in accordance with plans (often just a case of running a tape measure along an extension when they are making their site inspections) and they report their findings back to the planning officers (often resulting in the need for new applications!).

Another benefit is BC working closely with our Conservation officer, advising each other on building techniques and appropriate legislation.

Hope this helps!

Regards

Judith

Judith Jones BA Hons Town & Country Planning, BTP, MRTPI

Head of Town Planning Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Hi Gareth,

I manage both services, which I've always regarded as two sides of the same coin. Having the two functions together allows us to provide a one-stop shop to the public, and we encourage DM officers to promote BC since it is in competition with the private sector. Planners and building control officers can easily seek advice from each other when they get the inevitable queries about the other discipline.

We encourage BC officers to be the eyes and ears of the Planning Division, and they advise DM of any departures from the approved plans. DM enforcement are given a weekly BC commencements list to check whether any unauthorised work is being started, or schemes where conditions need to be complied with before starting.

Hope this helps.

Tim Stephens,

Development Control Manager,

Caerphilly County Borough Council.

Hello Gareth

I have responsibility for Building Control, which moved from Regulatory Services (Public Health) to Planning a few years ago. More recently we integrated our DC and BC teams under one manager as an efficiency measure. Initially we shared admin/technical staff to cover the both service areas however we have now reported to dedicated officers to support each team due to the distinct nature of the functions. Nevertheless we have carried out necessary training to allow the ability to provide admin/technical support for each area if called upon. I had some experience of working with Building Control early in my career but I had to learn a lot more about its function and responsibilities in my management role.

Having building control within the planning function has proved to be quite successful and popular with staff. There is more communication between officers and a better understanding of the respective roles. Planning officers promote the LABC function as part of any pre-application advice and Building Control officers provide a valuable service with monitoring and putting up site notices.

I hope this information is of use to you, I am happy to expand on any of the above if you wish.

Kind regards

Jonathan D Parsons

Bridgend County Borough Council

Hello Gareth

I manage both planning & building control and consider there to be more advantages than disadvantages to the two being paired.

As you suggest, back office savings are relatively minimal (but could not doubt be improved). The biggest advantage, however, is ongoing dialogue between POs and BCOs and the fact that BCOs often act as an additional pair of eyes when on site from an enforcement perspective.

One grumble I regularly receive from my BCOs however, is that clients are often dissatisfied with their experience of the planning process and as a result, are tempted to use external BCO services. This is clearly something that needs attention in my directorate as things move forward (I've only been in post a few months!).

Hope this assists.

Best wishes

David Fitzsimon

Cyngor Sir Penfro

Bore Da,

Graham has passed on your e-mail to POSW about the possible merging of the two disciplines in Gwynedd.

As you will know there are benefits with having the Development Management arm of planning and BC together. Historically it has been about plan checking, ensuring developments proceed in accordance with plans etc. However, the world of planning has changed since our early days of Mr Johnston coming through into our office explaining about his "bucket full of small stuff".

I work closely with Gareth Roberts this end as he now manages his Built Team (BC, Conservation, Housing Renewal, Energy Conservation). We rarely liaise over plans and conditions although there still is some operational activity like that. What we do tend to do more now is offer a joint DM and BC service for customers. We work closely together at our Developer/Agent Forum providing technical advice and guidance to local developers and agents. I have just introduced some pre-application service changes in my team which involves a simple charging scheme and a local agent list which we signpost people to. This has been developed through our Forum and DM and BC saw the advantages of trying to offer a cost effective tailored service from concept to completion for developers.

Having them see me and Gareth Roberts as a sort of team who will try to provide a speedy and co-ordinated

(chargeable) service seems to work well. We are more of a business than ever before now Gareth and I think it is essential to offer a holistic in-house pre-app, application and BC service to enable developers to have the confidence to invest economically in the County.

It could still work if BC was separated from DM but like everything else in Council's the more detached a section is from yours the harder it is to get things done efficiently.

Hope this helps.

Paul Mead
Rheolwr Datblygu – Cyngor Sir Ddinbych

Gareth,

Building Control falls within Planning and Public Protection (before my time it was in Housing). Over the years, I've worked in both situations and the advantages of location within a Technical Service rather than Planning are:

1. Engineering expertise support (easily managed in my experience)
2. Clearer separation between Planning and Building Control in minds of public (the risk of confusing the two regulatory regimes can be managed with appropriate correspondence caveats and letter headings)

I agree with your theoretical advantages. The reality is that there's relatively little joint working partly because competition with Approved Inspectors mitigates against Building Control Officers being seen as 'Planning snitches'. You may recall we pursued a Collaboration Project with your Huw Williams and moving Building Regs away from Planning wasn't seen as a risk and failed due to other factors.

We're looking at strengthening the relationship between Planning and Building Control in a Service Transformation Project which Ian Simson is project managing – see draft staff briefing to give you a quick overview

Gobeithio bydd hyn o help.

Jim Woodcock, Pennaeth Cynllunio a Gwarchod y Cyhoedd (Ynys Mon)

Apols for delay. I manage both and couldn't imagine them being separated tho it has been mooted a few times. The efficiencies around sharing a back office software system, daily interaction between planning officers and bco's, the ability for customers to discuss proposals across the services in one place at the same time, cross checking commencement lists and comparing apps for discrepancies, sharing capacity between the business support officers are just a few benefits off the top of my head. Both my DM and BC teams work very closely and there is daily contact. My BC manager and DM manager are husband and wife as well – not sure if that helps or not!

On the downside, about 10 years ago we did trial bco's checking for planning compliance and on occasion discharging planning conditions- that was not successful and I knocked it on the head. Wonderful in theory but didn't work in the real world

Steve Smith, Blaenau Gwent
