

# Chichester District Council

CABINET

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## Development Management Service Resourcing

### 1. Contacts

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### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That an underspend of £42,000 in 2014/15 be carried forward to 2015/16 to fund the cost for the first year of an additional senior planning officer post in the Development Management Major Applications and Business Team.**

### 3. Background

- 3.1. In 2013 a restructuring of the Development Management Service was undertaken, dividing the staff resources into three teams. It was estimated at that time that the Major Applications and Business Team would deal with 112 applications each year of which 26 would be major applications with the remainder being smaller scale and/or business related cases. This workload was to be resourced by 5 officers. In 2013/14, 51 major applications were handled by the Major Applications team and for the current year (2014/15), 65 are anticipated (59 major applications have been received to end of February). This trend represents a significant increase in major applications being submitted to the Council.
- 3.2. The Major Applications Team also deals with major and business related pre-application enquiries (PE) and discharge of condition (DOC) applications. The numbers of such applications is also an increasing trend; in 2013/14 the Majors Team dealt with 18 Major PE's and it is likely that by the end of 2014/15, the number submitted this year will be over 30. The number of DOC applications submitted is directly related to the number of planning permissions granted and so work associated with discharging conditions arising from major schemes is also likely to increase as permissions granted are implemented by developers.
- 3.3. Major applications are resource intensive and the work associated with them can extend over several months. The increased workload has so far been managed by allocating a greater number of smaller scale applications to the other (Applications) team than was envisaged by the 2013 restructure. This is not, however, considered to be a long term solution and there is now a pressing

need for greater capacity in dealing with current and forecast major application workloads and also in relation to appeals, particularly Public Inquiries.

#### **4. Outcomes to be achieved**

- 4.1. Efficient and effective handling of major planning applications by the Council.

#### **5. Proposals**

- 5.1. It is proposed that an additional senior planning officer post is created in order to provide enhanced capacity within the Major Applications and Business team to help resource the high volume of work that is and will continue to arise from the Council's evolving Local Plan position, from neighbourhood plans and from the strategic development locations identified in the Local Plan. It is essential that this post be created as a permanent contract so as to ensure a suitable candidate with the right knowledge and experience can be recruited. The overall annual cost of the post at grade 7 would be £37,775 - £41,765.
- 5.2. Planning application income amounting to some £1,125,000 has been received so far in 2014/15. This figure is significantly in excess of the income budget target (£819,000), largely due to the number of major applications being submitted to the Council. This new post can therefore be funded for the first year from surplus application income. However, given that it will need to be advertised and a recruitment exercise carried out, it is unlikely that the post will be filled before May/June 2015. A carry forward of the cost of funding the post for the first year is therefore required. It is proposed that the annual cost of the post would be included in the base budget from 2016-17, funded from increased income from fees.

#### **6. Alternatives that have been considered**

- 6.1. The alternatives are that firstly, existing staff within both the Major Applications and (other) Applications team continue to handle the additional work. Given that major applications require significant staff time and input, this is not considered sustainable beyond the short term and is likely to lead to loss of staff morale and unsatisfactory major application performance for which Local Planning Authorities now face the risk of 'designation' by government. Alternatively, a temporary post could be created but this would not address current and expected workloads in the medium to longer term, is likely to be difficult to fill and very unlikely to attract good quality experienced candidates.

#### **7. Resource and legal implications**

- 7.1. Whilst the existing staffing budget provision is inadequate to fund the additional post, there is sufficient surplus fee income to fund the post for the first year (2015/16) It is intended that the post will be included in the base budget from 2016-17.

#### **8. Consultation**

- 8.1. None.

## 9. Community impact and corporate risks

- 9.1. The Major Applications and Business team deals with planning applications for large scale development about which there is frequently high community interest. It is important therefore that these applications are handled efficiently, professionally and sensitively. The additional resource identified will help to achieve these aims.

## 10. Other Implications

<b>Crime &amp; Disorder:</b>	None
<b>Climate Change:</b>	None
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact:</b>	None
<b>Safeguarding:</b>	None

## 11. Appendices

None.

## 12. Background Papers

None