

Review of Development Management Service Structure

Councillor Angela Lax, Cabinet Member for Regulatory, Housing & Health

Date:	12th October 2021
Agenda Item:	13
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Key Decision?	YES
Local Ward Members	N/A



COUNCIL

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 A report was considered by Cabinet on the 7th September 2021 in respect of a review of the Development Management (planning) team.
- 1.2 The review proposed a revised structure to increase the amount of resources within the team from 18.3 FTE to 22.3 FTE and included the addition of market supplements on certain posts, in order to seek to address the pressures the team face with regard to high and increasing workloads, recruitment and retention of staff and, also customer expectations and responsiveness.
- 1.3 Cabinet agreed with the recommendation and subsequently approved a revised structure for the DM team and, to the proposed increased resources to support this. This was agreed subject to a recommendation to Council, to increase the revenue base budget for the development management team (totalling £1.13m for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26).
- 1.4 A link to the Cabinet report is included below.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council confirms the Cabinets' decision of the 7th September 2021 and approves an increase in the Revenue Base Budget (totalling £1.13m for the period 2021/22 to 2025/26) for the development management team, as detailed in the financial implications section.

3. Background

- 3.1 See [Cabinet report](#) of the 7th September 2021; extract below setting out the proposed changes:
- 3.2 To address the challenges of workload levels, meet the increasing customer demand placed on the service and return the service to an acceptable level of performance, it is proposed to include the following changes within the DM team:
 - a) Increase the level of resource from 18.3 FTE to 22.3 FTE. This increase will include additional capacity for the enforcement and senior level planning officer resource in the service. (See **Appendix A** and **B** of the Cabinet report respectively for the existing and proposed structures).

- b) Enhance the principal/team leader post salaries via a market supplement in order to attract and retain staff. Market supplements proposed follow a recent salary benchmarking exercise which identified a gap in local rates of pay compared to other nearby local authorities.

3.3 Implementing the proposed revised structure would result in a budget increase for the service in the order of £220,000 for 2021/22 rising to £231,000 2025/26. A total additional cost of £1.13 million over the 5-year period.

Alternative Options	<p>1. Stop Service- as it is a statutory function of Council to determine applications submitted under the Planning Acts this cannot be done.</p> <p>2. Shared service or staffing - opportunities to share staff have been previously explored on a county-wide basis but overall lack of capacity and appetite from many Council's. Problems of recruiting are affecting other neighbouring authorities so sharing staff unlikely to be workable or viable.</p> <p>3. Continue to engage consultants - not a cost-effective option plus this does not ensure consistency of approach nor service/team development, significant resource required to train interims, interims are less reliable and can cause instability in teams.</p> <p>4. Reduce performance & quality of work – an option, however not one to be recommended as this could mean the Council is designated as non-performing and potentially have decision making powers removed from it. Also, important Council projects could be delayed and there would be reduced income and loss of reputation.</p>																																																												
Consultation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Internal parties including HR & Finance Officers 2. Leadership Team 3. Cabinet 4. ELG in respect of Market Supplements 																																																												
Financial Implications	<p>Note: 20% refers to posts currently funded by the 20% uplift of planning application fees that have to be ring-fenced for planning purposes, therefore this funding is dependent upon income levels generated from application fees.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="406 1489 1316 1892"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2021/22</th> <th>2022/23</th> <th>2023/24</th> <th>2024/25</th> <th>2025/26</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Current</td> <td>609,650</td> <td>624,510</td> <td>639,740</td> <td>654,130</td> <td>668,880</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Current 20</td> <td>63,950</td> <td>65,230</td> <td>66,550</td> <td>67,880</td> <td>69,250</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20% Funding</td> <td>(63,950)</td> <td>(65,230)</td> <td>(66,550)</td> <td>(67,880)</td> <td>(69,250)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>609,650</td> <td>624,510</td> <td>639,740</td> <td>654,130</td> <td>668,880</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proposed</td> <td>830,660</td> <td>847,490</td> <td>864,630</td> <td>882,120</td> <td>899,960</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Proposed 20</td> <td>66,100</td> <td>67,450</td> <td>68,830</td> <td>70,230</td> <td>71,670</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20% Funding</td> <td>(66,100)</td> <td>(67,450)</td> <td>(68,830)</td> <td>(70,230)</td> <td>(71,670)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>830,660</td> <td>847,490</td> <td>864,630</td> <td>882,120</td> <td>899,960</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Additional Funding</td> <td>221,010</td> <td>222,980</td> <td>224,980</td> <td>227,990</td> <td>231,080</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Notes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Assumes the potential apprentice role would be funded through a corporate budget as part of on-going discussions regarding apprenticeship appointments to the Authority. ii. The 20% refers to posts currently funded by the 20% uplift of planning application fees that have to be ring-fenced for planning purposes. Funding is 		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Current	609,650	624,510	639,740	654,130	668,880	Current 20	63,950	65,230	66,550	67,880	69,250	20% Funding	(63,950)	(65,230)	(66,550)	(67,880)	(69,250)		609,650	624,510	639,740	654,130	668,880	Proposed	830,660	847,490	864,630	882,120	899,960	Proposed 20	66,100	67,450	68,830	70,230	71,670	20% Funding	(66,100)	(67,450)	(68,830)	(70,230)	(71,670)		830,660	847,490	864,630	882,120	899,960	Additional Funding	221,010	222,980	224,980	227,990	231,080
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	<p>therefore dependent upon income levels generated from application fees.</p> <p>This additional financial investment will increase the annual funding gap and in the absence of additional income or savings being identified, will need to be funded by general reserves. The use of general reserves on an ongoing basis is not good practice and is not a sustainable approach. It will also mean that there would be less funding available to manage financial risks or invest in strategic priorities.</p>
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes

Legal Implications	1. There are no specific legal implications however as a statutory service the proposals if accepted would assist the Council in meeting its obligations as local planning authority.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	N/A

Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	1. In terms of District Council’s Strategic Plan 2020 to 2024 the proposals would contribute to shaping the place/District, in determining applications that support developments that preserve the districts characteristics and ensure sustainable development; encourage and support economic growth and promote the ability to be more customer responsive.
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Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	1. There are no equality, diversity and human rights implications associated with implementing the recommendations.
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Crime & Safety Issues	1. There are no crime and safety issues associated with implementing the recommendations.
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Environmental Impact	1. The proposals if accepted would enable the Development Management Service to oversee the implementation of agreed spatial policies as they impact upon the development and use of land in the district and associated with this the protection and enhancement of environmental assets.
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GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment	1. No Privacy Impact Assessment has been undertaken as there are no GDPR implications relevant to the recommendation.
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	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	More staff leave the authority due to strain of high workloads and poor morale.	Likelihood: Red Impact: Red Severity of Risk: Red	Commit to delivering service improvements and proposals set out in this paper.	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow
B	Sickness levels rise within the team	Likelihood: Red Impact: Red Severity of Risk: Red	Provide internal support from manager/HR/Counselling	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow
C	Not meeting NIs and subsequent designation as non-	Likelihood: Yellow	Outsource work and/or bring in more consultants to support the team to help meet targets. Increase use of	Likelihood: Green

	performing authority & loss of local decision-making	Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow	EoT agreement with applicants, if they are willing to enter into such.	Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Green
D	Need to return application fees if applications not progressed in timely manner	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow	Refuse applications without negotiating and encourage resubmissions; but likely to impact on appeal work.	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Green
E	Delivery of Important and strategic projects delayed including Council priority projects and housing delivery	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow	Bring in interim support to lead on projects- although will increase budget spend and bring risks.	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow
F	Increase in complaints including to LG Ombudsman.	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow	Bring in interim support to lead on projects- more budget spend.	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Green
G	Increase use and costs of interim support	Likelihood: Red Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow	Fee levels negotiated to ensure best value where possible.	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow
H	Impact on Council reputation as a result of negative feedback and inability to meet customer demands	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow	Seek to manage customer expectations and prioritise work areas where demands are high or are felt of greater importance.	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow
I	Lack of qualified and skilled staff and poor decisions made increasing appeals and legal challenges	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow	Support and training provided to officers by managers and recruitment process	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow
J	Proposed market supplement levels are insufficient to address the recruitment and retention issues	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Red Severity of Risk: Yellow	Understand nature of market and consider all factors that influence staff and potential staff in respect of employment with the Council.	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: Yellow Severity of Risk: Yellow

Background documents

Item 8, Cabinet Report 7th September 2021

Relevant web links

<https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=138&MIId=1737&Ver=4>