

SPECIAL CABINET

Meeting - 23 March 2011

Present:

Mr Busby, Mrs Cranmer, Mr Lidgate, Mr Reed, Mr Wilson and Mrs Woolveridge

Also Present:

Mr Oxley

196. SHARED ARRANGEMENTS WITH CHILTERN AND WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCILS

The Special Cabinet considered a report of the Leader which contained recommendations from a Joint Cabinet meeting of South Bucks, Chiltern and Wycombe District Councils held immediately before this Cabinet meeting.

The Leaders of the three Districts have been discussing the possibilities for closer co-operation between them for some time and those discussions have led to the proposal considered by the Joint Cabinet meeting of the three councils.

The key points for South Bucks arising from the proposal were as follows:

- Merging the current three Chief Executive posts, five Director posts and nineteen Heads of Service to form a single Management Team under one Chief Executive.
- The key aim would be to deliver financial savings for the three councils and the commitment would extend to asking the new Chief Executive to look at the possibilities for joining together service provision, rationalisation of assets including offices and examination of the opportunity for smarter purchasing.
- The independence of each Council would be maintained with Councillors continuing to set policy, service standards and monitor delivery as is currently the case.
- Accountability to residents from Councillors in each area would be maintained.
- In the light of the severe grant settlement just suffered by this Council and the possibility of further tough settlements in the future, it was essential to look at opportunities for savings which did not simply involve cutting the District Council's services and ability to function.

The report set out an outline Business Case incorporating a risk analysis and although this would have to be refined and expanded at a later date, it gave a broad indication of the likely magnitude of immediate savings which can be expected of £1.3 million between the three councils with an illustrative payback period of between one and a half and three plus years. An important part of the Business Case is the risk analysis and it was noted that the Councils need to consider the risks carefully, particularly in view of other changes at national and local level and the forthcoming local elections, all of which add some degree of uncertainty.

The Chief Executive reported that he had held meetings with the staff who might be directly affected by these proposals and also had held two more general staff meetings to brief all staff and to take questions. Comments submitted by the Staff Side on behalf of all staff and by Service Heads were circulated and the concerns of staff noted. It was also accepted that further consultation and engagement with staff needs to be undertaken at the relevant times so that staff feel well informed and aware of possible implications of changes.

The proposed Terms of Reference for a Joint Working Group to be formed of councillors from the three councils (four councillors from each, politically proportional) were also considered and it was noted that the Working Group be intended to oversee the project until such time as a formal, legal Inter Authority Agreement was put in place after the District elections. It was further noted that any initial funding for the Working Group would be split according to the population of the three councils but this would be reviewed as part of the legal agreement.

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Finally the Cabinet considered the wording of the proposed Statement of Intent which codified the commitment, not legally binding, which each of the councils were being asked to approve in line with the principles already set out.

RECOMMENDED that:

- (a) the Statement of Intent be agreed subject to approval by the other two councils as well;
- (b) the setting up of a Joint Member Working Group be agreed as soon as practicable after the May elections to oversee the development of a detailed Business Case and Inter Authority Agreement for all three councils;
- (c) an initial budget be provided as necessary up to a total of £10,000 shared between the councils on the basis of population, in order to undertake initial legal and HR work and provide any advice on the setting up of a single team, with the share for South Bucks being £2084 to be met from reserves.

197. TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 9.35 p.m.