

Appendix C

Proposed Redirection of Resources: Regeneration and Planning (to assist with Major Applications)

PROPOSAL OF CHIEF OFFICER (REGENERATION & PLANNING)

- (1) **That with immediate effect, the revenue budget be updated as set out in this report, to allow the redirection of resources from Policy & Delivery to Development Management to reflect expected workload demands, whilst still providing a small net saving.**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Due to increasing workload pressures within the Development Management Section a temporary post of Major Applications Planning Officer was created for two years commencing April 2012 and due to end on 31st March 2014.
- 1.2 In the current climate, there are some benefits in temporary contractual arrangements running out, especially where staff at risk of redundancy in other areas of work could be redeployed. Within the planning process however specific expertise is required from experienced and qualified staff. At a time when workload continues to increase (in terms of the number of planning applications being received, and also the number of planning appeals that are progressing to either Public Inquiry or Informal Hearing and require case management by suitably-qualified Officers) the expiry of this particular arrangement will place the Council in danger of losing skills which are not able to be sufficiently replaced by redeployment at this critical time.

2.0 The Business Needs of the Service

- 2.1 Development Management is a statutory function in high demand and operating to capacity and which the Council will have to continue to provide. Furthermore, it is also one which is experiencing growth in workload including the number of major applications being handled by the current temporary post and which attracts the highest fees and facilitates local economic recovery through enabling development to take place.
- 2.3 Taking account of the position with ongoing increasing workload and capacity, further skills loss in the key areas of Development Management needs to be avoided, particularly at a time when local planning authorities are scrutinised for their planning application and planning appeal performance under a more rigorous Central Government regime. It is proposed therefore, to make the temporary Major Applications Planning post a permanent one, which would increase the establishment by one post.
- 2.4 These costs can be offset by redirecting resources from the accessibility and administration functions within the Policy & Delivery Section by disestablishing two permanent posts no longer required, whilst still providing an overall net saving.

3. Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

- 3.1 Following the decision of Cabinet on 3rd July 2012 (minute no. 25 relates) to review funding for any ongoing need for the Major Applications Planning post prior to the end of the temporary contract in March 2014 the following options are proposed:

	Option 1: Do not redirect resources: (i.e. not to allow continuation of the temporary post beyond 31 March 2014)	Option 2: Redirect resources permanently (i.e. to allow increase in establishment by one permanent post from 1 April 2014)	Option 3: One year redirection only (i.e. allow continuation of temporary post beyond March 2014, to be reviewed again as part of the 2015/16 Budget Process)
Advantages	All of the efficiency savings from not filling vacant posts can be used to assist with the Councils overall budget deficit.	Removes immediate uncertainty in the section and maintains stability.	Does not cause an immediate long term commitment against increased fee income.
Disadvantages	With an increase in the number of new jobs being advertised in this field The Council runs the risk of losing experienced officers and having periods with no officers in post whilst recruitment takes place.	Some of the saving created by redirecting resources cannot be used to assist with the Council's overall budget deficit.	Temporary continued instability in the Development Management Team.
Risks	Reduced performance against decision making targets resulting in government sanctions.	Should there be any future down turn in workload, staff reductions could be needed once again.	Reduced performance against decision making targets resulting in government sanctions.

Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

The officer preferred option is Option 2.

4. Financial Implications

The financial implications of making the Major Applications Planning post permanent is set out below. By redirecting resources from the Policy & Delivery team to Development Management the cost can be met from within existing Service staff budgets, while still providing a small net saving.

Redirection of Resources	2014/15 Draft Estimate	2016/17 Draft Estimate (Top of Scale)
	£000	£000
Increased Development Management Resources	40.4	43.5
Reduced Policy & Delivery Resources	(58.4)	(59.7)
Net Cost / (Saving)	(18)	(16.2)

It should be further noted that should the team continue to experience temporary peaks in their workload that it is considered that existing arrangements such as meeting the cost of additional resource requirements through corporate staff turnover savings should be sufficient to meet such demands and can be dealt with through the usual monitoring processes already in place.