

ITEM 12 – APPENDIX G

WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL EXECUTIVE – 1ST OCTOBER 2013

Title:

REVIEW OF PLANNING OFFICER SALARIES AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO ESTABLISHMENT
[Portfolio Holders: Cllr Mike Band and Stefan Reynolds)
[Wards Affected: All

Summary and purpose:

The purpose of this report is to recommend to the Council the introduction of a professional planning officer salary structure and changes to the establishment in the Planning Service.

How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:

A Planning Service, which can retain and recruit high-quality planning professionals, is essential to meeting Corporate Plan priorities

Financial Implications:

Contained within report

Legal Implications:

Potential equality pay claims have been assessed and the risk of a successful claim is considered very low.

Background

1. The planning function is a high profile and important part of the Council's statutory duties and has the difficult task of balancing development needs against the environmental constraints which exist in the Borough. To deliver the Council's aspirations for the Service, it needs to recruit and retain highly qualified professional planning staff. Planning Officers are employed either in delivering the development control function (planning applications, appeals and enforcement) or in plan preparation (local plan and supplementary planning guidance).
2. In recent years the Service has experienced a high level of turnover as staff have left to advance their career elsewhere in both the public and private sector. As a result, in 2012/2013 12 recruitment exercises were carried out (including re-advertisements) out of a headcount of 26 professional planning posts. As a consequence 6 Development Control officers have less than one

years service. Changes in national planning policy and the Government's growth agenda will further increase the demand for planners in both public and private sectors.

3. Current levels of turnover has impacted upon the efficiency of the service in terms of the estimated time to competency of 3 months; on our level of customer service (i.e. relationships with ward Councillors, applicants), local knowledge and continuity on planning applications and wider public confidence in the service.
4. Staff turnover also imposes additional costs as the Service has had to appoint agency staff on short-term contracts to maintain capacity. Between September 2011 and May 2013, 15 temporary agency planning officers were employed with an average length of service of 2.5 months. In addition, since 2009/2010 the average annual spend on agency staff in Planning has been £100,000.
5. Typically the average cost of employing an agency planner is 1.5 times the cost of employing a full-time planner in an established post. Despite this cost, the calibre and experience of agency staff is such that they are not always able to perform as efficiently as permanent staff. Their lack of local knowledge and well-developed relationships with Councillors and applicants mean that they operate at Planning Officer level with permanent staff adjusting their duties to temporarily fill vacant posts at a more senior level.
6. There are also both the direct and indirect costs of recruiting permanent staff. Since 2009/2010, the average yearly spend on recruitment advertising for permanent staff has been over £5,500, while the process of recruitment and training new members of staff also takes up considerable Officer time.
7. As a consequence of high levels of staff turnover, extensive salary benchmarking has been undertaken. The analysis is set out in Annex 1. This has demonstrated that the salaries of professional planners within Waverley are not competitive in the local authority market. It should also be noted that at the same time the private sector increasingly also offers competitive opportunities for planners. Over the past decade the proportion of Royal Town Planning Institute members employed by local authorities has fallen so that this year local authority employees represent just 43% of membership, down from 54% in 2000.
8. As part of the salary benchmarking exercise, data was collected from six other Surrey authorities (Guildford, Woking, Epsom & Ewell, Tandridge, Spelthorne and Reigate & Banstead). Runnymede, Elmbridge and Surrey Heath were also contacted but did not provide data. Information was also included from the SEE Regional Pay and Benefits Survey 2011 and E-paycheck, the new public sector pay comparator coordinated by South East Employers, to which Waverley has subscribed and which supplied data provided anonymously by 11 authorities in the South East. None of the 6 Surrey authorities that responded to our survey, or the 11 authorities that reported data to E-paycheck reported recruitment or retention difficulties with these posts.

9. Annex 2 is a proposed salary structure for professional planning officers, up to and including Section Manager level.

Financial cost

Costs

10. The estimated additional cost of the proposal during 2013/2014 of £18,220 can be met from projected Planning salary savings (latest available saving is £97,000) whilst still enabling the Service to achieve the target salary saving of £47,300.
11. Beyond 2013/2014 the full cost of these recommendations (of £89,330 by 2017/2018) cannot be met by the existing salary budgets in Planning. Annex 3 sets out the projected cost over the next four years. However the cost is likely to be offset by:
 - Some continued staff turnover such that assumptions about increased salary costs are likely to be over estimates.
 - The likely retirement (and non replacement) of the Historic Buildings equating to £26,000 per year.
 - One current post (Brightwells Officer planning officer) will in the longer term be deleted with the post holder moving into another post when one becomes vacant.
 - Potential significant reduction in agency costs as a consequence of improved recruitment and retention of staff
 - Potential for increased income from planning fees (this is currently projected to be above budget by £100,000 in 2013/2014) and may increase further in the longer term as the Council has to accommodate increased levels of house building in line with the Government's growth agenda.
 - Potential increases in income from revisions to the Council's pre-application charging regime which will be brought forward through the Star Chamber process.
 - Reduction in salary costs outlined in the section below.

Changes to Establishment

12. It is proposed to make some changes to the establishment as follows:

Establishment changes	Estimate 2013/2014
	£
Policy Planner Post P/T (CD15) - vacant	21,101
Policy Planner Post F/T (CD08) - vacant	30,498
Housing Enabling Manager F/T (HB01)	51,492
	103,091
Proposal:	
Principal Policy Planner (new post)	43,490
Policy and Information Officer (CD05) additional 6 hours per week	7,000
Housing Enabling Manager P/T (HB01)	30,880
	81,370
Saving against 2013/2014 estimate	-£21,721

13. The financial implications of the above are an estimated saving of £21,721 against the 2013/2014 budget.
14. Annexe 4 shows the current and proposed changes to the Planning Policy team structure
15. There will be no adverse service implications of these changes. The reduction in hours of the Housing Enabling Manager has already been implemented. The creation of a Principal Planner post will provide capacity at a senior level in taking forward the Core Strategy and supporting the neighbourhood planning process.
16. The Planning payscale changes will result in an estimated total additional cost of £89,330 across the different categories of Planning officer.
17. The estimated net cost of the changes contained in this report is £67,609.

Conclusion

18. The need for a well-resourced and resilient planning service has never been greater. The proposed changes to the salary structure for professional planners puts in place salary levels which are competitive in the local authority market and should address current difficulties in retaining and recruiting high quality staff. The proposed changes to the establishment realise long term salary savings which do not impact on service delivery.

Recommendation

That the Executive recommends to the Council that:

1. The revised professional planning salary structure be agreed, with an implementation date of November 2013; and
 2. The changes to the Establishment of the Planning Service be agreed.
-

Background Papers

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Name: Matthew Evans

Telephone: 01483 523298

E-mail: matthew.evans@waverley.gov.uk

Name: Jenny Deaves

Telephone: 01483 523380

E-mail: jenny.deaves@waverley.gov.uk

ANNEXE 1

Annex 1 – Planning Salary benchmarking conclusions (benchmarking data 2012-13 salary scales)

Planners (Waverley Current Pay band 8 - is £23,666 - £26,007)

- **Waverley’s starting salary** is higher than all but one of the six Surrey authorities that responded, although of these authorities do not always appoint at the bottom of the scale. Waverley’s Pay Policy has been amended to enable Waverley to do the same where required.
- It is higher than the lower quartile starting salary from the South East Employers (SEE) salary benchmarking data (E-paycheck) 2012/2013, but lower than the median.
- It is higher than the median starting salary from the South East Employers (SEE) Regional Pay and Benefits Survey 2011.
- **The top of the pay band** for planners is on average £7,000 less than its Surrey competitors.
- It is approximately £3,000 less than the top of the lower quartile of E-paycheck and the Regional Pay and Benefits Survey 2011.
- It is approximately £5,500 less than the top median salary on E-paycheck.
- Three of the other authorities have career grades for Planners and two of these (Tandridge and Reigate & Banstead) take the Planner’s maximum salary to the maximum Senior Planner’s salary i.e. they combine the two.

Reigate & Banstead	£18,084 - £37,914
Spelthorne	£18,404 - £32,266
Woking	£19,366 - £32,482
Tandridge	£22,089 - £30,159
Guildford	£23,039 - £30,737
Epsom & Ewell	£26,828 - £31,556
E-paycheck data-lower quartile	£22,660 - £28,360
E-paycheck data-median	£25,659 - £30,912
E-paycheck data – upper quartile	£29,303 - £34,541
SEE Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 – lower quartile	£22,954 - £28,707
SEE Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 - median	£23,047 - £27,518
SEE Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 – upper quartile	£25,549 - £30,011

Senior Planners (Waverley’s current Pay band 7 (£26,521-£29,945))

- **Waverley’s salary band is lower** than all six Surrey authorities that responded, at the top and bottom of the scale (except Tandridge’s starting salary which is lower than Waverley’s) Again, the disparity is less at the bottom of the grade (£2,500), than the top (£7,000) and 5 of the 6 authorities that replied do not always appoint at the bottom of the grade.
- Generally, our Senior Planners are appointed through internal promotion due to a lack of suitable external candidates

Tandridge	£22,089 - £30,159
Guildford	£26,031 - £37,526

Woking	£28,869 - £38,792
Spelthorne	£29,400 - £35,799
Epsom & Ewell	£31,329 - £36,851
Reigate & Banstead	£33,516 - £37,914
SE Emp Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 – lower quartile	£29,955 - £35,651
SE Emp Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 – median	£29,446 - £35,096
SE Emp Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 –upper quartile	£31,754 - £38,289
No E-paycheck data at this level	

Principal Planners Current Waverley Pay band 5 (£34,171 - £37,693)

- There is limited benchmarking data available for this role as only two other authorities of the six that replied (Guildford and Spelthorne) have this tier of staff
- As with the other roles, the disparity is at the top (£3,000 - £4,000), not the bottom of the pay scale
- 4 Principal Planners currently employed receive a 5% market supplement and are on pay point 5a** which gives them a total salary of £41,660 compared to the current maximum for the post of £37,693.
- This is a key area where we experience recruitment difficulties and high turnover amongst newer staff.
- The 5th post which does not attract the higher salary has had 3 occupants within the past 3 years.
- Continuity and retention at this level is key in terms of Member confidence, local knowledge and continuity with major planning applications.

Guildford	£32,781 - £41,172
Spelthorne	£36,807 - £40,156
SE Emp Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 – lower quartile	£29,955 - £35,651
SE Emp Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 – median	£29,446 - £35,096
SE Emp Regional Pay & Benefits Survey 2011 –upper quartile	£31,754 - £38,289
No E-paycheck data at this level	

Area Team Leaders (Currently Waverley pay band 4 £38,758 - £43,317)

- Waverley's salaries are more competitive at this level and Waverley pays more than Tandridge – though this is a much smaller authority in term so planning applications numbers. However they are significantly lower than Guildford which is comparable in terms of workloads, structure and responsibilities.
- Again, there is less benchmarking data as only four of the six authorities that responded have Area Team Leader posts. This may be because most other Surrey authorities are much smaller in terms of geography and numbers of planning applications so have a different management structure.
- Again, the disparity is at the top of the grade (£1,800 - £4,800), not the bottom
- These roles require a significant level of management skills which are not naturally developed at the Principal Planning Officer level which also makes them difficult to recruit to.
- Whilst one Team Leader was recruited externally to the bottom of the grade, a Principal Planning Officer is being paid a temporary allowance to undertake the role,

which increases his salary to £43,660 (pay point 4a is £43,317). The Council was unable to recruit externally to the temporary vacancy which he is filling.

Tandridge	£35,969 - £40,811
Woking	£37,097 - £44,296
Guildford	£37,808 - £48,867
Reigate & Banstead	£37,914 - £47,346
E-paycheck data – lower quartile	£36,776 - £41,248
E-paycheck data - median	£39,865 - £44,917
E-paycheck data –upper quartile	£44,840 - £49,840

Planning Policy and Development Control Managers (Pay band 3 currently £44,076 - £49,263)

- No retention difficulties at present to due to the long term commitment to Waverley of the current post holders who are also both paid pay point 3a** (currently £51,855).
- The longer term position is that pay band 3 does not represent a competitive salary to recruit the right calibre of staff for what are high profile posts within the Council.
- It should be noted that Waverley also uniquely combines management of the support function with the DC role and it is a role with more responsibility than many other authorities. Equally the Policy Manager also covers landscape and projects responsibilities.
- Again, Guildford represents the most relevant comparison.

Guildford	£39,954 - £53,701
Epsom & Ewell (Planning Manager)	£41,869 - £49,297
Spelthorne	£42,266 - £45,378
Woking	£44,296 - £52,919
E-paycheck data – lower quartile	£45,317 - £50,215
E-paycheck data - median	£47,526 - £55,179
E-paycheck data – upper quartile	£57,164 - £60,634

Annex 2 – Proposed Professional Planner Salary 2013 with comparison to existing structure

Job Title	Grade	a	b	c	D	e	Comment
		£	£	£	£	£	
Planning Policy and Development Control Managers	P3 Revised	53,855	52,060	50,263	48,466	46,671	
	3 (current scale)	49,263	47,966	46,671	45,374	44,076	
Team Leaders	P4	45,483	44,288	43,090	41,894	40,696	
	4	43,317	42,179	41,038	39,899	38,758	
Principal Planners	P5	41,462	40,372	39,281	38,385	37,588	
	5	37,693	36,702	35,710	34,896	34,171	
Senior Planners	P6 Revised	35,335	34,116	32,908	31,720	30,233	
	7	29,945	29,159	28,369	27,583	26,521	
Planners	P7	29,908	28,376	26,765	25,322	23,666	Progression to P7b will be dependant meeting in full the criteria for membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute
	8	26,007	25,217	24,443	23,978	23,666	

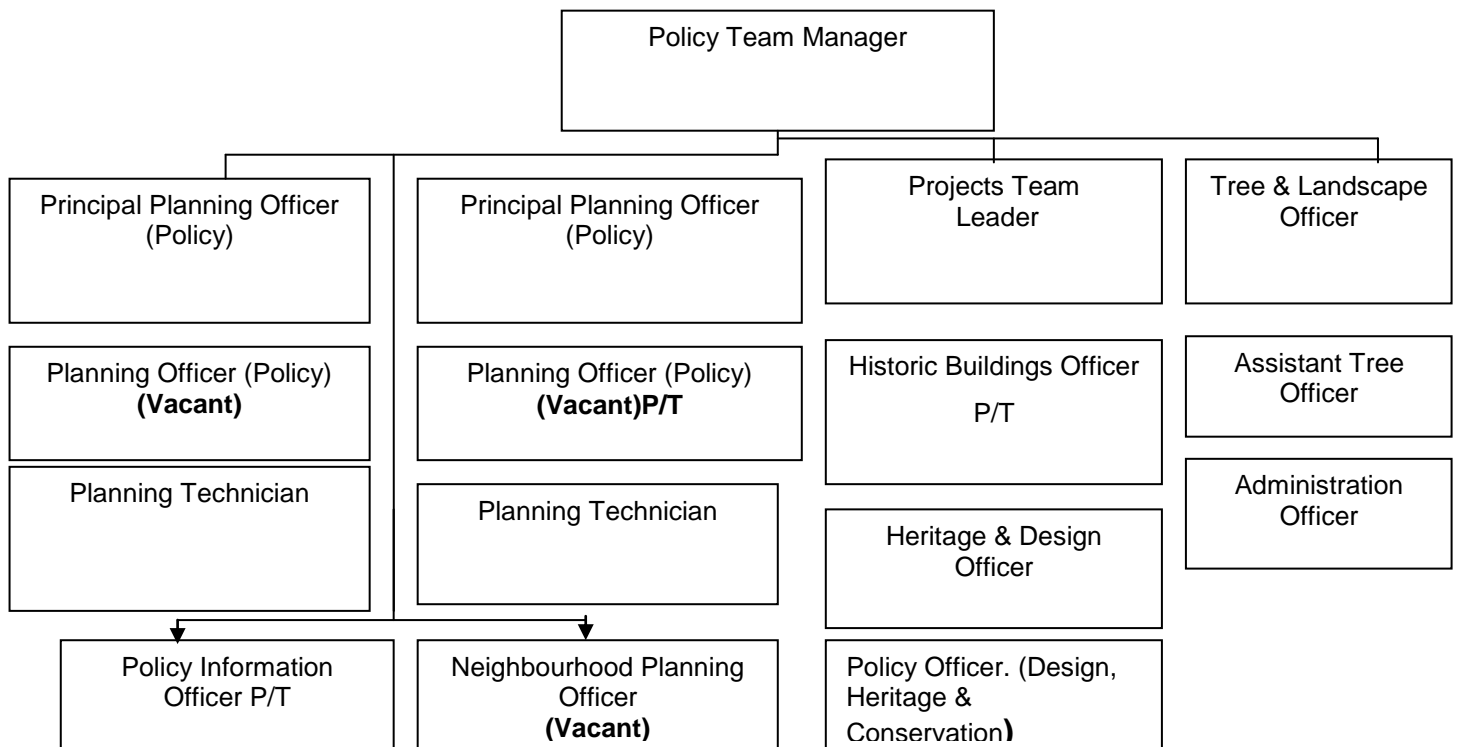
Annex 3 Salary Implications

Job Title	No of FTE	2013/2014 estimate £	Additional cost – current year £	Additional cost (2014/2015) £	Additional cost (2015/2016) £	Additional cost (2016/2017) £	Additional cost (2017/2018) £
Planners	9	282,010	8,420	27,980	36,210	40,290	41,500 (max)
Senior Planners	4.23	161,530	3,200	12,870	17,440	22,070	23,610
Principal Planners	6.68	324,970	6,030	15,160	15,880	16,280	16,670 (max)
Team Leaders	2	97,380	1,570	4,410	5,050	5,270 (max)	5,270
DC / Policy Managers	2	134,620	-1,000	2,280 (max)	2,280	2,280	2,280
Total	23.91	1,000,510	£18,220	£62,700	£76,860	£86,190	£89,330

ANNEXE 4

Annexe 4 current and proposed changes to the Planning Policy team structure

Planning Policy Team – current structure



Planning Policy team – proposed structure

