
PERFORMANCE OF BUILDING CONTROL

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the current performance of the Council's Building Control Service (the 'Service') further to a report presented to Review Committee on 7 November 2017 following the restructure of the service.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council is the main service provider of Building Control services to ensure that domestic and commercial building work meets minimum national and legal standards of building construction. The Service is customer focussed and provides much sought after support to local residents wishing to carry out alterations to property. The Service is more focused on residents' needs, compared to approved inspectors who only need to meet their contractual obligations under the Approved Inspectors Regulations. The Building Act 1984 and Building Regulations 2010 provide the statutory framework under which the Service operates.
- 2.2 The Service charges fees in accordance with the Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010. This allows for the cost of the Service to be recovered from customers, so that it does not place burden on the Council's general revenue budget.

3 UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW STRUCTURE AND PROGRESS MADE

- 3.1 In the previous report of November 2017, five stages were identified as needing to be progressed within the Service. These have now been completed as follows:-
- a) To recruit to vacant posts with an appropriate recruitment and retention package:

A review of salaries has been undertaken and an appropriate retention and recruitment package has been approved. The Senior Building Control Officer post is currently being advertised.
 - b) Review procedures and processes:

The Service is in the process of adopting a pilot quality management scheme which provides process maps of the core functions for comparison. This review work is on-going.
 - c) Restore the reputation of the Service and market the Service to potential customers:

Additional channels of communication, other than telephone access, have been introduced, which includes a specified email address, an

inspection request smart phone app and online payment of fees. This has improved the experience of customers accessing the Service.

In addition, more focussed time has been given to supporting customers, including homeowners, builders and architects. This has largely been achieved by managing the inspection requests so problems associated with work becoming un-approvable is proactively managed, reducing the need for follow up visits.

- d) Review the charges to ensure they are competitive in the market and ensure they are in line with CIPFA guidance.

The charges have been reviewed and benchmarked against other authorities and were last updated in 2016. The charges will remain under review to ensure full cost recover.

- e) To develop a training matrix to support staff development.

There is a nationwide skill deficit in respect of Building Control staff as a result of local authority cuts in recruitment in the early 1990s and college courses with dedicated Building Control content being discontinued as a result of colleges of Further Education coming under commercial pressure to fill courses.

The Team Leader is working with Local Authority Building Control (LABC) to identify learning pathways, which can lead to more specialised academic qualifications. In addition, in-house training, based on the needs of the service, is being provided. It should then be possible, using a skills audit from the LABC to identify, by means of using appraisals, to identify where surveyors need to improve to maintain and extend skills to ensure the Service stays competitive. This work is ongoing.

The current permanent staffing is at a current level of 50%, with a Team Leader and a Senior Building Control Surveyor. Assistance is being given by Agency staff for 22.5 hours a week. When another Senior Building Control Surveyor has been recruited the other vacant Building Control Officer's post can be considered .

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Building Control Service is still not fully staffed and customers report response times slower than their expectations. This has led to heavily prioritising work according to risk of non compliance, with some customers making complaints to get a faster response. This leads to loss of reputation and, potentially, work going to Approved Inspectors (AIs) who have a limited involvement under contract. This loss of supervision of work to AIs by the Council reduces its influence by diluting a consistent approach to enforcing standards with the cohort of builders who work in the District as well as a loss of fee income.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Not relevant.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 If the service is under resourced minimum standards to protect people in and around buildings fall and measures to meet standards for drainage, energy efficiency and carbon reduction may not be met.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The 2018/19 budget includes provision for the vacant Building Control posts, so successful recruitment will not cause a budget pressure. Fees for Building Control services are regularly reviewed to ensure full cost recovery.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council is required to carry out prescribed duties under legislation and determine compliance to ensure public safety.

9 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

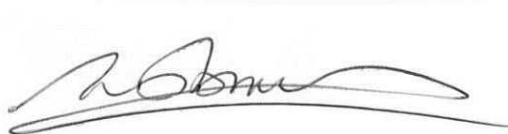
9.1 Not relevant.

10 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Not relevant.

11 RECOMMENDATION

11.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES** to note the progress made in implementing the new structure to stabilise and improve the performance of the Building Control Service.



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Background Papers:-

None

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