

Appendix 1

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SOUTHERN DISTRICTS - STATEMENT OF INTENT

What is it ?

A joint statement by Chiltern, South Bucks and Wycombe District Councils setting out their intention to share a single Chief Executive and a single Senior Management team to serve the three authorities.

The three Councils also intend to then examine the opportunities for further savings by the joining together of services, officer teams and offices.

Why is it Needed ?

All three Councils agree that they should take the current opportunity of a retirement at Chief Executive level to bring together their senior management into one team, thus saving money for local taxpayers and generating possibilities for further savings.

The three Councils are used to working together successfully on projects such as the shared paper sort facility, and are keen to operate as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible. They also have broadly similar characteristics and needs and are geographically close.

They see opportunities for :

- further medium to long term economies beyond the immediate savings
- maintaining front line resilience
- better services to the public, especially sharing specialist teams
- opportunities to rationalise office space and assets
- opportunities for smarter purchasing

Experience from other areas suggests that bringing together the post of Chief Executive and the creation of one Senior Management Team is an effective catalyst to a closer integration of services and their delivery, with consequent additional savings and efficiencies. It is also noted that in other areas indirect efficiencies have followed with other public services and the voluntary/community sector considering whether to mirror the council changes.

The Principles

The new arrangement would be based on the key principles of :

1. preserving the sovereignty and identity of each Council,
2. retention of councillor independence and leadership in each Council,
3. retaining accountability to councillors and residents for each Council.

These key principles will be delivered by :

- separate policy and decision making and independent policy advice for each Council,
- each Council of equal importance to the others,
- leadership will come from the political leaders in the three Councils,
- regular and coordinated communication with residents, councillors, staff, unions and other stakeholders,

- value for money and competitive processes must be capable of being demonstrated with decisions based on robust business cases,

Timescale

The aim is for all three Councils to approve this Statement of Intent by April 2011 and also to agree the principle that a shared Chief Executive will be appointed after the District Council elections in May 2011.

The new Chief Executive will then be tasked with appointing their senior management team as soon as possible.

Following these appointments the Chief Executive and new senior team will then be asked to examine the front line services and back office functions of the three Councils with the aim of achieving further efficiency savings by consolidation where possible and appropriate. This is to include examining the potential for shared services and shared buildings.

What Commitments are given by the parties ?

The three councils undertake :

- to work together in good faith and to act reasonably.
- to provide information to each other as needed.
- to identify issues and problems early and to seek solutions.
- to attempt actively to resolve any political difficulties.
- to keep all councillors, residents, staff and others informed.

In the event of a disagreement which cannot be resolved, it will be open to any or all of the parties to withdraw from this arrangement giving as much notice as possible but being required to meet any abortive costs which reasonably fall to them. It will then be open to any remaining parties to continue with the arrangement if they wish to do so.

These provisions apply only during the lifetime of this Statement of Intent. It will be superseded by a formal Inter Authority Agreement later in 2011.

Cost Sharing

Costs of the process arising from this Statement of Intent will be shared according to population size.

Costs of the shared arrangements themselves will be subject to further detailed discussion and incorporation in an Inter Authority Agreement which will replace the Statement of Intent and will be legally binding.

Risk and Governance

Risks are explored in detail in the initial Business Case and will need to be fully taken into account in the decision-making process.

Governance arrangements are crucial and need to be agreed at an early stage. They are examined separately but are based on the assumption that each of the three councils will wish to be involved in every decision.