

Appendices

3



**NORTHAMPTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Item No.

11

## CABINET REPORT

Report Title

Establishing an Integrated Planning Service and use of Planning Delivery Grant 2007/2008

**AGENDA STATUS:**

**PUBLIC**

<b>Cabinet Meeting Date:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2007
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes
<b>Listed on Forward Plan:</b>	Yes
<b>Within Policy:</b>	Yes
<b>Policy Document:</b>	No
<b>Directorate:</b>	People, Planning and Regeneration
<b>Accountable Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Richard Church
<b>Ward(s)</b>	<b>All</b>

### 1. Purpose

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- 1.1 To advise Cabinet on the results of the staff consultation regarding the Indicative Structure presented to Cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2007.
- 1.2 To present amendments proposed to the Indicative Structure as a result of the consultation.
- 1.3 To propose the allocation of Planning Delivery Grant for 2007/2008.

### 2. Recommendations

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- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the result of the formal staff consultations set out in Appendix 1 and the amended structure set out in Appendix 3.
- 2.2 That Cabinet notes the progress and key dates in the appointment process for Head of Planning, Development Control Manager and Building Control Manager.

- 2.3 That Cabinet agrees to allocate £224,620 of the 2007/2008 Planning Delivery Grant to support the implementation of the Indicative Structure in 2008/2009.
- 2.4 That Cabinet notes the proposed allocation of the balance of Planning Delivery Grant for 2007/2008 of £220,000 and £148,000 as set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.5 That Cabinet delegates the authorisation of specific allocations against the £220,000 and £148,000 Capital to the Corporate Director (People, Planning and Regeneration) in consultation with the Director of Finance and Portfolio Holder for Planning Services.
- 2.6 That Cabinet agrees the appointment to Head of Planning, Development Control Manager and Building Control Manager posts within existing budgets and Planning Delivery Grant.
- 2.7 That Cabinet considers the financial implications of the Indicative Integrated Planning Structure as part of the budget process for 2008/2009 and beyond.

### **3. Issues and Choices**

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#### **Report Background**

- 3.1 Cabinet agreed the proposed Indicative Integrated Planning Service Structure, as a basis for formal staff consultations at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2007.
- 3.2 Since then, formal consultations have taken place with all potentially affected staff. The last of these consultations was completed on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007.
- 3.3 The summary of responses is set out in Appendix 1. The results are generally supportive of the integrated structure, led by a professionally qualified Planner. The Appendix sets out against each key issue, the proposed action. Some are agreed and reflected in the amended structure set out in Appendix 3, others are noted, but await the views of the Head of Planning, when appointed. There are a few responses which, if agreed, would lead to an increase in the number of posts and, in turn, cost of service. These are not agreed at this stage as the proposed increase in cost of Planning Service is considered to be in line with working towards an Excellent Service at below average cost. This will need continual review as part of Service Planning and Value for Money consideration.
- 3.4 Retention packages have been agreed with five Development Control Planners, whose posts have met agreed criteria. This has stabilised the service, while the new structure is filled.
- 3.5 All vacant posts in Planning Policy have staff in place and appointments have been made to the Assistant Development Control Manager's post, Development Control Principal Planner and two Assistant Development Control Planner posts. It is believed the vision for the Integrated Planning Service, career paths offered and the experience offered are all key factors in successfully recruiting to these posts.

3.6 Recruitment consultants have been appointed to recruit to the Head of Planning, Development Control Manager and Building Control Manager. Due to the acute national shortages of such key professionals, the first and most important stage is through “search and selection”. This is believed to give the best likelihood of making successful appointments.

3.7 The key dates are:-

	<u>Target Dates</u>
Search Phase outcome	Mid-November 2007
Short List	December 2007
Interviews & Appointment	Early January 2008
Commence employment	April 2008

## Issues

3.8 The fundamental issue is agreeing a structure that can build on the improvements made to-date in Planning Services and deliver excellent services to support growth and improve the quality of environment and life in Northampton.

3.9 The estimated additional cost of the enhanced and Integrated Structure is considered to be in the order of £455,000 additional per year. This estimate will be refined through the medium term financial planning process.

3.10 The above estimate includes an additional estimated revenue cost of £100,000 for contributions to the running of the Joint Planning Unit for West Northamptonshire. The detailed resource plan for the Joint Planning Unit (JPU) was not available at the time of writing this report. Northampton Borough Council’s proportion of the JPU costs (net of in-kind contributions) will be factored into the budget and medium term financial planning process, when available.

## Choices (Options)

3.11 The Cabinet could decide not to fund the additional cost of the proposed structure. This would affect the sustainability of service improvements and the ability to establish a “fit for purpose” Planning Service.

3.12 The Cabinet could decide to phase the appointment to new posts, this would affect the Council’s ability to respond to the Growth Agenda on a timely basis

## 4. Implications (including financial implications)

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### Policy

4.1 This report does not, in itself, set policy. It does however affect the Council’s ability to improve its Planning Services, respond to and support the

Government's Growth Agenda and drive forward the Council's Regeneration priorities.

## **Resources and Risk**

- 4.2 The estimated additional cost of the proposed structure, when fully implemented is £455,000 per annum.
- 4.3 If the proposed allocation of Planning Delivery Grant (PDG) for 2007/2008 (£592,620) is agreed, the use of £224,620 to support the new structure in 2008/2009 would lead to a net budget pressure of £231,000 for 2008/2009 to establish the structure.
- 4.4 The costs of the new Joint Planning Unit are not yet known. The additional estimated cost of £455,000 includes a sum of £100,000 towards the cost. In addition, the proposed allocation of £100,000 from 2007/2008 PDG also adds to this contribution. The Council also contributes, in kind, by secondment of two staff, use of accommodation, computers and general facilities. All of these will be evaluated and used as contributions to the Council's share of the JPU's costs.
- 4.5 There are financial risks that the Council's share of the JPU's costs will be more than the total of our identified resources. This is dependent upon the total resource requirement to meet the Local Development Scheme timetable and the outcome of proposals to establish a Joint Planning committee.
- 4.6 There are risks that failing to implement the new structure will lead to loss of staff confidence. This, in turn, could lead to staff losses and failure to sustain service improvements.

## **Legal**

- 4.7 There are no legal implications as a direct result of this report.

## **Equality**

- 4.8 The proposed Indicative Structure will allow, as part of its improved customer focus, better engagement with service users, which will allow services to become better tailored to service users needs.

## **Consultees (Internal and External)**

- 4.9 All staff directly affected have been consulted formally, together with Trade Unions.

## **How the Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes**

- 4.10 Planning Service is a Corporate Priority for Improvement. The Planning Service is crucial to delivering the Government's Growth Agenda, Local Strategic Partnership and Local Area Agreement priorities. It is also a key enabler in assisting the regeneration of Northampton.

## **Other Implications**

- 4.11 The Government consider the timely production of both the Local Development Scheme and determination of Planning Applications, together with enabling of new Housing provision, to be important national priorities. Achievement against these are likely to be key performance targets for the Council.

Successful achievement is likely to attract additional financial support in future years. The proposed Indicative Structure and additional costs will enable the Council to sustain higher performance against these targets.

## **5. Background Papers**

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- 5.1 Cabinet Report – 30<sup>th</sup> July 2007 (Agenda Item 8).

**Report Author: Clive Thomas, Corporate Director  
– People, Planning and Regeneration - Ext. 7287**

## CABINET REPORT

### SIGNATORIES

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Establishing an Integrated Planning Service and use of Planning Delivery Grant 2007/2008</b>
<b>Date of Call-Over</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> October 2007

Following Call-Over and subsequent approval by Management Board, signatures are required for all Key Decisions before submitting final versions to Meetings Services.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Ext.</b>
<b>Monitoring Officer or Deputy</b>			
<b>Section 151 Officer or Deputy</b>			

## Appendix 1.

	<b><u>Issue</u></b>	<b><u>Proposed Action</u></b>
1.	There was general support for the integration of Planning Services under a Professional Qualified Planner.	None.
2.	Housing Strategy Team would prefer to be within the Integrated Planning Structure. Second preference being Regeneration, third preference Housing.	None; await outcome of Chief Executive's proposed organisational structure.
3.	The specialist advisor posts (Transport, Sustainability, Urban Designer) should be located within the Planning Policy part of the structure and not Development Control.	None at this stage; await views of Head of Planning.
4.	Change the titles of "Planning Technicians" to "Assistant Planning Officer".	Agreed. Reinforces career ladder and more attractive to applicants.
5.	Change the titles of "Trainee Building Control Officers" to "Assistant Building Control Officers".	Agreed. Reinforces career ladder and more attractive to applicants.
6.	Support for three specialist advisers, but would like to see additional specialist adviser for Biodiversity.	None. In a situation where resources were not finite, this could be supported. In the context of some resources, the proposed posts are considered a higher priority. Specific issues can be picked up through specialist commissions.
7.	The Council should wait until the appointment of Head of Planning before agreeing a structure.	None. The lead-time for securing a Head of Planning in post is likely to be five months.  The service can not wait that long, however the Head of Planning will be able to influence the new structure as the service moves forward. The structure is noted as indicative for this reason.
8.	The budget for the Integrated Planning Service should be brought up to the national average.	The approximate costings of the new structure will increase the revenue cost by some £455,000.

		The target should be to provide Excellent service at below average cost. The service costs should be kept under review through Service Planning cycles.
9.	An additional post of Team Leader should be established, covering the Northampton LDF and Conservation functions.	<p>None at this stage.</p> <p>The numbers in each section are considered to be within normal spans (8 and 3).</p> <p>To be reviewed by Head of Planning Services within financial parameters agreed.</p>
10.	The removal of responsibilities from two Corporate Managers when new Head of Planning in post could lead to a diminution in role if not replaced by other responsibilities.	None. Await Chief Executive's proposals for new organisational structure.
11.	Duty Officer (undertaken on a rotating basis) support to Planning Reception should be co-located at Reception to improve efficiency.	Agreed. To be actioned as part of improvements to Reception.
12.	The role of monitoring the satisfactory discharge of planning conditions be specifically allocated to a role.	Agreed. This role to be built into the post dealing with Appeals, Best Value and Customer Liaison.
13.	Career paths in and across service supported generally. Need identified to develop three year training plan for service to properly structure training and experience.	Agreed. Include in Training Bid for 2008/2009.
14.	The establishment of role of Building Control Manager strongly supported.	None, reflected in proposed structure.
15.	Dedicated support in Building Control supported.	None, reflected in proposed structure.
16.	Multi-skilling of Planning Support accepted in principle, but concern over reduced numbers in Development Control.	<p>None at this stage.</p> <p>The current working practices are out-dated, inefficient and inflexible.</p> <p>A thorough review of ICT systems, working procedures and activity analysis is taking place to ensure</p>



		<p>support and professional staff have use of up to date methods. The reduced numbers will not involve staff losses, as these are covered by temporary posts.</p> <p>Capital investment in ICT and software, coupled with staff training and development will optimise performance and efficiency. PDG is proposed to support this activity.</p> <p>The outcome of the above will determine the numbers of posts.</p>
17.	Have all existing staff got roles in the Indicative Structure?	<p>The Indicative Structure is not intended to lead to loss of posts. There may be some changes to roles, but this should represent development and job enlargement opportunities.</p> <p>Any changes to roles will be evaluated through the Council's new Pay and Grading arrangements.</p>

**PROPOSED ALLOCATION OF PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2007/2008**

Amount of Grant £592,620

Less

a) Required use of Capital (25%) - £148,000

b) Contribution to cost of new structure 2008/2009 - £224,620

**£220,000** for Allocation 2007/2008

Proposed Allocation 2007/2008

1. Recruitment costs (3 senior posts) £30,000

2. Service Improvement Manager £66,000

3. Interim DC Professional support £24,000

4. Additional contribution to JPU £100,000

**£220,000**

Proposed Capital Allocation

1. Planning Committee Audio Visual Improvements £28,000

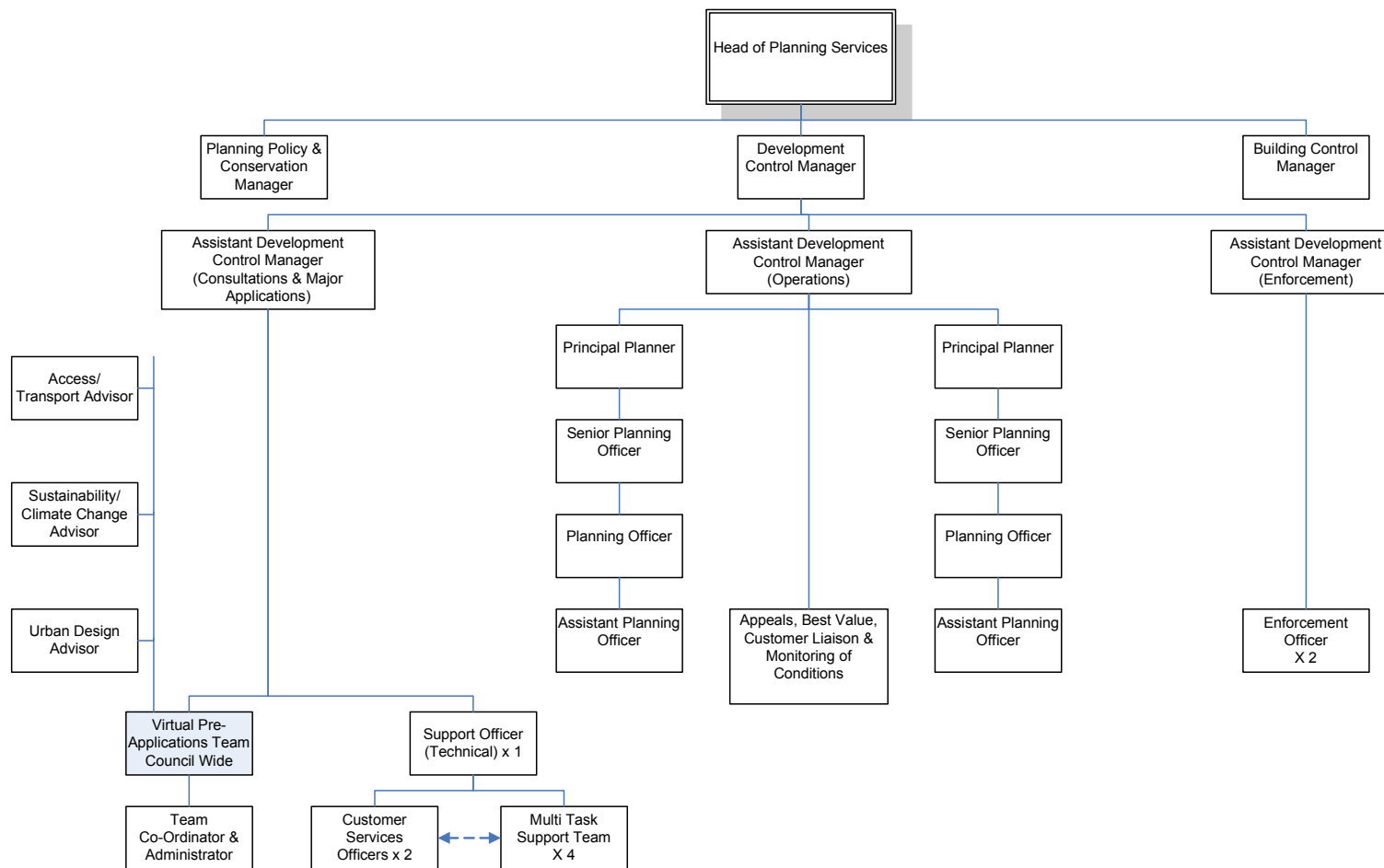
2. Improvements to Reception (leaflet displays, vision panel, photocopier) £10,000

3. Improvements to Planning ICT software, hardware and system integration £107,000

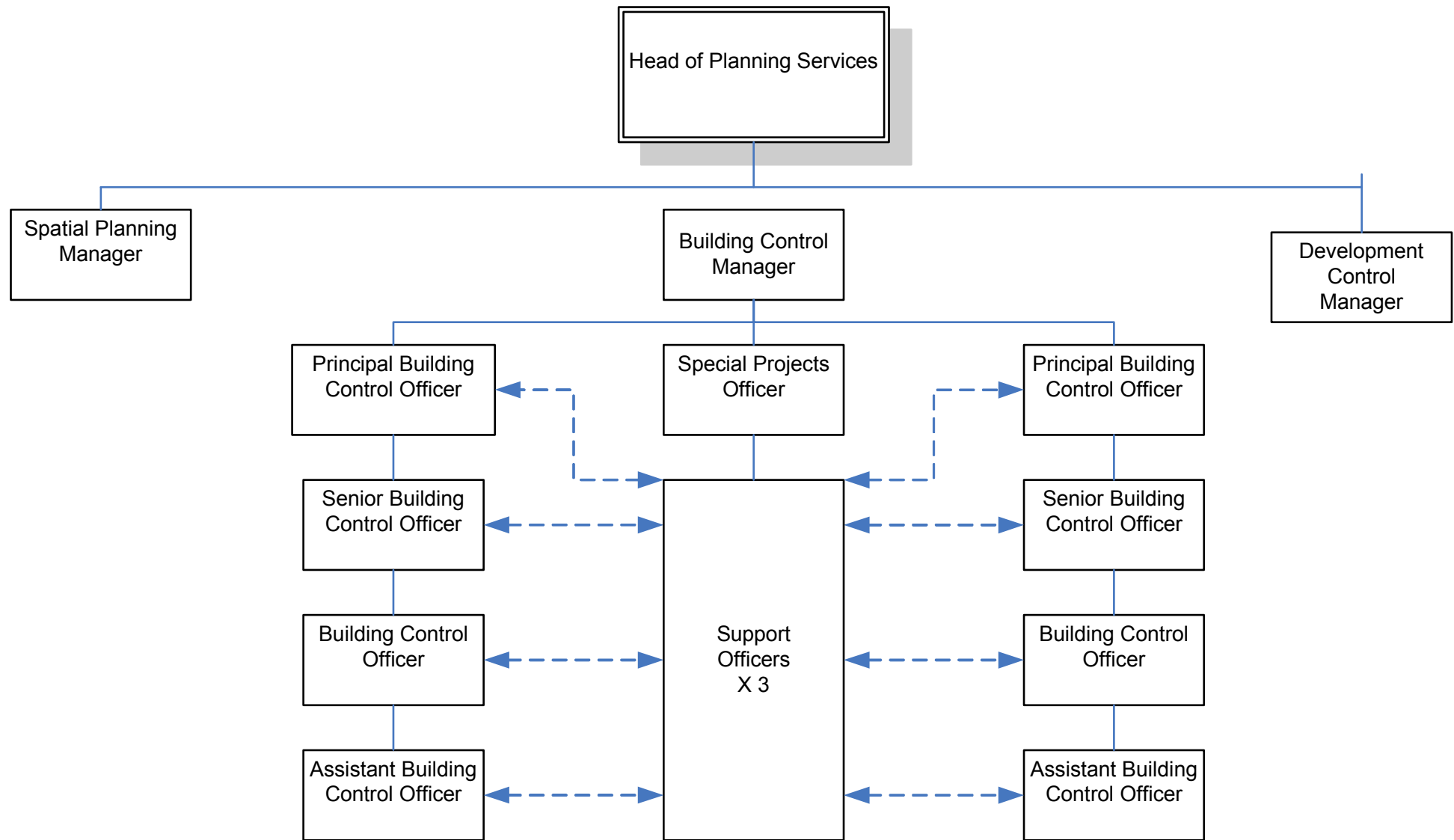
4. Mobile exhibition boards for Reception (Guildhall & Cliftonville) £3,000

**£148,000**

ESTABLISHING AN INTEGRATED PLANNING SERVICE – CABINET REPORT 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2007



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