

REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL AND BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

SHARED SERVICES BOARD

30th June 2011 at 5.30pm

COMMITTEE ROOM 3, TOWN HALL, REDDITCH

Present: Councillors Carole Gandy (Chair), Bill Hartnett, Michael Braley and Malcolm Hall (Redditch Borough Council)
Councillors Steve Colella and Margaret Sherrey (Bromsgrove District Council)

Also in attendance: Cllr Jinny Pearce (Observer, RBC)

Officers: Ruth Bamford, Kevin Dicks, Sue Hanley, Helen Mole and Deb Poole.

Notes: Steve Skinner.

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

Cllr Gandy welcomed Cllr Sherry to her first meeting of the Board.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Board held on 22nd March 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

3. PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report in respect of all elements of the Shared Service work involving Redditch Borough and Bromsgrove District Councils undertaken to date. The report had been made available to all members of both Councils.

The report detailed progress, service by service, by reference to a traffic light status system, which indicated whether the service was:

- Green - on track to achieve the stated benefits and performing satisfactorily.
- Amber - experiencing some performance issues and/or issues with achieving stated benefits, but which were expected to be eventually resolved.
- Red - experiencing some performance issues and/or issues with achieving the stated benefits which were not all expected to be resolved.

Officers provided further clarification in response to a range of detailed points raised by Members, which did not trigger any significant additional matters or actions.

Members then considered the recommendation to bring forward consideration of a Single Business Case to the Board's August meeting. Officers explained that a single management structure would improve subsequent transformation processes considerably, as well as bringing greater clarity to staff; avoiding unnecessary delays; and achieving some earlier savings.

Mr Dicks explained that it would not, in all cases go the whole way down a structure, for example where local delivery of a service was very different in each Council, such as in Customer Services.

Members agreed that it was important to maintain the momentum achieved to date in the roll-out of shared services and that what was now being proposed was the best plan. It appeared to be essentially supported by staff and Trade Unions and enabled staff to better plan for their futures and, although a challenging prospect, worth doing sooner rather than later.

Finally, with reference to the financial summaries, appended to the report, Members were keen to see further evidence that costs (Revenue and Capital) and savings were being accurately re-allocated across both Councils. Officers agreed to take this comment on board.

It was AGREED that

- 1) Members note progress to date, as detailed in the report; and**

RECOMMENDED that

- 2) Officers be tasked with producing, for the August meeting of the Board, a Single Business Case that will identify the benefits and risks associated with moving the remaining services into a shared environment by the end of the calendar year, in so far as this is currently achievable, between Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils.**

4. LOCAL LAND CHARGES SERVICE – BUSINESS CASE

Mrs Bamford, as relevant Head of Service, presented the Business Case for a shared Local Land Charges Service. In doing so, she tabled representations very recently received from two members of staff. These were noted and referred to the later consultation round on the proposals.

The Board noted that four options had been considered:

- Option 1 - No change to existing arrangements;
- Option 2 - Transform first, then Shared Service;
- Option 3 - Contract Out; and
- Option 4 - Two-stage approach whereby the service is shared and then interim measures put in place to achieve transformation, followed by a further review of staff and resources once transformation is complete.

The recommendation before Members was for Option 4.

Members noted the current differences between the existing provision of Local Land Charges Services at Redditch and Bromsgrove, and also the potential for a very different kind of service if maximum use was made of current IT capabilities.

It was noted that, before this could occur, much data loading and checking would be required to ensure all electronic records were fully up to date and accurate, subject to which, access to the service could be far less Officer-reliant. Some of this work would be the responsibility of Local Land Charges staff themselves, and some the responsibility of contributing services, such as Planning, Environmental Health and Highways.

Therefore the preferred option was for a two-stage approach: one permanent full time employee was currently proposed, plus a further half-time post until such time as this second post was thought to be no longer required. Subject to later consultation and further consideration this proposal might yet change.

Members noted that, in terms of fee income, the Local Land Charges Service was not allowed to generate a surplus, only cover its costs. It was therefore accepted that, in this case, there might not be a great advantage in financial terms. However the proposal generally helped to move both Councils closer towards Transformation.

It was AGREED that

the delivery of a Shared Local Land Charges Service, provided by a single Team hosted by Bromsgrove District Council (Option 4) be recommended to both the Redditch Borough Council Executive Committee and Bromsgrove District Council Cabinet.

5. BUILDING CONTROL SERVICES – BUSINESS CASE

Mrs Bamford, as relevant Head of Service, presented the Business Case for sharing Building Control Services across Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest Districts.

The Board noted that six options had been considered:

Option 1 - No change to existing arrangements;

Option 2 - Minor changes only;

Option 3 - Shared Service between Redditch and Bromsgrove only;

Option 4 - Outsource the service;

Option 5 - County-wide Building Control Service;

Option 6 - North Worcestershire Shared Service between Redditch, Bromsgrove and Wyre Forest Districts.

The recommendation before Members was for Option 6.

This proposal offered significant savings, partly deriving from reduced staff costs. Management arrangements would be similar to those proposed for the North Worcestershire Economic Development Shared Service.

Members noted the rationale for Bromsgrove to host this service was more complex than simply because it was geographically the central point. This was a service which has less need for a direct public interface at each Council office. However, Members acknowledged the need to maintain high levels of 'local knowledge', which was one reason that a County-wide option had not been recommended.

It was AGREED that

the following be recommended to the respective decision-making bodies of the three constituent local authorities:

- 1) in accordance with the agreed PID dated 9th December 2010, the three partner Councils proceed with the creation of the shared service in accordance with recommendation 6: the delivery of Shared Building Control Services, provided by a single Team, hosted by Bromsgrove District Council;**
- 2) implementation costs be shared on the same basis as the total revised service costs amongst the three Councils to reflect the percentage of the initial budget allocation into the service (as detailed at Appendix 5 to the report); this to be subject to final financial agreements being in place between the partner authorities; and**
- 3) the new service be known as 'North Worcestershire Building Control' and use a service specific logo and document templates, the design of which is to be formally agreed before the completion of this project.**

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting would be held on Thursday 18th August 2011 at 5.30 p.m. in Committee Room 3 at Redditch Town Hall.

The meeting closed at 6.55 p.m.