

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 9th December 2024
Report for: Information
Report of: Director of Growth and Regulatory Services

Report Title

Building Control - Market Supplement

Summary

This report provides an update in relation to a market supplement payment for Building Control staff.

Recommendation(s)

It is recommended the Employment Committee:

- Note the approval of a market supplement payment of £7,149 per annum (pro rata) for the Building Control Officer, Principal Building Control Officer and Building Control Manager posts with effect from 1st January 2025 for a period of 2 years.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: None

Implications:

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	<i>Building control has a significant role in reducing carbon emissions and improving thermal efficiency, reducing fuel costs for households</i>
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	<i>If the growth ambitions of GM are to be realised, effective Building Control for tall buildings and other buildings at risk needs to be in place.</i>
Financial	<i>There is an additional financial cost arising from the payment of a market supplement. This will be met from within the exiting service budget.</i>
Legal Implications	<i>The Building Control Officers are involved in regulatory enforcement. The ability to recruit and retain staff is therefore crucial to the Council meeting its statutory responsibilities.</i>
Equality/Diversity Implications	<i>Not applicable</i>
Sustainability Implications	<i>Not applicable</i>
Carbon Reduction	<i>Building Control supports the reduction of carbon emissions in domestic and commercial buildings.</i>
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	<i>The intention of the market supplement is to lessen recruitment and retention challenges</i>
Risk Management Implications	<i>The new Building Safety Regulator can place Councils in 'special measures' if they do not have an effective Building Control Service. There is a risk that if we do not implement the market supplement that we may face increased remuneration and retention challenges.</i>
Health and Safety Implications	<i>Effective Building Control is vital for Building safety.</i>

1.0 Background – Building Control Responsibilities

- 1.1 The process of Building Control ensures that all types of building are constructed and completed to appropriate standards which are set nationally. These standards ensure that buildings are structurally sound and are sufficiently robust to be occupied for their intended purpose. The Building Control system is closely aligned with the fire service and helps ensure that all buildings have the requisite fire safety standards. Effective building control also plays a leading role in ensuring that buildings are thermally efficient - thus playing a part in both mitigating Climate Change and tackling fuel poverty.
- 1.2 Building control is unusual within the Council in that it blends statutory responsibilities with a traded service. Unlike planning applications, building control applications can be processed by private companies – and so the Council carries out its core functions within a competitive environment. This provides the challenge of competition – but also the opportunity to win work and increase income. This fee paying activity cross subsidises non-paid statutory responsibilities that the private sector cannot carry out and which the Council must deal with.
- 1.3 Over the past decade Private companies have become adept at 'cherry picking' work – and have recruited large numbers of staff from Councils. This in turn has

made recruitment difficult for Local Authorities – who have been generally poor at responding to market conditions – and who have failed to train sufficient new younger staff. The Council has consequently suffered from vacancies and staff turnover in recent times.

2.0 Building Safety Act

- 2.1 Alongside ongoing competition and pressure within the service, there is now significant new legislation in the form of the Building Safety Act 2022 which imposes new obligations and responsibilities on to building control bodies – and building control professionals. The Act establishes a new Building Safety Regulator who has oversight of taller buildings – but also the profession as a whole. The Health & Safety Executive acts as the Building Safety Regulator in England.
- 2.2 In addition to previous duties, there is now an obligation to provide support for the Building Safety Regulator on High Rise Buildings and other structures within its jurisdiction.
- 2.3 Special attention is paid to multi-occupancy higher risk residential buildings (HRRBs) – and Councils are designated according to whether they include such buildings. Given our building mix, Trafford is designated as a HRRB authority.
- 2.4 New performance standards are now being applied to Building Control departments - in a way that has never been applied previously. These new performance standards cover all aspects of a Building Control service within the new regime and will be monitored by the Building Safety Regulator.
- 2.5 As part of this regime and in order for Building Control Officers to practice, they have also needed to undergo a fresh process of registration. This is the equivalent of asking everyone to re-take qualifications gained earlier in their career. Many older officers are choosing to retire rather than go through the registration process – leading to a premium on qualified staff. There are several different classes and categories of registration, ranging from single occupancy domestic dwellings to complex commercial and high-rise buildings.

3.0 Regrading

- 3.1 As a consequence of these changes some older professionals are choosing to retire rather than re-train – placing qualified staff further at a premium. This will further exacerbate market pressures within the industry – and Councils in particular.
- 3.2 Within GM all authorities are struggling with recruitment and retention of staff, partly because salaries are perceived as not sufficiently competitive.
- 3.3 Against this context, if Trafford is to retain staff and meet the obligations of the Building Safety Act we need to do more to retain staff. If we succeed in that, there will be the opportunity to gain additional higher skilled work, as the Building Safety Regulator will come to Councils first for their high rise work. This could be a steady and reliable income stream in the future.

3.4 It was previously recognised that there was therefore a need to review salaries in the light of the challenges and changes within the industry, and a business case was approved in 2022.

4.0 Market supplements

4.1 In addition to salary review, it was previously agreed that the Building Control Officer, Principal Building Control Officer and Building Control Manager posts would receive an honorarium of £2,992 and a market supplement of £4,157.

4.2 These measures have been effective in the Building Control team being able to retain existing staff and also recruit two additional Building Control Officers.

4.3 However, against the context described above, the pressure on retaining staff is still acute, with ever increasing salaries being offered in the private sector. We are also aware that several GM local authorities are experiencing significant issues with retaining and attracting qualified building control staff, with a number relying solely on agency staff – this brings further budgetary pressures as recruitment agencies can charge a premium for qualified staff. It is therefore essential that the market supplements are retained.

4.4 The market rate was tested by the Pay and Reward Team by the benchmarking of salaries across other GM authorities and also in the private sector, and this supported the maintenance of the total salary package at the existing rate.

4.5 It was decided, therefore, that when the current honoraria payments come to an end on 31st December 2024, that this would be wrapped up into one market supplement payment to maintain the current salary. It was agreed therefore that the Building Control Officer, Principal Building Control Officer and Building Control Manager posts would receive a market supplement of £7,149 (equivalent to the existing market supplement payment of £4,157 together with the honorarium of £2,992) with effect from 1st January 2025 for a period of 2 years.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 It is recommended that Employment Committee:

- Note the approval of a market supplement payment of £7,149 per annum (pro rata) for the Building Control Officer, Principal Building Control Officer and Building Control Manager posts with effect from 1st January 2025 for a period of 2 years.