

## CABINET

5 FEBRUARY 2019

### **SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS PLAN 2019/2022**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jane Chitty, Planning, Economic Growth and Regulation and Member of Joint Committee

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation and Deputy Chief Executive

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

#### **Summary**

This report seeks agreement to the South Thames Gateway (STG) Building Control Partnership Business Plan for 2019/2022 (version 2) and accompanying Delivery Plan for 2019/2022 (version 2).

#### **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. The STG Building Control Partnership involving Medway, Gravesham and Swale went live in 2007 and was expanded in 2018 with Canterbury City Council joining on 1 April 2018.

#### **2. Background**

2.1 The South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership (involving Medway, Gravesham, Swale and now Canterbury) went live in 2007 and the Partnership's business plan outlines how the building control function for the four Partnership Councils will be delivered over the next three financial years.

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 Whilst much of the building control partnership operation is subject to competition from approved inspectors, the service retains statutory responsibilities regarding public protection eg, dangerous structures, demolitions, unauthorised works and maintenance of public registers etc.

### **3 Executive Summary**

3.1 The Business Plan, as set out in the exempt appendix, outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the four partnership Council's up until 2022 and indicates what the reduced contributions will be between 2019/22.

3.2 Over the last 3 years STG have embraced change and engaged with our back office provider to explore and improve service provision using off-site technology to provide access to our systems 24/7. However, we recognise that our digital transformation is not a destination but a journey.

3.3 We now need to build on the freedom and accessibility that remote and agile working is delivering for us and we need to use the technology to both improve the customer experience as well as build in efficiencies in service delivery. Our staff and customer consultations revealed both an acknowledgement of our successes, on the journey so far, but also identified other opportunities that we can develop.

3.4 Introducing a new area brings with it a number of opportunities to increase our current market share and build in further resilience to the partnership so as to deliver a first class service over a much larger area.

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

- Continue to meet customer needs and expectations.
- Maximisation of technology to reduce cost and continue to improve the way we work.
- Valuing, supporting and development of staff

3.6 Medway's contribution towards the partnership funding is expected to reduce from the current £122,945 in 2019/2020 to £109,517 by 2022.

## **4 Financial Implications**

4.1 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 £122,945 has been provided for in the 2019/20 draft budget.

## **5 Legal Implications**

5.1 The Building Control function is a statutory duty under the Building Act 1984 and therefore must be provided by each authority – whether as a partnership arrangement or a standalone service.

## **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.

6.2 Service risks are set out in Part 3 of the Service Delivery Plan 2019-2022, as set out in the exempt appendix.

## **7 Recommendations**

7.1 That the proposed Business Plan for 2019/2022 and Delivery Plan for the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership, as set out at Appendix A, be approved by the Cabinet and the proposed contribution of £122,945 for 2019/2020 be noted.

## **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**

Tony Van Veghel, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership,  
Foord Annexe, Eastgate House, High Street, Rochester, ME1 1EW

Tel: 01634 331552

E-mail: [tony.vanveghel@stgbc.org.uk](mailto:tony.vanveghel@stgbc.org.uk)

**Appendices**

Exempt Appendix - South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Draft  
Business Plan 2019/2022 and Service Delivery Plan 2019/2022

**Background papers**

None