

CABINET

2 FEBRUARY 2021

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS PLAN 2021-2024

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

Report from: Richard Hicks, Director Place and Deputy Chief Executive

Author: Janine Weaver, Director of South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

Summary

This report seeks agreement to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan for 2021-2024 and accompanying Delivery Plan for 2021-2024.

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, Canterbury, Gravesham and Swale) 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 must 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 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 (Exempt Appendix) outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the four Partnership Councils up until 2024 and indicates what the contributions will be between 2021-2024.

3.2. The Partnership has already begun a training programme to develop surveyors to ensure they are able to demonstrate the required skills and competencies to practice on all categories of work. It is this investment which is critical to the future delivery of the Partnership.

3.3. Incentivising individuals to develop more specialist skills will not only present opportunities for taking on more complex developments but potentially provide an additional income stream through the consultancy.

3.4. Under the Building Safety Bill, there is an opportunity for specialised surveyors, who meet the minimum standard criteria, to be registered building inspectors. The registered building inspector that building control authorities can use to provide advice on specified functions.

3.5. Training is not simply a tick box exercise; this must happen before it is forced on all building control bodies. STG need to ensure they are the building control body in Kent recognised for the experience and skills of the staff as well as the ability to provide specialist advice.

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 £127,342 has been provided for in the 2021-2022 draft budget, which demonstrates exceptional value for money as in comparison to the costs of one building control surveyor, including on-cost, is £68,000.

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 2021-2024 (Exempt Appendix).

7. Recommendations

7.1. That the proposed Business Plan for 2021-2024 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 £127,342 for 2021-2022 be noted.

8. Suggested reasons for decision

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

Janine Weaver, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership,
Foord Annexe, Eastgate House, High Street, Rochester, ME1 1EW

Tel: 01634 331600

E-mail: janine.weaver@stgbc.org.uk

Appendices

Exempt Appendix 1: South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business
Plan 2021-2024

Exempt Appendix 2: South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Service
Delivery Plan 2021-2024

Background papers

None.