

Development Management Staffing

Planning Policy Committee – 22 September 2022

Report of: Interim Chief Planning Officer

Purpose: For decision.

Publication status: Unrestricted.

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

- The staffing of the Development Management function in the Planning Department has occupied a significant amount of Committee and Officer time for more than 12 months being key to the delivery of improvements in the function.
- There has, in the interim, been a reliance on temporary staff to keep Development Management functioning but as the following Budget Report in these Committee papers shows this is not a financially sustainable option going forward.
- The Committee accepted a permanent officer Development Management staffing structure with the report to the 25th November 2021 meeting as part of the Planning Transformation process.
- Since then, Officers in Planning Department, Human Resources (HR) and Finance have worked together to put a staffing structure in place but have, in the process, identified amended opportunities to recruit permanent staff who will have a commitment to delivering a quality Development Management service going forward and have capabilities and competencies the Council can draw upon.

This report supports the Council's priority of: Building a better Council and creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need, supporting economic recovery in Tandridge and becoming a greener, more sustainable District.

Contact officer Cliff Thurlow: cthurlow@tandridge.gov.uk

Recommendation to Committee:

The revised Development Management structure for the Planning Department in Appendix 2 below be approved and implemented to deliver ongoing resilience and improvement to the service.

Reason for recommendation:

Introduction and background:

1. The opportunity has arisen to move the Development Management team to being all full-time Council employees.
2. The Planning Transformation staff structure included 3 Senior Planning Officers and 3 Planning Officers (see Appendix 1).
3. The opportunity that has arisen is to move the staff structure to 4 full-time Senior Planning Officers and 2 full-time Planning Officers (see Appendix 2) which it is considered will deliver ongoing resilience and improvement to this Council service.
4. The cost of an additional Senior Planning Officer will be offset by reducing the number of Planning Officers from 3 to 2 and from not filling the apprentice post in the previously approved Planning Transformation staff structure.
5. The apprentice post was advertised and attracted limited interest and the job offer was not accepted and subsequently withdrawn.
6. There is currently a vacancy for 1 Planning Officer post which has been advertised and an interview held and HR are following through a potential job offer.

Other options considered

None available that offer proven financial savings and deliver ongoing resilience in the Development Management function.

Consultation

Internal consultation within Council service areas.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

The Q1 2022/23 Planning Policy Committee Financial Monitoring Report presented separately on this agenda shows a £124k overspend. The part year effect of proposals in this Committee Report will reduce the 2022/23 overspend by £24k, so this is a positive step forward to add to the general position. An update on the overall position for Planning Policy committee will be provided on a quarterly basis.

Preparations for the 2023/24 budget are in progress and will need to draw in the medium-term impact of this structure. The move towards sustainable, permanent staffing is positive and will reduce the reliance on more expensive temporary or interim staff.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. However, as a statutory service the proposals, if accepted, would assist the Council in meeting its obligations as local planning authority under the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended) and defending any planning appeals related to decisions made.

Comments of the Head of Human Resources

Human Resources will partner with the service to ensure restructure timescales are followed in line with employment legislation.

Any relevant documentation in terms of equality impact will be provided to the service to ensure a full analysis of impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

Equality

The matters dealt with in this report have provided for equality of opportunity in the process of identifying suitable full-time Council employees.

Climate change

The recruitment of new staff with competencies in terms of climate change issues will enhance the Council's ability to address these important issues going forward.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Planning Transformation staff structure as at November 2021

Appendix 2: Alternative and now proposed staff structure

Background papers

None.