

WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

STATEMENT OF DECISION

SUBJECT: BUILDING CONTROL - CROSS BOROUGH PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS

Notice is hereby given that the Cabinet Member for Planning and Public Realm has made the following executive decision on the above mentioned subject for the reasons set out below.

Summary of Decision

- The Cabinet Member approved the proposal to share the Head of Service for Building Control with the RB Kensington & Chelsea and the London Borough of Camden.

Once in place, the new Head of Service will draft proposals for the merger of all existing structures into a single unified team as identified in Paragraph 5.6 - Option 2c of the report.

It is recommended in the report that members of staff are consulted and discussions continue on the type of operating model and to identify a host borough, subject to an agreed set of criteria including cost, location and systems. The host borough would then lead on the transformation to a new operating model, in consultation with the other two partners.

In line with Westminster's financial regulations, the decision on whether to enter into a shared service model, or to withdraw from discussions, would be taken on the basis of a business case submitted to Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision

- Several local authorities across the country have decided to share building control services to streamline delivery mechanisms, increased resilience, make savings and create efficiencies. In a climate where the private sector continues to provide competition for non-statutory building control work, authorities that have shared building control services have seen a sustained or increased market share over time. Additionally, those that have set up as Local Authority Trading Companies have been able to operate as commercial companies whilst being able to keep strong links to their parent local authorities. The main driver for setting up a building control shared service is to ensure that the service is resilient to a number of challenges within the current market. Westminster has seen its market share drop by 15% over the past 5 years from 35% to 20%, which is in line with a falling market share for local authority services nationally.
- Officers in Westminster, K&C and Camden have significant experience of setting up shared services and are coming together now to assess the opportunities for creating a Central London shared service for Building Control, building on lessons learned and research across all three boroughs.

- Based on research and conversations with authorities that have chosen to share services, it is anticipated that a shared service between these authorities will lead to a number of benefits and efficiencies for all partner boroughs. There will be an initial saving across the three boroughs of approximately £180k by recruiting a single Head of Service. In the medium term, it is anticipated that there would be efficiencies created by streamlining delivery and there could be further savings made from duplicate posts and back office support in the long term. A number of potential operational structures are included in the report.

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Reference:
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