

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

BUSINESS CASE

COMMITTEE Finance, Policy & Resources

DATE 30 September 14

LEAD OFFICER Gordon Spence

AUTHOR OF BUSINESS CASE Gordon Spence

NAME(S) OF HR ADVISER(S) CONSULTED Lindsay MacInnes

NAME(S) OF FINANCE PARTNER(S) CONSULTED Susan Gray

TITLE OF BUSINESS CASE Re-grade - Application Support Assistants

REPORT NUMBER

PURPOSE OF BUSINESS CASE

The Application Support Team provides the administrative support to the Development Management and Building Standards statutory functions. The team deal with the receipt, validation, lodging, and processing of planning and building warrant applications. Additionally, they are customer facing, engaging customers at reception by telephone and e-mail, providing advice and guidance on the application process and answering general technical enquiries at source.

The timely and efficient processing of applications directly impacts on the performance of the two services which are monitored by both local and national standards and as part of the attainment of Customer Service Excellence.

The role, remit and responsibilities of application support assistants have changed significantly since the post was last job evaluated as part of the Council-wide Job Evaluation exercise carried out during Single Status Implementation in 2006. There has also been a recognition that the job profile has never adequately reflected the application support assistant role – for instance with regard to the degree of customer facing interaction.

Given the development pressures in the City and the consequent increase in the workload of planning and building standards officers, this business case is to recognise that the team will take on the additional statutory duty and responsibility of the validation of planning applications, therefore freeing up those officers to focus on the professional evaluation of applications. A draft of the Job Profile and job evaluation questionnaire to reflect that change and the customer focus of the job has resulted in the salary grade moving from G8 to mid-point of G9.

Minor Change Major Change (tick as appropriate)

Reason for choice of category:

The re-grading recognises the statutory responsibility of validation, it has been budgeted for by an increase in building warrant and planning fee income and has no negative impact on other services or organisations.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that approval is given for the re-grading of the Application Support Assistant post from G8 to G9.

Additional resource(s) / change to structure required	Job title(s)	No of jobs
Establishment of permanent job		
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	Application Support Assistants	N/A

* 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 and building warrant approval.

Skills and Labour Requirements – delivery of a 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 and building standards 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 application support 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.**

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

Aberdeen City Council is the only planning service in Scotland that has not centralised the validation of submitted planning and related applications into a small administrative/technical team working closely together as a unit to ensure efficiency, consistency and single point of contact for validation. The current system, which involves checking and hand off of applications at the pre-validation stage between planning officers (working on a rota) and application support assistants is inefficient and time consuming and results in inconsistent advice and validation requirements, and does not make the best use of the skills and experience of planning staff – all of which has a negative effect on customer service and the speed at which applications are processed.

With the foregoing in mind it is seen as essential that the validation function should be consolidated within the administration team. Validation requires a degree of judgement about whether information submitted with an application is sufficient to make an application valid and will require application support assistants to take on additional training and responsibility. Validation is not specifically mentioned in the ASAs current Job Profile and this is corrected in the draft Job Profile.

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

Within the Planning Performance Framework, Scottish Government has the power to reduce fee income for an underperforming Authority. Currently, the validation process as described above is delaying the processing of planning applications and affecting targets embedded with the Performance Framework. Clearly, there is a reputation risk to the Council if this continues, as well as their being a risk that delays in determining applications result in investment going elsewhere.

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

There are no additional Health & Safety risks.

6. Financial Implications:

Impact on current year's revenue/capital budget:

Job Title	JE Grade	Min Salary*	Max Salary*
Application Support Assistant	G8 Point 4 to G9 Point 2	£4,136 (11 FTEs)	£4,136(11 FTEs)

***These figures are based on an appointment being made by 01/10/14. Minimum and maximum salary costs also include agreed allowances and 30.3% on costs.**

Net Cost	£ 4,136	Net Saving	£ 0
-----------------	----------------	-------------------	------------

Full year impact on revenue/capital budget:

Job Title	JE Grade	Min Salary*	Max Salary*
Application Support Assistant	G9 Point 2	£8,272	£8,272

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

Net Cost	£8,272	Net Saving	£ 0
-----------------	---------------	-------------------	------------

Source and amount of revenue/capital budget funding available:

The expenditure will be covered by the increased fee income received through planning and building warrant submissions and as agreed through the PBB process.

Amount of external monies available within the current financial year:

The expenditure will be covered by the increased fee income received planning and building warrant submissions and as agreed through the PBB 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?

Not applicable

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?

None

12. HR Comment(s)

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

13. Report Author Details

Gordon Spence/Daniel Lewis, Building Standards Manager/Development Management Manager.
gspence@aberdeencity.gov.uk/dlewis@aberdeencity.gov.uk. 01224 522436/522250.

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