

**BROMSGOVE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND**  
**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**SHARED SERVICES BOARD**

**27th October 2016 at 5.30 pm**

**COMMITTEE ROOM TWO, TOWN HALL, REDDITCH**

**Present:** Councillors Bill Hartnett (Chairman), Juliet Brunner, Yvonne Smith and Pat Witherspoon (Redditch Borough Council)  
Councillors Sue Baxter, Richard Deeming and Karen May (Bromsgrove District Council)

**In attendance:** Councillor Mike Chalk (Redditch Borough Council)

**Officers:** Kevin Dicks, Sue Hanley, Ruth Bamford and Helen Mole

**Notes:** Amanda Scarce

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Greg Chance and Debbie Taylor (Redditch Borough Council) with Councillors Pat Witherspoon and Yvonne Smith in attendance as substitutes respectively and Councillor Geoff Denaro (Bromsgrove District Council).

**2. NOTES**

The notes of the previous meeting of the Board held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015 were approved as a correct record.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

(Meetings of the Board are not subject to statutory Access to Information requirements; but information relating to individual post holders and/or employee relations matters would nonetheless not be revealed to the press or public.)

**3. PRESENTATION – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SHARED SERVICE**

Members received a verbal presentation from the Head of Planning and Regeneration which provided background information in respect of the proposed Development Management Shared Service. It was explained that Development

Management referred to the area which was previously known to Members as Development Control, the shift to the new name had been led by central Government. The Head of Planning and Regeneration highlighted the following:

- There was already an informal shared service, which evolved following the period of transformational work, which had driven the decision to request formalising the shared service.
- There had been significant changes which had led to improvements within the services following the transformation work, which continued to be an ongoing process.
- A major proposed change was the inclusion of enforcement work within the Development Management Team. It was anticipated that a Planner allocated to an application would see it through all stages and pick up any enforcement issues which arose referring to that application.
- There were no cost implications, however it was anticipated that there would be an increase in income for both Councils due to an increase in the number of planning applications going forward. This gave a benefit of approximately £12-13k to each authority.
- A brief outline of the staffing structure was given, which also included details of the grading system.
- It was confirmed that the grading system used at each Council *was* different and as the host authority was proposed to be Bromsgrove the pay structure for the shared service would be that of Bromsgrove however different grades for planning case officers would be introduced giving the opportunity for better staff retention and recruitment and training /career grades would be introduced (as had been the case in Redditch).
- The staffing structure required 2 managers, each of which would take a lead on a Planning Committee. It was hoped that in the future those lead officers would be able to support each Committee in making any improvements that were needed to the process.
- The post of Town Centre Manager would remain at Redditch Borough Council and would be charged solely to them. In respect of the Town Centre Manager for Bromsgrove District Council, the post was part of the service provided through the North Worcestershire Economic Development team.
- It was anticipated that there would be an overall reduction in staff of 2 full time posts following the implementation of the new structure.

Finally, the Head of Planning and Regeneration gave details of the next step of the process, should the Board agree to the proposals. Executive and Cabinet would consider the business case at the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> November respectively with both Councils' making the final decision at their meetings to be held week commencing 21<sup>st</sup> November. If both Councils endorsed the proposals, the Head of Planning and Regeneration would then put in place the formal procedure of informing staff and there would be a period of consultation with Human Resources and the Unions involvement.

#### **4. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SHARED SERVICE – BUSINESS CASE**

Following the presentation Members made a number of observations and raised a number of questions which were responded to by Officers, these included:

- Support provided to those staff whose positions may be at risk and the options for them to be redeployed within the Councils, or the option to take voluntary redundancy.
- Income from the increased number of planning applications and the overall costing of the service. It was explained that whilst there was an increase in the number of planning applications, the fees for these was set by central Government and did not cover the cost of the overall service. Therefore the balance of that cost came from the Councils' overall revenue budget.
- How the pod system described within the business case worked. The Head of Planning and Regeneration gave a brief overview of the process and explained that the applications were split into three categories, were not split between the two Councils, but were in date order.
- Concerns around the inclusion of the enforcement role within that of a planning officer. The Head of Planning and Regeneration agreed to provide Members with additional information outside of the meeting, and prior to Executive/Cabinet.
- The data entry posts and the work which was carried out – a brief explanation was provided in respect of the requirements from the Land Registry in respect of individual properties and access being available to residents directly in the future to details of properties.
- The calculation of the breakdown of costs between both Councils and whether this would be regularly reviewed. The Head of Planning and Regeneration acknowledged that whilst this would not be feasible on an annual basis, there was potential to carry out regular reviews.
- The location of the team – Members questioned the decision to have the team based at Redditch, when it had been acknowledged within the report (and in the costings) that Bromsgrove had a higher demand for the service.
- The proportion of enforcement cases between the two Councils and whether this was at a similar ratio to the number of applications.
- Whether the savings highlighted within the recent Efficiency Plans had taken into account the creation of this new shared service. It was confirmed that these would have been taken into account.
- The main driver in creating the shared service – whilst cost savings had played a part in the decision it was also important to ensure that good decisions were made in a timely manner and improvements in service had already made an impact following the transformation work and the informal shared working.
- Future changes to the planning application process, including residents being able to choose who dealt with their application. The Head of Planning and Regeneration explained that whilst this could benefit the Council there were many areas which needed to be explored before this became a reality.
- Whether the Head of Planning and Regeneration had explored the opportunities of developers paying for extra time on an application.

Reference was made to information provided by the MPs office and the relevant Member agreed to discuss in more detail with the Head of Planning and Regeneration outside of the meeting.

After further discussion it was

**RECOMMENDED that**

- 1) Executive/Cabinet and Council endorse the Business Case for Development Management;**
- 2) the implementation costs are shared on the same basis as the total revised service costs between the two Councils to reflect the percentage of the original application income into the service. This to be subject to final financial arrangements being in place between both Authorities. Full year income figures from 2012/13 to 2015/16 confirm a percentage share for the joint service arrangements of**
  - a) Bromsgrove 67%**
  - b) Redditch 33%****and;**
- 3) the service be hosted by Bromsgrove District Council as it receives more applications and covers a larger geographical area.**

**5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Shared Services Board would be held on Tuesday 6th March 2017 at 6.00 pm in the Parkside Suite at Bromsgrove District Council.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm

And closed at 6.23 pm