

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

Wednesday, 25 March 2015

10.10am to 11.00am

Record of the meeting

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

Present: Councillors: Burden, Chitty (Chairman) and Lewin

In Attendance: Janine Boughton, Head of Administration and Business Development
Stephen Gaimster, Assistant Director, Housing and Regeneration
Sarah Kilkie, Assistant Director (Communities), Gravesham Borough Council
Andrew Lawson, Principal Accountant
Michael Turner, Democratic Services Officer
Tony Van Veghel, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership
Terri Williams, HR Business Partner

21 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

22 Record of meeting

The record of the meeting held on 11 December 2014 was agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23 Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other interests

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

24 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances

There were none.

25 2014 - 2015 Proposed Audit Timetable

Discussion:

The Finance Business Manager (Medway Council) introduced this report which asked members to approve the proposed audit timetable for 2014/2015 and consider audit arrangements for 2015/16 and beyond.

Since the agenda papers had been published further discussions had taken place with the external auditor and a revised proposed audit timetable was tabled at the meeting, as follows:

Action	2014/2015 Deadline
Date of Audit Announcement	1 June 2015
Annual Return signed at the AGM.	10 June 2015
Start of Inspection Period	15 June 2015
End of Inspection Period	10 July 2015
Annual Return to be received by the auditors.	13 July 2015
Public Display of the audited Annual Return	30 September 2015

In response to questions from members about whether the new timetable was achievable an assurance was given that officers were confident the new deadlines were achievable, provided the final accounts were agreed by the Joint Committee at its June 2015 meeting.

From 1 April 2015, as a result of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, Joint Committees would no longer be required to have their accounts separately prepared and audited. The Committee was asked to consider whether, in the light of this, it wished to continue having a separate audit of its financial results. In response to questions from members about whether this was needed, the Committee was advised that officers did not feel this was necessary as there were robust procedures in place to ensure the accounts were properly scrutinised without the need (and expense) of an external audit. Accountants in the three constituent councils provided any necessary challenge to the accounts, which were also scrutinised by members through the Joint Committee. Having received this assurance members were content that an external audit was not necessary.

Decision:

The Joint Committee:

- (1) Approved the revised audit timetable as set out above
- (2) Agreed that from 1 April 2015 a separate external audit of the Joint Committee's accounts is not required

26 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Decision:

The Joint Committee agreed to exclude the press and public during consideration of agenda item nos 7 (South Thames Gateway Building Control Update on Expansion of Partnership) and 8 (Monitoring Report: December 2014 to February 2015) because consideration of these matters in public would disclose information falling within paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as specified in agenda item 6 and, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption, outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

27 South Thames Gateway Building Control Update on Expansion of Partnership

Discussion:

The Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership introduced this report which advised members on the conclusion of the project to incorporate Canterbury City Council within the Partnership.

Whilst members were disappointed with the outcome of the negotiations with Canterbury City Council they felt the rigour by which the proposals had been tested was reassuring. It was accepted by both members and officers that the process had taken longer than was ideal. Lessons had been learned which would be applied to any future expansion of the partnership. The Chairman thanked officers for their significant efforts made to progress the expansion.

A suggestion was made that the way in which the three constituent councils engaged with and promoted building control should be scrutinised as it was possible this was not as effective as it could be.

Decision:

- (1) The Joint Committee agreed that, in the light of the outcome of the negotiations with Canterbury City Council, the Director of the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership will take no further action to exercise the power delegated to him at the last meeting of the Joint Committee to progress the inclusion of Canterbury City Council within the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership by 1 April 2015 unless a proposal is received from Canterbury City Council which, in the view of the Director and following consultation with the Officer Steering Group and the Heads of Legal departments at the partner authorities, does not place any additional financial or operational risk on the existing partners

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- (2) The Joint Committee agreed that a paper be submitted to the June 2015 meeting on how best to examine the effectiveness of the constituent councils in engaging with and promoting the building control service.

28 Monitoring Report: December 2014 to February 2015

Discussion:

The Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership introduced this report which updated the Joint Committee on the current forecast for the 2014/2015 financial year and gave details against the progress of the objectives of the Business Plan 2012/2017.

Members were advised that in January a deficit of £87,000 had been predicted. Over the last quarter further mitigation measures had been put in place including a reduction of agency staff and a moratorium on expenditure. Through this, some of the pressure was reduced and, at the time the agenda papers had been published, a revised figure of £55,000 was forecast as a possible end of year deficit. This had now been reduced to £35,000 and efforts would continue to reduce this further before the end of the financial year.

Decision:

The Joint Committee noted the report.

Chairman

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