

Cabinet Meeting	
Meeting Date	9 February 2022
Report Title	STG Building Control Partnership Business Plan 2022 to 2025
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Baldock, Cabinet Member for Planning
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	James Freeman, Head of Planning
Lead Officer	James Freeman, Head of Planning
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<p>1.The Draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business and Delivery Plans for 2022 to 2025 be agreed.</p> <p>2.Agree to continue as a STG partner Authority into a fourth term.</p>

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider and make any comments on the draft STG shared Building Control Partnership (STG) Business and Delivery Plans 2022 to 2025 and to refer the comments to the Joint Committee.
- 1.2 The new three-year Business Plan will take the Council beyond the third term of the partnership and therefore a recommendation has been put forward to agree to a further term for Swale's inclusion within the partnership shared service.

2 Background

- 2.1 The STG Building Control Partnership (involving Medway, Canterbury, Gravesham and Swale) went live in October 2007 with Canterbury joining in April 2018. Under the terms of the Memorandum Agreement between the four partner authorities, a three-year rolling business plan needs to be agreed.
- 2.2 Each partner authority must advise the Secretary to the Joint Committee whether it approves or rejects the revised draft business plan by no later than 10 days before the Annual Meeting of the Joint Committee in June each year
- 2.3 Whilst much of the Building Control Partnership operation is subject to competition from Approved Inspectors, the service retains statutory

responsibilities regarding public protection e.g. dangerous structures, demolitions, unauthorised works and maintaining registers etc.

- 2.4 Over the past few years, the service has had to compete with 'Approved Inspectors' within an increasingly competitive and shrinking market, which has put pressure on income generation within the service and correspondingly has put pressure on the resourcing of the service itself. This has been further compounded by the Covid 19 impacts, although the shared service has been able to recuperate much of the lost income costs through Government Covid-19 support funding. The service has also been able to withstand the fall in income not covered by the Government by the use of existing reserves.
- 2.5 The ability to adapt to this new competitive environment has been a major benefit of a combined authority shared service and has facilitated significant improvements on embracing digital transformation, including the freedoms and accessibility that remote and agile working operations deliver, improving the customer experience and introducing efficiencies and savings to service delivery.
- 2.6 Whilst there has been some impact on service delivery during this difficult period, communication with customers has been paramount to service delivery and there has been no discernible increase in customer dissatisfaction being recorded.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The Business Plan (Appendix II) outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the partnership Councils' up until 2025 and indicates what the contributions will be for 2022/23 and forecasted to 2025.
- 3.2 The Business Plan presents three agreed objectives:
- Embracing our customer needs and expectations;
 - Maximisation of technology to reduce costs and continue to improve the way the Partnership works; and
 - Valuing, supporting and development of staff.

The Plan also includes action plans and targets to achieve these objectives.

- 3.3 The key projects for 2022/23 will be:
- Improvements to the online portal to facilitate other forms of building regulation notifications;
 - Improvements required to the quality and consistency of plan checking and site inspections;
 - Development of the back-office system to improve enforcement activity; and

- Training and evidencing of surveyor competencies and capabilities to attain the required licenses under the new Building safety Bill.
- 3.4 These items will form the focal point in the year ahead and underpin the objectives for the Delivery Plan (Appendix III).
- 3.5 The new three-year Business Plan will take the Authority beyond the third term of the partnership and handle the very significant legislative changes to the building control environment following the Grenfell Inquiry.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could consider removing itself from the partnership. However, whilst the Council is facing significant pressures on its revenue budget over the next few years, the success of the building control partnership has been recognised in that the efficiencies secured since its inception would have significantly exceeded any potential savings as a single authority service given the economies of scale a shared partnership presented. This has been borne out through separate reviews undertaken at the respective partner authorities, particularly in Canterbury City Council's recent decision to join the service. There are proposals to review how consultancy services can be promoted to increase potential income and how best to make use of the existing staff abilities and experience to achieve efficiencies.
- 4.2 Additionally, many building control services are currently experiencing severe shortage in available qualified building control staff. Whilst STG has not been immune to the impacts of such a skills shortage, the combined resources available as a partnership has demonstrated clear resilience benefits and an ability to bring in training opportunities which smaller individual authority services would struggle to provide.
- 4.3 However, it should be noted that the Partnership will be undertaking a review of the Shared Service employment offer to new recruits because of the ongoing pressures arising from the national and local skills shortages and the competition for the limited available skills from the private sector.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Business Plan has been considered and agreed by the Joint Authorities Committee overseeing the operation of the Building Control partnership. This has involved Councillor Tim Gibson as the authority's representative on the Joint Committee.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications															
Corporate Plan	The Partnership has built resilience into the service that supports the Council's aim to provide well run customer focussed services.															
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Appendix I sets out the details of the financial plan accompanying the Business Plan.</p> <p>It is proposed to increase the total partner contribution over the three year plan by £ (6.1%) from 2021/22 to 2024/25. (These figures take into account the temporary 1.25% rise in National Insurance contributions)</p> <p>The contributions for Swale BC are as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="564 846 1519 1155"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="564 846 880 936">Year</th> <th data-bbox="880 846 1200 936">Contribution (£'s)</th> <th data-bbox="1200 846 1519 936">Change from previous year (£'s)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="564 936 880 987">2021/22</td> <td data-bbox="880 936 1200 987">65,220</td> <td data-bbox="1200 936 1519 987">+2,182(+3.5%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="564 987 880 1039">2022/23</td> <td data-bbox="880 987 1200 1039">67,961</td> <td data-bbox="1200 987 1519 1039">+2,737(+4.2%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="564 1039 880 1090">2023/24</td> <td data-bbox="880 1039 1200 1090">68,602</td> <td data-bbox="1200 1039 1519 1090">+641(+0.9%)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="564 1090 880 1155">2024/25</td> <td data-bbox="880 1090 1200 1155">69,261</td> <td data-bbox="1200 1090 1519 1155">+659 (+1.0%)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>At Swale, the Medium Term Financial Plan will accommodate the proposed contributions as stated above.</p>	Year	Contribution (£'s)	Change from previous year (£'s)	2021/22	65,220	+2,182(+3.5%)	2022/23	67,961	+2,737(+4.2%)	2023/24	68,602	+641(+0.9%)	2024/25	69,261	+659 (+1.0%)
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Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Partnership and Joint Committee operate under a memorandum of agreement signed by each of the partner authorities.															
Crime and Disorder	Effective control and enforcement of building standards and dealing with dangerous structures is consistent with an increased perception of security and wellbeing.															
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	This is detailed in Section Three of the Service Delivery Documentation, focussing on the highly competitive market the partnership operates within as well as a lack of investment in staff development and IT solutions.															
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage.															
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.															

Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Three year budget build and contribution calculation for 2022-2025;
- Appendix II: Business Plan
- Appendix III: Service Delivery Plan

8 Background Papers

None

APPENDIX I

Three-year Budget Build and Contribution Calculation for 2022/23 to 2024/2025

		<u>2022/23</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2023/24</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2024/25</u> <u>Budget</u>
Staffing		1,766,825	1,784,726	1,802,627
Premises		59,850	60,960	62,643
Transport		81,526	81,867	82,216
Supplies and Services		148,250	148,710	149,175
Support Services		44,998	44,998	44,998
Total Cost:		<u>2,101,449</u>	<u>2,121,261</u>	<u>2,141,659</u>
Contributions		323,623	326,674	329,815
Income		<u>1,777,826</u>	<u>1,794,587</u>	<u>1,811,844</u>
Total Income		<u>2,101,449</u>	<u>2,121,261</u>	<u>2,141,659</u>
Chargeable	84.6%	1,777,826	1,794,587	1,811,844
Non-Chargeable	15.4%	<u>323,623</u>	<u>326,674</u>	<u>329,815</u>
		<u>2,101,449</u>	<u>2,121,261</u>	<u>2,141,659</u>
Authority and Agreed Percentage		<u>2022/23</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2023/24</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2024/25</u> <u>Budget</u>
Canterbury - 23%		74,433	75,135	75,858
Gravesham - 15%		48,543	49,001	49,472
Medway - 41%		132,685	133,936	135,224
Swale - 21%		<u>67,961</u>	<u>68,602</u>	<u>69,261</u>
		<u>323,623</u>	<u>326,674</u>	<u>329,815</u>

[Figure 1]



Building Control Partnership Business Plan 2022-2025



Director
Version No.
Last updated

Janine Weaver
2
3rd November 2021

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Building Safety Bill represents the biggest shake up of the building regulations since the 1984 Building Act and will have a significant impact on building control teams.
- 1.2. The Bill sets up a new Building Safety Regulator (BSR) within the Health and Safety Executive and will oversee the safety and standards of all buildings, implement the new regulatory regime for higher-risk buildings and assist and encourage competence among the built environment industry and registered building inspectors.
- 1.3. All surveyors will have to be registered with the BSR regardless of whether they work on higher-risk buildings. This means all surveyors will have to have their competency assessed and validated.
- 1.4. There will be a new professional structure for building control covering both local authority and approved inspectors who will be renamed as registered building control approvers. There will be sanctions and criminal charges available that can be brought against anyone passing themselves off as this.
- 1.5. Under the proposed amendments to the Building Act, the BSR will oversee the performance of the whole building control profession through a robust process of monitoring, analysis, reporting and sanctions. This will apply across all building control work, not just on in-scope buildings and as such will impact all building control teams and professionals in England.
- 1.6. Powers will be given to the BSR to intervene and direct both public and private building control bodies to rectify any unsafe practices and they will create new operating standards for both. Specified building control functions will only be able to be executed by considering advice from a 'registered building inspector'. The building control profession will have various classes of registration dependent on complexity of work and competence.
- 1.7. Significantly, Section 38 of the Building Act 1984, Civil Liability, - for breach of the requirements of the Building Regulations will be commenced upon the enactment into law of the Building Safety Bill.

2. Financial Plan

- 2.1. To meet the timetable required by the Constitution, the first draft of the business plan is required to be presented to the Joint Committee in September 2021. Therefore, the financial table, in figure 1, is a forecast for 2022/2023 as the Plan is being developed using half yearly comparative data. Monthly financial monitoring is reported back to both the Steering Group and Joint Committee and revisions are therefore possible given more up to date information.
- 2.2. The business plan format is a 3-year rolling programme, which will take the forecast beyond the end of the current third term which finishes in September 2022. However, Members have endorsed the likely progression of the partnership beyond that period and the new arrangement will allow for the agreed contributions to feed into each authority's medium-term financial plan.
- 2.3. All building control providers will be expecting rising salaries and training costs to be the biggest impact in the coming years as a consequence of the changes Government is bringing to the building control profession.
- 2.4. The most significant introduction under the Building Safety Bill is that of the 'Registered Building Inspectors' (RBI) where certain activities, such as inspections for the purposes of building control, will now only be able to be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and registered building inspector. Therefore, to inspect controlled work (Restricted Activity), which Government will specify in secondary legislation, and before a Restricted Function is undertaken, the Local Authority must obtain the advice of a suitably competent RBI (in-house or bought in), will have to employ staff who are RBIs at the respective grades and levels to undertake the activity at that level.
- 2.5. The mandatory registration that Government is introducing is about ensuring surveyors have the proven competence or proof of the required experience at the requisite level to work on the specific categories of developments:
 - Domestic
 - New Dwellings
 - Low Risk (Non-Residential)
 - High Risk (Residential & Non-Residential)

With specialisms potentially in:

- Building Regulation Fire Safety on Higher Risk Buildings
- Public Safety at Large Events
- Regulatory Enforcement

- 2.6. Surveyors will be required to undergo training/examination for each category in order to be licenced to work on that type of development. Timescale for registration is likely to be April 2023, but this will depend on timing of Royal Assent, with re-registration on a four-year cycle.
- 2.7. In this highly competitive market, there is already a lack of building control surveyors and the requirement to evidence competency will compound this with the more competent surveyors becoming more sought after. More experienced surveyors at the upper end of the age profile may also consider that this may be the opportune time to retire.
- 2.8. Operational standards will need to change to accommodate the required changes, compete within the market to keep and grow resources and still deliver the service.
- 2.9. To progress the partnership, there also needs to be continued investment in the development of our IT system. The expansion of alternative and complementary services reliant on customer self-serve and interaction to reduce pressure on the service.

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[Figure 1]

Re-grading and training costs as a requirement of the Government changes to surveyor licencing under the Building Safety Bill are not included within the above financial forecast.

This financial information will be provided once available.

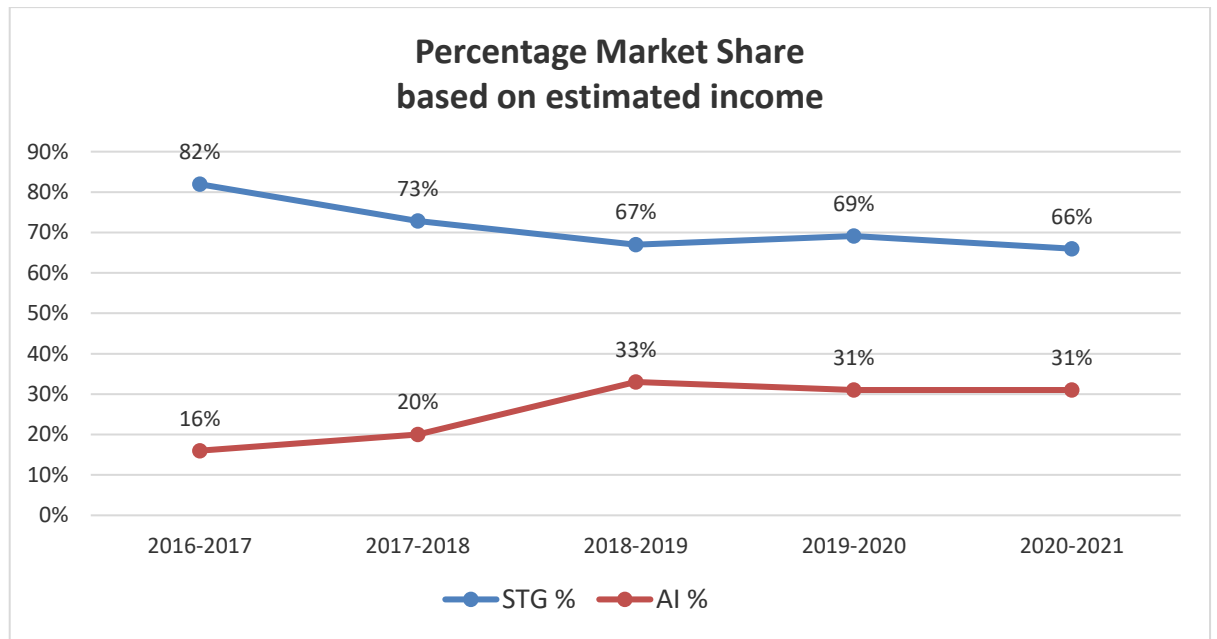
3. PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

- 3.1. The building control partnership's role is to ensure, as far as is reasonable, that building work undertaken in the council areas of Canterbury, Gravesham, Medway, and Swale comply with the requirements of the building regulations.
- 3.2. The building regulations are national standards that apply to all types of buildings from major developments to house extensions. They cover all aspects of construction from foundations to roof coverings, including drainage, energy conservation, fire protection and means of escape in case of fire. In addition, they also ensure that buildings are accessible to all people.
- 3.3. The partnership has three elements to its business.
 - Building Regulations applications
 - Public Protection services
 - Consultancy services

Building Regulations

- 3.4. The partnership ensures that building construction complies with the various requirements by checking proposals submitted and carrying out site inspections of building work. Where necessary it also undertakes enforcement action, however, by being proactive in the way it operates such action is minimised.
- 3.5. We are a major provider of building control within the four council areas and customers can use our expertise in conjunction with other local authorities under the LABC Partner Authority Scheme.
- 3.6. The building regulation service is in direct competition with the private sector. Over the last number of years there has been a major change in the work that approved inspectors undertake away from majorly commercial/residential developments towards the domestic market, including some quite minor works. There is now widespread competition for domestic extensions, loft conversions and conversions to dwellings, work which was traditionally carried out by the Local Authority.
- 3.7. It is extremely difficult assessing market share lost to approved inspectors. There is no information available on the fees generated from the initial notices and with the market so competitive, we know that quotes for work are now often 50%-60% less than would have been charged three years ago.
- 3.8. Also, we often have several initial notices deposited for one site, each of these must be registered but only one will win the contract to supervise the site so the other two have eventually to be cancelled. We also receive

initial notices for speculative building, shortly after they have received planning permission and again these are registered and may only be cancelled some two or three years later when the development does not go ahead.

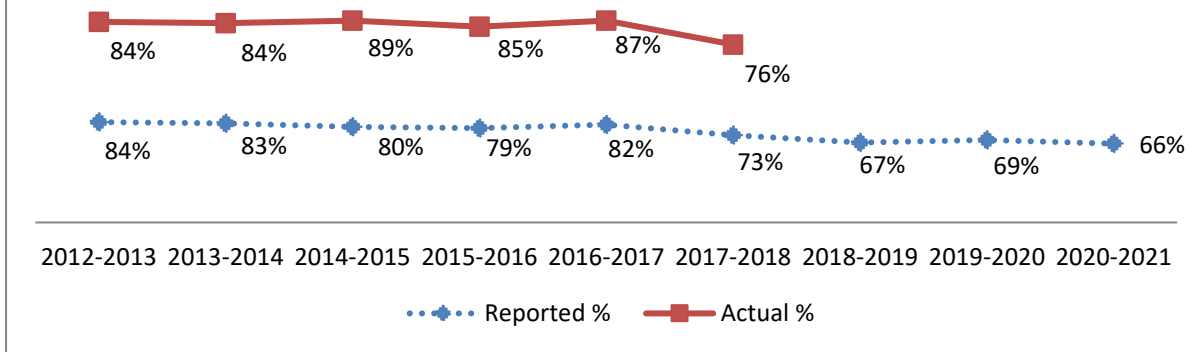


[NB: 2018/2019 incorporated fourth partner authority]

3.9. A benefit of a larger administrative team means we can carry out our duties under Section 52(5) of the Building Act 1984 (As Amended) and The Building (Approved Inspectors etc.) Regulations 2010 (As Amended) and where an initial notice has not commenced within the prescribed three years, cancel that notice. This also ensures our only public register is kept up to date. Since 2016 we have had 515 initial notices with an estimated income of £276,817, cancelled or withdrawn.

3.10. Whilst we are unable to gauge our market explicitly, this exercise allows a review to be undertaken on what information we have and how that translates to a difference in market retention.

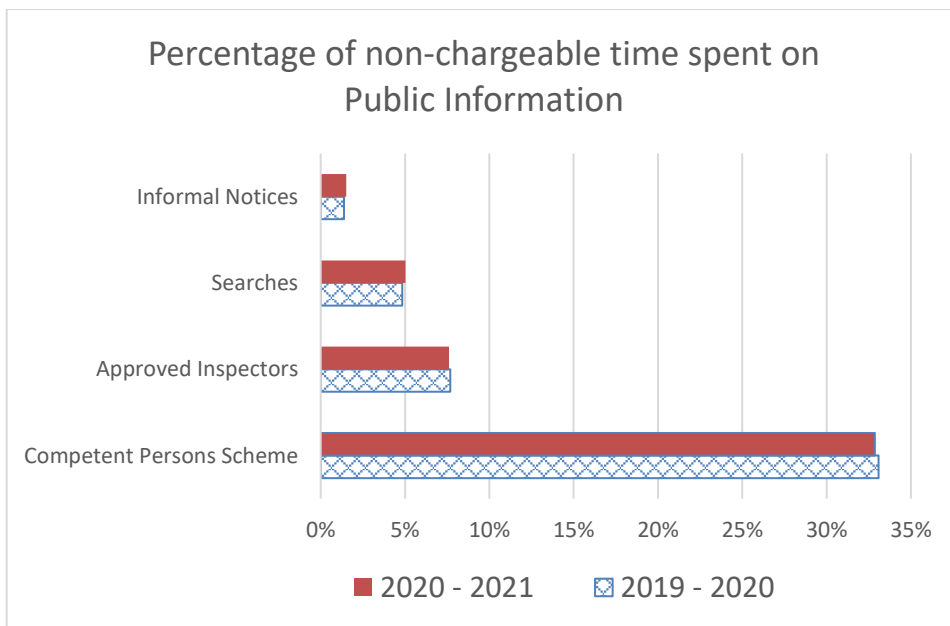
Comparison on reported & actual percentage Market Retention based on estimated income



Partner contributions

3.11. The partner contributions pay for much of the partnerships works that is designated as public protection and often falls as a duty or responsibility on the Local Authority such as: dangerous structures, demolitions, unauthorised work and enforcement and the administration of the approved inspector legislation.

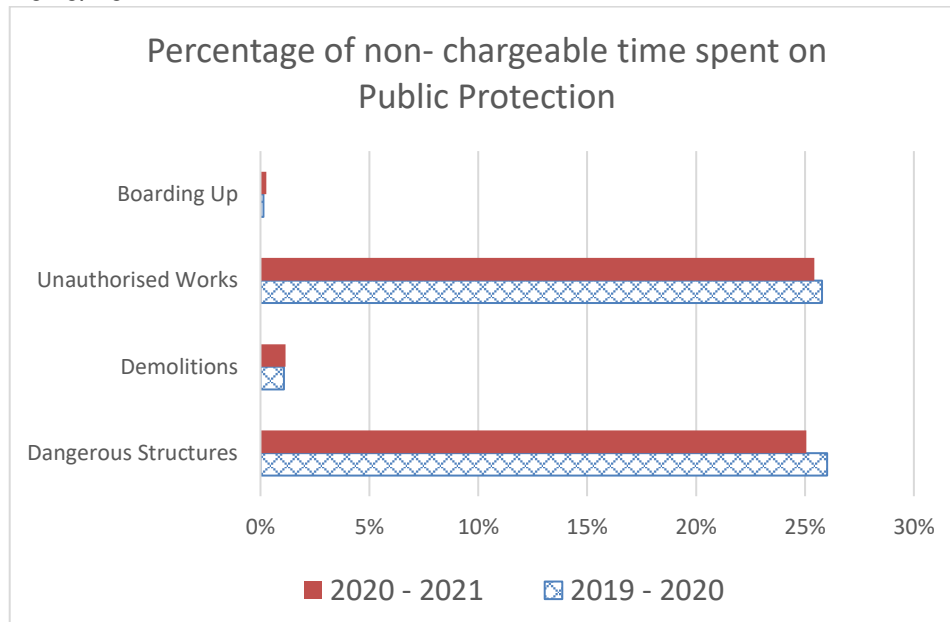
3.12. The charts below show comparisons of the time spent on the non-fee chargeable work through public information for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.



[NB: total percentage of time for non-chargeable works shown in the two charts above and below]

3.13. Effective public protection is important to ensure within the partnerships areas that any building works are constructed in a safe, healthy manner and are also provided with adequate access for the disabled and have provision for energy conservation.

3.14. The chart below shows comparisons of the time spent on some of these non-chargeable works through public protection for 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.



3.15. A duty of the local authority which is extremely time consuming and expensive is carrying out inspections and monitoring the situation with dangerous structures. Endeavouring to establishing ownership can take a long time and where no proof of ownership, it is often reliant on the local authority to act and resolve any dangerous issues.

3.16. The constitution designates the authority in which the dangerous structure exists, is liable for the cost of any remedial or repair work to be carried out in emergency situations, however, even when an owner can be traced these structures are normally uninsured and again the cost of the work is borne by the local authority, which may place a charge on the property for recovery at some late date.

Consultancy

3.17. The consultancy delivers additional discretionary services which either complement the building control service and assist us in being competitive with the private sector or provide services to other parts of the authority requiring a building surveying skill. In this way we currently deliver energy and fire risk assessments together with SAP calculations. The partnership also provides a clerk of works service overseeing decent homes for Medway Councils' social housing stock.

3.18. We continue to review other services which could be provided through the consultancy and have through 2020/2021 have assisted Swale Borough Council with regards to climate change on planning conditions.

4. Partnership Strategy

- 4.1. For all those involved in the construction and re-development of properties, there are changes happening to Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel & Power) and Part F (Ventilation) which will significantly impact the requirements for energy efficiency from 2021. The Government is aiming to make non-domestic buildings greener and more efficient. The plans have been many years in the making and are driven by the need for building energy regulations to align with the low and zero-carbon Government commitments.
- 4.2. Heating and powering buildings currently account for 40% of the UK's total energy usage. In 2019, the Government introduced a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050. There is significant progress that is needed if this target is to be met. The new measures will not just apply to new-builds but to existing buildings where relevant refurbishment works are being undertaken. As many of the non-domestic buildings that will exist in 2050 have already been built.
- 4.3. The Future Buildings Standard aligns with the domestic Future Homes Standard and will regulate new homes. The new standard covers the revision of Part L for non-domestic buildings. Part L, which regulates heating, lighting, and hot water energy use in buildings, has not had any major revisions since 2013. This has been recognised for many years as hindering progress with some councils insisting on standards which exceed the regulation to grant planning permission.
- 4.4. Alongside this is the review of Part F, which regulates ventilation, which is targeting the reduction of the risk of overheating in new homes to reduce carbon emissions.
- 4.5. The Future Homes Standard proposes a ban on fossil fuel boilers from 2025 and a decrease in emissions of 75% to 80% compared with current levels. In the interim the aim is achieving a 31% reduction in 2021 and greater use of heat pumps for heating over traditional methods. The Future Buildings Standard is similar in structure and includes an interim target for 2021 but has no longer term goal for 2025.
- 4.6. In July 2020, the Government published its draft Building Safety Bill which included substantial changes to the Building Act required to make the building regulation system safer following the Grenfell tragedy. When enacted these changes will revolutionise the whole building control system and will place significant new duties and risks on all local authorities in England.
- 4.7. The draft Bill sets up a Building Safety Regulator (BSR), with three of its main functions being:

- To oversee the safety and standards of all buildings
- To directly regulate the safety of higher-risk buildings (HRBs) during construction and after occupation
- To improve the competence of all those involved in the construction and management of HRBs

4.8. The Regulator will be able to request local authorities and fire and rescue authorities to support its work by providing staff or information and if necessary, it will have the power to direct them to do so. Local authorities will be reimbursed for the costs of this support.

4.9. The HSE as the new Building Safety Regulator will be overseeing the performance and standards of all building control bodies (public and private sector) and professional not just for HRBs. Local authorities will be exposed to greater responsibilities and risks and local authority building control teams will take on additional work and will have stronger powers and sanctions.

4.10. Under the new regime, all building control teams in both public and private sector building control will have to demonstrate it has the ongoing capacity, competence, and resilience to work on all buildings and individual building control surveyors will have to be registered to practise. Teams will have to regularly report on performance and operating standards and individual surveyors will need to regularly prove their competence through a third-party accreditation scheme.

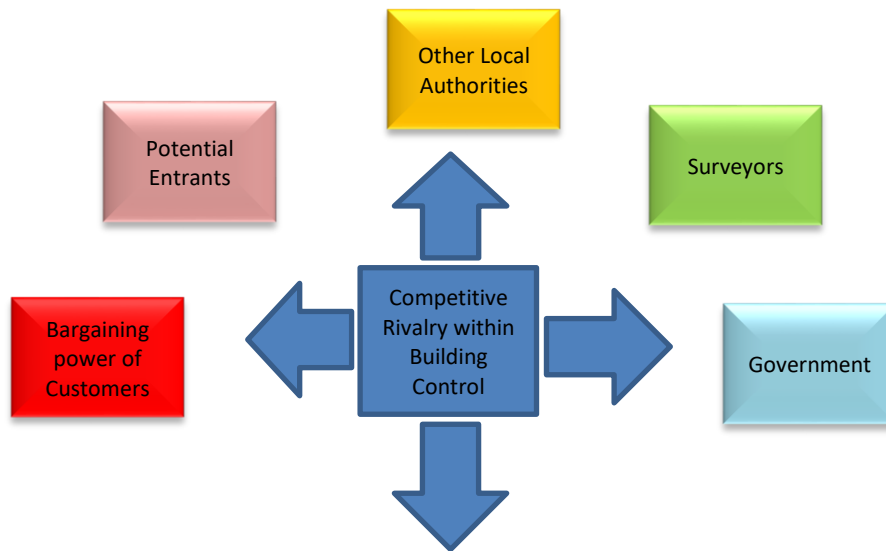
4.11. All local authority building control teams will require investment in:

- Additional professional surveyors
- Recruitment of trainees
- Formal learning and structured CPD to ensure professional staff pass their competence and registration exams and can maintain registration.
- ISO quality management systems and independent external audits
- Back-office processes and IT links with the BSR, fire and rescue authorities and LABC to supply mandatory application information and inspection records.

4.12. The resource market is shrinking, the demand for more experienced and qualified surveyors is becoming more competitive and the requirements and challenges to operate as a surveyor are becoming more multifaceted.

4.13. Building Control operates in a competitive market to provide the building regulation service for every building project. Our competitive environment

includes components both inside and outside the partnership, has and will continue to significantly change.



[Michael Porters, Competitive Strategy]

Bargaining power of customers

Customer bargaining power is high and influences the service in terms of price. In many cases, builders determine the building control provider and want the least intervention at the lowest cost.

Potential entrants

The scheme of Approved Inspectors was introduced by the Building Act 1984. Prior to this the role of ensuring that a project complied with Building Regulations was solely carried out by Local Authorities' building control departments. After this, the role of ensuring compliance could be carried out by either depending on what the customer decided.

Over the years approved inspector operations have shifted from a national level to a regional, engaging individuals across the country to work from home. Also, more and more individual approved inspectors are forming each year.

Other local authorities

Under the Local Authority Partnering Scheme, partner architects and developers can benefit from being able to operate in multiple locations with many local authorities. This enables work to remain within local authorities and not lost to the private sector.

Competition is also between authorities to recruit experienced and qualified surveyors to replace retiring staff or those that have left for the private sector.

Surveyors

The bargaining power of surveyors will continue to increase as they are able to leverage their circumstances to achieve the most beneficial salary packages.

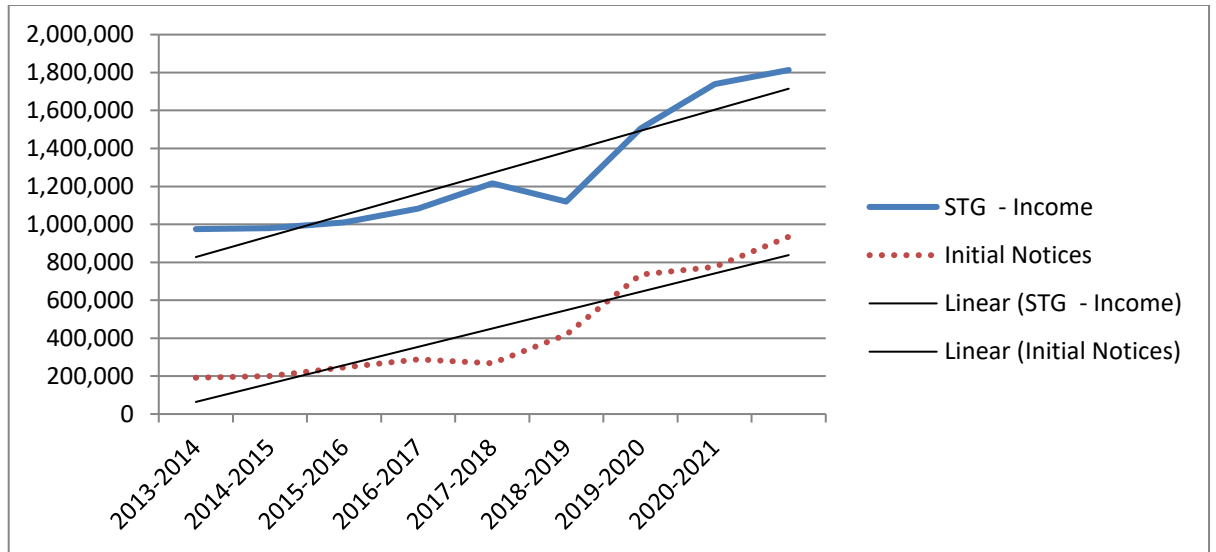
Government

The Building Safety Bill will require validation for surveyors' competency which will become an integral part of the building control surveyor role requiring greater investment and resourcing. This will ultimately lead to a proficiency tiering of surveyors; domestic, non-domestic, high-rise.

- 4.14. According to Inside Housing, the number of building control surveyors employed by councils has fallen by 27.4% in the last decade. A Freedom of Information request from 85 councils indicated that 707 surveyors were employed in December 2010, but this had fallen to 513 by December 2020. One council went from 10 surveyors to two. If the figure is replicated across the country, it would mean councils have lost around 1,400 surveyors across the decade at the time when the country is facing a major building safety crisis.
- 4.15. The research carried out showed that many other authorities have cut staffing levels in their building control departments. Around 38% of those have cut their teams by more than a third. The reduction may also have been exacerbated as a result of retirements and following a central government requirement from 2010 to make building control services 'cost neutral', alongside the freedom to set their own fees locally.
- 4.16. At the Grenfell Tower enquiry, the former surveyor for The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea cited the pressure created by staff reduction from 12 to five at the council as a reason for errors.
- 4.17. When the partnership was formed in October 2007 it employed 16 site surveyors, but this has fallen to 10 (a cut of 37%) by March 2021. When Canterbury joined in April 2018, 4 surveyors were employed and this has fallen to 3, a cut of 25%. STG also has 3 trainee building control surveyors.

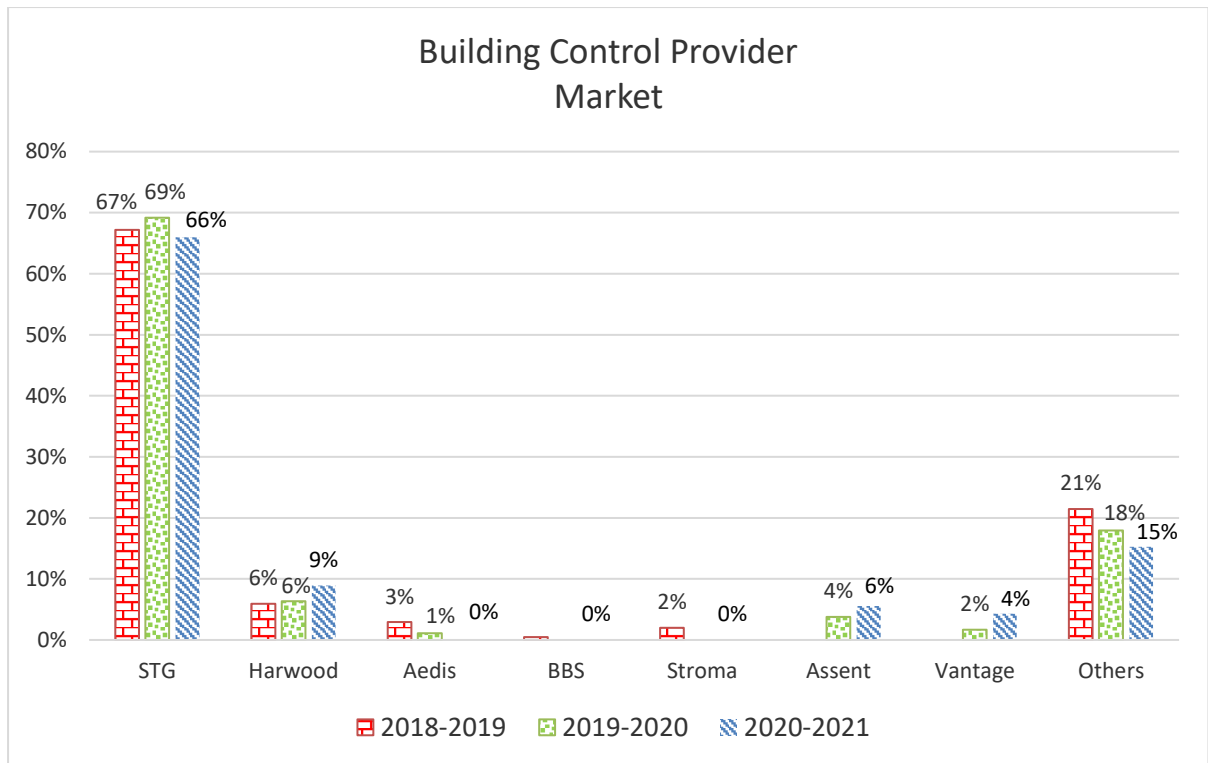
4.18. This dropped has been due to natural retirements, significant competition from the private sector for staff and to reduce operational costs. We need to be committed to developing a stronger in-house team by regrading surveyors accordingly to domestic and non-domestic as well as recruiting more staff.

4.19. The graph below indicates the application trends of both STG applications and Initial Notices served by AI's. Despite our market share dropping in 2018/2019 to 67% and rising to 69% in 2020/2021, this demonstrate that the ongoing trend differences remains consistent.



4.20. The building control provider landscape has changed over time with the early years of the partnership seeing a general mix of local and regional providers. For several years our main competitors were local providers, however, the larger regional companies have progressively acquired local approved inspectors to enable them to provide national coverage.

4.21. The chart below shows our main competitors and how the share of the market has changed over the last three years.



4.22. There are more and more small non-corporate AIs' establishing themselves in the market with minimal overheads. As became evident from the collapse of Aedis Approved Inspector in 2019 and several others, the site inspection records were minimal or non-existent and largely relied upon photographic evidence. This ties in with what we see on some surveyor CVs where they record their job as 'home based site inspector'.

4.23. The other way we understand AIs are leveraging their brand, is by aligning themselves with similar providers to enable the companies to benefit from each other while escalating their reach by appearing bigger than they are.

4.24. Salaries within building control are constrained by the authorities pay scale structure. A structure that whilst it enables other services to compete on a level playing field for staff is a disincentive for building control where staff can work in the private sector for more money and without the problems of dealing with enforcement, dangerous structures, or political accountability.

4.25. We cannot compete on all levels, however, if we are to encourage staff to remain or compete for suitably experienced and qualified staff the grading structure needs to be fit for the purpose.

5. Business Environment

- 5.1. Net zero by 2050, the notion that we reduce carbon emissions to a level where we are no longer adding to the stock in the atmosphere. In April 2021, the Government announced to set in law the world's most ambitious climate change target, cutting emissions by 78% by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.
- 5.2. Retrofitting existing buildings to make them net zero carbon is the biggest challenge the construction industry will face in meeting the UK's goals. The industry needs to invest in training in how to construct and retrofit buildings to Passivhaus standards and use of heat pump technologies. Training will be required not only for installers but also occupants in terms of the new technologies required.
- 5.3. It is crucial that a fabric-first approach is taken to reduce the energy demand of buildings before changing their heat source to electric.
- 5.4. Construction companies need to identify the role of their organisation and employees in achieving the targets. Industry and individuals do not currently know what net zero requires and they also need the time to identify and then fill the skills gap.
- 5.5. A survey conducted by Construction Manager found 86% of industry professionals consider current training provisions 'inadequate'. Of those polled, 79% said it was 'not easy' to find suitable net zero training, and of those that had undertaken a course, almost two-thirds said they did not deliver the skills required. Courses on traditional (pre-1919) buildings and retrofit were seen as the weakest, with 35% and 29% respectively of respondents describing training they had taken as 'not useful'.



Building Control Partnership
Delivery Plan
2022-2025



Director
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2
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Executive Summary

The Delivery Plan Update sets out our ongoing work and plans to meet our three objectives:

- Embracing our customer needs and expectations
- Maximisation of technology to reduce cost and continue to improve the way we work
- Valuing, supporting and development of staff

Our objective is to improve the partnerships performance for our customers by developing our service delivery through customer feedback – which remains our main purpose and underpins everything we do – exploit technology for the benefit of staff and provide savings – appreciating our team and assisting them to grow.

We continue to deliver public protection to the community with 1143 inspections carried out and with ongoing monitoring of 244 dangerous structures in 2020/2021.

Supporting our staff with their career development has seen the achievement of:

- 3 Assistant Building Control Surveyors advance their training path to becoming Building Control Surveyors.

- 2 Building Control Surveyors progressing on the BSc (Hons) in Building Control degree at the University of Wolverhampton.
- 1 Technical Administrator completed the LABC Level 3 in Building Control Technical Administration.
- 1 Technical Administrator commenced a HNC in Construction.

We continue to ensure that buildings, within our partnerships area, are designed and built-in accordance with the Building Regulations and associated legislation. In delivering this around 12,354 site inspections were carried out in 2020/2021.

This Delivery Plan lays out our objectives and outputs for the 2022/2023 year. Our past record shows that we take these commitments seriously. We recognise that we still have much to do to improve our performance and we believe that we will continue to deliver against our objectives of our Business Plan, the expectations of our stakeholders and for the benefit of our customers.

What we plan to deliver in 2022-2023

Embracing our customer needs and expectations

We have been listening to our customers and stakeholders to better understand their needs and concerns. This insight, supported by our surveys, is helping us to deliver our objectives more efficiently and meet the needs of our customers.

We have already delivered several initiatives aimed at improving our customers' experience including:

- Inspection reports deliverable through the Tascomi mobile app for owners / builders detailing:
 - the stage of works inspected
 - inspection result: satisfactory / unsatisfactory
 - details of any contraventions
 - next stage of works to be inspected

During 2022/2023, we will:

- Investigate feasibility of modifications to current online submission portal to accept other types of application submissions.

- Continue to improve consistency to plan vetting and site inspection through mobile app to reduce variances in interpretation of the building regulations.
- Expand our technical seminars for architects, agents, and builders to improve understanding of legislative changes, clarify issue on interpretation and use of building products.

Working with others

In 2022/2023, we will:

- Expanding our partnering to engage with more architects/builders to increase our client base and build long-term relationships.
- Carry out a competitor survey to either corroborate previous survey results as to who chooses the building control provider or establish any market change.

What we plan to deliver in 2022-2023

Maximisation of technology to reduce cost and continue to improve the way we work

We remain focused on continuous improvement of our IT to ensure we retain the capability to adapt in our competitive market.

In 2020/2021 we introduced enhancements to our mobile app to enable GIS route planning and check-in/check-out facility to safeguard surveyors as lone workers. Our safeguarding has expanded to incorporate a direct call device to the out-of-hours control centre for surveyors attending dangerous structures out of hours.

We aspire to enhance our service to customers by increasing the accessibility of information 24/7 and automated notifications.

During 2022/2023, we will:

- Develop an enforcement module incorporating legislative action target points.
- Continue to improve work allocation module by enabling the prioritisation on individual surveyors' workflow.
- Development of an individualised dashboard presenting visual data on performance and current workload.

- Restricting data access to partner authority information by custodian code to provide additional protection on our partner authorities' information.
- Develop our online facilities to enable other types of applications to be submitted, such as initial notices to deliver further savings.
- We will continue to improve performance, generate efficiencies, and achieve cost savings, supporting our drive to achieve a balance budget.

Working with others

We are committed to work with our customers and back-office provider to assess opportunities to improve IT performance, identifying the resources and capabilities necessary to ensure lasting results

In 2022/2023, we will:

- Continue to demonstrate to other potential users our advancements and collectively seek best practice.

What we plan to deliver in 2022-2023

Valuing, supporting and development of staff

Ultimately, we can only optimise our ability to deliver if we have the right people, processes, and systems. We will increase our efforts to retain, develop and attract the best talent to meet our evolving needs and to continue to strengthen our position as a building control provider.

During 2022/2023, we will continue to embed:

- Trust which underpins our partnerships principles
- Autonomy to manage their own workload
- Responsibility and ownership to strengthen their resolve to achieve the partnerships goals
- Interpersonal skills to engender team working and prevent disengagement through agile working

The Regulations are becoming more involved and complex. The main driving force of the changes is the Building Safety Bill and climate change, reducing the carbon footprint.

During 2022/2023, we will continue our programme of:

- Mentorship to ensure skills and knowledge of senior staff are transferred to others.

- Expanding surveyor's competencies and capabilities to deal with all categories of work through:

- Peer to peer learning
- Virtual learning
- External training
- Guided learning

- Encourage autonomous learning so staff take ownership of their career development.

During 2022/2023, we will:

- Undertake the mandatory registration of surveyors as prescribed by Government.
- Investigate operational changes to facilitate staff retention and future-proofing the partnership.
- Encourage and support staff in achieving the LABC Level 6A and other relevant specialisms.

Working with others

We recognise the importance of having a work-life balance and we are committed to supporting staff in achieving this.

- Work with staff to manage their work-life balance.
- Monitor levels of development to prevent training fatigue.

5. CONTRIBUTION AND SUPPORT FOR COUNCILS' PRIORITIES

5.1. As STG is a Partnership of four authorities, it is important that its values reflect those of the four councils. The four partner authority priorities are:

Canterbury's priorities are:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported
- Places – we make most of our unique built and natural environment
- Prosperity – the district has a resilient, diverse economy which supports job growth

Gravesham's priorities are:

- People: a proud community; where residents can call a safe, clean, and attractive borough their home
- Place: a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community
- Progress: an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment

Medway's priorities are:

- Place: Medway: a place to be proud of
- People: Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential
- Growth: Maximising regeneration and economic growth – growth for all

Swale's priorities are:

- Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all.
- Investing in our environment and responding positively to global.
- Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone.
- Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future.

5.2. There are clear links between the four and all revolve people and place, maximising opportunities for local communities and delivering quality services. These are also encompassed in the values of putting the customer at the heart of everything we do and giving value for money.

People

Linked to Council Priorities:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported – Canterbury priority
- People: a proud community; where residents can call a safe, clean, and attractive borough their home - Gravesham priority
- Supporting Medway’s people to realise their potential – Medway priority
- Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone – Swale priority

5.3. We work cooperatively with building owners, homeowners, architects, developers, building contractors and other professionals to ensure buildings are safe, healthy, and efficient to meet the standards set by the building regulations.

5.4. Our consultancy is able to offer a range of services to the major regeneration projects in the area. Early intervention in the design process will eliminate issues that could provide conflicts with legislation at a later date. Our range of services include:

SAP calculations, Fire Risk Assessment, Energy advice on Planning applications

We have also teamed up with colleagues LABC Services, the commercial arm of Local Authority Building Control (LABC) through whom we are able to offer air pressure testing, acoustic testing and have access to CDM co-ordinators together with other expertise and specialism’s which we are now able to facilitate.

5.5. We work with colleagues in Private Sector Housing and Environment Health to aid the transformation of areas through social regeneration, providing advice on bringing back into use empty and dilapidated properties, giving advice on houses in multiple occupation and the refurbishment and repair of commercial premises.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objectives 1 (see page 2)

Place

Linked to Council Priorities:

- Places – we make most of our unique built and natural environment – Canterbury priority
- Prosperity – the district has a resilient, diverse economy which supports job growth - Canterbury priority
- Place: a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community – Gravesham priority
- Medway: a place to be proud of – Medway priority

- Investing in our environment and responding positively to global – Swale priority
- Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all – Swale priority

5.6. The outcomes from the Hackett report clearly indicated that neither the building regulations nor fire safety legislation were fit for purpose, in particularly with regards high rise buildings. A holistic review will generate significant changes to both the legislation and the way it operates. The degree of competency of those carrying out inspections on such buildings will be tested via a new body, however, significant changes to the way products are identified and procured throughout the supply chain will also be challenged.

5.7. The roles and responsibilities of those engaged in this form of construction will be more clearly defined and there will be greater clarity and transparency through both the construction side of the industry and that of those carrying out enforcement.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objective 2 & 3 (see pages 3 & 4)

Maximising Opportunities for local communities

Linked to Council Priorities:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported - Canterbury priority
- Place: a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community – Gravesham priority
- Progress - an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment’ – Gravesham priority
- Children and young people having the best start in life – Medway priority
- Medway’s people to realise their potential – Medway priority
- Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone – Swale priority

5.8. Through our work with the housing sections of Medway Council we help to deliver improvements to council owned properties through the Decent Homes, condition surveys and fire risk assessments. During these surveys we also assess health and safety requirements of the occupants and impacts on the community. These opportunities are available to all partners either directly or indirectly involved in social housing.

5.9. With joint training, guidance, and information sheets, together with builder and architect forums, the Partnership aims to support all our customers in their building projects. By interlinking through our website to the LABC we can ensure our customers have the latest and most up-to-date guidance available. This will

assist in ensuring a consistent approach to the many challenges, the multitude of complex and interactive regulations now presents to every development.

- 5.10. Inclusive design is a paramount requirement of both new build and refurbishment works. Advising on compliance with The Equalities Act and Part M of the Building Regulations is a major part of public protection inspection services non-chargeable work. This not only delivers a more suitable environment for disabled people, but also transfers the benefits to the greater community, i.e., young families, older people, and those caring for others.
- 5.11. The majority of the work of the Partnership is concerned with protecting the community through health and safety requirements in the regulations or in other sections of the Building Act.
- 5.12. Important examples of health and safety requirements include fire safety (means of escape, fire spread and access for the fire service) structural safety and satisfactory drainage. In addition, the Partnership deals with dangerous structures, demolitions, dilapidated buildings, and contraventions of the Building Regulations
- 5.13. We assist with a number of local agents and private sector housing sections to ensure adaptations comply with the Regulations to enable older and vulnerable people to stay in their homes and maintain their independence.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objectives 1 - 3 (see pages 2 - 4)

Delivering quality services

Linked to Council Priorities:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported – Canterbury priority
- An entrepreneurial authority: commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment – Gravesham priority
- Place: Medway a place to be proud of - Medway priority
- Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future – Swale priority

- 5.14. Quality of our services has been tested through agent's focus groups and customer feedback. Each have fed back excellent results which emanate from our digital transformation programme. Agents and customers enjoy the availability of being able to submit applications and pay for them at a time of their choosing and the savings in costs through digital application rather than printing and posting.
- 5.15. They have also praised the availability of the search facility on the website which allows them to track applications as well as the provision of drop-box technology

in order to accept larger applications, particularly from commercial, industrial, and educational providers.

5.16. Our agile working solution provides surveyors with far greater access to wider streams of information which can be discussed and relayed to customers on site and has been seen as an improvement to the range of advice that surveyors can provide.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objectives 1 – 3 (see pages 2 - 4)

6. SERVICE RISKS

Risk rating key

<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Impact</u>
A. Very high	1. Catastrophic (showstopper)
B. High	2. Critical
C. Significant	3. Marginal
D. Low	4. Negligible
E. Very low	
F. Almost impossible	

Host Directorate: RCET			Service: STG Building Control		Manager: Janine Weaver	Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee
Risk Title: Finance and Strategy					Description of Risk: Reduced income	
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners
13/08/21	01	B2	Inability to recruit staff in a competitive market from a	13 operational qualified surveyors	Additional staff brought in from agencies which would significantly increase costs.	Continuance of market premia. Development of assistant building control surveyors and

Host Directorate: RCET				Service: STG Building Control	Manager: Janine Weaver	Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee
Risk Title: Finance and Strategy					Description of Risk: Reduced income	
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners
			reducing pool of resource			continue recruitment of assistants from other areas in the construction industry.
13/08/21	02	B2	Surveyors failing the mandatory registration to achieve the necessary licence to work on various categories of developments	Unable to provide sufficient licensed surveyors to carry out inspections	Inability to deliver the service resulting in additional staff brought in from other authorities or agencies which would significantly increase costs.	Ensure staff have sufficient time to undertake examination and investigate grading structure to decrease risk of poaching from private sector.
13/08/21	03	D2	Current infrastructure unable to support development of technological advancements in service delivery	Inability to access back-office system and meet customer demands	Inefficient service delivery resulting in further loss of market and inability to compete.	Data to be transferred to a partner authorities IT for in-house delivery
13/08/21	04	B2	Contributions reducing beyond the requirements of the Charges Legislation 2010	Percentage time spent exceeds contributions income	Further call on contributions from partners. Reduction in service to partners.	Agree deminimus percentage of time allocated to public protection by partners

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13/08/21	05	C2	Highly competitive and unpredictable market. Diminishing income through lack of building regulation applications.	50% of market share	Insufficient income to cover expenditure on chargeable account resulting in an increase on the followings year's chargeable rate which may make us uncompetitive.		Reduced expenditure to limit income deficiency. Look for alternative income streams through consultancy service. Improve marketing strategy and rationale services provided.		
13/08/21	06	C3	Inability to sustain growth and acquire additional business.	Reduction in market share and consultancy services income	Inability to match income with expenditure resulting in increase in following year's chargeable rate. Surveyor's chargeable time transfers to enforcement activity which would not be sustainable from the contributions. Consultancy losing income and not sustainable.		Invest in training and development of staff to diversify resources into consultancy work. Develop customer experience strategy.		
13/08/21	07	D3	Current economic situation leading to increased debt arising from unpaid invoices.	Increased number of applicants unable to pay invoices.	Number and value of debtors increased affecting the budgeted income figure. Unpaid invoice provision within budget would need to be increased.		Careful monitoring of debtors list. Vigorous pursuit of large debts. Database clearly marked where invoice remains unpaid so as site surveyor can pursue on inspection. Taking over the functions of		

Host Directorate: RCET				Service: STG Building Control		Manager: Janine Weaver		Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee	
Risk Title: Finance and Strategy						Description of Risk: Reduced income			
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised		Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners		
							invoicing and debt collection from the finance department.		
13/08/21	08	D3	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 client's which compliment building regulation work. The Partnership requires staff to be trained to deliver a more diverse service 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.		
27/09/21	09	B2	Insufficient numbers of surveyors to maintain dangerous structure out-of-hours rota	60% operational full-time staff	Staff brought in from agencies which would significantly increase costs.		Careful monitoring of rota and if levels forecasted to drop conduct staff consultation to reach agreement on future delivery		