

Individual Member Decision Record



This form records an individual member decision and is published in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 and the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014.

Decision Maker:	Councillor Mark Crane, Leader of the Council
Lead Officer:	Martin Grainger, Head of Planning
Title of Decision:	Planning Resource
Ward(s) Affected:	All
Type of Decision:	<p>X Key decision</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Non-key decision discharging (or connected to the discharge of) an Executive function</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific delegation from Council or Committee</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Grant of permission / licence</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Affecting the rights of an individual</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Awarding a contract or incurring expenditure which materially affects the financial position of the Council</p> <p>X Decision Under Urgency</p>
Details of decision:	<p>The decision is to apply additional planning income generated in 2021/22 to fund agency staff in 2022/23 to address the exceptional peak in workload.</p> <p>The latest approved annual income target is £953k. At the end of February in-year income was approximately £1,420,163 that is already £467,463 higher than full year budget. The Full year forecast reported at Q3 is £1,444,570 which would be £491,870 higher than full year budget</p> <p>In terms of application numbers, we have reviewed the position and forecasts at the end of Q3. At that point we had received 1146 applications (excluding pre app). If this trend was to continue, we would receive around 1550 applications by the</p>

end of the year. This around 20% up on 2019/20 which we would regard as a standard year. The number of applications received between May and September were exceptionally high. If this trend had continued, we would have been around 30% up on previous years. Numbers fell away slightly in Q3. In terms of Q4 a conservative estimate has been taken for the purposes of financial forecasting, but it seems likely the overall level of applications for this year will be between 20% - 30% up on a standard year. It should be noted that the year 2020/21 was also high in terms of the number of applications with approximately 1460 received.

The service structure is calibrated to deal with less than around 1300 applications per year. It should also be stressed that for the majority of this year agency staff did not provide an additional resource but rather helped fill vacancies in the service. It has therefore been difficult to deal with the increased application numbers experienced in both 2020/21 and 2021/22.

Nevertheless, we are making good progress and increasing productivity. At Q3 the service had made 1178 decisions; this means that by year-end we will deal with around 1571 applications in total (excluding pre app). This is 29.6% more applications than we dealt with in 2019/20.

We currently have four agency staff in DM currently carrying a total workload of 130 applications between them. Based on current funding these contracts, with the exception of one will end on 31st March 2022. Given the case load levels they are currently handling if their contracts were not extended the impact on service delivery would be very significant. And looking ahead further recruitment and retention challenges may occur, placing even greater reliance on agency resource.

In addition, the current Planning Development Manager has resigned and will be leaving the authority at the end of March 2022. An existing Principal Officer has agreed to act up and based on both experience and aptitude would be a good candidate. Given the volume of work currently experienced the officer in question has a caseload of over 20 applications several of which are complex. It will not be possible to do the management role with that caseload level. Given other officer caseload it will not be possible to redistribute to others. It is therefore also recommended that the substantive Principal post is backfilled via agency for a 6 month period.

As the decision is a Key Decision, the Chair of Scrutiny has been consulted and agreed that the decision cannot be reasonably deferred, and that the decision is genuinely urgent.

	<p>RESOLVED: That as the matter is urgent, and the decision cannot await a full meeting of the Executive due to the need to put in place arrangements to secure the necessary capacity within the planning service, the Leader agrees that:</p> <p>£363k income generated from Planning Applications in 21/22 is used to fund current agency staff in 22/23 for up to 12 months to deal with the peak in workload. In addition, that the income highlighted is also used to backfill an existing post for 6 months to allow the officer in question to act up into the Planning Development Manager Post.</p>
<p>Reason for decision:</p>	<p>This key decision is needed to ensure that the Planning function continues to meet its statutory obligations. As this virement is outside of delegation to the Chief Finance Officer and Lead Member for Finance and due to the urgency (the majority of contracts expire at the end of March), it requires a decision to be signed off by the Leader (FPR Rule 4).</p>
<p>Alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Given the workload pressures on the service and the nature of the applications we are currently dealing with there is no realistic, practical alternative.</p>
<p>Member Interests: <i>(Name of any Member who has declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision and details of any dispensation granted by the Head of Paid Service if appropriate)</i></p>	
<p>Legal, Financial or other implications:</p>	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The Development Management staffing budget is £690,480 (net of vacancy factor). To extend the agency contracts identified and to backfill the Principal Officer post with agency for a 6 month period the costs would be an additional £171k to the net General Fund staffing budget (after netting off vacant posts). To extend agency contracts for a full twelve months a further £192k would be required giving a total 12 month additional cost to the existing General Fund staffing budget of £363k.</p> <p>The service is forecasting an income surplus by the 2021/22 year end of £492k against the revised budget of £953k.</p>

	This report proposes £363k of the income surplus be carried forward to 2022/23 to cover the cost of the agency staffing for the full 12 months.
Background papers:	None
Contact details for further information:	Martin Grainger, Head of Planning Email: mgrainger@selby.gov.uk
Signed:	<i>Signature redacted</i> Councillor Mark Crane, Leader of the Council
Date of Decision:	4 March 2022