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## Shared Building Control and Somerset Independence Plus Service

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|-----------------------------|--|
| Executive Portfolio Holder: | Tony Lock, Portfolio Holder for Protecting Core Services |
| Ward Member(s)              | All  |
| Strategic Director:         | Netta Meadows – Director, Service Delivery               |
| Lead Officer:               | Jan Gamon, Programme Director, Stronger Somerset         |
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### Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek District Executive approval to consider expanding the existing Somerset Building Control Partnership and the existing Somerset Independence Plus agreement to include South Somerset (SSDC) within the existing agreements in place with Mendip District Council (MDC), Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT), Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) and Somerset County Council (SCC).

### Forward Plan

2. This report does not contain a key decision and therefore there is no requirement to publish this on the forward plan. However, the actual bring forward of the Business Case and recommendations will be a key decision and needs to be published on the executive forward plan accordingly.

### Public Interest

3. Having an effective and successful Building Control and Aids and Adaptations functions are fundamental to the successful delivery of frontline services to our businesses and residents.
4. Approving the recommendations set out in this report will enable the Council to explore the expansion of the existing building control partnership and home improvement service to ensure the most resilient, efficient and effective delivery of services to our customers and communities. This would also further our desire to work collaboratively and in partnership with the other District Councils' in Somerset.

### Recommendations

That District Executive:-

- a. Note the contents of this report.
- b. Authorise the development of a business case for an expanded Somerset Building Control Partnership and Somerset Independence Plus Partnership in collaboration with any or all of MDC, SDC, SWT and SSDC.

## Background

### **Building Control**

5. The Somerset Building Control Partnership (SBCP) was formed in March 2016 by MDC, SDC and SWT (formerly Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council). The SBCP is the largest Local Authority Building Control Partnership in the South West and provides a modern, flexible building control service to businesses and householders on behalf of its partner Councils. The SBCP is governed by a Joint Committee, comprised of representatives from each Constituent Authority.
6. When the SBCP was initially considered, SSDC opted not to join the partnership at the time. However, SSDC have since expressed a willingness to work with the other partner Councils to develop a business case to consider joining the SBCP.

### **Somerset Independence Plus**

7. The Somerset Independence Plus (SIP) service is a Home Improvement Service provided by the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership, which is a partnership between SDC and SWT. The shared service was formed in August 2018, following the expiration of the contract between Somerset County Council (SCC) and the four district councils with Aster Living for the delivery of a Home Improvement Agency (HIA). SIP is commissioned by SCC to provide an integrated service, including adaptations, home improvements and prevention services for disabled and vulnerable people in Somerset, to enable them to be more independent, improve their housing and to live safer in their homes. SCC, MDC, SDC and SWT are the commissioning partners of the service.
8. When the shared SIP service was initially considered, SSDC were not a part of the previous HIA contract with Aster and had no core funding, so at that time we opted not to join the partnership. However, SSDC have since expressed a willingness to work with the other partner Councils to develop a business case and join the SIP partnership.
9. This report, therefore, seeks authority to investigate further a shared Building Control Partnership and shared Home Improvement service with MDC, SDC SWT Council and SSDC
10. If the recommendation is approved, SSDC will work collaboratively with the other parties to develop a business case for the expansion of the partnerships.
11. The business case will be brought back to District Executive for approval.

## Report Detail

12. Somerset's four District Councils are currently developing a bid which seeks to reform local government in Somerset by establishing two unitary authorities within



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the County. The two unitary authorities would retain and deliver a number of statutory services and strategic functions respectively. Unitary work aside, there is a strong desire that we consider more collaboration and integration between authorities, through sharing a number of enabling services, which would support the District Councils, Town and Parish Councils, and wider partners.

13. If a Unitary bid were successful then the proposed changes to these services (Building Control and Home Improvement functions) would mean that the Partnerships would work across any new unitary authorities.
14. It is therefore proposed that all four councils consider the business case together to establish whether there is a case for all four councils being part of a shared Building Control Partnership and an expanded Home Improvement service, to promote cooperation between the authorities, provide resilience and achieve savings through economies of scale. To do this, a business case will need to be prepared. This business case will need to take account of each council's service needs, public procurement law and the external regulatory framework for the delivery of building control and home improvement services. The main benefit of widening the service to include SSDC will be in respect of SSDC's customers and communities being able to access a robust and resilient service that is delivered consistently across the whole of Somerset. A full benefit analysis will be considered as part of the business case development.
15. If District Executive approves recommendation 2 of this report, further work will be undertaken by SSDC to develop a business case to join the existing Somerset Building Control Partnership and Somerset Independence Plus Partnership, with the support of the other District Councils.
16. The Business Case will take into account the requirements of each independent authority (and their respective constitution and corporate priorities) whilst considering the advantage of combined and shared services, noting the reflective nature of the options progressed in respect to the District Unitary Business Case.
17. The outcome of this work is to develop a business case, which will be brought back to District Executive.

### Financial Implications

18. Widening the existing Somerset Building Control Partnership and Somerset Independence Plus service will reduce the cost of the services.
19. A full analysis of the costs and potential savings will be done as part of the business case. Value for Money will be considered as part of the development of the business case.
20. Any change to the current partnership and service agreement will have financial implications (including set up costs) for SSDC. However, it should be noted that building control and Somerset Independence Plus are a fee earning service. The



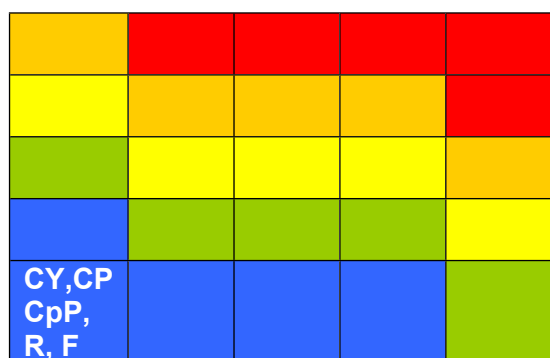
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financial implications will be explored in more detail in the business case and managed within a budget as agreed by the Unitary Programme Board.

### Risk Matrix

21. A full risk and opportunities register will be developed and presented as part of the business case. At this point in time, Officers are only requesting permission to develop a business case.

**Risk Profile before officer recommendations**



Likelihood



**Risk Profile after officer recommendations**



Likelihood



### Key

| Categories                      | Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy) |
|---------------------------------|---|
| R - Reputation                  | High impact and high probability                                      |
| CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities | Major impact and major probability                                    |
| CP - Community Priorities       | Moderate impact and moderate probability                              |
| CY - Capacity                   | Minor impact and minor probability                                    |
| F - Financial                   | Insignificant impact and insignificant probability                    |

### Council Plan Implications

22. The recommendation put forward in this report will help deliver the council's core values of

- Customers first - Designing plans and services around our customers
- Working collaboratively - Working with partners to enhance outcomes for our communities

### Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

23. There are no direct climate change implications, however any new service will, where possible, ensure that services are delivered with minimal environmental impact

### Equality and Diversity Implications

24. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken when the business case is developed and prior to any decision to approve the Business Case.

### **Background Papers**

25. None