

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 8th February 2018 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), Principal Surveyor (AH), Solicitor (SF) and Senior Corporate and Community Services Officer (BT).

Mid Devon District Council

Head of Planning, Economy and Regeneration (JC) and Accountants (AB and JP Mc).

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence received.

14 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd November 2017 (circulated previously) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

16 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

The Building Control Manager updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- Building Regulation Full Plan applications determined in 2 months – the performance indicator had now reached 96% for quarter 3.

- Building Regulation Applications examined within 3 weeks – the performance indicator had now reached 98%.
- Market share number of applications – the performance indicator had continued to drop for quarter 3. The market share had dropped due to a number of service failures that had occurred following the relocation of offices and at the same time competitors marketing in the area. These issues had been reported to the Joint committee meeting on 23rd November 2017. However in January there appears to be indications of a recovery with the market share returning to 78%.
- Market share for new housing completions had dropped significantly to 32% which was below target. It was believed that a contributing factor was a push for completions prior to Christmas on larger housing projects serviced by NHBC Building Control. Building Control secured an agreement with developers prior to the commencement of the development.
- Planning Forum – the Building Control Manager would be attending the next meeting of the Planning Forum to promote the services of the team.

17 POOLED BUDGET AND TRADING ACCOUNT AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2017

The Joint Committee received an updated by the Head of Resources in relation to the Pooled Budget and Building Control Trading Account as at 31st December 2017 (circulated previously).

The Head of Resources updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- The comparisons between the 6 month trading account (as reported at the last Joint Committee) and the 9 month trading account for 2017/18.
- The individual budgets approved by both Mid Devon District and North Devon Councils for 2017/18 for the Building Control service were respectively split 55% (North Devon) and 45% (Mid Devon). In quarter 2 this had been changed to a 60/40 split respectively based on actual income performance.
- The individual authority's actual costs and income for the 9 months trading was £63,000 and it was anticipated that the costs for the full year would be £80,000 compared to the budget of £72,000. There would be a reduction in the central support cost as the team had relocated from Brynsworthy Environment Centre. These savings would be incorporated within the trading account for quarter 4.
- The total income received for Mid Devon District Council was slightly lower than expected. Based upon the Building Control income, costs were split 60%/40% across the respective Councils.
- As part of the agreement between the two Councils, no authority would gain financially at the loss of the other authority at the end of the financial year.
- Costs for chargeable and non-chargeable functions for each authority. A decision would need to be made in relation to any surplus and

whether it should be ring fenced into reserves or used to offset costs for both authorities.

The Building Control Manager advised that the income was lower in quarter 3 as fewer applications had been received, however 108 applications had been received in January 2019. Although there had been an increase in the number of applications received, the workloads were balanced between both authorities.

The Joint Committee agreed that a revised trading account to include January 2018 figures be produced and it be circulated to Members for information.

18 BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS UPDATE

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Building Control Manager (circulated previously) regarding an update on the progress of the Building Control Partnership.

The Building Control Manager updated the Joint Committee as follows:

- The two vacant posts for the Technical Support Officer and Principal Surveyor had now been filled and the team was now fully staffed.
- Building Control had volunteered and had been accepted for the pilot phase of the roll-out of the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Quality Assurance scheme. The scheme had been introduced following the Grenfell Tower fire and the public enquiry into Building Regulations and Fire Safety. Only 50 Local Authorities had been accepted as part of the pilot and all Local Authorities would be required to sign up to following the pilot. The scheme would ensure a uniform approach to quality and standards of service provision. The LABC had produced quality assurance policy, manual and procedures. All Local Authorities would be required to adopt these policies and procedures to achieve the ISO9000. This would require intense input over the next couple of months to prepare for the three day external audit to be undertaken by ISOQAR. This also had implications for the I.T. team in terms of providing reporting information. 15 Local Authorities would be audited and all would need to pass to enable all 50 Local Authorities within the pilot to become accredited. The scheme would also include the implementation of a competency framework for all levels of building surveyors. North Devon Council's Building Control team had been ISO9000 accredited until November 2017 with another organisation.
- The web portal submission platform iApply was now live and would improve efficiency when widely adopted by customers. The mobile inspection app was still not rolled out due to an issue regarding exporting appointments made on the Uniform system to Outlook. A potential solution had now been identified and would be tested.
- In relation to marketing, Building Control's social media profile on Facebook and Twitter was being developed. Planning lists were now being considered to direct mail details of the service to potential clients. Customers would be contacted to obtain an opt in to the marketing

database in order to comply with the GDPR regulations. A presentation would be given at the Planning Forum in Mid Devon and in North Devon to promote the service. A CPD presentation was scheduled regarding fire safety in flats for architectural agents. The Building Control Manager and Principal Surveyor would be attending the LABC South West region marketing conference.

19 FEE CHANGES FOR 2018/19

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Building Control Manager (circulated previously) regarding proposed fee changes for 2018/19.

The Head of Resources confirmed that the North Devon Council's Executive and Mid Devon District Council's Cabinet Committee had considered and recommended the approval of the Building Control fees for 2018/19.

The Building Control Manager advised that North Devon Council had not increased its building control fees since 2013 and Mid Devon District Council had increased its fees in 2015 previously to synchronise with North Devon Council. The overall fee structure of the fees remained relevant but the levels need to be increased due to inflation and to ensure that the service continues to be self-funding and break even. It was anticipated that the full financial benefits of joining the two services together would be achieved in approximately 12 months' time.

RECOMMENDED that North Devon Council and Mid Devon District Council be recommended to:

- (a) Increase the Building Control fees for 2018/19 by approximately 3% as detailed in the proposed fee schedule in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (b) That the change in fees for 2018/19 be introduced on 1st April 2018 after advertising the change on the website for one month.

20 DATES AND LOCATIONS OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED that a meeting be arranged during early June 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 10.46 a.m.

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

NOTE: The above decisions shall not take effect until the five clear working days have elapsed from the date of publication: 13th February 2018.