

# **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **SHARED SERVICES BOARD**

**Monday 9 February 2009**

**Redditch Town Hall**

### **NOTES**

#### **Present:**

- Councillors Carole Gandy, Colin MacMillan, Bill Hartnett, Malcolm Hall (Redditch Borough Council)
- Councillors Roger Hollingworth, Peter MacDonald (Bromsgrove District Council)

**Officers** – K Dicks (Acting Joint Chief Executive – Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils)

**Committee Support** – I Westmore

**Also in attendance** – None

**Apology** – Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Webb (BDC).

#### **1. Minutes of previous meeting**

**It was AGREED that**

**the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 21 January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.**

#### **2. Matters Arising**

Members were informed that, as of that day, which had been the date set for the close of expressions of interest, approximately 30 such expressions in the contract for the General Business Case had been received. A short-listing process would be undertaken by Officers with the preferred candidates being considered at the next meeting of the Board in early March.

The Board was notified that Redditch representatives had given further consideration to the Medium-Term Wins and it was suggested that Economic Development could be taken forward as one of the proposals either with or without any willingness on the part of Wyre Forest to contribute to the work.

**It was AGREED that**

**the proposal to include Economic Development Services as a potential medium-term win not be subject to Wyre Forest's willingness to contribute to the work.**

### **3. Six Month Review**

The Chair referred Members to the Six Month Review report, prepared by the Acting Joint Chief Executive, detailing the progress against the phases of the project and against set targets, problems and issues encountered, risks and operational improvements. The elements of the review had been agreed at the previous meeting of the Board. Each of the two Council Leaders would be submitting a report to their respective Councils in due course outlining their opinions of the benefits or otherwise of the arrangements thus far.

#### a) Progress against each of the phases of the Project

Mr Dicks reported that the project was generally proceeding according to the targets and objectives agreed by the Board. Robust consultation with staff over the quick-wins for shared services had slowed progress to an extent. It was noted that the next Board meeting would be to select the preferred consultant to assist with the preparation of the full Business Case.

#### b) Progress against targets for each Council

It was considered significant that the draft CPA report for Bromsgrove District Council had reported that the Joint Chief Executive arrangements had not impacted negatively on the Council's ability to continue to improve. One area of slight concern had been the inability to conclude the budget process at Redditch as quickly as desired. It was acknowledged that the respective Leaders report to each Council would address this in more detail.

#### c) Problems encountered by each Council

Mr Dicks acknowledged that the press article arising from the results of an employment tribunal following the dismissal of a Head of Service at Bromsgrove had been the cause of some concern amongst Members at Redditch. Members made it clear that it was the lack of forewarning that had been the primary cause of concern. It was accepted that any such future matters that might be the cause of unusual press interest should be communicated to Members of both authorities at the earliest opportunity.

#### d) Problems encountered by the Acting Joint Chief Executive

The position of the Acting Joint Chief Executive on those occasions when the interest of both authorities needed to be reflected was discussed. In respect of the Regional Spatial Strategy, Mr Dicks indicated that he would be stepping back and allowing the Director of Planning and Environmental Services at Redditch and the Head of Planning and Environment at Bromsgrove to take the respective leads. Should Mr Dicks be involved in discussions over such a matter he made it clear that it

should be absolutely transparent which Council he was advising. To this end it was suggested that reports touching on such matters should include a clear indication that the Acting Joint Chief Executive was formally designating another Officer from whichever authority to take the lead as there was an inherent conflict of interest. It was suggested that the role of Acting Joint Chief Executive could be considered a strength by both authorities as it served to prevent potential conflicts arising between Redditch and Bromsgrove.

Formal meeting arrangements were discussed and it was suggested that some flexibility was required on both sides to allow Mr Dicks to be present at key meetings of each authority. On a related theme the Acting Joint Chief Executive confirmed that he had not experienced any practical difficulties through being at one authority at the time of an urgent occurrence at the other.

e) Operational Improvements

Mr Dicks referred to a number of improvements that were either ongoing or anticipated through the Acting Joint Chief Executive arrangements. Two areas that were particularly highlighted were the assistance that was being provided by Bromsgrove in the field of equality and diversity and the use that was being made of the skills and experience of the Redditch Planning and Development Control Team.

f) Cost Savings

Mr Dicks provided a brief update on cost savings that were accruing. An outstanding issue was the different means of financial reporting at the two authorities which would be addressed over time.

Mr Dicks left the meeting at the conclusion of the presentation of the report and prior to the Members debating the recommendation contained therein.

#### **4. Consideration of recommendations**

The predominant view was that the first six months of the trial period had clearly not been the cause of major difficulties and there was consequently no reason not to continue with the present arrangements. It was proposed that the proper time for a major discussion of the continuation of arrangements be at the conclusion of the entire twelve month trial period.

The two Minority Labour Group representatives indicated that their Groups did not support the Acting Joint Chief Executive arrangements and, as a consequence, the Board was not able to reach unanimity on this point. On a majority vote

**It was RECOMMENDED that**

**the respective Councils continue with the Acting Joint Chief Executive and Shared Service arrangements between Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils for a further six months.**

## **5. Dates of next meetings**

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Board would be held on 3 March 2009 at Bromsgrove District Council, but that the start time would be brought forward to 5.20pm to allow as many parties as possible the opportunity to attend.

The meeting started at 5.08 p.m.  
and closed at 5.47 p.m. .