



Operational/Business Plan 2021/22

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Section 1 – Introduction and Partnership Drivers

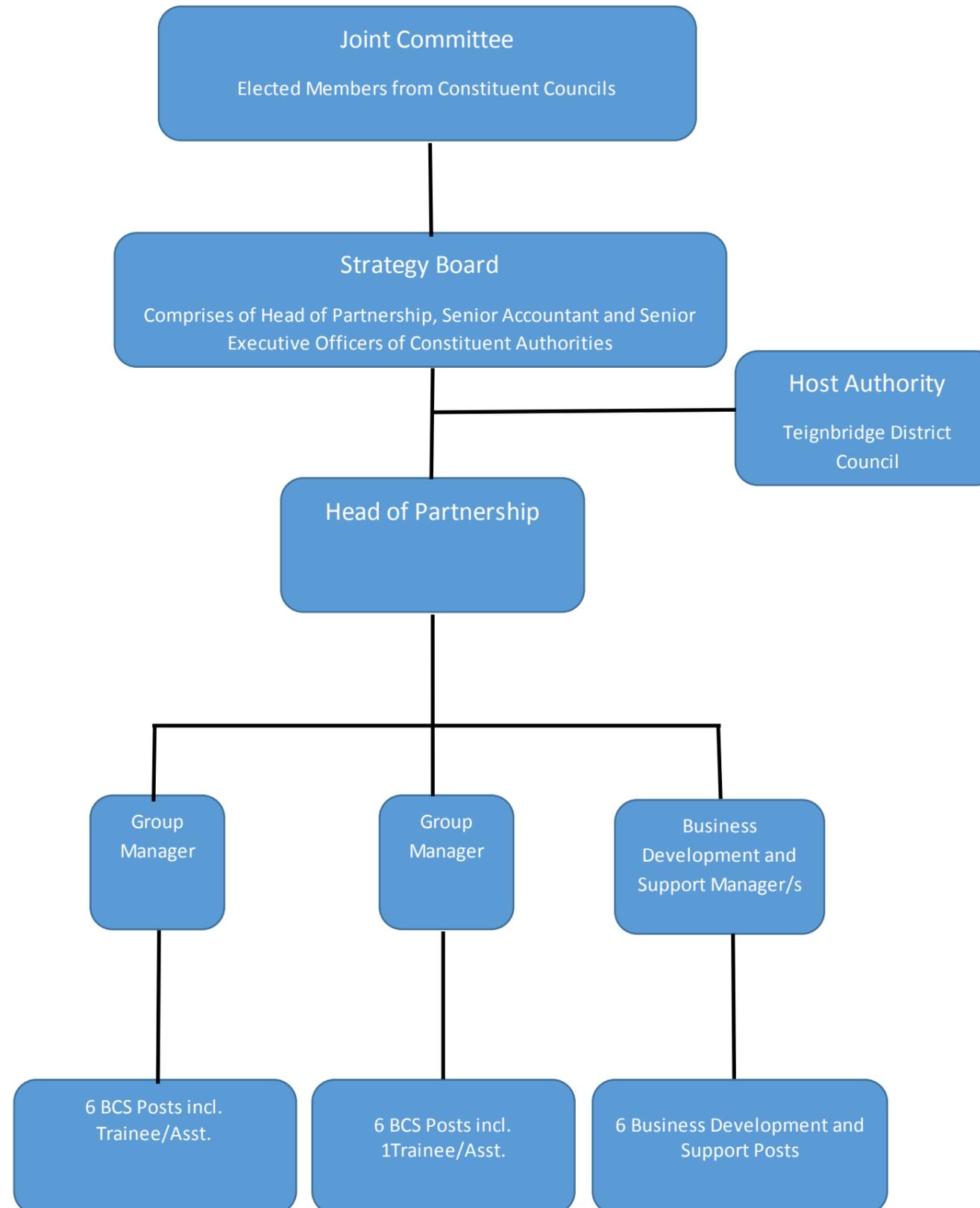
| Main functions of the team | |
|----------------------------|---|
| <p>What do we do?</p> | <p>This Operational Plan has been developed for the Devon Building Control Partnership which carries out the Building Control functions for Teignbridge District Council, South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council.</p> <p>The main function of the Partnership is to ensure that the Councils can meet their statutory and regulatory duties in respect of building control matters in a timely manner. It is a statutory service, which administers legislation relating to the built environment and operates in such a manner as to establish and maintain a high reputation for both itself and the partner councils. It therefore aims to provide a responsive service, which is of a consistently high standard and gives value for money to its customers.</p> <p>The service has two elements which are described as fee earning and non-fee earning work. The building regulation aspect of the service is income generating and in accordance with The Building (Local Authority Charges) Regulations 2010 and CIPFA accounting requirements. This aspect of the business must be self-financing over a continuous three-year rolling period. The non-fee earning part of the service is funded by the council taxpayer and includes dangerous structures, enforcement, demolitions, support for the safety advisory group and consultancy services to other council services.</p> <p>Local authority building control is subject to competition from private sector building control bodies (approved inspectors or AI's) operating both regionally and nationally. This competitive scenario is applicable across all developments including domestic extensions, new housing, and commercial developments. This gives all applicants a clear choice between the Local Authority Building Control Service (LABC) and private sector building control Approved Inspector (AI) services. This choice may be based on cost alone or a number of other factors such as the quality of site inspection service, ease of contact, early involvement in the design process or flexibility in making decisions. However, it is made, the Partnership must try to compete effectively</p> <p>Despite this choice, the Local Authority retains a statutory duty to enforce the building regulations in its geographical area. Approved Inspectors are not able to perform this function and sites which cannot be signed off by AI's revert to Local authorities for enforcement. Thus, irrespective of workload and income, all councils must retain a Building Control Service at some cost to the Authority.</p> <p>The service is also subject to a continuous programme of both administrative and technical legislative change, this means that management objectives and priorities may change at short notice.</p> <p>Building Regulation Fee Earning Service This service is concerned with determining compliance with Building Regulations by assessing plans and carrying out site inspections at different stages of the building process. Customers are advised of contraventions of the building regulations and how they may be overcome. Legislation allows prosecution in the magistrates' court for contraventions of the Building Regulations but is only used as a last resort. This element of the service's work is subject to competition by the private sector.</p> <p>Non-Fee Earning Work Building Control provides a number of services which are necessary as part of a local authority service. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangerous Structures. • Enforcement of Building Regulations • Demolitions. • Registering AI Initial Notices and Competent Person Scheme works. • Process disabled person's applications. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice to other council services. • Safety advisory group / safety at sports ground. • General pre-application and building regulations advice. <p>These elements of building control work do not require payment of a building regulation charge and are not required to be self-financing.</p> <p>NB Opportunity and Risk Assessments are now held on the internal management system.</p> <p>Main activities The main activities of the Building Control service are as follows: Provide advice to customers about the need for planning and building control permission.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake Inspections on building work to ensure compliance with relevant standards and legislation • Ensure the health, safety, and welfare of persons in and about buildings • Provide advice to customers and partners on Building Regulation matters • Enforcement of Building Regulations • Organise and run the annual Building Excellence scheme • Promoting energy conservation in homes. • To contribute to the delivery of the partner council’s corporate housing strategies by helping to improve the quality and standard of private sector housing |
| Who do we deliver to? | <p>The Partnership has a diverse range of customers, stakeholders and partners (within and outside the organisation). These include. Applicants, agents, internal teams, Parish Councils, members of the public, elected Members, external statutory and non-statutory consultees, other Local Authorities and Professional Bodies</p> |
| How do we deliver? | <p>The vast majority of services provided by all functions within the service are delivered using a combination of in-house resources and partnership with external organisations. However, it should be noted that a large part of the Building Control function is carried out in a competitive marketplace and is subject to commercial pressures.</p> |
| Which elements of our service are statutory or discretionary? | <p>The determination of Building regulation applications, dealing with Demolition Notices and ensuring Health and Safety of the public with regard to dangerous structures. All other elements of the service are discretionary.</p> <p>The Partnership will proactively consider additional discretionary services which would generate income, such as fire risk assessments, access statements, SAP calculations and acoustic testing.</p> |

Strategy map measuring performance delivering the service



DBCP STRUCTURE



Section 2

Operational Priorities 2021-22

| Priority | Specific Actions | Due | Measure and Milestones | | | Responsible person | Quarterly Progress (RAG) | Comments |
|--|--|-------|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--|
| | | | Description | Target | Actual | | | |
| Ensure that the Partnerships functions are managed in line with outcomes defined in agreement with the board and supporting agreements | Ensure all finances are effectively managed | Q1-4 | CIPFA protocols followed and a balanced budget is delivered of a rolling three to five-year trading period | Annual sign off by Sec 151 Officer | Ongoing | NH | Green | Finances reviewed monthly. |
| | Yearly Operational/Business plan agreed with partnership board | Q1-4 | Produce a plan which clearly sets out the targets and performance levels required. | Annual sign off by Board | New plan to be presented in Q4 | NH | Green | Agreed by partnership board |
| | To provide effective leadership for the Building Control Partnership | Q1-4 | Develop the Partnership strategically to provide high quality building control services and ensure that partners meet their statutory obligations under the relevant legislation. | Operational Plan agreed by Board | New plan to be presented in Q4 | NH | Green | As above |
| Ensure the Partnership is fully aware of the proposed changes in legislation and the responsibilities associated thereof. | The Partnership will need to adapt to the significant changes being brought about by the introduction of a new Building Control Regulator now set in statute as well as new legislation relating to fire safety. | Q1-4 | Develop the service to ensure any new proposals can be serviced effectively | N/A | N/A | NH | Green | The partnership is already preparing itself for the potential changes by up skilling existing staff. |
| | Implement the new Building Regulations and associated legislation. | Q1-4 | The proposed changes are the most significant and wide ranging in over 30 years and will have a significant impact on the application and provision of Building Control. | N/A | N/A | NH | Green | Updates will be provided to the strategy board throughout the year. |
| Implement and update the LABC Quality Management System (ISO 9001:2015) | The LABC system will ensure that all LA Building Control providers undertake their roles and responsibilities to agreed standards across the country. In particular it focuses on service delivery, timeliness, and provision of information, professionalism and staff attitudes. | Q1-Q4 | Continually review current working practices and protocols. | 100% | 100% | NH | Green | Quarterly review of performance against requirements. |

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| Develop a Medium-Term Financial Plan | A new MTFP will need to be developed against the background of issues arising from Covid-19 and possible recession. This will contribute to future business planning of the service | Q1-Q4 | A MTFP will consider all potential financial impacts on the service over a 5-year period. Consideration will be given to possible changes to the general economy and the construction industry specifically. The plan will also outline proposals for a reserve fund and actions to reduce surpluses. | 100% | Ongoing | NH | | Work will be commenced on the MTFP at the end of Q2. This will be presented in Q4 |
| Develop a commercial approach to support business growth | Carry out detailed business analysis to understand current market share | Q1-4 | Ensure the service fully understands its position in the BC marketplace, including market share, key strengths, and changes over time | 100% | Ongoing | NH | | Market position/share monitored monthly |
| | Identify realistic growth (or stabilisation) targets in key market sectors | | Regular business analysis supports key business decisions in commercial environment | 100% | Ongoing | NH | | Business performance monitored closely |
| | | | Percentage market share stabilises, and business invests in growing priority areas | Maintain levels of market share 70% or above. | Q1 80% Q2 83% | All Staff | | Market share has been maintained above |
| Take a positive and proactive approach to the determination of Building Regulation applications in a timely manner. | Building Control to register submitted applications within 5 working days | Q1-4 | Applications registered within prescribed periods. Validation and registration of applications within 5 days. | 80% | 100% | All Staff | | Commentary provided quarterly |
| | Initial check for compliance of Building Control application within 3 weeks. Request for additional information if required. | Q1-4 | Full plan submissions checked for compliance with building regulations any additional information requested | 80% | Q1 86% Q2 85% | All Staff | | Commentary provided quarterly |
| | Approve or reject Building Control Full Plan applications within 8 weeks | Q1-4 | Full plan applications need to be decided within a statutory 8-week period. If no decision is made applicants can claim back fees | 100% | Q1 100% Q2 100% | All Staff | | Commentary provided quarterly |
| | Requests for site inspections received before 4 pm will actioned the same day | Q1-4 | Respond to request for site visits in a timely manner. | 90% | Q1 100% Q2 100% | All Staff | | Commentary provided quarterly |
| Promote a healthy and safe environment | Provide a responsive dangerous structure service | Q1-4 | Respond within agreed timescales | 100% | Q1 100% Q2 100% | All Staff | | Commentary provided quarterly |
| | Respond to demolition notices in a timely manner | Q1-4 | 95% of notices responded to within 1 week | 100% | Q1 100% Q2 100% | All Staff | | All notices registered and acted upon within timescales |

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| | Support area Safety Advisory Groups | Q1-4 | Attend meetings as required | Ongoing | Ongoing | All Staff | | Meetings attended where BC input required |
| Maintain and improve market share | Devon Building Control Partnership services are used on the majority of applications registered within the geographical area of the Partner Councils. Targets laid out in Marketing Plan/Strategy | Q1-4 | Promote and market the service at all possible opportunities. Utilise customer feedback information and industry trends for market intelligence. | Ongoing | Ongoing | All Staff | | Market share is being maintained and it is hoped that new ways of working will increase the percentage. |
| Undertake a review of the Building Excellence Awards | Review the format and viability of the Awards in their current format. | Q3 | A comprehensive review is required with regard to staff engagement and resources. | Ongoing | Ongoing | NH, all staff. | | Potential venues are being explored. Dates to be confirmed. |
| Provide timely pre-application advice to customers and realise an opportunity for additional income for the Council. | Meet with customers on request to advise on Building Regulation requirements | Q1-4 | Building Control surveyors available to customers by attending the partner offices or on site by appointment. | Ongoing | Ongoing | All Staff | | Staff are actively engaging with clients via online platforms or in person. |
| | Building Control Surveyors will act as account managers with registered partners | Q1-4 | Will enable single point of contact regarding pre-application consultation | Ongoing | On going | All Staff | | All surveyors have a client portfolio. |
| Use customer feedback to deliver continuous service improvements and increased customer satisfaction. | Meet with customers twice yearly through the liaison panel to identify areas for improvement and report back on actions taken if appropriate. | Q1-4 | Twice yearly meetings held with customers and actions taken. | 100% | Request for members will be sent out in Q3 | NH | | Meetings are informal and are held after a CPD event. An event has been organised for each quarter. |
| | Take action where complaints are considered to be justified. | Q1-4 | Action taken where complaints are justified. | 100% | Ongoing | NH | | No complaints in Q1 or Q2 |
| | Ensure that all cases of service feedback whether praise or complaint is recorded and reported. Review each case so that the service can learn and reinforce those areas of delivery. | Q1-4 | Praise exceeds justified complaints. | 100% | Ongoing | NH | | Customer feedback is recorded and in some cases presented on the SBCP website. |

Section 3

Risk Register

| Date | Risk No | Risk Rating | Vulnerability | Trigger | Consequences if Risk Realised | Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners | Priority |
|------------|---------|-------------|--|--|---|--|----------|
| 28/06/2021 | 01 | H | Economic downturn resulting in low numbers of applications. The current situation surrounding Covid-19 and Brexit is a major concern and will be monitored closely. | Fall in income and application numbers | Insufficient income to cover expenditure on fee earning account resulting in extra pressure on each partner authority to fund the deficit in the agreed proportions. | Reduced expenditure to limit income deficiency. Partnership may need to access additional funds from the ring-fenced surpluses already generated. | 1 |
| 28/06/2021 | 02 | M-H | Inability to sustain growth and acquire additional business. | All three schedules: residential, commercial, and domestic show signs of reduced applications | Surveyors carry out uneconomic site visits or transfer workload to additional non fee earning work. Increases in the latter would be unfunded from authority contributions. | Invest in training and development of staff so as to diversify resources into consultancy work. Improved time analysis monitoring to ensure agreed percentage split. | 2 |
| 28/06/2021 | 03 | L-M | Failure to suitably develop staff to meet the needs of the business and match personal self-improvement expectations. | The market is regularly changing to offer alternative services to clients which compliment building regulation work. The Partnership requires staff to be trained to deliver the same services and remain competitive. | Insufficient skill base would result in customers being more attracted to the competition with a resultant loss in work. | Ensure staff are well trained and able to compete with the services offered by the private sector. Develop training matrix to ensure staff development through PDR process. | 2 |
| 28/06/2021 | 04 | H | Loss of qualified staff not only to private building control providers and other local authorities but the new Building Control Regulator. This risk has increased, as the market locally and nationally, is offering significant better pay and conditions in both the public and private sectors. This should also be considered as a factor not only in recruiting staff, but also in terms of retention. | The loss of any staff members, at all levels. | There is a significant risk of staff moving due to better pay and conditions. As there is a national shortage of suitable staff, the opportunity to recruit is reducing. | Ensure staff are motivated and are provided with job satisfaction. Look to develop Assistants and Trainees as part of a 'grow your own policy'. Review current pay and conditions as agreed in the original business case. | 1 |

Section 4

Commentary

Managers Comments

The first two quarters of 2021/22 have been challenging for the Devon Building Control Partnership. There has been uncertainty affecting the construction industry due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit and the appointment of a new Head of Partnership. Soon after the appointment a full service review was conducted which identified that the service was extremely lean with regard to staff numbers due to staff leaving, retirement and a substantial increase in application numbers. The review also noted that the existing surveying teams were operating in different ways, which were effective prior to the pandemic. However, the move to remote working for all staff during the pandemic had identified a number of positive outcomes which had improved the effectiveness of the service including greater use of IT, a reduction in non-productive time travelling to and from the office along with the associated cut in carbon emissions. There has also been positive outcomes associated with some staff's work/life balance.

The outcomes of the review identified that the Partnership needed an additional full-time Surveyor and an additional part-time Business Support officer along with a new way of working for the surveying teams. The ability to fund additional staff was compromised by the application of historic pension costs to the operating reserve, and a recognition that fees being charged for applications were below the levels of inflation experienced since their last increase and substantially below those charged by neighbouring authorities. Consequently fees increased in October 2021 with another smaller increase in April 2022. In future it is proposed that fees are increased yearly to at least the level of inflation.

With the help of the Partnerships accountants a Medium Term Financial Plan has been developed which will allow for the additional staffing, the appointment of the existing apprentice to a full-time position and the opportunity to invest and develop the Partnership going forward. The earmarked reserve has been increased to help cover costs should there be a downturn which will reduce the burden on the constituent Council's.

The Partnership has instigated new ways of working, after comprehensive consultation with staff, the main change is that all Surveyors now have full responsibility for servicing an area of the Partnership's districts, wherever possible near to where they currently live.

Staff need to be congratulated that, even though there have been significant pressures, they have continued to achieve and in most cases exceed the Key Performance Indicators.

The Head of Partnership has also introduced a Strategy Board which consists of Head of Partnership, senior officers representing the constituent council's and the partnership's accountants. The board meets regularly to discuss performance and strategic direction.

During Q1 and Q2 application numbers have remained relatively high compared to previous years and the Partnership has maintained high levels of market share, above those held by neighbouring Local Authority Building Control Services.

The Partnership has recommenced our online briefings/training events the first of which is on the 11th November 2021.

The Partnership is delighted to report that it has 3 finalists entered for the national LABC Awards which are being held in January 2022.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all the staff for their hard work and co-operation to date, and also express my appreciation of the support from the Members of the Joint Committee, Neil Blaney, Clare Moors and Anita Carpenter.

