

Report

Report to:	Community and Enterprise Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 December 2021
Report by:	Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources) Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Workforce Planning and Recruitment in Planning and Building Standards Service
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1. Purpose of the report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ seek approval for 3 full time equivalent (FTE) Graduate Planning Officer posts in the establishment to be extended on a fixed term basis for an additional 11 months

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the fixed term 12 month contract of 3 FTE Graduate Planning Officer posts on Grade 2, Level 2 - 4 (£23,140 to £30,147) within the Planning and Economic Development establishment be extended for a further 11 months, as detailed in section 6 of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Council's statutory role as Planning Authority for its area is undertaken by the Planning service which sits within the Planning and Economic Development Service. The Planning Service is responsible for the preparation of the Local Development Plan and associated supporting guidance; the processing of planning applications; and the enforcement and monitoring function. In addition, officers within the service provide advice and guidance on a wide range of planning matters as well as dealing with consultations from licensing, property enquiries, information requests and liaison with groups and community bodies.
- 3.2. The Planning Service is responsible for delivering a front-line statutory function. Within the context of a changing economic climate and budgetary matters there was a reduction in the number of frontline planning officers/team leaders within the Service, at the end of July 2021. In addition, the number of managers within the service was reduced from 4 to 3 in March 2018. Analysis of the workforce profile of the service shows over 50% of officers, team leaders and managers are now over 50.
- 3.3. The table below provides information on the total number of all types of applications received by the service since 2018/2019.

All application types	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	1 April to 30 Sep 2021
Received	2001	1892	2131	1196

An additional 239 applications were received during 2020/2021 compared to the previous 12 months. In addition, the first 6 months of 2021 has seen 1196 applications submitted which, if this rate continues for the remainder of 2021/2022, would result in a 36% increase in the number received compared to 2019/20. This reflects the trend of an upturn in the economy which has seen increasing activity by developers including housebuilders.

- 3.5. The following table shows the number of enforcement cases received by the service during the same period.

Enforcement cases	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	1 April to 30 Sep 2021
Received	187	188	280	192

The figure for 2020/2021 represents a 49.7% increase compared to the previous year. In addition, the number of cases opened in the first 6 months of 2021/2022 is higher than for the whole of the years 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.

- 3.6. The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 received Royal Assent in July 2019. It will result in the introduction of a number of additional statutory duties across the planning service which will have an impact on the role and responsibilities of officers. This will include major changes to the way in which Local Development Plans are produced, the matters to be addressed and the way in which they are presented; the introduction of the ability of community bodies to prepare Local Place plans; and a requirement to prepare an Open Space Strategy and Play Sufficiency Assessment. In addition draft national planning policy (National Planning Framework 4) is due to be published by the Scottish Government for consultation in the autumn. A position statement published by the Government in November 2020 highlighted the significant role the planning system will have in tackling climate change, meeting the needs of local communities (this includes an emphasis on placemaking and introduces the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods), health and wellbeing and economic recovery.

4. Current Position

- 4.1. Ongoing recruitment has been taking place since July 2021 in order to fill vacant posts (0.5 team leader and 0.5 advanced officer), the backfilling for an officer on maternity leave with a temporary graduate officer (12 months) and the creation of a total of 5 additional graduate planners posts (2 permanent and 3 temporary for 12 months).
- 4.2. The cost of funding the permanent positions have been met within the Service. In response to the critical situation within the Service, permission was also given from The Head of Personnel Services to recruit three temporary graduate planning posts on 12-month contracts.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. The overall effect of the creation and filling of these posts has been two-fold. Firstly, it has helped address capacity issues within the planning service and allowed an initial improvement in the management of workloads. Secondly the recruitment of graduate level officers has to some extent redressed the ageing structure of the service and will contribute to succession planning in the longer term. The 2 permanent graduate posts are now embedded within the establishment.

- 5.2. The additional temporary positions will have a beneficial impact in the short term in relation to the allocation of workload and progressing policy matters and new statutory duties. In view of the above, the retention of the temporary posts for an additional 11 months is being sought.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. It is proposed that the following posts be extended for an additional 11 months (23 months in total) to the Planning and Economic Development Services establishment as detailed below.

Post	Proposed Number of Posts (FTE)	Grade	SCP Range	Hourly Rate	Annual Salary	Gross Cost (inc on costs 30.3%)	Total inc on costs (23 months)
Graduate Planning Officer (23 months)	3.0	Grade 2 Level 2 - 4	SCP 63 - 74	£12.68 to £16.52	£23,140 to £30,147	£30,151 to £39,282	£173,368 - £225,872

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The overall cost of the 3.0 FTE temporary graduate Planner posts for 23 months will be £225,872. This will be met from existing budgets.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. The 2019 Planning Act and the direction of national planning policy puts tackling climate change and encouraging sustainable development at the core of the planning system. The retention of the 3 posts for an additional 11 months will help address this key issue in planning terms.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. The failure to fully resource the Planning service could result in a fall in performance levels and a reputational risk to the Council. There will also be implications for implementing the additional duties placed upon the Council in the Planning Bill. Addressing the age profile of the service is also a key issue.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.

- 10.2. Trade unions have been consulted in terms of the content of this report.

Michael McGlynn
Executive Director (Community and Enterprise Resources)

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17 November 2021

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Values/Ambitions

- ♦ Improving the availability, quality and access to housing
- ♦ Working with communities and partners to promote high quality, thriving and sustainable communities
- ♦ Supporting the local economy by providing the right conditions for inclusive growth

Previous References

- ♦ None

List of Background Papers

- ♦ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:- Tony Finn, HQ Manager
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