

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet  
Council

10 November 2011

24 November 2011

**AUTHOR/S:** Senior Management Team

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### HEAD OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

#### Purpose

1. This report proposes the creation of a new senior post to strengthen capacity and leadership in planning and economic development. It is intended to fund the post using savings from the Council's staffing structure and proposals to achieve this will be included within the 2012/13 budget.
2. This is a key decision because it requires the appointment of additional permanent staff for which there is currently no budgetary provision.
3. It has not previously been included in the Forward Plan, but it is considered that urgent action is needed to address capacity given that current arrangements are interim and part-time. The Chairman of Scrutiny has been advised in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules.

#### Recommendations

4. That Cabinet recommends to Council that
  - (a) a new post of Head of Planning and Economic Development, reporting to the Corporate Manager (Planning and New Communities) is created; and
  - (b) proposals to achieve savings from the Council's staffing structure are included within the 2012/13 budget to enable the funding of this post.

#### Background and Considerations

5. The Planning Service has been under significant pressure for some time for a number of reasons, including both internal and external challenges and major changes to staffing and structures.
6. The performance of the service has improved in recent months under the leadership of a part-time Interim Head of Service and with significant effort from the team. However, the service remains under pressure and is likely to do so for the foreseeable future. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee concluded in its Planning Services Review in June that the management of planning services needed to be structured to provide strong, experienced leadership.
7. Among the emerging opportunities and challenges that the planning service will need to respond to are:
  - (a) proposed changes to the National Planning Policy framework, in particular, neighbourhood planning;
  - (b) the production of the new South Cambridgeshire Local Development Plan

- (c) the establishment of a new joint delivery team for Northstowe
- (d) significant development activity on other major development sites including North West Cambridge
- (d) the potential for opportunities generated by the New Homes Bonus and proposed return of business rates;
- (e) the establishment up of the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Economic Partnership, the closure of Cambridgeshire Horizons, and the creation of a new County-wide Strategic Planning Unit
- (f) the growing prominence of economic development within the Council's priorities and the positive prospects for economic growth;
- (g) current discussions about how urban design and building control services will be delivered in future.

8. The current agenda provides the Council with some exciting opportunities. However, we will not be in a position to maximise the opportunities and respond to the current agenda unless there is sufficient capacity and leadership in what is one of the Council's most important services.

### Options

- 9. It would be possible to maintain the status quo. However, the service is under significant pressure and the current Head of Service is a part-time interim whose contract will shortly come to an end. His departure without the appointment of a new Head of Service would leave the Council exposed and vulnerable.
- 10. In addition, the new post provides an opportunity to strengthen the delivery of the Council's objectives for economic development.

### Implications

11. Financial	It is difficult to be precise as the post if approved, would be subject to job evaluation. However it is anticipated that the cost will be in the region of £75,000 pa. It is intended that this will be found from additional savings within the Council's current staffing structure, proposals for which will be included in the 2012/13 budget.
Legal	There could be legal risks with regard to planning decisions made if capacity and leadership within the service is not strengthened.
Staffing	There are no direct implications for current employees within the Planning Service as a result of these proposals. However affected staff have been advised and will be engaged in appropriate consultation.
Risk Management	There are significant risks in taking no action as the planning service would be more vulnerable to legal, financial and reputational risks and would be less able to maximise opportunities for economic growth.
Equality and Diversity	Recruitment to the new post would be carried out in line with the Council's equality and diversity policies.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	Not relevant at this stage.
Climate Change	No direct implications.

## **Consultations**

12. Initial discussions have been held with staff who are indirectly affected.

### **Consultation with Children and Young People**

13. None.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

14. The proposals in the report will enable more effective delivery of the Council's vision and priorities by strengthening capacity and leadership in a service that is critical for our local communities.

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