

NOTE TO: JOINT SERVICES COMMITTEE

DATE: 12/11/2020

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 has progressed to the next year of the degree and is on course for a potential 2:1
- 2.1.2 Moral has remained good through the quarter.
- 2.1.3 Currently workloads are such that further furlough of staff is not currently being considered.
- 2.1.4 We currently have 3 members of staff working from the office. 2x members of our Tech Support Team to ensure that we have adequate telephone coverage and the Building Control Manager who is temporarily homeless. The two Surveyors who had returned to the office are now again working from home although their working environments are not ideal.
- 2.1.5 We have reviewed our Covid19 precautions and with the announcement of a further lockdown we will continue to offer the option of remote inspection particularly for building work in a domestic setting. We are concentrating the allocation of remote inspections to vulnerable members of staff to limit face to face contact where possible.
- 2.1.6 We also have a “fire break” between key members of staff so that the Principle Surveyors and Manager do not meet to ensure continuation of service leadership, and Technical Support is split with the team leader working from home and all the Surveyors are working from home without meeting in person unless essential such as where required for safety on site visits.

2.2 Devonshire Homes

- 2.2.1 After reporting to the last meeting that Devonshire Homes were considering returning to NHBC for provision of Building Control Services I am happy to say that this is no longer the case.

2.3 MDDC Local Plan Policy DM1

- 2.3.1 Following up from the report to the last committee I can confirm that we have been liaising with MDDC development control with regard to the implementation of Local Plan Policy DM1 and the requirement for 20% of dwellings to comply with Requirement M4(2) for the Building Regulations for sites of more than 10 houses. As a result we have developed draft protocols for applications which will be reviewed once experience has been gained. Feedback also suggests that the Planning Officers found this useful in providing clarity with regard to the implications of the regulations in relation to spatial planning and the impact on the street scene.

2.4 Building Safety Bill

- 2.4.1 The timetable for the transition of powers to the Building Safety Regulator was expected to be published late October or early November 2020 but at the time of writing no further information has been made available.
- 2.4.2 No further information is available with regard to the process for validating existing officers competence in relation to Levels 4 and 5 and therefore we have been unable to progress validation for those who were not successful in the Level 6 Fire Safety validation examinations last year.
- 2.4.3 Level 6 registration is valid for 4 years and therefore the registration of our Surveyors will expire on 19/11/2023. Early indications are that re-validation will include the requirement for a portfolio of evidence regarding projects dealt with over the previous 3 years. Hence, this may prove extremely difficult for our Surveyors to maintain to the nature of their workloads.
- 2.4.4 In all likelihood in the medium term Level 6 Surveyors will demand premium salaries and be concentrated in “centres of excellence” based in urban areas. It may therefore not be commercially viable for us maintain this level of expertise in house in the long term when considering the number of high rise and complex developments that we deal with.
- 2.4.5 However, as nothing is as yet confirmed, in order to maximise the flexibility of our response, we will concentrate the allocation of complex work to one of our Principle Surveyors to maximise his chances of maintaining registration and the capabilities of our service.
- 2.4.6 We are predominantly a rural service and whilst we may have the expertise to compete for work outside our geographic boundaries, marketing in this sector is likely to lack credibility when competing with urban centres such as Bristol and Plymouth.