

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

BUSINESS CASE

COMMITTEE Finance, Policy & Resources

DATE 30 September 14

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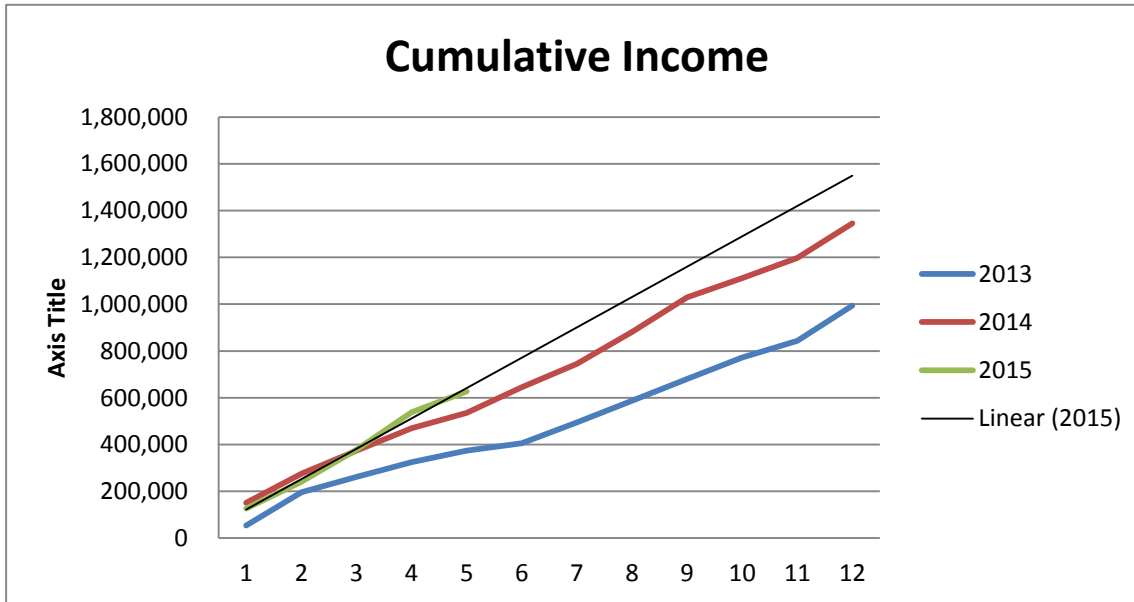
TITLE OF BUSINESS CASE Establishment of 2 Senior Planner Posts and 1 Planner Post

REPORT NUMBER

PURPOSE OF BUSINESS CASE

The Development Management Team handles all planning and other applications for development within the City as well as masterplanning of the full range of land release and brownfield sites with the aim of ensuring that the Council facilitates and creates a future legacy of high quality, economically buoyant and sustainable places for the citizens of Aberdeen.

The team is currently experiencing an unprecedented surge in masterplanning work on local development plan land release sites, as well as increasing numbers of applications – many of them complex and significant and occurring simultaneously. All the evidence indicates that this workload will not diminish in any way in future years and is likely to intensify. The capacity of the existing staff resource has been exceeded and staff can best be described as fire fighting on a day to day basis. The Scottish Government indicated last year that it expected an improvement in the processing times, especially for major applications (which have the maximum economic impact on the wellbeing of the City) and has introduced a penalty clause to be imposed on planning authorities who do not demonstrate a sustained improvement in performance. Unfortunately processing times in the City have flat lined since last year. All efforts have been, and continue to be, made to improve processes and procedures (including a full comprehensive review of administrative structures, systems, processes and procedures) but the evidence shows that this will not be sufficient on its own. Benchmarking with all other Scottish Local Authorities shows a significant comparative shortfall in the staff resource pro rata per application dealt with. At the same time planning application fee income has increased dramatically which provides statistical evidence of the increase in complex and significant applications. See table below.



Much more analysis, evidence and benchmarking data to support the statements above has been done and can be provided if required.

Two new Senior Planner posts and one Planner post are required to cope with the workload. The Scottish Government has stated that it expects planning fee income to be reinvested in improvements to the planning service. The requirement for these posts has already been budgeted as a PBB Budget Option for 2015/16 (Reference EPI_PSD44). The salary of these posts can be paid for out of the increase in planning fee income (a further 5 percent increase in planning fees will come into effect in November - further boosting income).

Minor Change Major Change (tick as appropriate)

Reason for choice of category:

The requirement for these posts has already been budgeted as a PBB Budget Option for 2015/16 (Reference EPI_PSD44). The increase in staff is small compared with the total staff complement of Development Management (44 staff) and the fee income that will be received this year (highly likely to exceed £1.5M).

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that approval is given to create three new posts in the structure constituting 2 Senior Planner positions (in Applications Team) and 1 Planner Position (likely within MDC Team).

Additional resource(s) / change to structure required	Job title(s)	No of jobs
Establishment of permanent job	Senior Planner	2
	Planner	1
Conversion of fixed term job to permanent status		

Creation of fixed term job		
Extension of fixed term job		
Dis-establishment of permanent job		
Change to Job Title	Former: Revised:	
*Redesign of existing job		

* for a redesign of an existing job there should be reference in the report to the impact of the redesign on the jobholder(s).

BUSINESS CASE

Please do not repeat any information contained in other sections of the report

1. **With specific reference to anticipated outputs/outcomes, state how the recommendation(s) support corporate objectives e.g. Council's Policy Statement; Vision and Values; Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003; Community Plan; Transformation Programme etc.**

Strategic Infrastructure Plan Goals

Step Change in Supply of Housing – delivery of housing by private developers, housing associations and local authority led projects – requires the timely delivery of statutory approvals for planning permission.

Skills and Labour Requirements – delivery of high quality domestic and commercial built environment boosts economic activity and makes Aberdeen a more attractive place to work and live.

2. **State how the recommendation(s) support service objectives and plans and/or the achievement of a Statutory Performance Indicator.**

Service objectives are already identified within the How Good is Our Service Plan and can be summarised as:

Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure Priorities

Delivery of Structure Plan and Local Development Plan – ensure that development identified in both these plans is delivered on the ground to meet the economic needs of the City.

Service Improvement / Best Value – ensuring that quality planning services, with a customer focus, are provided and meet the needs of applicants, economic activity and Scottish Government.

Beyond this, a number of performance indicators are embedded in our Customer Service Excellence status, as well as national performance frameworks for both planning and building standards. Attainment of performance is reliant on an adequately resourced and effective development management team.

3. A) Outline why the new work cannot be undertaken within existing staff resources e.g. by re-distributing resources or curtailing lower priority services.

There has been a dramatic increase in economic activity in the City within the last two years. Evidence of this is provided by the significant surge in applications and associated fee income (see graph above) which has further increased in the first financial quarter of 2014/15. The value of work is an indicator of the complexity of developments which in turn, attracts the need for additional resources.

OR B) In the case of the redesign of an existing job, outline details of the new tasks being undertaken.

4. Risk Management: What are the consequences of not proceeding with the recommendation(s)?

In January the Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act introduced powers for the Scottish Government to reduce the level of fees, and consequently fee income, for underperforming Local Authorities. Based on indicators of application processing time, performance in 2013-14 did not improve compared with 2012-13. The evidence (benchmarking etc) indicates that lack of staff resource was a significant contributory factor to this level of performance. There is a risk that the Scottish Government might choose to exercise this power in future years if this situation persists with a significant reputational and financial risk to the Council. There is also a risk that delays in determining planning applications will result in developers investing outwith the City which would undermine the achievement of Council objectives. And time spent dealing with complaints relating to delays could be better spent in determining applications.

5. Risk Assessment: What Health and Safety considerations have been taken into account?

Staff are currently under significant pressure with many working beyond their contracted hours. There is a risk that this pressure could lead to stress related illnesses.

6. Financial Implications:

Impact on current year's revenue/capital budget:

Job Title	JE Grade	Min Salary*	Max Salary*
Senior Planner	G14	£11,200	£12,804
Senior Planner	G14	£11,200	£12,804
Planner	G13	£9,783	£11,193

***These figures are based on an appointment being made by 01/01/15. Minimum and maximum salary costs also include agreed allowances and 30.3% on costs.**

Net Cost	£ 32,183	Net Saving	£ 0
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Full year impact on revenue/capital budget:

Job Title	JE Grade	Min Salary*	Max Salary*
Senior Planner	G14	£44,800	£51,217
Senior Planner	G14	£44,800	£51,217
Planner	G13	£39,134	£44,775

***Minimum and maximum salary costs include agreed allowances and 30.3% on costs (ie National Insurance and employer's pension contributions).**

Net Cost	£128,734	Net Saving	£ 0
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Source and amount of revenue/capital budget funding available:

The expenditure will be covered by the increased fee income received through planning application fees already agreed through the Priority Based Budgeting process.

Amount of external monies available within the current financial year:

The expenditure will be covered by the increased fee income received through planning application fees already agreed through the Priority Based Budgeting process.

Amount of external monies available in total:

None

- 7. If the recommendation(s) relate to additional staffing, outline and justify the proposed contractual status of the new employee(s) i.e. 'permanent' or fixed term?**

Permanent – there is an increase in economic activity which shows no signs of slowing down in the foreseeable future. It is important to meet the demand of this activity with a properly resourced service by re-investing the fee income in service improvements.

- 8. If the recommendation(s) are funded on a time-limited basis from an external source, what is the likelihood of the project continuing beyond the term of funding?**

Not applicable

9. If the project is likely to continue beyond the term of funding, what steps are being considered in order to finance this extension?

Not applicable

10. In the case of fixed term contracts, state whether this contract is task or event related; outline the proposed exit strategy and detail how potential exit costs will be met.

Not applicable

11. What accommodation and equipment considerations have been taken into account?

It will be necessary to accommodate the additional staff within the Development Management team in Marischal College and within the Smarter Working set-up. The team currently operates on a ratio of 6.1 desks per 10 non fixed desk staff members within the Development Management "Zone" of GFN. The additional staff will reduce this ratio to 5.6 desks per non fixed desk staff and consideration will have to be given to accommodating these staff within a 7:10 ratio given the nature of the service requiring close working with colleagues and face-to-face contact with the public.

12. HR Comment(s)

13. Legal, Finance or Trades Union Comment(s)

13. Report Author Details

Daniel Lewis, Development Management Manager
Contact 01224 522250

Approved under delegated authority: _____

Date: _____

or

Committee Approval Required

Establishment Control Table

Post(s) to be established	No of posts	Weeks /hours	Job No.	Reports to	Location	Grade	Financial Code	JE No
Post(s) to be disestablished	No of posts	Weeks/hours	Job No.	Reports to	Location	Grade	Financial Code	JE No
Posts (for grade change only)	No of posts	Job no.		Reports to	Location	Old Grade	New Grade	JE No