



To: Executive Councillor for Planning Policy and Transport: Councillor Kevin Blencowe
Report by: Head of Planning Services – Patsy Dell
Relevant scrutiny committee: Environment 13/1/2015 Scrutiny Committee
Wards affected: All

BUILDING CONTROL SHARED SERVICE INVESTIGATION

Not a Key Decision

1) Executive Summary

- 1.1 A shared building control service has the potential to be a more sustainable and resilient business model for future service delivery and cost effectiveness.
- 1.2 The City Council has been asked to explore the benefits of joining the shared Building Control service already committed to by Huntingdonshire (HDC) and South Cambridgeshire (SCDC) District Councils. This report seeks approval to undertake that work.

2) Recommendations

- 2.1 The Executive Councillor is recommended:

To agree that the viability and benefits of developing a shared Building Control service should be explored, and the business case and conclusions brought back to the scrutiny committee at the earliest opportunity for consideration.

3) Background

- 3.1 The City Council has been asked to work with South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire District Councils in developing a shared Building Control service. These District Councils have already formally agreed that they will progress a shared service model based upon South Cambridgeshire being the lead authority.
- 3.2 The City Building Control (BC) function is undertaken by a team of 10 FTE staff, located within planning services. The BC service is responsible for administration of applications under the Building Regulations and operates largely commercially through the fee income it

secures. The Cambridge City Council BC service is well regarded locally and has a strong reputation for the quality of service that it delivers. The dynamic growth agenda locally means that like all development related service areas there is an increasing workload with resources being under increasing pressure.

- 3.3 The Head of Planning Services and Building Control Manager have been investigating new business models for Building Control and have looked at a number of options coming forward nationally. This limited research suggests that a lead local authority partnership type model based locally could well be the most viable way of delivering local authority BC services in future. The exploration of the business case for the three authority shared service model will investigate this fully.

4) Other Principles

- 4.1 Lead Authority/Service: at the moment South Cambridgeshire are identified as Lead Authority in the shared service model that has been developed between SCDC and HDC. This will be reviewed as part of the investigation of the City Council becoming a part of that model.
- 4.2 Location of Service: The location of the new service will be an operational issue considered as part of putting together the detailed business case. The impact on staff will be taken into account together with the strategic accommodation priorities of each Council. Whatever location is chosen, the need to reduce travel and environmental impact will also be taken into account.
- 4.3 Cost Sharing / Efficiencies: these will be explored taking into account the specific fee-earning approach that covers BC services already. A Benefits/outcomes assessment will form part of the business case analysis.
- 4.4 The desired outcomes from a shared service would be as follows:
- [1] Deliver savings in management, hardware, software and services, administrative support and accommodation costs.
- [2] Increased opportunities for income generation. Local Authority Building Control services are budgeted for in two ways: their statutory non-fee earning service area which is paid for by the councils through general fund contributions, and the ring-fenced fee-earning area which can cover the cost of administering the building regulations on a development by development basis. A larger, more commercially focused BC service should make it possible to increase income generation and potentially reduce the cost of the statutory service area.
- [3] Improving resilience and retention – better able to prevent service

loss or interruption and cope with peaks in workload and staff absences.

[4] A larger team will also give each council access to a greater breadth and depth of professional/technical expertise and capacity.

[5] A larger service will increase the opportunity for staff development, by allowing staff to work across a broader range of areas, or to become more specialised as appropriate.

5) Governance

5.1 The next step will be consideration of the business case for joining the shared service with SCDC and HDC. Thereafter if the business case is agreed overall progress in bringing the services together would be overseen by the Shared Services Board, a joint steering group involving Leaders, and relevant portfolio holders where appropriate, reporting back to the respective Cabinets and other decision-making bodies.

6) Proposed next steps

6.1 Continued and ongoing consultation with staff.

6.2 Commission project support.

6.3 Risk management.

6.4 Work on business case including terms of shared service, cost sharing, location.

6.5 Programme to transform practices and processes.

6.6 Plan for implementation.

6.7 Report back to 17 March Environment Scrutiny Committee.

7) Implications

7.1 Financial Implications: The delivery of shared services will require additional capacity upfront in order to ensure effective delivery. However it is anticipated that this will be recovered via future efficiencies.

7.2 Staffing Implications: Whilst moving to shared services creates short-term uncertainty for staff, it will also help to ensure greater capacity and longer-term resilience together with enhanced career opportunities. BC staff have been briefed on the shared service investigation that is being proposed. There will be full engagement and consultation with both staff and trade unions moving forward.

7.3 Equalities and Poverty implications: An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the business case development. This will be

included with the next report and will be updated as the proposals are refined and developed

- 7.4 Environmental Implications: None.
- 7.5 Procurement: None
- 7.6 Consultation and communication: See (6.1) above.
- 7.7 Risk Management: A dedicated risk log will be set up for the Shared Services Programme Board to ensure that risks are identified and managed. In addition, specific operational risks will be identified and managed through the business plan process.
- 7.8 Legal: Any legal implications will be addressed in future reports

8) Background Papers

- 8.1 None at this stage

9) Appendices

- 9.1 None with this report

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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