

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL JOINT COMMITTEE

21 SEPTEMBER 2017

EXPANSION OF SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL PARTNERSHIP

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

Summary

This report seeks approval to extend the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership by the inclusion of Canterbury City Councils building control service.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Memorandum of Agreement, which underpins the Partnership, requires each of the existing partnership councils to first agree to an additional authority joining. A business case has been prepared which demonstrates that following a due diligence investigation and evaluation of benefits the expansion would be beneficial to both parties and would result in further reductions in contributions and improves the service to customers.

2 Background

- 2.1 Following an approach by Canterbury City Council the partnership engaged in a project to examine the viability of them joining as a fourth partner.
- 2.2 Members of Joint Committee instructed that any expansion could only be considered at nil detriment to the existing arrangements. Not only would that mean no increase to their forecasted contributions but also equally important was to ensure the excellent reputation of the partnership and the high quality service to customers would be maintained.
- 2.3 An Outline Business Case was taken to Joint Committee in June 2017 and following their consideration and recommendations the attached business case has been developed through negotiation and discussion between the partnership and Canterbury City Council.
- 2.4 Through the development of the partnerships digitalisation programme and the creation of a business model using agile and mobile working the partnership has been able to demonstrate how improvements to customer

service and service delivery can be achieved. Through the effective use of borderless office principles the model can be incorporated in this and future partnership expansion plans.

- 2.5 A financial forecast within the business case demonstrates further reductions in contributions by the existing three partners to 2021 should this proposal be taken forward. There are also details of the operational plan and revised staffing structure to verify the viability of the project.

3 Director's comments

- 3.1 The partnership has been operated successfully over the last 10 years and Members of Joint Committee have expressed a view to share some of the benefits from the operation with the adjoining authorities and to also enhance the resilience and opportunities through a wider market that expansion would bring.
- 3.2 This proposal looks to take the benefits and improvements to customer service that have been developed over the last ten years to a wider audience, increasing critical mass of the partnership, delivering greater consistency and improving market share over an area of Kent which would comprise a population base of over 627,000.
- 3.3 The partnership benefits from being able to work across boundaries without the restrictions that individual local authorities have, therefore moving resources to where demand exists is much more feasible and with the additional benefit now, of being able to operate in a mobile environment.
- 3.4 Continuous service improvement is a high priority to both the partnership and Canterbury City Council. This expansion would allow for improvements in the way customers track their applications, give more consistency in the interpretation of building regulations across a large area of Kent and provide a responsive site inspection regime with all relevant information available to the surveyor on site. Ongoing development in plan processing and plan vetting online will be taken forward together with a more responsive service being able to deliver building control advice and guidance to clients in their home or office rather than them having to travel to Council offices.
- 3.5 With the availability of complimentary services through the consultancy, clients will be able to benefit from a one stop shop approach to their construction needs including energy, fire risk and accessible assessments together with access to the pressure and sound testing facilities.
- 3.6 Should the expansion be agreed then we would look to implement the new arrangement from 1st April 2018 subject to Canterbury progressing their digitalisation of building control so as to facilitate working in the STG agile environment.
- 3.7 As set out in paragraph 3.26 of the Memorandum of Agreement before an additional authority is permitted to join the partnership each of the existing

councils are required to agree the proposal through their individual Cabinets.

- 3.8 Canterbury City Council will also need agreement through their full council meeting on 19th October 2017 having taken reports to their Management Team on 12 September 2017 and Policy and Resources Committee on 4th October 2017.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There will be no cost to the existing partnership with Canterbury City Council responsible for any costs associated to them joining.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Memorandum of Agreement sets out the requirements for additional authorities to join the partnership under paragraph 3.26. Legal representation for the partnership is provided by Medway Council and discussions have already commenced with the production of a Non-Disclosure Agreement. Further discussions will take place to agree any necessary amendments to the Memorandum which will need to be signed by all four authorities.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 Risk analysis has been carried out within the business case and how through these negotiations we have been able to mitigate exposure to risk to the partnership and the individual authorities.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that Joint Committee approve the expansion of the partnership through the inclusion of Canterbury City Councils building control service.

8 Suggested Reasons for Decisions

- 8.1 The expansion of the partnership will build in further resilience and provide opportunities for a wider market and broader customer base as well as providing reductions in contributions for the existing three partners.

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Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Exempt Appendix – Business Case