

## BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Report of:** Paul Hewett – Executive Member for Property, Projects and Procurement

**To:** General Purposes Committee – 22 March 2023

**Author:** Ralph Burton, Assistant Director Property and Infrastructure

**Subject:** Corporate Projects Service

**Purpose:** To obtain approval to proceed with the implementation of the creation of a new functional service and job posts.

### **Recommendation(s):**

Agree and authorise Option 1 – Approve the establishment of the Corporate Projects Service along with the necessary budgets and staffing as required. Also, delegate authority to the Assistant Director to implement as required.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 The Council requires an evolved and permanent approach to the delivery and management of projects and change activity for the following reasons:

- The Council is entering into a phase of requiring increased delivery on change activity and projects. The Council has a continuing ambitious work programme to enable the delivery of the corporate plan, ensuring our corporate plan priorities and associated benefits are realised.
- Currently the Council has a small resource allocation for corporate project activity. The current 'skeleton' resource allocation for existing corporate project activity has delivered a proof of concept for the recommended larger corporately focused function. The proof of concept has had notable successes and examples are the Elm House project, Elleanor Fenn community garden project and the construction of new rough sleeper dwellings in Thetford. In the proof of concept, the resource was allocated to high priority project activity, and this could be replicated on a larger scale depending on the size of the investment.
- There is a need for a more consistent approach to determine what a project is; how projects should be managed and how they can be successfully delivered on time and to budget across the Council services. Consistency would create efficiency with a greater number of projects delivering on time and to budget.
- Industry statistics shows that 70% of all projects fail due to various reasons including over ambitious timeframes, changing the scope of projects and poor communication. These and other critical success factors can be improved with investment in project management resources.
- Finally, the 2022 Peer Review made a recommendation for the Council to make further investment in delivery resources to meet its programmes of activity. The subject of this report directly addresses that recommendation.

1.2 To address the above a review was undertaken of the different models that could be implemented for the creation and investment in a different service. For the size and scope of the Council and its change programme a hybrid approach is recommended to be adopted where some project activity is managed centrally, and some project activity is managed in service teams.

1.3 This proposal is to create a new functional service of the Council, called the Corporate Projects Service. This will directly manage, monitor and report on the delivery of a finite

number of projects that are categorised as 'corporately critical' based on their size, complexity, budget and risk. These corporately critical projects would be managed separately and independently of service teams to give them corporate visibility, resource prioritisation and a dedicated focus to ensure they are delivered efficiently. The management of all other projects within the Councils workplan will then be de-centralised into the existing corporate objectives governance i.e. managed in services and reported / escalated accordingly.

- 1.4 The aim and purpose of the Corporate Projects Services will be to increase the delivery and completion rate of change projects within the Council's total programme of change activity or projects. It will do this using the following 5 key principles:
1. Establishing a core team of corporate project management resources that can be deployed to project manage the change activity that is deemed to be the highest priority corporately and directly linked to the Corporate Plan priorities. This focuses resourcing on ensuring projects are delivered on time and to budget, without the distraction of the 'day job'.
  2. Embedding a standardised approach and framework for the management and control of project activity for the Council using best practice guidance.
  3. Supporting all teams across the Council to develop their awareness, skills and knowledge of good project management.
  4. Seeking to self-fund part of the cost of the service (see 5.5.1 for further information).
  5. Focusing most of the resource allocation on project delivery (rather than earlier project stage activity such as feasibility and options review).
- 1.5 Members will be aware that General Purposes committee on the 09 February 2023 received a report titled 'Directorate Review'. That report is linked to the proposals in this report. Through that report, General Purposes committee approved the creation of an additional Project Manager post that will be deployed to increase delivery of the Breckland 2035 corporate priority. This report links to that recommendation incorporating that created post in the new Corporate Projects Service and staff structure for that service as outlined in Appendix 1. The new Corporate Projects Service will ensure that the equivalent of an FTE will directly deliver delivery activity related to Breckland 2035.
- 1.6 Appendix 1 provides the indicative staffing structure to create the Corporate Projects Service. This is not a traditional service review as there is only one existing permanent post that is affected. The expectation is that post and post-holder will be assimilated into one of the new posts in the new structure.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

Agree and authorise Option 1 – Approve the establishment of the Corporate Projects Service along with the necessary budgets and staffing as required. Also, delegate authority to the Assistant Director to implement as required.

## **3.0 OPTIONS**

- 3.1 **Option 1** - Approve the establishment of the Corporate Projects Service as a new function of the Council establishment. Increase the establishment to accommodate the structure as set out in Appendix 1. Implement the creation of the new function immediately.
- 3.2 **Option 2** – Do not approve the establishment of the Corporate Projects Service as a new function of the Council as described in the report and the single existing permanent post remains 'as is'.

## **4.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The reasons to approve the recommendation are:

- Increase the delivery and completion rate of change projects within the Council's total programme of change activity or projects.
- Increase the success rate of project delivery i.e., more projects are delivered on time and budget.
- Making more efficient use of resources, deploying professional project management resources to provide assurance on delivery and therefore better outcomes for the residents and businesses in Breckland.
- Support a recommendation from the recent Peer Review.

## **5.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS**

The following expected benefits are:

- Prioritisation and more effective decision making in the delivery of all change related tasks and projects.
- Greater oversight and a joined-up approach to all projects across the Council.
- Improved benefit realisation, to realise more outcomes for the corporate plan.
- Focus on 'corporate critical' projects to ensure they progress in a controlled way and are well managed by a skilled and experienced project manager.
- Ensure projects are correctly established and initiated. Also, to ensure all risks, decisions, issues, stages, communications and scopes are well managed and documented throughout the life of a key project.
- Clear definition and categorisation of projects to ensure they are resourced and established appropriately either within service areas or within the Corporate Project functional service area.
- Alignment of projects with wider corporate programme and work streams to ensure outcomes are attributed to the appropriate corporate priorities. This is likely to be the activity in the Evolve efficiency programme.
- Ensure that key projects have efficient and accurate recording/communications plane to ensure that officers and members are aware of current milestones, challenges, risks, dependencies, and any upcoming public communications.
- Standardised approach to managing and reporting on projects across the Council and improved and efficient decision-making process and clearer governance within projects.
- Provide support and coaching to officers within service areas across the council to deliver smaller projects in a controlled way using the newly designed framework.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Constitution & Legal**

5.1.1 Staffing matters are non-executive functions and therefore reserved to the General Purposes committee for decision. The establishment of the new function and staffing has been subject to advice and guidance from HR and will continue to have HR guidance to ensure compliance with employment legislation.

### **5.2 Contracts**

5.2.1 There are no supplier contract issues. One permanent employment contract is affected, and this post is included in the new service.

### **5.3 Corporate Priorities**

5.3.1 The new structure will ensure this new service is fit to deliver against a range of change activities across the whole of the Council's Corporate Plan. The service specific corporate priority is Working Smarter.

### **5.4 Equality and Diversity / Human Rights**

5.4.1 The proposals will consider the HR policies and procedures of the Council to ensure a fair and transparent process.

### **5.5 Financial**

5.5.1 To implement the service as scoped and sized requires an investment into the staffing costs and for the creation of a new Project Management system for the Council. These costs are outlined in Proforma B attached. It should be noted that only 40% of the staff costs are core funded and 60% funded from reserve for the first two years, pending self-financing from year three onwards for the 60% of costs required.

### **5.6 Staffing**

5.6.1 The proposed structure;

- Retains an existing permanent post.
- Incorporates a post that was previously approved from a previous decision made by General Purposes committee in February 2023.
- Creates a further four permanent posts.

The net change is an additional four permanent posts.

### **5.7 Stakeholders / Consultation / Timescales**

5.7.1 The existing permanent post holder has been consulted. That post holder is supportive of the new structure and establishment of the new service.

5.7.2 Following the decision by the Committee, implementation will begin. The first step is to recruit to the Executive Project Manager post. Following which the other posts can be recruited.

### **6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 All wards

### **7.0 ACRONYMS**

7.1 n/a

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#### **Lead Contact Officer**

Name and Post: Ralph Burton, Assistant Director

Telephone Number: 07786 716309

Email: ralph.burton@breckland.gov.uk

**Key Decision:** No

**Exempt Decision:** No

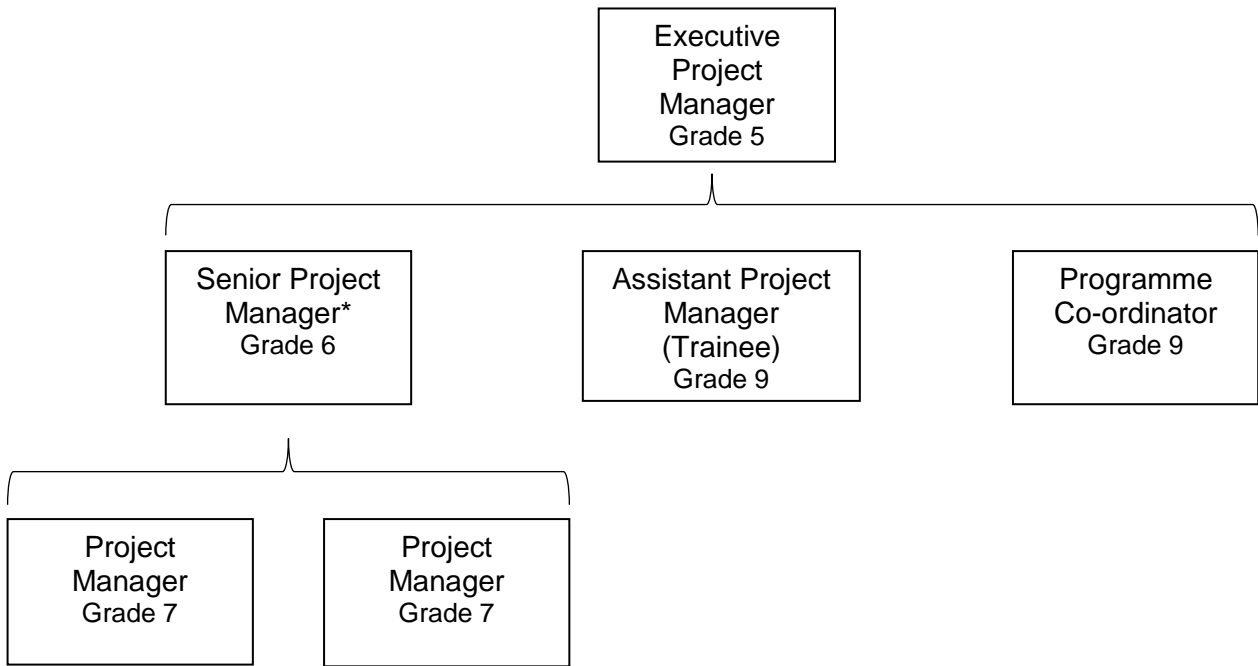
**This report refers to a Discretionary Service**

#### **Appendices attached to this report:**

Proposed Structure

Proforma B

**Appendix 1  
Proposed Structure**



All job grades are subject to job evaluation.

\*This is the equivalent to the existing permanent post in the establishment.