

**MINUTES OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
JOINT IMPROVEMENT BOARD**

14TH SEPTEMBER 2007

PRESENT: Councillors Bill Chapple (Chairman) (Buckinghamshire CC), Michael Edmonds (Vice Chairman) (Aylesbury Vale DC), Steve Adams, Mary Baldwin, Peter Cartwright, , Frank Downes (Buckinghamshire CC), Noel Brown (in place of Cllr Linda Smith) (Chiltern DC), Roger Reed (South Bucks DC), Bill Bendyshe-Brown (for agenda item 1–7), Roger Columb (for agenda item 8–10) (Wycombe DC),

Apologies: Councillor Linda Smith (Chiltern DC)

1. MINUTES

The following comments regarding accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 26th July, 2007, were made:-

- (i) Minute 5 (Press Releases) – the minute was clarified to read, ‘Following an earlier and uncleared Press Release by one Council, the Chief Executives of all five councils were asked to ensure that their respective communications departments were consulted on the content of Press Releases prior to information being made public’.

The Board was informed that no further press releases had been issued and the Chairman agreed to review the content of a recent press article and issue a response, if required.

- (ii) Minute 10 (Support Services Partnership) – the Board recognised that the different scale of operation of councils would mean that the level of savings for smaller councils would be lesser. As such, a ‘one size fits all’ model might not be appropriate.
- (iii) Minute 12 (Demand Led Transport) – Members requested it be recorded:-
- that the Board had requested that more detailed cost benefit information on the likely level of savings associated with the concessionary travel part of this project be reported to a future meeting.
 - that the Board had clarified that responsibility for obtaining the relevant council approval for the concessionary fares scheme was with the demand led transport team member, not the Joint Improvement Board Members.

RESOLVED –

That subject to the clarification at (i) to (iii) above, the minutes of 26th July, 2007, be approved as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Baldwin declared a personal interest in regard to minute number 6 (Support Services) as a member of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority and minute number 8 (Demand Led transport) as a trustee of Age Concern.

Councillor Adams declared a personal interest in respect of minute number 6 (Support Services) as a Member of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

3. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Board received a report providing an overview of progress. Members were advised that the Programme Director, Nick Cave, had been appointed and would be in post by 1st November 2007.

A seminar for Members of all five authorities would be held on the evening of Wednesday, 31st October, 2007, at the Wycombe Wanderers Football Club. The Extranet site, which would hold information about the pathfinder for Members and Officers of each council, would be operational in October.

The staff vacancy and secondment protocol was now in place for the Waste project, but had not yet been implemented by other projects and work streams.

The Board received a report on the Pathfinder budget and were informed that £200,000 had been allocated for programme management and spend was within budget.

£200,000 had also been allocated to projects and work streams. Requests to the value of £375,850 had been submitted by the project teams, and the Board had agreed £36,995 to date. The bid to the Capacity Building Fund would not be considered by the South East Improvement and Efficiency (SEIE) Board until 8 October 2007, however, Members were advised that the programme manager was currently working with a South East Centre of Excellence representative to ensure a positive response from the SEIE Board. In the event that the Capacity Building fund bid was unsuccessful the County Council had offered to underwrite the cost of the support services project, and to recover the costs from the savings achieved by that project, estimated to be in the region of £4 million. This would reduce the total call on the budget to £175,850, within the £200,000 budget.

Members were further advised that the Bucks Chief Finance Officers group had drafted a funding protocol which provided a formula for all contributions to the Pathfinder pooled budget according to each Council's gross budget. The protocol also states that the sharing of efficiency savings will be agreed on a case by case basis as

part of the business case approval process. It was requested that a copy of the funding protocol be circulated to all Board Members.

The Board also requested that information on the cash flows that would be required to support projects beyond Year 1 be reported to a future meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That if the Capacity Building Fund bid was unsuccessful the county council would underwrite the costs of the support services project, and recover those costs from the savings achieved by that project.
- (2) That a budget for the programme be provided, identifying costs and savings over the six year programme. The detail of the budget would be developed as the business cases for each project and work stream became available, and as the timing for other projects across the six year programme was agreed.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Board received a report on the progress of the Community Engagement work stream, for which a business case was currently being worked up. Members were advised that as part of the development of the business case a joint database was being considered which would build on existing information systems. In order to ensure a link with the Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (MKOB) Improvement Partnership project on community engagement the project manager for that project was also the project manager for the pathfinder community engagement work stream.

Members discussed the link between the pathfinder community engagement work stream and the County Council's Getting Closer to Communities (GC2C) programme, only part of which related to community engagement. Members agreed that whilst the work stream would use the geographical building blocks of the GC2C model, it was important for each partner to remain open to reviewing all current arrangements in order to achieve the best possible outcome for local residents and communities.

RESOLVED –

That £10,000 be earmarked from the Pathfinder budget for the community engagement work stream, subject to a detailed business case being prepared and submitted to the Board.

5. PROCUREMENT

The Board received a report on the Procurement work stream, which detailed the funding requirement for this area of work, and was advised that the estimated savings were likely to be at least twice the project's costs. The focus of the work presently was to establish a procurement board and further work would then be required to enable other public bodies, including town and parish councils, to take advantage of the procurement opportunities.

Members noted a forthcoming tendering opportunity for built environment services for which the initial notice was being kept as open as possible for all partners. Being named as part of the initial notice enables all authorities, and other public sector partners, to be part of the framework, without having to include their services in the final contract. Concern was expressed that large contracts may lead to less flexibility.

RESOLVED –

That up to £50,000 be allocated to the Procurement work stream to provide staff resources as outlined in the report.

6. SUPPORT SERVICES

The Board received a report updating them on the support services project that outlined the four phases of the development of the business case, which would be reported to the Board in February 2008. As one of the County Council's transformation partners, Vertex Consulting had been approached to support the project and assist the project team to achieve the ambitious timetable to deliver the business case by February. As part of the dialogue with the South East Centre of Excellence (SECE) about the Capacity Building Fund bid, SECE had agreed to assume a quality assurance role for the project.

Members discussed the need for clear and regular communication with staff and Members about this project, and the proposal for a Member sounding board, consisting of Members from each authority, which would be consulted by the support services project team.

Members noted that the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority had expressed an interest in joining this project, but that governance issues would need to be worked through. The Fire Authority would not be involved in the Joint Improvement Board, but would need to make a decision about whether to opt in to whatever arrangement was ultimately agreed by the pathfinder councils.

Members also noted the difference in scale between the pathfinder partners and that a 'one size fits all' model may not be appropriate for all support services. An assurance was given that this would be considered as part of the evidence gathering phase of the project. Members stressed the importance of retaining high quality services, which in turn supported high quality front line services.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the project should proceed, with the support of Vertex Consulting, to produce a costed business case by December 2007.
- (2) That JIB Members should consult their respective councils on the proposal for a Member sounding Board for this project.

- (3) Lead roles for the project be agreed by the professional groups representing the services included in this phase of the project.

7. CUSTOMER SERVICES

The Board received an updated report on the costs of the Customer Services project, which was also the subject of the Capacity Building Fund bid. Members were advised that it was intended to commission a customer survey using the Buckinghamshire Residents Panel, to address gaps and supplement any out of date information currently available.

It was estimated that information on the specific scale of efficiency savings would be provided at the end of the planning phase in March 2008.

Members again noted that a ‘one size fits all’ approach may not be appropriate for this area of work, and that this would be reviewed as part of the development of the business case.

RESOLVED –

That the project proposal’s scope be approved and that funding of £32,000 be released, in the event that the Capacity Building Fund bid is unsuccessful.

8. DEMAND LED TRANSPORT

Members received a report on the community transport aspect of this project (having agreed the concessionary fares aspect at its last meeting). The Board was informed that the cost of the concessionary project would, at a minimum, avoid the costs associated with preparing for what would be required under the new concessionary fares scheme from April 2008. They were further advised that the granting of discretionary travel benefits, for example, to taxi token and rail card schemes, was still a policy decision matter for each District Council.

The prospect of increasing demand on community transport services, as a result of changes to transport policies within the health service, were discussed and it was

RESOLVED –

That £10,350 be allocated to progress the community transport aspect of this project.

9. WASTE

The Board considered a report updating it on the Waste project, and the revised funding request which was phased over the two year period of the project. Members were advised that it would be necessary to employ some essential administrative support to enable officers to commit expertise to the Waste Pathfinder project whilst ensuring day to day activities were maintained.

RESOLVED –

That £35,000 be allocated to the project for 2007/08 to support the development of detailed options appraisals.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

Members commented on the need, in time, to develop the strap-line for the Pathfinder further, which would allow it to be used with all communication materials.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That no further press releases were required at this stage.
- (2) That, subject to the decisions of the Leaders' group on 19th September, the decisions of the Board be included in a Pathfinder newsletter to all staff, to be issued in October.
- (3) That further funding of £6,505 be allocated to the communications group to cover the costs of this work, as outlined in a previous report to the Board.

11. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Joint Improvement Board would be held at 5pm on the 19th December, 2007.

The meeting ended at 6.25pm