

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
BUILDING CONTROL BOARD  
HELD ON 20 MARCH 2018 AT 7.10 - 8.35 PM**

**Committee Members Present**

Marcus Franks (Chairman)	West Berkshire Council
David Coppinger	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Norman Jorgensen	Wokingham Borough Council

**Officers Present**

Steve Broughton	Wokingham Borough Council
Anne Hunter	Wokingham Borough Council
Rob Large	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Sean Murphy	West Berkshire Council
Roger Paine	Wokingham Borough Council
Callum Wernham	Wokingham Borough Council

**9. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were submitted from Councillors Michael Airey (Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead), Michael Firmager (Wokingham Borough Council) and Emma Webster (West Berkshire Council).

**10. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

Councillor David Coppinger was appointed Vice Chairman of the Building Control Board for the remainder of the 2017/18 Municipal Year.

**11. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Building Control Board held on 21 June 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Steve Broughton, Wokingham Borough Council, outlined the matters arising as contained in the minutes. He went on to outline the issues around the funding of the IT system and the procuring of Tascomi. It was noted that there had been discussion as to whether to fund the IT system and Tascomi procurement via revenue or capital. Board Members had been consulted on whether to use surplus funds to cover the cost and unanimous support had been received for this proposal. Steve Broughton tabled the risk register and the operational risk matrix. Steve advised that consideration was still being given to setting up a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC). The plan going forward was still to adopt the LATC model which could be carried out once the IT and accommodation were put in place. A project manager had been put in place with revenue funding which had proved very helpful, however issues with staffing levels remained.

Steve Broughton explained that the costs would be £87,000, which included £24,000 for the system, £37,000 paid in stages for implementation and £21,000 first year licence fees. Annual licence fees will be applicable. He then went on to add that there would be data migration costs but these were as yet unknown. It was noted that the new IT system would be cloud based.

Responding to a question from Councillor Norman Jorgensen, Wokingham Borough Council, about what would trigger the move towards an LATC, Steve Broughton explained that once there was confidence in the financial position of the shared service and the market strategy was in place then it would be considered. The merging all three partner emails into a single domain email, would lead to the shared service having a stronger identity and a better marketing outlook and suppress some confusion that customers have had. It was noted that a single web domain had been purchased to assist with the identity and marketing strategy of the business.

Rob Large, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, asked whether Tascomi would be independent of Wokingham Borough Council and their administration and IMT team. Steve Broughton stated that Tascomi would be using the HR, Finance and IMT services of WBC. In response to concerns raised about relying on Wokingham Borough Council's IT services, Steve Broughton explained that the host authority (Wokingham Borough Council) was expected to provide this service so every effort was being made for an SLA agreement to be put in place. It was also noted that the costs given by Wokingham Borough Council's IT services were felt to be too high and this was currently under negotiation.

## **12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor David Coppinger declared a personal interest by virtue of the fact that he was a member of the board of Optalis.

## **13. UPDATE ON THE BUILDING CONTROL PROJECT**

Steve Broughton presented a report which provided an update on the service development project which included options for the future of the Building Control Service. He reported that the business delivery model's preferable option would be the local authority trading model which would be reviewed on a regular basis. The service has begun to look at the legal ramifications surrounding this.

Accommodation had not currently been a priority as it was noted that 84% of the service staff were now located within one building at Wokingham Borough Council with only five staff members based at West Berkshire Council. There had been ongoing issues with space at Shute End (Wokingham Borough Council), and as such discussions had been held with the Property Team with a view to rectifying this issue. A potential opportunity to move to Waterford House (another Wokingham Borough Council property, which could become available in September of this year, was being explored as this was felt to be an ideal location which would meet the service's space requirements. It was noted that this property could also potentially house a permanent scanner which could save £30,000 in current outsourcing costs. The cost of a move to Waterford House had not yet been provided but when the information was available it would be provided to the Board.

It was noted that one implication of being based in a single location would be that West Berkshire Council and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead would not be able to recharge the shared service for these facilities no longer being used.

Marcus Franks questioned how much face to face contact happened between the service and its customers. In response, Steve Broughton explained that very little face to face contact occurred and what wanted in terms of local operation was quick responses e.g. to request for inspections.

## IT

Steve Broughton continued the report by updating the Board on the state of the IT procurement and mobilisation. He stated that the service was very close to securing the contract with Tascomi and should this happen by March then a £5,000 discount would be applied to the contract. The new and upcoming GDPR rules were discussed as these were relevant to the data migration that the service would undertake. The service would provide 15 years backdated building control data with a recommendation of disposing of any older data. Should individual authorities require the older data it would be their responsibility to store it.

In response to a question regarding the savings that the new IT system would make, Steve Broughton emphasised that it would be a case of a much more efficient system that would also enable a fully remote/mobile solution.

Marcus Franks enquired about how the new system would benefit the service's KPIs. In response, Steve Broughton stated that the move to a single system would make the whole business process much more efficient by speeding up administration processes including completing certificate issues. He went on to explain that the service was currently using three separate systems. The implementation of a single system would enable the service's surveyors to be flexibly deployed across the combined geographical area.

Steve Broughton reported that Tascomi would also provide a full accounting service which would enable all payments and invoicing to be dealt with through the system which again would make the service more efficient. It was noted other local authorities including Hertfordshire County Council (a 7 council agreement) had been using Tascomi and had rated their services very positively.

## Staffing

Steve Broughton discussed the staffing situation within the shared service. He said that there had been ongoing staff retention issues which had resulted in a 50% turnover in staff. A large part of the recruitment and retention issue was that private firms could offer a higher base salary than the service could currently offer. It was noted that the service was exploring the option of taking on apprentices with the opportunity of using the apprentice levy scheme. Successfully winning large new projects and having the new IT system in place would motivate staff and hopefully encourage new applicants.

## Marketing

Steve Broughton reported that having a dedicated website with a single e-mail address and phone number would promote the services' identity and assist with the marketing strategy. Councillor David Coppinger, queried whether the marketing strategy would come to the Board for approval. In response, Steve Broughton stated that the intention was for it to be sent to the lead Officers in each authority. David Coppinger stated that he would like to see it.

## Business Plan

Steve Broughton stated that the original business plan developed by previous Boards was very optimistic. More would be known going forward and a revised version would come back to the Board in July.

**RESOLVED:** That the management briefing report be noted.

#### **14. UPDATE ON PERFORMANCE**

The Board considered the performance statistics of the Building Control Service for the past year.

Roger Paine, Wokingham Borough Council, stated that there had been an issue with processing the completion certificate within its defined timeframe. During an audit in December 2017, it was agreed between the service and the auditors to implement revisions and remedial action to the process of the completion certificates.

Roger Paine reported that the move from West Berkshire to Wokingham Borough Council for the administration team had created initial issues as a number of staff did not wish to make the move. Agency staff had been required to cover the workload and it had taken some time to train them on the various systems which had resulted in a temporary decrease in performance. It was noted that the move to a single office for all administration staff has been very positive, with customers adapting well to the new situation.

Norman Jorgensen questioned as to why the completion target was 5 days and not 7 days. In response, Roger Paine stated that the 5 day figure came from the Local Authority Building Control's work with customers. It was also noted that many customers wanted a completion certificate quickly for issues such as a house sale.

In response to a question about calculation of market share, Roger Paine stated that this was based on the number of applications to the service compared to the number of projects that go to competitors. It was hard to ascertain the total market share, however, as the service did not know the value of projects from private firms. It was noted that the service was not commonly more expensive than its competitors, but customers tended to use firms that they already built up a relationship with. The option of contacting home owners before they had chosen the builders or the architect could help increase market share.

In response to a question about the Board seeing financial performance in monthly and quarterly issues, Steve Broughton confirmed that a budget summary would be brought to the Board.

Roger Paine updated the Board on the state of business in January and February, stating that it had increased from the end of 2017 with approximately 40 applications a day.

Rob Large stated that it would be necessary to make it clear on each individual Authority's website that the Building Control service was a shared service. Roger Paine stated that this was in hand and the new web site would better reflect that. He also commented that homeowners appreciated the reassurance of having a Local Authority conducting their work.

**RESOLVED:** That the performance statistics be noted.

#### **15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of any other business.