

Appendix B Essex DM Staffing and Benchmarking Survey July 2015

Essex Development Management Staffing Recruitment Survey

At the July 2015 meeting of the EPOA DM forum, the issue of staffing levels in Development Management and difficulties in recruiting to vacancies was raised. With a limited pool of staff to recruit from and with other authorities experiencing similar recruitment difficulties a survey was carried out amongst Essex LPAs and ECC as M&W and County Planning Authority. Following completion of the survey by 8 authorities, the results are highlighted below.

Summary of Findings:

A shortage of staff in post and the difficulties in recruiting to vacancies, especially at more senior levels, has been recognised by the forum. The issue has been exacerbated by a rise in the number of planning applications received; more formal procedures for pre-application advice and discharge of conditions; and new activity including dealing with prior approvals. Competition, in respect to recruiting to vacant posts has also been recognised as a major issue.

The survey was conducted amongst Essex authorities in the late 2015 to improve intelligence concerning the current position regarding staffing levels, vacancies, staff turnover, the source of recruitment for staff and where they leave to etc.

7 of the 12 LPAs and ECC responded to this survey which revealed In 2007/08 (before the economic downturn) a peak level of 13,186 planning applications had been submitted to the 7 LPAs. Since then this figure is thought to have declined during the downturn, but last year seemed to bounce back to the former level at 12,577 applications received in 2014/15. This equates to around 95% of the 2007/08 level. It could therefore be argued that current workloads are roughly proportionate to those experienced before the economic down turn.

Nonetheless, changes to staffing levels indicate that in 2007/08 the total number of staff employed within the DM service within the 8 authorities was 203.5. In 2014-15 this figure had decreased to 174.3 demonstrating that there had been around a 15% decrease in overall staffing numbers since 2007/08, with some authorities suffering over a 30% decrease in staff. It is also worth noting that the nature of work has changed with a greater emphasis and very large increase in pre application work; recent policy changes which have resulted in a large caseload relating to prior approvals; and increased regulatory requirements across the board.

In respect of staff turnover, during 2014/15 a total of 45 officers moved on or accepted positions amongst the eight authorities. Particular concern has been noted by the forum about the decline in applicants for advertised positions and the movement of experienced staff amongst the Essex authorities and the private sector, indicating that competition may exist amongst the Essex authorities to recruit experienced DM officers.

Survey Results

	Essex CC		Epping Forest DC		Southend BC		Braintree BC		Chelmsford CC		Colchester BC		Harlow		Uttlesford DC	
	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15
Total no of applications	200	331 ¹	2534	2914 ²	1688 ³	2068	2191	1339	2328	1995	1900	1748	530	720	2015	1793
Of which were Major applications	47	30	38	29	Not available	28	63	37	55	44	55	57			54	64
% change in number of applications received over period	Not comparable ⁴		+ 15% (increase)		+ 22.5% (increase)		-39% (decrease)		-14% (decrease)		-8% (decrease)		+36% (increase)		-11% (decrease)	

¹ Includes all applications

² Includes LDCs NMA's DOC etc.

³ Inc. all application types: LDCs, TPOs, Prior Approvals

⁴ Not comparable as data is not consistent or reliable following migration to new case management system

Number of Applications

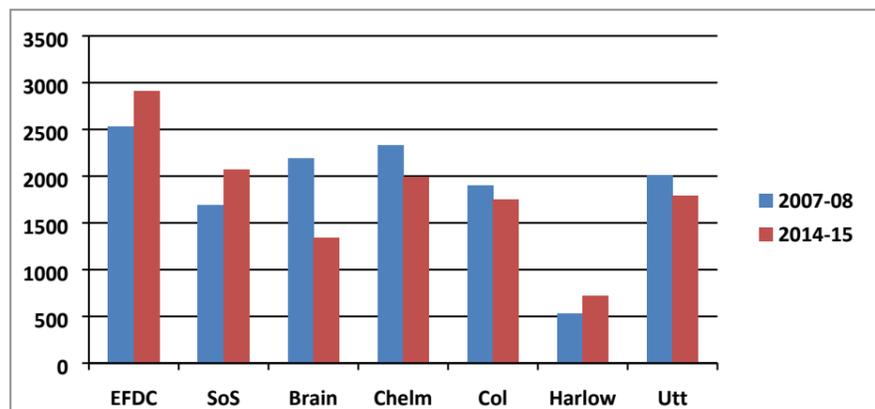


Table 2: Staffing Levels

	Essex CC		Epping Forest DC		Southend BC		Braintree Dc		Chelmsford CC		Colchester BC		Harlow		Uttlesford DC	
	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15	2007/08	2014/15
DM staff	12	8	12	10.2	14	8	16 ⁵	15.6	13	13	16	14	4	5	12	11
Support staff	6 ⁶	3 ⁷	10	8	9	5.5	7 ⁸	5	5	4.4	8	6	3 ⁹	3	13.5	15
Enforcement staff	1	1	5	5	2	1.6	3.5	2.5	6	3.5	4	3	0	0	1	2
TOTAL	19	12	27	23.2	25	15.1	26.5	23.1	24	20.7	28	23	7	8	26.5	28
other			1 x conservation 1x conservation/design 4 x tree/landscape 1 x contamination	1 x Team Leader – Trees, Conservation & Enforcement 2 x conservation 3.5 x tree/landscape 1 x contamination	1 conservation	1 conservation			1 conservation/LB 2 x trees 3 x customer service	1 conservation 2 trees 0.6 compliance	4	5	0.5 tree officer	0.11 tree officer	x1 conservation X1 tree	X2 conservation x1 tree x1 housing enabling
TOTAL	19	12	34	30.7	26	16.1	26.5	23.1	30	24.3	32	28	7.5	8.1	28.5	32
% change in staffing levels over period	-37% (decrease)		- 10% (decrease)		- 38% (decrease)		-13% (decrease)		-20% decrease		-13% (decrease)		+8% increase		+12% increase	

⁵ Includes 1 p/t role

⁶ Dedicated DC admin team

⁷ X1 Technician, 0.5 PSO and est1.5 Business Support from corporate service

⁸ Includes 4 p/t

⁹ Includes P/T scanner shared with other services

Staffing Levels

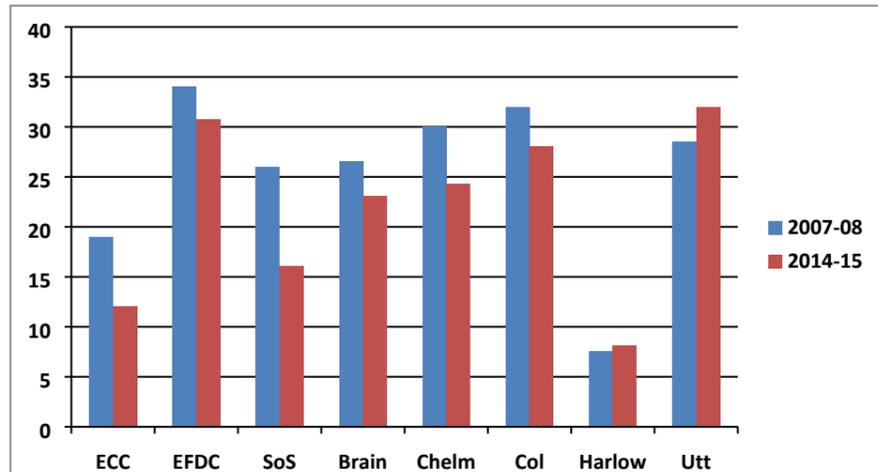
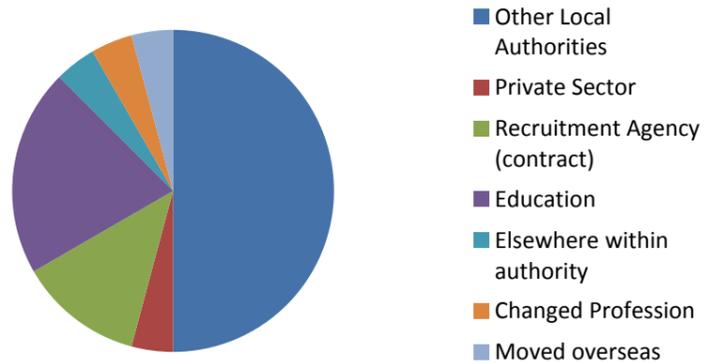


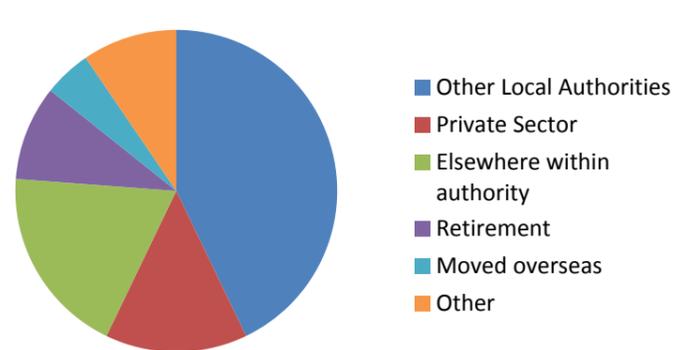
Table 3: Leavers & Starters for 2014/15

	Essex CC		Epping Forest DC		Southend BC		Braintree DC		Chelmsford CC		Colchester BC		Harlow		Uttlesford DC	
	Starters From	Leavers To:	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To	From	To
Other Local Authorities	2	4		2	1	1	1	1	2	3	3		2	1	1	
Private Sector	1					1		1						1		
Recruitment Agency (contract)	1 ¹⁰		2													
Education					2		1		2							
Elsewhere within authority	1	1														
From Career Break																
Retirement												2				
Redundancy																
Changed Profession	1															
Moved overseas						1								1		
Self Employment																
Internship/Apprentice									1							
Other		1 ¹¹										1				
TOTAL TURNOVER	12		4		6		4		8		6		4		1	

Starters - where from - 14/15



Leavers - where to - 14/15



¹⁰ Maternity cover

¹¹ maternity