

## **Continuation of Funding for Fixed Term resources within the Post & Scanning Team.**

### **Summary:**

The Digital Transformation Programme has significantly increased the need for corporate scanning, indexing, redacting and copying of documents to support new business processes and to enable paperless working.

In order to deliver this service, whilst the outcomes of the Planning and Environmental Health BPR have been rolled out, it has been necessary to support this work with 2 Full time, fixed term, Post & Scanning Assistants. This report requests the release of previously identified funding to extend the two posts for a further 12 months.

### **Options considered:**

Outsourcing of ongoing scanning and copying activities have been assessed and discounted on practicability and value for money grounds.

Increased use of Service based staff is not feasible because of other work demands and coordination and control issues.

Fixed term additional resource with the appropriate skills and experience has been successfully supporting the service to date and is considered the most practical and cost efficient option until the new processes are fully implemented within service areas such as the Planning Service.

### **Conclusions:**

The provision of funding for an additional 12 months for the 2 posts (fixed term) will allow the immediate requirements to be met whilst assessing the long term demand and resource requirement to provide adequate support for service business processes.

### **Recommendations:**

**That Cabinet approves the release of £52,000 previously identified Digital Transformation funding to allow the continuation of the two fixed term posts for a further 12 months in the Digital Mail Room Team.**

**Reasons for  
Recommendations:**

The continued employment of the 2 additional posts within the Digital Mail Room Team will ensure that the team has the capacity and skills available to support the scanning, redaction and copying of applications, and documents until the full introduction of systems and processes to help deliver paperless working.

Making the posts fixed term will provide flexibility to react to changes in delivery and service demands over the next 12 months.

Cabinet Member(s)	Ward(s) affected
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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Members are aware that one of the main work streams of the Digital Transformation Programme (DTP) has been the Planning Service Business Process Review (BPR).
- 1.2 One of the key elements of the Planning BPR yet to be fully implemented is the introduction of systems and procedures to enable paperless working. There remains a requirement for all planning applications however received to be scanned, documents redacted before being made public, and a printed planning file including all associated documents created for both householder and major applications.
- 1.3 Since the initial business case in support of the Planning BPR there has been a steady increase in the number of planning applications being made with a 17% increase between 2015/16 and 2018/19 of applications started (excluding withdrawals and rejected applications).
- 1.4 With the digitisation of the historic Planning Files requests to view these archived files now falls to the Digital Mail Room Team (DMRT) to redact and files and comply with General Data Protection Regulations before producing a publically accessible file.
- 1.5 The DMRT now also receive emails from Planning Officers, Agents, External Consultees and Applicants to make changes or add information to Planning applications. Since 2016 on average over 3100 emails have been received by the DMRT each year which equates to approximately 12 such emails a day. The actions required to resolve these emails can take from less than 1 minute to a full day's work in cases of major applications.
- 1.6 The use of the scanning services offered by the DMRT is increasing in scale and complexity as more services are becoming increasingly reliant on electronic recording of customer transactions.

## **2. Approach**

- 2.1 Two temporary Post and Scanning Assistant posts have been used to support the full functions of the DMRT so that experienced staff can be allocated to more complex and time consuming Planning work. This has enabled the DMRT to keep to the targets required by the Planning service to work electronically and to be confident in making decisions based on the information held within the system whilst maintaining service levels across all other service areas.
- 2.2 If approved, the funding will allow the continuation, for a further 12 months, of two fixed term posts within the DMRT.
- 2.3 The posts have been recruited using standard Council recruitment processes and policies and the current post holders are meeting the requirements of the post. Both of the post holders have recently been successful in obtaining alternative posts within the council and therefore a recruitment process will be required to fill the vacancies if approval is given.

## **5 Financial Implications and Risks**

### **5.1 Financial Implications**

The additional costs associated with extending the two fixed term posts for a further 12 months is approximately £52,000 inclusive of on-costs.

These sums are within the initial estimates for the Digital Transformation Programme budget approved by Council in March 2018.

### **5.2 Risks**

The Head of Planning has raised concerns about the impact the potential reduction on staffing in the DMRT will have on the Planning Service delivering a timely and efficient process to our customers. The recommendation to retain the temporary posts will ensure that current service levels can be maintained during the full implementation of the updated software system and implementation of processes designed to support paperless working, through effective case management and workflow. Without this resource there is a significant risk that services will fail to meet performance targets effecting both customers and the reputation of the council.

The lack of appropriately managed scanning, redaction and copying services will inhibit the delivery of improvement in service business processes and efficiency.

## **6 Conclusion**

The retention of the two fixed term posts will allow the continuation of the interim processes that have been effectively supporting the delivery of the Planning Service until the full outcomes of Planning BPR are fully implemented.

## **7 Sustainability**

The continuation of an efficient post and scanning system with accurate and up to date information will allow for ongoing service improvements and efficiencies across multiple service areas.

Efficient electronic service processes will also result in reduced environmental impact from the reduction in use of paper and print material as well as minimising the need for storage facilities.

## **8. Equality and Diversity**

There are no equality and diversity implications directly resulting from the recommendations or options considered in this report.

## **9. Section 17 Crime and Disorder considerations**

There are no Crime and Disorder implications directly resulting from the recommendations or options considered in this report.