

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-044-2013/14
Date of meeting: 21 October 2013



Portfolio: Asset Management & Economic Development
Subject: Additional staffing resource for Estates & Valuation Section
Responsible Officer: Chris Pasterfield (01992 564124).
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Decisions Required:

- (1) To appoint a valuation and development surveyor to assist the Chief Estates Officer in progressing existing and future development opportunities in the District; and**
- (2) To recommend to Council for approval a revenue supplementary estimate in the sum of £12,681 plus on costs, subject to Job Evaluation, to enable the appointment to be made during 2013/14.**

Executive Summary:

The workload of the Estates & Valuation Section in recent years has increased due to the proactive asset management of the Council's property portfolio and third party land holdings. There are currently a number of projects being developed which if not properly resourced will not progress in an efficient manner to the detriment of the Council's interests. The existing Estates & Valuation establishment of three Valuers already have a full workload managing the Council's portfolio consisting of more than 300 properties and a rent roll in excess of £4million per annum.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure the Council maximises revenue and capital growth from its property portfolio and economic regeneration within the District.

Other Options for Action:

To not employ additional staff resource in Estates & Valuation to progress these schemes.

To employ the person through an agency on a fixed term contract but this is likely to be more expensive.

Report:

1. In April 2009 CIPFA produced an External Review of the Estates & Valuation Section and noted that the Council had a large property portfolio comparable to city councils and the London Borough Council of Hackney.

2. The report noted that comparable councils had higher staffing levels than EFDC and that the existing 4.4 Full Time Employees(FTEs) were stretched and that there was a good case for 5 or 6 FTEs.

3. In addition to normal estate management and valuation duties the workload of the section has increased due to a number of large development and regeneration projects which include the following:

(a) Langston Road Retail Park – This project has outline planning approval and is now moving forward to the detailed design stage and the submission of a detailed planning application. Detailed negotiations are also underway regarding a development agreement with Polofind Ltd the joint venture partner.

(b) Sir Winston Churchill Project – Cabinet approved Heads of Terms for this development at the 9 September 2013 meeting. A development agreement now has to be agreed and documented and the developer has now submitted a planning application.

(c) Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate – the planning application for this site is still being processed and a resolution of the waste contractor depot is also required subject to the current re-tendering process.

(d) St John's Road – expressions of interest have now been received for this site in combined ownership with ECC and ETC. There is likely to be a long process of analysing offers with other land owners and discussing planning implications before a development agreement can be agreed and documented.

(e) The Broadway, Debden – a number of sites are being progressed including the Sainsbury site, the TFL site and land off of Vere Road and Burton Road.

(f) Town Mead Depot – a residential development scheme is being considered and discussions taking place with WATC regarding adjoining land.

(g) Pyrles Lane Nursery – this site is being considered for residential development and adjoining property is currently being acquired.

Financial Implications:

To employ an additional full time member of staff at grade 9; this has a maximum current salary of £38,042 per annum, subject to job evaluation.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None at this time.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

None.

Background Papers:

CIPFA External Review of Estates & Valuation Section 2009.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

If an additional person is not employed as an additional resource then there could be some risk to existing on going projects and also this would increase if any staff were to leave and new staff would need time in which to familiarise themselves with projects.

Equality and Diversity

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
None.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?
N/A.