

CABINET

10 FEBRUARY 2015

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS PLAN 2015/2018

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

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration and Development

Report from: 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 and Delivery Plan for 2015/2018.

The Business Plan and Delivery Plan are 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 Partnership's 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
- 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 11 December 2014 the Joint Committee agreed the draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership's Business Plan for 2015/18 as attached at Appendix A (Supplementary Agenda No. 1). This encompasses the comments already received from the Partner Authorities.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 The Business Plan (Appendix A in Supplementary Agenda No. 1) outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the three partnership Council's up until 2018 and indicates what the reduced contributions will be.

3.2 The amended plan presented to Members for final consideration indicates the three agreed objectives:

- To improve customer service utilising IT development and increased customer interaction.
- Increase opportunities for protecting and capturing market share.
- Development of consultancy services with dedicated staff under separate company.

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

Our key projects for 2015/16 will be:

- The improvements in IT allowing greater flexibility in the way we work.
- Improvements required to the quality and consistency of plan checking and site inspections.

- Improvements to the speed of turnaround of applications.
 - Access to reliable and consistent advice through the provision of a duty surveyor.
 - Enabling customer service improvements for tracking applications and carrying out searches.
 - The need to develop the consultancy as a commercial arm of STG.
- 3.3 These items will form the focal point in the year ahead and underpin the objectives in the delivery plan (Appendix A in Supplementary Agenda No. 1) With continued support from the three authorities and the likely expansion of the partnership delivery on these objectives will build on the reputation of delivering a first class service to customers and stakeholders.
- 3.4 Total contributions will have reduced for the current three partners by £61,472 between April 2012 and March 2016 in the current arrangement. Should the partnership be extended the saving to the current three partners would increase to £65,291.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 It is noted that negotiations with Canterbury City Council regarding them joining the partnership are ongoing and has been the subject of several reports to the Joint Committee. The further expansion of the Partnership has therefore been included within the Business Plan for illustrative purposes only at this stage. Any proposals to expand the Partnership would be subject to each of the Partner Authorities first approving the proposal. A report would be brought to Cabinet at the appropriate stage.
- 3.7 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 to this report. The findings of this indicate the Business Plan does not need a full Diversity Impact Assessment.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Figure 1 within Appendix A (Business Plan 2015/2018) to this report shows the financial plan based on the three current members of the partnership and demonstrates a 2% saving on the previous Business Plan projection.
- 4.2 Should the proposed expansion of the partnership take place in 2015, the Business Plan will be revised to incorporate four partners and further savings will be generated as shown in figure 2 of Appendix A to this report.

4.3 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 £153,859 has been provided for in the 2015/16 draft budget.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 Where appropriate these are set out in the report and in the Business Plan. The Business Plan makes provision for partnership working with private architects. This will be done under the recognised Local Authority Building Control Partnership scheme.

6. Risk Management

6.1 Should chargeable applications and therefore income fall below expectations and outside of any mitigating proposals put forward to enable a zero based budget there may be further calls on the contributions from each of the partner authorities. However, this would be only applied for as a last resort.

7. Recommendations

7.1 That the proposed Business Plan and Delivery Plan for 2015/18 for the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership, as set out at Appendix A, be approved by the Cabinet.

8. Suggested Reasons for Decisions

8.1 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 2015/2018 and Service Delivery Documentation 2015/18 (Supplementary Agenda No. 1)

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 20 January 2015	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 2015/18 reflect those of the previously considered Business Plan 2012/17 and do not affect the responses given then. However, as the Business Plan now continues to 2018 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 (as amended) 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 (as amended) 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 (as amended). 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 (as amended). 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 (as amended). 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 (as amended). 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 (as amended) 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 (as amended) 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 (as amended) 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 September 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 September 2015.	Tony Van Veghel

Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review	
Date of next review	January 2016
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	20/01/15
Signed (service manager/Assistant Director) Stephen Gaimster	Date	20/01/15