

**NOTE TO: JOINT SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 14/02/2019**

**TOPIC: REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIP**

**REPORT BY: MIKE TUCKER (BUILDING CONTROL MANAGER)**

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of this note is to update members with regard to progress against the original objectives that formed the rationale for the partnership and contains no recommendations.

## **2 REPORT**

### **2.1 Service vision**

The business case for the partnership identified the core vision as *“to provide a Building Control Service that helps our customers to meet the requirements of the Building Regulations in a manner that is user friendly whilst ensuring that the activities open to competition are competitively priced and delivered efficiently without cost to the Local Authority”*.

### **2.2 Benefits of joint working**

Anticipated benefits of joint working in order to achieve this vision were identified as,

- Business resilience
- Updating systems
- Shared investment
- Marketing
- Cost reduction
- Skills and training

### **2.3 Objectives**

In order to deliver these benefits the following objectives were considered key,

- **Maximise efficiency by minimising costs whilst maintaining customer satisfaction with the service**

The combined Building Control budget prior to the formation of the partnership for both NDC and MDDC in 2016/17 was £731,750.00. If this had increase 3% pa the budget for 2019/2020 would have been £799,602.00. The actual proposed budget for 2019/20 has been set at £733,660.00 indicating that the partnership has increased efficiency and minimised costs delivering a saving of approximately £65,942.00 pa.

Current market share and feedback from customers indicates that customer satisfaction has been maintained or enhanced.

- **Enable digital transactions with clients without making internal procedures inefficient**

The instruction of the current ICT systems has greatly increased the efficiency of dealing with customers in digital formats enabling a choice of submission portals via iApply and the Planning Portal and the facility for on-line payments at the time of submission of applications.

As a result the vast majority of information is now submitted digitally and combined with the mobile inspection apps has delivered efficiencies to the Surveyors. This can be seen in the ability to replace a senior Surveyor with a trainee. Confidence in the system has also enabled us to become completely paperless with no hard copy files now being used.

- **Provide accurate data to ensure pricing policies are competitive and meet costs incurred on projects**

Reporting capabilities have been improved due to the ICT systems implemented but reporting capabilities are yet to be exploited. However, report training is scheduled for April 2019.

- **Build strong relationships with our customers including use of LABC Partnership scheme and tie into national marketing initiatives**

By combining best practice across the partners we have gained greater commitment to national marketing initiatives with an increased number of nominations for the LABC Building Excellence Awards and national recognition with the LABC Superstar of the year award being one by our Technical Support Team Leader for outstanding commitment to the provision Local Authority Building Control.

We are now represented on the LABC SW Marketing panel and chair the Devon and Cornwall Building Control Group.

We have also joined the LABC Quality Assurance Scheme that was a response to the Hackitt enquiry into Building Control being one of the first Authorities to gain accreditation to ISO9001 under the pilot scheme.

Market share is currently good and a number of customers have returned after working with Approved Inspectors providing evidence of improved reputation particularly in the Mid Devon area.

Direct marketing efforts have been constrained by staff shortages in 2018/19 but this is now being rectified with an increase in face to face meetings with key clients.

Training has also been provided to all staff with regard to customer service and the concept of consultative selling.

- **Maintain sufficient staff with adequate expertise to deliver service effectively**

One of the major challenges we have had to contend with since the formation of the partnership has been enabling adequate staffing resource.

- The move to a centralised office located at South Molton has impacted on retention of our Technical Support Staff with three of the original four staff leaving.
- Two Senior Surveyors from Mid Devon left by mutual agreement
- Two Senior Surveyors moved on in order to move their careers in a different direction.
- A technical Support Officer who was recruited left again.
- Two Surveyors who were off for extended periods of sick leave for very different reasons.

These retention difficulties have been carefully considered and other than those due to relocation of the office are not attributable to the formation of the partnership.

However, what is clear is that a similar rate of turnover would have devastated the service if each Authority had continued to operate as an independent service within their own boundaries demonstrating the impact of the partnership on business resilience.

The formation of the partnership has provided the flexibility to recruit a trainee instead of a Surveyor enabling us to fill a post we were finding it difficult to recruit a suitably qualified and experienced candidate and we are developing staff for future more senior roles.

- **Introduce workflow management to maximise flexibility in allocation of resources**

The ICT systems including the Enterprise workflow management system and mobile inspection app have enabled a far greater level of flexibility by increasing the ability of staff to work remotely. It has also enabled systems to be introduced that track the work far more visibly identifying any backlogs or uneven distribution work earlier which helps improve performance against KPI's and will prevent service failures moving forward.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

We believe that there is evidence that the objectives of the partnership are being met and that a firm foundation has been laid for the development of the service in the future.