

# Finance and Resources Committee

10.00am, Thursday 23 May 2019

## Planning and Building Standards Improvement Team – Extension to Contracts

Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

---

- 1.1 It is recommended that Finance and Resources Committee approves short-term contract extensions, via waiver, for the Building Standards Improvement Team to provide the necessary support to the next stage of the Building Standards Improvement Plan. This will help to further the considerable improvement in service performance to date. In parallel, this will enable necessary shared expertise, knowledge transfer and support to the Planning Improvement Plan, in accordance with the Planning Committee's decision of 12 December 18 to obtain external advice in this regard. These extensions will enable the final stage of the building service improvement process to be undertaken and the work of the improvement team will come to an end.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

Contact: David Givan – Service Manager – Building Standards

E-mail: [david.givan@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:david.givan@edinburgh.gov.uk) | Tel: 0131 529 3679

## Planning and Building Standards Improvement Team – Extension to Contracts

### 2. Executive Summary

---

- 2.1 The Scottish Government has appointed the Council as Verifier of Building Standards within this council's geographic area, for a period of two years from 1 May 2019 to 30 April 2021. This appointment is conditional on the Council continuing to deliver improvements in its Building Standards service.
- 2.2 During its previous period of appointment, which was for 1 May 2018 to 30 April 2019, the Council was required to appoint an Improvement Team to provide advice, guidance and assistance to improve the performance of the Building Standards Service. The team's appointment in this regard was reported at Finance and Resources Committee on [4 December 2018](#).
- 2.3 The input of this team has supported significant improvements in performance and in the delivery of the Building Standards Improvement Plan. In order that the Council can meet the requirements of its current conditions of appointment as verifier, these improvements require to be sustained. To ensure this, it is recommended that the Improvement Team's appointment is extended to assist in taking forward the final stage of Building Standards improvement. This final stage will ensure the improvement work carried out thus far is further embedded and support the advancement of new ways of working that are currently in the initial stages of development. This work is expected to be complete by 31 March 2020 at the latest when the work of the improvement team would conclude.
- 2.4 It is noted that if the appointments are not continued, there is risk that improvements already undertaken will not be fully sustained as the support and monitoring that the improvement team has provided has proven invaluable in supporting sustained change. Furthermore, given the insight that the team has offered, if the appointments are not continued, the development of new ways of working would be slower to progress to implementation.
- 2.5 In parallel with this work, the Planning Service has put in place an Improvement Plan. This sets out the major changes that are required within that service over a three year period from December 18. To date, lessons learned from the improvements to the Building Standards service are being used to inform Planning improvements.

- 2.6 At Planning Committee on [12 December 2018](#), it was agreed that external advice would be appointed to review the Planning Improvement Plan and to consider whether the data being collected, and actions proposed, were sufficient to drive the required improvement.
- 2.7 The work already undertaken by the Improvement Team on Building Standards has enabled insight into the wider Planning and Building Standards Service. This in-built knowledge will allow the team to provide advice on planning improvements. It is therefore recommended that the Improvement Team's appointment is extended to include for advice on the Planning Improvement Plan.
- 2.8 The maximum total estimated value of the contracts extension is £75,000. This extension will enable the final stage of the process to be undertaken and the work of the improvement team will come to an end.

### **3. Background**

---

- 3.1 The Scottish Government appointed the Council as Verifier of Building Standards within this Council's geographic area for a period of two years from 1 May 2019 to 30 April 2021. A condition of this appointment (as Verifier) is the Service sustaining and improving performance as well as continued adherence to the actions set out in the previously agreed improvement plan. The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning has stated his intention to review this appointment and officials from the Scottish Government have indicated that this review will happen at the end of 2019.
- 3.2 The Planning Service is implementing its Improvement Plan 2018-2021. This is designed to bring about significant change in the performance of the service. The plan takes a similar approach as the Building Standards Improvement Plan which the Improvement Team have advised on. It covers the same improvement themes of Leadership and Management, Continuous Improvement and Performance, and Customer.
- 3.3 The Planning Committee made a decision at its meeting 12 December 2018 that external advice shall be appointed to review the Planning Improvement Plan and to consider whether the data being collected, and actions proposed, were sufficient to drive the required improvement.
- 3.4 In agreement with the Scottish Government, on 1 May 2018, the Council appointed an Improvement Team of three external advisers. The appointment was reported at Finance and Resources Committee on 4 December 2018 for a period up to 30 April 2019.

### **4. Main report**

---

- 4.1 The Improvement Team is made up of three individuals:

- 4.1.1 Russell Cartwright managed the Building Standards Service in Falkirk Council before going on to become director of its environment department. This department included its Planning Service.
- 4.1.2 Len Murray managed the Building Standards service in Angus Council. During his tenure, Angus Council became the leading building standards service in Scotland in Customer Service Excellence.
- 4.1.3 Steve Quinn is an expert in change management and has worked with organisations across the UK, helping to ensure they deliver their change programmes.
- 4.2 The total approved cost for the team since its initial appointment in May 2018 is £280,000.
- 4.3 It is proposed to extend the contracts of the three members of the improvement team to 31 March 2020. The total cost of this extension would be a maximum of £75,000.
- 4.4 The fees will be contained within Place Directorate existing revenue budget for Financial Year 2019/20.
- 4.5 It is noted that since the Improvement Team has been engaged, there has been a marked improvement in both the performance of the service and the rate at which improvements have been delivered. This is a result of the development of, and support on implementation of, the Building Standards Improvement Plan 2018-2021.
- 4.6 In relation to Building Standards performance, between 1 July 2018 and 31 March 2019, the backlog of applications awaiting a first report was reduced from 320 to zero. In Quarter 4 2018/19, the 98% of first reports were delivered within 20 working days. This exceeds the Scottish Government's target of 95%. Between 1 November 18 and 31 March 19, the backlog of applications awaiting decisions for more than 10 working days was reduced from 350 to 10. There has been a rise in performance in relation to this target with 73% of applications in Quarter 4 being granted building warrants within 10 working days of satisfactory information being provided.
- 4.7 Supporting this enhanced performance have been a wide range of improvement measures. This includes, new methods of monitoring performance and ensuring resources are adequately deployed and the training and development of the management team. In addition, innovative approaches to recruitment have helped bring in new members of staff, including three apprentice building standards surveyors. Customer improvements have been undertaken, including the establishment of a Stakeholder Panel which advises and holds the service to account on its improvements.
- 4.8 The Planning Service has similarly made progress in its improvements. An increase in planning fees has been invested in the creation of seven additional posts to support the service. New ways of working have been developed with more agile

use of resources across the service being deployed to deal with workload pressures. New data collection reports have been developed and are being used by the management team to monitor performance. Changes to the scheme of delegation for making decisions on planning applications and procedures for the preparation of legal agreements have been implemented. Further details are set out in the Planning Improvement Plan – Progress Update report to Planning Committee of 15 May 2019.

## **5. Next Steps**

---

- 5.1 Once the Improvement Team’s appointment is extended, they will continue their work on supporting and sustaining the improvements being made in the Planning and Building Standards service. This will ensure the positive changes already made in relation to performance, leadership and management, continuous improvement and customer can be fully embedded. It will also ensure the new ways of working to be more rapidly developed and implemented.

## **6. Financial impact**

---

- 6.1 The estimated expenditure with the suppliers for the extension period totals £75,000. This will be contained within Place existing revenue budget for financial year 2019/20.
- 6.2 The total approved cost for the team since its initial appointment in May 2018 is £280,000.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

---

- 7.1 There are no sustainability or equalities impacts arising from these appointments.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

---

- 8.1 Report to Finance and Resources Committee – 4 December 2018 – Building Standards Improvement Team – Extension to Contracts
- 8.2 Minute of Planning Committee of 12 December 2018 (item 5)
- 8.3 [Planning Improvement Plan – Progress Update](#) – Planning Committee, 15 May 2019

## **9. Appendices**

---

- 9.1 None.