

**Medway Council**  
**Meeting of South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint  
Committee**

**Thursday, 11 December 2025**

**10.00am to 11.04am**

**Record of the meeting**

**Subject to approval as an accurate record at the next meeting of this committee**

**Present:** Councillors: Curry, Gibson and Edwards

**Substitutes:** Councillors:  
Mochrie-Cox (Substitute for Burden)

**In Attendance:** Mark Breathwick, Assistant Director, Culture and Community,  
Medway Council  
Shazad Ghani, Head of Planning, Gravesham Borough Council  
Simon Thomas, Head of Planning, Canterbury City Council  
Janine Weaver, Director, South Thames Gateway Building  
Control Partnership, Director STG Building Control Partnership

**529 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Burden and Swale Borough Council Head of Place, Joanne Johnson.

**530 Record of meeting**

The notes of the inquorate meeting on 18 September were noted and the record of the meeting held on 12 June 2025 was agreed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

**531 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Other Significant Interests**

Disclosable pecuniary interests

There were none.

Other significant interests (OSIs)

There were none.

Other interests

There were none.

**532 Urgent matters by reason of special circumstances**

There were none.

**533 Election of a Vice Chairperson**

Councillor Gibson was appointed as Vice Chairperson for the year.

**534 Exclusion of the press and public**

The Committee agreed to exclude the press and public for the remainder of the meeting because consideration of agenda items 7 and 8 in public would disclose information falling within one or more of the descriptions of exempt information contained in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, and, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**535 Monitoring Report September to November 2025**

**Discussion:**

The Director of South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership introduced the report. She highlighted that three surveyors had left the Partnership in the period. In response, there had been a successful recruitment campaign for two posts, however, three vacancies, including one management post remained. Salary remained the principal cause of staff leaving with the private sector able to offer significantly higher salaries and this was experienced by other local authorities as well. The Partnership strategy was to provide a clear career path and structured training for staff which included a dedicated training officer.

The Director added that fee applications had risen by 8.9% and a balanced budget may be achieved. Performance remained strong, with all service standards met.

The following issues were discussed:

**Budgets** – The Committee discussed the current budget, the Partnership Director stated that fees had risen 4.6% in the period and a balanced budget or indeed a small surplus remained a possibility. What would be done with the surplus would be a decision for the Committee, however, any surplus would usually be retained by the Partnership as part of a reserve for future years.

The Partnership had received some additional work due to other private firms going into administration during the last quarter. It was a complex process to take over ongoing work so this added to the workload. Some of the work undertaken had been of variable quality which had caused some complaints, so although the additional work was welcome it was not without risk.

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**Training** – it was asked whether the costs of training staff who subsequently left the Partnership were recouped. The Partnership Director confirmed that where the Partnership had paid for specific training courses this was done on a sliding scale, however, much of the training was on the job, the costs of which could not be recouped.

It was asked whether training could be offered to the private sector as a business opportunity. The Partnership Director stated that it would not be a realistic proposition given the additional supervision and mentoring work required.

**Staffing** – Members discussed ongoing staffing issues across the local government sector, it was agreed that the Chairperson would write to the relevant government minister outlining the difficulties faced by local authorities.

**Consultation** – The Partnership Director updated the Committee on the ongoing national consultation regarding the future of the industry. She had responded to the consultation highlighting issues regarding salaries and the additional administrative burden placed on the authority including work that authorities were required to undertake but for which, it could not recoup its costs.

**Inspection** – it was asked whether any lessons could be learned from authority inspections which had taken place prior to an expected inspection of the Partnership in the next year. The Partnership Director stated that recent inspections had found a common theme in the lack of capacity and resources across a number of authorities. Some areas had been required to suspend work for a period this financial year due to a lack of resourcing. She added that she was confident that the partnership was in a good position and looking forward to development to meet the challenges in the industry. There was also an ongoing issue of continued professional development and training in the public sector, however, the partnership was confident it provided a strong training and development programme. Some small policy changes had been made in response to issues raised by auditors across the country. Finally, inspections had identified a lack of strong governance oversight in some authorities, the Director stated that the Committee provided strong oversight in this area.

**Enforcement notifications** – the committee discussed the drop in enforcement notifications, the Partnership Director stated that they were reliant on notifications from the public which had reduced. Enforcement remained an issue in the industry with too many poor builders in the region which left homeowners responsible for the cost of fixing substandard work. The Committee agreed that the letter to government should also draw attention to the need to deal with rogue builders which were not up to UK standards including consideration of a licensing scheme.

Decision:

- a) The Chairperson to write to the Government Minister regarding difficulties faced by Local authorities in the sector and problem building firms.

b) The Committee noted the contents of the report.

### 536 Business Plan 2026-2029

#### **Discussion:**

The Partnership Director introduced the report which reflected how the Partnership proposed to respond to the challenges in the sector and transform its services. The Business Plan was written in a climate of staff shortages, increased workload and additional administrative burdens such as supervision, mentoring and oversight requirements and competition from the private sector.

Income had fallen in the Partnership due to a lack of development; however, additional administrative burden and increased regulation meant the workload for the Partnership remained broadly in line with previous years. The plan would address the capacity issues by implementing a phased recruitment strategy. Whilst recruitment and retention would remain an issue given the larger salaries offered in the private sector the Partnership would invest in talent and provide a structured training and career pathway to attract staff.

The following issues were discussed:

**Salary and recruitment** – Members discussed issues regarding recruitment and retention, the Partnership Director stated that the strategy was to improve salaries and provide a positive environment for staff. The levels of work were currently low but the workloads were cyclical and there would be a recovery, the partnership needed to be in a place to have the resources to deal with increasing applications. The building control industry worked around 8 months behind planning, and there had been some increased planning activity in recent months.

A Member commented that the Partnership had to address the biggest issues which were staffing, salaries and resources to meet the workload and the Business Plan with the proposed incremental growth in staffing achieved this in his view.

The Partnership discussed the impact of Local Government Reform, it was agreed that the role of the current Business Plan was to provide a stable footing for the authority as it moved towards Local Government Reform in 2028. The new authorities would be responsible for decisions relating to the future of the partnership and consequently, paragraphs 2.60 and 2.61 of the business plan were not required at this stage.

A Member commented that the draft plan would be considered by Canterbury Council prior to Christmas, officers undertook to let the clerk to the Committee know when this was complete.

#### **Decision:**

## **South Thames Gateway Building Control Joint Committee, 11 December 2025**

The Joint Committee approved the Business Plan for 2026–2029, which outlined the strategic objectives, performance targets, and financial arrangements for non-chargeable activities.

**Chairperson**

**Date:**

**Steve Dickens**

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