## FilmApp baseline survey

Introduction

Through FilmApp we aim to standardise and improve the current application process for film makers in London. There are currently 10 London local authorities signed up to FilmApp, an online application, notification and payment system designed to help London boroughs process filming requests.

London Boroughs engaged with Film App

LEGEND

1: Phase 1 boroughs (August 2010)
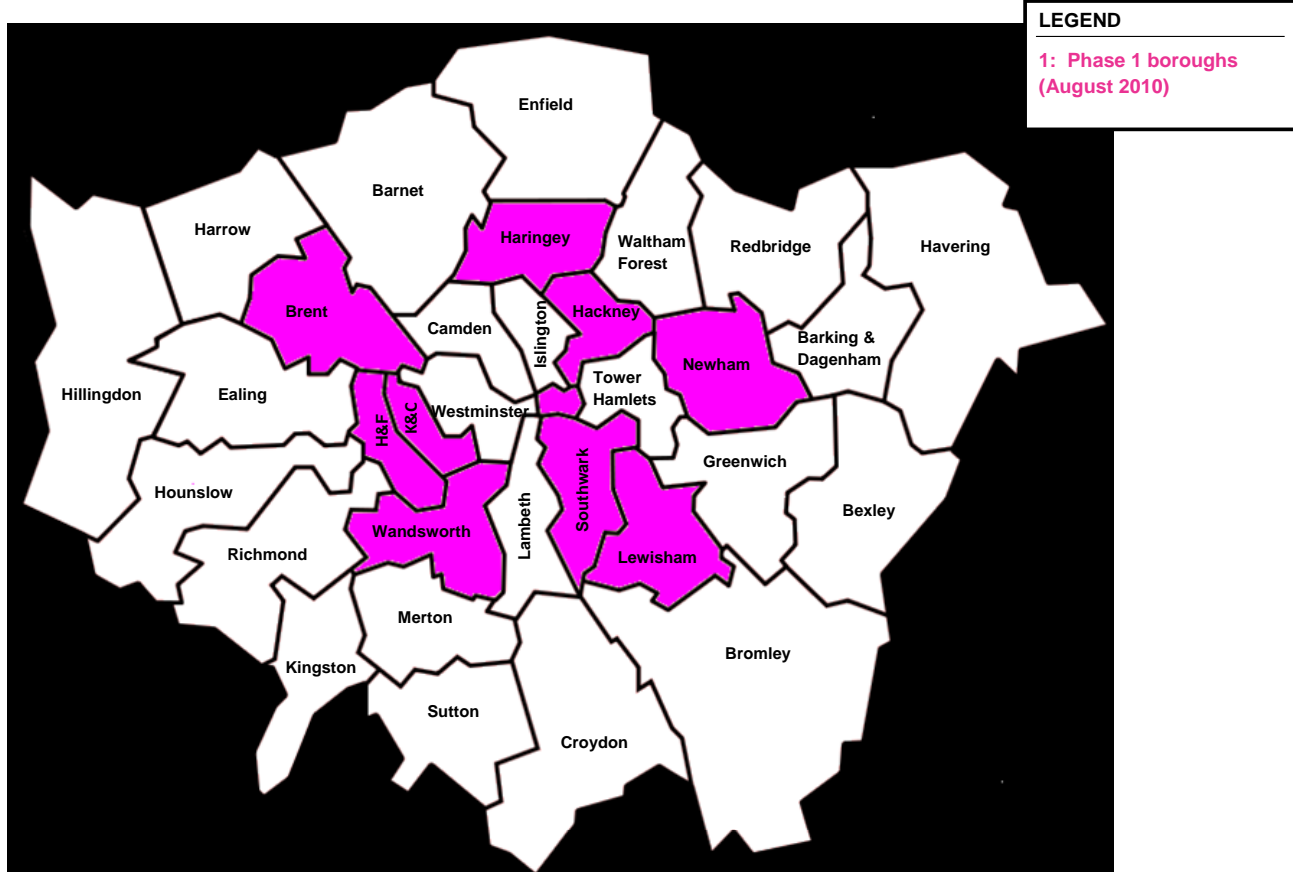
Methodology

We conducted baseline evaluation of the current application systems used across London, sent to both location managers and local authority film officers, in order to conduct further comparative evaluation following the launch of FilmApp. We contacted location managers by using the Southwark & Lewisham Film Office contacts, the Guild of Location Managers membership list, and Location Collective, a large group of Location Managers.

The survey sent to all local authority film officers asked them to: approximate time spent processing applications, identify tasks that require manual copying, identify concerns raised and applications made to the wrong borough, as well as rating satisfaction and film friendliness.

The survey sent to location managers asked them to: rate satisfaction levels with response times and application processes; rate film friendliness; and state ability to identify the correct authority and the amount of paper work needed to apply. The location managers were asked to comment specifically on Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, City, Southwark, Camden, Islington, Brent, Hackney and Sutton. We selected these local authorities as they cover a range of inner and outer London boroughs; those with computerised systems and those without; and those who are adopting FilmApp and those who are not. They were also given the option to comment on other local authorities in a free text box.

**Support for standardised and streamlined application process:**

Currently each borough has its own film application method. FilmApp aims to standardise and streamline this process. How far do you agree that this will improve the film application process in London?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
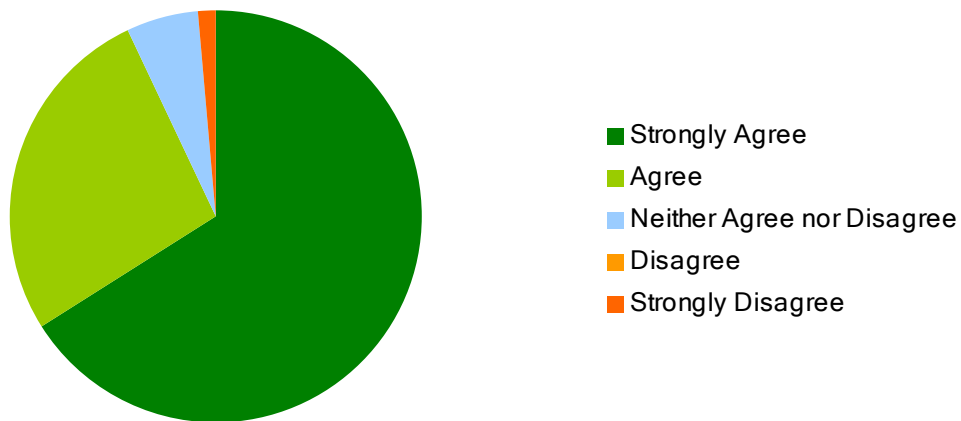
66 out of 71 Location Managers who responded to the survey agreed that a streamlined and standardised application process was preferable. Just under half of respondents provided additional comments on this question with several referring to the possibility of replicating or avoiding models adopted by specific boroughs which Location Managers have found to be particularly successful or unsuccessful. Specific suggestions were: to make the application process online, to consult Location Managers in the design process, to ensure that the forms reduce in size, to ensure that the application is quick, and to remove borough specific boundaries that force multiple applications.

Ability to identify correct authority
Both location managers and film officers were asked to comment on the ability of location managers to correctly identify the local authority to apply to for filming.

- Very often
- Often
- Occasionally
- Never
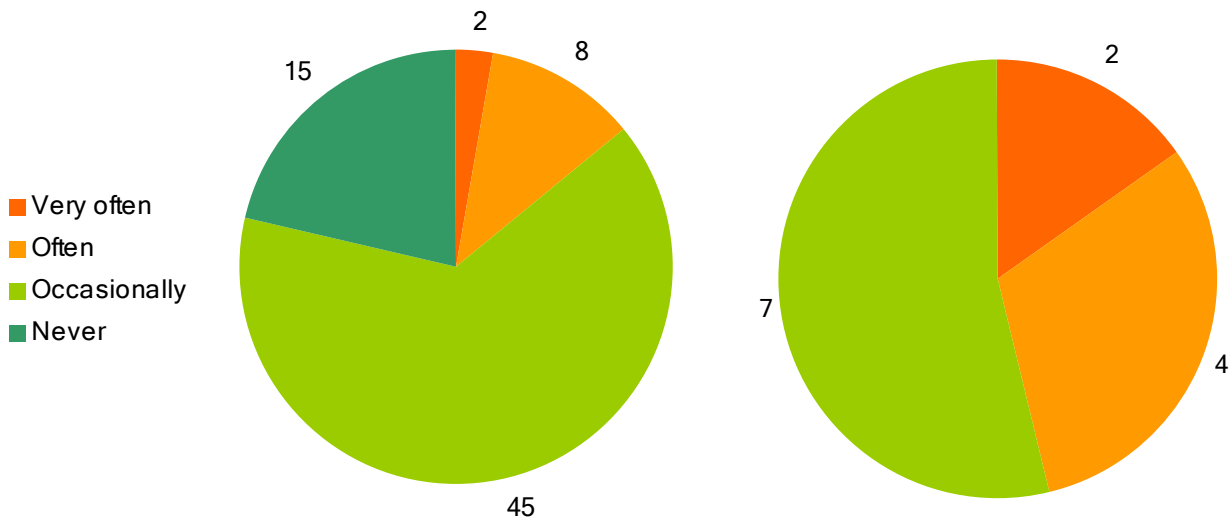
Location manager: Do you experience difficulties identifying the correct authority to apply to for filming?

Film Officers: Do you receive applications or enquiries for locations that are not in your remit?

All responding Film Officers have experienced Location Managers applying to film in locations that are not within their remit and the majority of Location Managers have experienced difficulties identifying correct boroughs. Location Managers indicated that length of experience improves the ability to identify the correct authority but that borders between local authorities can pose problems: "Sometimes I have to make a few phone calls to work out a boundary" and identifying who is responsible for particular properties or streets is

not always clear "I often need to know whether open land is privately or local authority owned – pavements, squares etc".

Overall Application Process:
Location Managers were asked to rate their satisfaction levels with the overall application process in specific boroughs and Film Officers were asked to comment on their own boroughs.

How satisfied are you with the application process to film in the following London boroughs:
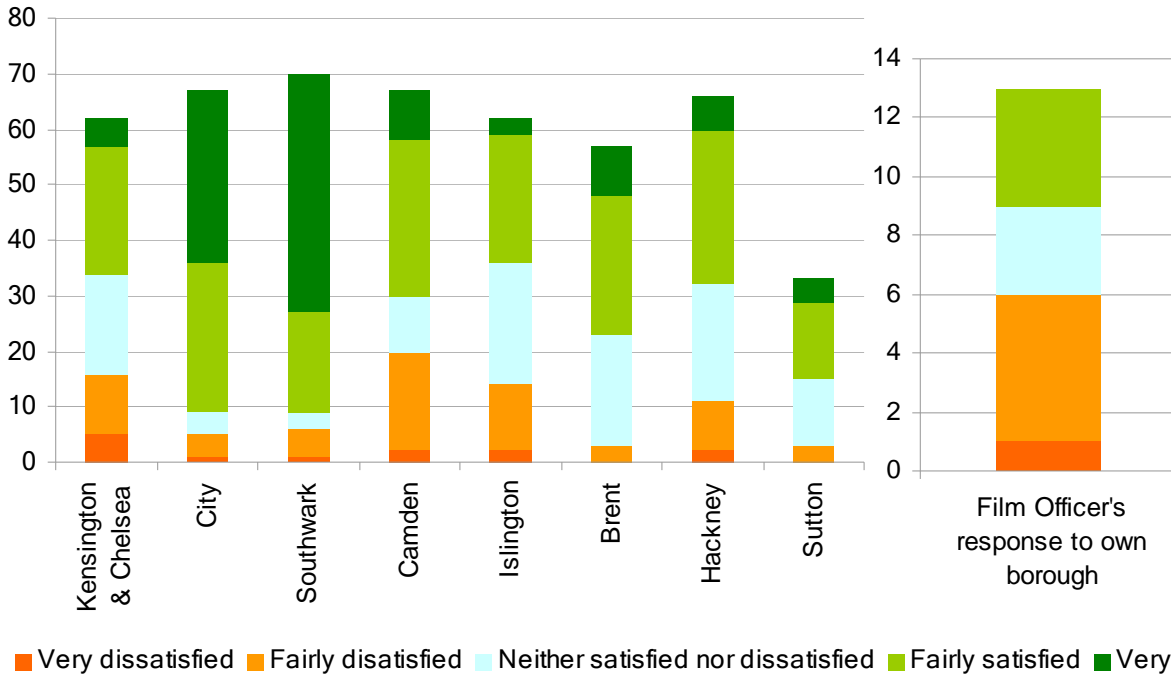
Film Officers specifically commented on the need for systems that allowed for: an integrated photo library of locations, and audit trail of actions to facilitate shared working, and an online system. Particular problems with current systems were efficiency, speed and functionality. Problems identified by Location Managers with current systems focussed on time it takes to process applications; the varying costs of local authorities, "The … film office is just a money making enterprise and I avoid it like the plague"; and the lack of ability to communicate effectively with Film Offices, "[I find … Film Office] very remote and hard to communicate with"
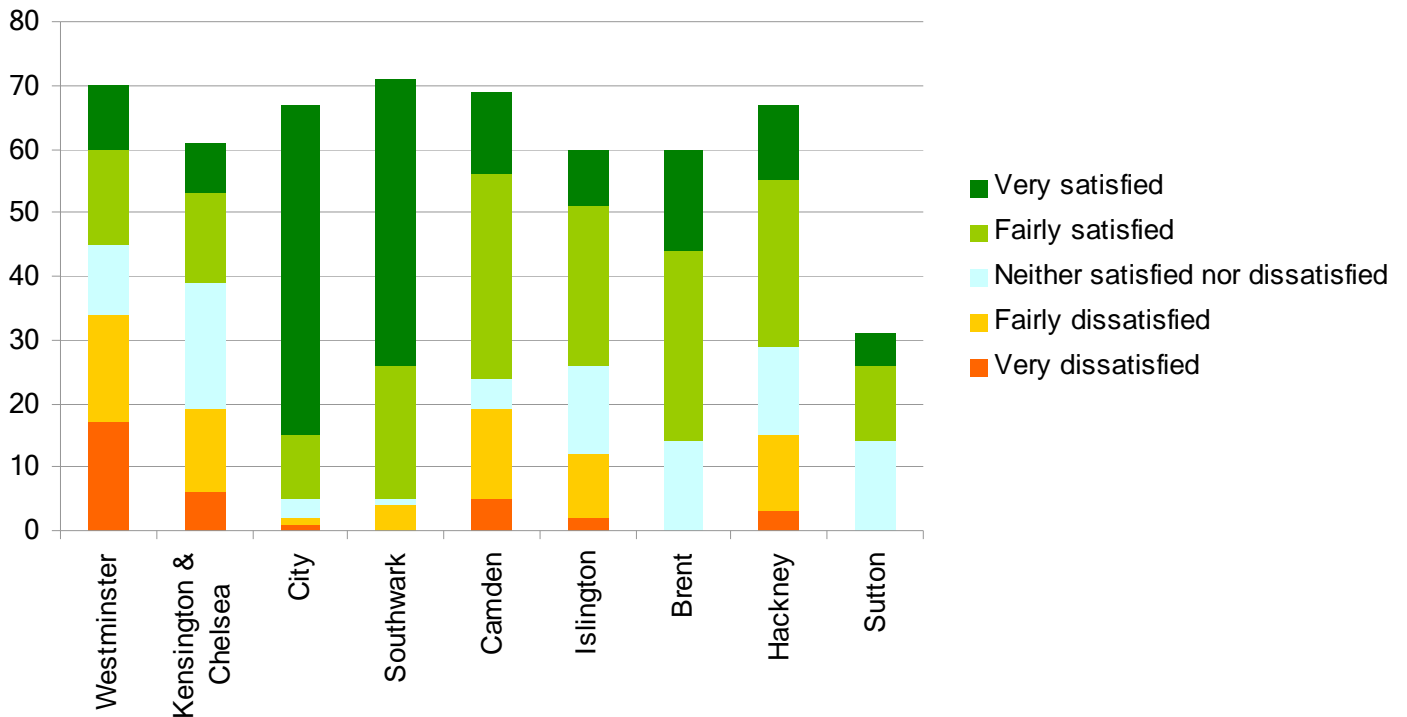
Response times
Location Managers and Film Officers were asked to comment on the time it takes to complete or process filming applications. This information will be of most use when compared with the next set of data gathered after the implementation of FilmApp, but it begins to give an indication of successful models, which FilmApp will build on. We would hope to see an increase in satisfaction levels in boroughs that are adopting FilmApp. Film Officers were asked to approximate the time they spent processing average applications for small crews on streets and large feature crews on streets (not including site visits):
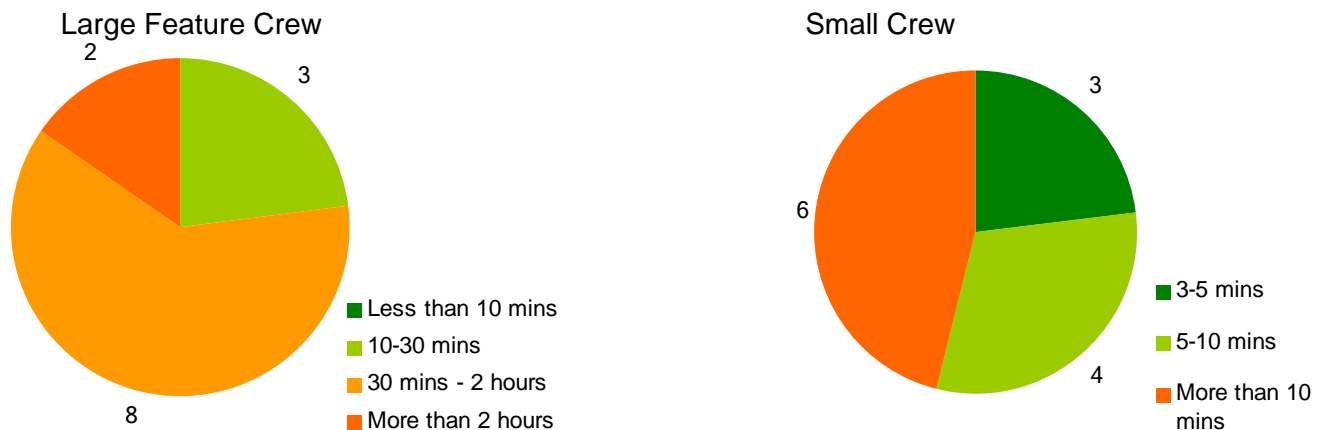
Location Managers were asked to respond with regards to specific boroughs:

How satisfied are you with response times to enquiries made to the following film offices:

Respondents were then given the opportunity to comment on other boroughs; 15 Location managers took up this opportunity:

## How satisfied are you with response times to enquiries made to other film offices:
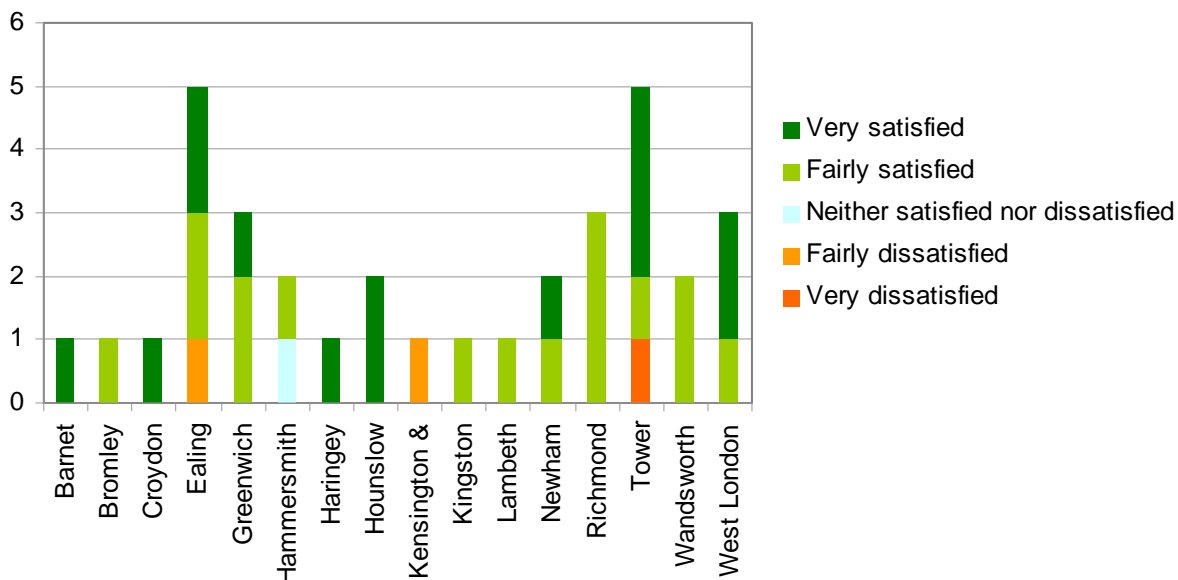
There are clearly discrepancies across the London boroughs and a single, effective system would go some way to eliminate such problems.

Paper work

We asked both Location Managers and Film Officers to comment on the level of paperwork required to apply for or process filming applications.

How far do you agree with the following statement: "I spend a lot of time providing local authorities with paperwork."?
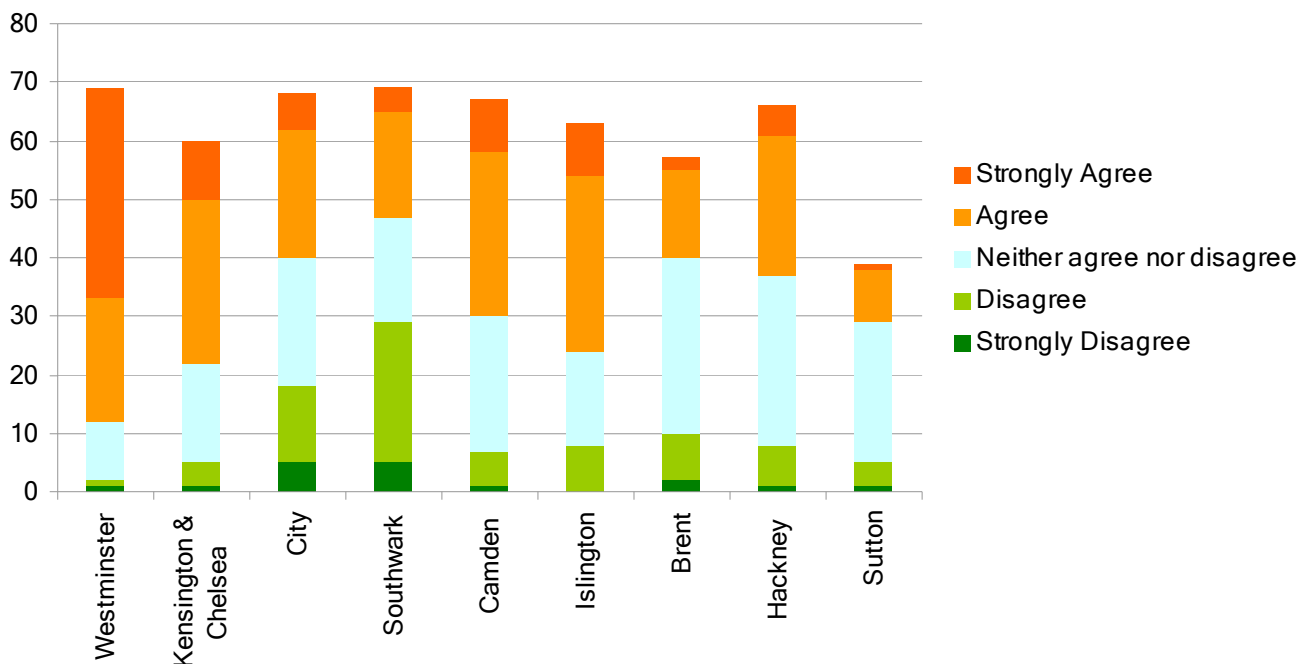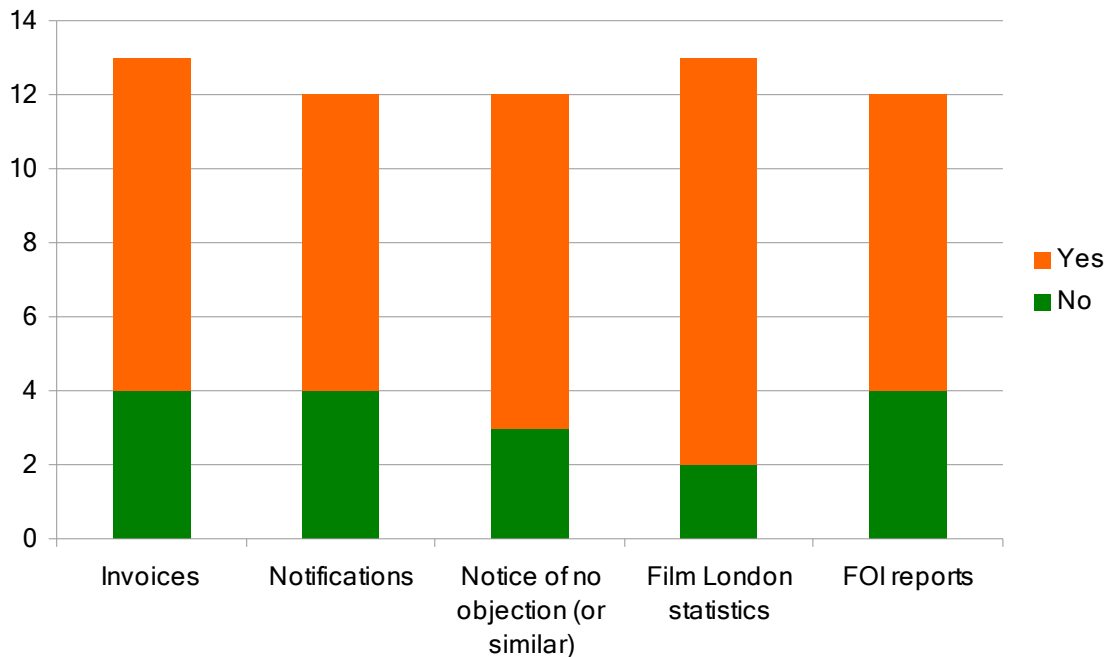

It is worth noting that two Location Managers voiced their support for completing paperwork and saw it as a necessary part of the process: "paperwork is evidence of clear planning - which is helpful for both sides…its not "bad" to have to generate - offer paperwork - the idea that paperwork is a problem is rubbish". Whilst it is fair to say that a certain level of paper work is necessary it is clear that there are varying levels of paperwork required for the same function in each local authority. From the responses given by Film Officers it is also clear that the time spent processing the supplied paperwork varies greatly:

Please estimate how long it takes you to generate the following:
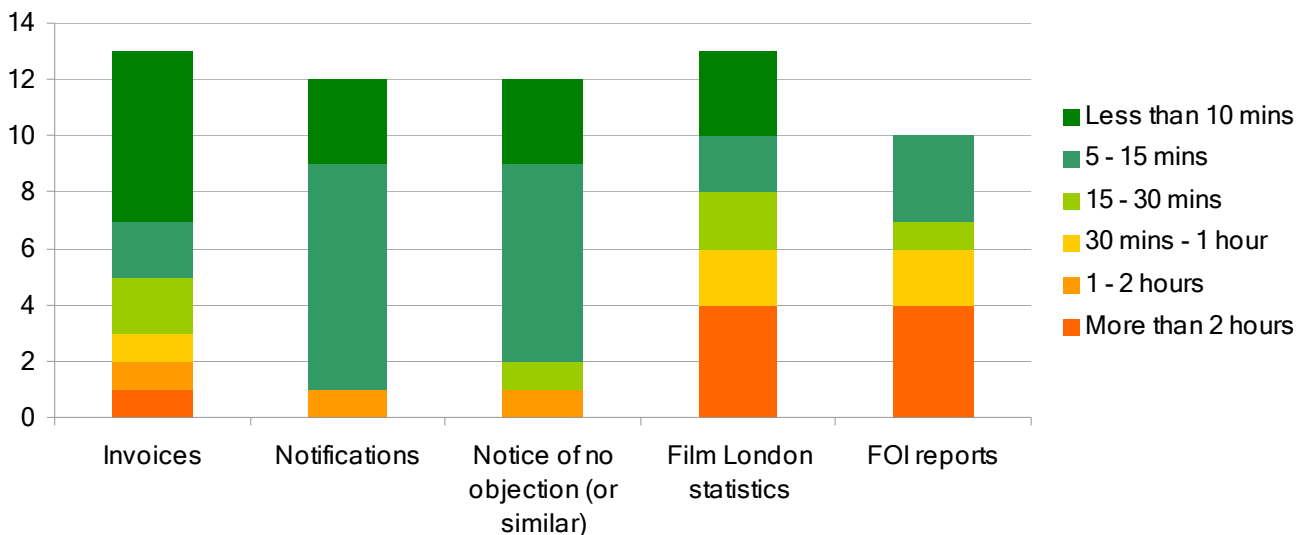
Most boroughs who responded seem to have acceptable response times for notifications and notices but the production of invoices, Film London statistics and FOI requests differ greatly. Furthermore, the prevalence of manually copying data to produce such responses is quite high:

Do you find you need to manually copy data (such as production titles, addresses, codes) for the following:

Chart legend: Yes (orange), No (green)

Category	No	Yes (total height)
Invoices	4	13
Notifications	4	12
Notice of no objection (or similar)	3	12
Film London statistics	2	13
FOI reports	4	12

7 Film Officers shared the details of the systems they use and it is clear that both online systems and paper forms are causing problems: "[I have to] manually input the data from the paper applications" and "We currently have an online application system - hosted by an external company, however the back-end admin, editing content and general front facing design is limited and antiquated". One respondent commented that the lack of integrated financial systems causes duplication and delays: "invoices 2 completely different systems - accounts must be set up independently and then authorised by accounts before the invoice can be processed. All information has to be emailed to the correct departments causing duplication and time wasting waiting for confirmation of receipt."

Location Managers General Comments
The comments made by Location Managers throughout the survey revealed trends in areas of concern and areas that they are most satisfied with. The frequency of similar comments relating to particular boroughs demonstrates the disparity in systems and service throughout London. The comments below are made about a wide variety of boroughs and highlight problems that, moving forward, we can look to improve on:

Parking: "Difficult to organise parking. Prohibitive process" and "you can ring their parking department direct and get parking dispensations with 24hrs and not like the 9 days the film office originally quotes"
Lack of personal contact: "They have a terrible application system which is made all the worse now as you are not able to speak to a film officer to make general enquiries" and "Poor level of service, often calls not returned"
Turnover of staff: "don't even know who their film officer is at the moment"
Cost: "nice guys but very money grabbing" and "New costs for processing film applications are not in line with any other borough"
Inconsistency amongst boroughs: "There should be a uniform approach to alerting the Police. One borough do it for you and others don't."

There were, however, many positive comments about the work of local authority film offices and areas where Location Managers have responded particularly positively are:
Knowledge: "Fantastic, realistic and have a good working knowledge of the industry."
Quick turnaround: "Very helpful especially on quick turnaround jobs"
Assistance of Film Officers: "Excellent assistance and extremely thorough" and "Very helpful and film friendly and aware of the process that we have to go through to get answers"