

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	<p>N/A</p>
Crime and Disorder	<p>N/A</p>

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