

Policy and Resources Committee	
Meeting Date	29 November 2023
Report Title	South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan 2024 – 2027
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Joanne Johnson Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning
Lead Officer	Joanne Johnson Head of Regeneration, Economic Development and Property and Interim Head of Planning
Classification	Part Open / part exempt
Recommendations	1. Members are asked to provide comment on the draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan for 2024 – 2027.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek comments on the draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership (STGBC) Business Plan for 2024 – 2027.
- 1.2 The STGBC Constitution states that before 1 October each year the Joint Committee is required to approve and send its draft Business Plan for the following year to each partner authority for comment. This draft was considered at the STGBC Joint Committee meeting of 21 September 2023.
- 1.3 This draft Business Plan sits within the Council's membership of the fourth term of the STGBC partnership.
- 1.4 Following consideration by each partner authority, the revised business plan will be reviewed at the December Joint Committee, including the final financial statement. This will then return to each authority for ratifying in the new year.
- 1.5 The Joint Committee has a duty under the Memorandum of Agreement to formally adopt the Business Plan at the Annual General Meeting.

2 Background

- 2.1 The STG Building Control Partnership (involving Medway, Gravesham and Swale) was formed in October 2007 with Canterbury joining in April 2018. Under the terms of the Memorandum Agreement between the partner authorities, a rolling business plan needs to be agreed.

- 2.2 Each partner authority is required to comment on the draft business plan and advise the STBGC Joint Committee.
- 2.3 Much of the STGBC operation is subject to competition from approved inspectors. The service however retains statutory responsibilities regarding public protection e.g. dangerous structures, demolitions, unauthorised works, etc
- 2.4 The service finds itself increasingly competing with approved inspectors within a more competitive and diminishing market. This has put pressure on income generation within the service, and correspondingly has put pressure on the resourcing of the service itself. This has been exacerbated by the Building Safety Act 2022 which has mandated the licensing of all individuals within the profession, placing further pressure on staff resources.
- 2.5 The Business Plan (Appendix I) outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the partnership local authorities up until 2027, and forecasts budget contributions from 2024/25 to 2026/27.
- 2.6 The Business Plan presents three agreed objectives, and includes an action plan and targets to achieve them:
- 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

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Members are asked to comment on the draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business Plan for 2024 – 2027.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could consider removing itself from the partnership (by giving the requisite year's notice). However, one of the recognised successes of STGBC is the efficiencies secured by economies of scale. This has been borne out through separate reviews undertaken by the partner authorities. There is also considerable value in resilience and risk mitigation through being part of the partnership. This option is not recommended.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The draft Business Plan was approved by the STGBC Joint Committee at its meeting on 21 September 2023. Councillor Gibson is Swale Borough Council's representative on this Joint Committee.
- 5.2 Officer input had been sought and provided on earlier drafts.

5.3 This same process is carried out with each of the partner authorities.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The Business Plan supports the delivery of priority 4 of the Corporate Plan, making the Council fit for the future, by supporting the operation of an efficient and resilient partnership arrangement.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Costs involved in being a partner authority are set out in the attached appendix.</p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Plan accommodates the proposed contributions as stated above.</p> <p>Finance colleagues were consulted on the draft plan.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The Partnership and Joint Committee operate under a memorandum of agreement signed by each of the partner authorities.</p> <p>Legal colleagues were consulted on the draft plan.</p>
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	None identified at this stage
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: STBGC Business Plan (exempt)

8 Background Papers

None.

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