

CABINET MEMBER DECISION
(12 October 2021)

Increased expenditure for Planning Consultants within DM

1. Decision:

- 1.1 That spend be agreed by a further £75,000 per recruitment agency, in addition to the previously agreed amount of £150,000 (as agreed by Cabinet in March 2019), resulting in a total allowed spend of up to £225,000 per agency. This is to cover a 5-year (as opposed to 4-year) period from 2018/2019 to 2022/2023 for the procurement of interim planning officer and planning enforcement consultants within the Development Management (planning) team.

2. Statement of Reasons:

- 2.1 In March 2019 Cabinet agreed a level of additional expenditure for a number recruitment agencies who the Council use to engage and pay consultant planners. This included agreement to spend up to £150,000 for each of the 7 named recruitment agencies over a 4-year period from 2018/2019 to 2021/2021.
- 2.2 The Development Management (DM) planning team has needed to and continues to need to engage consultant support at this time, however some of the recruitment agencies used are now coming close to previously agreed expenditure limits (£150,000). This is impacting on the ability to engage the relevant support of experienced interim planning officers at this time and also impacting on the ability to extend the contracts of existing consultants who currently support the team; until such time that all vacant (including proposed new) posts are filled.
- 2.3 Therefore, an urgent extension is sought for the increased level of expenditure for certain agencies, increasing spend from £150,000 to a total of £225,000 per agency over a 5-year period from 2018/2019 to 2022/2023, to allow this interim support to continue; including retention of existing consultants and also engagement of extra support needed.
- 2.4 Existing DM (planning applications) budget, including the recently extended budget, as agreed by Cabinet on the 7th September 2021 to be used.
- 2.5 This will ensure continuity of the current consultant support in the DM team whilst permanent recruitment is undertaken, to provide continued service delivery and to meet customer demands of the service.

3. Any Alternative Options:

- 3.1 Seek framework agreements for external companies to support- this will take time to undertake and delay bringing in much needed urgent interim resource for the team.
- 3.2 Do nothing – service delivery and performance declines and impact on the wellbeing of the team due to overwhelming workloads.

(The Chair of Overview & Scrutiny as agreed that this decision be taken as a matter of urgency).

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