

Tri-borough Building Control Structure options

There are two models by which Building Control work is carried out;

- A) the 'patch' system and
- B) the 'plan checking team' system.

All three boroughs currently run a patch system, although RBKC and WCC have used a plan checking team approach for major projects recently. The two systems are described below.

A) The Patch system

The district is split into a number of geographical areas, usually into sizes that give an equal workload across each area or patch. A surveyor is assigned to each area and is responsible for all work that falls in their patch.

Pros

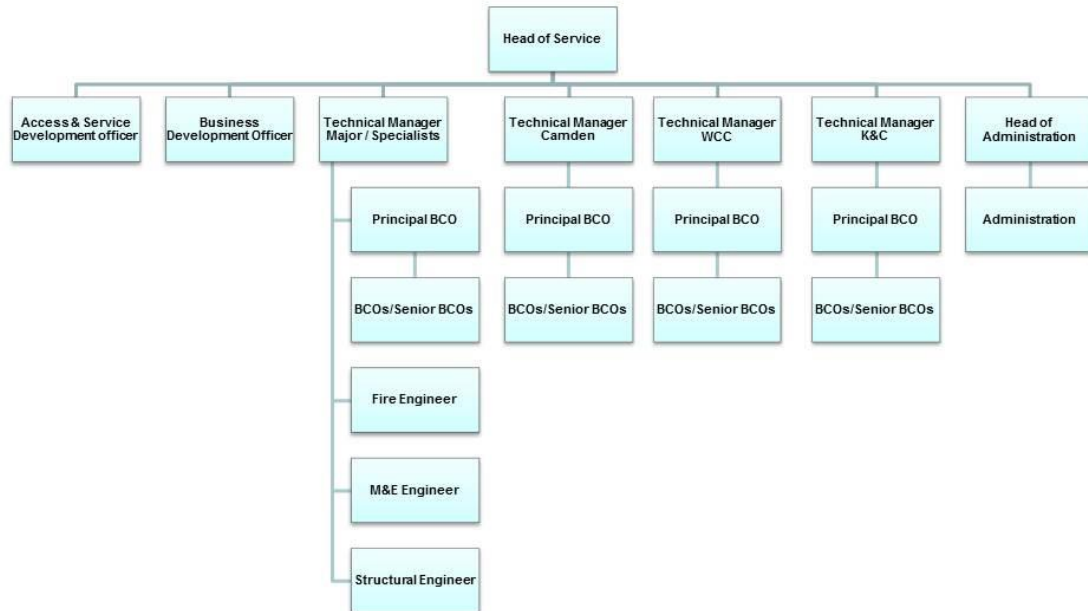
- Surveyors become familiar with their patch (geology, previous works to specific buildings, property owners).
- Customers prefer dealing with the same officers from pre-application advice to plan checking and site inspections.
- Site visits are relatively close to each other.
- Surveyors have a wider variety of functions, so tend to prefer this system.

Cons

- Workloads can vary significantly over short periods leading to missed deadlines.
- Cover for absent surveyors may be difficult to arrange on short notice.
- Customers can be left waiting for response to questions if a surveyor is absent when messages are left.
- Regular customers working across the district may deal with numerous different surveyors.

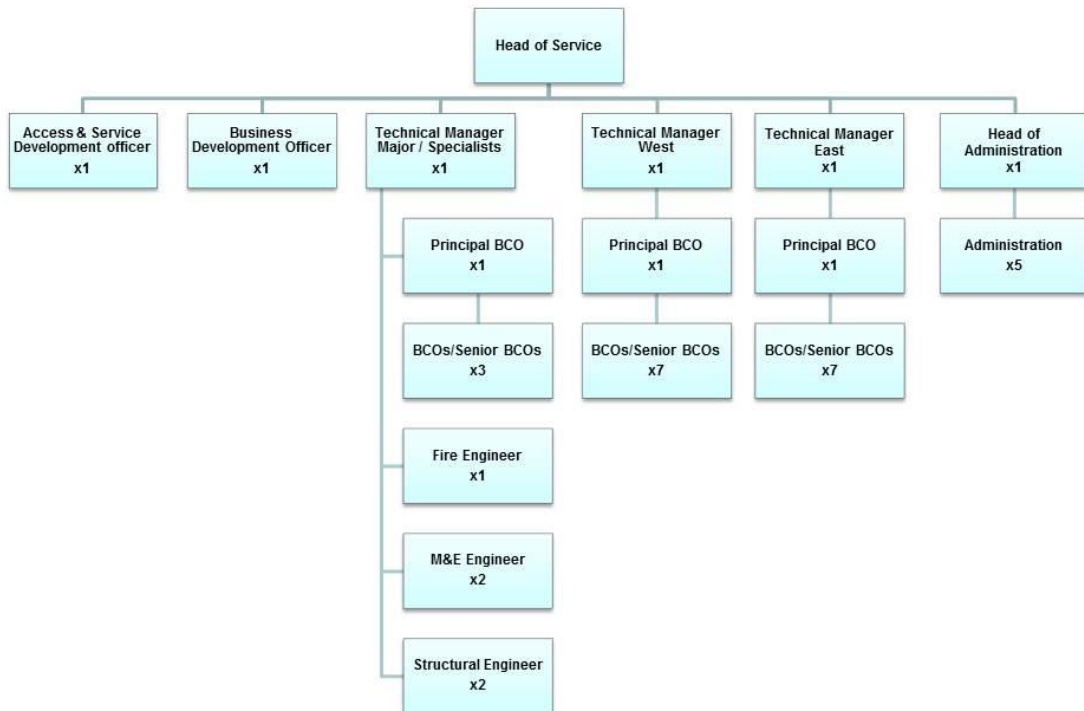
There are two options developed for the patch system to cater for the transition period from 1st April 2017 to infrastructure implementation. In developing these Options, span of control of 6-8 is considered reasonable which is highlighted in Option 2. The number of officers is provisional and is based on the work load in 2015-16 which needs to be updated in time for 2017-18 figures. Also, the format of Business Development position needs further consideration. In case of the Technical Manager for the Major/Specialist team, the reporting line is very similar to other teams but due to various specialities, it is shown slightly differently. The span of control is possibly larger but due to the nature of the works, there will be less volume of applications.

Option 1



This option allows the smoothest transfer of current staff in the three boroughs with some consolidation into the Major/Specialist team.

Option 2



This option brings the three teams together in a more unified manner, avoiding silo working and business as usual. The separation between the East/West Team is proposed to be along the Edgware Road which effectively splits WCC area into two halves to be managed by the two teams whilst consolidating the specialist in one group.

B) The Plan Checking Team system

The teams are divided by function rather than location. The plan checking team is responsible for all pre-application advice and the informal and formal approval of plans submitted. Being office based, it is also suited to dealing with visitors or customers making telephone enquiries. There are separate site inspection teams that may be located remotely. The site inspection teams pick up a project from the plan checkers and take it through to completion. Liaison is needed between the plan/inspection teams to pass on any unusual proposals or deal with technical questions that arise during construction.

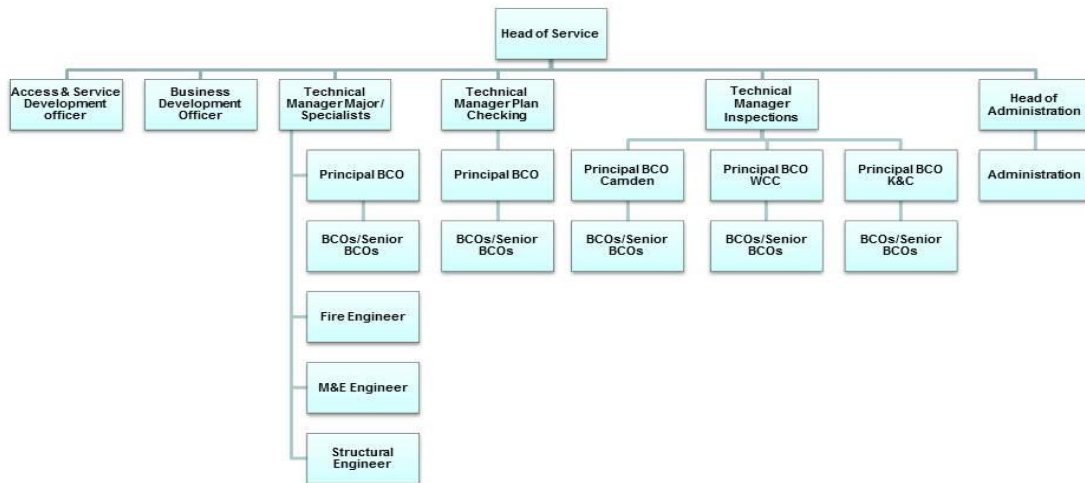
Pros

- Work is distributed equally on receipt, so deadlines can be better managed.
- Specialists can be better utilised on key projects.
- An office based team is available to deal with any customer question immediately.
- Urgent site inspections can be better covered as more surveyors are available during absences and can be directed to the necessary sites.
- Customers prefer quick answers at the design stage, so this approach may help with better customer.

Cons

- Good communications are needed between the plan and inspection team to ensure project design philosophies are carried through.
- Local site knowledge may be lost initially.
- Surveyors tend to prefer the patch system, so may need to be rotated to maintain their job satisfaction.
- Projects may be visited by several different surveyors, so continuity of decisions may vary causing dissatisfaction from builders.
- Surveyors will be covering wider areas so greater daily travel may be necessary.

Option 3



Conclusion

It is understood that the future Head of Service may wish to change the proposed option but it is still useful to have a preferred option as part of job evaluation at this stage. The current Heads of Service discussed and developed the three options and concluded their preference of patch system over the separate plan checking and site inspections teams. **Option 2** presents a good opportunity for integrating the teams and working across traditional borough boundaries and should be worked towards implementation by 1st April 2017 or as soon as the infrastructure changes permit, but in the first instance and for a short period, we may need to consider retaining 'borough' teams, hence **Option 1**. The main factors in coming to this decision were;

- Familiarity of staff with the current ways of working and least amount of disturbance as we join up
- Ownership of jobs and clients by one officer
- All-round training for all staff in plan appraisal and site inspection
- This is what customers want and is now adopted in our partnership working
- Deletion of local teams by bringing staff together and have a physical manifestation of shared service as soon as possible.
- Better business continuity as all staff will be able to carry out their function independently