

CABINET

4 FEBRUARY 2020

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS PLAN

- 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: Janine Boughton, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

Summary

This report seeks agreement to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan for 2020/2023 and accompanying Delivery Plan for 2020/2023.

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 the 1 April 2018. 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. 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 e.g., dangerous structures, demolitions, unauthorised works and maintenance of public registers etc.

3 Executive Summary

3.1 The Business Plan outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the four partnership Council's up until 2023 and indicates what the contributions will be between 2020/21.

3.2 Given the increasing expectations of all construction professionals to demonstrate ongoing competency, the focus of our business and delivery plan is around training and upskilling our surveyors. Ensuring all have the appropriate knowledge, experience and competency to work on all types of developments.

3.3 There is a severe shortage of qualified and experienced building control surveyors throughout the industry and over this period a rolling training programme will take place so as to develop surveyors to deal with the simply domestic developments up to the more complex construction required under building control legislation.

3.4 Customer expectations will always exceed what we can deliver but it should never stop us aiming to achieve them as it is this fundamental element that

drives our service forward. We will, therefore, continue to exploit technology to achieve benefits for both customers and staff.

3.5 Our aim is to provide a cost effective and efficient building control service that adds quality in achieving a healthy and safe environment. Our partnerships objectives for 2020/23 will be:

- 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.

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 £123,082 has been provided for in the 2020/21 draft budget, which demonstrates exceptional value for money as in comparison to the costs of one building control surveyor, including on-cost, is £67,000.

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 2020-2023

7 Recommendations

7.1 That the proposed Business Plan for 2020/2023 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 £123,082 for 2020/2021 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

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Background papers: None

Exempt Appendix South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Draft
Business Plan 2020/2023 and Service Delivery Plan
2020/2023