

Bolsover District Council

**Meeting of the Employment and Personnel Committee on
Wednesday 2nd November 2022**

Proposals for Managing the Housing Strategy Duties

Report of the Executive Director of Resources and Head of Paid Service

Classification	This report is Public
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PURPOSE / SUMMARY OF REPORT

- To seek approval for the separation of the former joint Housing Strategy Team structure with North East Derbyshire District Council and reallocate the duties and responsibilities for housing strategy across the Planning Policy Team and the Housing Management Team.

REPORT DETAILS

1 Background

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Council has a joint Housing Strategy Team with North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC). The team are responsible for preparation of strategic housing policies, housing stock analysis and work on empty homes, as well as undertaking the duties relating to homelessness, rough sleeping, private sector lettings and tenancy strategy.
- 1.2 However, it has been agreed with NEDDC that, due to the strategic nature of the work required within the team, which is based on local housing needs, the roles and responsibilities of this team should be separated back within each District Council. This will provide greater focus on the housing requirements of each Council, better use of resources and the delivery of initiatives using local data specific to the needs of Bolsover residents.

- 1.3 Following discussions with NEDDC, it has been agreed that the team should be separated with the BDC budget allocation of £82,828 divided equally between the Planning Policy Team and the Housing Management Teams to enable the Council to respond to these new duties. The existing staff within the joint team will remain with NEDDC, enabling BDC to shape its own housing strategy resources.

Planning Policy Team Background

- 1.4 Members will also be aware that from April 2014 through to November 2021 the Council had a Joint Planning Policy Team with North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC), reflecting the direction of travel towards joint services under the Strategic Alliance in 2013/14. This joint team pooled staff resources between the two Councils under the management of the former NEDDC Planning Policy Manager.
- 1.5 Financially, the cost of this joint team was shared equally between the two Councils, given that at the outset the number of planning policy officers deployed to each Council was equal, with BDC essentially sharing the time of its two planning information officers with NEDDC and taking a share of the time of the NEDDC manager.
- 1.6 However, in practice it had proved difficult to integrate the two groups of staff members operationally given the need to bring forward Local Plans for both BDC and NEDDC in roughly the same period of time. It also proved difficult for the joint manager to oversee both processes and share their time equally between the two authorities, so undermining the attempt to balance the costs and benefits to the two Councils equally and fairly.
- 1.7 As a consequence to this inequitable situation, the Council took the decision to appoint a consultant as an Interim Planning Policy Manager in August 2016 to provide additional manager capacity that would focus solely on the needs of Bolsover District. This arrangement ran to 31st March 2019 and whilst since this point the Joint Planning Policy Manager provided some managerial support for Bolsover District matters under the jointly funded team arrangement, the day-to-day responsibility has been provided by officers within the Bolsover deployed part of the team. However, it was decided to end this arrangement and the joint team structure ceased to be in place from 30th November 2021.
- 1.8 Since this point, the Bolsover Planning Policy team has comprised the following staff posts:
- PLA032 - Principal Planner (Policy) (Grade 8)
 - PLA350 - Principal Planning Officer (Grade 8)
 - PLA351 - Senior Planning Officer (Grade 7)
 - PLA353 - Senior Planning Information Officer (Grade 6)
 - PLA354 - Planning Information Officer (Grade 4)
 - PLT01 - Bolsover Community Woodlands Project Officer (since June 2022 and temporary to May 2024) (Grade 5)

- 1.9 The basic salary cost of the Planning Policy team as per this establishment for 2022/23 is £158,212 (excluding the temporary and principally externally funded Bolsover Community Woodlands Project Officer post).
- 1.10 To provide managerial oversight since 1st December 2021 one of the Principal Planner's has been appointed as Interim Planning Policy Manager and awarded an honorarium at Grade 10 on a temporary basis until a new team structure can be established.
- 1.11 To this end, the needs of the Planning Policy team going forward have been kept under review given the prospect of the Government's planning reforms coming to some resolution. However, given the national picture does not look much clearer and given it is nearly a year since the ending of the joint arrangements, it is now considered that this matter should not be delayed any further.
- 1.12 In addition, the decision to end the Joint Housing Strategy team arrangement imminently has prompted an additional impetus to bring the new structure of the Council's Planning Policy team to a resolution.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 A Council's Planning Policy team is responsible for managing the Council's strategic planning function and how it places itself as a Local Planning Authority in its local context. It works with its neighbouring local planning authorities to help bring about the Council's development strategy across the North Derbyshire and Bassetlaw Housing Market Area, its Functional Economic Market Area and other political geographies such as Local Economic Partnerships, City Regions or Mayoral combined authorities.
- 2.2 It is also responsible for providing development strategies that respond to external expectations and internal aspirations. It is responsible for helping the Council's political ambitions for growth become viable and meaningful planning policy in the form of Development Plans that soundly shape other planning decisions, such as on planning applications. The Council has an up-to-date adopted Development Plan, namely the Local Plan for Bolsover District, and is now preparing supplementary Growth Plans for Shirebrook and Creswell. The Council's Local Development Scheme sets out the Planning Policy team's public work plan and this also includes the preparation of an updated Statement of Community Involvement and the preparation of four Supplementary Planning Documents to provide further detail to the policies in the Local Plan.
- 2.3 It is also responsible for meeting duties within planning law around supporting Parish and Town Councils with their Neighbourhood Plans, monitoring developments and developing evidence of the District's economic, social and environmental situation that can influence policy development. It is also able to deliver a range of projects and initiatives that ensure the Council's Local Plan and development strategies are implemented, with current examples being the Bolsover Community Woodlands, Shirebrook Market Place: *Reimagined* and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy projects.
- 2.4 All of these areas of work require an appropriately resourced team to be effective and this has been considered and factored through the review of the team.

- 2.5 Therefore, it is proposed that the following team posts in a dedicated Bolsover only Planning Policy team are required:
- 1x Planning Policy Manager (Grade 10)
 - 2x Principal Planning Policy Officer (Grade 8)
 - 1x Senior Planning Policy Officer (Grade 7)
 - 1x Senior Planning Information Officer (Grade 6)
 - 1x Planning Information Officer (Grade 4)
 - 1x Bolsover Community Woodlands Project Officer (temporary to May 2024) (Grade 5)
- 2.6 As can be seen, the substantive difference is the addition of a Planning Policy Manager at Grade 10 with all other posts remaining at their existing grades.
- 2.7 The basic salary cost of the Planning Policy team as per this proposal for an annual period would be £202,712 (excluding the temporary and principally externally funded Bolsover Community Woodlands Project Officer post). As a result, it is recognised that this represents a growth bid to the Council's establishment of approximately £44,500.
- 2.8 However, it is noted that the planned separation of the Joint Housing Strategy team is due to provide for some of their duties and staffing budget to be transferred to the Planning Policy and Housing Management teams.
- 2.9 From discussions with the relevant officers, the split of duties will see the Planning Policy team taking on the preparation of strategic housing policies, housing stock analysis and work on empty homes, with the Housing Management team taking on the duties relating to homelessness, rough sleeping, private sector lettings and tenancy strategy.
- 2.10 On this basis, it is proposed that the Council's committed funding to the established Joint Housing Strategy team of £82,828 is divided equally between the Planning Policy and Housing Enforcement teams to enable suitable recruitment to take place to respond to these new duties. Furthermore, the remaining £15,000 of the Government grant relating to Empty Property Officer role would be allocated to the Planning Policy team given this specific duty is being transferred to this team.
- 2.11 As such, there is sufficient budget available to enable the proposed changes to the Planning Policy and Housing Management Teams to be funded without the need for budget growth.
- 2.12 In terms of the staff in the existing posts in the Planning Policy team, it is expected that the individuals would largely be unaffected by this new team structure, although it is considered that the new Planning Policy Manager post would be ring fenced to staff within the Planning Policy team.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 There is an outstanding need deliver the separation of the Joint Housing Strategy Team with NEDDC and also to resolve the temporary arrangements for the structure of the Planning Policy Team.

3.2 It also recommended that funding currently committed to the established Joint Housing Strategy team is reallocated to the basic salary budgets of the Planning Policy and Housing Management teams without the need for budget growth.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 A ‘do nothing’ option was rejected as there is a continuing need to deliver the Housing Strategy functions and responsibilities across the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. That the Joint Housing Strategy Team with NEDDC be separated and the allocated budget returned to BDC. All existing staff within the team will remain with NEDDC as agreed.
- 2. That the structure for the Planning Policy Team, outlined within this report be implemented, to include the responsibility preparation of strategic housing policies, housing stock analysis and work on empty homes.
- 3. That a post be created within the Housing Management Team to undertake the remaining duties relating to homelessness, rough sleeping, private sector lettings and tenancy strategy.

Approved by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Councillor Duncan
McGregor

IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

There is no additional budget growth required as a result of these proposals. The existing budget allocation for the BDC element of the Joint Housing Strategy Team of £82,828 can be reallocated equally between the Planning Policy Team and the Housing Management Teams as outlined within this report.

Furthermore, the remaining £15,000 of the Government grant relating to Empty Property Officer role can be allocated to the Planning Policy team given this specific duty is being transferred to this team.

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

There are no specific legal or data protection issues arising from this report.

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing:
Details:

Yes No

The Council's policies and procedures relating to recruitment and restructures will be followed as outlined within the report.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds: Revenue - £75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £150,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i>	No
Is the decision subject to Call-In? <i>(Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</i>	No

District Wards Significantly Affected	
Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Executive <input type="checkbox"/> SLT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	Details:

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy and Environment.
Focussing on Our Customers Focussing on Our Economy Focussing on Our Environment

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No.	Title

Background Papers <i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>