

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL JOINT COMMITTEE

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PERFORMANCE MONITORING

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Summary

This report informs the Joint Committee of performance during 2008/2009.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 The Joint Committee has a key role in monitoring the performance of the partnership and in ensuring that any actions arising are followed through.

2. Background

2.1 The Government's Improvement and Development Agency define performance management as "taking action in response to actual performances to make outcomes for users and the public better than they would otherwise be".

2.2 At the outset of the Partnership it was agreed that managing performance would be integral in ensuring service delivery is continually improved and customer expectations are met by achieving challenging standards and targets.

2.3 Competition between Local Authorities and Approved Inspectors in the provision of Building Control services provides a stimulus to greater efficiency and high standards of service to the customer. However, it has been recognised that the same market forces also have the potential to drive down Building Control standards thereby threatening the health and safety of building users.

2.4 Because Building Control is unique as a regulatory service which is open to competition from the private sector it does not have national key performance indicators to benchmark its performance against, unlike planning, environmental health, housing etc.

2.5 A substantial amount of work has been carried out by a Building Control Services Steering Group (made up from members representing the Local Authority Building Control, the Association of Corporate Approved Inspectors, the Local Government Association and the Construction Industry Council) to develop a set of standards which can be applied to

both the public and private sector. Because of the complexity in trying to compare sometimes quite diverse work types and volumes, a lead time was agreed before these would need to be reported on. These now feature in the draft Business Plan 2009/10 and will be monitored throughout the year and reported to Members quarterly.

2.6 Where data is available for 2008/09 we will produce the relative statistics on these standards in order to have something to benchmark against next year. We do, however, have a number of local indicators, set out below, which were devised to monitor performance against a number of critical targets required to meet legislative deadlines and to test against customer satisfaction.

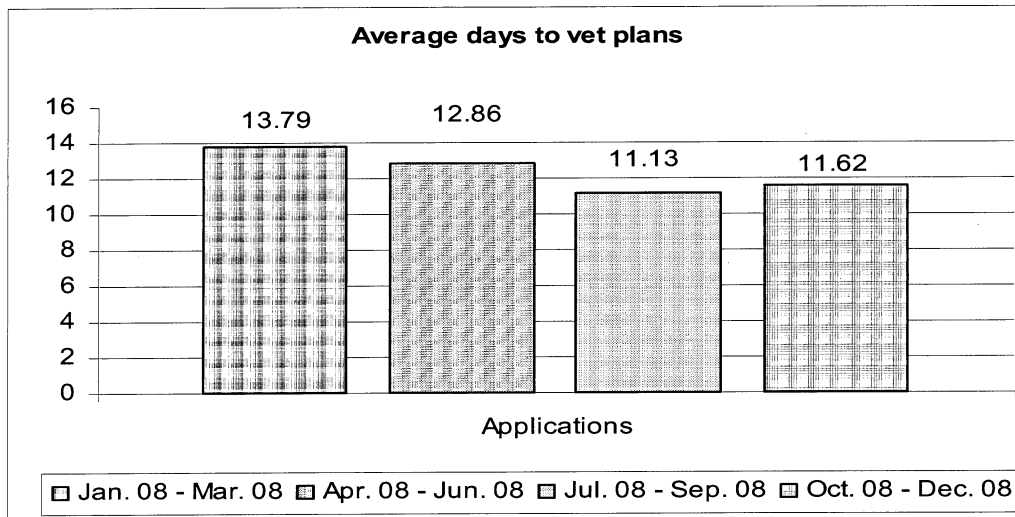
3. Local Performance Indicators

3.1 In previous customer surveys carried out by Kent Building Control the two most important aspects of the service were:

- the speed of checking applications
- the response to requests for site visits.

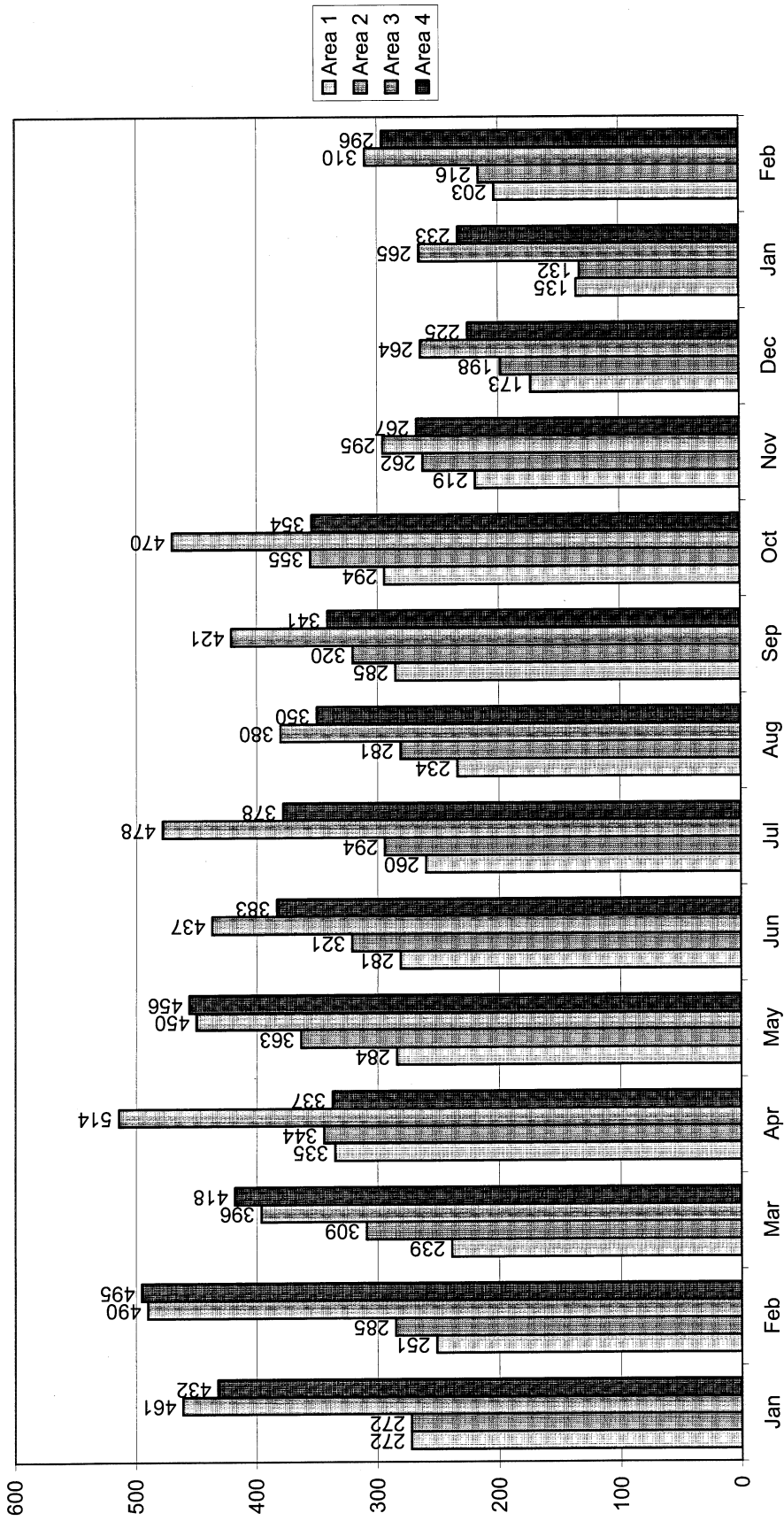
The first two indicators therefore reflect applications checked within 10 and 15 working days and responses to requests for visits.

3.2 The graph below indicates the improvements to service achieved over the last four quarters and the average time taken to check applications. With the proposal to apply some of the principles of the partnering scheme to selected practices to generate a good deal of income to us through their local applications we expect to see further improvements to this through 2009/10 and we will be looking to improve on the adopted building control standards of 100% of plans checked within 15 working days.



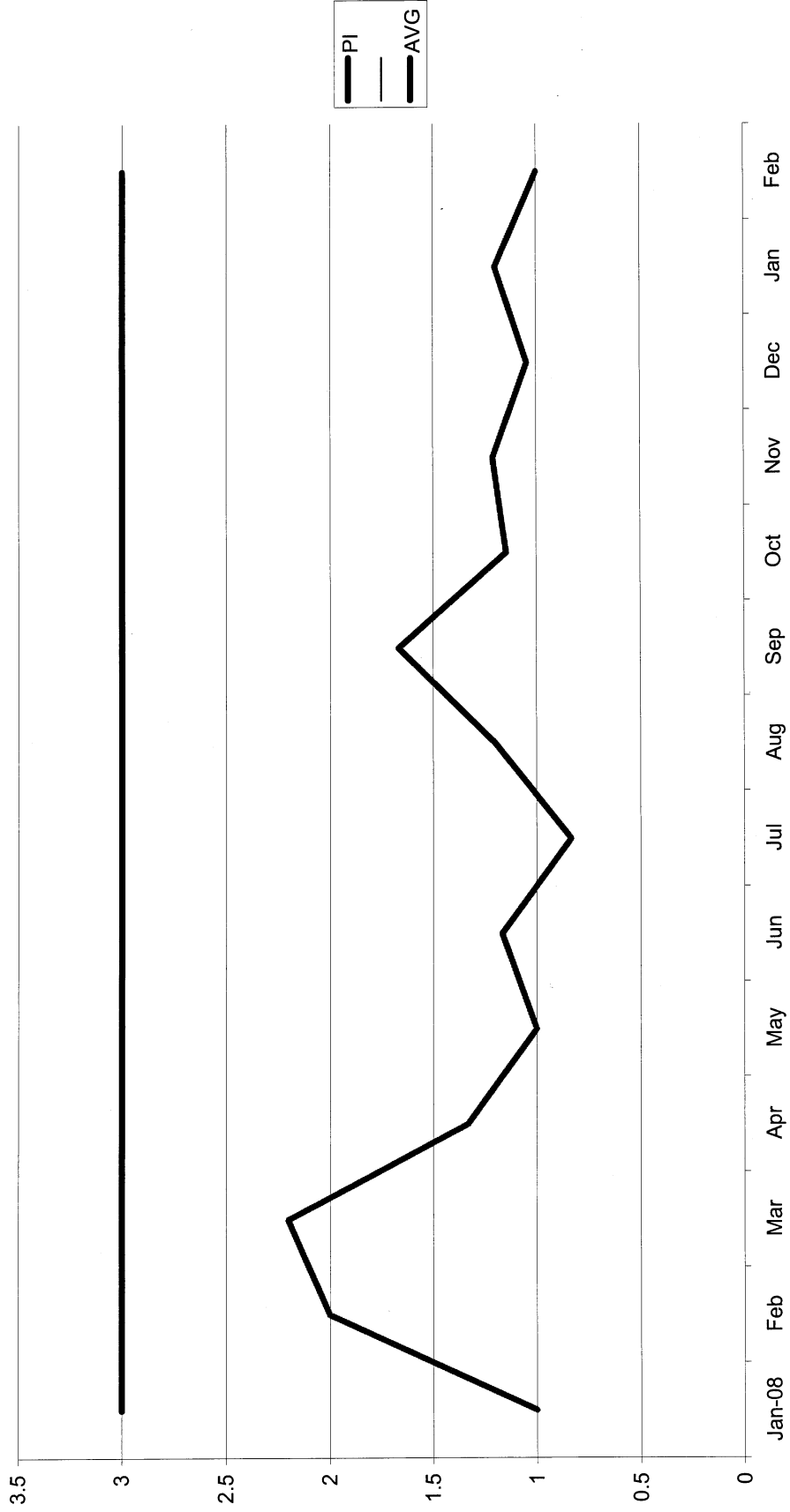
3.3 With regard to site inspections we have continued to offer the same day service when notified before 10am. However, there has been a significant take up of the improved service we now offer regarding early morning visits. The statistics for monthly inspections over the four areas are shown in the following table:

Monthly Inspection Count
January 2008 to February 2009



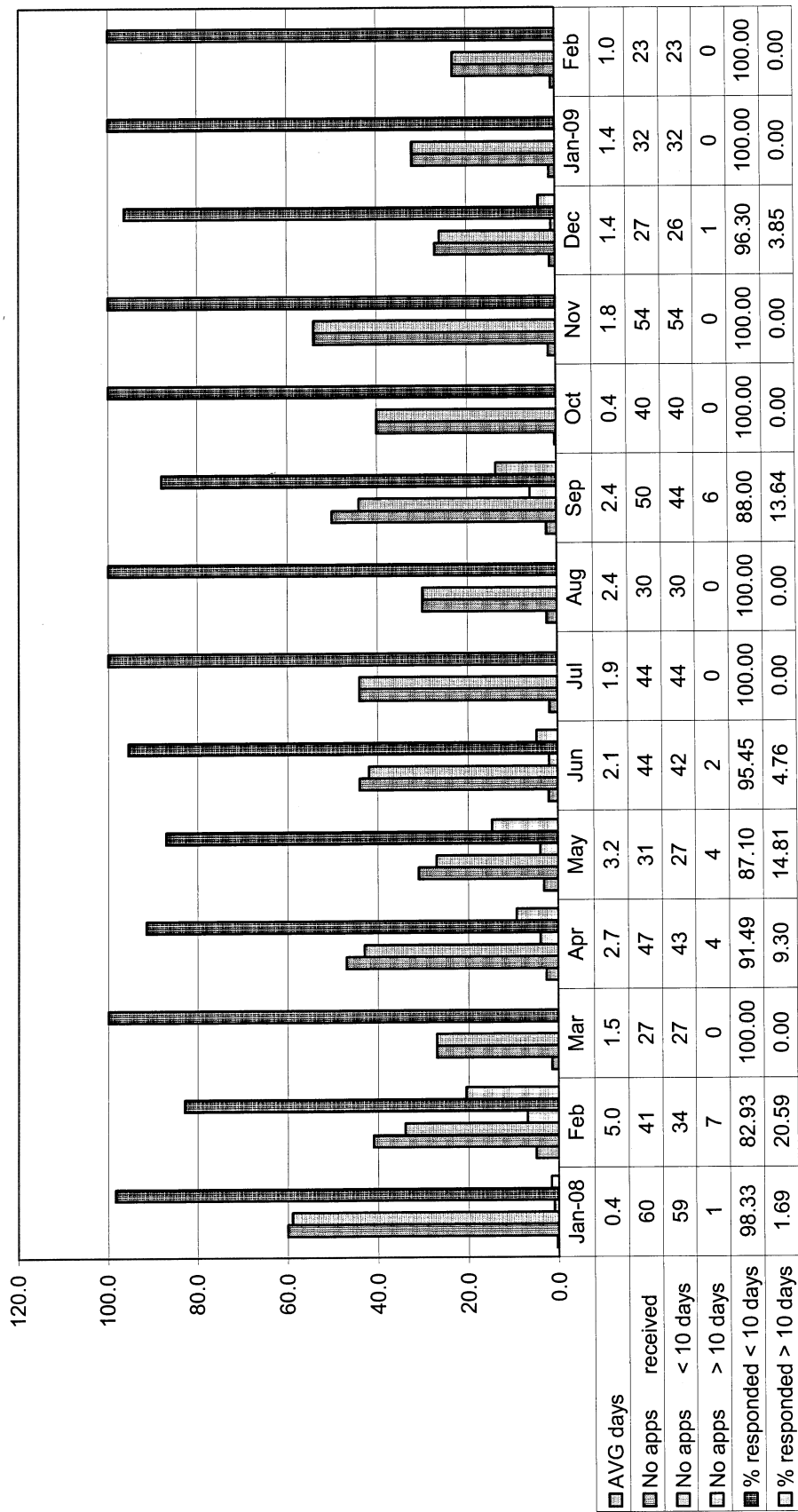
3.4 It was also identified in the surveys that customers wanted an early acknowledgement of their application and details of the next process and who was dealing with it. This has been addressed through our acknowledgement letter and a target time of 3 days given to the technical assistants to validate the application and respond to the agent or owner. The graph below indicates the average processing time against this performance indicator from January 2008 to February 2009. This demonstrates that we have achieved 100% in this performance indicator.

**January 2008 to February 2009
Average processing days per month against Performance Indicator**



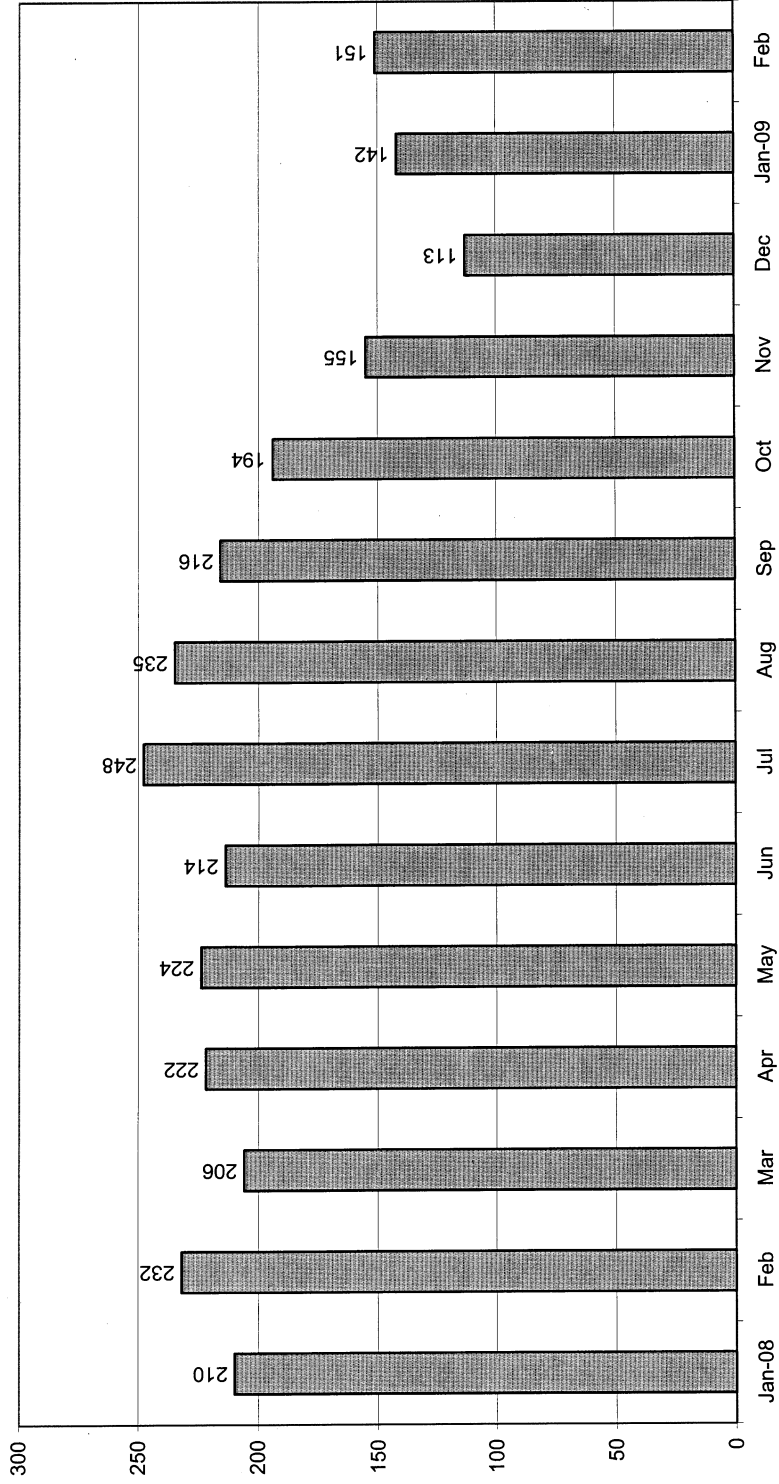
3.5 Another important client group that requires responses in set time limits are solicitors and conveyancing companies dealing with house sales. The introduction of Home Improvement Packs has increased the demand in this area. As this was a new service in 2008/09 we set a target of 10 days for responses. The graph on the next page indicates performance against that target where we have achieved between 82% to 100%.

**HIP Processing
January 2008 to February 2009**

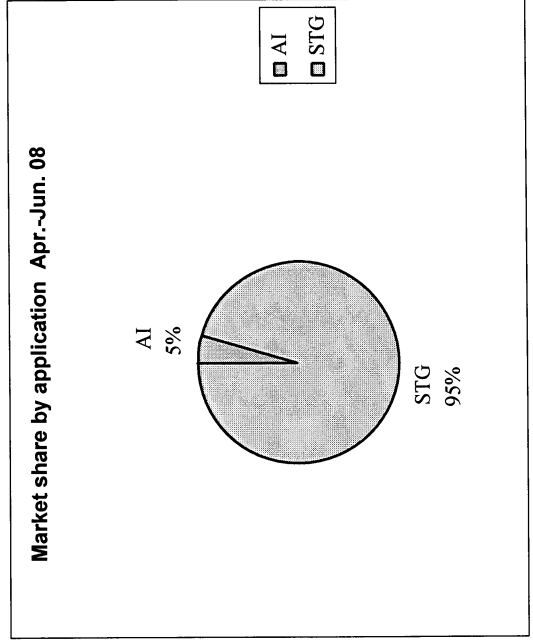
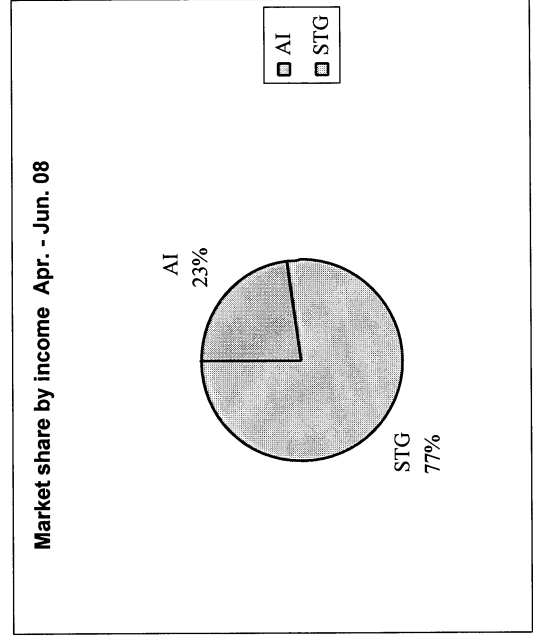
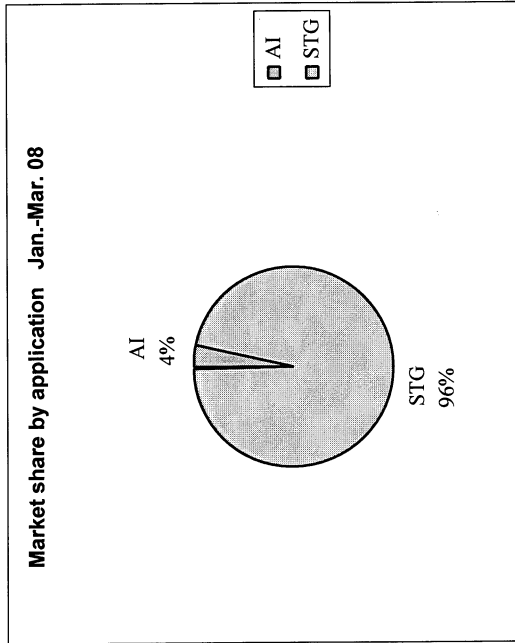
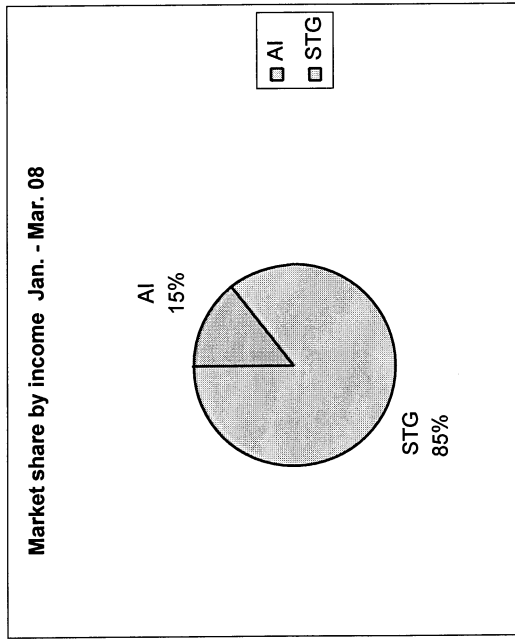


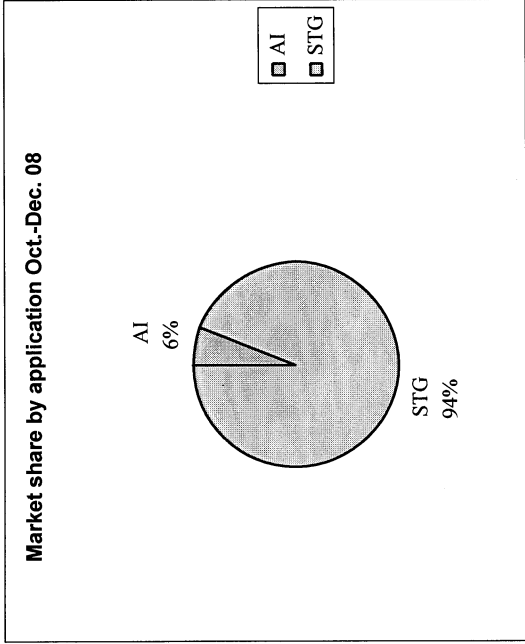
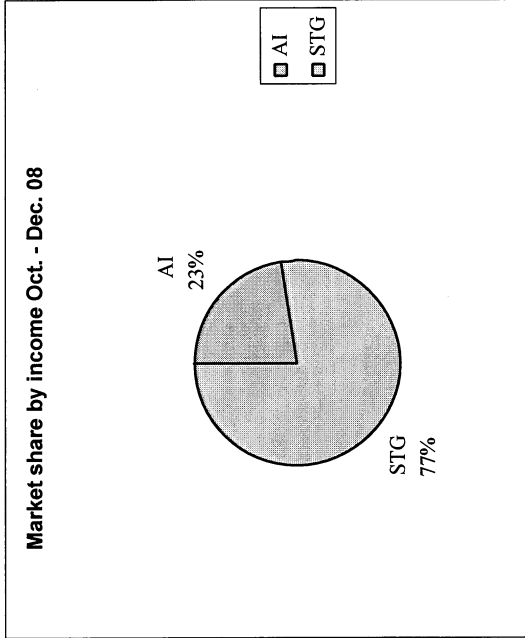
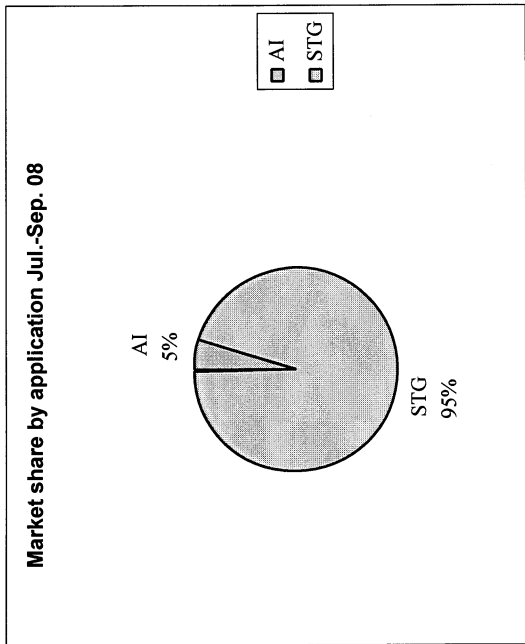
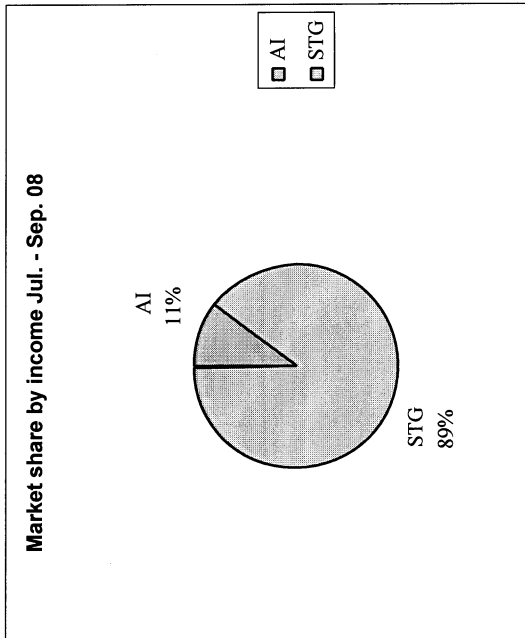
3.6 A critical element of our monthly monitoring process is that of budget and in particular the amount of income against a budgetary projection. As 75% of a building control application fee is paid for on commencement of works it is important for us to see general trends which will reflect the economic situation. Currently there are a number of applications that have conditional or full approval, however, because of the difficulties in funding projects at present many of these have been shelved and therefore the expected income is not forthcoming. Below is a chart indicating the number of commencements month to month clearly indicating the effects of the credit crunch around October 2008.

**Commenced Applications
January 2008 to February 2009**



3.7 As part of our performance measurement with regard to marketing our aim from the previous business plan was to increase the income share by 5%. Details of the last four quarters showing both the numbers of applications and the market share are shown below. The benchmark when the Partnership was set up was 71% market share by income and we are on course to hit our target of 76% for 2008/09. However, the economic climate described earlier has meant a far more aggressive market exists for competition with the Approved Inspectors and therefore for 2009/10 we will be aiming for a market share of around 78%.





4. Benchmarking

- 4.1 As mentioned in the background section, because of the competition element to the service and the vast range of duties local authority building control units carry out, it has not been possible to produce a set of indicators which can easily be benchmarked against.
- 4.2 In order to address this balance LABC has worked with the Audit Commission to produce the Quality Performance Matrix. This looks at nine key areas of the service which are specific to local authorities. We have reviewed our operation against the criteria for these nine key areas through 2008/09 and the resultant score will enable us to benchmark against this compared to other Partnerships or other local authorities throughout the UK next year.

Quality and Performance Matrix (2008) for the Building Regulation Function			
For			
South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership			
		Current Score March 09	Maximum Score
Column 1	Enforcement and Complaints	7.5	12
Column 2	Quality Management And Financial	9	16
Column 3	Accessibility of Service	5	6
Column 4	Customer Communication	4.5	8
Column 5	Service Initiatives	5	6
Column 6	CPD, Staff Training & Qualification	8	8
Column 7	Consultation, Assessment of plans and achieving records	10	16
Column 8	Site inspection, completion and archiving records	10	16
Column 9	Review of overall performance	10	12
	Percentage Assessment Score	69.00	100.00

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The performance indicators included in this report form an integral part of our ISO 9000 Quality Management Accreditation. We currently review the statistics at monthly management meetings and they are also reported to Steering Group and through end of year reports to Joint Committee. Further data analysis is undertaken by Managing Surveyors and Head of Administration and these results are fed back at fortnightly meetings. These examine more closely individuals performance and outcomes and are also discussed at regular one to

one meetings which ensure each member of staff is achieving their goals and targets identified in their personal development review.

- 5.2 Effective performance management requires:
- Systematically deciding and communicating what needs to be done (aims, objectives, priorities and targets)
 - A plan for ensuring that it happens (improvement, action or service plan)
 - Some means of assessing if this has been achieved (performance measures)
 - Information reaching the right people at the right time so decisions are made and actions taken (performance reporting)
- 5.3 We were committed in the first business plan to use performance management principles to help deliver a quality building control service. We have used local performance indicators to set targets and objectives that have been identified in subsequent business and service plans and use the reporting mechanisms at management team, steering group and joint committee to ensure there is an understanding of what has been achieved to set further objectives for the future. Through the quality assured process we put forward ideas for continual improvement and through the engagement of staff and stakeholders we identified specific measures to put in place, monitor and report on. This ensures the Partnership is reactive to customers expectations and to changes required by legislation or the effects of the economy.
- 5.4 We will be using these local indicators, the Quality Performance Matrix and the nationally agreed Standards to benchmark ourselves against comparable local authorities and Partnerships to ensure we deliver an efficient, cost effective, quality service to our customers.

6. Financial and legal implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial or legal implications arising from this report

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 The Committee is asked to consider and note the current performance as set out in the report.

8. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

- 8.1 The Joint Committee has a key role in monitoring the performance of the Partnership and in ensuring that any actions arising are followed through.

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Background papers

There are no background papers accompanying this report