



RECORD OF DELEGATED DECISION (OFFICER)

1. Decision Reference No.	CEX396
2. Name/Title of Officer	Pranali Parikh Director for Growth & Regeneration
3. Email address of Officer	pparikh@melton.gov.uk
4. Title / Subject Matter:	Extension of contract for agency Development Management Officer
5. Type of Decision:	Public
6. Key Decision?	No
7. Decision Taken:	<p>1. To extend the contract of an existing agency Planning Development Officer for a period of 4 months to assist with clearing the backlog of planning applications that has increased whilst formal recruitment has been undertaken.</p>
8. Reasons for Decision:	<p>Following the Planning Service Review and the introduction of full career grading of the Planning Development Officer posts, successful recruitment followed, and we have for the last couple of years had a full complement of staff on payroll.</p> <p>Unfortunately, earlier in the summer a number of other local authorities advertised numerous posts for experienced planning development officers, and we lost 2.3FTE officers from the team, in addition to 1FTE who took maternity leave (for a period of 12 months).</p> <p>Caseloads in the Development Management team continue to be high, and we continue to receive more applications each week, which makes it incredibly hard to deal with any gaps whilst staff are replaced on a permanent basis. This has led to excessive caseload backlogs, poor customer service and an inability to meet targets (forming part of the government returns). Additionally, this is impacting upon staff morale.</p> <p>We have now been successful with a round of recruitment and will have staff in place in January 2024. We have been without a fully staffed team since May 2023. To assist the team we had 2 agency staff start with us in the summer. One of those left the contract early (due to underperformance), and the other has been</p>

performing above expectations. Ideally, we need to extend the contract from December 2023 – end of March 2024 and make it full time to clear the backlog that has further built up over the last 7 months.

We have applied for grant funding through the Planning Skills and Backlog grant in September 2023 for support in both local plans and development management teams. We were due to hear back as to whether we had been successful in October 2023, however this has now been pushed back to ‘Autumn 2023’. If we are successful, the full cost of this agency cover will be provided for. If not, we will need to cover this from existing budgets.

It is not proposed to procure again for this as the existing candidate is performing well and working well with the team. The hourly cost is standard across the board for the level and type of work being undertaken.

9. Authority / Legal Power:

The Director for Growth and Regeneration has delegated powers in accordance with paragraph 12.2 of the Officer Scheme of Delegation.

10. Background Papers attached?

No

11. Alternative options available / rejected:

- 1. Wait for new permanent staff to be recruited into the positions – this has been discounted for the reasons set out above.

12. Implications:

Legal	<p>The decision can be taken under delegated powers. A contract will be required with the successful agency.</p> <p>The Council has the power to enter into contracts in order discharge its functions (Local Government Act 1972, s111 and the Local Government (contract) Act 1997, s1). The Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to have regulations for how it enters into contracts. In addition to complying with all relevant UK and EU legislation every contract entered into on behalf of the Council must also comply with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules and the Council’s Financial Regulations</p> <p>[Legal Approval – 15 November 2023]</p>
Finance	<p>This extension will cost c. £32,560 (extending the contract from December to March 2024 and making it full time @£55 per hour).</p> <p>There remains vacancy savings with the local plans budget in the region of £20k after taking into account the back dated pay award which can be vired across to help fund this.</p> <p>We have also applied for grant funding for this contract extension; however, it is not clear when we will hear whether the application has been successful as detailed above. If successful with the grant, that will more than cover the cost of this decision.</p>

	[Finance Approval – 17 November 2023]
HR	<p>If we do not act to clear the backlog of applications whilst awaiting new staff to start there will be substantial impacts upon staff morale within the existing team, potentially leading to further issues of staff retention. It is important to move quickly to provide some stability and continuity in the team.</p> <p>[HR & Communications Approval - 23 November 2023]</p>

13. APPROVAL/SIGN OFF (Do not complete until all implications signed off at Section 12)

Signature of Decision Maker with authority to sign :	<p>Email approval received Pranali Parikh Director for Growth & Regeneration</p>
Consultation with:	N/A
Date:	22 November 2023