

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL JOINT COMMITTEE

16 SEPTEMBER 2021

SOUTH THAMES GATEWAY BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS PLAN 2022-2025

Report from: Janine Weaver, Director, South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership

Summary

The report seeks agreement to the South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership's Business Plan and Delivery Plan for 2022-2025 (dated 13 August 2021 Version 1).

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1. The Joint Committee's Constitution states that 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.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Joint Committee's Constitution sets out the process for approval of the Partnership's 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.
- 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).

2.2. 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.

3. Director's comments

3.1. The 2022-2025 Business Plan covers the fourth term of the Partnership's operation which will be renewed on 1 October 2022. A separate report will be taken to Members for their consideration in support of the fourth term at the meeting in December 2021. The focus of the plan is around training, competency and licensing of surveyors required under the new Building Safety Bill.

3.2. There is a severe shortage of qualified building control surveyors throughout the industry. The changes being brought in by Government will have a detrimental impact on building control.

3.3. As detailed in our current Business Plan, over the next couple of years 28% of our senior and most experienced surveyors will be nearing or have indicated they are looking to have retired. With a projected timescale for mandatory registration under the Building Safety Bill of April 2023 this will most certainly result in surveyors not wishing to undertake training and examinations leaving the profession.

3.4. To prepare for registration there are three available routes:

a) Degree in Building Control Surveying

A four-year degree under the University of Wolverhampton requiring 20% off the job training (1 day per week) and two weeks per year residential. Levy funded.

b) Modular

Certificates and diplomas covering the requisite level for the specific category of development (i.e., domestic). Each level is a one-year course requiring 20% off the job training (1 day per week) and one week residential as well as a designated mentor. Each level costs around £2,500.00 (plus VAT).

The mentor will also need to be enrolled and undertake training on a separate mentor CPD programme.

c) Experiential

Proven competence or proof of required experience at requisite level. LABC are preparing a full suite of validation assessments which should be available by the end of 2021. Costs for validation assessments not yet known.

- 3.5. All registration routes will result in a reduction of available resources and increased expenditure. This will put additional pressure on staff that are already struggling to carry out inspections and enforcement, plan assessments etc as well as responding to increased levels of communications from customers demanding immediacy of response.
- 3.6. Registration is mandatory and sufficient time and support will be required to be given to each surveyor to ensure they are able to validate their competency for the appropriate levels.
- 3.7. Local authorities are already unable to compete with the salary packages offered by approved inspectors. The competition will only get more intense once surveyors are licensed. A restructuring and review of salaries and job descriptions needs to be undertaken if we are to retain staff. If not, we run the risk of being unable to provide staff at the right level to undertake categories of work and would be required to buy-in that expertise.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Figure 1 of the Business Plan details a three-year financial plan covering the period 2022-2025.
- 4.2. This includes contributions payable by the constituent authorities that will be ratified by their acceptance of the Plan.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. Where appropriate these are set out in the report and in the Business Plan (dated 13 August 2021 Version 1). The Business Plan makes provision for partnership working with private architects. This will be done under the recognised Local Authority Building Control Partnership scheme.

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.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1. The Joint Committee is asked to approve the draft Business Plan 2022-2025 (dated 13 August 2021 Version 1) and Delivery Plan 2022-2025 (dated 13 August 2021 Version 1) and send to each Partner Authority for comments.

8. Suggested Reasons for Decision

- 8.1. The Joint Committee has a duty under the Memorandum of Agreement to formally adopt the Business Plan at the Annual General Meeting.

Lead officer contact

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Exempt Appendices

Appendix 1 – Three Year Budget Build and Contribution Calculation for 2021-2024

Appendix 2 – Business Plan (dated 13 August 2021 Version 1)

Appendix 3 – Service Delivery Plan (dated 13 August 2021 Version 1)

Background papers

None