

NOTE TO: JOINT SERVICES COMMITTEE

DATE: 11/02/2021

TOPIC: BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS UPDATE

REPORT BY: MIKE TUCKER (BUILDING CONTROL MANAGER)

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members regarding the progress of the partnership and contains no recommendations.

2 REPORT

2.1 Staff

- 2.1.1 Our trainee Building Control Surveyor continues to have strong reviews from the course tutors.
- 2.1.2 One of our Technical Support Team has commenced a Level 3 qualification in Building Control administration and has also registered for Systems administration Training with iDox our software supplier in order to ensure that we have an internal succession plan for the Team Leader Role
- 2.1.3 We are currently experiencing some resourcing issues with two Surveyors having to take sick leave for longer than average periods. Unfortunately one of these is due to a severe case of Covid-19. As the Surveyor has been working from home throughout the pandemic there has been no risk of spread to colleagues.
- 2.1.4 With a Principle and Senior Surveyor currently shielding due to vulnerable health issues this has left us with only one Senior Surveyor able to carry out inspections in the field. As a result I have been carrying out site inspections myself to provide adequate cover and delegating other tasks to our Principle Surveyor who is shielding. A down turn of the number of inspections requested in January has ensured this approach is manageable
- 2.1.5 One of our Technical Support Team commences maternity leave on 11 March 2021 and the Technical Support Team Leader is due to retire in September. It is therefore critical that we bring in a temporary staff member to assist with cover. However, due to the extensive training required in the role we hope that the temporary cover will become the permanent replacement.
- 2.1.6 Michael Tichford Head of Place for North Devon and member of the Building Control Partnership Panel left North Devon Council on 31 January 2021 and at the time of writing we have not been made aware of interim plans for management reporting.

2.2 Legislation

- 2.2.1 The publication of the following revised Approved Documents has been delayed,
 - F - Ventilation, and
 - L - Conservation of fuel and power.

- 2.2.2 Publication now expected around April 2021 to enable the impact of responses to the Future Homes Consultation to be fully considered. This could provide an opportunity to provide update training to our customers as a tool to further promote the service.
- 2.2.3 Approved Document B Fire safety now under major review with a number of work strands ensuring a research based approach to the changes expected by 2024.

2.3 LABC

- 2.3.1 LABC are carrying out a review of the partnership scheme. The scheme allows Local Authorities to work beyond the geographic boundaries of their area. Normally this involves the design approval of applications with the inspections being carried out by the “host” Local Authority. However, it also facilitates cross border inspections with the agreement of both Authorities.
- 2.3.2 The review has become necessary due to a variety of bad practice and attempts by some Authorities to compete with their neighbours rather than working collaboratively to meet the needs of the customer.
- 2.3.3 The future scope of the scheme is therefore likely to be more restricted and more clearly targeted at regional and national developers such as our own partnership with Devonshire Homes.

2.4 Enforcement Case

- 2.4.1 We prepared for enforcement proceedings against a supplier of domestic platform lifts. A lift was fitted in a residential dwelling between a garage and first floor.
- 2.4.2 Despite having been repeatedly approved by their Partner Local Authority it was evident when inspecting on site that there was no effective fire separation that is required for a garage.
- 2.4.3 The company initially provided summary test reports purporting to show adequate fire resistance and refused to provide the full reports claiming confidential intellectual property. However, we eventually obtained the full reports after threatening prosecution for contravention of Regulation 16. On receipt of the full report it was clear that the results had been misrepresented and the company subsequently upgraded the installation enclosing the lift in fire resisting construction.
- 2.4.4 We did not proceed with prosecution because the work was rectified to a good standard and the Magistrates Courts are currently effectively dysfunctional. However, we did raise the issue with the Partner Authority and nationally with the LABC Technical Director in an effort to ensure that this is not repeated in the future elsewhere.