

**NORTH DEVON COUNCIL/MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the BUILDING CONTROL JOINT COMMITTEE held at Woodlands Enterprise Centre, Pathfields Business Park, South Molton on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Representing North Devon Council

Councillors Brailey (Chair) and Yabsley.

Representing Mid Devon District Council

Councillors Chesterton and Eginton.

Officers:

North Devon Council

Chief Executive (MM), Head of Resources (JT), Building Control Manager (MT), Assistant Solicitor (SF) and Senior Corporate and Community Services Officer (BT).

Mid Devon District Council

Director of Finance, Assets and Resources (AJ).

**1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN 2017/18**

RESOLVED that Councillor Brailey be appointed Chairman of the Joint Committee for a period of one year from date of appointment.

**2 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN 2017/18**

RESOLVED that Councillor Chesterton be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee for a period of one year from date of appointment.

**3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence received.

**4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Yabsley declared a personal interest as a Member of Devon County Council.

## **5 PURPOSE OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Assistant Solicitor outlined the functions of the Joint Committee as set out in the Joint Committee's constitution dated 6<sup>th</sup> July 2017. The Joint Committee was responsible for the building control function and such other function, which had been agreed between the Partner Authorities, should become a shared service. The Joint Committee shall act as the ultimate arbiter in the case of unresolved disputes between the Partner Authorities unless such matters were referred to arbitration. In respect of the Shared Services for building control, the Joint Committee was responsible for overseeing the joint building control team; and formulating the budget, including any fees and charges, for the joint building control team as a recommendation for each Partner Authority to approve. All other matters were reserved to partner authorities.

## **6 BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS UPDATE**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Building Control Manager (circulated previously) regarding an update on progress of the Building Control partnership which started trading on 1 April 2017.

The Building Control Manager updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- Systems implementation – the systems implementation was due to go live with the combined and updated Building Control administrative system on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. However this had been delayed due to a failure of the data load as issues had been identified between the old and new system. The system went live without undertaking further testing of fixes which resulted in the live data load failing completely causing a further weeks delay. When the live data was loaded the pre go-live test showed that many of the data fixes had not been successful. The inefficiencies were exasperated by the failure to deliver an effective link to the North Devon systems for a further month and the inevitable learning curve as staff mastered the new system. During this period, the finance team at North Devon Council provided assistance by taking payments.
- Staff – there had been a number of staffing issues during the implementation period, with a temporary member of staff proving to be unsuitable and a permanent administrator resigning. It was not practical to bring new staff in during this period due to the training input required. A member of the Technical Support Team also resigned. A full-time administrator and Principal Surveyor had now been successfully recruited.
- Performance – as a result of the issues associated with the systems implementation and loss of staff the service had failed to meet the key performance indicators during the first two quarters of 2017/18 which had caused some reputational damage. The speed of response had dropped from 10 to 20 days. This has resulted in a potential 1% loss of the market share. However, significant time had been invested to talk with key customers to maintain good working relationships. There had

been a lesser impact on the Mid Devon Council area. The service was on target to return to meeting targets in the third quarter. No formal complaints had been received during this period.

## **7 BUILDING CONTROL SERVICE PLAN**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Building Control Manager (circulated previously) regarding the adoption of a joint Building Control service plan.

The Building Control Manager updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- The Joint Building Control service plan had been presented to Mid Devon Senior Management Team.
- The service now needed a period of stabilisation to ensure that key performance indicators were met and to make it an excellent service.
- Marketing would become more structured. Previously agents had been targeted, however this approach would now be broadened to ensure that more formal approaches were made. This would be undertaken by the Building Control Manager and the new Principal Surveyor.
- The service organised continuous professional development training opportunities for agents. These sessions were also used as informal networking opportunities. It was proposed that these training opportunities would continue to be provided.
- Digital working practices would be developed further. Implementation of the mobile inspection app and iApply web submission platform was scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017.

The Joint Committee suggested holding either a joint or separate Building Control forums in each area with agents.

RESOLVED that the proposed Building Control Service Plan be adopted.

## **8 POOLED BUDGET AND TRADING ACCOUNT AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2017**

The Joint Committee received an update by the Head of Resources in relation to the Building Control Partnership Trading Account as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017. A copy of the trading account was tabled.

The Head of Resources advised the Joint Committee that the trading account had been broken down into five areas and outlined each area:

- 1 – detailed the individual budgets approved by both Mid Devon District and North Devon Councils for 2017/18 for the Building Control service.
- 2 – detailed the actual costs and income for both Mid Devon District and North Devon Councils for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017. Building Control employees were accountable to each local authority. North Devon Council received all income for the

joint service; however, it was coded separately to each Local Authority. Income had been split 60/40 to North Devon and Mid Devon District Councils respectively which was in line with the budget and expenditure.

- 3 – detailed expenditure and income split between both Councils.
- 4 – detailed the chargeable and non-chargeable expenditure and income for North Devon Council.
- 5 – detailed the chargeable and non-chargeable expenditure and income for Mid Devon District Council.
- At the end of the financial year, if the trading account demonstrated a surplus, both Councils would need to make a decision regarding whether to ring fence the surplus and place in a separate reserve.
- The Joint Committee would need to consider setting fees and charges at its next meeting.
- A process needed to be put in place regarding the transferring of funds and income over to Mid Devon District Council.
- Currently central recharges assumed 50% of budgeted recharges, however this may decrease as the service became less reliant on central support services.
- If work was undertaken outside of both Councils areas, then a separate element would be shown on the trading account.

In response to a question, the Building Control Manager advised that the service had previously sent out letters to applicants following the approval of planning permission to advise of the Building Control service. This had temporarily stopped due to the lack of resources, however would now be recommenced for both Councils.

## **9 EARLY IMPACTS OF GRENFELL TOWER FIRE**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Building Control Manager (circulated previously) regarding the early impacts resulting from the Grenfell Tower Fire and actions being taken within the Building Control service to limit the impact of the Public Enquiry.

The Building Control Manager updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- The biggest impact on the service in 2018/19 would be the fallout from the Grenfell Tower fire and the public enquiry into Building Regulations and Fire Safety.
- It was already clear that the current situation where Local Authorities effectively have autonomy over their Building Control service was unlikely to continue.
- In order to respond to criticisms regarding oversight and national consistence the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Ltd were introducing a performance standards framework backed up by an audit regime and had requested all Local Authorities to sign up to this. This would ensure a uniform approach to quality and standards of service

provision and enable benchmarking of the service against other comparable providers.

- Approved Inspectors were required to renew their licence every five years.

RESOLVED that the Building Control Service adopt the national LABC Quality Assurance Policy and register for accreditation to ISO9000:2015 with Alcumus ISOQAR.

## **10 BUILDING CONTROL KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Building Control Manager (circulated previously) regarding the Building Control Key Performance Indicators.

The Building Control Manager updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- The proposed number of key performance indicators had been reduced to six. The single set of indicators were required to ensure that there was a common basis for review of performance for both partners.
- The introduction of the iApply web submission platform would have no impact on the proposed performance indicator number one; however the time taken for the registration process would reduce.

RESOLVED that the proposed key performance indicators as detailed in the report be approved.

## **11 SENIOR TECHNICAL SUPPORT OFFICER POST**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Building Control Manager (circulated previously) regarding a business case for creating a post for a Senior Technical Support Officer.

The Building Control Manager updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- The Building Control Technical Support team was made up of 2.6 full time equivalent posts. The role covered a wide range of support activities. These activities were split over two sites creating a clear need for coordination and supervision of these activities.
- Currently this role was carried out by the Building Control Manager but increasingly one of the existing Technical Support Team was taking the lead.
- By creating the Senior Technical Support Officer post would release the Building Control Manager to concentrate on the development and marketing of the service rather than the day to day administrative support.
- The position would need to be advertised and would be ring-fenced to the Building Control service team only.

In making a resolution on this item, the Joint Committee took into account the fact that the power to create this post was reserved to the delegated authority of the Head of Paid Service at Mid Devon District Council.

RESOLVED that the reorganisation of the Technical Support team to create a senior post based at Woodlands Enterprise Centre be approved.

**12**                    **DATES AND LOCATIONS OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

It was noted that in accordance with the Joint Committee's constitution that the Joint Committee must meet at least on a quarterly basis with the meeting held at 10.00 a.m. and at the offices of the Chairman's partner authority.

RESOLVED that a meeting be arranged during early February 2018 at Woodlands Enterprise Centre and that the Senior Corporate and Community Services Officer contact Members and Officers of the Joint Committee to check availability.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 11.24 a.m.

**NOTE:** These minutes will be confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting of the Committee.