

## **1. Issue requested for scrutiny at Environment and Place O/S**

Building Standards – the effectiveness, enforcement, and future of building inspections within the BCP area, with a focus on restoring Local Authority control and ensuring robust, impartial oversight.

## **2. Desired outcome resulting from Overview and Scrutiny engagement, including the value to be added to the Council, the BCP area or its inhabitants.**

To establish a clear and evidence-based policy position for BCP Council on the future of Building Control. This includes exploring how the Council can advocate for stronger local authority powers, improved safety standards, and a more transparent inspection regime. Scrutiny engagement will add value by helping protect residents, restore public trust, and ensure that the built environment across the BCP area is safe, accountable, and properly regulated.

## **3. Background to the issue**

This request follows a motion passed by Full Council on 25 February 2025. The motion called for stronger local authority powers in Building Control and urged the Leader to write to the Secretary of State with the following asks:

- Restore Local Authority control over building inspections.
- Properly invest in and resource Building Control teams.
- End the practice of Developer-Selected Inspections.
- Ensure impartial and transparent inspection processes.

Within the motion, Council agreed to **‘refer the motion to the Environment and Place O&S Committee for recommendation of the Council’s policy position on this matter.’**

The Environment and Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this request from Council on 2 April 2025 and agreed that the request be rejected as the motion at Council had been agreed and there was no clearly valuable work for the committee to add to this agreed motion.

However, the committee agreed to consider an updated scrutiny request on the matter at a future date, with a more refined scope detailing how scrutiny could add value to the matter. This document now contains that proposed scope and sets out Key Lines of Enquiry at section 7 below.

## **4. Proposed method of scrutiny**

A small working group of councillors, supported by officers, to investigate best practice nationally, explore existing capacity within BCP Building Control, and assess the risks and implications of continuing with the current system. A report with findings and policy recommendations should be brought back to the main Committee for endorsement and potential referral to Cabinet.

## **5. Key dates and anticipated timescale for the scrutiny work (TBC)**

The following timescales are proposed:

- May–June 2025: Working group established and begins investigation.
- July–August 2025: Evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement.
- September 2025: Report drafted and presented to Environment and Place O&S.
- October 2025: Final recommendations submitted to Cabinet/Council as appropriate.

## **6. Notes/ additional guidance**

This issue links closely to wider national concerns around building safety, especially in the wake of post-Grenfell reforms and current debates about the independence and effectiveness of inspection processes. The work would contribute to positioning BCP Council as a proactive voice in advocating for resident safety and regulatory integrity in the built environment.

## **7. Key Lines of Enquiry**

- What are the current strengths and weaknesses in the BCP Council's Building Control capacity and enforcement?
- How does the developer-led inspection model impact safety, transparency, and accountability?
- What are the comparative outcomes in areas where Local Authorities retain full control over inspections?
- What investment or resourcing would be required to restore and sustain a strong in-house Building Control service?
- How can BCP Council influence national policy to support stronger local authority powers?
- What mechanisms exist or could be created to ensure independent and impartial inspections?
- What are the views of residents, professionals, and stakeholders on the current and proposed systems?

Submitted by Cllr Peter Cooper