

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: Acting Head of Legal and Administrative Services

REPORT NUMBER **E158**

TO: Overview & Scrutiny (Stewardship) Committee

DATE OF MEETING 27 September 2005

LOCAL LAND CHARGES: PERFORMANCE, NLIS AND LAMP

1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report sets out the latest performance trends for the Local Land Charges service and the latest position regarding the proposal received from MacDonalD Dettwiler and Associates Ltd. (MDA) to undertake required data capture and conversion work to enable the transition to electronic working. The report is for information only.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 The Committee is recommended to note the contents of this report.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 The cost of the Solution Definition offered by MDA is £43,000.

4. **KEY INFORMATION**

4.1 **RECENT PERFORMANCE TRENDS**

The Committee received a report (E56) at its meeting on 5 July 2005 charting the fluctuating performance of the Land Charges service since the introduction of a computerised system in autumn 2003. It was mentioned in the report that problems were being experienced once more and that efforts were being made to supplement the resources available to the section. An experienced officer had therefore been seconded from Suffolk County Council for two mornings per week and, as was reported orally to the meeting, Management Team had also given approval for the employment of an additional member of staff on a full-time basis until the end of the current financial year. Both additional resources were applied during the first week of July.

4.2 As may be seen from Appendix A to this report, the average response time at the beginning of July was in excess of 25 working days. Despite the absence of one half-time member of staff for the whole of August and the fulfilment of other annual leave commitments during the summer, the number of outstanding searches has been reduced to approximately 100 and the average response time is now 14 days. The target is to reduce that to 5 or 6 days and for 100% of standard searches for the remainder of the year to be responded to within the BVPI target of 10 working days. The percentages for the first five months of the year are set out in the table below.

Month	No. of searches	% of standard searches in 10 days
April 2005	233	3.9
May 2005	204	2.3
June 2005	220	4.0
July 2005	224	6.9
August 2005	220	12.2

- 4.3 Although the steady improvement has not yet translated itself into a high percentage of searches responded to within the 10-day target, turnaround times of 13-14 days are nevertheless quite acceptable to most solicitors/conveyancers. Moreover, once the breakthrough has been made, it is anticipated that it should be possible to sustain the improvement for the whole of the remainder of the year, which would make for a cumulative performance figure for the year of approximately 60%. Although still bottom quartile, this would represent the best performance since 2002/03.
- 4.4 **LOCAL AUTHORITY MODERNISATION PROGRAMME (LAMP) PROPOSAL**
The goals for the Local Land Charges service are to achieve NLIS Level 3 status and reduce search times. It was reported in July that the Council had received a proposal from MacDonald Dettwiler Associates (MDA), to undertake, under LAMP, various works designed to create a fully electronic search service operating at NLIS Level 3. The first phase involved the Solution Definition, which is a detailed investigation of existing processes and data and would result in recommendations as to hardware and infrastructure requirements, any necessary data capture and conversion works and interfaces with internal and external systems, together with an implementation programme. The Solution Definition would also provide a fixed cost proposal for undertaking those works.
- 4.5 At the time of the previous report it was indicated that the Solution Definition would take 5 months and cost £43,000. A provisional estimate of the cost of the works required to create a fully electronic search service had been estimated to be in excess of £600,000. It must be stressed, however, that that was for an end-to-end electronic solution in which every piece of data required to answer a search was captured digitally and almost every process was automated, permitting search turnaround times in minutes rather than days. The Council has not indicated that this level of service is a priority and, following discussions, MDA clarified that they would also present various lesser, costed options setting out clearly the implications for the Council of each one. MDA have also indicated that the scope of the Solution Definition can be expanded at no additional cost to include investigations of other planned projects (such as GIS replacement and Positional Accuracy Improvement) and identification of developments necessary for the achievement of other e-government priorities and enhanced management of property-related information.
- 4.6 A very detailed report was prepared for the Corporate Management Team by an Officer Group setting out the scope of the Solution Definition, the business case for MDA's proposal (including establishing the works that would be necessary even if MDA's proposal were rejected as well as the likely effects on the Land Charges service) and the internal resources that would be required to support MDA's managed service at each stage. Management Team considered the report on 13 September and approved, subject to certain conditions and clarifications, the engagement of MDA to undertake a Solution Definition and the cleansing of the Council's Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG). The creation of the post of LLPG Custodian, initially for a period of 6 months, has also been agreed to take charge of the LLPG and to manage both the Solution Definition and the gazetteer cleansing projects from Babergh's point of view.
- 4.7 Although this does not commit the Council in any way to any subsequent phase of work, bids are being submitted under the Service and Financial Planning process for the necessary support in the event that an Implementation Phase follows and for other items, such as the purchase of NLIS level 3 software, in the event that it does not.

5 APPENDICES

- (a) Appendix A – Land Charges Performance Indicators, July 2005 – September 2005 (attached)

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO

None.

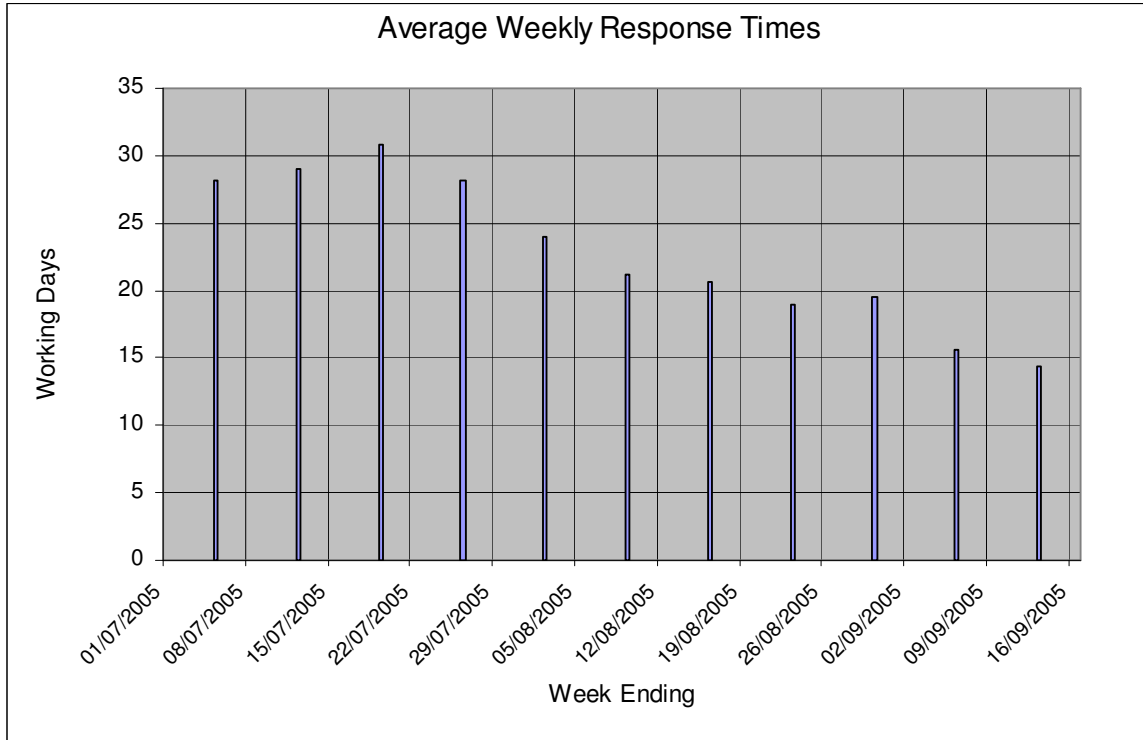
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LAND CHARGES RESPONSE TIMES, JULY – MID-SEPTEMBER 2005



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