

-CHILTERN AND SOUTH BUCKS JOINT COMMITTEE

Meeting - 19 January 2012

Present:

Mr Busby, Mr Reed, Mrs Cranmer, Mr Wilson, Mrs Woolveridge, Mr Rose, Mr Smith, Mr Brown, Mrs Darby, Mrs Harker and Mr Martin

Also Present:

Mr Phillips (CDC) and Mr Warder (CDC)

Apologies for absence:

Mr Lidgate and Mr Stannard (CDC)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Councillor A Busby was appointed Chairman for the meeting and with regard to future arrangements it was agreed that meetings be chaired by the Leader of the host authority.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were asked to agree the proposed Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee.

After noting the important decision making role the Joint Committee would play in overseeing and implementing the joint arrangements, it was

RESOLVED that the Terms of Reference of the Chiltern and South Bucks Joint Committee be agreed.

3. PROGRAMME AND RISK REPORT

Following the decision of both Chiltern District Council and South Bucks District Council to enter into a joint project to share management as a means of improving the resilience and quality of services and reducing costs, the Joint Committee received a report seeking agreement to the format of reporting on the progress of the project.

The report, after identifying the objectives of the project, went on to explain how the work would be divided into two stages with Stage 1 bringing together the senior management for the two Councils under a joint Chief Executive and Stage 2 bringing forward business cases for the joining up of services. An appendix set out the proposed format for presenting reports on progress and a further appendix reproduced the main risks as set out in the Business Case within which an allowance of up to £250,000 had been made for the costs of providing support.

The report went on to explain how procurement exercises would be undertaken to obtain this support and the rationale behind the proposal to secure external personnel support.

In agreeing that the key strategic areas as set out in the report had been properly identified, the Joint Committee acknowledged that it would have a crucial leadership role to play in meeting and managing the challenges that would inevitably arise as the project is progressed and new ways of working are introduced. The Joint Committee also recognised that it had an important role to play to protect the interest of ratepayers of both districts and ensure that the transitional costs were kept to a minimum.

Receiving regular reports would be crucial to fulfilling these roles and the Joint Committee therefore agreed to the proposed format as set out in Appendix A on the understanding that such reports also included a breakdown of expenditure against the budget.

The Joint Committee after noting that the risk analysis set out in Appendix B was a working document that would be updated as the project progressed.

RESOLVED that the proposed format for future programme reports (Appendix A) and the risk analysis (Appendix B) be agreed subject to the programme reports including a detailed breakdown of expenditure.

4. **TRANSFORMATION SUPPORT REPORT**

Following the decision of both Chiltern District Council and South Bucks District Council to enter into a joint project to share management as a means of improving the resilience and quality of services and reducing costs, the Joint Committee received a report seeking agreement to a proposal to secure external support to assist with the development of the project in the areas identified in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

The report went on to explain the support the organisations would be expected to provide and the three areas of work that would be procured through Chiltern's contract arrangements. The estimated cost of the procurement exercise was £75,000 and the report reminded the Joint Committee that the Business Case had made allowance of up to £250,000 for the costs of providing external support. Organisations that could be invited to tender for the work were identified in the report which also contained an indicative timetable.

During the discussion, the Joint Committee, in recognising that Officers would be simultaneously managing the project and carrying out their day job of providing services, endorsed the comment made by the Leaders of both Councils that experience with Pathfinder had demonstrated the importance of securing external support to challenge the status quo and move things forward.

Whilst accepting that the status quo would need to be challenged, the Joint Committee also recognised that both Councils had a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise amongst their workforces. The Joint Committee therefore emphasised the importance of involving staff in Stage 2 and following a suggestion from a member agreed that external support should be sought only after staff in a particular service area had been given an opportunity to put forward their own ideas for change. If and when to use external support were therefore crucial issues which would need to be managed sensitively on a service by service basis. Maintaining the morale of staff at a time of change and uncertainty was also important and the Joint Committee was assured that no favouritism would be shown to staff from either Council.

With regard to member development, the Joint Committee agreed that, whilst it was important to secure member commitment and ownership to the project, no specific action needed to be taken at the moment but that the matter be kept under review by the Leaders of both Councils and revisited once the transformation process had begun and the need for specific member training had been identified.

Following the discussion the Joint Committee supported the proposals in the report and accordingly

RESOLVED

1. That the proposed approach to deliver the project be endorsed subject to the comments set out above.
2. That agreement be given to allocate £75,000 from the programme budget to fund the external support, to be allocated to the three elements as set out in the report.
3. That authority be given for Officers to undertake a procurement exercise with a report back to a future meeting on the outcomes.

5. **PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT REPORT**

For Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils to achieve their objective of sharing their senior management as an enabling step to closer working at service levels it will be necessary for a series of individual projects and activities to be carried out and the Joint Committee considered a report setting out proposals for the management of these projects not in terms of delivering the projects but in providing an overview in relation to the areas identified in paragraph 3.2.

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The report went on to describe the role the resource would cover and to explain why the role would need to be carried out by a single individual. The Joint Committee noted that it might be possible to identify the role internally with some backfilling costs and that the post may initially be part time until the full requirement is understood.

The report proposed that a provisional sum of £40,000 be allocated for the support to be met from the allowance for support costs of £250,000 provided for within the approved business case.

Both Leaders reminded members of the point made earlier under minute 3 that the Project was being undertaken to reduce costs to the benefit of Council Tax payers in both districts. To ensure that this outcome was achieved swiftly and at minimal cost it was essential for the project to be properly managed - hence the need for the programme support identified in the report.

After a discussion, during which members fully accepted the need for the support if both authorities were to achieve their goal, the Joint Committee, supported the proposal and, whilst noting the intention to review the effectiveness of the arrangements after one year of operation, asked for an interim report to be submitted by the end of the calendar year.

RESOLVED that authority be given to establish a programme management resource, within a budget of £40,000, and an interim report reviewing the effectiveness of the arrangements be submitted to a meeting by the end of the calendar year.

6. PROVISIONAL CALENDAR OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Joint Committee was asked to agree a Calendar of Meeting up to July 2011. During the discussion, it was recognised that because of members other commitments there would always be difficulties in identifying mutually convenient dates for meetings. However, the Joint Committee also recognised that, if the timetable was to be achieved, the project needed to be accorded a very high priority possibly resulting in other competing commitments not being fulfilled. The Joint Committee also accepted that, subject to the quorum being met, meetings may need to progress when not all 12 members were present.

Following the discussion the Joint Committee agreed the programme of meetings subject to the start time being brought forward to 5 pm.

The meeting terminated at 7.20 pm