

RESOURCES FOR THE DELIVERY OF FUTURE PLANNED DEVELOPMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report considers the staff resources which will be needed to deliver the enhanced levels of growth proposed in the district in the Local Plan 2016-2036, to the high environmental standards Members and local communities expect in such an environmentally sensitive area. The report considers resources in the planning and open space service areas.

2. THE DEMAND ON RESOURCES

- 2.1 The workload of the two Planning Service areas – Policy and Strategy (which includes Environmental Design) and Development Control – has increased significantly over the past 18 months in particular. The teams are currently resourced at a level to reflect the ‘restrained’ growth of the current and previous planning strategies for the area. Members will be aware that the changes in National Planning Policy have required the Council to plan for much higher rates of development in its review of the Local Plan. The Local Plan agreed for submission to the Secretary of State by Cabinet and Council on 6th June 2018, will increase the rate of new housing building, doubling and then trebling it over the next few years to meet the new local housing targets. To ensure that these major new housing developments are well planned and deliver high quality schemes, additional resources will be required. Areas of work where a particular need for extra skills and capacity have been identified are:

- Environmental design (Landscape and Urban Design)
- Policy and Plans
- Major scheme development management
- Planning Delivery and Enforcement

- 2.2 Outside the Planning Service areas, the planned growth will also have a significant impact on the workload of the Open Spaces team. There will be a significant increase in the amount of public open space provision, including new provision of significant areas of natural recreational greenspace land which need to be provided and then managed and maintained to mitigate the recreational impact of the new residential development on the New Forest and Solent/Southampton Water nature conservation sites of international importance. There are also a number of existing cases relating to open space matters (including the transfer of land) that will only be satisfactorily addressed through the deployment of additional resources.

3. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Environmental Design

- 3.1 The Environmental Design Team are mainly responsible for:
- Master-planning and Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Documents
 - Securing good design through pre-application discussions and the negotiations of planning applications. (Both buildings and open spaces.)
 - Design and implementation of a programme of habitat mitigation projects
- 3.2 It is proposed to increase the current team of three officers to five, with the addition of an extra senior landscape architect/urban designer and an additional Landscape Architect to the team.

Policy and Plans

- 3.3 The Policy and Plans Team are mainly responsible for:
- Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents
 - Supporting Neighbourhood Planning
 - Cross boundary working on strategic planning matters
 - Community Infrastructure Levy and Infrastructure Delivery Plan
 - Implementation and monitoring of mitigation projects and Community Infrastructure Levy.
- 3.4 Capacity within the team at a senior level needs to be maintained and it is proposed to add capacity to the team by the employment of an additional Planning Graduate career graded post, to build resilience into the team.

Major scheme development management

- 3.5 The Development Control Team are mainly responsible for:
- Managing pre-application negotiations
 - The processing and decision making on planning applications
 - Planning appeals
- 3.6 There will be a significant increase in the volume and complexity of major development applications. There has already been an internal restructuring within the existing teams to respond to this challenge (funded by fee increases), creating more capacity at a senior officer level to deal with major development projects. In addition, a further senior post is required to supplement current levels of resource.

Planning Delivery and Enforcement

- 3.7 There is currently a need for resources and structures within the planning service areas to ensure development is implemented to our required standards. With Government performance measures giving great weight to speed of decision-making, too often detailed matters have not been fully resolved before the grant of planning permission, with planning conditions and legal agreements left to subsequently sort out details. This has given rise to a number of issues, but particularly relating to the delivery of infrastructure and in particular the quality of open space being provided.

- 3.8 It is proposed to create a new Planning Delivery and Enforcement Team, with responsibility for monitoring the implementation of development, Community Infrastructure Levy, Legal Agreement requirements, together with the planning Enforcement function. Three new posts will be created; A Site Monitoring Officer, a Planning Delivery Assistant and an additional Senior Planning Enforcement Officer.

Open Space Service

- 3.9 New residential development within the district is required to mitigate its impact on the European nature conservation sites it affects. All new residential development places increased recreational pressures on both the New Forest and Solent/Southampton Water European sites, and this impact must be mitigated to enable development to proceed. The Council's adopted (and future) mitigation strategy require the provision and management of significant new areas of natural recreational green spaces as well as other public open spaces.
- 3.10 Open Space provision is an area of work that straddles service areas across the Council and has generated issues for the Council, both in terms of staff time to secure the provision of well-designed open spaces (as part of development) (Planning Service) and financial resources to pay for the longer term management and maintenance of public open spaces (Open Spaces Service). The Council's Open Space service has an increasingly important role to play in ensuring open space is provided, managed and maintained to ensure it continues to provide the necessary recreational mitigation, and is available for public enjoyment.
- 3.11 Additional resources are needed to undertake the land transfer process and to liaise with planning services over the satisfactory implementation and 'sign off' of open spaces for hand over to the Council. Funding is required for two new posts: an Open Space Transfer Officer and an Open Space Transfer Assistant.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The maximum cost of the additional staff resources in the Development Control Service and the Policy and Strategy Service is £267,000. Two principal funding streams have been identified that will, over time, generate the necessary income to cover these costs. They are, additional fees related to the pre-application and planning application process, and work chargeable to Community Infrastructure Levy and developers' contributions income. These two funding streams should generate an average income of £270,000 per annum, although the flow of income may not be even. (It will depend on when development comes forward.)
- 4.2 The additional posts in the Open Spaces Team will cost up to £88,600, and will, in time, be funded by increasing charges on developers for land transfers processes and through charges for taking on management and maintenance of the open space land.

5. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Good design and land management ensures places and open space are safe for users.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Achievement of high quality environments is the key to achieving planned growth in a sustainable manner in an environmentally sensitive area.

7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None

8. PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS

- 8.1 I support the recommendations below.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a.) approve expenditure of up to £267,000 on additional staff in the Policy and Strategy and Development Control Service areas, as set out in this report, and approval of the following posts:

Principal Planning Delivery Officer (Team Leader)
Planning Graduate/Trainee (Policy and Plans Team)
Senior Environmental Design Officer
Landscape Architect
Planning Delivery Assistant
Site Monitoring Officer
Senior Development Management Officer
Senior Planning Enforcement Officer

- b.) approve expenditure of up to £88,600 on additional staff in the Open Spaces Service area, as set out in this report, and approval of the following posts:

Open Space Transfer Officer
Open Space Transfer Assistant.

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Background Papers:

None