

CABINET

11 FEBRUARY 2014

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL PARTNERSHIP – BUSINESS PLAN 2012/2017

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jane Chitty, Strategic Development and Economic Growth and Member of Joint Committee

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration and Development

Author: Tony Van Veghel, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

Summary

This report seeks agreement to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan for 2012/2017.

The Business Plan is set out within Supplementary Agenda No. 1.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The approval of the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan is a matter for Cabinet, however, specific parts of the plan may need to be progressed in accordance with the Council's relevant policies and procedures.

2. Background

- 2.1 The South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership (involving Medway, Gravesham and Swale) went live in 2007 and a second term was agreed, in January 2012, to run to 2017. The partnership's business plan will be refreshed each year to reflect changing circumstances, however, the plan outlines how the building control function for the three partnership Councils will be delivered throughout that period.
- 2.2 The Joint Committee's Constitution sets out the process for approval of the business plan each year and the timing required to ensure that each partner authority is able to incorporate associated budget

requirements into the financial planning process for the subsequent year. The stages to this process are as follows:

- Before 1 October each year the Joint Committee is required to approve and send its draft Business Plan for the following year to each partner authority for comments.
- Each Council has 35 days (from receipt) to provide comments to the secretary of the Joint Committee on the draft business plan. In order to streamline the process the Cabinets in each partner authority have agreed to delegate authority to the relevant director, in consultation with the council's Chief Finance Officer and appointed member on the Joint Committee to deal with this element of the process.
- The Joint Committee is then required to meet to consider any comments received and agree any revisions to the draft business plan.
- By no later than 5 January the Joint Committee has to send a revised draft to each partner authority for their final approval.
- Each partner authority must advise the Secretary to the Joint Committee whether it approves or rejects the revised draft business plan by no later than 10 days before the Annual Meeting of the Joint Committee. (The Joint Committee will formally adopt the Business Plan at its Annual meeting).

2.3 There are also provisions in the constitution of the Joint Committee stipulating the process and timescales for agreeing amendments to the business plan during the course of each year.

2.4 This year the Joint Committee agreed to move the September meeting to 2 October and considered the draft business plan which was then sent to the partners for comment.

2.5 On 12 December 2013 the Joint Committee agreed the draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership's Business Plan for 2012/17 as attached at Appendix A (Supplementary Agenda No. 1). This encompasses the comments already received from the Partner Authorities.

3 Options

3.1 The Cabinet needs to advise the secretary to the Joint Committee whether it approves or rejects the revised draft business plan.

4 Advice and analysis

4.1 The Business Plan outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the three partnership Council's up until 2017 and indicates what the reduced contributions will be between 2012 to 2017.

4.2 Following the approval of the draft at Joint Committee in October 2013, the opportunity has been taken to update a number of the charts with half yearly data, amending the text where necessary.

4.3 The amended plan indicates the five agreed objectives:

- To improve customer satisfaction by providing an effective and efficient administration and site inspection regime in particular through improved use of information technology and communication
- To raise the profile of STG by developing a dynamic marketing strategy and pursuing the expansion of the Partnership through additional partners.
- To provide a healthy, safe and accessible built environment, reducing the carbon footprint and contributing to sustainable construction.
- To provide additional services through a consultancy to effectively compete with the private sector and generate additional income.
- To continually review contributions by partner authorities to reflect reductions in expenditure.

The plan also includes action plans and targets to achieve these objectives.

Key projects for 2014/15 will be:

- Enable customer self-service for tracking and searches
- Increase use of mobile technology with the ability to update in real-time
- Increase income from consultancy services by 70% over the 2012/13 budgeted figure
- Re-examine case for consultancy becoming a Local Authority Company
- Examine case for STG becoming a Local Authority Company
- Further expansion of the Partnership with the inclusion of new partner authority
- Identify new accommodation for the Partnership head office.

4.4 The next phase of the Partnership will not only consolidate the successes of the past six years but continue the expansion of services, staff development and improved customer service which the investment of the three Partner Authorities has allowed.

4.5 The Council has adopted a Diversity Impact Standard to ensure policies and significant projects reflect potential impact on residents due to their racial group, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion. In line with this, the first stage of a Diversity Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached at Appendix B. The findings of this indicate the Business Plan does not need a full Diversity Impact Assessment.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 This is detailed in Chapter 4 of the Service Delivery documentation and focuses on a lack of recovery in the economic situation and an inability to sustain growth as well as a lack of investment in staff development and IT solutions.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The report has been agreed by the Joint Committee of the three Partner Authorities on 12 December 2013 and is being presented to all three partner authorities.

7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 The construction industry currently predicts possible growth of 4%-5% in 2014/15. Through the introduction of new working practices with increased efficiency through IT investment, there will be a total reduction of £60,000 in contributions between 2012 and 2017. This represents an 18.5% reduction in contributions from the three partner authorities over the 5 year life span of the Plan.

- 7.2 The constituent authorities are required to make contributions to fund non chargeable activities. Medway's contributions are shown in the table below.

| Year | Contribution £ | Reduction on previous year £ |
|---------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2012/13 | 186,439 | 21,150 |
| 2013/14 | 173,601 | 12,838 |
| 2014/15 | 160,816 | 12,785 |
| 2015/16 | 157,016 | 3,800 |
| 2016/17 | 154,607 | 2,409 |

- 7.3 The Memorandum of Agreement, which underpins the Partnership, states "each Council shall notify the Partnership no later than 28 February in each year the amount the Council has allocated to the Partnership from its revenue budget". For Medway the sum of £160,816 has been provided for in the 2014/15 draft budget.
- 7.4 The draft Business Plan makes provision for partnership working with private architects. This will be done under the recognised Local Authority Building Control Partnership scheme. The Joint Committee has approved the Partnership undertaking consultancy work under the powers of Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 That the proposed Business Plan for 2012/17 for the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership, as set out at Appendix A, be approved by the Cabinet.

9. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

- 9.1 The constitution of the Joint Committee requires approval of the Business Plan for the following year by the Cabinet of each Partner Authority.

Lead officer contact

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Background papers: None

Appendix A South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Draft Business Plan 2012/2017 and Service Delivery Documentation 2012/17

Appendix B Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Directorate Regeneration Culture and Community | Name of Function or Policy or Major Service Change Building Control Partnership | | |
| Officer responsible for assessment Tony Van Veghel | Date of assessment 23 January 2014 | New or existing? Existing | |
| Defining what is being assessed | | | |
| 1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives | To ensure compliance with the Building Act 1984 by enforcing the Building Regulations across three boroughs. Deal with dangerous structures, demolitions, unauthorised work. Provide discretionary services through a consultancy. The objectives of the agreed Business Plan 2012/17 reflect those of the previously considered Business Plan 2011/14 and do not affect the responses given then. However, as the Business Plan now continues to 2017 a new DIA has been carried out. | | |
| 2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way? | Residents, businesses and visitors to Medway. | | |
| 3. What outcomes are wanted? | A healthy, safe and sustainable environment. | | |
| 4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes? | Contribute Resources available from the Partnership. Support from the three constituent Authorities. | Detract Competition from the private sector. Economic climate. | |
| 5. Who are the main stakeholders? | The three boroughs in the Partnership, Medway, Gravesham and Swale. Property owners, businesses, developers and architects. | | |
| 6. Who implements this and who is responsible? | No third parties are involved. | | |

| Assessing impact | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| 7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>racial groups</i>? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |
| 8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>disability</i>? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation although disabled people or their carers are not charged a fee under the exemptions in the Charges legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |
| 9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>gender</i>? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |
| 10. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i>? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |
| 11. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i>? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|
| 12. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to people's age? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |
| 13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being transgendered or transsexual</i>? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |
| 14. Are there any <i>other</i> groups that would find it difficult to access/make use of the function (e.g. people with caring responsibilities or dependants, those with an offending past, or people living in rural areas)? | YES | If yes, which group(s)? |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |
| 15. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>multiple discriminations</i> (e.g. disability <u>and</u> age)? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| What evidence exists for this? | All applications are processed in accordance with The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 legislation. All enquiries for consultancy services are based on competitive quotes compared against the private sector. | |

| Conclusions & recommendation | | |
|--|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 16. Could the differential impacts identified in questions 7-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact? | YES | Brief statement of main issue |
| | NO | |
| 17. Can the adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or another reason? | YES | Please explain |
| | NO | Not applicable |

| Recommendation to proceed to a full impact assessment? | |
|--|---|
| NO | This function/ policy/ service change complies with the requirements of the legislation and there is evidence to show this is the case. |
| NO, BUT ... | <p>What is required to ensure this complies with the requirements of the legislation? (see DIA Guidance Notes)?</p> <p>Since April 2009 information has been collected on diversity. However, the number of responses was noted as being extremely low and the process was reviewed in April 2010 and the issue discussed with the Research and Review team during training for all staff on diversity. It was felt that more one-to-one surveys may be more productive and this was carried out in June 2011.</p> <p>The survey carried out in June 2011 generated a 74% return on monitoring diversity survey. Results and outcomes were discussed at Joint Committee on 27 September 2011. A further postal survey was carried out in June 2012 with 88% of the respondents either fully or partial completing the Equality and Diversity section of the survey. Outcomes were discussed at Joint Committee on 20 September 2012 noting that the customer profile had remained the same as the previous survey results.</p> <p>Males formed the largest group at 83%, however, the majority of this group were aged between 55 and 64 (the middle three age bands 35-44, 45-54 and 55-64 all scored between 14% and 36%). 82% of this group mainly consists of White British men with 3% being Asian or Asian British forming the next highest group.</p> <p>The majority of females that contacted the service were aged between 45 and 54 which is the same as in 2011/12 survey, however, 94% considered themselves White British with 6% being Asian or Asian British.</p> <p>Due to the delays in the implementation of the IT improvements planned for 2013/14 and our head quarters will be moving at the end of the year our next survey is programmed for February 2015.</p> |
| YES | Give details of key person responsible and target date for carrying out full impact assessment (see DIA Guidance Notes) |

| Action plan to make Minor modifications | | |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| Outcome | Actions (with date of completion) | Officer responsible |
| An understanding of how the improvements to the IT system, giving access to greater customer self-service has affected delivery | To implement one-to-one survey during February 2015. | Tony Van Veghel |
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| | | |

| Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review | |
|---|---|
| Date of next review | January 2015 |
| Areas to check at next review (e.g. new census information, new legislation due) | Validity and depth of information gathered. |

| | | |
|--|-------------|----------|
| Is there <i>another</i> group (e.g. new communities) that is relevant and ought to be considered next time? | No | |
| Signed (completing officer/service manager) Tony Van Veghel | Date | 23/01/14 |
| Signed (service manager/Assistant Director) Stephen Gaimster | Date | 23/01/14 |