

CHILTERN AND SOUTH BUCKS JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting - 9 December 2013

Present: Mr Busby, Mrs Darby, Mr Harris, Mr Martin, Mr Naylor, Mr Rose,
Mr D Smith, Mr M Smith, Mr Stannard and Mrs Woolveridge

Apologies for absence: Mrs Cranmer, Mr Hudson and Mr Reed

17. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 21 October 2013 were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

18. SHARED SERVICES OFFICER ACCOMMODATION

The Joint Committee considered a report setting out proposals for dealing with the changes required to accommodation at the offices of both CDC and SBDC as a result of the service reviews.

The report identified the minimum criteria to be used in planning small scale accommodation changes and the proposed locations for the Community Safety, Licensing, Building Control and Housing Teams - 2 at CDC and 2 at SBDC. The Committee endorsed the proposed locations for these four teams and felt that consideration of the locations of the teams involved in the next phase of service reviews was premature and best left until the business cases were being developed.

The Committee, after noting the changes that would be required to IT and telephony, went on to consider the two options that had been identified with regard to desks. Mindful of the costs, for which no specific budgetary provision existed, the Committee indicated its support for the option to reuse current desks unless a business case provided a compelling financial justification for doing otherwise.

RESOLVED - that

1. The proposed minimum accommodation criteria be agreed.
2. The proposed locations for the Community Safety, Licensing, Building Control and Housing Teams be agreed.
3. Current desks be used where possible unless a business case compels otherwise.

19. ASSURANCE REVIEW OF THE SHARED SERVICE REVIEWS ARRANGEMENTS

The Joint Committee considered a report from TIAA setting out the results of their assurance review of the processes used to manage the Shared Service arrangements. The review identified and tested the controls that are being operated by both Councils so as to provide an assessment of the combined effectiveness of the controls in mitigating the key control risks.

Evaluations were carried out in respect of 8 controls and the Joint Committee was pleased to note that TIAA had reached a conclusion that there was substantial assurance i.e a robust series of internal controls were in place which should ensure continuous and effective achievement.

RESOLVED that the report of TIAA be noted.

20. JOINT WORKING ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with the requirement set out in the inter-authority agreement the Joint Committee received an annual report providing information on the progress of the joint working arrangements during 2013.

The report, which would be circulated to all members at CDC and SBDC for the Joint Briefing meeting on 8 January 2014, was divided into three Sections.

- Shared Service Reviews
- Other Shared Service Working
- Issues and learning Points

With regard to the savings set out in the table in paragraph 5.3 members noted that the net financial effect for 2013/14 should be amended to £113, 090.

A member expressed concern on the effects the joint working arrangements were having on staff morale and sought an assurance that the issue was being dealing with sensitively and proactively with support and advice being offered to staff as appropriate.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the issue was being dealt with proactively and sensitively. An important lesson that had been learnt from the reviews carried out to date was the need for clarity with staff on the objectives and the processes/mechanisms to achieve these objectives. As a result of the consultation process a number of detailed points had been raised by staff. Responding to these points promptly (and more importantly personally to the individual concerned) generated confidence in the process and provided assurance that concerns were not only being listened to but acted upon.

The harmonisation of Terms and Conditions was being progressed through meetings between Management and UNISON representatives. A number of contentious issues were being discussed at these meetings (job evaluation, gradings, pay protection) and the constructive way in which the negotiations were being carried out, with the representatives feeding back concerns/comments raised by staff, was also helping to provide assurance and generate confidence in the processes. Maintaining staff morale during this stressful period would remain a high priority

Responding to a related question the Chief Executive confirmed that arrangements were in place to support Heads of Services who were not only having to manage the service reviews but also responsible for managing day to day services. The level of support provided was dependent on the individual concerned and their particular circumstances The implementation stage of the service reviews was particularly onerous and the need to provide temporary support during this stage remained an option.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and circulated to all Members at CDC and SBDC for the Member Briefing on 8 January 2014.

21. 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 review and risks for the programme.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

22. SHARED IT HIGHLIGHT REPORT

After receiving an explanation for why the report had not been despatched with the agenda, it was agreed that the report should be circulated to all members of the Joint Committee.

23. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

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 of business on the grounds that it 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.

24. SHARED TELEPHONY - PARAGRAPH 3

A common theme that had emerged from the shared service reviews undertaken to date was the need for a common telephony system that supports staff joint working, primarily by allowing staff to have telephony access via a single number wherever they are located be it either in offices, or in the districts. The existing telephone systems at both CDC and SBDC were due to be replaced and the Joint Committee considered a report setting out a case for a shared telephony solution.

The report, after explaining the current systems at both CDC and SBDC and the timeframe for replacing them, went on to identify the business and technical requirements that a new system would need to meet thus providing the basis for drawing up a specification. Of the four suppliers which had been approached to quote against the specification, two had declined and the costs quoted by another had significant revenue consequences for both Councils.

The fourth company had provided two proposals one based on a hybrid solution and the other on a cloud system which although fit for purpose was expensive.

The report went on to provide further information on the hybrid proposal including the set up costs and the indicative split between the two Councils.

The Joint Committee noted that the additional annual costs for the solution would be £47,293 for CDC and £24,627 for SBDC.

During the discussion that ensued a member, having asked why such an advanced solution was being proposed, was advised that the solution was not particularly advanced and that the specification that had been drawn up was based on the service needs identified by Heads of Service. Other telephony solutions were available but they did not meet the standards compliance particularly the need to comply with the PSN Code of Connection standards. Nor did they meet the service requirements.

Following another question the Joint Committee was assured that the need for the components, particularly the number of handsets, would be reviewed.

In summing up the discussion the Chairman emphasised that doing nothing was not an option - the telephony systems at both Councils were in need of replacement for the reasons given in the report which also set out the timescale. Incurring costs was therefore inevitable but the additional costs involved needed to be seen in the context of the savings being achieved as a result of the joint working arrangements. In making a decision to replace the systems the Councils could go alone or they could do it jointly which made more sense given the joint working arrangements. Other systems were available but it was essential for both Councils to have a system fit for purpose and meeting their business needs including a need to be PSN compliant. A specification had been drawn up based on the service needs identified by Heads of Services who, being responsible for service delivery, were in the best position to make this judgement and the hybrid proposal was adjudged to meet the specification including the need to be PSN compliant. The quantity of some of the components could be questioned but revisions could be made as the system was rolled out.

After asking members to balance all these factors the Joint Committee supported the proposal and accordingly

RESOLVED that	
1	The Lync/ICE solution for telephony be adopted.
2	The set up costs indicated in the report be agreed and funded from the respective authority's capital programme.
3	The revenue costs be built into the respective revenue budgets.

The meeting terminated at 6.25 pm