

Update

The following paper was reviewed by the Broadland and South Norfolk Joint Lead Members Group and the Joint Scrutiny Group in December who approved the recommendations.

The paper was also reviewed by South Norfolk Council Scrutiny on 2nd January and Broadland Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4th January. Broadland Officers will brief Members on the comments from the South Norfolk Scrutiny committee and the amended recommendations proposed.

South Norfolk officers will update verbally at the South Norfolk Council Cabinet meeting the comments from Broadland Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Broadland officers will then update Broadland Cabinet, which is taking place on the 9th January (the day after the South Norfolk Cabinet), on the recommendations from South Norfolk Cabinet.

The following report has been updated to reflect the resolved comment to expand on the rationale in the report for the proposal from South Norfolk Council Scrutiny Committee.

South Norfolk Council Scrutiny Committee RESOLVED: to;

1. Endorse Recommendation 1 in the report
(Recommendation 1: Agree the introduction of an interim shared planning management team between Broadland District Council and South Norfolk District on the basis set out in the report);
2. Endorse Recommendation 2 in the report
(Recommendation 2: Agree that the new structure and post holders be in place by 22 January 2018);
3. Endorse Recommendation 3 in the report and that South Norfolk Council's Scrutiny Committee consider the review in 6 months-time at its meeting scheduled for 27 June 2018
(Recommendation 3: Review the impact of the interim arrangements 3, 6, 9 and 12 months after being established. Reviews will be taken back to the informal joint member groups at each reviewing stage. After 9 months, both Councils to consider whether as a result of the wider Feasibility Study outcomes the arrangement is made permanent and a formal recruitment process is undertaken);
4. Endorse Recommendation 4 in the report and recommend to Cabinet that the additional wording: "regarding shared posts where vacancies arise and other contract opportunities" be added after the wording: "to pursue other early opportunities..."
(Recommendation 4: Agree that officers be delegated authority to pursue other early opportunities without the need to go through the formal Member governance process);
5. Add a standing item to the Scrutiny Committee work programme to allow the Chairman to update the Committee on work undertaken at the Joint Scrutiny Group meetings;
6. Recommend that the Head of Business Transformation seek the views of the Broadland District Council's Scrutiny Committee and communicate this, as required;

and
7. Recommend that Officers expand on the rationale contained within the report prior to its consideration by Cabinet on 8 January 2018.

Broadland and South Norfolk - Collaborative Working Opportunities

Report to Joint Lead Members Group

Summary

The paper outlines the opportunity for a shared planning management team to support the delivery of an effective and efficient planning service at both Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council. The paper follows on from the agreement of both Councils to develop a feasibility study to explore the opportunities for a shared culture and shared management team and the commitment to explore opportunities that emerge during the period of the feasibility study. The paper sets out the background to the feasibility study, the rationale for the early adoption of a shared management team for the two councils planning services, the proposal, benefits and any implications.

Background

At their Full Council meetings in September, Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council unanimously agreed to support the development of a feasibility study to explore the opportunities for collaborative working including shared management, whilst maintaining individual council autonomy.

The rationale for undertaking this project is:

- To drive forward economic growth in Broadland and South Norfolk and strengthen the profile of Greater Norwich as a place in which to invest;
- To provide the capacity and resilience within the organisations to deliver good quality services to our residents;
- To address and respond to the challenges around financial sustainability given the uncertainty around the future funding of local government
- To take advantage of external funding opportunities to bring in additional funding to both areas to support the Councils' economic growth and housing priorities.
- To reduce duplication of effort across the two councils, for example by only one officer needing to attend strategic partner meetings.
- To share expertise across the two councils reducing the need for external consultants
- To identify opportunities for working more efficiently and effectively across the two organisations.

The councils have agreed to explore the potential for shared arrangements as opportunities arise during the process of the feasibility study and this paper sets out the proposal for such an opportunity within the planning service.

Rationale for early introduction of a shared planning service

The councils have agreed to explore potential shared arrangements that present themselves during the collaborative working project, which support the rationale, but would not prejudice the outcome of the wider project. In respect of the planning function, South Norfolk will shortly have a vacancy in a senior post which presents an opportunity to consider whether a 'shared service' would be an appropriate interim arrangement.

- Both councils have economic and housing growth as a key objective; planning plays an important role in the growth agenda;
- Both councils have a history of collaborative working on strategic planning across Greater Norwich going back over ten years; and
- The two councils already have similar structures for the planning service;

Due to the established collaborative history around strategic planning, a 'shared planning service' would appear to present a natural 'fit' to the rationale for undertaking the collaborative working project and provide an early indicator as to the potential success of the wider project.

Proposal

It is proposed to combine the planning teams from Broadland and South Norfolk together, under a joint management team comprising 3 posts:

- Head of Planning;
- Development Manager – responsible for the running of the Development Management service.
- Spatial Planning Manager - responsible for running the Spatial Planning service.

The Head of Planning post will report to the Chief Executive at Broadland, and to the Director of Growth and Business Development at South Norfolk and will be responsible for the planning service for both Councils. The post holder will also represent both Councils in the senior Greater Norwich officer group. The manager posts will report to the Head of Planning. A proposed structure chart can be found in Appendix A.

It is suggested that the proposal is an interim arrangement lasting initially for up to 12 months. This time period has been proposed to enable the new roles to have time to embed, whilst also acknowledging the potential for wider opportunities which may arise during the feasibility study.

The structure below the management posts will initially remain largely as current in the two councils. This will maintain capacity within the councils and increase resilience at this time when the planning service is under increasing pressure.

Appointments to the new interim posts will be from existing staff. It is proposed that Phil Courtier will take on the role of Head of Planning, Helen Mellors will take on the role of Development Manager and John Walchester will take on the role of Spatial Planning Manager.

The next stage will be for the Head of Planning and the managers to review team structures, and identify if there are any opportunities for expanding service delivery, driving efficiencies and delivering further savings. The service will continue to be delivered from the respective council offices. The autonomy of the Planning Committees will remain as at present.

Any vacancies which arise during the interim period will first be reviewed to see if they need to be filled or whether they present opportunities for further collaborative working. If there is an established need for posts to be recruited to, then these will be advertised internally between the 2 councils, before considering external recruitment.

Should the interim arrangements be confirmed as permanent after 12 months, there would be formal processes put in place to recruit into the new permanent structure.

Principles for the interim arrangements for sharing services between Broadland and South Norfolk can be found in Appendix B.

Benefits

Aligning the development management teams allows the sharing of specialisms, creates additional resilience and enables a consistent service across the two councils. This is a positive response to requests from the local development industry obtained through the recent PAS study and would allow the local development industry to progress schemes through the planning system more effectively.

Aligning the spatial planning resources will further contribute to the work on the Greater Norwich Local Plan. This new team will also allow specialisms to be shared to augment some of the delivery aspects of the current local plan, and broaden capacity around neighbourhood plans, as well as reducing duplication of attendance at strategic partner meetings.

Financial implications

It is proposed that those roles taking on additional responsibilities will be given honoraria to recognise the additional responsibilities that they will be taking on. The below table sets out the additional costs, savings and overall financial implications of the proposed changes.

Current salaries for 3 posts affected	£213, 835
Increased staffing costs for 3 posts affected to reflect additional responsibilities	£32,075
Savings from SNC Planning Policy Manager post to be used to cover increased staffing costs (2 days a week)	£26,272
Remaining additional cost to cover increased staffing costs (to be split equally by SNC and BDC)	£5,803

Whilst the initial new structure has a small increase in overall staffing costs it is anticipated that in the medium and longer term opportunities will be identified to deliver savings through further collaborative working across the two planning services.

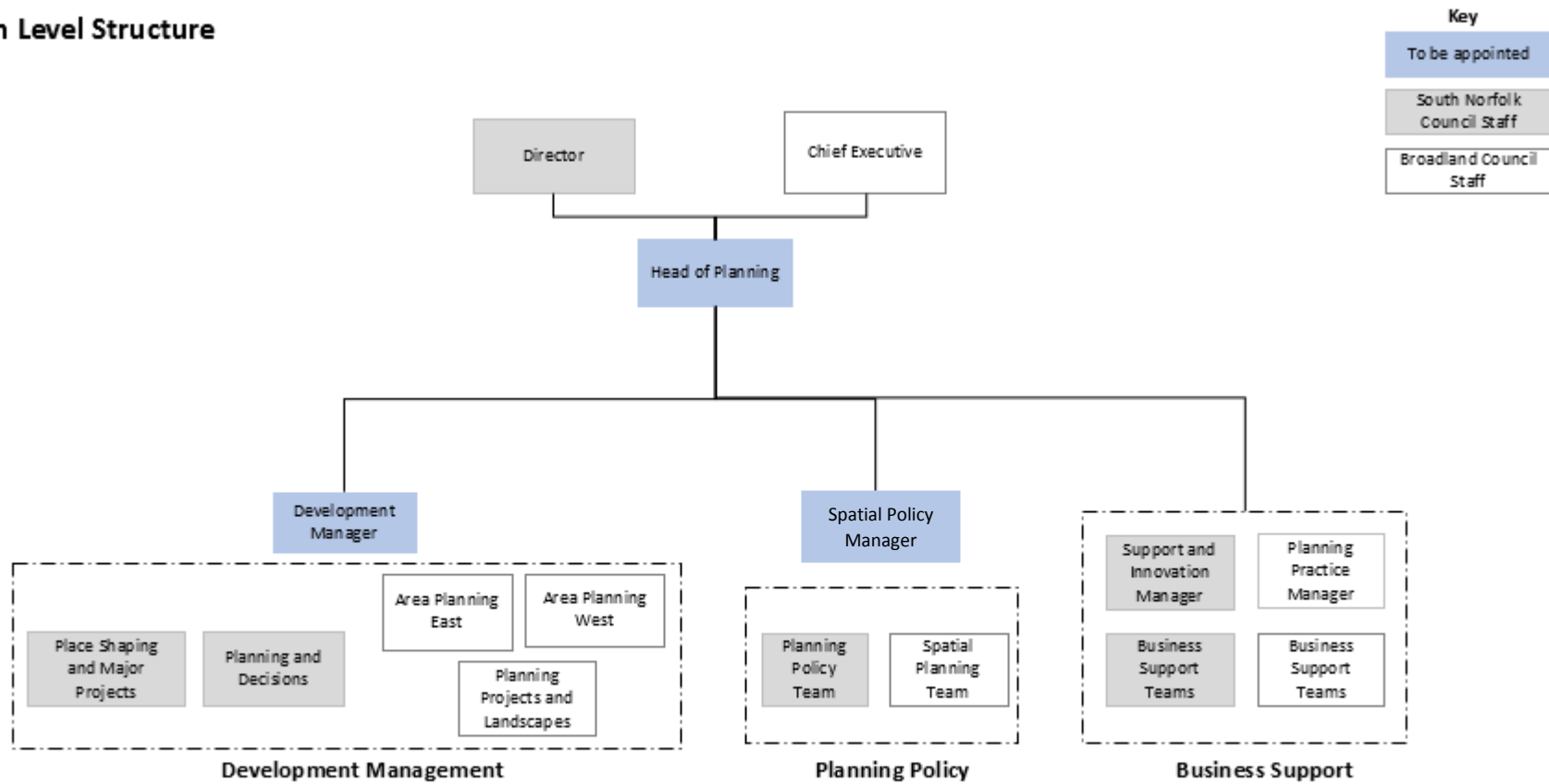
Risks

A move to a shared service in advance of the wider project being completed carries an inherent risk, in the event that the eventual decision is taken not to proceed down this route. However, it could be argued that the planning service is such an integral part of the growth ambitions of both councils that such a move would be a sensible approach to take regardless of other service alignments.

For the recommendations please refer to page 4 of the agenda.

Appendix A

High Level Structure



Appendix B - Interim Arrangements for Sharing of Services

The Councils shall always co-operate with each other and shall observe the following key principles, to meet future business need:

- trust, transparency, integrity and respect
- effective working relationships
- co-operation, collaboration, and information-sharing whilst respecting the confidentiality of the other Council
- shared/consistent communication and messaging
- accountability
- openness to change with focus being on improved outcomes
- respect of the commercial sensitivity of relevant data

Staff may be employed by either one of the Councils and having been so employed can be placed at the disposal of the Council who is not their employer, in accordance with their terms and conditions of employment and following consultation, if a business need is identified.

Those officers identified as the lead managers will divide their time fairly and reasonably between the two Councils and will not demonstrate bias towards one Council vis-à-vis the other. The teams below will remain unchanged, initially, however there will be an expectation that resources are shared to ensure the business need of both Councils are fully met. Improvements identified through working together may influence future structures.

Interim structures will normally be in place for up to 12 months with 3 monthly reviews to ensure the core business need is met, take learning and the opportunity to make identified changes that will contribute to the success of the shared arrangement.

Where possible interim structures will be supported by current staff of both Councils, without the need for a recruitment process. Any recruitment process will be ring fenced to current staff in the areas of work at both Councils prior to wider recruitment.

If an interim structure is made permanent then a formal recruitment process will follow, again ring fenced to current permanent staff.

If a vacancy arises in an interim structure, consideration will be given by both Councils as to how to proceed with this and the post will not be advertised unless both Council agree to this.

Officers will be reimbursed normal travel rates for any work undertaken at the partner Council's base or on behalf of the other Council.

Some interim arrangements may be short and very informal to allow each Council to clearly identify a resourcing gap and agree how to fill this. As a result one Council may be providing more support to the other at any given time, this is accepted to ensure continuity of business in both Councils; however, over time with give and take should balance out. If this approach is consistently benefitting one council, then by mutual agreement a financial arrangement could be entered into.

An exit strategy will be agreed at the commencement of each individual arrangement.