



Council

Tuesday, 23 February 2021

Dear Councillor

You are advised that the attached documents form part of the main agenda papers for this meeting.

Please ensure you bring them with you to the meeting.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Walsh'.

S Walsh
Service Manager (Communities)

List of documents attached

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 6f Minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on Thursday, 11 February 2021 | (Pages 3 - 6) |
| 8. Council Tax and Budget Setting 2021-22 – Appendix 8 | (Pages 7 - 20) |
| 11. Senior Management Restructure | (Pages 21 - 32) |
| 12. Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer | (Pages 33 - 36) |

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Overview Scrutiny Committee**Thursday, 11 February 2021****7.30 pm****Present:**

Cllr Jordan Meade (Chair)
Cllr Steve Thompson (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Conrad Broadley
Leslie Hills
Emma Morley
Elizabeth Mulheran
Peter Scollard
Gurjit Kaur Bains
Brian Francis

Sarah Parfitt Director (Corporate Services)
Lisa Nyon Assistant Director (Corporate Services)
Chris Wakeford Committee Services Manager
Clive Boorman Technical Services support Officer

26. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Alan Ridgers and Cllr Christina Rolles; Cllr Gurjit Bains and Cllr Brian Francis attended as their respective substitutes.

27. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview Scrutiny Committee held on 19 November 2020 were signed by the Chair.

28. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were made.

29. General Fund Budget Setting 2021/22

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) presented the Committee with the draft budget and proposals for 2021/22. The report contained the General Fund Revenue and Capital Estimates for 2021/22, as well as the revised estimates for 2020/21 and longer term budget projections, as set out in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) advised that the pandemic had created new challenges for the future sustainability of the Council, which had been compounded by the ongoing and prolonged uncertainty around the future funding of local government. Members were advised that the format of the budget report included a covering summary report which outlined the budget setting context and proposals with a series of appendices providing the detail.

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) highlighted the following points:

- Appendix 2 - The budget had been prepared on the basis of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement announced on 17th December.
- Similarly to last year, this was a one year only settlement pending the outcome of the Spending Review and Fair Funding Review.
- There had been a number of cuts to local government funding over the last 10 years and attention was drawn to the table under point 3 of Appendix 2 showing that there has been no increase in the business rates baseline this year. However, there was a continuation from last year of Government eliminating 'negative Revenue Support Grant' for Gravesham and this was budgeted to be £244k. In addition, the provisional settlement had introduced a new Lower Tier Services Grant intended to ensure that no lower tier council had a decrease in spending power. For Gravesham, the provisional settlement indicated that this grant would be £126,260.
- The graph in point 11 of the report showed the assumed increase in Core Spending power for 2021/22 of 1.4% This assumed a rise in Council Tax receipts which had been reflected by the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- The Council had secured indicative New Homes Bonus funding for 2021/22 of £311,050. This was below the level of funding that was previously in the Medium Term Financial Plan due to there being only 55 net additions to the housing stock of the Borough due to the pandemic, less than the 167 net additional homes needed to be delivered to meet the 0.4% national baseline.
- This had resulted in an increase of Core Spending power per dwelling in the Borough of c.2% or £252. This is the sixth lowest in Kent.
- With regards to Business Rates for 2021/22 Gravesham would continue to be part of the Kent pool.
- The current Medium Term Financial Strategy covered the period to 31 March 2021 and in the absence of any certainty from the Government on local government funding, it had been decided that the Council would produce another one year Medium Term Financial Strategy, effectively a holding statement, until the outcomes of the Spending Review, Fair Funding Review and Business Rates reforms were known.
- In relation to the Council Tax charge - the Provisional Finance Settlement announcement had indicated the continued flexibility for district councils in setting Council Tax levels by permitting district councils to raise Council Tax by 2% or up to and including £5 (whichever was higher) without triggering the requirement for a referendum. Therefore, the budget had been prepared on the basis of a £4.95 or (2.3%) increase, taking the Council's element of the charge from the current level of £208.08 to £213.03.
- It was proposed that working balances remain at £5.25m, this comprised of minimum working balances of £2m and General Reserve of £3.25m.
- The draft Capital Programme for 2021/22 was expected to cost £52.3m. The main items being works for the St Georges Shopping Centre of £5m, Elizabeth Huggins Cottages £2m and The Charter £27m.

The Director (Corporate Services) confirmed that she was confident about the budget proposals which once again had been built in the face of a lack of longer-term funding arrangements plus ten years of sustained cuts and the effects of the pandemic. However, she noted that whilst it had been difficult the Council was still in a strong position because of work undertaken previously and the budget continued to deliver the Council's objectives and support local employment opportunities. However, the impact of Covid had resulted in a budget gap of £2.6m emerging in 2025/26 in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Director (Corporate Services) and the Assistant Director (Corporate Services) fielded questions from the Committee and highlighted the following:

- The draft budget and proposals for 2021/22 is proactively brought to the Overview Scrutiny Committee to ensure transparency and enable members to ask questions.
- Employee costs have increased; mainly due to the salary increase for those who earn £24,000 and below and the Kickstart scheme that helps young people get back into work and develops skills. The Kickstart Scheme is fully funded by government and this will offset the expenses.
- A number of budget lines have additional expenditure and it is expected that grants will help to offset this.
- The Director (Corporate Services) will provide the Committee with further detail of the £1million movement in salaries outside of the meeting.
- The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) will provide the Committee with further detail on the running expenses, outside of the meeting.
- Policy announcements by Central Government about longer term funding for local government will influence when the MTFs can move from a one year plan to a longer term plan. These announcements could take effect from 2022, but may not happen before 2023.
- The Council received £1.8million to help us meet additional expenditure pressures from Covid-19. There are some direct costs to the council from Covid but we cannot underestimate the Council staff time in delivering a local response e.g. community support, delivering food, delivering medicines, grants for businesses, test and trace payments etc. as well as continuing to deliver essential council services. The funding is welcome but hasn't fully reflected the resources the Council has put into the response at the detriment of other services or projects being progressed.
- A lot of officer time is being spent on the vast number of returns submitted to the Government.

Resolved that the Committee note the General Fund Budget Setting 2021/22 report and appendices.

30. Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting 2021/22

The Assistant Director (Corporate Services) presented the Committee with the draft revenue and capital estimates for the Housing Revenue Account in 2021/22 and the following key points were highlighted:

- An income of 28m and expenditure of £29m.
- As per the Spending Review announcements on public sector pay in November, the budget reflected no inflationary increase for 2021/22 with the exception of those earning less than £24k per annum who would receive a pay increase of at least £250.
- A budget of £200k had been provided to support a planned review and restructure of housing services.
- Service charges had increased to a level capped at CPI +1 (1.5%) bringing the average service charge to £3.72.
- The Council would continue with the Housing Capital Programme set out in 2020-21 which had been severely impacted by the pandemic. The programme for the year

was estimated at £20.8m with the focus being to maintain current housing stock and deliver on the new build and acquisitions programme.

The Director (Corporate Services) and the Assistant Director (Corporate Services) fielded questions from the Committee and highlighted the following:

- The Director (Corporate Services) will check the percentage increase is correct on page 244, point 28.
- The Director (Corporate Services) will check if Arnold Avenue should be included in the New Build and Acquisitions Programme on page 271, point 5.
- Interim housing for the homeless – where we are unable to house persons requiring temporary accommodation, Bed and Breakfast (B&B) is one option but is not really suitable. The Council anticipates a reduced level of requirement for temporary accommodation which be used to offset the costs of the premises moving forward, alongside Housing Benefit.

Resolved that the Committee note the Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting 2021/22 report and appendices.

31. Maritime Strategy Review - Oral update

The Chair provided the following update:

- Ten evidence gathering sessions have been held
- The Sub-Group have developed twenty-three recommendations.
- A draft report is being prepared for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting on 4 March 2021

The Chair thanked Chris Wakeford, Committee Services Manager and the IT / Digital Teams for their work in supporting the review.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.16 pm

Classification: Public

Appendix 8 – Economic Stimulus Package

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Full Council

Date: 23 February 2021

Reporting officer: Director (Corporate Services)
Director (Community Services)

Subject: Appendix 8 - Economic Stimulus Package

Purpose and summary of report:

To present a package of measures to provide an economic stimulus to support business recovery in response to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, helping to drive investment and growth, create jobs and help people into the workplace.

Recommendations:

1. As per the Council Tax and budget setting 2021/22 report.

1. Economic Stimulus Package

- 1.1 These are unprecedented times with the Coronavirus virus having a severe and uncertain impact on the local economy for the foreseeable future. Key indicators of local impacts and the take-up of Government support measures are summarised in Sub-Appendix 2.
- 1.2 The Council has been at the forefront of paying grants to support Gravesham businesses during national and local lockdowns since March 2020, the sum of these payments now exceeds £20 million.
- 1.3 On 31 October 2020, the Government announced the introduction of additional support for Local Authorities under national and Local COVID Alert Level 3 restrictions in the form of the Additional Restrictions Grant Scheme (ARG).
- 1.4 The Council has received a total of £3,088,725 to fund support to the local business economy under ARG, which is required to be utilised by 31 March 2022. Guidance issued by Government set out that Additional Restrictions Grant has been made available to local authorities to be used in the form of discretionary grants and wider business support activities. Local authorities can determine how much funding to provide to businesses and which businesses or sectors to target and to support larger businesses which are important to the local economy, beyond other support available directly from Government or through the grant schemes administered by the council.

- 1.5 The council has been using ARG funds to operate a discretionary grants scheme since November to support businesses that have had to close since 5 November 2020 and are outside of the businesses rates system, hence not eligible for Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSRG).
- 1.6 Discretionary grant payments totalling £700,000 have been made under this scheme up to the period ending 15 February 2021 (the point at which the review of the current lockdown will be undertaken). On the premise that the scheme will be required to continue to support businesses to the end of April 2021, it has been estimated that further grant support of £700,000 will be awarded under this scheme.
- 1.7 It is proposed that the remaining balance of funding, some £1.6 million, will be directed to fund an economic stimulus package for the borough, comprising additional cash injections to businesses which have been severely impacted by Covid-19 and other business support measures to the end of March 2022. This report sets out a series of proposals, which Full Council is asked to agree, together with the necessary authorities contained within this report and the main budget report to manage this funding throughout the year to support businesses, helping to drive investment and growth, create jobs and supporting people into the workplace.
- 1.8 The proposals identified in this report are for implementation in the short and medium term. If those in the medium term can be worked up to a level of detail where they can be implemented in 2021/22, then the necessary legal and financial authorities will be put in place to bring them forward. Alternatively, they will be considered within future budget setting proposals.
- 1.9 These proposals are set against a backdrop of the major financial commitment that the Council is already making, especially within the Town Centre, to stimulate investment, provide training and employment opportunities and create certainty for future growth.
- 1.10 The proposals and budget allocations for the short term are summarised in Sub-Appendix 3. It is proposed that these will be kept under review during 2021/22 and funding adjusted accordingly to ensure maximum benefit is derived for the borough from the ARG funding allocation received.

2. Short Term Proposals - 2021/22

2.1 *Business Grants:*

- 2.1.1 A Severity of Impact Grant to businesses severely impacted by Covid-19 and assessed as being of strategic importance to the Borough and/or able to demonstrate a significant contribution to employment, training, wellbeing or culture. A simple online application and assessment framework based on costs, employment levels and impact on turnover will be adopted. A sum of **£650,000** will be set aside to fund this grant.
- 2.1.2 Monies will be set aside to meet the cost of licences for taxi drivers, licensed premises and Members' Clubs in Gravesham to offset the cost of renewal of fees for 2021/22. This will provide immediate help to specific groups of businesses whose income has been reduced significantly over the last year. This will require a sum of **£130,000**.

- 2.1.3 Adaptation grants to help businesses respond to the impact of Covid-19, e.g. moves to online trading, responses to changed consumer patterns, digital skills training, transition to low carbon business activity, etc. Applications will be sought from businesses on the basis of set criteria and grant levels, with a requirement for an element of match funding from other sources. A sum of **£250,000** be allocated to this.
- 2.1.4 A business start-up grant scheme, possibly to match other available finance and contingent on acceptance of business planning, finance, legal and marketing advice. A sum of **£150,000** will be allocated to this scheme.
- 2.2 *Business Support Activity*
- 2.2.1 Steps are being taken to enhance the level of 1-2-1 and specialist support available to local businesses to assist recovery and innovation. The Council has contributed to the funding of the Kent & Medway Growth hub, together with Kent & Medway local authorities throughout the Pandemic. A proposal is being considered to enhance the support to businesses that is available via the Hub at a cost of **£45,000** in 2021/22.
- 2.2.2 It is proposed that an additional **£45,000** is allocated to make available 1-2-1 support to recipients of the grants outlined at 2.1 above.
- 2.2.3 **£10,000** will be made available to run procurement workshops for local businesses on how to work effectively with the Council and the wider public sector in supplying goods and services, influencing the impact of the Council's procurement activity on the local economy.
- 2.2.4 Alongside this, the Council will recommence face to face business networking through the Gravesham Business Network as this activity strengthens communication and collaboration within the local business community, creating opportunities for mutual support and business to business activity. This will be funded from existing economic development budgets.
- 2.3 *Town Centre Recovery*
- 2.3.1 Steps will be taken to put in place a Town Centre recovery plan to make the case for further interventions and potentially other funding bids. **£15,000** is required and this can be funded from the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund (RHSSF).
- 2.3.2 Retail vacancies in Gravesend Town Centre have increased during the pandemic (12.3%, December 2020) and it is anticipated that they may continue to increase as lockdown restrictions are relaxed. Where the Council acts as landlord steps can be taken to incentivise occupancy, however it is recognised that elsewhere in the Town, and working with private landlords, additional incentives may be required to ensure that vacant premises are immediately available for occupancy and on favourable terms.
- 2.3.3 It is proposed that a grant scheme is developed and trialled in 2021/22, targeted on a finite number of vacant units, especially where they have a demonstrable impact on active street frontages. It is proposed that **£100,000** is allocated to this. If successful and subject to available

finance, this approach could be expanded to include other premises/streets over time.

2.4 *Unemployment Response*

- 2.4.1 Unemployment has risen during the Pandemic and the Council has reviewed the opportunities it can give to enable young people into the workplace. It is strengthening its apprenticeship and work experience programmes, putting in place new career graded posts and making a commitment to 34 placements via the national Kickstart Scheme.
- 2.4.2 It is proposed that Council explores making available up to 25% **£18,750** of its apprenticeship levy funds to other local employers, helping to boost apprenticeship numbers within the Borough.
- 2.4.3 Alongside this, the Council is working in partnership with Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), North Kent College and other training providers to expand jobs and enhance skills of the Borough's residents.

2.5 *Community Resilience Activity*

- 2.5.1 Throughout the Pandemic the Council has been in contact with those organisations providing valued support within the local community. **£52,852** of Emergency Assistance Grants have been allocated to those organisations, which have had a significant role in Covid response activities.
- 2.5.2 Some organisations, established on a business model, are likely to be eligible for business grants and it is proposed that **£200,000** is allocated to assist those businesses if applications are forthcoming.
- 2.5.3 Additional steps will be taken to monitor the ongoing resilience of the community/voluntary sector and sports clubs/organisations locally. Officer support will be made available for a 6-month period to help community organisations to identify additional funding sources they may be entitled to access.
- 2.5.4 A Gravesham volunteer scheme, where possible linked to job readiness initiatives, will be established and networking opportunities will be held to strengthen information sharing and collaboration within the community/voluntary sector.

2.6 *Growing Sectors*

- 2.6.1 The Council recognises the important role that the creative sector can have in business and employment growth. Commitments are being made to refurbish two vacant units within St George's Shopping Centre for a new Arts & Cultural Hub, including gallery, workshop and co-working space. It is proposed that **£20,000** is allocated for grants for creative business as an incentive to use these spaces.
- 2.6.2 Opportunities for recovery in the creative sector will be stimulated by Gravesham's participation within Estuary 2021 – a major creative arts festival being held in the Thames Estuary in May/June.

- 2.6.3 Gravesham is well placed as an affordable, accessible/well connected location to attract small and medium sized businesses within the digital sector. i.e. those which in a great variety of forms rely upon the capture, transmission and display of data and information electronically. A higher level of digital infrastructure is important to their development and it is proposed that a detailed specification and costed business case is prepared in 2021/22 and that a budget of **£25,000** is established to undertake this work.
- 2.6.4 Alongside this, the Council will look to bring together those businesses within this sector currently operating in the Borough to understand their requirements more fully and to support to the case for enhanced infrastructure.
- 2.6.5 It will also explore opportunities to create a programme for upskilling digital skills for businesses, residents and its own workforce as a means to address some of the skills deficiencies in the Borough, relative to other parts of the County, and to use its own digital footprint where it can to support businesses. Work will be undertaken to establish the level of funding required to support this.
- 2.6.6 Subject to relaxation of restrictions and access to adapted work stations the Council will look to make available space within the Civic Centre foyer area/Spotlights for businesses to work.

3. Medium Term

- 3.1 The Council will also take forward actions in support of businesses where they align with the *achievement of the Council's carbon neutral target*, e.g.
 - 3.1.1 Expansion of the number of super-fast electric vehicle charging points in the Borough, especially where they enable businesses to make the transition to hybrid/electric vehicles, e.g. dedicated chargers for taxi use. This may be accompanied by grants to support this transition, subject to the timing of replacement vehicles/taxi licence review and funding.
 - 3.1.2 A social media campaign designed to engage Gravesham businesses in the benefits of a commitment to low carbon actions as a step towards identifying local business advocates, developing initiatives and creating case studies to inspire local business action.
- 3.2 The Council will progress actions to expand opportunities for local people to access *jobs, training/apprenticeships and/or work experience*:
 - 3.2.1 It can use its influence in procuring contracts and as the local planning authority to secure commitments to this within tender documentation and developer commitments.
 - 3.2.2 The Council is already working with its partners to identify the skill and workforce requirements from planned major development and infrastructure projects, e.g. such as major Town Centre development and the London Resort to enable early investment in training and apprenticeships and local supply chain development.

- 3.3 The Council will review how a *local discretionary business rates scheme* may be able to incentivise business investment. Any actions will need to be targeted and agreed with other preceptors and reviewed in the context of any changes proposed at a national level.

4. Existing Commitments

- 4.1 This economic stimulus package complements many other actions and investments that the Council is taking to create the conditions for economic growth over the longer term in the Borough:

4.1.1 Investment in the Town Centre, facilitating investment decisions by the private sector.

4.1.2 Using the Council's commercial property portfolio to support business start-ups and new occupants.

4.1.3 Actions to bring forward new employment space within major sites.

4.1.4 Promotion of the borough's advantages for business.

4.1.5 Commercialisation of Council services.

4.1.6 Maintain its record of 100% payment of unchallenged invoices within 30 days.

4.1.7 Support for transport and digital infrastructure that will enhance the Borough's connectivity for business location, investment and growth

5. Other Financing

- 5.1 A number of funding streams are likely to be forthcoming to complement the proposals set out above, these include Covid-19 Emergency Grant Funding being made available by Kent County Council, specifically in respect of business support.
- 5.2 The Government may make further funding announcements in its March 2021 budget.
- 5.3 Steps will be taken to access any additional funding sources that can support the implementation and additional actions as part of the economic stimulus package outlined in this report.

6. Business Engagement

- 6.1 Access to additional finance and advice is at the forefront of business requests for ongoing support.
- 6.2 The Kent & Medway Growth Hub (<https://www.kentandmedwaygrowthhub.org.uk/>) have undertaken regular surveys of businesses across Kent throughout the Pandemic. The most recent identifies that of those surveyed a high level of businesses have sought advice and guidance (75%) and accessed the financial initiatives available - job retention scheme (39%), small business grant funding (37%), discretionary grants schemes (34%) and bounce back loans (21%) – all subject to eligibility criteria.

- 6.3 When asked about what future support should be available, they ask for access to finance (36%), specific business advice (32%), advice on financial/business planning (26%) and help with adoption of new technology/digitisation (24%). This is set against a backdrop of business confidence split evenly between – positive/very positive 39%; negative/very negative 36% and neutral 35%.
- 6.4 The Federation of Small Business (<https://www.fsb.org.uk/>), representing businesses across the country, remain concerned that 1 in 5 businesses nationally may not have received any financial support from Government. They welcome any steps being taken to support those who have missed out.
- 6.5 The Council asked for additional information in respect of impact on turnover and experience of trading online during the Pandemic from those businesses applying for Local Restrictions Support Grant - the majority of whom will have had to close during the lockdown from November onwards. Of these, 87% of businesses indicated that they had experience in excess of 50% impact on their turnover over the year.
- 6.6 Alongside this, a mixed picture of moves to online trading has emerged. By far the majority of respondents stated that this was not possible for them due to the nature of the business, e.g. providing face to face services, such as hair and beauty, restaurants, public houses, etc. Many restaurants/food takeaways have expanded use of online ordering systems, but are concerned about the commission levels that they need to agree to. Where small businesses are trading on line, the results have been mixed, with levels of activity indicative of the depressed state of trading generally. However, these responses demonstrate that there is work that can be undertaken to help businesses review their online trading capabilities, even if that only goes as far as how to use various social media channels to promote themselves more effectively.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 Guidance to local authorities in respect of paying grants to support businesses during the national lockdown and periods of local restrictions, including Additional Restrictions Grant can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-restrictions-support-grants-lrsg-and-additional-restrictions-grant-arg-guidance-for-local-authorities>

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	SUB APPENDIX 1
Legal	No legal implications currently envisaged, but each initiative will be considered as design and implementation progresses
Finance and Value for Money	<p>The Financial implications of the proposed Economic Stimulus Package are set out in Sub Appendix 3.</p> <p>In the main, funding for the package will be provided through the Additional Restrictions Grant Funding received from Government which is required to be used by 31 March 2022. The funding is provided as a Section 31 Grant and intended to be directed by the council to support businesses in line with the ARG Guidance issued by Government. The relevant initiatives set out in the report are considered to be in accordance with the funding guidance issued by Government and are one-off expenditure, so do not create any ongoing financial commitments to the council beyond the 2021-22 financial year.</p> <p>Other initiatives funded by the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund and DWP Kickstart schemes also do not create ongoing liabilities for the council beyond 2021-22.</p> <p>The new Career-Graded posts referenced in the report have be incorporated into the budget proposals for 2021-22 and for future years.</p> <p>The Apprenticeship Levy is a charge incurred by the council and all employers with a wage bill of more than £3 million per year, equivalent to 0.5% of their payroll each month. The levy is then able to be reinvested into the workforce through accredited apprenticeship training, including professional qualification training. if not utilised within two years, the levy funding is lost.</p>
Risk Assessment	it is vital that the funding available is directed to business support activity which is going to provide the protection and stimulus required to ensure the local business economy in Gravesham can be sufficiently sustained and recover from the pandemic.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer.

	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
Corporate Plan	#Place -
Climate Change	Where possible, the actions taken and developed through this economic stimulus package will align with the achievement of carbon neutral targets.
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications.
Digital and website implications	Supporting communications activity will be required, together with adjustment to online application forms via the Council's website.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	No direct implications.

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The Economic Impact of Covid-19 in Gravesham

Number of employments furloughed in Gravesham
(30 November 2020)

6,500

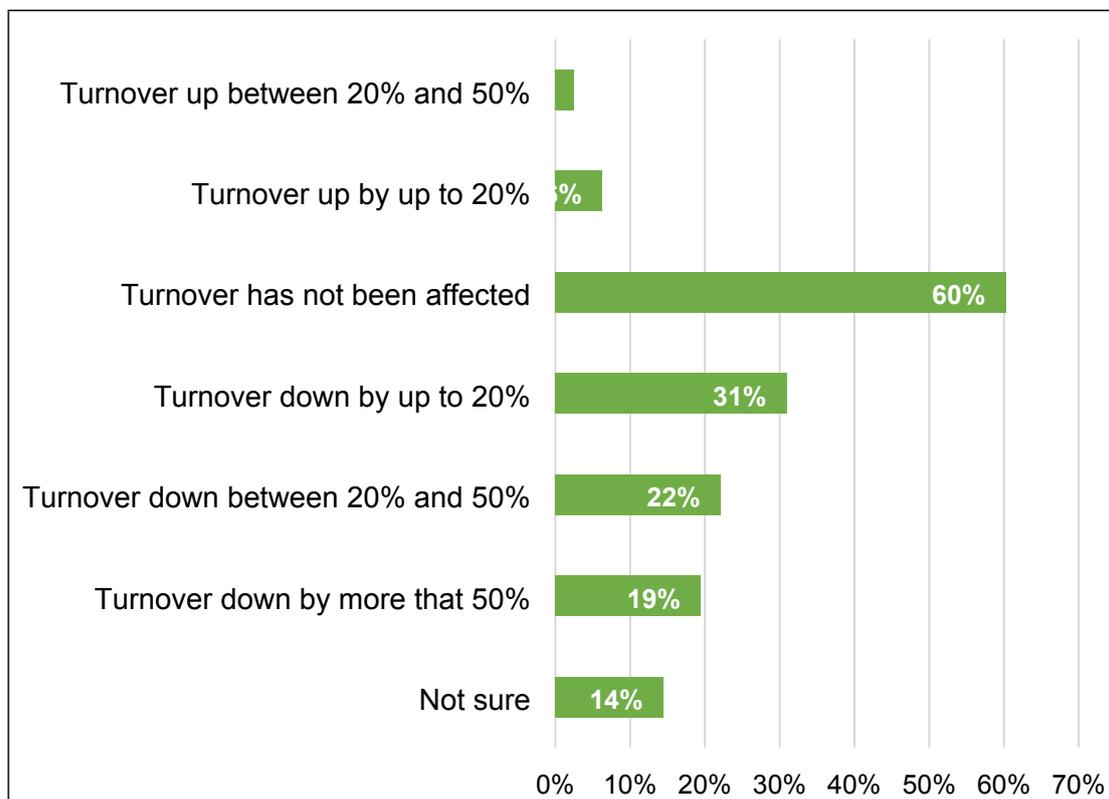
Self-employment Income Support Scheme Grants
(31 December 2020)

13,700
claims

£42m
value

	March 2020	December 2020	Increase	
Unemployment	2,300 (3.5%)	4,805 (7.3%)	109%	↑
Youth Unemployment (18-24 year olds)	455 (6%)	955 (12.6%)	110%	↑
Claimant Count (In & not in work)	8%	16.1%	99%	↑

Impact on business turnover – comparison with what is normally expected this time of the year (11-24 January 2021)



The following data applied to Gravesham is from the [Kent Economic Dashboard - COVID 19 Recovery](#), derived from modelled estimates from the ONS Business Impact of COVID-19 Survey (BICS).

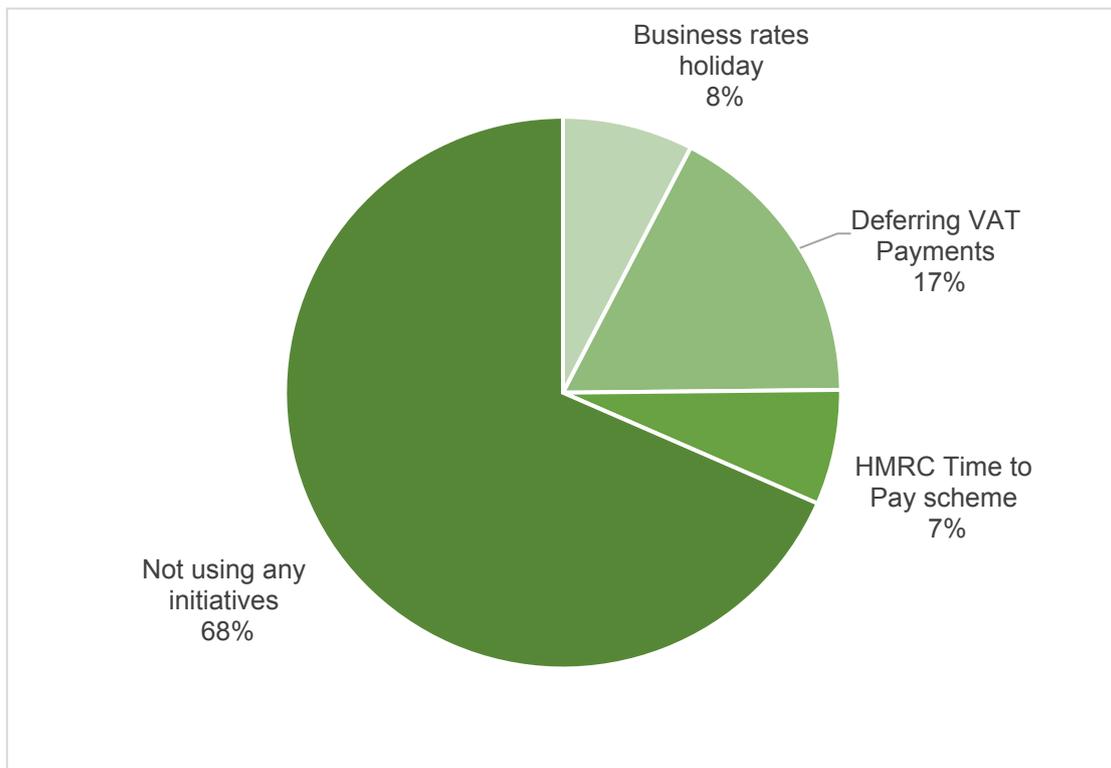
21%
of enterprises have
paused trading

3%
of enterprises have
ceased trading

36%
of enterprises have
cash reserves lasting less than 3 months (at January 2021)

13%
of enterprises
**have been unable to get materials, goods or services if needed
or have had to change suppliers from within the UK**

Enterprises Making Use of Available Initiatives (11-24 January 2021)



Sub-Appendix 3

Economic Stimulus Proposals

Proposal	Proposed Budget (£)		Source
	ARG	Other Source	
<u>Business Grants</u>			
Severity of Impact Grants	£650,000		ARG
Grants to Licence Holders	£130,000		ARG
Adaptation Grants	£250,000		ARG
Business Start-up Grants	£150,000		ARG
<u>Business Support Activity</u>			
Kent & Medway Growth Hub	£45,000		ARG
1-2-1 Support	£45,000		ARG
Procurement workshops	£10,000		ARG
<u>Town Centre Recovery</u>			
Recovery Action Plan		£15,000	RHSSF
Vacant retail units grant	£100,000		ARG
<u>Unemployment Response</u>			
New Career Graded Posts		£164,000	Gravesham BC Budget
Kickstart Scheme		£418,000	DWP Kickstart Scheme
Apprenticeship Levy Transfer		£18,750	Apprenticeship Levy
<u>Community Resilience Activity</u>			
Community Organisations Grant	£200,000		ARG
<u>Growing Sectors</u>			
Creative Sector Support	£20,000		ARG
Digital Infrastructure business case development		£25,000	
TOTAL	£1,600,000	£640,750	

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Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Full Council

Date: 23 February 2021

Reporting officer: Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service)

Subject: Senior Management Structural Review

Purpose and summary of report:

In order to best prepare the authority to achieve its corporate objectives and policy commitments as established in the council's Corporate Plan, this report presents Full Council with proposals developed by the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service) for key structural changes to the Corporate Management Team and associated services.

The report therefore seeks relevant authority to the commencement of the constituted appointment process.

Recommendations:

1. Full Council notes the retirement of Director (Planning and Development) and acknowledges his contribution to the authority.
2. Full Council agree to the proposed key changes to the corporate management structure as set out in this report.
3. Full Council agree to the convening of the authority's Appointments Panel and all related recruitment practises to oversee delivery of the enclosed proposals as appropriate.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposed senior management restructure to continue to enable Gravesham Borough Council to meet its corporate objectives, as established by the authority's adopted Corporate Plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 After spending the past 31 years at Gravesham Borough Council, Kevin Burbidge has formally announced his intention to retire from his post as the council's Director (Planning and Development) on 31 March 2021.

- 2.2 Kevin has contributed significantly to the council's recent success and had a lasting impact on the way the council manages and delivers some of its most frontline of services. On a personal note, Kevin has been a respected and trusted colleague during my time in the authority, providing me with support and advice that I will always be grateful for. Kevin has fulfilled several roles within the Council during his time; including Housing Strategy Manager, Economic Development Officer, Head of Planning & Regeneration and more recently his role as Director of Planning & Development. Particular career achievements rank as leading the delivery of the new Denton relief road, building strong and constructive relationships with external partners such as the military, and delivery of new housing developments within the Borough, including the Christianfields redevelopment.
- 2.3 I would therefore like to ask Members to join myself in thanking Kevin for the dedication to his profession he has shown throughout his career and his service to the council and our local community.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 It is accepted good practice to design senior management structures on the framework provided by the organisation's corporate objectives, as well as the functional leadership required for effective operational service delivery. This objective is particularly true when considering the lasting socio-economic legacy the Coronavirus pandemic has presented Gravesham, at a time when local government as a sector is operating in a sustained period of financial uncertainty.
- 3.2 The retirement of the Director (Planning and Development) therefore presents the authority with a unique opportunity at a critical moment; the chance to refocus our resources to the right areas of our business in order to deliver the quality and scale of service our residents increasingly need and ultimately deserve.
- 3.3 Having considered this opportunity in some detail, it is therefore recommended to Full Council that the post of Director (Planning and Development) be removed from the council's establishment in order to act as the key enabler to the senior management restructure detailed in section 4.
- 3.4 The proposals introduced in section 4 are a result of carefully appraised and consulted options, tasked with presenting the right structural synergies to enable us to achieve in our corporate objectives, as set out within the council's Corporate Plan. Crucially, in order to bring about the cultural development we are committed to, the aim therefore is to also ensure we maximise the officer talent within the council and establish effective succession planning considerations as we look to take on the significant operational challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

4. Future structure

- 4.1 Appendix 2 sets out the current Corporate Management Team and wider senior management structure for the authority. The proposals within this report are inclusive of a comprehensive review of housing services within the council and, equally, incorporate the services of the Planning and Development directorate into a new senior management structure as presented at Appendix 3.

- 4.2 The changes are accounted for across two new directorate areas and are detailed in sections 5 and 6 below. Appropriate and timely staff consultation activity has been undertaken for both elements with the findings detailed in section 7.

5. Housing services

- 5.1 At 5,690 homes Gravesham Borough Council is the largest social housing provider amongst Kent's district authorities, managing 18.5% of all council housing stock across the county.
- 5.2 The housing services provided by the authority have undertaken a significant transformation in recent times, both in regards to the model of delivery and associated levels of performance. Alongside improvements to the traditional housing management services, in 2016 the decision was taken to amalgamate the Contracts and Responsive Repairs Teams. Since this time, the services have been through a substantial amount of change, including the expansion of the servicing workforce to carry out more work in-house, which has resulted in savings across both revenue and capital budgets in the region of £2m per year whilst increasing customer satisfaction and performance outcomes for tenants.
- 5.3 Collectively housing services now account for 133 officers (25% of the authority's workforce), with this set to further increase by 23 following a decision by Full Council on 1 December 2020 to boost the resources of the Contracts and Responsive Repairs Teams.
- 5.4 The council is rightly proud of its achievements as a social landlord and the innovative financial and operational service interventions that have recently been implemented. As a result of the council's increased focus on its housing provision, it has become evident that it is important to recognise this within the Corporate Management Structure, and to maximise the synergies between different housing functions within the Council to continue to deliver the high quality housing articulated within the Corporate Plan.
- 5.5 Aligned to this, in order to undertake a fully comprehensive review of housing services across the authority, it is important to also take the opportunity to reflect on the council's Private Housing function.
- 5.6 Currently the responsibility of the Director (Planning and Development), the disestablishment of the responsible directorate provides the authority with a timely opportunity to consider the most appropriate structural location for Private Housing in order to deliver on our policy commitments to housing development and standards within the borough.
- 5.7 In keeping with the principles identified in section 3, having considered a number of options it is assessed that bringing the Private Housing function into the same management structure as the council's existing housing services area would present a number of direct benefits to local tenants:
- **Development:** a collective, clear and inclusive housing development strategy, sensitive and responsive to the complex needs of our tenants and informed by existing stock (Assets and Repairs) and existing tenants (Landlord Functions), would ensure the best use of budgets and land assets.

- **Safety:** a commitment to the highest possible safety standards across all house build projects. A combination of *Building a Safer Future* and the government's Social Housing White Paper: *The Charter for Social Housing Residents* places more responsibilities on housing providers, with safety being at heart of everything we do as a landlord. Combining the teams into one overarching directorate will ensure the high standards we have in place for our own council housing stock will also apply to new builds in the borough.
 - **Engagement:** put tenants at the heart of helping shape and influence developments for the future, drawing on local experiences of previous house build projects.
- 5.8 On the basis of the contextual background detailed above, the ability to maintain focus and strategic direction towards delivery of the council's Corporate Plan and the evident benefit to working synergies and efficiencies such a change would generate, it is therefore proposed that a new Housing Directorate be established incorporating existing housing services with the Private Housing function.
- 5.9 In order to lead this new directorate at a CMT level, the following recommendations are made to Full Council:
- the appointment of a new Director (Housing) post; and
 - approval for the convening of the authority's Appointments Panel and all related recruitment practises to oversee delivery of the new post.
- 5.10 On Full Council approval, to help facilitate the effective running of the new Housing directorate it is also proposed that the post of PA to the Director (Planning and Development) be transferred in order to provide the new Director (Housing) with the level of support required.

6. Planning services

- 6.1 Alongside Private Housing, the remaining services within the Planning and Development directorate included the following areas currently the operational responsibility of the Assistant Director (Planning):
- Development Management;
 - Planning Policy; and
 - Strategic Regeneration
- 6.2 As a local planning authority, the council's planning services have had to adapt to significant recent developments in government legislation. The introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Growth and Infrastructure Act are both designed to establish a planning process that positively encourages development.
- 6.3 In support of this agenda are a series of financial opportunities open to the authority such as: the New Homes Bonus, local retention of business rates, and Community Infrastructure Levy that, collectively, aim to encourage development and maximise the benefits of the council's planning services to the benefit of the local community.

- 6.4 Planning services are unquestionably essential, acting as a key enabler to the authority in its efforts to deliver against its corporate objectives. Whether through a Local Plan that sets a progressive vision for the future of the borough in shaping solutions to local housing, economic and public health needs, or an efficient, customer-focussed Development Management service sensitive to the quality and speed of decision making expected by customers and government alike, or a Regeneration team dedicated to realising the significant physical, social and economic opportunities within Gravesham, there is a need for the council to put in place an effective management structure to deliver efficient and high performing services.
- 6.5 Against this background, and the likely pressures to be presented by a post-Covid operating environment, it is therefore proposed that the existing role of Assistant Director (Planning) be refined to concentrate managerial responsibilities within the Development Management and Planning Policy services.
- 6.6 In doing so, it is also proposed that an Assistant Director (Strategic Regeneration) post be created. This role would be specifically tasked with realising the benefits associated with the suite of already established development projects and, crucially, in delivering future inward investment into Gravesham in the shape of new development opportunities for the benefit of local residents and businesses; critical as we look to support the borough in a post-Covid environment.
- 6.7 The remaining business of this proposal relates to the responsibility of planning services at a CMT level. Through its Corporate Plan, the council committed to the creation of a vibrant and protected living environment. In light of the retirement Director (Planning and Regeneration), there is therefore an opportunity to exploit the obvious synergies involved in the council's environmentally focussed services; combining those services responsible for the strategic planning of the borough's residential and business environment with those tasked with the maintenance of a 'green borough', one with clean streets and green, open accessible and protected spaces – collectively the council's principle responsibilities to the advancement of the local environment.
- 6.8 As such, in order to reflect the removal of the housing agenda from the directorate, it is proposed to use this capacity to incorporate the suite of planning services, as identified above, into a newly defined and cohesive Environment directorate; thereby amending the existing post of Director (Housing and Operations) to Director (Environment). Nick Brown will fulfil this role in conjunction with the strategic oversight provided in his existing capacity as Deputy Chief Executive.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 In order to advance these proposals discussions have been undertaken with Unison and, importantly, relevant officers have also been engaged as part of the process, in order to establish their thoughts and identify any concerns. As an organisation committed to investing in its people, we recognise officers are at the heart of council service delivery and therefore engaging staff in the design and implementation of such proposals – at an embryonic stage – forms an integral part to the restructuring approach.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposed changes outlined in this report take due consideration of the environment the council now operates in and, equally, the challenges and opportunities facing the authority in a post-Covid world.
- 8.2 The new CMT and associated supporting officer structure is specifically designed to ensure that the council continues to benefit from the extensive experience and expertise of all those who have contributed significantly to the authority's success, whilst providing the foundation and agility for the council to anticipate and shape its own future to the benefit of the local community.
- 8.3 Approval to the recommendations made within this report, will therefore embed a new Corporate Management Team – one designed to continue the council's progression as a high performing, value for money organisation and *Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of*.

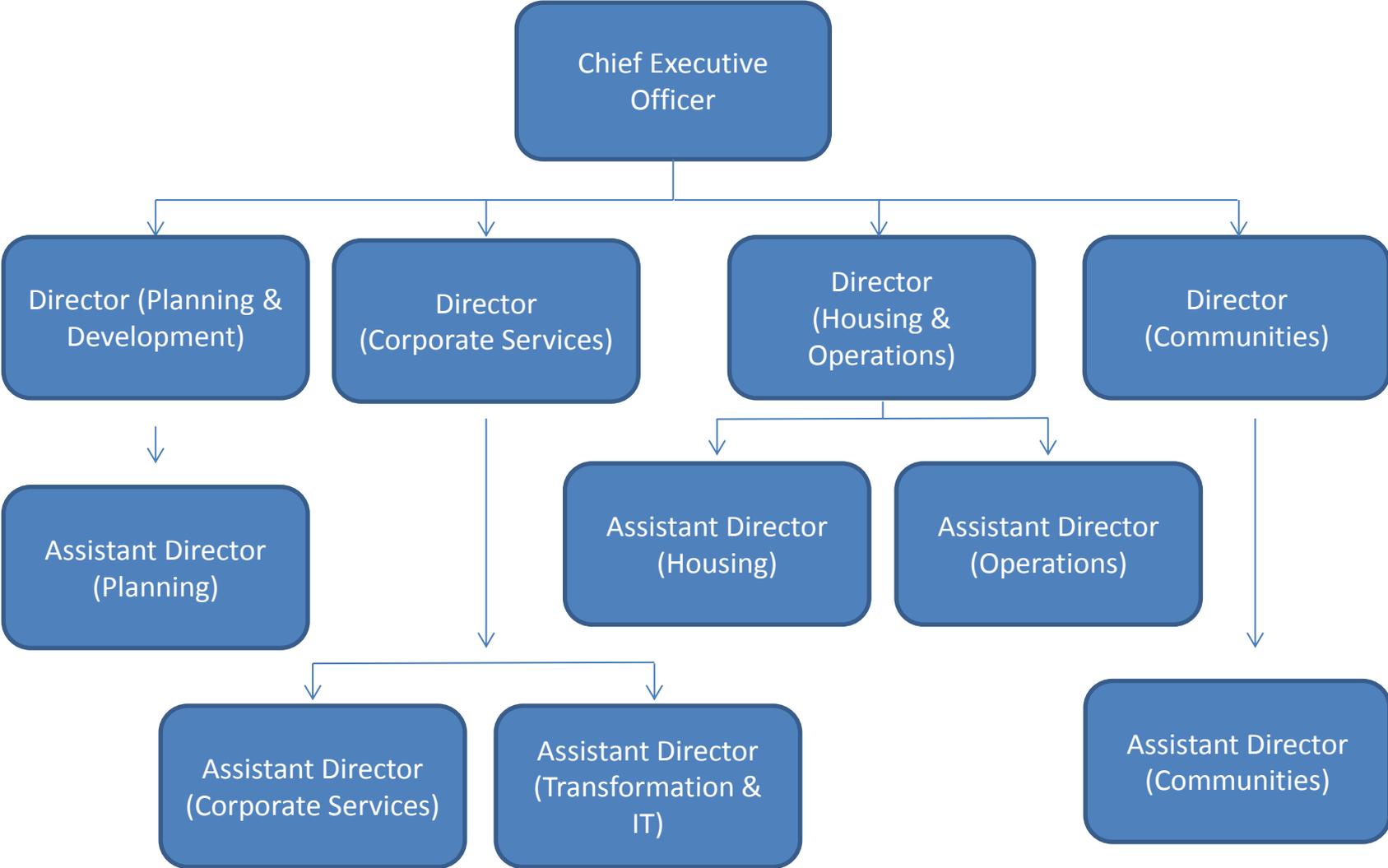
9. Background Papers

- Gravesham Borough Council: Corporate Plan 2019-23.

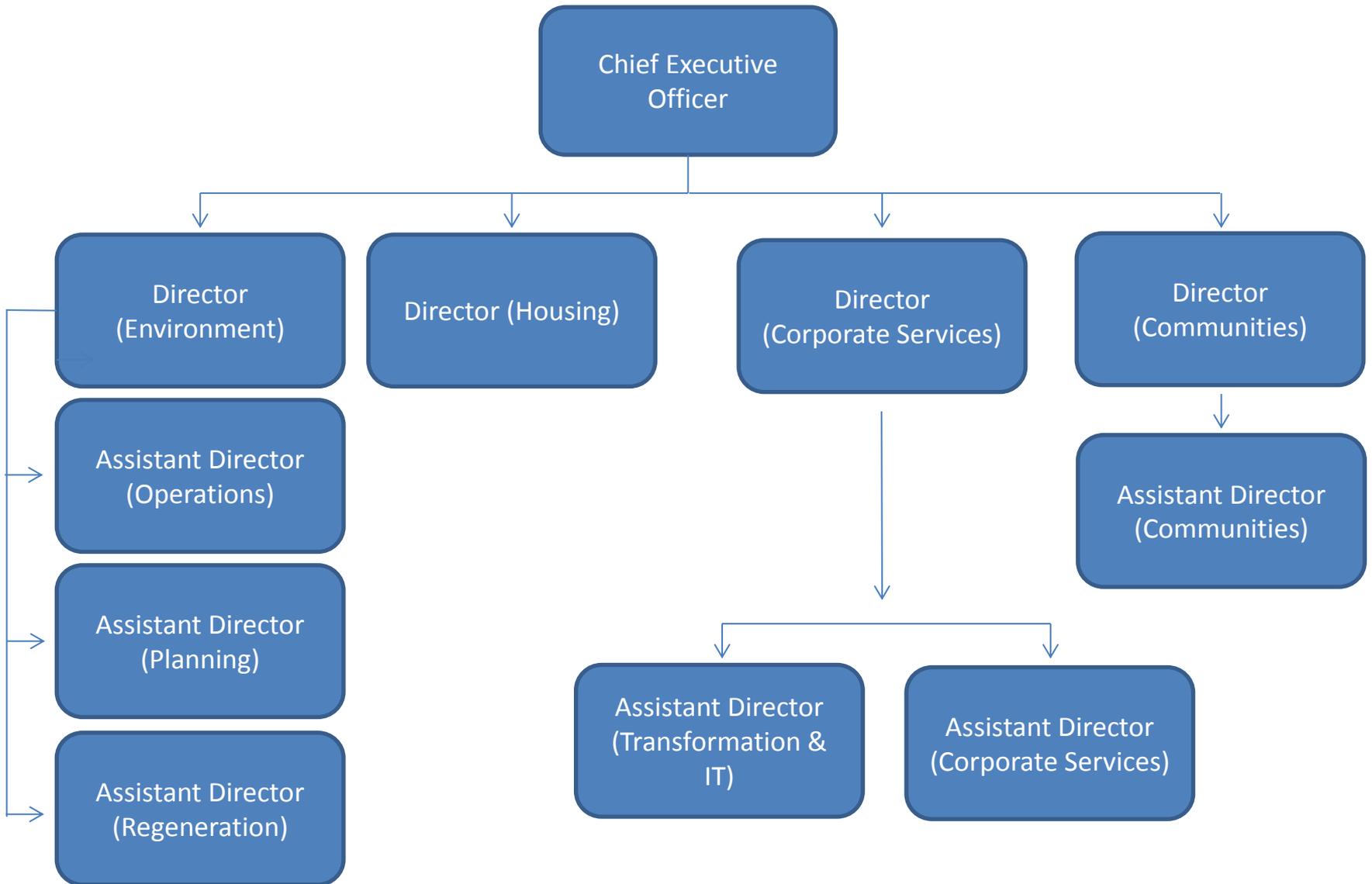
Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	<p>In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 (as amended), the steps that need to be taken in order to give effect to the proposals are contained within the council's Constitution.</p> <p>Additionally appropriate consultation has been undertaken with the advice of the council's HR service. Consultation has been undertaken on a timely basis and in a fair and transparent manner with relevant feedback being given due consideration.</p>
Finance and Value for Money	<p>Alongside the demonstrable operational benefits identified within the report, the structural changes as proposed are expected to be delivered at no additional cost to the authority, being delivered within the existing staffing budget for the authority.</p>
Risk Assessment	<p>Through the consultation exercises and ongoing discussions all risks associated with the proposals have been duly considered.</p>
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p>
	<p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p>
	<p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice?</p>
	<p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk.</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p>
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p>
	<p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
Corporate Plan	<p>The council's adopted Corporate Plan sets the strategic ambition and objectives for the authority over the 2019-23 period. This report proposes a new working management structure for the authority aimed specifically at advancing the council's efforts in its delivery of its suite of policy commitments.</p>
Climate Change	N/A
Crime and Disorder	N/A

Digital and website implications	N/A
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	N/A



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Classification: Public

Key Decision: No

Gravesham Borough Council

Report to: Report to Council
Date: 23 February 2021
Reporting officer: Chief Executive
Subject: Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer

Purpose and summary of report:

This report invites the Council to appoint an Interim Monitoring Officer in accordance with statutory requirements.

Recommendations:

That in accordance with Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 that Council be asked to confirm the appointment of Jan Guyler, as the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer which at the time of writing is expected to commence from 30 April 2021 and to last until such time a permanent appointment has been made and reported back to Full Council for consideration.

1. Summary

- 1.1 Under Section 5 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989 (as amended), the Council has a duty to appoint a Monitoring Officer. Neither the Head of Paid Service nor the Chief Finance Officer can hold the position of Monitoring Officer. There is no statutory requirement for the position to be held by a legally qualified officer.
- 1.2 The Monitoring Officer has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities relating to the Council's Constitution and our arrangements for effective governance. These duties include maintaining the Constitution, ensuring that no decision or omission of the Council is likely to give rise to illegality or maladministration and promoting high standards of conduct. A full list of the Monitoring Officer's responsibilities and delegated powers is included within the Councils' Constitution.
- 1.3 The Council's Constitution stipulates that the designation of the Monitoring Officer role can only be made by Full Council and it is a function that cannot be delegated.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council entered into a Shared Legal Service arrangement with Medway Council on 1 April 2017. At the meeting of council on 21 February 2017 Council resolved that the existing Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer for Medway Council, Mr Perry Holmes, was formally designated as the Monitoring Officer for Gravesham Borough Council with effect from 1 March 2017
- 2.2 Mr Holmes is moving from his employment with Medway Council on 29 April 2021 (correct as at the time of writing). Therefore there must be arrangements put in place for a monitoring officer to be appointed with effect from 30 April 2021.
- 2.3 There is insufficient time until the next full council meeting for Medway Council to complete a recruitment campaign before the conclusion of the postholder's notice period. As such, it is deemed necessary to put in place an interim arrangement, pending a substantive appointment being made by Medway Council and the subsequent approval required for Full Council.
- 2.4 This interim arrangement seeks to appoint Mrs Jan Guyler, the Head of the Shared Legal Service, as the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer from 30 April 2021 (or sooner should Perry Holmes' leaving date be brought forward for any reason) until such time as a permanent appointment has been made by Medway Council, and that the appointment to Monitoring Officer for Gravesham being subsequently considered by Full Council.

3. Constitutional Implications

- 3.1 Having reviewed the Constitution, it is considered that there are no required changes where references are made to the Monitoring Officer as the post will still exist, albeit with a different officer in the post.

4. Background Papers

- 4.1 Background papers pertaining to this report are as follows:

Report to Council on 21 February 2017 regarding the Role of the Monitoring Officer

Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
Legal	<p>Any resulting partnership arrangement will be made pursuant to Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972, which allows a local authority to may arrange for the discharge of any of their functions by any other Local Authority and Section 113 which allows the authority to place any of its officers, who consent to the arrangement, at the disposal of another local authority on such terms as may be agreed between the parties.</p> <p>The Council's Constitution stipulates that the designation of the Monitoring Officer role can only be made by Full Council and it is a function that cannot be delegated.</p>
Finance and Value for Money	There are no financial implications
Risk Assessment	The council is required to have an appointed monitoring officer in place. The Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer for Medway Council and Gravesham's monitoring officer is due to leave Medway council's employment on 29 April 2021. It is therefore necessary to ensure that there is an appointed monitoring officer in place with effect from 30 April 2021. Only Full Council can make this appointment.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of personal data or special category data or criminal offence data? A definition of each type of data can be found on the Information Commissioner's Office website via the above links.</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at gdpr@medway.gov.uk. N/A</p>
Equality Impact Assessment	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p> <p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer. N/A</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
Corporate Plan	#3 Progress: an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment.

Crime and Disorder	There are no specific crime and disorder implications resulting from this report
Digital and website implications	There are digital and website implications resulting from this report.
Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	There are no safeguarding children and vulnerable adults resulting from this report.