

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

26 FEBRUARY 2014

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Report prepared by Ryan O'Connell

1. MKIP – PLANNING SUPPORT SHARED SERVICE - EMPLOYER

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider whether a single authority should be chosen as employer for the planning support shared service.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Planning and Development:

1.2.1 That Maidstone be chosen as the employer for the Planning Support Shared Service (Mid Kent Planning Support);

1.2.2 That existing planning support staff at Swale and Tunbridge Wells be transferred to Maidstone Borough Council as their employer; and

1.2.3 That the principles agreed in the ICT Collaboration Agreement for the management of the risks arising from taking on additional staff be used as part of the planning support collaboration agreement to manage the risks of becoming the employer for this service.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Choosing a single employer for the planning support shared service will deliver the significant benefit of providing one clear reporting line for the service. This will ensure that the staffing budget for the service is in one place and that all staff will be treated equally in relation to training opportunities, equipment provided, etc. The principle of having a single employer was established in the report to the Tri-Cabinet meeting on 12 June 2013 where the decision on choice of employer was delegated to Chief Executives.

1.3.2 Currently, the staff impacted by entering a shared service are split across three employers, each with its own appraisal system, corporate requirements and policies which is a significantly inefficient environment for managing staff.

- 1.3.3 One of the aims of a shared service is to bring the staff together as a single service providing the same service outcomes to its three customers. By bringing the staff together rather than remaining with their current employers enables a single culture for Mid Kent to be more easily embedded. The service levels for the three authorities will be set out in Service Level Agreements that will form part of the Collaboration Agreement (as schedules to it) underpinning the service. A shared service board with representatives from each authority will have operational strategy of the shared service and will define amendments to the service levels as part of service planning going forwards and to respond to national and local changes.
- 1.3.4 As the service will be located in Maidstone and the Mid Kent Planning Support team will be line managed through the Maidstone structure it is recommended that Maidstone be chosen as the employer for the service.
- 1.3.5 Following transfer it will be necessary to review the staffing requirements for delivering the new requirements of a remote shared service. The three authorities also provide different levels of service and functions for their planning authorities. In order to achieve the key benefit of resilience staff will have to cover each other within the team and this will involve staff picking up new technical skills and taking on additional responsibilities.
- 1.3.6 Staff have been consulted on the changes and proposals to planning support, with the consultation ending on 12 February 2014. The consultation was carried out on the basis that Maidstone would be agreed as the employer for the service. Because of this the consultation for TUPE took place at the same time as the re-structure consultation.
- 1.3.7 Depending on the outcome of the transfer of staff as it relates to individuals it is estimated that Maidstone will become the employer for approximately 20 additional staff, with an approximate extra salary cost of £530k which will be funded by Swale and Tunbridge Wells through the shared service arrangements.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 It could be decided to retain staff with their existing employers but this is not recommended for the reasons outlined above.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 The recommendations aim to deliver as efficient a planning support service as possible which both supports corporate efficiency objectives and those delivered by an efficient and effective planning service.

1.6 Risk Management

- 1.6.1 All activities involving significant change for staff and staff employment carry risks. Recommendation 1.2.3 is made in order to manage the risks of Maidstone becoming the employer for an estimated 20 extra (£530k) staff.
- 1.6.2 In particular the clauses relating 'funds (salaries and redundancies)' and under 'relevant employees' in the ICT collaboration agreement will be used to manage these risks. This enables the risks of all liabilities arising from additional staffing (or a reduction in staffing in the case of Swale and Tunbridge Wells), including pension liabilities, to be managed between Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils.

1.7 Other Implications

- 1.7.1 Financial – there are financial risks of taking on additional employees which will be managed through the legal agreement between Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells.
- 1.7.2 The planning support shared service will produce forecast savings as set out in the business case attached to the Cabinet report on 12 June 2013 (see background documents).
- 1.7.3 Legal – all changes proposed will be conducted in accordance with employment regulations and HR assurance from all three authorities will be provided at all stages. A legal agreement will underpin the shared service.
- 1.7.4 Staffing – the recommendations deal directly with staffing issues.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendices

None

1.8.2 Background Documents

Cabinet Report – MKIP - Planning Support Shared Service – 12 June 2013