

CABINET

DATE 29TH SEPTEMBER 2016

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND REGENERATION

BUILDING CONTROL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL AND NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Cabinet Member: Councillor Richard Chesterton
Responsible Officer: Jenny Clifford, Head of Planning & Regeneration

REASON FOR REPORT: The purpose of this report is to update Members of the proposed arrangements and progress made towards delivering the Building Control Service through a Partnership between Mid Devon and North Devon Councils.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Project team in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration is delegated responsibility to finalise details of the agreement and method of delivery for final Cabinet approval in November / December 2016.

RELATIONSHIP TO CORPORATE PLAN: The effective operation of the Building Control Service directly links with all four of the corporate priorities of economy, homes, community and the environment. It is principally a service to ensure health and safety standards apply to building work, energy saving provisions are attained and premises are fully accessible for use through the application of the Building Regulations. The service also deals with dangerous structures and demolition notices.

Financial Implications: Mid Devon are providing ICT resource to support the implementation of systems for the partnership but there are no capital costs. The project costs are within the allocated budget identified by North Devon.

Legal Implications: A legal agreement is required and the impact on constitution of the Council is being identified

Risk Assessment: There is risk associated with all changes to the way we work. The Partnership business case considered by Cabinet on 10th March 2016 contained a risk analysis that shows that after mitigation the risk profile is low.

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 Cabinet recommended to Council on 10 March 2016 that the Councils form a Joint Committee in respect of their Building Control functions to enable joint working and it was agreed that the matter would be brought back to Cabinet, once the draft agreement (along with all other aspects of joint working on

building control) with Mid Devon District Council has been finalised, so that decisions can be made on the following in respect of a new Joint Committee:

- 1.1.1 its membership and formation;
- 1.1.2 the proposed variations to the constitution; and
- 1.1.3 finalise all other details.

This was subsequently endorsed by Council.

2.0 **THE PROPOSED MODEL**

2.1 The Building Control Service will be provided through a joint committee composed of a total of four members consisting of two members appointed by each Council.

2.2 It is proposed that MDDC will supply and support the Building Control administrative system to support the operational activity of Building Control using the iDox Uniform database and associated software.

2.3 In order to ensure a balance of power and resources required to support the service between the Partners it is proposed that North Devon is the Lead Authority providing governance and financial support services.

2.4 On formation of the partnership human resource support and employment contracts will remain with the existing employing Authority. The implications of this will be reviewed within 12 months and in the event of the need to recruit new staff.

2.5 Legal services support in relation to enforcement will be provided by the relevant partner authority.

2.6 A single address using Woodlands, South Molton is proposed to emphasise the single nature of the service.

2.7 A minimalist approach to branding of the Partnership is proposed emphasising that North and Mid Devon are working in Partnership to deliver the service.

3.0 **PROPOSED ICT INFRASTRUCTURE**

3.1 One of the drivers for the Partnership was to minimise overheads charged to the service of which a significant part is ICT charges.

3.2 A primary requirement is a single database to support operations which needs to be hosted by one of the Authorities. As Mid Devon already has the iDox Uniform Building Control System and the expertise to support an Oracle based system the decision has already been made that they will host the system.

- 3.3 In order to ensure maximum reliability of the system, minimum support costs, simplicity of design and clear accountability connection is proposed direct from Woodlands to Phoenix House via the Devon WAN. This link is in one direction only, effectively makes Woodlands part of the Mid Devon ICT.network. Hence, all equipment connected to this network will be provided by and maintained by Mid Devon ICT. Hence, all software provision supporting Building Control operations will need to be provided by Mid Devon including e-mail, shared drives and any supporting software such as Superbeam, Microsoft Office and Etarmis.
- 3.4 Communication with North Devon systems will be via a VRF link to the finance systems and data will be imported and exported to support interacting systems including the Gazeteer and Land Charge information.
- 3.5 If access is provided to North Devon systems including intranet, corporate drives, financial systems and covalent can be provided on a named user basis but this will incur ICT support costs and require additional licences to be purchased.

4.0 **SEPARATION STRATEGY**

- 4.1 In the event of the partners wishing to separate operations in the future this would be possible. All data on the uniform system has a custodian code that identifies the Local Authority. Data could be extracted using this information and installed on an iDox hosted cloud based system to enable continuity of business with the minimum of disruption or impact on either Partner. Division of costs involved and required notice periods will be included in the legal agreement.
- 4.2 The initial set up and purchase of ICT equipment for North Devon staff at Woodlands is being funded by North Devon. Hence, in the event of termination of the agreement equipment would revert to North Devon ownership.

5.0 **PROJECT PROGRESS**

- Key achievements include,
- 5.1 Administrative support system determined adopting the iDox suite of products to provide an end to end digital transformation through the delivery of,
- Uniform Building Control database,
 - Enterprise workflow management
 - iApply web submission platform,
 - iDox Document management system
 - iDox mobile working
- 5.2 The Uniform database has been updated and reviewed with configuration changes specified and all letter templates and forms have been re-designed.

- 5.3 Preparation for roll out of the Document Management and workflow management programmed for 21 October 2016.
- 5.4 Data scoping for the merging of the data bases has commenced following a meeting with the iDox consultant on the 24th August 2016.
- 5.5 Common operation procedures and policies are being adopted introducing a procedural format and record keeping based on ISO 9001:215 to enable future registration if considered necessary.
- 5.6 Positive steps taken to develop a cohesive team between the two authorities.
- 5.7 Licences for the new software and training have now been ordered and initial payments made.
- 5.8 Predicted costs and time frame for the project are currently within the original estimates and the budget allocation made by North Devon.

6.0 TIME FRAME FOR DELIVERY

Nov/Dec 2016- Presentation of legal agreement and method of delivery to Cabinet in Mid Devon and Executive in North Devon for final agreement

Dec 2016 - Implementation of Communications Plan to raise customer awareness

Dec 2016 - North Devon staff transfer to office base in South Molton.

Mar 2017 - Partnership launch through seminars introducing iApply platform to customers

Apr 2017 - Operational go live date for combined systems

Contact for more Information: Mike Tucker, Building Control Manager
mgtucker@middevon.gov.uk

Background papers: Cabinet 10th March 2016
The Business Case for Project Initiation – Building Control Partnership

Circulation of the Report: Cllr Richard Chesterton, Members of Cabinet