

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 12 July 2023

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## Place & Prosperity Team Resourcing

### Report summary:

The work of the Place & Prosperity Team within the Place, Assets & Commercialisation Team has significantly increased in recent years with many significant and high profile current and pipeline projects insufficiently resourced.

The Team comprises:

- Project Manager / Team Lead
- Project Officer 0.6 full time equivalent – Vacant
- Administration Officer

Alongside this core Team there is also a Project Manager, but without Team Lead responsibilities who was appointed on a 2 year fixed term contract in January 2022 to lead on Placemaking projects within Exmouth alone. The contract for this post ends in January 2024. The need for this post remains - to deliver projects in Exmouth over the next 5 years at least. The intention and approvals back in 2021 included for this Project Manager post but also a Project Officer post to provide support. This latter post was never then filled, largely as for Exmouth projects alone, the Project Manager – Exmouth had the skills and capacity to deliver both roles. As such there has been a budget saving. With Exmouth being our largest town along with the extent of the Council's land ownership along the seafront but also around the town centre it is important that we retain this dedicated post. That said, with the way the project has evolved we have found this is not a full time role and we have therefore in recent months utilised surplus capacity to support the backlog of wider Place & Prosperity projects elsewhere in the District.

The recommendation within this report is that we make this 2 year fixed term contract post permanent, continuing its lead role in delivering Exmouth projects but also utilising it to boost capacity and therefore delivery in wider Placemaking projects. The current post holder has a skillset that compliments that of others within the wider team.

In addition, the recommendation is that the 0.6 Project Officer vacant post to be made full time and role widened to support both Project Managers in delivery of their projects. There will be additional calls on this post with supporting two Project Managers, but in addition, appointing to a full time post will more likely attract a wider pool of interest.

It is important to note that the work around Placemaking being delivered by the Council is growing considerably and there is great expectation by Town and Parish Councils, businesses and residents that the Council will fulfil its role in this area. Without suitable resourcing we cannot deliver those expectations.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

That Cabinet recommend to Council that additional revenue budget is secured to:

- a) Make the 2 year fixed term Project Manager – Exmouth post permanent at Grade 6. Revenue cost including on-costs of an additional £74,000 per annum from 2024/25 with a pro-rata allowance for latter 3 months of 2023/24.
- b) Make the Project Officer post full time. Additional revenue cost including on-costs would be £21,000 per annum from 2024/25 with a pro-rata allowance for latter 6 months of 2023/24.

### **Reason for recommendation:**

To provide an appropriate level of resource to fulfil Service Plan objectives, Council, business, residents and others expectations in Placemaking.

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Medium Impact

**Risk:** High Risk; Without the Project Manager – Exmouth post being filled post January 2024 the Exmouth Placemaking work will need to cease. Without successful appointment to the Project Officer post, the work capacity of the Team working on projects outside of Exmouth and across the District will be adversely affected.

### **Links to background information**

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
  - A greener East Devon
  - A resilient economy
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### **Report in full**

1.1 [What is Placemaking?](#)

1.2 There is no single definition, but a brief description might be that:

“Placemaking is the process of creating quality places that people want to live, work, play and learn in”

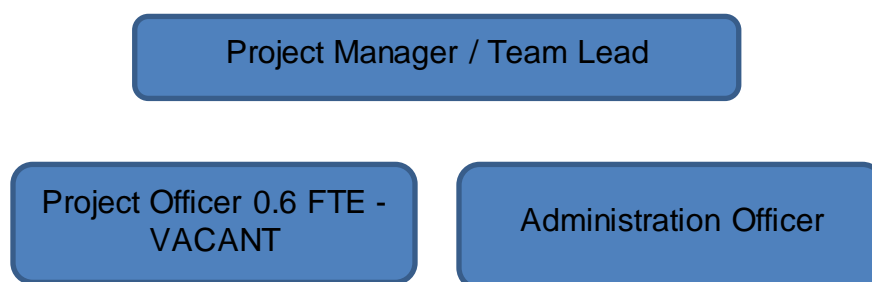
The Place & Prosperity Team deliver this by:

- Developing and delivering place-making strategy and associated development projects
- Securing new funding sources to enable development projects and investment opportunities
- Working with the Council’s own resources to deliver better places e.g. Place & Prosperity Fund (proposed), Enterprise Zone, Levelling Up and other funding sources, along with the General Fund asset base itself
- Identifying strategic and practical means of improving and strengthening the defining places of East Devon: its towns and town centres, commercial centres and other key locations

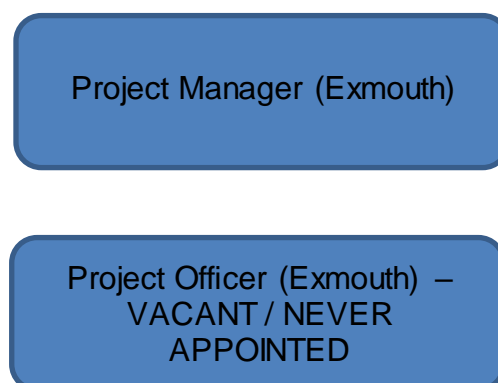
### 1.3 Current Staffing Structure for Delivery

1.4 Delivery of these elements of Placemaking is through the Place, Assets & Commercialisation Service. There are 2 particular Teams delivering this work:

#### Place & Prosperity Team



#### Place & Prosperity (Exmouth) Team



It was an intentional decision in 2021 to create a dedicated Team to deliver Placemaking projects in Exmouth, this being our largest town in the District but also then town with most EDDC owned assets, both on seafront but also close to town centre and therefore the town with greatest opportunities, consequently with the greatest workload. This arrangement has worked well but there is currently insufficient work for the Project Manager and therefore we are utilising surplus capacity to assist the main Place & Prosperity Team. As projects come forward for delivery this workload will increase significantly.

1.5 Both Project Managers report directly to Assistant Director – Place, Assets & Commercialisation.

## 1.6 Current work being delivered by the two Teams

### 1.7 Within the Place & Prosperity Team the more significant projects being delivered are:

- Community Asset Transfer – currently land at Canaan, Ottery St Mary being considered
- UKSPF Town Feasibility Studies in Sidmouth, Honiton and Ottery St Mary
- Drill Hall and Public Toilets, Esplanade, Sidmouth - disposals
- Seaton Moridunum disposals and arrangements with adjacent Fosseyway Court development
- Websters Garage site, Seaton
- Bids to future rounds of Levelling-Up being considered
- Devon Place Urban Renewal Projects for Axe Valley – separate projects in Seaton and Axminster with separate Project Boards
- Review of current depot provision to ensure facilities are in the best locations and fit-for-purpose, identifying costed options
- Providing Officer and Member workshops to increase awareness of what is meant by the term Placemaking and to facilitate discussion on this topic and the opportunities available within the District
- Delivering options for stalled employment sites – Hayne Lane in Honiton and Colyford Road and Harepath Road sites in Seaton \*
- Adoption and then implementation of a new Place & Prosperity Fund \*

### 1.8 Within the Exmouth Team, the Project Officer coordinates all Placemaking type activities (Strand, Levelling-Up Bid seafront requests etc) in Exmouth along with leading on delivering the Placemaking in Exmouth Town and Seafront Plan. This was consulted on heavily last year and WSP consultants are now being appointed to take forward the work from 2022 and developing a terms of reference and a plan for a Placemaking strategy to include:

- A prioritisation of the key Themes and Characteristics and opportunity sites
- Spatial analysis of the opportunities across Exmouth
- Analysis of what the Council can deliver (i.e. is within its remit) in the short, medium and long term
- Identification of key partners to deliver other elements e.g. Devon County Council
- Preparation of options for sites
- High level feasibility design and costing
- Draft options to Delivery Group
- Preparation of shortlist of options
- Further consultation on the options
- Cabinet and Full Council approvals to move to detailed design and costing
- Implementation phase then to begin in 2024

In addition, to utilise surplus capacity that exists currently and until such times as implementation phase commences, progressing projects outside of Exmouth as asterisked above in para 1.7.

## 1.9 Trajectory of work for the two Teams

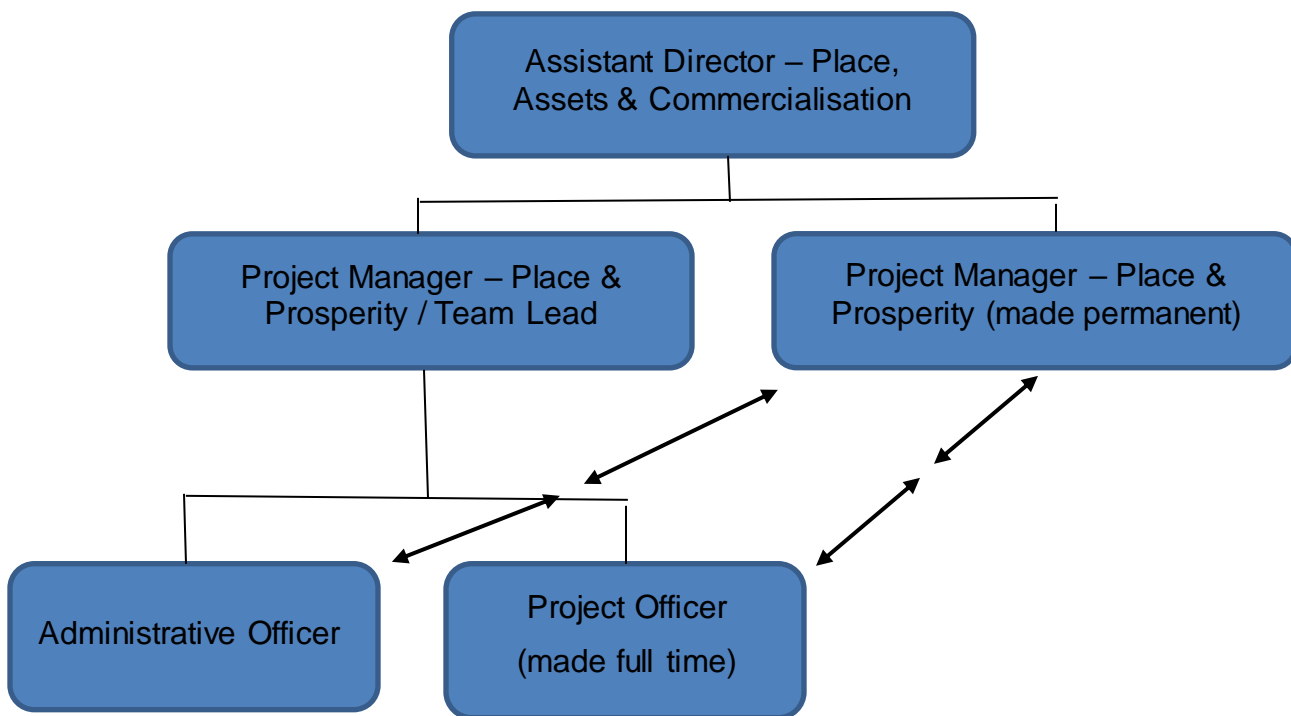
### 1.10 We are experiencing increased demands on the main Place & Prosperity Team through increasing engagement with Devon Place Board, expectations from our Towns for EDDC to support them in Placemaking projects which assist in economic recovery of their towns, through the Levelling Up agenda and funding streams, but also through the expectations

being set across the District through our focus in recent years on the work of Exmouth. In addition there is also significant expectation and need to focus inwardly on the Council's own assets, whether that be our depots (a workstream now started), but also office and other reviews needed, all of which contribute towards Place Making. The role of a local authority and therefore expectations in this area is greater than ever before and every indication is that our role in this area of work will increase yet further and continue to do so over the next 5 years at least.

### 1.11 Proposed Resourcing Levels and Structure

1.12 If we do not secure additional budget then the Exmouth work will not be able to progress beyond end on this calendar year meaning that expectations will have been raised, further public monies invested in resource, but with resulting deliverables then not achieved. In addition, we are unlikely to recruit to the Project Officer post meaning that all Placemaking projects will need to be delivered by one post holder. This not only does not provide organisational resilience but is simply not realistic with support to our towns in particular needing to be significantly reduced.

### 1.13 Proposed Structure:



### 1.14 The proposed structure ensures:

- Increased resilience and capacity by creating two Project Manager posts within our permanent workforce
- Does not change line management responsibilities and thereby avoids related HR issues
- Increases resilience and capacity by increasing the 0.6 FTE Project Officer post to a 1 FTE (full time). By doing so provides the 2<sup>nd</sup> Project Manager with the support structure that hasn't existed to-date as never recruited to. Arguably also avoids the need to appoint a 2<sup>nd</sup> full time Project Officer post agreed back in 2021.
- Formalises arrangements for both Project Managers to have equal administrative support and Project Officer Support
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Project Manager post (the FTC being made permanent) would continue to prioritise Exmouth projects but would be utilised to deliver other projects across District as capacity allows. The skillsets of both Project Managers are different but nicely complement each

other. Assuming the Place & Prosperity Fund is adopted, this Officer would lead on delivering this significant area of work.

Note: Both the Administrative Officer and Project Officer continue to have same line manager reporting line as currently

- 1.15 The cost implications of the proposals are as follows:
- 1.16 For the Project Officer post, this is a Grade 4 post. The maximum additional cost for increasing hours of this vacant post to a full time post (within Grade) would be £21,000. This figure includes a 35% allowance for on-costs. The additional amount would require additional budget.
- 1.17 For the Project Manager post, this is a Grade 6 post. The maximum additional cost for making this post permanent (within Grade) would be £74,000. This figure includes a 35% allowance for on-costs. The additional amount would require additional budget. It is worth noting that as current projects progress through this post holder, there will not only be revenue savings to the Council, at this stage not able to be quantified, but potentially significant and exceeding the revenue cost of the post, but also as projects are then delivered, an opportunity to apportion some of the staffing cost to capital budgets.
- 1.18 Discussions have taken place with the Council's Corporate HR Manager who is supportive of proposals for both posts. With the Project Manager post there is no policy or procedural reason not to offer this permanent post to the existing fixed term post holder.

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### **Financial implications:**

The financial details are contained in the report. In total going forward this is a request of £95k to be added to the base budget of the Council. Members will be aware of the projected shortfall in the Council's budget for 2024/25 alone of nearly £900k and if approved this will add to that deficit and Cabinet will have to consider the priority of this request. To mitigate the position this post is key in the delivery of key projects which should return additional income direct to the Council through specific schemes and through additional business rates, although this is difficult to quantify at this stage.

### **Legal implications:**

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to this report.