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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDING CONTROL BOARD HELD ON 21 JUNE 2017 AT 7.00 - 8.30 PM

Committee Members Present

Marcus Franks (Chairman)	West Berkshire Council
Derek Wilson (Vice-Chairman)	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Michael Firmager	Wokingham Borough Council
Norman Jorgensen	Wokingham Borough Council
Emma Webster	West Berkshire Council

Officers Present

Rob Large	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Roger Paine	Wokingham Borough Council
Steve Broughton	West Berkshire Council
Clare Lawrence	Wokingham Borough Council
Arabella Yandle (Secretary)	Wokingham Borough Council

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was submitted from Councillor Michael Airey, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

An amendment was made to the Minutes of the Committee held on 2 February 2017, to clarify that Emma Webster worked for a developer, not 'a developed' as originally published.

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 21 June 2017, together with the amendment as outlined above, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Emma Webster declared a personal interest by virtue of the fact that she worked for a developer and represented her Borough on the Royal Berkshire Fire Authority. She confirmed that she did not have any involvement with building control.

Norman Jorgensen declared a personal interest by virtue of the fact that he was a member of the board of Lodden Homes Housing Association

4. BUDGET

Clare Lawrence, Assistant Director – Place Based Services, presented a verbal report on the budget, stating that there was a surplus of £180,000 since BCS Shared Service has been established (at the end of the previous financial year).

Clare explained that the statutory element of building control, which related to public safety, comprised approximately 17-21 % of the work across the service. This was attributed to the partner local authority statutory work modelled when the Shared Service was established. She suggested that the current figures be used as a baseline figure and that CPI index linking be applied to calculate the amounts in future years.

Resolved: Approved that the use of CPI index linking on the baseline modelling of the shared service work when BCS was established is used to agree the cost of the service to LA partners in the future. However, this may change should any one or all partner statutory activity change.

5. OPTIONS FOR FUTURE OF BCS

Clare Lawrence outlined the challenges presented to the Shared Service in merging three different historic LA procedures and three IT systems. She went on to explain the particular issues currently in Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) that was going through a major restructuring, which had diverted resource and time away from implementing solutions. She stated that the Shared Service needed to operate as a business to be able to compete in the market and that the proposed changes at WBC would not facilitate that model. There were four possible models, outlined in the report, and the recommendation was that option 3, to function as a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) be adopted as it offered the most opportunities whilst maintaining risk at a manageable level. The LATC model offered most flexibility in terms of setting competitive staff terms and conditions and so on. The councils were required to provide a statutory service and the Shared Service, by bringing in private business, allowed these services to be carried out at a lower cost with greater efficiency whilst still maintaining oversight of the work in terms of overview and scrutiny.

Referring to the action plan, Clare indicated that the surplus referred to in the previous item would be reinvested to cover any deficit in year 1 costs of setting up a single IT system to replace the multiple legacy systems. As a result, much of the issues around time delay and de-motivation of staff would be reduced. The amount would cover the capital cost, consultancy and data transfer. It was proposed that the Service adopt the building control software produced by Tascomi. This Irish company, which offered Cloud-based solutions, was well thought of in terms of their product and their customer care. Officers had visited STG Building Control, a long-standing 3-way service based in Kent, who were very happy to commend the system and suggested there were no problems with compliance. Any data would be owned by the Shared Service.

During discussion around the action plan and budget, Members queried the prioritisation of actions and the method of funding the IT. Officers indicated that a loan could be taken out but that the cost of funding capital loans through WBC was twice that of West Berkshire Council. It would be preferable to keep the finance and investment within the Shared Service. The new system could be developed in conjunction with the Public Protection Partnership, but the two joint services had different priorities. The Building Control Shared Service had the immediate need and the funds were available now.

In relation to staffing, the historic problems with recruitment and retention were improving and would benefit from an integrated IT system, a new business model and more competitive terms and conditions. There had been staff turnover, but this was not attributed to dissatisfaction. The current staffing levels were not sufficient and more resource was required to assist with the implementation of the new systems. Implementing the action plan would allow the Service to be more resilient in terms of staffing and it would be easier to plan for succession. On the question of office base, Clare Lawrence stated that there were clear advantages to having a single base, both for staff and systems, and she asked the Board to approve this.

Clarifications on the action plan and costs included that there was no current allocation of funds to a Change Manager and that the accommodation costs would be £30000 pa. Processes and procedures in the three authorities would be merged and the best approaches retained.

Resolved: That

1. Options for funding the IT system be re-examined;
2. Options for resourcing be re-examined and clarified;
3. A breakdown of the action plan showing time dependencies and a risk register to be developed and supplied to Board Members, and
4. The Officers be authorised to carry out more work on the model of a LATC for submission at a future meeting.

6. EMERGENCY PLANNING

In response to a question from Emma Webster regarding Grenfell Tower, Clare Lawrence clarified what information was required. She explained that the task was made more complicated by the fact that the partners may not be responsible for an asset. The partners have said they would work with organisations to assist them in providing the information. Building Control was only one of many agencies within authorities with a responsibility and there needed to be a corporate approach. Roger Paine, Wokingham Borough Council, stated that the information request was limited to buildings of six storeys/ 18m and that there was a very short turn around on the request. He explained that the aim was to ascertain which assets there were within the authorities that met the requirement, where they were, and what information was available.

Steve Broughton, West Berkshire Council, stated that the authorities were receiving a number of Freedom of Information (Fol) requests for the information and that the response should be clear in regards to what was known. The Chief Executive had been asked for a corporate response and the statement should be used universally.

Clare Lawrence outlined the historic situation regarding emergency planning and stated that the aim should be to set up a more robust on-call service, requiring a rota where one person would cover all three authorities at a time. Whilst a recent occurrence in Windsor had been dealt with efficiently, there was not a robust system currently in place. There would be a cost involved due to the need to formalise matters and paying an on-call cost. This had been estimated to cost to each borough of at least £15000. The limit of Building Control was to inspect and secure a property with a view to safety, so other agencies, such as planning, would need to be involved.

While a duty call out system could be implemented BCS, each LA partner had the responsibility to secure a resource to carry out emergency works to make structures safe. Each Partner should take this issue back to their LA organisations for action.

Resolved: That

1. Officers talk to Emergency Planners to develop a corporate approach to secure a resource to carry out emergency works to make structures safe;

2. An on-call service be established, and
3. Proposed costings and budget implications for an on-call service be brought to the next meeting.

7. PERFORMANCE

Roger Paine shared a spreadsheet containing summary performance figures across the three authorities, a copy of which is attached. All performance targets against key performance indicators (KPIs) had been met except that for completion of certificates within 5 days that had achieved 77% (target was 85%). In response to a question regarding a marked increase in numbers and whether this illustrated a spike, It was noted that there had been a marked increase in requests for completion certification and Roger Paine indicated that many of these would be backdated certificates due to an active property market. Any charge was limited by Fol rules, but a higher charge could be demanded for certification at very short notice.

In response to a question regarding dangerous structure incidents, Roger Paine stated that he had asked the officer concerned for further information.

Clare Lawrence asked that the Board note the progress that had been made since the establishment of the Shared Service.

Resolved: That the figures be noted and that the thanks of the Board be passed to the officers.

8. AOB

There were no items of any other business.

Building Control Solutions - 3 Way Shared Service Performance Figures

KPI's	July		August		September		October		November		December		January		February		March		April		May	
	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved	Total	% Achieved
Register and acknowledge all submitted applications within 3 working days of receipt - KPI 75%	401	57%	445	82%	432	62%	406	63%	393	92%	296	93%	398	89%	439	94%	497	92%	365	88%	453	87%
Percentage of Building Control Full Plans applications examined within 15 days of receipt - KPI 70%	168	82%	207	79%	154	69%	169	74%	217	83%	163	87%	180	92%	178	93%	207	92%	134	86%	214	83%
Issue a decision notice within the relevant statutory time period - KPI 100%	178	74%	205	76%	164	87%	198	83%	182	92%	135	96%	155	99%	183	98%	184	99%	141	99%	120	100%
Percentage of site inspections carried out on the same day of request - KPI 80%	2077	98%	1789	99%	1902	98%	1765	98%	1597	100%	1128	100%	1233	100%	1256	100%	1749	100%	1435	100%	1663	100%
Issue a completion certificate within 5 working days of satisfactory inspection on site and receipt of any necessary services certificates - KPI 85%	206	54%	184	68%	197	59%	216	81%	175	72%	184	71%	170	72%	153	66%	193	81%	123	74%	256	77%
Issue a Demolition Counter Notice within 5 working days of receipt of Notice of Intention to Demolish - KPI 100%	14	82%	16	83%	9	93%	12		5	80%	4	100%	11	91%	11	100%	10	80%	4	100%	8	100%
Percentage of dangerous structure incidents visited on same day of report (within 24 hours) - KPI 100%	10	100%	5	100%	4	100%	2	100%	5	100%	5	100%	4	100%	11	100%	4	100%	3	100%	6	83%
Average Market Share		77%		82%		79%		79%		76%		73%		70%		78%		75%		69%		77%

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