

Meeting Date	10 February 2021
Report Title	STG Building Control Partnership Business Plan 2021 to 2024
Cabinet Member	Cllr Mike Baldock, Cabinet Member for Planning
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration
Head of Service	James Freeman, Head of Planning
Lead Officer	James Freeman, Head of Planning
Recommendations	<p>The Draft South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership Business and Delivery Plans for 2021 to 2024 be agreed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) That the Draft STGBCP business and delivery plans be considered and approved or comments referred to the Joint Committee2) That should there be any amendments following consideration by the Joint Committee the final plans be reported back for final approval.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider and make any comments on the draft STG shared Building Control Partnership (STG) Business and Delivery Plans 2021 to 2024 and to refer the comments to the Joint Committee.

2 Background

- 2.1 STG Building Control Partnership (involving Medway, Canterbury, Gravesham and Swale) went live in October 2007 with Canterbury joining in April 2018. Under the terms of the Memorandum Agreement between the four partner authorities, a three year rolling business plan needs to be agreed.
- 2.2 Each partner authority must advise the Secretary to the Joint Committee whether it approves or rejects the revised draft business plan by no later than 10 days before the Annual Meeting of the Joint Committee in June each year
- 2.3 Whilst much of the Building Control Partnership operation is subject to competition from Approved Inspectors, the service retains statutory responsibilities regarding public protection e.g. dangerous structures, demolitions, unauthorised works and maintaining registers etc.

- 2.4 Over the past few years, the service has had to compete with 'Approved Inspectors' within an increasingly competitive and shrinking market, which has put pressure on income generation within the service and correspondingly has put pressure on the resourcing of the service itself. This has been further compounded by the Covid 19 impacts, although the shared service will be able to recuperate much of the lost income costs through Government Covid-19 support funding. The service has also been able to withstand the fall in income not covered by the Government by the use of existing reserves.
- 2.5 The ability to adapt to this new competitive environment has been a major benefit of a combined authority shared service and has facilitated significant improvements on embracing digital transformation, including the freedoms and accessibility that remote and agile working operations deliver, improving the customer experience and introducing efficiencies and savings to service delivery.
- 2.7 Whilst there has been some impact on service delivery during this difficult period, communication with customers has been paramount to service delivery and there has been no discernible increase in customer dissatisfaction being recorded.

3. Proposal

- 3.1 The Business Plan outlines how the building control function will be delivered on behalf of the four Partnership Councils up until 2024 and indicates what the contributions will be between 2021-2024.
- 3.2 The partnership has already begun a training programme to develop surveyors to ensure they are able to demonstrate the required skills and competencies to practice on all categories of work. It is this investment which is critical to the future delivery of the partnership.
- 3.3 Incentivising individuals to develop more specialist skills will not only present opportunities for taking on more complex developments but potentially provide an additional income stream through the consultancy.
- 3.4 Under the Building Safety Bill, there is an opportunity for specialised surveyors, who meet the minimum standard criteria, to be registered building inspectors. The registered building inspector that building control authorities can use to provide advice on specified functions.
- 3.5 Training is not simply a tick box exercise; this must happen before it is forced on all building control bodies. STG need to ensure they are the building control body in Kent recognised for the experience and skills of the staff as well as the ability to provide specialist advice.

- 3.6 Over the past years, the contributions from each partner has seen year on year savings and in recent years that has been secured via the use of a small reserve fund. However, given the pressures being experienced by the service, there are limited opportunities for further reductions without impacting significantly on service delivery and performance. Accordingly, a small additional contribution of just under £5,000 will be required over the business plan period beyond that currently funded by the Council.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could consider removing itself from the partnership. However, whilst the Council is facing significant pressures on its revenue budget over the next few years, the success of the building control partnership has been recognised in that the efficiencies secured since its inception would have significantly exceeded any potential savings as a single authority service given the economies of scale a shared partnership presented. This has been borne out through separate reviews undertaken at the respective partner authorities, particularly in Canterbury City Council's recent decision to join the service. There are proposals to review how consultancy services can be promoted to increase potential income and how best to make use of the existing staff abilities and experience to achieve efficiencies.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 The Business Plan has been considered and agreed by the Joint Authorities Committee overseeing the operation of the Building Control partnership. This has involved Councillor Tim Gibson as the authority's representative on the Joint Committee.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications		
Corporate Plan	The Partnership has built resilience into the service that supports the Council's aim to provide well run customer focussed services.		
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Appendix I sets out the details of the financial plan accompanying the Business Plan.</p> <p>It is proposed to increase the total partner contribution over the three year plan by £4,933(7.8%).</p> <p>The contributions for Swale BC are as follows:</p>		
	Year	Contribution (£'s)	Change from previous year (£'s)

	2020/21	63,042	
	2021/22	65,224	+2,182(+3.4%)
	2022/23	67,316	+2,092(+3.2%)
	2023/24	67,975	+659 (+0.9%)
	At Swale, the medium term financial plan will accommodate the proposed contributions as stated above.		
Legal and Statutory	The Partnership and Joint Committee operate under a memorandum of agreement signed by each of the partner authorities.		
Crime and Disorder	Effective control and enforcement of building standards and dealing with dangerous structures is consistent with an increased perception of security and wellbeing.		
Risk Management and Health and Safety	This is detailed in Section Three of the Service Delivery Documentation, focussing on the highly competitive market the partnership operates within as well as a lack of investment in staff development and IT solutions.		
Health and Well Being	None identified at this stage.		
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage.		
Sustainability	None identified at this stage.		

7 Appendices

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report

- Appendix I: South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership – Business Plan 2021 – 24
- Appendix II: South Thames Gateway Building Control Partnership – Service delivery Plan 2021-24

8 Background Papers

None.



Building Control Partnership Business Plan 2021-2024



Director
Version No.
Last updated

Janine Weaver
3
15 October 2020

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Government's draft Building Safety Bill represents the most radical legislative reform to building safety in decades, providing for greater accountability, a new stricter regime for high rise buildings and a new Building Safety Regulator amongst a range of other changes to the laws surrounding the planning, construction and management of buildings.
- 1.2. Everyone working in the built-environment sector in the UK will be aware of the tragic policy background to the Building Safety Bill, following in the wake of the Grenfell disaster. Taken together with various accompanying measures relating to building safety - such as the Fire Safety Bill currently passing through Parliament, various changes to the Building Regulations and the establishment of two significant funds for the replacement of both ACM and Non-ACM cladding, worth £1.6bn - there is no doubt that the measures comprise the most wide-ranging reforms in building safety for 40 years.
- 1.3. Underpinning the various legislative changes set out in the draft Bill is the establishment of a new Building Safety Regulator (BSR), which will operate within the Health and Safety Executive. The BSR will undertake various regulatory functions, applicable to all buildings, with a view to improving the safety of people in and about buildings and improving the standard of the buildings themselves, as well as the competence of all those that work in the built environment industry.
- 1.4. The impact will be considerable and will affect all building control teams, whether their authority has high rise buildings or not. All building control surveyors will have to prove their competence by regular examinations and assessments, and they will have to be licensed to practice for all building work, not just work in scope.
- 1.5. The partnership has already embarked on a programme of competency review and training. Embedded within the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) ISO 9001 accredited Quality Management System, is a Competency Matrix which was developed by the LABC as both a learning framework for creating learning and qualifications, and against which an individual's competency can be assessed.
- 1.6. Since July 2018, the LABC have regularly run the Competency Validation assessments for 'Level 6' Fire Safety Specialists which was developed in conjunction with the Institution of Fire Engineers to prove the competency of our most experienced surveyors. In the future it is likely that there will be various bodies created to certify the competency of individuals against the British Standard 'Overarching Competence Framework' and the sector specific frameworks.
- 1.7. The LABC are looking to create a 'LABC Certification' which will be UKAS ISO17024 accredited and certified. Under this they must demonstrate impartiality which means that the scheme cannot be made solely for public service building control. As such, the LABC Certification scheme for assessing

Fire Safety (Level 6 Fire Safety Specialists) must validate the competency of both public and private sector building control professionals.

- 1.8. The partnership needs to invest in the skills and competencies of the surveyors to ensure they have proven and measured competency. That they can work on all categories of developments within our partner authorities' areas, but to be ideally placed to provide a service for higher risk building projects countywide.
- 1.9. There is an acute skills shortage of qualified, experienced building control surveyors. The competency validation will impact on employment, retention and succession planning especially as high-risk competence surveyors affects salaries and the grading of other surveyors within local authorities.

2. Financial Plan

- 2.1 To meet the timetable required by the Constitution, the first draft of the business plan is required to be presented to the Joint Committee in September 2020. Therefore, the financial table, in figure 1, is a forecast for 2021/2022 as the Plan is being developed using half yearly comparative data. Monthly financial monitoring is reported back to both the Steering Group and Joint Committee and revisions are therefore possible given more up to date information.
- 2.2 The business plan format is a 3-year rolling programme, which will take the forecast beyond the end of the current third term which finishes in September 2022. However, Members have endorsed the likely progression of the partnership beyond that period and the new arrangement will allow for the agreed contributions to feed into each authorities' medium-term financial plan.
- 2.3 Building Control is a very busy service which dealt with 2,691 income related applications in 2019/2020. This generated £1,299,859 of building control fee income and represented 71% of the overall workload.
- 2.4 There is a large proportion of non-fee earning work (eg, dangerous structures, unauthorised works) which the Partnership is required to carry out to fulfil the public protection duties of the four Partner authorities as well as maintaining certain registers which are required by law. This non fee-earning work is resourced through the contributions from each Local Authority and is estimated to equate to 24% of the Partnership staff time for 2019/2020.
- 2.5 These areas of work are regularly monitored in accordance with the Constitution of the Partnership to ensure that the contributions of the Councils are cost effective and give good value for money. In 2019/2020 the contribution costs were £299,866, if based on the time analysis the costs would equate to £464,788.
- 2.6 The contributions for each authority for non-fee earning work will represent 15.4% in 2021/2022 of total activity. Half yearly time analysis reports for 2020/2021 suggest the split between fee earning and non-fee earning work was 72%/26%, however, the percentages are likely to change as the number of building regulation applications increases.
- 2.7 The building control charges key principles, under the Charges Legislation 2010, is the need to fix charges by means of a scheme, full cost recovery and the fact that the user should pay for the actual service that they receive. Local authorities (LAs) should continue to make every effort to keep their costs to a minimum to ensure that charges remain affordable and competitive and do not encourage people to circumvent the building regulations. There is an expectation that LAs will not set their charges artificially low to win work from Approved Inspectors (AIs) and then routinely increase them later on, nor to set charges high where they are operating in effect as a monopoly and routinely need to give refunds.

- 2.8 Whilst the partnership over the years has been able to achieve a balanced budget, the building control fee income has rarely achieved its target with a shortfall ranging between 8%-18%. Reduction in partner contributions by 14.6%, cost increases on premises, supplies/services, transport and reduced building control income were mitigated through a reduction in staff, streamlining processes through investment in technology, savings in other areas, as well as gaining additional work delivered through the consultancy.
- 2.9 In 2019/2020, the partnership increased its fees by 4% and currently the building control service, is equal fourth highest in Kent.

The Future of Building Control

- 2.10 In July 2020, the Government published its draft Building Safety Bill which lays out the framework and enabling powers to implement their new approach to building safety regulation.
- 2.11 All building control surveyors will have to prove their competence by regular examination and assessment, and they will have to be licensed to practice for all building control work, not just in scope. Local authority building control will be expected to work according to defined standards following defined processes and will be measured regularly by the regulator.
- 2.12 The impact of these changes will be substantial with building control needing investment and additional learning. We are on the cusp of a future where building control can create immense opportunities for all, and we need to be ready to realise it. If we do not radically overhaul the way we prepare, develop, and manage surveyors, we are in danger of sleepwalking into a skills crisis.
- 2.13 Resourcing, competence, standards, and resilience will need to be proved to be the right level. There will be a knock-on effect into recruitment, employment, retention, and succession planning especially as the national shortage of surveyors and especially high-risk competence surveyors affects salaries and the grading of surveyors in local authorities.
- 2.14 In our June 2020 staff engagement survey surveyors were asked “if they were to leave tomorrow what would be the reason, they would give in their exit interview?” Over half of them, 54%, listed increased salary and the opportunity of advancing skills and competency as the two main reasons for leaving.
- 2.15 The partnership operates a progression grade for surveyors whereby as they reach various stages in their training they qualify for re-grading. The chart shown in Appendix A, demonstrates our training timeline where we recruit from other areas of the construction industry to develop an individual into a qualified building control surveyor.
- 2.16 Once they have become fully qualified, they automatically pass a salary bar and re-grade as a senior building control surveyor. The impact on the salary budget is indeterminable as training can take anywhere between two and four years depending on their current level and their drive to achieve as well as the

yearly pay awards. The new Building Safety Bill will have an influence in the future on the qualification of surveyors and expected salaries.

- 2.17 Our current training programme projection would enable all our surveyors to be able to carry out unsupervised inspections on all domestic works from 2021. The senior surveyors, which account for 58% of the team, able to carry out inspections on more complex developments, given sufficient training and exposure to complex/commercial sites, from 2021/2022.
- 2.18 To continue to build resilience into the partnership, we need our surveyors to be focused, ambitious and able. We cannot become overly reliant on one or two key members of staff to deliver the complex and specialist work. Staff development is a key element to our succession planning.
- 2.19 Our only qualified LABC fire safety specialist, is in the top quartile of staff who could potentially retire or leave in the next few years. Over reliance on one individual exposes the partnership to risk of:
- Having to buy-in the expertise to enable the continuation of current work or the opportunity to win work.
 - Overstretched resource covering four authority areas which could have an unhealthy effect on the individual.
 - Inability to resource during periods of leave/absences.
- 2.18. Surveyors already have a heavy workload in addition having to cover colleague's areas when on leave, sickness absence and training. They have always had to maintain a certain level of continuous professional development (CPD) to retain membership of their professional body and this has become more important with expectations on professional organisations within the industry to demonstrate ongoing competency.
- 2.19. Despite the level of commitment already being delivered by staff, we need more, and we need them to develop. This will have a significant impact on performance, expenditure, and staff morale. The risk if we do not develop is an inability to deliver our service and retention of staff.
- 2.20. Taking into account potential re-grades through qualified progression, the staffing budget could potentially increase by 10% by 2023.
- 2.21. Specialist skills, such as fire safety or energy assessment, need to be encouraged to enable the partnership to oversee complex sites or be in a position to market those skills to neighbouring authorities or be 'registered building inspector' to work on projects overseen by the Building Safety Regulator.
- 2.22. The inclusion of a specialist payment within the surveyors' market premia of £2,000 could have the potential to encourage individuals to attain a higher level of competency. Whilst they maintain this level and deliver the skill on the partnerships or neighbouring authority projects the payment would continue.

2.23. Whilst the effects of the coronavirus pandemic have reduced income levels for this financial year, it is important that the partnership continues to look to future delivery. Members have agreed that the specialist payment is to be funded from the reserve at a cost of around £6,000 per surveyor (inclusive of on-costs) for the first 3 years to enable a surplus to be achieved to cover future payments.

2.24. The financial plan, in figure 1, is based on the following pressures:

- An increase in salary costs of 2% per annum
- An increase in transport costs associated with increased visits by surveyors
- Re-grading of surveyors attaining required competency and standard

2.25. With increasing costs, whilst we will look to mitigate these pressures with reductions in other areas, there will be every increasing pressure on our staffing budget. The recommendations on the future of the building control sector and profession in England, which is being proposed by Government, is not just something that would be beneficial for the Partnership to introduce but is going to be forced on all building control bodies.

2.26. Our current business plan as well as this one and all future plans must prioritise training to ensure the Partnership stays ahead of the game and is in the best position possible for when these legislative changes are enacted.

2.27. It has been consistently proven, that staff retention is a more economical way of retaining skills, local knowledge, relationships with builders, designers, and developers. We know there is a national shortage of surveyors and if we want to work on just more than domestic extensions, we need surveyors at the right competency level. Investment in training is critical to securing the Partnerships future delivery but will come at a cost as competence affects salaries and grading of surveyors.

Three-year Budget Build and Contribution Calculation for 2021/22 to 2023/2024

		<u>2021/22</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2022/23</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2023/24</u> <u>Budget</u>
Staffing		1,689,273	1,750,975	1,768,876
Premises		58,514	59,159	59,817
Transport		79,802	81,526	82,774
Supplies and Services		144,232	144,849	145,427
Support Services		44,998	44,998	44,998
Total Cost:		<u>2,016,819</u>	<u>2,081,507</u>	<u>2,101,892</u>
Contributions		(1,706,229)	(1,760,955)	(1,778,201)
Income		<u>(310,590)</u>	<u>(320,552)</u>	<u>(323,691)</u>
Total Income		<u>(2,016,819)</u>	<u>(2,081,507)</u>	<u>(2,101,892)</u>
Chargeable	84.6%	(1,706,229)	(1,760,955)	(1,778,201)
Non-Chargeable	15.4%	<u>(310,590)</u>	<u>(320,552)</u>	<u>(323,691)</u>
		<u>(2,016,819)</u>	<u>(2,081,507)</u>	<u>(2,101,892)</u>
Authority and Agreed Percentage		<u>2021/22</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2022/23</u> <u>Budget</u>	<u>2023/24</u> <u>Budget</u>
Canterbury - 23%		(71,436)	(73,727)	(74,449)
Gravesham - 15%		(46,589)	(48,083)	(48,554)
Medway - 41%		(127,342)	(131,426)	(132,713)
Swale - 21%		(65,224)	(67,316)	(67,975)
		<u>(310,590)</u>	<u>(320,552)</u>	<u>(323,691)</u>

[Figure 1]

3. PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

- 3.1. The building control partnerships role is to ensure, as far as is reasonable, that building work undertaken in the council areas of Canterbury, Gravesham, Medway, and Swale comply with the requirements of the building regulations.
- 3.2. The building regulations are national standards that apply to all types of buildings from major developments to house extensions. They cover all aspects of construction from foundations to roof coverings, including drainage, energy conservation, fire protection and means of escape in case of fire. In addition, they also ensure that buildings are accessible to all people.
- 3.3. The Building control Partnership has three elements to its business;
 - Building Regulations applications
 - Public Protection services
 - Consultancy services

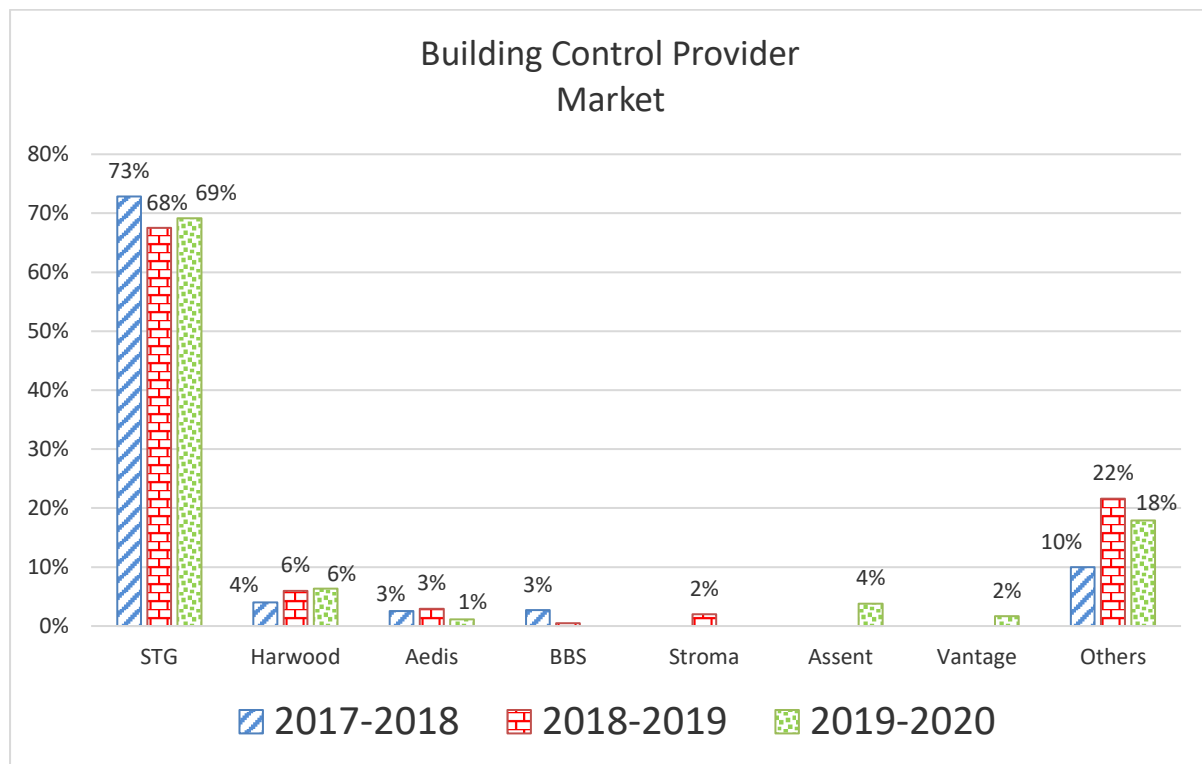
Building Regulations

- 3.4. The partnership ensures that building construction complies with the various requirements by checking proposals submitted and carrying out site inspections of building work. Where necessary it also undertakes enforcement action, however, by being proactive in the way it operates such action is minimised.
- 3.5. We are a major provider of building control within the four council areas and customers can use our expertise in conjunction with other local authorities under the LABC Partner Authority Scheme.
- 3.6. The building regulation service is in direct competition with the private sector. Over the last number of years there has been a major change in the work that approved inspectors undertake away from majorly commercial/residential developments towards the domestic market, including some quite minor works. There is now widespread competition for domestic extensions, loft conversions and conversions to dwellings, work which was traditionally carried out by the Local Authority.
- 3.7. In May 2019, several approved inspectors (AIs) experienced difficulties in obtaining or renewing their insurance cover. Under the Building Act 1984, the Building (Approved Inspectors etc) Regulations 2010 as amended an AI must hold the relevant insurance approved by the Secretary of State to be able to operate. This affected 7 AI's one of which was one of our main competitors and one which was operated by a council.
- 3.8. The building control landscape is always changing with a mix of local and regional providers. 10 years ago, Studios and BBS were our main competitors (both local AI's) and 6 years ago it changed to Aedis (regional AI) and Studios. Our competitor market shifted again 3 years ago with a local

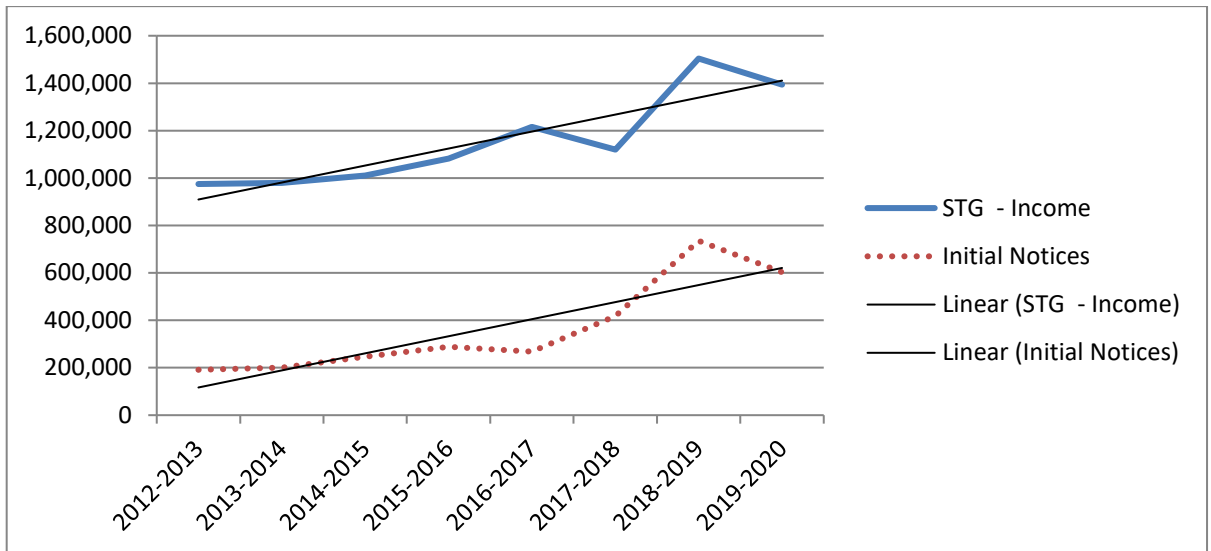
provider, Harwood becoming our main competitor together with BBS and Aedis.

3.9. In 2018 we saw Stroma intensify their position within the sector with the acquisition of two further building control providers. Stroma has been a national approved certification body for delivering energy assessments for many years', and then in 2015, they diversified into the market they were delivering to by acquiring an established building control company, Greendoor Building Control & Specialist Services Limited. The acquisition of two further established providers Approved Design Consultancy Limited and BBS Building Control Ltd in October 2018 formed one multidisciplinary national building control service provider called Stroma Building Control.

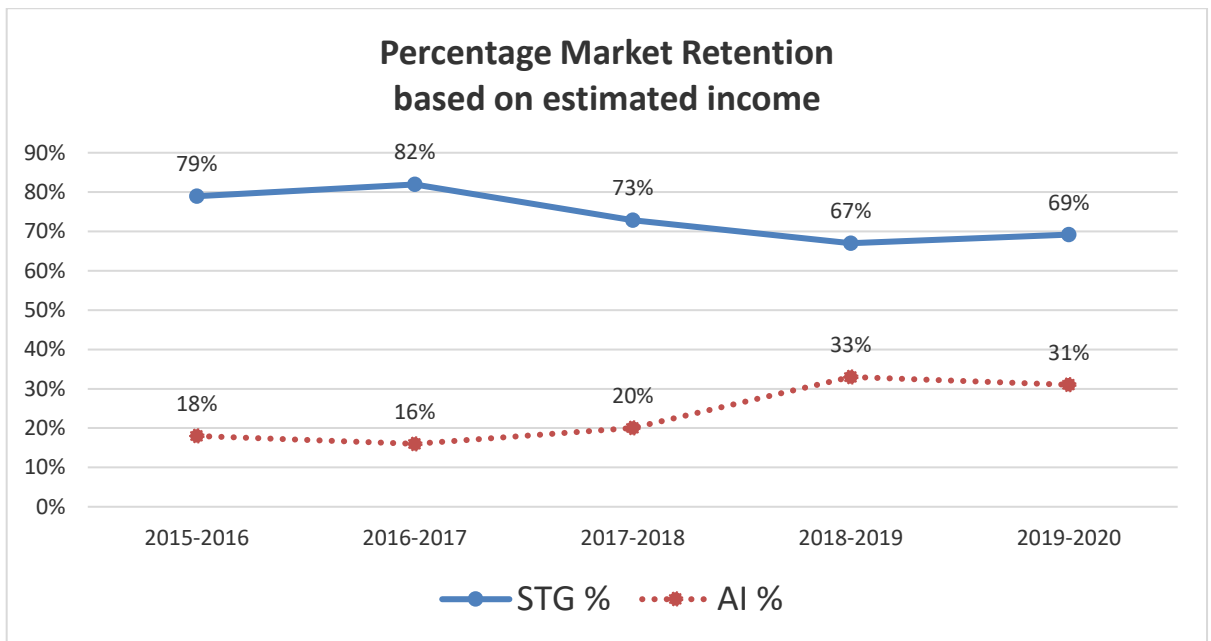
3.10. The acquisition of local building control providers by larger regional companies to expand their market is becoming more familiar. In 2019 Assent Building Control acquired Oculus Building Consultancy who will now benefit from a larger network of resources.



3.11. The graph below indicates the application trends of both STG applications and Initial Notices served by AI's. Despite our market share dropping in 2018/2019 to 67% and rising to 69% in 2019/2020, this demonstrate that the ongoing trend differences remains consistent.



3.12. Confidence in building control providers and the activity in reversions, saw a 2% improvement in our market retention for 2019/2020 compared to 2018/2019.

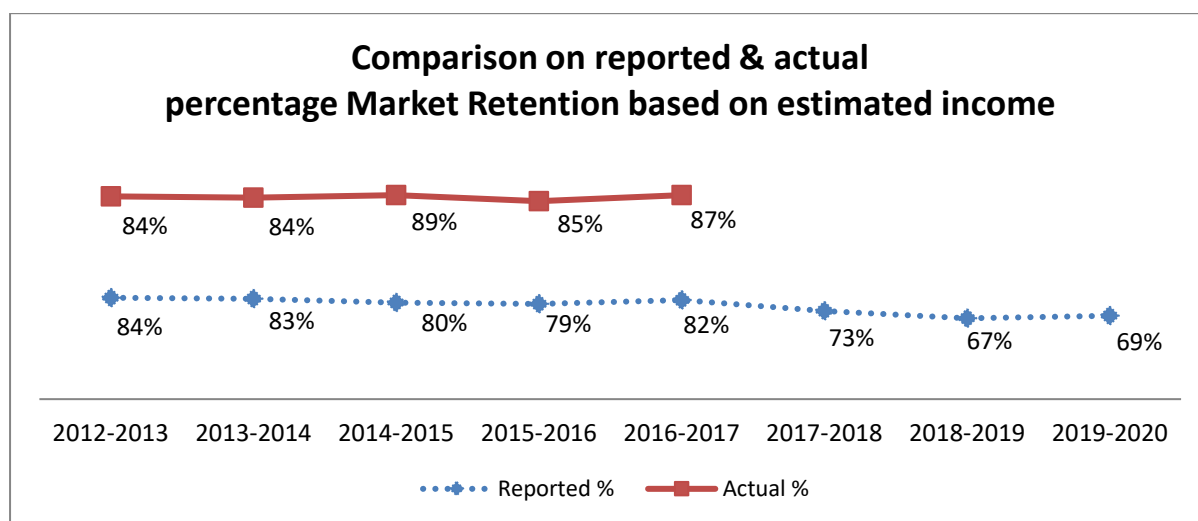


[NB: 2018/2019 incorporated fourth partner authority]

3.13. Estimating our market size is by no means an exact science and years ago building control providers measured this by the number of applications received. However, the value of loss of income on a load-bearing wall against a two-storey extension does not equate.

3.14. A benefit of a larger administrative team means we can carry out our duties under Section 52(5) of the Building Act 1984 (As Amended) and The Building (Approved Inspectors etc.) Regulations 2010 (As Amended) and where an initial notice has not commenced within the prescribed three years, cancel that notice. This also ensures our only public register is kept up to date.

3.15. Whilst we are unable to gauge our market explicitly, this exercise allows a review to be undertaken on what information we have and how that translates to a difference in market retention.

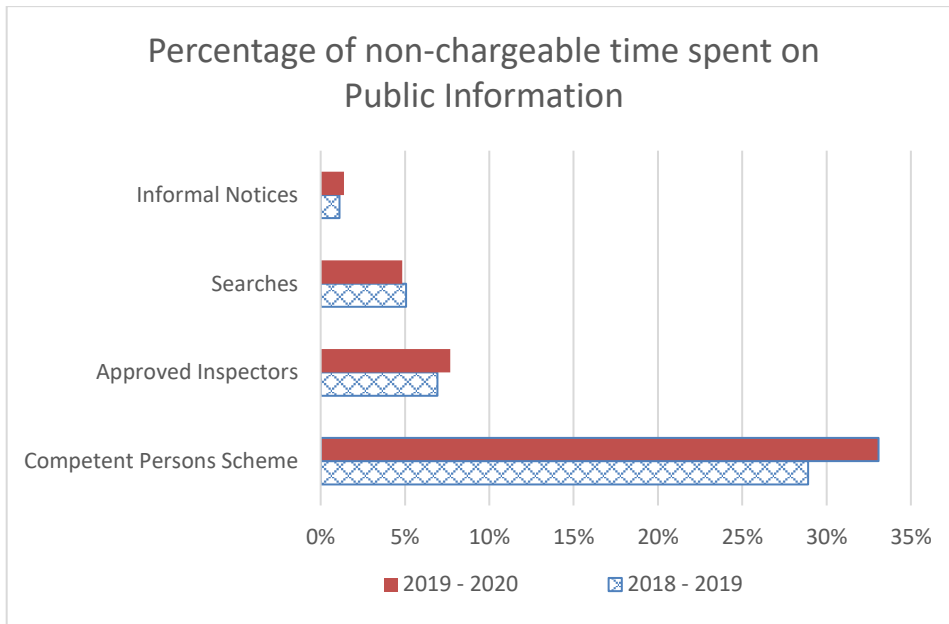


Public Information & Protection Service

3.16. There are other aspects of the building regulation work for which the partnership cannot charge a fee and this cost is one of the elements paid for by the contributions from the four partner authorities. This covers such things as: administration of approved inspector legislation, applications for disabled people and their carer's, maintaining the initial notice public register and maintaining details of approved installer schemes through competent persons' registration.

3.17. The Government has made transparency and open data a key priority as it fosters accountability and looks to drive improvements in public sector services. Whilst building control records are not public records which mean there is no public right to view or obtain information submitted under the Building Regulations, our online building control register is a useful tool which provides property information in respect of building regulation work and is freely available for owners and agents alike.

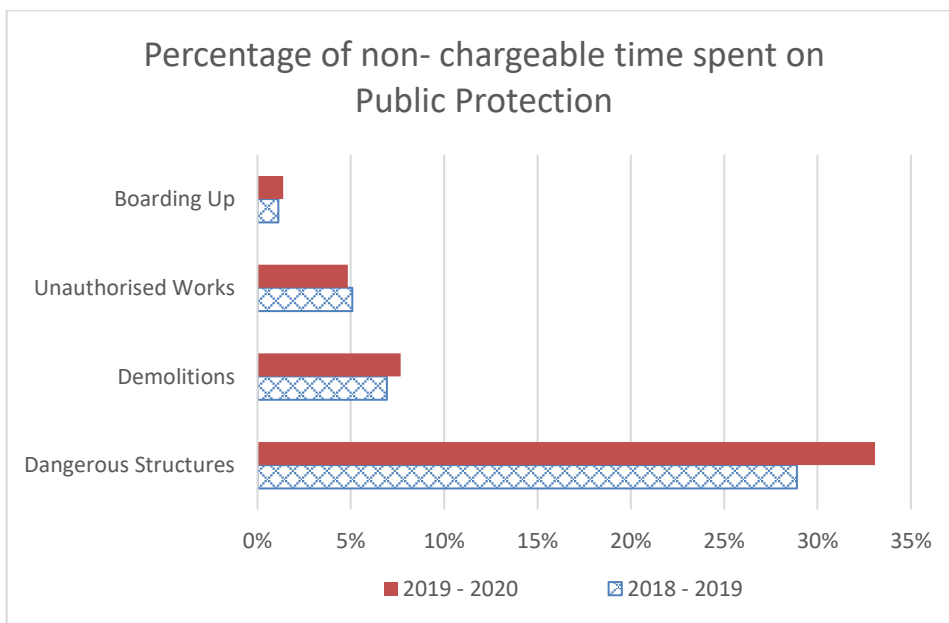
3.18. The chart below shows comparisons of the time spent for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 on non-chargeable works through public information.



[NB: total percentage of time for non-chargeable works shown in the two charts above and below]

3.19. Effective public protection is important to ensure within the partnerships areas that any building works are constructed in a safe, healthy manner and are also provided with adequate access for the disabled, and have provision for energy conservation.

3.20. The chart below shows comparisons of the time spent on some of these non-chargeable works through public protection for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020.



3.21. A duty of the local authority which is extremely time consuming and expensive is carrying out inspections and monitoring the situation with dangerous structures. Endeavouring to establishing ownership can take a long time and where no proof of ownership, it is often reliant on the local authority to take action and resolve any dangerous issues.

3.22. The constitution designates the authority in which the dangerous structure exists, is liable for the cost of any remedial or repair work to be carried out in emergency situations, however, even when an owner can be traced these structures are normally uninsured and again the cost of the work is borne by the local authority, which places a charge on the property for recovery at some late date.

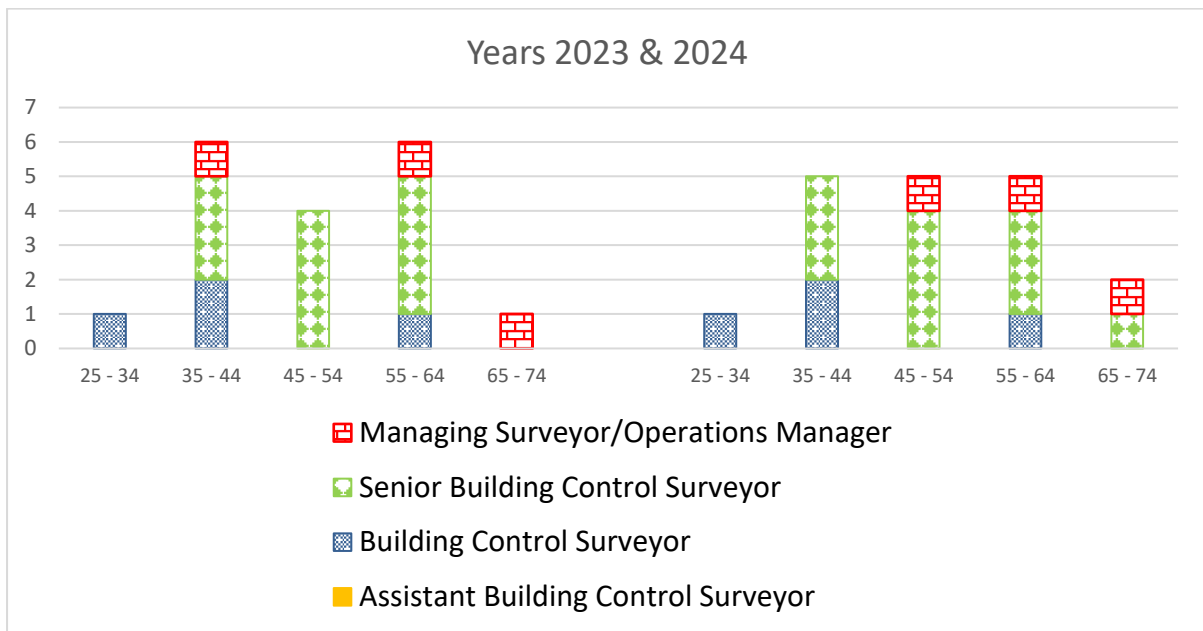
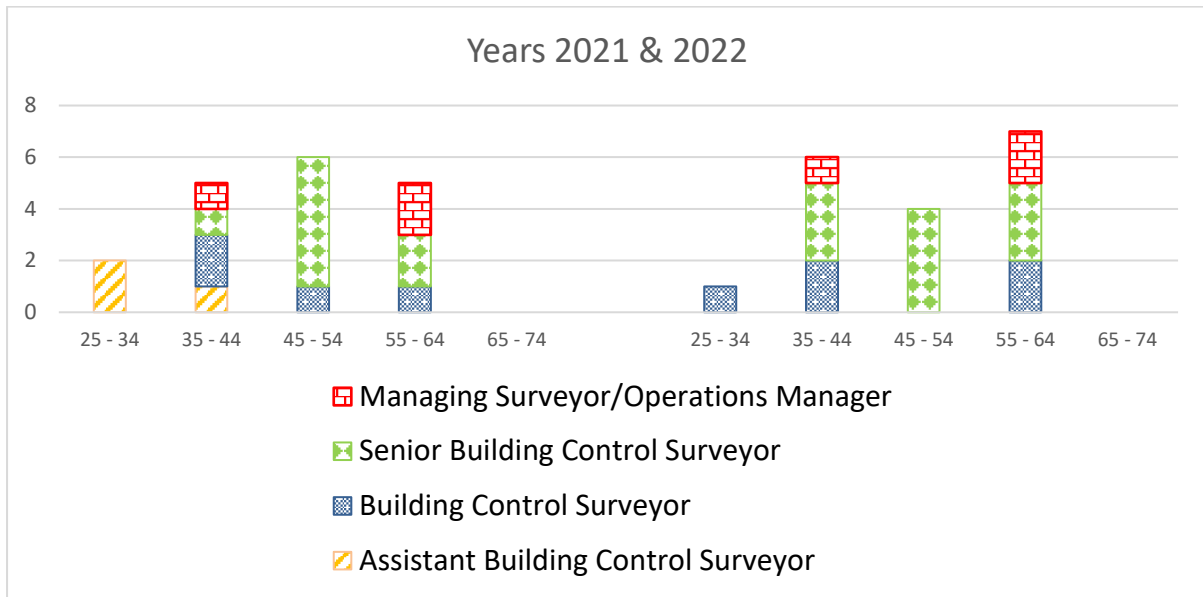
Consultancy

3.23. The consultancy delivers additional discretionary services which either complement the building control service and assist us in being competitive with the private sector or provide services to other parts of the authority requiring a building surveying skill. In this way we currently deliver energy and fire risk assessments together with SAP calculations. The partnership also provides a clerk of works service overseeing decent homes and stock condition surveys for social housing stock.

3.24. We continue to review other services which could be provided through the consultancy and have recently assisted Swale Borough Council with regards to climate change on planning conditions.

4. Partnership Strategy

- 4.1. There is an acute skills shortage in the building control sector. With a lack of investment in training by building control bodies, for years, the pool of building control surveyors is growing older, with increasing numbers reaching retirement.
- 4.2. Skills shortages have been exacerbated by a poor pipeline of new recruits. Young people who may have a limited understanding of building control and its opportunities are unlikely to pursue it as a career. According to the 2019 Patterns and Trends report published by Universities UK, the number of undergraduate students studying HNC/HND fell in 2018/2019 to 10,865, a decrease of 22.3% on 2017/2018.
- 4.3. As a result, building control bodies have been accelerating their efforts to attract new talent. In March 2019, the UK's first ever building surveyor qualification pathway was launched by the LABC (Local Authority Building Control) in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton and the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB).
- 4.4. The recruitment challenge for building control is all the greater when it comes to inclusivity. In 2016, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) reported that 13% of the workforce in the land, property and built environment profession were female, and just 1.2% were Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME). Those with disabilities were at less than 1%, and there was no data for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) representation. The number of qualified female building control surveyors working for local authorities has grown from just 26 in 1986, but the proportion today is still a disappointing 15%. The partnership is performing higher than the national average, with 17% of surveyors being female.
- 4.5. Indicated in the charts below, are the age profiles of the partnership's surveyors against their respective posts over the period of this business plan and incorporates the career graded which exists for the surveyors. There is a qualification bar towards the top of the range to encourage surveyors to become fully qualified. One of the major benefits of the range is that the partnership can be more responsive to rewarding endeavour and increase capability, unlike most authorities where promotion is reliant on someone else leaving.
- 4.6. In the next three years, 28% of our senior and most experienced surveyors will be nearing or have indicated they are looking to have retired. With finances only enabling the opportunity to recruit when a position becomes available, and the inability to recruit experience/qualified surveyors, means we recruit from other sectors of the construction industry which require at least four years of training to achieve their professional qualifications.
- 4.7. It is critical to our service delivery that our surveyors within the ranges 25-54 have the opportunity and are provided with the necessary training to deal with domestic through to complex sites.



4.8. In April 2020, the Government set out its proposals for a reformed building safety system and looking to introduce a consistent approach to assuring competence across all disciplines. The professional structure would be designed to increase regulatory standards across the sector under a single robust set of standards for competence.

4.9. The partnership has already commenced a holistic approach to upskill and build resilience into the team. We successfully transferred our BSI ISO 9001:2015 to the LABC's ISO 9001 to co-ordinate with the LABC's quality management system and competency model to gather collectively both team and individual surveyor capability to ensure the team is competent to deliver the service in accordance with the LABC performance criteria and standards. This matrix is in line with the Industry Response Group Competency

Framework for Building Standards Surveyors and aligns with the national programme that will be coming out.



4.10. The LABC competency framework ensures those attaining an LABC level are competent to practise and meet the highest standards of professionalism required by LABC and will enable us to benchmark ourselves against our equivalent providers in the future. This will link to the competency and professional register that will be developed for all public and private building control surveyors and overseen by the BSR (Building Safety Regulator) and the HSE.

4.11. If the partnership wants to deliver on all categories of work we need to ensure our team has the required licence to practise on these as well as for specialist skills including: fire safety, safety at sports grounds and regulatory enforcement. If we are unable to evidence the necessary competence to deliver a particular level of building control work, then we would have to look to an adjacent authority that has all of those skills (eg, high rise project requiring a Level 6 specialist).

4.12. Worryingly, with a lack of qualified building control surveyors available there is no incentive for the team to:

- Undertake training to become a specialist surveyor
- Undertake training to progress to become qualified

- Undertake training to evidence their current competency to work on, for example, domestic, non-residential, educational sites until a formal licence is introduced

4.13. Currently we have one of the two Level 6A (fire specialist) surveyors in Kent. However, this individual is within the 28% looking to retire and with no incentive to take on the extra training and difficulty of the projects involved, or the fact they are near retirement age, none of our current senior surveyors are willing to progress.

4.14. Our team of surveyors are at varying stages of their careers, mainly experienced in domestic construction due to the lack of exposure to more complex sites and will have different preferred learning styles. If we are to evidence competency and ongoing competency they need to be always learning. Whilst for some this will not change, however, there are those that only carry out the necessary CPD to retain their professional membership.

4.15. Our training programme will ensure individuals:

- Cover the core of their job role which can be applied to real-life situations and to which they can receive immediate feedback to refine their understanding.
- Guided learning which has been personalised from their PDRs and 1:1 meetings.
- Virtual learning through the LABC training site which makes it easier for the individual to take part in training, be in control of their personal development and improve and evidence their competencies.
- Peer to peer learning to facilitate continuous development by encouraging individuals to engage in knowledge/experience exchange through collaboration, technical meetings, discussion, and information sharing.
- Attending external training courses to learn specific specialist/technical skills or evidence their competencies.
- Provided with ongoing support through the operations manager, their line manager, mentor, and colleagues.

4.16. Members have agreed the inclusion of a specialist payment within the surveyors' market premia which may have the potential to encourage individuals to attain a higher level. Whilst they maintain this level and deliver the skill on behalf of the partnership's or neighbouring authority projects the payment will continue.

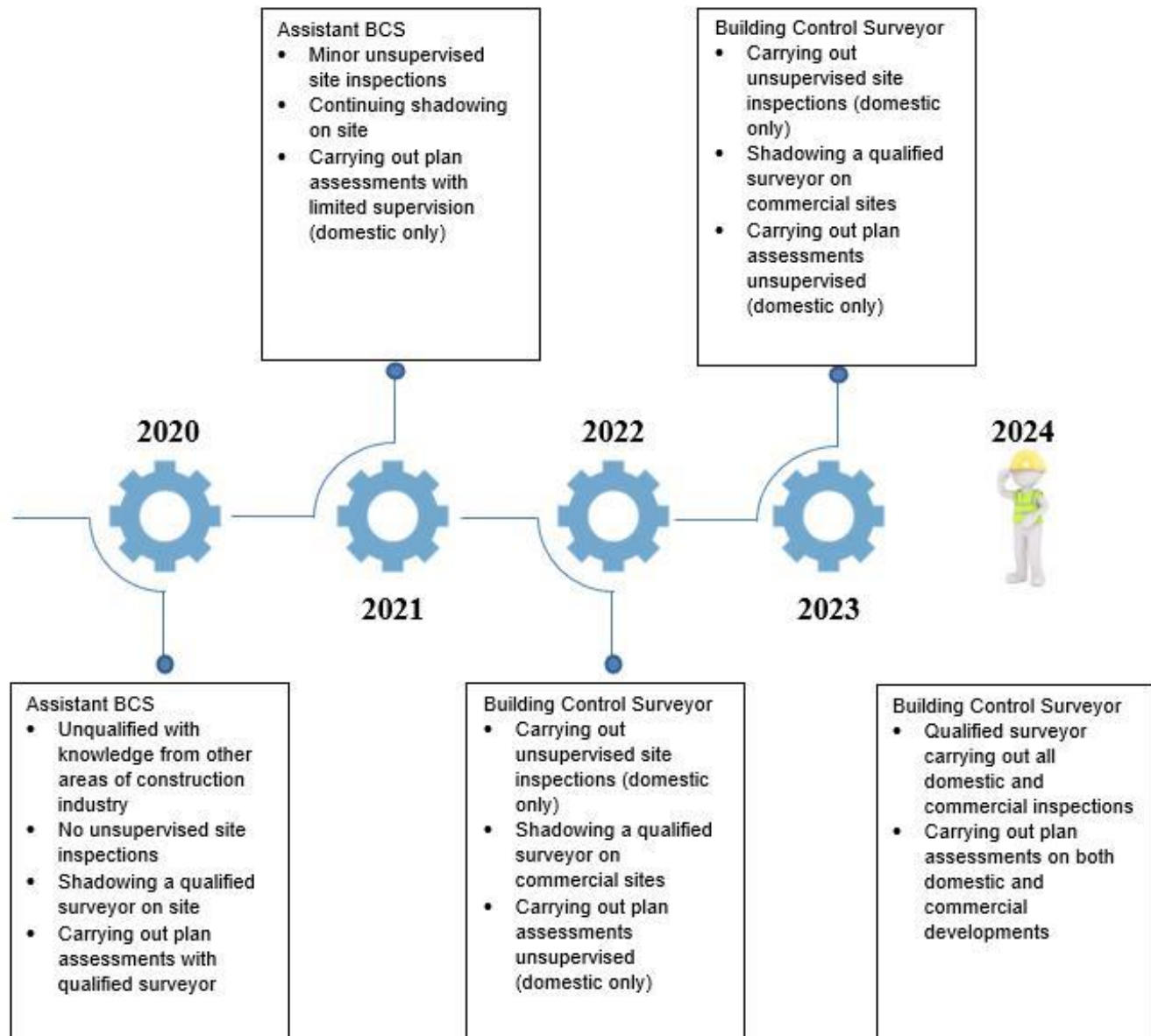
5. Business Environment

- 5.1. You will constantly hear about building regulations not going far enough, but over the last 40 years they have improved considerably. One area often talked about is the energy efficiency of buildings.
- 5.2. The first building regulations that had an impact on energy waste in the home came into force in 1965 where limits on the amount of energy that could be lost through certain elements of the fabric of a new house were introduced. As the building regulations are regularly updated, the requirements on the building envelope (ie roof, walls, windows, and floor) are amended to reflect the improvements in building design and government policy for sustainable construction.
- 5.3. In 2019 more than half of UK councils committed, including all four of our partner authorities, to reducing carbon emissions by declaring a 'climate emergency'. Many have set 2030 as a target date for reducing carbon emissions to zero, 20 years ahead of the Government's 2050 target.
- 5.4. A key challenge for regulators, developers and contractors is the need to bridge the performance gap between modelled energy consumption at design stage, and the actual metered output of energy use in the operation of new buildings. With the built environment accounting for around 40% of carbon dioxide emissions as well as impacting on habitats and biodiversity, the issue is this current built estate with the vast majority of 2050's homes, offices and commercial buildings already constructed and in occupation.
- 5.5. In April 2020, the MHCLG published the government's proposals for reforming the building safety regulatory system. The government will legislate for these reforms in new primary legislation through the Building Safety Bill, which was published in July 2020, further secondary legislation where necessary and will deliver this by the establishment of a new, national Building Safety Regulator within the Health and Safety Executive.
- 5.6. The Building Safety Bill's key recommendations include:
 - Steps to simplify and unify building control legislation, process, and procedures
 - An independent designated body to oversee professional registration and organisational audit
 - Introduction of a new competence framework to cover all persons working in building control including those working on higher risk buildings in scope of the new regulator
 - A unified pan-industry Code of conduct for all Building Control Bodies and professionals
 - A unified pan-industry career structure to set clear expectations of competence across the building control sector.
- 5.7. The Future of Building Control Working group see these recommendations as a potentially key part of the reform of the construction sector. They suggest a

consistent plan to make sure building control professionals and the bodies they work for are competent and effective.

- 5.8. The skills, expertise and capacity of local authority building control will provide the main support for the new regulator and be complemented by approved inspectors where required.

Timeline – 4 Years of Training



Building Control Partnership Delivery Plan 2021-2024



Director	Janine Weaver
Version No.	3
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Executive Summary

The Delivery Plan Update sets out our ongoing work and plans to meet out three objectives:

- Embracing our customer needs and expectations
- Maximisation of technology to reduce cost and continue to improve the way we work
- Valuing, supporting and development of staff

Our objective is to improve the partnerships performance for our customers by developing our service delivery through customer feedback – which remains our main purpose and underpins everything we do – exploit technology for the benefit of staff and provide savings – appreciating our team and assisting them to grow.

We continue to deliver public protection to the community with 1107 inspections carried out and with ongoing monitoring of 121 dangerous structures in 2019/2020.

Supporting our staff with their career development has seen the achievement of:

- 3 new Assistant Building Control Surveyors commenced their training path to become Building Control Surveyors.

- 1 Assistant Building Control Surveyor and 1 Building Control Surveyor enrolled on the first apprenticeship for a BSc (Hons) in Building Control degree.
- 3 Administrators began their training as Technical Assistants.
- 1 Administrator commenced training as a Scanning Assistant.
- In 2019/2020, the administration team received 133.20 hours of training and the surveying team obtained 695.60 hours.

We continue to ensure that buildings, within our partnerships area, are designed and built in accordance with the Building Regulations and associated legislation. In delivering this around 12,500 site inspections were carried out in 2019/2020.

This Delivery Plan lays out our objectives and outputs for the 2021/2022 year. Our past record shows that we take these commitments seriously. We recognise that we still have much to do to improve our performance and we believe that we will continue to deliver against our objectives of our Business Plan, the expectations of our stakeholders and for the benefit of our customers.

What we plan to deliver in 2021-2022

Embracing our customer needs and expectations

We have been listening to our customers and stakeholders to better understand their needs and concerns. This insight, supported by our surveys, is helping us to deliver our objectives more efficiently and meet the needs of our customers.

We have already delivered several initiatives aimed at improving our customers' experience including:

- Inspection reports deliverable through the Tascomi mobile app for owners / builders detailing:
 - the stage of works inspected
 - inspection result: satisfactory / unsatisfactory
 - details of any contraventions
 - next stage of works to be inspected

During 2021/2022, we will:

- Develop customer site inspection booking capability through the website.

- Investigate feasibility of modifications to current online submission portal to accept other types of application submissions.

- Continue to improve consistency to plan vetting and site inspection through mobile app to reduce variances in interpretation of the building regulations.
- Expand our technical seminars for architects, agents, and builders to improve understanding of legislative changes, clarify issue on interpretation and use of building products.

Working with others

In 2021/2022, we will:

- Undertake a survey of our partner architects to review our performance and understand how they are looking to operate in the future. How those requirements will impact on our service delivery and what we can do to make our working relationship better.

- Carry out a competitor survey to either corroborate previous survey results as to who chooses the building control provider or establish any market change.

We will review our customer strategy to ensure that we mature our understanding of our customers' needs and develop improvements to meet these.

What we plan to deliver in 2021-2022

Maximisation of technology to reduce cost and continue to improve the way we work

We remain focused on continuous improvement of our IT to ensure we retain the capability to adapt in our competitive market.

In 2020/2021 we introduced enhancements to our mobile app to enable GIS route planning and check-in/check-out facility to safeguard surveyors as lone workers.

We aspire to enhance our service to customers by increasing the accessibility of information 24/7 and automated notifications.

During 2021/2022, we will:

- Develop an enforcement module incorporating legislative action target points.
- Continue to improve work allocation module by enabling the prioritisation on individual surveyors' workflow.
- Development of an individualised dashboard presenting visual data on performance and current workload.

- Restricting data access to partner authority information by custodian code to provide additional protection on our partner authorities' information.
- Develop our online facilities to enable other types of applications to be submitted, such as initial notices to deliver further savings.
- We will continue to improve performance, generate efficiencies, and achieve cost savings, supporting our drive to achieve a balance budget.

Working with others

We are committed to work with our customers and back-office provider to assess opportunities to improve IT performance, identifying the resources and capabilities necessary to ensure lasting results

In 2021/2022, we will:

- Continue to demonstrate to other potential users our advancements and collectively seek best practice.

What we plan to deliver in 2021-2022

Valuing, supporting and development of staff

Ultimately, we can only optimise our ability to deliver if we have the right people, processes, and systems. We will increase our efforts to retain, develop and attract the best talent to meet our evolving needs and to continue to strengthen our position as a building control provider.

As a reactive service it can have a negative impact with constantly changing priorities which can exhaust staff trying to do a good job and leaving them feeling undervalued and experiencing low morale.

We know for a wide range of reasons, many staff are increasingly seeking more flexibility in their work, training, and career pathway. Cultural change is perhaps our biggest barrier. Team building in an agile environment is a more complex challenge than fostering high morale in individual surveyors.

During 2021/2022, we will continue to embed:

- Trust which underpins our partnerships principles

- Autonomy to manage their own workload
- Responsibility and ownership to strengthen their resolve to achieve the partnerships goals
- Interpersonal skills to engender team working and prevent disengagement through agile working

The Regulations are becoming more involved and complex. The main driving force of the changes is climate change, reducing the carbon footprint and the Hackitt report.

During 2021/2022, we will continue our programme of:

- Mentorship to ensure skills and knowledge of senior staff are transferred to others.

- Expanding surveyor's competencies and capabilities to deal with all categories of work through:
 - Peer to peer learning
 - Virtual learning
 - External training
 - Guided learning
- Encourage autonomous learning so staff take ownership of their career development.

During 2021/2022, we will:

- Investigate the inclusion of a specialist payment to encourage individuals to attain a higher specialist skill level.
- Encourage and support staff in achieving the LABC Level 6A and other relevant specialisms.

Working with others

We recognise the importance of having a work-life balance and we are committed to supporting staff in achieving this.

- Work with staff to manage their work-life balance.
- Monitor levels of development to prevent training fatigue.

5. CONTRIBUTION AND SUPPORT FOR COUNCILS PRIORITIES

5.1. As STG is a Partnership of four authorities, it is important that its values reflect those of the four councils. The four partner authority priorities are:

Canterbury's priorities are:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported
- Places – we make most of our unique built and natural environment
- Prosperity – the district has a resilient, diverse economy which supports job growth

Gravesham's priorities are:

- People: a proud community; where residents can call a safe, clean, and attractive borough their home
- Place: a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community
- Progress: an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment

Medway's priorities are:

- Medway: a place to be proud of
- Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential
- Maximising regeneration and economic growth

Medway ways of working

- Giving value for money
- Digital services so good that everyone who can use them prefers to do so
- Working in partnership where this benefits our residents

Swale's priorities are:

- Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all
- Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges
- Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone
- Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future

5.2. There are clear links between the four and all revolve people and place, maximising opportunities for local communities and delivering quality services. These are also

encompassed in the values of putting the customer at the heart of everything we do and giving value for money.

People

Linked to Council Priorities:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported – Canterbury priority
- People: a proud community; where residents can call a safe, clean, and attractive borough their home - Gravesham priority
- Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential – Medway priority
- Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone – Swale priority

5.3. We work cooperatively with building owners, homeowners, architects, developers, building contractors and other professionals to ensure buildings are safe, healthy, and efficient to meet the standards set by the building regulations.

5.4. Our consultancy is able to offer a range of services to the major regeneration projects in the area. Early intervention in the design process will eliminate issues that could provide conflicts with legislation at a later date. Our range of services include:

SAP calculations, Sbem calculations, Display Energy Certificates and Fire Risk Assessments.

We have also teamed up with colleagues LABC Services, the commercial arm of Local Authority Building Control (LABC) through whom we are able to offer air pressure testing, acoustic testing and have access to CDM co-ordinators together with other expertise and specialism's which we are now able to facilitate.

5.5. We work with colleagues in Private Sector Housing and Environment Health to aid the transformation of areas through social regeneration, providing advice on bringing back into use empty and dilapidated properties, giving advice on houses in multiple occupation and the refurbishment and repair of commercial premises.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objectives 1 (see page 2)

Place

Linked to Council Priorities:

- Places – we make most of our unique built and natural environment – Canterbury priority
- Prosperity – the district has a resilient, diverse economy which supports job growth - Canterbury priority
- Place: a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community – Gravesham priority
- Medway: a place to be proud of – Medway priority
- Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all – Swale priority
- Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges – Swale priority

5.6. The outcomes from the Hackett report clearly indicated that neither the building regulations nor fire safety legislation were fit for purpose, in particularly with regards high rise buildings. A holistic review will generate significant changes to both the legislation and the way it operates. The degree of competency of those carrying out inspections on such buildings will be tested via a new body, however, significant changes to the way products are identified and procured throughout the supply chain will also be challenged.

5.7. The roles and responsibilities of those engaged in this form of construction will be more clearly defined and there will be greater clarity and transparency through both the construction side of the industry and that of those carrying out enforcement.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objective 2 & 3 (see pages 3 & 4)

Maximising Opportunities for local communities

Linked to Council Priorities:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported - Canterbury priority
- Place: a dynamic borough; defined by a vibrant and productive local economy taking advantage of growth in the area, supported by its strong and active community – Gravesham priority

- Progress - an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment' – Gravesham priority
- Children and young people having the best start in life – Medway priority
- Medway's people to realise their potential – Medway priority
- Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges – Swale priority
- Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone – Swale priority

5.8. Through our work with the housing sections of Medway Council we help to deliver improvements to council owned properties through the Decent Homes, condition surveys and fire risk assessments. During these surveys we also assess health and safety requirements of the occupants and impacts on the community. These opportunities are available to all partners either directly or indirectly involved in social housing.

5.9. With joint training, guidance, and information sheets, together with builder and architect forums, the Partnership aims to support all our customers in their building projects. By interlinking through our website to the LABC we can ensure our customers have the latest and most up-to-date guidance available. This will assist in ensuring a consistent approach to the many challenges, the multitude of complex and interactive regulations now presents to every development.

5.10. Inclusive design is a paramount requirement of both new build and refurbishment works. Advising on compliance with The Equalities Act and Part M of the Building Regulations is a major part of public protection inspection services non-chargeable work. This not only delivers a more suitable environment for disabled people, but also transfers the benefits to the greater community, i.e. young families, older people, and those caring for others.

5.11. The majority of the work of the Partnership is concerned with protecting the community through health and safety requirements in the regulations or in other sections of the Building Act.

5.12. Important examples of health and safety requirements include fire safety (means of escape, fire spread and access for the fire service) structural safety and satisfactory drainage. In addition, the Partnership deals with dangerous structures, demolitions, dilapidated buildings, and contraventions of the Building Regulations

5.13. We assist with a number of local agents and private sector housing sections to ensure adaptations comply with the Regulations to enable older and vulnerable people to stay in their homes and maintain their independence.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objectives 1 - 3 (see pages 2 - 4)

Delivering quality services

Linked to Council Priorities:

- People – residents enjoy a good quality of life and those in need are supported – Canterbury priority
- An entrepreneurial authority: commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment – Gravesham priority
- Giving value for money - Medway priority
- Digital services so good that everyone who can use them prefers to do so – Medway priority
- Working in partnership where this benefits our residents – Medway priority
- Renewing local democracy and making the council fit for the future – Swale priority

5.14. Quality of our services has been tested through agent's focus groups and customer feedback together with a mystery shopper exercise. Each have fed back excellent results which emanate from our digital transformation programme. Agents and customers enjoy the availability of being able to submit applications and pay for them at a time of their choosing and the savings in costs through digital application rather than printing and posting.

5.15. They have also praised the availability of the search facility on the website which allows them to track applications as well as the provision of drop-box technology in order to accept larger applications, particularly from commercial, industrial and educational providers.

5.16. The mystery shopper exercise demonstrated both ease of application and the ability to receive consistent and precise answers to enquiries. There were also some improvements captured through the exercise, particularly around the depth of response and the reasoning behind. Further work has been identified through this and other consultation meetings around a wider explanation of the building control service and the difference between private and public sector provision.

5.17. Our agile working solution provides surveyors with far greater access to wider streams of information which can be discussed and relayed to customers on site and has been seen as an improvement to the range of advice that surveyors can provide.

Links to STG Delivery Plan Reference:

- Objectives 1 – 3 (see pages 2 - 4)

6. SERVICE RISKS

Risk rating key

<u>Likelihood</u>	<u>Impact</u>
A. Very high	1. Catastrophic (showstopper)
B. High	2. Critical
C. Significant	3. Marginal
D. Low	4. Negligible
E. Very low	
F. Almost impossible	

Host Directorate: RCET		Service: STG Building Control			Manager: Janine Weaver		Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee
Risk Title: Finance and Strategy					Description of Risk: Reduced income		
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners	
31/08/20	01	B2	Inability to recruit staff in a competitive market from a reducing pool of resource	13 operational qualified surveyors	Additional staff brought in from agencies which would significantly increase costs.	Continuance of market premia. Development of assistant building control surveyors and continue recruitment of assistants from other areas in the construction industry.	
31/08/20	02	D2	Current infrastructure unable to support development of	Inability to access back-office system and meet customer demands	Inefficient service delivery resulting in further loss of market and inability to compete.	Data to be transferred to a partner authorities IT for in-house delivery	

Host Directorate: RCET			Service: STG Building Control		Manager: Janine Weaver		Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee		
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Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners			
			technological advancements in service delivery						
31/08/20	03	B2	Contributions reducing beyond the requirements of the Charges Legislation 2010	Percentage time spent exceeds contributions income	Further call on contributions from partners. Reduction in service to partners.	Agree deminimus percentage of time allocated to public protection by partners			
31/08/20	04	C2	Highly competitive and unpredictable market. Diminishing income through lack of building regulation applications.	50% of market share	Insufficient income to cover expenditure on chargeable account resulting in an increase on the followings year's chargeable rate which may make us uncompetitive.	Reduced expenditure to limit income deficiency. Look for alternative income streams through consultancy service. Improve marketing strategy and rationale services provided.			
31/08/20	05	C3	Inability to sustain growth and acquire additional business.	Reduction in market share and consultancy services income	Inability to match income with expenditure resulting in increase in following year's chargeable rate. Surveyor's chargeable time transfers to enforcement activity which would not be sustainable from the contributions. Consultancy losing income and not sustainable.	Invest in training and development of staff to diversify resources into consultancy work. Develop customer experience strategy.			

Host Directorate: RCET			Service: STG Building Control		Manager: Janine Weaver		Portfolio Holder: STG Joint Committee	
Risk Title: Finance and Strategy					Description of Risk: Reduced income			
Date	Risk No	Risk Rating	Vulnerability	Trigger	Consequences if Risk Realised	Mitigation/Action Points for Risk Owners		
31/08/20	06	D3	Current economic situation leading to increased debt arising from unpaid invoices.	Increased number of applicants unable to pay invoices.	Number and value of debtors increased affecting the budgeted income figure. Unpaid invoice provision within budget would need to be increased.	Careful monitoring of debtors list. Vigorous pursuit of large debts. Database clearly marked where invoice remains unpaid so as site surveyor can pursue on inspection. Taking over the functions of invoicing and debt collection from the finance department.		
31/08/20	07	D3	Failure to suitably develop staff to meet the needs of the business and match personal self-improvement expectations.	The market is regularly changing to offer alternative services to client's which compliment building regulation work. The Partnership requires staff to be trained to deliver a more diverse service and remain competitive.	Insufficient skill base would result in customers being more attracted to the competition with a resultant loss in work.	Ensure staff are well trained and able to compete with the services offered by the private sector. Develop training matrix to ensure staff development through PDR process.		