

## BUILDING CONTROL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Deputy Leader, Councillor Geil  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Michael Tichford, Head of Regeneration  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Michael Tichford, Head of Regeneration

### **Summary and Recommendation:**

The report provides an update on progress in the development of a building control management partnership with Allerdale Borough Council.

Members are requested to:

- (i) note progress on developing a management partnership
- (ii) agree to withdraw from the negotiation with Allerdale Borough Council and
- (iii) agree to the development of a revised, in house managed arrangement for the Building Control Team as described at paragraph 5.1, subject to it being funded from within existing budgets and to the detail being agreed by Personnel Panel.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 At the Executive meeting on July 2006 it was agreed to investigate a management partnership with Allerdale Borough Council for the provision of building control services. At the Executive meeting in January 2007, after preliminary work indicated that there was potential in developing a management partnership, this option was approved, subject to a further report being brought back to members for approval setting out the detailed business case, the operational arrangements, implications and timescales. Members asked that a proposal be brought back by May or June 2007 for approval.
- 1.2 This report updates the Executive on progress in the management partnership.

## **2. ARGUMENT**

- 2.1 Despite efforts by Copeland and Allerdale Council officers little progress has been made in getting beyond the in principle agreement established between the partners; at Copeland in a report to the Executive in July 2006. There is no detailed business plan, which develops the 'in principle' case, or implementation plan with timescales to complete the

investigation. The Executive made clear that this was a requirement before any partnership or financial arrangement would be entered into.

- 2.2 It has recently become evident that officers from the two Councils did not have a mutual understanding as to how the partnership would be progressed. Copeland members require a business case that went beyond the detail presented in two reports to the Executive, whilst Allerdale proposed an contractual arrangement between the councils which put a manager in place who would then work on the partnership.
- 2.3 Building Control is one of the services that Cumbria authorities have agreed to pursue as a shared service under the Connected Cumbria initiative. After a slow start the building control strand, led by Allerdale, was restarted with a workshop in May this year. After good initial progress this has again lost momentum due to the loss of staff from the Connected Cumbria team.
- 2.4 One of the issues for building control, in common with other services, has been attracting experienced staff. Recruitment to the posts of Principle Building Control Officer (the PBCO currently leads the team) and Area Building Control Officer leaves two vacancies remaining; the Building Control Manager and a trainee(s).
- 2.5 The Team has worked extremely well to maintain performance since the previous manager left in early 2006 and under the PBCO's leadership have developed the team, improved performance and produced plans to improve processes and performance further. Performance management information is now available, although hampered by the lack of appropriate software. An active role has been taken in supporting the shared service initiative under the Connected Cumbria initiative and the implementation of new software pursued to enhance efficiency.

### **3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 Options are to continue to pursue the management partnership with Allerdale Council or revert to a Copeland managed team. The Cumbria wide shared service would be pursued, should it be restarted, with either option as the Council is already committed to this course of action.

### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 Due to the lack of progress in establishing a clear proposal for a partnership with Allerdale, the greater emphasis on Cumbria wide shared services following the outcome of Local Government Review and the positive progress made by the team (and their opposition to the partnership) it is concluded that the option of reverting to a Copeland

managed team is the best option and it is this that is recommended. However, it is the negative impact on service delivery, through the difficulty in developing the team whilst the future is uncertain, that is the main reason for this recommendation. As head of service I have considerable regret that it has not been possible to deliver the partnership.

- 4.2 No fault is attached to either partner for the lack of progress in developing the business case on which any decision on whether or not to progress would be based; rather it shows the difficulty experienced in investigating such initiatives, largely due to lack of resources and a lack of clear corporate policy on the shared services agenda. Allerdale Council have been notified in writing of the intention to recommend this course of action.
- 4.3 Valuable experience has been gained since the report to the Executive in July 2006 and proposals are under development for a revised structure for the team to deliver a strengthened service, also taking into account the possible requirement to make savings in the financial year 2008/09. The details of the revised structure will be taken to the Personnel Panel and will be within or below the existing budget.

## **5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)**

- 5.1 From work undertaken by the PBCO with colleagues the new team structure that is proposed will meet the need to have clear leadership, clarify team member roles and reorganise responsibilities to make best use of staff skills. The proposal that will be taken to Personnel Panel will recommend that the Building Control Manager post be recruited to but will be a direct report to the head of service, previously reported to the Development Services Manager. This was the explicit outcome of the partnership proposal, in order to match Allerdale's arrangement, provide a better structure to the team and to put in place interim management, as reported to the Executive in January 2007. This proposal will require under the current budget conditions that an ABCO post be deleted and the trainee post be held vacant. The proposal has the support of the team and is a structure that is felt will secure performance improvements.
- 5.2 The proposal is within existing budgets, maintain the neutral three year rolling budget required of all building control services and give the option of making savings should this be required as part of the budget exercise currently being undertaken. This will however, require a change in the team structure. The details of these changes will be taken to the personnel panel should the Executive agree this report.

## 6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 Project and risk management plans will be established should approval be given and included in a report to Personnel Panel on the changes proposed.

## 7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 Quality of the build environment is a key concern of the corporate plan.

**List of Appendices:** None

**List of Background Documents:** Executive reports July 2006 and March 2007

**List of Consultees:** Portfolio Holders: Cllr Williams and Cllr Knowles, Corporate Team, Human Resources Manager, Development Services Manager, Building Control Team.

### CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed . This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	N/A
Impact on Sustainability	Not significant
Impact on Rural Proofing	N/A
Health and Safety Implications	N/A
Project and Risk Management	To be addressed
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	N/A
Children and Young Persons Implications	N/A
Human Rights Act Implications	N/A

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision YES/NO