

## CHILTERN AND SOUTH BUCKS JOINT COMMITTEE

### Meeting - 21 October 2013

Present: Mr Rose (Chairman), Mr Busby, Mrs Cranmer, Mrs Darby, Mr Martin, Mr Naylor, Mr Reed, Mr M Smith, Mr Stannard, Mrs Woolveridge and Mr D Smith.

Apologies for absence: Mr Harris and Mr Hudson

#### 10. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 17 July 2013 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### 11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 12. ITEM WITHDRAWN: SHARED SERVICES OFFICER ACCOMMODATION

It was noted that this item had been withdrawn from the Agenda and would be considered at the next meeting on 9 December 2013.

#### 13. SHARED IT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Joint Committee had previously requested to receive regular high level reports on the progress of the shared ICT programme. As such, Members received a report detailing the key elements and milestones, risks and issues, and a budget summary of the shared ICT programme.

During the discussion Members asked a number of questions. It was confirmed that the GOSS web project related to the upgrade of the South Bucks District Council website and would not affect or delay the planned launch of the new clubhouse at the South Buckinghamshire Golf Course.

It was also confirmed that the upgrade to Microsoft Office 2010 had been carried out separately to the shared ICT programme and as such the costs relating to the upgrade were not included in the budget summary contained in the report, but following a request made at the meeting, costs relating to that project would be included in the budget summary in future progress reports.

It was clarified that an organisational structure for the new shared services would be subject to final agreement by Members, and that officers would need to be appointed to their new roles within the new shared services before more operational ICT business processes, such as user testing, could be carried out.

#### RESOLVED -

That the shared IT programme update report be noted.

#### 14. PROGRAMME REPORT

The Joint Committee received the latest programme report detailing progress on milestones and future activities; the latest budget position including cumulative savings; joint projects outside of service reviews and risks for the programme.

Members noted that the Councils' bid to the Government's Transformation Challenge Award had been unsuccessful and that only 18 bids out of a total of 145 had been successful. Feedback on the Councils' submission would be used to inform the development and submission of future bids. It was

confirmed that the Councils' would continue to identify and exploit future opportunities to access funding to support shared services. It was anticipated that the next opportunity to bid for funding would be likely to be in 2014 and this was expected to consist of a larger total Fund of around £100M, rather than £7M.

It was confirmed that some external support had been used to facilitate the housing service review, although this was to a much lesser extent than previous service reviews, due to knowledge transfer and experience gained by officers involved in the previous service reviews. The Councils' aimed to build upon and utilise this experience in future service reviews, but may also seek some external support, if required.

One Member expressed concern regarding the timescales for the first phase consultation on terms and conditions as this had yet to be completed. It was requested that a report containing recommendations on the proposals be considered at the next meeting of the Joint Appointments and Implementation Committee (JAIC). In response it was confirmed that the consultation was on track to conclude by the end of the current financial year; a timescale agreed by the JAIC. The consultation comprised of three sections and the recommendations on the two remaining sections were due to be considered at the next two scheduled meetings of the JAIC. The consultation sought agreement on the proposals, but the process would not delay progress on the shared service reviews.

**RESOLVED -**

That the programme management report be noted.

**15. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED -**

That under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

*Note: the relevant paragraph number and description is indicated under the Minute heading.*

**16. HOUSING SERVICE REVIEW BUSINESS CASE**

*Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

A housing service review and resulting business case had taken place as part of the Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils' programme of shared service reviews. The Joint Committee considered the outcomes of the housing service review which proposed a joint housing service and set out key features of a shared housing service operating across the authorities. This would provide an opportunity to reduce costs, improve service resilience and create opportunities to increase the quality of service.

The Joint Committee considered a number of options, including: both housing teams continuing to work independently across the two districts; outsourcing the function; and, the recommended option to combine the two housing teams.

During the discussion a number of questions were asked. It was confirmed that a single database for housing options would still enable data specific to each district to remain separate, such as housing options. A decision on the hosting arrangements for the main housing service office was still to be made, but duty officers and customer service staff would be available at the satellite office. Commuted Sums used to support the provision of affordable housing in one authority would be ring fenced and could not be transferred between both authorities. It was clarified that the proposals regarding opportunities to support and enable the delivery of affordable housing would not involve activities that would contravene the Councils' respective adopted Core Strategies, but

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would instead focus on enabling early discussions to be held with Registered Providers and other stakeholders to support the provision of affordable housing.

The Joint Committee welcomed the report and expressed thanks to all the staff involved in the housing review, including both housing teams. The opportunities to increase self service and utilise customer service staff to answer housing enquiries were welcomed in particular. Members also noted the anticipated efficiencies and increase in value added activities arising from a joint housing service.

### **RECOMMENDED -**

1. That the case for a joint Housing service is proven (Section 4) and that both Councils should proceed to establish a joint service.
2. That the respective Councils agree that staff in the respective services can be shared to work across the two local authority areas.

### **AND RESOLVED -**

That if the decision taken in respect of Recommendation 1 is to proceed to establish a joint Housing service, then

3. The joint Housing service to be implemented should be as described in Section 5 of the report.
4. The cost sharing arrangements set out in the financial benefits (Section 6) of the report be agreed.
5. The high level implementation plan (section 8) be agreed as the basis for reviewing progress in line with delegations and responsibilities decided for the implementation phase of the service review.
6. The potential full year savings of £120,500 (12.4%) are taken account of in the authorities' respective financial plans.
7. It be noted that it is proposed to use the budget virement rules to use expected underspends in the current year (2013/14) to purchase the Locata Housing Options, Prevention Advice and Registration modules in order to start progressing with this project.

The meeting terminated at 6.03 pm