



## Council 23 September 2014

### Exercise of Chief Executive's Urgency Powers: Planning Shared Service Additional Resource Requirements

#### 1. Reason for use of Chief Executive's Urgency Powers

##### 1.1 Increased demand in the Planning Service

- 1.1.1 The Planning team have experienced a significant upturn in applications and income over the last 24 months, as demonstrated by Table 1 below.

**Table 1 – income *in excess* of budgeted income**

	<b>FHDC (£000s)</b>	<b>SEBC (£000s)</b>	<b>Combined (£000s)</b>
2011/12	(58)	101	43
2012/13	18	211	230
2013/14	185	359	544
2014/15 (projected*)	85	208	293

\* The *projected* income in excess of budget in 2014/15 is *AFTER* the budget has been increased by **£100k** in FHDC and **£150k** in SEBC. Although it is too early to say, it appears that income is therefore stabilising at c. £300k in excess of the 14/15 budgeted income. This income is before any appeal costs, which could be funded from general fund if necessary.

- 1.1.2 In order to respond to this increase in activity, it is proposed to **CREATE** two new posts in planning, to be funded by extra income:

<b>Posts to CREATE</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cost (£000s)</b>
Senior Planner	F	45
Planner	E	35

- 1.1.3 It is also proposed to **RETAIN** two posts which had been planned to be cut from the service as part of the approved shared service business case, as set out below.

- 1.1.4 There are currently two Place Shaping Manager posts, and one was to be cut after the shared service had been in operation for two years. However, it is clear that with the amount of strategic sites both authorities are dealing with, and the aspiration of both councils for continued growth, we need to retain both

posts (although one focus on the Local Plan for both councils and the other will focus on Major sites and growth).

- 1.1.5 Land Charges had been a service that was planned to move to Customer Services, but the government has now set out a national plan to move all land charges to a central nationwide agency – therefore it is not sensible to transfer the service to Customer Services currently, and the post should be retained until the national changes have been implemented.

<b>Posts to RETAIN</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cost (£000s)</b>
Place Shaping Manager	I	65
Land Charges Assistant	D	25

## **1.2 Planning Enforcement**

- 1.2.1 As part of the restructure of the planning service, June 2012, the opportunity was taken to amalgamate the roles of dealing with planning applications and enforcement of the planning regulations.
- 1.2.2 This was not an uncommon change across local authorities in the way enforcement was dealt with. The recession clearly impacted on the Planning Department workloads and the coalition government’s drive to streamline the planning process presented an opportunity to reduce the establishment as well as looking at new ways of working.
- 1.2.3 As set out above, the upturn in the local economy has increased activity back to those experienced before the recession. Planning legislation and processes have also changed and while expecting these changes to reduce work loads, have actually increased them.
- 1.2.4 These new demands have had a major impact on the service’s ability to cope with the generic role while maintaining the same level of staff. Inevitably, planning applications take priority – not least because there are government performance indicators setting out response times (through Key Performance Indicators), and this has been at the expense of enforcement.
- 1.2.5 It is therefore suggested we re-establish a dedicated Enforcement Team. This has the benefit of releasing capacity so that the Development Managers can focus on dealing with planning application cases and appropriate resources to deliver better enforcement of the planning regulations. The team will consist of the following posts:

<b>Posts to CREATE</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Cost (£000s)</b>
Senior Planning Enforcement Officer	F	45
Enforcement Officer	E	35

## **1.3 Summary**

- 1.3.1 In order to respond to the increase in demand for the planning service, and to improve the ability to provide an enforcement service it is proposed to **create 4 new posts** and **retain 2 posts** which were planned to be cut. The costs of

these posts will be covered by income from both councils, which (looking at the trend over the last four years) is secure income. However, demand in this type of service fluctuates and should income drop, the service will be reviewed to reduce cost accordingly.

- 1.3.2 The total cost of creating/retaining the posts is £250k and income is projected to be above budget by £293k.

## 2 Exercise of Urgency Powers

2.1 The next full council meeting was not until 23 September 2014. If we had waited for approval before creating these new posts, recruitment could not have commenced until mid-October, and it would have been unlikely that staff would have been appointed and working at full capacity until at least January 2015. The service would have suffered immensely by waiting this long.

2.2 Therefore, on 24 July 2014 and in accordance with the provisions made in paragraph (C)(a) of the Scheme of Delegation, contained in Part 3, Responsibility for Functions of the Council's Constitution, the Chief Executive exercised his urgency powers to approve the creation of extra capacity in the Planning Service as detailed in this report.

## 3. Recommendation

- 3.1 Council is asked to **NOTE** the content of this report.

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