

Renewal of Conservation Advice to South Staffordshire Council

Cllr Ian Pritchard

Date: 13th March 2018

Agenda Item: 3

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Key Decision? YES

Local Ward None affected

Members

Lichfield
district council
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CABINET

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Lichfield District Council has provided a Conservation Service to South Staffordshire Council since April 2015 under a Service Level Agreement (SLA). The current SLA ends on 31 March 2018 and the proposal is to renew for a further 3 years (31 March 2021).
- 1.2 Both Lichfield District Council and South Staffordshire Council consider that the existing SLA and has worked well and provided benefits to both Councils. Lichfield has received income to help reduce the net cost of the service (cashable savings), and South Staffordshire Council has been provided with a professional conservation service to advise its planning team.
- 1.3 The Service is provided for one day (7.5hrs) a week, usually a Tuesday with the officer based at South Staffordshire's Codsall office. The service is provided on a full cost-recovery basis with this year's income estimated at £18,500 per annum (£55,500 over the 3 year agreement). Therefore, as income is estimated to exceed £50,000 Cabinet approval is required.
- 1.4 Over the last 3 years, the provision of this part-time service has not adversely impacted on the planned work programme or performance of the Conservation and Urban Design Team.
- 1.5 Cabinet approval is therefore sought to enter into a further SLA with South Staffordshire Council to provide a part-time conservation service to 31 March 2021.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet delegates authority to the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Development and Environment and the Head of Development Services to enter into a Service Level Agreement with South Staffordshire Council to provide a conservation service up to 31 March 2021.

3. Background

- 3.1 Since 2013 Lichfield District Council has provided part-time conservation advice to South Staffordshire Council. This advice has been formally delivered by the Conservation and Urban Design Team under a Service Level Agreement (SLA) since April 2015. The current SLA expires on 31 March 2018 and committed Lichfield District Council to provide advice one day per week on a range of planning related case-work. This advice included:
 - Comments and advice on listed building consent applications.
 - Comments and advice on planning applications that affect the character and setting of a conservation area.

- Comments and advice on planning applications affecting heritage assets, i.e. properties within or adjacent to a conservation area/locally listed buildings/buildings covered by article 4 directions.
- Pre-application advice involving all the above applications.
- Advice on cases undergoing enforcement action.
- Discharge of planning conditions.
- Provision of expert advice at appeal.
- Conservation surgeries to Council Officers to cover all the above.
- Advising on locally listed buildings and buildings at risk.
- General advice to members of the public on all matters relating to heritage assets.

- 3.2 The proposal is to renew the SLA for a further 3 years up to 31 March 2021, as both authorities acknowledge that the service is performing well and provides benefits to both Councils. Lichfield District Council generated approximately £17,300 per annum for providing the service - reducing the net cost of service delivery over the last three years. South Staffordshire Council has not employed a conservation officer since 2015, and therefore, gains access to professional conservation advice.
- 3.3 The Service is provided for one day (7.5hrs) a week, usually on a Tuesday by the Conservation and Design Officer. The officer usually works from the South Staffordshire Council Offices in Codsall, but can equally work remotely with full access to the IT systems. Cover is provided by the Principal Conservation Officer as circumstances arise. The agreement can be terminated by either Council with one year's written notice.
- 3.4 The costs of providing the service are recovered on a full cost – recovery basis. The estimated income of renewed service has increased slightly to £18,500 per annum – £55,500 over the three year term of the agreement. This cost includes professional indemnity cover; access to qualified conservation officers; management supervision and all associated on-costs. These costs will be reviewed annually through the SLA to ensure ongoing full-cost recovery. It should, however, be noted that this additional income is already built into the budgets, and therefore, should the service not be renewed, this would result in a significant a financial pressure.
- 3.5 Whilst providing the service one day per week does reduce the resource available to Lichfield District Council to fulfil its duties, this has not resulted in any adverse impacts on the team's performance or delivery of the work programme. The added resilience of having two qualified conservation and design officers – ensure the Districts built heritage is carefully monitored and managed to the benefit of those who live, work and visit the District.
- 3.6 Therefore, Cabinet approval is sought to enter into a further SLA with South Staffordshire Council to continue the provision of part-time conservation advice to 31 March 2108.

Alternative Options	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Not to renew the contract and use the resources to discharge Lichfield District Council duties. This was discounted as the team's performance has not been adversely affected by the SLA. Furthermore, failure to renew the SLA would result in a loss of income - representing a significant financial pressure. 2. To expand the service with South Staffordshire. This was discounted as South Staffordshire Council are satisfied with the current level of service provision. Furthermore, any expansion on behalf of Lichfield District Council may impact on the team's capacity to deliver the current work programme.
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Consultation	1. Discussions have taken place between the relevant Heads of Service for Lichfield District Council and South Staffordshire Council and relevant officers. Both Council's consider that the agreement is working well.
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Financial Implications

1. The income from the SLA contributes to the cost of the Conservation and Urban Design Service. Renewal of the SLA will ensure ongoing annual savings will continue to be delivered.

The budgetary impact is identified in the table below.

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Approved Budget	17,300	17,300	17,300	17,300
Proposed Budget	18,500	18,500	18,500	18,500
Savings	(1,200)	(1,200)	(1,200)	(1,200)

Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	1. Securing additional income through providing services to neighbouring authorities reduces the net cost of the service and demonstrates good value for money – ensuring a Council that is fit for the future.
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Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	1. None.
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Crime & Safety Issues	1. None.
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	Risk Description	How We Manage It	Severity of Risk (RYG)
A	Failure to renew the agreement with South Staffordshire Council – loss of income.	Regular review meetings to ensure both parties are satisfied with the implementation of the SLA.	Yellow. The loss of income would be a significant financial pressure.
B	Insufficient resources to deliver the requirements of the SLA.	Ensure sufficient cover is in place to fulfil the requirements of the SLA.	Yellow. The Council would be at risk of service failure.

Background documents: Service Level Agreement with South Staffordshire Council – Provision of Conservation Services 1 April 2015 – 31 March 2018.

Relevant web links: None.
