

Report to Joint Consultative and Safety Committee

Subject: Review of Economic Development

Date: 23rd October 2012

Author: Corporate Director

1. Purpose of the Report

To Inform Committee of the outcome of the review of the secondment of the Policy and Research officer to the economic development service and inform members of the proposals to provide appropriate resources to Economic Development Section in the future to enable major growth programmes to be delivered.

Members are asked to consider the report and receive comments made either direct by employees affected by the proposals or through trade union representation. Any comments or recommendations made by the Committee will be referred to the Chief Executive who, under delegated arrangements, has the authority to determine the final staffing structure to be adopted.

2. Background

As part of the Council's major restructuring exercise that took place at the end of 2011, the Policy and Research section was disbanded. Several officers were displaced as a result, one officer was temporarily seconded to the Economic Development team with a commitment given that in due course a review of that secondment would take place. That review is now complete.

3. Proposal

The detailed proposal of how Economic Development is best delivered in future is set out in the attached report (Appendix A). The report is supported in its draft form by Senior Leadership Team. Formal consultation has already commenced, with a meeting between management, unions and employees potentially affected by the proposals and now as part of this formal process the report is presented to this committee for initial introduction. It is proposed that consultation closes with the next meeting of the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee meeting on 28 November 2012 at which final comments can be received from interested parties and recommendation can be made by the committee for consideration by the Chief Executive prior to implementation of any structural review.

4. Resource Implications

The report at Appendix A sets out the business case for the review of the secondment and prioritises for the Economic Development Service in the future and also presents a proposal for future resource allocation to deliver this.

Although, as detailed in the body of the report, every reasonable attempt will be made to retain current employees in suitable work within the Council, should this not be possible, redundancy costs will arise.

5. Recommendation

The Committee is asked:

- i. To consider the detailed report at Appendix A,
- ii. To receive comments from employees and union representatives, and
- iii. Subsequently to make any initial recommendations for consideration by the Chief Executive under whose delegated authority a final staffing structure will be implemented.
- iv. To invite interested parties to consider the proposal further and to make any final comments at the formal close of consultation at the JCSC meeting of 28 November 2012.

GEDLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Economic Development – Future Staffing Proposals

COMMENCEMENT OF FORMAL CONSULTATION

DATE: 10th October 2012

1. The Business Case for Change

1.1 Following the election of the new administration in May 2011 greater emphasis was placed on driving forward economic growth within the borough.

1.2 However since the start of the economic downturn in 2008 indicators of economic prosperity have been steadily decreasing within the borough mirroring the national recession:

- The proportion of residents claiming Job Seekers Allowance within the borough continues to rise.
- The proportion of young people unemployed within the borough is third highest in the County with some wards experiencing levels of youth unemployment almost twice the national average.
- There is a continued lack of growth in job opportunities within the borough.
- Development both in residential and employment sites allocate for development has stalled in many cases .

1.3 Against this backdrop the Council is keen to do whatever it can to attract and support development within the borough in terms of housing, business and promoting a work ready resident workforce. Over recent months a programme of projects have been development to promote a climate to encourage growth:

- An Employment and Skills Partnership has been developed with the priority to bring forward initiatives to reduce youth unemployment.
- The Council has been success in attracting a permanent Further Education presence in the borough to also prioritise targeting areas of youth unemployment. An assessment centre and “ Employ Local “ initiative is now running to up skill young people within the borough and

promote work readiness and at the same time establish links and employment opportunities with local businesses within the borough.

- A series of projects (Get Gedling Building) have been developed to assertively market the borough as a place to live and work, these involve targeting specific stalled development sites and commercially marketing these sites for development.
- A developers Forum and a Landlords Forum have been developed by the Council to engage business and promote development. And it is the intention to develop a strategy for business engagement to work with businesses to promote growth in their business and promote the borough as a place for new businesses to relocate.

1.4 Across the country many local shopping areas have declined with many facing void premises of up to 30%. However in Gedling main shopping town of Arnold there is only 7% of void properties and a customer satisfaction level of 98%.

1.5 Within the Council the resources permanently allocated to Economic Development has been the permanent establishment of one Economic Development Officer. That officer has traditionally concentrated on providing local support to small business and town centre management issues.

1.6 Following a major management and service restructure in 2011 the service area of Policy and Performance was disbanded. This placed several employees from that section at risk of redundancy. All but one of the staff secured permanent alternative employment within the council at that time but one officer namely the Policy and Research Officer was temporarily placed in secondment into Economic Development at an enhanced grade of Band 7 (substantive grade was Band 5) to support the permanent post holder pending a future review of the Economic Development service area.

1.7 The development of the projects outlined in Get Gedling Building Programme has been developed by the Corporate Director and Service Managers for Housing and Planning services. In order to ensure the deliverability of the projects the need for an additional resource has been identified as the deliverability element of these projects is reducing within the capacity and skills currently available. This additional resource needs to be at a more senior level than can be delivered by a Band 7 officer to work with the Director and Service Managers to take forward the growth agenda at a project level. The specific skills need to encompass building and commercial marketing, and planning and design and well as Senior Economic Development background to deliver a strategic growth plan for the borough.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 That the secondment of the post of Band 5 Policy and Research Officer to Economic Development is ended and the post deleted from the establishment.
- 2.2 A budget equivalent to the salary of the deleted post is retained within Economic Development for the purpose of securing the necessary skills on a project basis to deliver the Economic Development Growth Plan.
- 2.3 The existing job role of the Economic Development Officer is prioritised to meet the new objectives for Economic Development.
- 2.4 If the proposals, following a period of 30 days of consultation, are implemented then the Policy and Research post would be deleted and the post holder would potentially be at risk of redundancy. The Council will seek to reduce the potential for redundancy by attempting to seek for suitable alternative redeployment within the Council. Should this not be possible, a dismissal due to redundancy would occur.

Paula Darlington, Corporate Director
Date: 10/10/12