



NOTE TO: JOINT SERVICES COMMITTEE

DATE: 07/07/2022

TOPIC: BUILDING CONTROL BUSINESS UPDATE

**REPORT BY: PRINCIPLE BUILDING SURVEYOR FOR NORTH DEVON
 COUNCIL**

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 Key Performance Indicators & Market Share

At the time of writing the KPI activity reports were not available to publish and are not included in this report content. Once they are available a copy will be provided for circulation in time for the Committee meeting.

Due to our depleted resource it is evident from the information that is currently available our capacity to maintain our plan checking times is diminishing with response times slipping from an average of 7 to 10 days for April and May.

While not critical at this time, the figures represent the significant efforts staff are currently making with limited resources and it should be noted this level of performance in the allocated time cannot be realistically expected to continue.

Also this period is prior to validation training commencing and the spike in applications being received. Therefore it is anticipated the response time will slip further as a direct result of our resource shortage, the validation training requirements, holiday cover, as well as the spike in workload due to the applications received that are taking advantage of the transitional arrangements for the changes in the Building Regulations.

Clearly if this anticipated trend in reduced performance continues it is likely to have a detrimental effect on our market share and income.

The graphs for the remaining activity reports for April and May have been attached as an appendix to this report, they indicate a strong performance in relation to number of applications received and income for the first two months

of this quarter. While encouraging, the high volume of activity around applications only compounds the current difficulties we face with our current resourcing issues.

It is anticipated the final application numbers and income figures for June 2022 are going to be very strong. This is because the date for depositing applications to take advantage of transitional provisions to the changes in the building regulations was 15th June 2022.

2.2 Financial Position

To be reported by finance.

2.3 Workload

Given the current vacant posts and increased volumes of work, individual work load remains high. In addition, the validation training has commenced and we are now approaching the holiday season.

With increased demand for the service, covering colleagues while they study and or are away on annual leave with a reduced workforce is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve.

This is now having a significant impact on our ability to deliver the service and these pressures are directly impacting on our ability to quote for work, undertake site inspections and plan examination at the appropriate time.

As reported at the last Committee Meeting, the 15th June 2022 was the deadline for submitting applications to take advantage of the transitional provisions for the changes in the Building Regulations.

As anticipated, we have received a significant volume of applications in the first two weeks of June 2022.

Our Technical Support Staff reported receiving and processing payments for 60 applications in two working weeks. The income from the deposit of these applications was in the region of 80K.

At the time of writing the report the volume of work is hard to explain and quantify as the figures aren't quite as representative of the situation and will not be until we are through to the end of June. Once we are at the end of June we will have a complete picture that really shows the volume increase and strain on the team that is still to come.

Our Technical Support staff will now be under pressure to process these applications and put the application documentation on the system in a timely manner.

This process is time path critical so that the Surveying staff can undertake plan examination on the applications in the required time frame to avoid having to return fees and default approve applications if they are not processed in the correct time scales.

2.4 Staffing

The vacant Building Control Managers post has not yet been re-advertised.

The delay in this appointment continues to place significant pressure on the remaining members of the building control management team and in turn the rest of the team.

Additional 20 hour Technical Support Staff has not been re-advertised and it is anticipated this post will be reviewed again once the new Building Control Manager is in post.

Having completed their notice period a member of staff has now left the Partnership.

The vacant Principal Surveyors post he has vacated has yet to be advertised.

The Senior Surveyor who returned from his long term absence remains on light duties under supervision of the Director of Place, Mid Devon District Council.

The Building Control trainee with the support of North Devon HR is in the process of applying for a place on the distance learning Building Control Surveying Degree at Wolverhampton University. This training and qualification will be funded by the training leave.

Morale remains very low amongst staff and this continues to relate to the uncertainty around vacant posts being advertised, lack of structure, additional workload and the pressure the validation training is having on individuals and the wider team.

2.5 Short Term Measures, Structure, Recruitment & Retention

At the time of writing Senior Management from both authorities have just agreed to the use of temporary contractor Building Control Surveyors to provide some of the cover required.

74K has been made available for to provide cover for the validation training.

It is planned to seek two agency surveyors to provide cover for the summer and autumn months.

The vacant leadership gaps left by the departing Manager and Principle Surveyor leave the Partnership vulnerable. There continues to be a lack of formal recognised structure and lines of responsibility. Discussions are continuing with regard to formalising a temporary structure so that individuals remain adequately supported and work load is monitored sufficiently.

In light of the lack of a formal temporary structure discussions are continuing with regard to honorarium payments being provided in recognition of five team members who have had to temporarily to step up in an adhoc manner.

In addition, discussions are continuing with regard resourcing the spike in workload due to the regulation changes and how best to re-numerate staff for the additional hours they are working beyond the core 37 hours.

2.6 Threats to the Partnership Resourcing

Due to the current situation with ourselves and local market conditions, surveying staff being attracted to offers from other LA Building Control Teams in the South West, where salaries and conditions are more favourable.

Adjoining LA Building Control Authorities are offering better basic pay, terms and conditions, a 3K market supplement and the promise of a pay review.

Surveyors are also being directly approached by a local branch of an Approved Inspector looking to fill their vacant post as the vacant Managers post at Torridge has been filled by one of their employees.

2.7 Building Safety Regulator

Validation training has commenced.

The requirements and expectations of the courses are more onerous than had initially been advised. Each cohort is 11 weeks with one full days training on a working week day, which falls on a Wednesday for Enforcement and Friday for Fire Safety. Each cohort requires 200 hours learning time within the 11 week period with a deadline assignment set at the end of each Cohort.

2.8 Approved Document F, L and Introduction of Approved Document S

The revisions to the building regulations are now in place and applications received after the 15th June 2022 will be required to comply with the revised Approved Documents F and L and the newly introduced Approved Documents O and S for Overheating and Electric car charging points.

The new thermal standards are onerous and represent a 20-30 percent uplift on the 2013 requirements. The documents are difficult to summarise but the table below gives an indication of how the uplift has impacted the minimum standards for the thermal performance of a domestic extension.

2013 U-Values for Individual Thermal Elements	2022 U-Values for Individual Thermal Elements
0.28 Wall	0.18 Wall
0.18 Roof	0.15 Roof
0.22 Floor	0.18 Floor
1.60 Windows	1.60 Windows