



PART A:	MATTERS DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED POWERS
REPORT TO:	POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
DATE:	29 JULY 2021
REPORT OF THE:	PROGRAMME DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, BUSINESS AND PARTNERSHIPS, PHILLIP SPURR
TITLE OF REPORT:	ADDITIONAL CAPACITY FUNDING REQUESTS
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report:

- notes the additional resources being deployed in the short term to increase capacity in the Economic Development and Planning teams (one post and two posts respectively) to enable progress to be made on the livestock market project and required capacity to be in place in the Development Management team to deal with a significant increase in Planning applications.
- also notes that a continuation of these resources will require additional funding to be agreed by Council as part of a wide-ranging review of capacity to be presented to Committee in September, and subsequent discussions about the Financial Strategy

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

2.1 It is recommended that

- Committee notes that additional budgets will be used in 2021/22 to support the three posts below, and that a further report will be brought to cover funding for future years, as part of the Financial Strategy

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 Both the livestock market relocation and processing Planning applications in a timely manner are key corporate priorities which need to be progressed as quickly and efficiently as possible.

3.2 Current staffing resources mean that it is not possible to progress these activities to the desired timescales/without adverse impact upon other existing priorities. These

proposals will address this issue.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT RISKS

- 4.1 Should funding not be agreed then resources will need to be redirected from other priority activities to enable the livestock market relocation to be progressed and Planning applications to be processed in a timely manner.
- 4.2 In the Economic Development team this would mean that activities such as transport schemes, employment projects, feasibility work and funding bids will not be progressed. Within the Planning team this could mean that Development Management performance will decline, or resources would have to be drawn from Local Plan work, with impacts upon the timeline for moving that process forward.

5.0 POLICY CONTEXT AND CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Ryedale Council Plan 2020 – 2024 identifies the need to build strong, inclusive and attractive communities; the opportunity to harness Ryedale’s unique economy to deliver growth, homes and jobs; and the need to build the district as a sustainable, safe and clean place, as key priorities. The livestock market relocation and undertaking Planning work in a timely and efficient manner will make a central contribution to the delivery of these priorities.
- 5.2 This funding request will feed into the Financial Strategy which is a key strategic document that affects all service delivery, linking into the Corporate Plan and all other strategic plans, as well as providing the means for attaining the Council’s objectives and priorities.

REPORT

6.0 REPORT DETAILS

- 6.1 The Financial Strategy agreed by Council in February noted that:

‘The Head of Paid Service commissioned senior managers to work with their teams to identify areas where it is considered that further investment is required given the current pressures on capacity due to increased service demands and the need to deliver against the Council Plan as well as COVID-related responsibilities.’
- 6.2 A wider report is being prepared and will be brought to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting in September to address broader resource issues. This report is presented to Members now given the urgency of decisions regarding additional resources to progress the livestock market and address a significant increase in Planning workload.
- 6.3 **Livestock Market (£106k over 24 months, £18k in 2021/22)**
- 6.4 Council agreed to earmark £1.5m from reserves into the capital programme for a livestock market. This does not cover Officer costs required to facilitate the project, including additional Member meetings. Therefore it is proposed that an additional £106k is earmarked to cover the recruitment of a Grade 8 post for the next two years.
- 6.5 The very early stage in progressing the livestock market scheme is currently being managed by an Officer within the Economic Development team. If the livestock market is to be progressed at the pace sought by Members it is not possible to accommodate

this project and continue to deliver what is an already high and demanding workload within Economic Development. If the livestock market is prioritised within the current resource base this will mean that other key activities such as transport schemes, employment projects, feasibility studies and funding bids will have to be deprioritised/ceased at this time.

- 6.6 As highlighted above, an Officer within the Economic Development team is currently overseeing the very early phases of livestock market work. It is proposed that any new appointee will either lead on the livestock market allowing the existing Officer to return to substantive duties, or the new appointee will backfill the current Officer's workload and allow that Officer to retain responsibility for the livestock market scheme. This management decision will be made in the coming weeks.
- 6.7 **Planning (£90k per annum, ongoing; £30k in 2021/22, less any increased Planning income received)**
- 6.8 Additional funding was agreed in the budget of £64k to cover two Development Management posts in the Planning team: a Grade 5 and a Grade 6. However, we have seen a significant increase in workloads since the start of 2021: the increase in minor and other category applications has been from 295 to 363 (an increase of 23%) since the same period last year. Pre-applications have also increased by 23% and development enquiry requests have almost doubled. (This may be because as working from home becomes a more significant part of life, people are looking to make changes to their properties to accommodate this change in work and home lifestyles.)
- 6.9 Members are also advised that a number of major applications arising from sites being allocated in the Council's adopted Sites Document are anticipated to be submitted shortly. Whilst not large in number these large (major category) applications will inevitably have a significant and additional impact on Officer workloads as they are complex, locally contentious and time consuming to deal with.
- 6.10 Members will recognise that it is a Council priority that work on the review of the Local Plan progresses in a timely manner and that Officers involved in the Plan review can concentrate solely on that work. This is particularly important given the impending pressures of LGR. A reviewed Plan will also give certainty to the communities of Ryedale in the medium term by helping to head off the likelihood of 'planning-by-appeal'. At this moment in time 'Local Plan' Officers have been involved, to varying degrees, in dealing with the increased Planning caseload. Additional resources in the Development Management function will ensure that this is not required going forward allowing relevant Officers to focus on progressing the Local Plan.
- 6.11 Members will be aware that the Council is also encouraged by Government to negotiate and agree extensions of time with applicants to resolve problems with submissions in order to avoid refusals where possible and/or withdrawn applications. This has increased from 28% of applications to 31% at the time of writing which again is an indication of increasing pressure on the team.
- 6.12 Discussions with other Councils indicate that this this is not something that is unique to Ryedale. Although the budget agreed funding for two posts, Officers consider that another Senior Planning Officer is required to deal with the increase in more complicated workload and an additional Planning Officer is required to deal with the increased pressure from homeowners who are seeking to extend and alter their properties. This will enable the other work to be redistributed around the team to deal with the general rise in work across all applications and pre apps and the exempt work listed above and mean that 'Local Plan' Officers are not diverted from that task into

Development Management work. Therefore funding for a Senior Planning Officer (Grade 8) post (£53k) and a Planning Officer (Grade 6) post (£37k) is requested.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The following implications have been identified:

a) Financial

The costs for the additional posts can be funded from within existing resources in the current financial year and these are set out below – although they might be reduced if additional Planning income offsets these. Further funding of £143k in 2022/23 and then £117k the following year would be required if the posts continue after that date, as set out in the following table. (This issue will be dealt with in the broader Capacity report to be presented to Committee in September.)

Should Members decide not to support the continuation of these resources in future financial years then officers will need to look at savings elsewhere in the budget to offset these costs or terminate the posts. This will however need to be done in the context of the overall Financial Strategy.

	Time	Costs			Total
		£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
		2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	
Planning	Ongoing	30	90	90	210
Livestock Market	24 months	18	53	27	98
		48	143	117	308

b) Legal

There are no additional Legal issues resulting from these recommendations.

c) Other

The proposals within the Financial Strategy do impact on the staffing resources of the Authority. Appropriate procedures and plans are in place to manage these issues.

No other implications (such as Equalities, Staffing, Planning, Health & Safety, Environmental, Climate Change, Crime & Disorder) have been identified at this stage.

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Background Papers:

None.