

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	12 July 2023
Subject:	Planning Partnership Contribution
Report of:	Planning Policy Manager/ Associate Director: Finance
Head of Service/Director:	Planning Policy Manager/ Associate Director: Finance
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Built Environment/ Lead Member for Finance & Asset Management
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this report is to agree to an increased financial contribution to the new Planning Partnership in order to ensure sufficient resources are available to prepare a sound development plan for the borough.

Work was commissioned in 2022 to evaluate the resources needed to produce the next joint and local plan, which was undertaken by Deloitte LLP, and this equated to an increase to £220k per district council per annum. Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council have already agreed the increased budgetary contribution.

Recommendation:

To RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- i. that a virement of £120,000 from the local pay review budget to the Planning Partnership base budget is approved; and**
- ii. the new Planning Policy Officer post (included in the 2023-24 budget as a growth item) be moved to the Planning Partnership budget (ca. £40,000)**

Financial Implications:

Each partner Council has contributed £60k per annum towards the Planning Partnership since its inception in 2008/09. This annual contribution has not increased over the 14 years of the partnership and has resulted in each partner needing to fund large one-off contributions to meet the required expenditure.

In order to rectify this position, an external review was commissioned which highlighted the need to increase the annual contribution by £160,000 per annum per partner resulting in a total annual contribution per partner of £220,000. The Council set the 2023/24 budget in February 2023 which included a new Planning Policy Officer costing ca. £40,000. This post is already in budget but will be moved to the Planning Partnership budget. The additional amount of £120,000 will be vired from the budget set aside to meet the outcomes of the local pay review. Having completed all phases associated with the review, there is a balance of £126,425 which is not required for further pay increases. This then provides an ideal opportunity to confirm the ongoing partnership contribution at this early stage rather than

supporting with one-offs and looking to the 2024-25 budget to confirm an ongoing commitment.

Both Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council have confirmed their ongoing increased partnership contributions.

Legal Implications:

It is a statutory requirement to have an up to date development plan in place for the Borough.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute towards sustainable development principles. Planning decisions are required to be made in accordance with an adopted development plan. The plan-led approach to development will help to ensure that new development is supported by the necessary facilities and infrastructure to make it sustainable in the long term

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

Included within the report.

Safeguarding Implications:

None.

Impact on the Customer:

None

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (JCS) Development Plan Document was adopted in December 2017 by all three authorities. This plan is a coordinated, planning plan that sets out how the local authority areas of Gloucester City, Cheltenham Borough and Tewkesbury Borough will develop between 2011 and 2031. It sets out a spatial strategy, planning policies and site allocations to deliver development needs, whilst protecting the natural and built environment.

1.2 Sitting underneath the adopted Joint Core Strategy is the 'district plan' for each local authority. These plans deliver the JCS locally and address local issues and opportunities. On 8 June 2022, the Tewkesbury Borough Plan 2011-2031 was adopted at an Extraordinary Council meeting.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 Work has been ongoing in a partnership between Tewkesbury Borough Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucester City Council (and Gloucestershire County Council) to review the Joint Core Strategy. Having been adopted over five years ago, that Plan is now overdue a formal review.

2.2 Local plans are important documents setting out the ground rules for long-term sustainable development and are subject to complex statutory procedures around evidence gathering, options appraisals, sustainability appraisal, public consultation/engagement and Public Examination. Typically, a Plan takes around three years from inception to adoption.

2.3 Tewkesbury Borough Council serves as the budget holder for the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Planning and Local Plan on behalf of the partner authorities. Currently the authorities each contribute £60k per annum (including Gloucestershire County Council) to support this work; however, given the scale of the task, the three district authorities recently undertook a resource review and commissioned Deloitte LLP to support this task. A particular priority was the need to ensure a minimum staff complement with the right skills set to deliver the review, as it was evident that existing planning policy staff across the area are required to spend sizeable proportions of their time on duties unrelated to the shared plan-making work. These include, for example, supporting the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans and corporate initiatives and projects.

2.4 Accordingly, it was concluded there was a clear need for an overall programme manager role for the duration of the project, together with additional temporary staff resources at Team Leader, Principal/Senior and Planning Officer level. These roles would be shared jointly across the three authorities and dedicated wholly to the review of the planning policy elements in the partnership.

2.3 The resource review concluded that partnership contributions and existing balances would fall short of anticipated expenditure by £1.92m over the next four years. In budgetary terms, this would average out a requirement for an additional c£160k per annum per district planning authority.

3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 The conclusion was that the following temporary roles would be needed to deliver the overall programme which would need to be funded by the three district authorities:

- An overall project manager
- Additional dedicated resource at Team Leader, Principal/Senior Planner and Planner levels

Both Cheltenham and Gloucester Councils have already confirmed their additional budgetary provision. Around a quarter of the additional contribution has been identified in Tewkesbury Borough Council's Planning Policy budget, leaving a shortfall of around £120k. This will be funded from the budget set aside to meet anticipated costs of the local pay review. Given the size of the virement required, Council is asked to approve the budgetary movement.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 None

5.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

5.1 If the Council does not produce a sound development plan, adoption could be delayed with the risk of inappropriate development.

6.0 MONITORING

6.1 Performance is managed through the partnership reporting structure and through the Council's own performance and project management processes.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

7.1 Tewkesbury Borough Council Plan (2020 – 2024).

Adopted Joint Core Strategy (December 2017).

Adopted Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan to 2011 (June 2022).

Background Papers: None

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Appendices: None