

Medway Council
**Meeting of South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint
Committee**

Thursday, 12 June 2014

10.00am to 10.47am

Record of the meeting

Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee

Present: Councillors: Burden and Lewin

Substitutes: Councillors:
Carr (Substitute for Chitty)

In Attendance: Maria Beaney, Senior Accountant (Medway Council)
Janine Boughton, Head of Administration and Business
Development (South Thames Gateway Building Control
Partnership)
James Freeman, Head of Planning (Swale Borough Council)
Stephen Gaimster, Assistant Director, Housing and
Regeneration (Medway Council)
Sarah Kilkie, Assistant Director, Communities (Gravesham
Borough Council)
Anthony Law, Democratic Services Officer (Medway Council)
Andrew Lawson, Principal Accountant (Medway Council)
Tony Van Veghel, Director (South Thames Gateway Building
Control Partnership)
Terri Williams, HR Business Partner (Medway Council)

1 Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Jane Chitty (Medway Council).

2 Appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman

Decision:

- a) Councillor Jane Chitty was elected Chairman for the 2014/2015 municipal year.
- b) Councillor Gerry Lewin was elected Vice-Chairman for the 2014/2015 municipal year.
- c) In the absence of Councillor Chitty, it was agreed that Councillor Lewin would act as Chairman for this meeting of the Joint Committee.

3 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 20 March 2014 was agreed and signed by the Chairman as correct, subject to the amendment of the list of those present to reflect that the Andrew Lawson was the Principal Accountant (Revenue and Capital Budgets) in attendance.

4 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

5 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

6 Final Outturn and Statement of Accounts 2013 - 2014

Background:

The Senior Accountant explained the contents of this report, which provided details of the partnership's final outturn and Statement of Accounts for the 2013-2014 financial year.

It was noted that the partnership was required under its Memorandum of Agreement and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (as amended) to produce an annual statement of accounts, which was subject to scrutiny by the external auditors. The Statement of Accounts incorporated the Governance Statement and internal audit annual report. The external auditor's certificate and opinion would be completed in due course.

Members were advised that the final outturn for 2013-2014 was a surplus of £35,213, which represented an improvement of £27,500 on the 2012-2013 position. Details of this outturn and the resultant partner contributions were given.

Members considered the impact of the 2010 Building Control Charging Regulations. These regulations allowed the Joint Committee to set its own charging policy (rather than regulated fees), subject to demonstrating a 'breakeven' position on chargeable works. Whilst the report identified a cumulative deficit on chargeable works of £10,506 for the partnership, Members stressed the importance of reimbursing the respective authorities for

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their costs in establishing the Building Control Partnership. The Building Control Officer Steering Group was requested to consider this further.

Decision:

The South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee:

- (a) noted the outturn for 2013-2014 and respective partner contributions as presented in section 2.2 of the report.
- (b) approved the Statement of Accounts, as presented at Appendix 1 of the report.
- (c) requested that the Chairman and the Monitoring Officer of the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership sign the Statement of Accounts as appropriate.

Reasons for Decisions

The Joint Committee has a key role in monitoring the performance of the Partnership and is required to approve the Statement of Account.

7 South Thames Gateway Building Control Annual Report

Background:

The Director of the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership gave a brief introduction to the information contained within the Annual Report, setting out the performance and financial information for the 2013/2014 financial year, and responded to Members' questions.

Members were advised that the construction industry had shown signs of a recovery in 2013/2014, with particular increased activity within the domestic market. It was noted however, that whilst the number of building regulation applications had increased, by around 19%, the income generated from these applications was around the same as that generated in 2012/2013. This demonstrated that the value of construction work in the area had still not risen to the expectations reported in the media. The Joint Committee was advised that the partnership had maintained over 80% market share in the area and increased its partnering companies to 37 in the locality.

The Director also highlighted the investment made in the new back office system. This was seen as fundamental to the way the partnership would operate in the future and linked to the fundamental principles of building in resilience, improving customer service and reducing costs to the partner authorities. Other highlights included the changes required in working practices with preparing for and adopting a mobile solution and the move to new accommodation in Rochester in October 2014.

It was noted that the possibility of expanding the partnership with Canterbury City Council was being examined and could take effect in 2014/2015. This would introduce new resilience, new staff skills and reduce costs to the constituent authorities. A number of working groups had been established,

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which were working to produce a business plan for the proposal. It was reported that a meeting of the Finance Working Group would take place in July, where the costs of supporting the expanded partnership would be discussed.

The end of year monitoring statement was included in Appendix 1 to the report and examples of savings and income generation were set out in section 4.3 of the report. The report included a proposal to use the reserve to pay for the move, dilapidations, IT upgrades to the Foord Annexe and any necessary fit-out requirements.

During their consideration of this item, the Members expressed their gratitude to the staff for their work during what had been a challenging year.

Decision:

The South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee noted the contents of the report and approved the use of the reserve to pay for the move and all associated works with regard to the Foord Annexe.

Reasons for Decisions

The Constitution requires the Joint Committee to maintain a monitoring role on the progress of the partnership including the use of any surplus at the end of the financial year.

8 South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan 2012 - 2017

Background:

The Director of the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership presented a report that sought agreement to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership's Business Plan and Service Delivery Documentation for 2012/2017.

The Business Plan outlined how the building control function would be delivered on behalf of the three partnership Council's up until 2017 and indicated what the reduced contributions were between 2012 to 2017. Details of the financial plan 2012-2017 were shown in Appendix 1 to the report.

Key projects for 2014/2015 were to:

- 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 20% over the 2013/2014 budgeted figure
- continue to examine the use of different delivery models for the partnership and the consultancy
- relocate Partnership's head office
- revisit and adopt a relaunched marketing strategy.

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During the discussion on this item the Director gave assurances as to the proposals to increase the income from consultancy services by 20% and advised that future Business Plans would be developed on a 3 year rolling basis.

It was noted that Medway Council had adopted a Diversity Impact Assessment 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 had been carried out and was attached at Appendix 3 to the report. The findings of this indicated the Business Plan did not need a full Diversity Impact Assessment.

The Head of Planning (Swale Borough Council) took this opportunity to advise the Joint Committee of the opportunity to bid for funding from the 2015-2016 Transformation Challenge Award. It was explained that the proposed bid could seek resources to appoint consultants to review opportunities for marketing the partnership and also for creating a separate consultancy arm. It was noted that expressions of interest for 2015-16 needed to be submitted by 1 July 2014, with feedback provided by the end of July. The deadline for formal bids was 1 October and announcements of successful bids would be made in November. Members supported the submission of the bid and requested that the Joint Committee is kept informed of progress.

Decision:

- (a) The South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee adopted the 2012-2017 Business Plan, dated 27 November 2013 Version 4, and Service Delivery Documentation as attached to the report.
- (b) The South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee supported the submission of a bid for funding from the 2015-2016 Transformation Challenge Award, which seeks resources to appoint consultants to review opportunities for marketing the partnership and also for creating a separate consultancy arm.

Reasons for Decision:

The Joint Committee has a duty under the Memorandum of Agreement to formally adopt the business plan at the Annual General Meeting.

9 Administrative Arrangements 2014/2015

Background:

Details were given of the proposed administrative arrangements for the Joint Committee for the next municipal year. This included the schedule of meetings (as discussed at the Committee meeting on 20 March 2014) and the appointment of proper officers.

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Decision:

The South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee:

- a) agreed the following timetable of meetings for the 2014/2015 municipal year:
 - 12 June 2014 (AGM)
 - 2 October 2014
 - 11 December 2014
 - 19 March 2015.

- b) noted the appointment of the officers listed in paragraph 4.2 of the report as Monitoring and Deputy Monitoring Officers, and as S151 and Deputy S151 Officers.

- c) agreed to select Medway Council to provide a secretary to the joint committee for the 2014/2015 municipal year.

Chairman

Date:

Anthony Law , Democratic Services Officer

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