



North Devon Council

Report to: Strategy & Resources

Report Date: 9th January, 2023

Topic: NMD Building Control

Report by: Jeremy Mann; Head of Planning, Housing & Health

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. NMD Building Control is a partnership between North Devon and Mid Devon District Councils.
- 1.2. This report is to present proposals to address the current workforce deficit in Building Control and attend to the current unsustainable use of agency staff.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Building Control fees are increased by 8% with immediate effect, subject to there being no adverse representations received following the notice of intention to make this change.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To re-establish a sustainable workforce for the Building Control service, i.e., an environment which supports our existing/new employees and meets the Council's business needs.

4. REPORT

- 4.1. Since September 2022, the service has seen the following departures:

Building Control Surveyor	Retired
Building Control Manager	Retired
Principal Building Control Surveyor	Moved to Private Sector BC
Building Control Surveyor	Moved to adjoining LABC
Senior Building Control Surveyor	Moved to Private Sector BC
Building Control Surveyor	Moved to Private Sector BC
Tech. Team Leader	Move to non-BC employment
Senior Surveyor	Contract ended due to ill health

- 4.2 The impact of this has been significant, refer to Appendix A, the approved complement of the service.
- 4.3 Service delivery is now being sustained by the use of expensive agency staff. This situation is not unique as recruitment and retention issues are widespread, due to a national shortage of staff, workforce age demographics and competition from the external market.
- 4.4 The current salary levels and benefits' package is, however, considered to be a contributing factor in the service's inability to retain and attract staff.
- 4.5 Current surveyor salaries need to be enhanced to be competitive. The Building Control Manager's post was re-advertised at an enhanced rate in August, but failed to attract a single candidate to interview.
- 4.6 Officers wish to minimise both the cost and reputational damage associated with further market engagement/failed recruitment exercises, which could also result in a loss of market share. It is understandable that the uncertainty associated with key vacant posts and the rise in the cost of living has led more employees to seek to improve their personal financial position.
- 4.7 Notwithstanding the use of agency staff, their high cost means the service is continuing to function at under-capacity. NMD customers value the efficiency and continuity of service provided by familiar professionals and it is unlikely they will tolerate the current situation beyond the short term. The work of the remaining team in securing a market share of local business >75% (40% for housing) at this time is, however, extremely impressive.
- 4.8 Fortunately, the chargeable functions of the service provide opportunity to fund market supplements which could be used to both retain and attract new staff to fill the vacant posts.
- 4.9 Both Councils' policies allow for the use of market supplements of up to 10% of basic (12 months and then to be reviewed, and the provision of relocation packages).
- 4.10 Senior responsible officers for the partnership have met with the Operational Manager and finance colleagues from both Councils.
- 4.11 A market supplement of 10% of basic for the surveyor positions could be accommodated by an 8% increase in fees.
- 4.12 A specialist recruitment agency is also being engaged to recruit to the Building Control Manager position.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The cost of all surveyors receiving a 10% supplement is £47,000. This requires an overall income for the partnership of £662,255, which can be secured through an 8% increase in fees.
- 5.2 The current level of Building Control fees for 2022/23 can be found at; [Fees and Charges Appendix B \(northdevon.gov.uk\)](#)

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 This report has a neutral impact on the characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There is no environmental impact associated with this report.

8. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 8.1 The Building Control Service supports numerous corporate priorities, including the provision of new housing and supporting economic growth.
- 8.2 Early this year the service adopted enhanced regulatory responsibility for home energy efficiency.

9. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

- 9.1. Article of Part 3 Annex 1 paragraph: 1(d) and (g)
- 9.2 Referred or delegated power? Delegated

10. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The 2022/23 Building Control Partnership Trading Account August 2022, which is available at:

<https://democracy.northdevon.gov.uk/documents/s21277/2022-23%20Building%20Control%20Partnership%20Trading%20Account%20August.pdf>

12. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

NDC SMT, 31st October, 2022.
Simon Fuller.