

<b>Committee(s)</b> Planning & Transportation	<b>Dated:</b> 02/06/2020
<b>Subject:</b> District Surveyors Annual Report 2020/21	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of the Built Environment	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Gordon Roy, District Surveyor & Environmental Resilience Director	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the workings of the District Surveyor's office which reports to it for the purposes of building control, engineering services for the City's major infrastructure and to provide resilience to buildings and businesses within the square mile that maybe affected by climatic and environmental risks. To provide Members with a better understanding of the work of the District Surveyor it was agreed to submit annual reports to the committee for information.

### Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Note the report for information.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. The principal role of the District Surveyor's Building Control Service is to ensure that all building work complies with the requirements of the Building Act 1984 and the Building Regulations 2010. Building Regulations are minimum standards laid down by Parliament to secure the health and safety of people in or about buildings with an increasing emphasis on improving energy efficiency, sustainability and accessibility. The building control section is also responsible for notices submitted under Section 30, London Building Act (Amendment) Act 1939 for temporary demountable structures.
2. In offering this Building Regulation regulatory service within the City, the District Surveyor's Office is in direct competition with approximately 90 private firms operating as corporate Approved Inspectors authorised to offer a building regulations approval service.
3. In addition, Dangerous Structures within Inner London are dealt with under the London Building Acts 1930-1939. Responsibility for dealing with them is delegated, by your committee to the District Surveyor. This service is provided on a continuous basis, 24 hours a day throughout the year to ensure public safety. A record of all calls is maintained on the CAPS Uniform software.
4. Other responsibilities placed upon the District Surveyor include:
  - Maintaining a register of all work under the control of Approved Inspectors.
  - Registering certificates under the Competent Persons Schemes.
  - Processing and recording Demolition Notices.

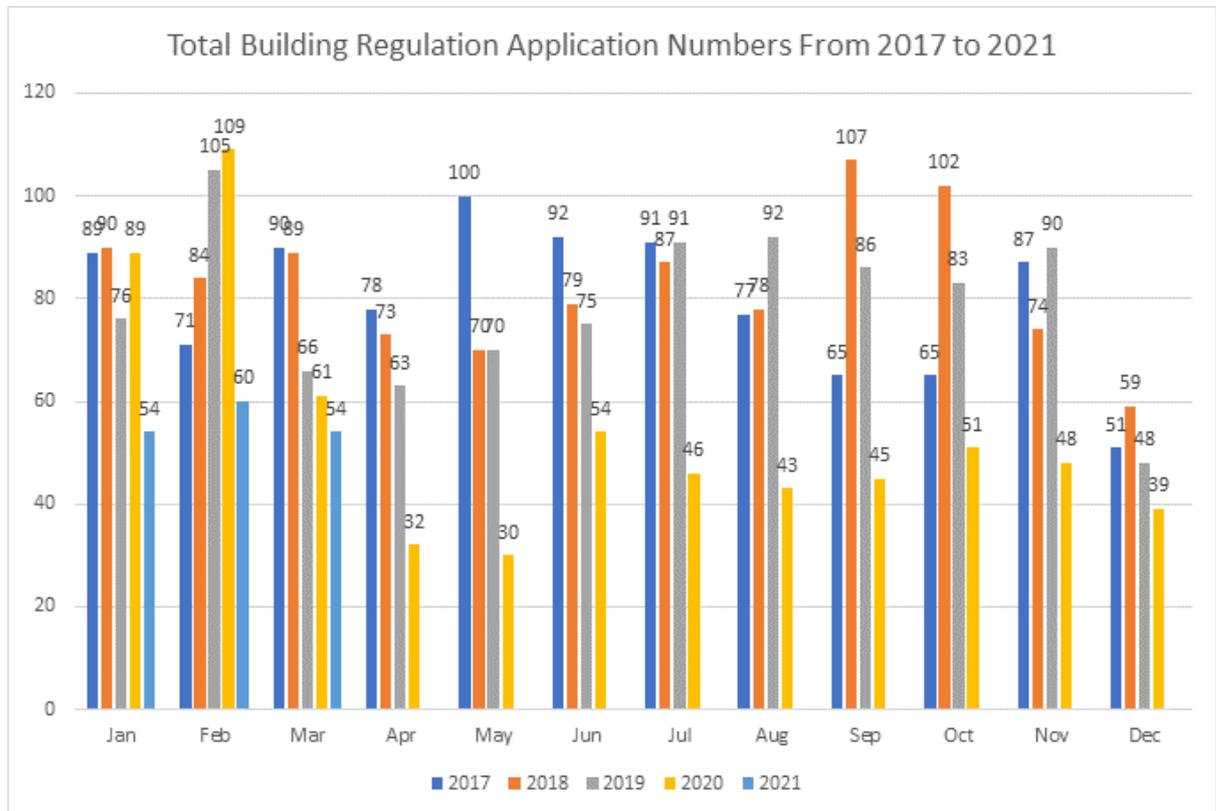
- Advice to the Community and Children’s Services on Marriage Licence applications for the technical standards in relation to Health and Safety.
  - Advice to the Planning Service on major Planning Applications on the design of Sustainable drainage systems. This service was extended in April 2020, to include Fire Safety and Energy Statements, which are additional requirements for major planning applications under the Local Plan.
5. Advice and guidance on technical and procedural requirements are made freely available to other areas of the City of London Corporation and the public upon request.
  6. The Engineering Team are responsible for the structural inspection and maintenance of the City’s 5 river Bridges, approximately 80 Highway Structures and a number of Statutory Reservoirs on which they have reported separately to your committee and Open Spaces Committees respectively. With the formation of the new Bridge House Estates Board from April 2021, all matters relating to the 5 City Bridges will be reported to this new Board. The Engineering Team also provide advice on major Infrastructure Projects to protect the City’s interests.
  7. The Environmental Resilience Team, formed in June 2019, aims to improve the resilience of the City Corporation and the Square Mile to environmental impacts including flooding, and fulfilling the City Corporation’s statutory duties as Lead Local Flood Authority under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

### **Current Position**

8. As referenced earlier in the report, the Building Regulations function of the District Surveyor’s Office is open to extensive competition and is affected by the fluctuating extent of building work within the City. During 2020/21 workload has also been affected severely by the Covid-19 pandemic where applications received by both the Approved Inspectors and The District Surveyors Office dropped by around 50% from previous years. The following bar chart (Table 1) shows the number of applications and Initial Notices received by the District

Surveyors Office over the year and includes previous years to demonstrate the considerable drop in applications.

**Table 1**



9. Applications received by the Building Control Service for 2020/21 and the resulting market share are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**

Market Share					
	Yr. 2016/17	Yr. 2017/18	Yr. 2018/19	Yr. 2018/19	Yr. 2020/21
City of London Applications	216	248	244	300	158
Initial Notices Received	763	773	791	697	418
Total Number of Applications	979	1021	1035	997	576
City of London Market Share	22%	24%	24%	30%	27%

10. Market share dropped slightly from the previous year but remains within the 22-30% range.

11. A summary of the all the Building Control Service workload for 2020/21, is shown in table 3:

**Table 3**

Building Control Stats					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Corporate Complaints	0	0	0	0	0
Jobs Commenced	224	237	205	278	151
Jobs Completed	138	188	142	186	121
Full Plans Applications Submitted	126	159	110	174	100
Building Notice Applications submitted	66	63	73	78	46
Partnership Applications	11	9	24	10	8
Regularisations	13	17	28	29	12
Cross Boundary applications	N/A	N/A	9	9	2
Total Number of Applications	216	248	244	300	158
Competent Person Notifications	333	739	827	376	554
Dangerous Structure Call Outs	32	29	33	23	12
Site Inspections	1457	1603	1537	1759	894
Income	£1,295,411	£874,660	£957,150	£1,058,245	£810,533
Market Share	22%	24%	24%	30%	27%

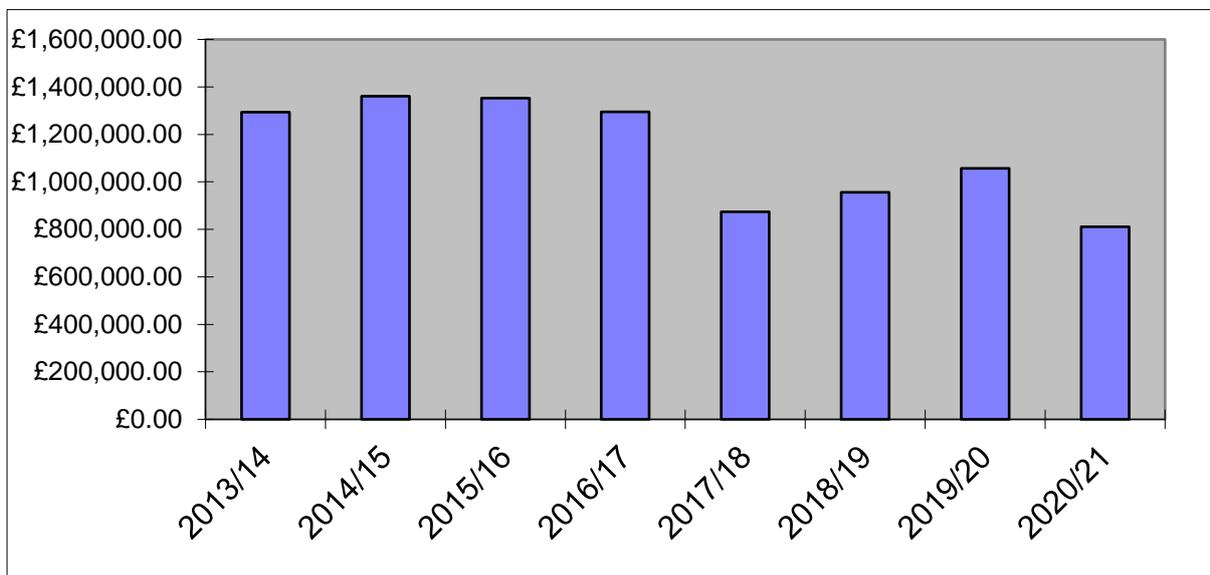
12. Tables 2 and 3, show the total number of Building Regulation applications dropped significantly during 2020/21. Table 1 shows the very healthy application numbers in January to March 2020, but with the Covid Pandemic starting at the end of March 2020, applications drop sharply to around 50% of their normal levels, and this has continued into the early part of 2021 also. This severe drop-in construction activity has affected the workload across the whole of the Building Control process, resulting in lower applications for other matters such as Demolition Notices, Temporary Structures, Approval in Principles and Marriage Licence inspections.

13. The Covid Pandemic in April 2020, required Building Control to stop all physical site inspections of on-going building work, with surveyors having to adopt a new remote inspection process, where photographs, Facetime, video, and similar electronic methods of completing a remote inspection, were used. While this remote method is not ideal, it allowed contractors to proceed with their works, while keeping the surveyors safe. Working with Corporate Health & Safety team,

and the Construction Leadership Council's Covid guidelines, a revised Covid-19 Risk Assessment was produced and agreed, and physical site inspections recommenced during the summer 2020, with a very strict protocol being implemented and contractors being asked to supply in advanced Covid Secure site inspection plans. The District Surveyors Office has adopted a pragmatic attitude to the Covid pandemic, and this has allowed the construction industry within the City to continue during this time.

14. As application numbers decreased in 2020/21, income also decreased. Table four shows fee generation from applications between 2013 to 2021 to use as a comparison.

**Table 4**



15. Income received in a year can be difficult to use as a measure of new business activity as large projects which have already started, are invoiced throughout their construction period and can disguise market activity. To analysis new business activity, applications received in a calendar year and their respective fee income is checked and the results are listed in table 5:

**Table 5**

<b>Table 5 Building Control Applications 2015-2020</b>		
Year	Number of Application	Fees Generated
2015	280	£1,210,007
2016	228	£847,099
2017	236	£778,279
2018	246	£778,279
2019	266	£1,091,256
2020	191	£810,533

16. The analysis of Table 5 suggests that new large scale construction activity during 2020/21 paused due to the pandemic, but there was a reasonable number of medium sized applications, resulting in income being at a similar level to 2017 and 2018 although application numbers were smaller.
17. Medium sized applications received included the relocation of the Museum of London to Smithfield's, the fit outs of 21 Moorfields, 74 and 84 Moorgate.
18. The number of applications and income are not the only measure of the workload for the division. Large developments have extended contract periods which spread work and fees over several years. With the fees being taken in stages the fee associated with the initial application provides a better measure of the work carried out by the office at any time. Table 5 shows fee generation from applications between 2013 to 2020.
19. Fees and charges for Building Regulation work are governed by The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 and the City are required to approve a Building Regulation Charges Scheme. In 2010 the charges scheme was approved and has been reviewed annually to ensure the principles of the Regulations, to ensure full cost recovery of the Building Regulation part of the service, was being maintained. The scheme was amended in 2018, and in 2020. As requested by the Committee, an annual report relating to the fees was submitted to review the current charges scheme ensuring fees are set at an appropriate rate. This report, recommended some minor changes to the scheme, for commencement from May 2021, which was agreed and has been implemented from the 4th May 2021.
20. Dangerous structure call-out inspections dropped over the last year from 23 to 12. This drop in dangerous structure reports is probably due to fewer people being in the City but will be monitored to ensure that all incidents are correctly reported. Of those dangerous structures that were reported, there were no significant incidents.
21. Over the last year, Officers have been participating in the London District Surveyors Dangerous Structures Consortium's work on procuring a new contract for a Dangerous Structure Call-out Contractor. This work has now been completed with "Wates" appointed for the next 4 years. Wates will provide this service for all London Boroughs, 24/7.
22. Other areas where Building Control services have been requested include:
  - Special and Temporary and Special Structures- 5 applications.
  - Approvals in Principal for the Engineering Team- 16 applications.
  - Marriage Act applications to carry out a technical assessment for the premises prior to a Licence being issued- 1 application.
  - Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) - providing the technical advice and assessment for major planning applications - 39 applications.
  - Demolition Notices - 2.

23. Applications for Demolition Notices, Temporary Structures, Approval in Principle applications and Marriage Licences were all significantly lower than normal as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
24. Only assessments for Sustainable drainage systems which are submitted as a result of a planning application, remained at a normal level, which indicates that the planning system remained active during the pandemic.

### **Major Projects that Completed in 2020/21**

25. Construction work during 2020/21 was severely affected due to the COVID pandemic but works to a number of major buildings still completed during the year. These included:
  - Fleet Building, Farringdon Street.
  - Fit out works for 52-54 Lime Street (The Scalpel)
  - Fit out works for 60-70 St Marys Axe.
  - Fit out works for 100 Bishopsgate.
26. While the number of large projects that completed was small, construction work at 22 Bishopsgate and, 150 Bishopsgate continued and are very close to being completed. Works to 8 Bishopsgate and 40 Leadenhall commenced and are now well underway. Works to 1 Leadenhall have also been monitored with the demolition to the existing building nearing completion, with piling planned for autumn 2021. A similar situation exists for 1-2 Broadgate.

### ***Engineering Team***

27. The Engineering Team have been extremely busy with the Thames Tideway project with tunnelling now complete to the City section of the river and for the complicated float out of the new Fleet Culvert. The team have ensured this work has not affected the Bridges on behalf of Bridge House Estates.
28. The re-waterproofing of London Bridge and the associated replacement of Bridge bearings was successfully completed on time and in budget after considerable persuasion not to suspend the works when the pandemic commenced.
29. With the proposed relocation of the Museum of London to Smithfield's, the Engineering Team have been working in collaboration with the development's project team, for their contractor to waterproof a number of bridges around Smithfield and Snow Hill, as well as carrying out investigations to the bridge at Lindsey Street.
30. The team have also worked very hard to ensure the critical services of approving abnormal load routes, crane notification etc, have been continued while remote working throughout the pandemic and minimising the impact of the proposed TOM.
31. There has also been considerable input to the setting up of the new BHE Board.

## **Environmental Resilience Team**

32. The Environmental Resilience Team has continued its leading edge work to ensure that the City is resilient to the risks we face from climate change (flooding, heat stress, water shortages, biodiversity loss, emerging pests & diseases and disruption to food and trade).
33. The team have developed the City's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2021–27 (adopted Feb 2022) which sets out how we will address the risks the City faces from all flooding sources, tackling the increased risk from climate change. This work has advanced in parallel with our contribution to the Environment Agency's second cycle Flood Risk Management Plan. These tasks contribute to fulfilling the City Corporation's duties as Lead Local Flood Authority for the Square Mile under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the Flood Risk Regulations 2009.
34. In order to address the increased risk of flooding from the tidal Thames as a result of sea level rise, the team has progressed a pilot Riverside Strategy, part funded by the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. This strategy demonstrates how the City can adapt the riverside to cope with higher tides whilst maintaining a well-designed and accessible riverside for all. Work has included the commissioning of a drone survey of the City's riverside, desktop research, comprehensive GIS mapping and involvement in the Design in the Public Sector programme (sponsored by the Local Government Association) all of which have informed the draft strategy.
35. The Environmental Resilience Team led the inclusion of climate resilience as a key element of the Climate Action Strategy. The team worked with Buro Happold to produce a climate resilience adaptive pathways report which prioritises climate resilience actions taking account of the uncertainty of climate impacts. Implementation of this work has begun through the "Cool Streets and Greening" and "Mainstreaming Resilience" projects. We have run a series of "Climate Chats" to communicate climate change issues to a wider audience and we represent the City at regional forums addressing flood risk and climate resilience.

## **Staff**

36. The District Surveyors Office has an overall team of 30, including 24 in the Building Control Team, 5 in the Engineering Team, and the District Surveyor post. In addition, the Environmental Resilience Team has 2 posts which have been seconded into the team, as specialists in this field. The Building Control Team has a number of officers of various seniority and specialisms to reflect the work we do. These include structural engineers, chartered surveyors, a fire

engineer, and services engineers. All members of the Engineering Team are civil engineers.

37. Over the last few years, the Building Control Team has been in transition with a number of staff members retiring. At the end of March 2021, 3 members of the team, who had a combined service to the Office in excess of 110 years, retired. Recruitment to fill these positions is extremely difficult due to the National shortage of Building Control Surveyors, competition from Approved Inspectors, and constraints due to the TOM process. However, we have been successful in appointing to one of the positions and a further recruitment advert will be published shortly.
38. Building Control in August 2019 started its first professional Building Control Apprentice, on a four-year University based training programme, with a second apprentice appointed in 2020. In March 2021 a third apprentice was appointed who will commence their University course this autumn. As recruitment to Building Control is very difficult, the Division is committed to training new and existing staff to ensure service delivery.
39. We continue to actively seek out potential clients and win new work, with discussion continuing with major developers and landowners, such as British land. Pre application agreements have been signed regarding, 2-3 Finsbury Avenue, Custom House, 81 Newgate Street, 120 Fleet Street, 55 and 70 Gracechurch Street. We also work with British Land on their framework agreement for redeveloping the whole of Broadgate. Applications for 1-2 Broadgate, and 30-34 New Bridge Street have recently been submitted. We are also providing early advice to the Courts Project team. We are optimistic for the future and continue to market the service at every opportunity.
40. The London District Surveyors Association (LDSA) represents the heads of Building Control in the 33 London authorities. The District Surveyor office continues to support the work of the LDSA and is represented on all its major committees, including its executive committee. Gordon Roy, the District Surveyor and Environmental Resilience Director has been elected as Junior Vice President in 2020. His Presidential year was due to be in 2022, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic the existing President was asked to remain for a second year, so Gordon's Presidency will now commence in 2023.
41. To help steer both the regulatory format and technical standards, staff participate in full consultation with government and have been involved with the industry committees and working parties following the Hackitt enquiry regarding fire safety. This has also required our engineers, to work with the fire engineers at Edinburgh University to examine new construction techniques particularly around the use of timber in buildings. This work continues and ensures the District Surveyors are at the forefront of the construction industry.
42. Close working with the London Fire Brigade ensures a coordinated response on fire related issues is fed back to clients, and we continue to have regular discussions with their fire engineering team.
43. Regular reviews of our workload and performance are carried out and reviewed in the light of regular customer surveys.
44. Performance standards are measured by means of Key Performance Indicators which indicated in table six, KPI's 2021.

**Table 6**

	LBC1	5 week apps 90% within 19 working days			LBC2	8 week apps 90% within 26 working days			LBC3	Completion Certificates Issued 85% within 10 working days		
		Apps.	Success	%		Apps.	Success	%		Final Inspections	Success	%
<b>2020/21</b>												
Apr		6	6	100%		7	7	100%		1	1	100%
May		1	1	100%		1	1	100%		3	3	100%
Jun		2	2	100%		2	2	100%		8	7	88%
Jul		6	6	100%		8	8	100%		12	12	100%
Aug		3	3	100%		2	1	50%		2	2	100%
Sept		2	2	100%		1	1	100%		7	7	100%
Oct		3	3	100%		1	1	100%		13	13	100%
Nov		3	3	100%		6	5	83%		18	18	100%
Dec		1	1	100%		4	3	75%		9	9	100%
Jan		0	0	100%		7	5	71%		12	12	100%
Feb		5	4	80%		8	7	88%		11	11	100%
Mar		2	2	100%		9	9	100%		16	16	100%
<b>YEAR TOTAL</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>97%</b>		<b>56</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>89%</b>		<b>112</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>99%</b>

45. The Building Control division operate a Quality Management System which was externally audited in August 2020 and received re-accreditation. This re-accreditation of the Building Control Quality Management System means that the division has been providing an accredited management system, continuously for 27 years.
46. The District Surveyor’s office uses the Building Control module of CAPS Uniform software to record all applications and records. This is the same software that the Planning department use for their purposes. The use of a common system enables easy abstraction of information for building searches and shared information. The software is part of the corporate IDOX/M3 replacement programme which should be concluded shortly.

**Conclusion**

47. This report describes the background of Building Control, the Engineering Team and the Environmental Resilience Team within the City of London and the work of the District Surveyor’s office over the last year plus looks positively forward to the challenges ahead.

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