

Mid Kent Improvement Partnership Joint Task and Finish Group – 10 September 2014

Scoping Report

1. Aim of the Review

To consider how Mid Kent Improvement Partnership's (MKIP) governance arrangements should be taken forward and how a MKIP communications plan should be developed.

2. Why has this review been selected?

Over the last 12 months scrutiny members have taken a keen interest in shared services and the development of MKIP. Committee members, across the three authorities, have raised a number of important issues relating to:

- Governance arrangements;
- Seeking clarity on the role of O&S to be able to scrutinise the decisions of the MKIP Management Board, if it so wished;
- The objectives of the Mid Kent Services Director and how these would be measured; and
- Communication.

With that in mind, a joint meeting was arranged on 7 July 2014 to enable further consideration of these issues. It was at this meeting that the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Maidstone Borough Council's Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee formally agreed (with Swale Borough Council's Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 23 July 2014) to establish a joint Task and Finish Group to consider how MKIP's governance arrangements should be taken forward and how a MKIP communications plan should be developed.

It was further agreed that the Task and Finish Group report back to a joint meeting of these three Committees in December 2014.

3. Who will carry out the review?

The review will be carried out by a Task and Finish Group including:

- Maidstone - Councillors Fay Gooch and Paulina Stockell
- Swale – Councillors Andy Booth and Mike Henderson with substitutes Councillors Lloyd Bowen and/or Peter Marchington
- Tunbridge Wells – Councillors Bill Hills and Chris Woodward

4. Officer Support

The main officer support will be the Scrutiny Lead Officer from the same authority as the Chair of the Task and Finish Group. However, the Scrutiny officers from the other two authorities will provide assistance when and where required.

5. How the review will be carried out

It is suggested that the Task and Finish Group takes a number of steps to work through the evidence and reach some conclusions. It is recommended that the Group should undertake the following activities:

1. Session 1 - 10 September 2014

- A. To receive evidence from the Mid Kent Services Director and the MKIP Programme Manager on the current and future proposals for the governance arrangements for the partnership and development of a communications plan. This will include an opportunity to learn about lessons learnt from good practice elsewhere.

The aim of this session is to get all members of the group to the same level of background knowledge so that the group can plan its programme of work.

- B. To consider this scoping report and amend it accordingly following the evidence at 1A above.

2. Session 2 - Mid/Late September 2014

- A. To receive evidence from a mix of Heads of Service from across the three authorities that covers a range of services with different expectations and delivery options i.e. from internal and external facing departments.

The aim of this session is to get an understanding from the Heads of Service as clients using MKIP services, and as providers of shared services themselves, on how MKIP affects their work, whether it is clear who does what and where and whether changes to services are clearly communicated, internally and externally.

- B. Governance Part

To receive evidence from at least one of the Council's Monitoring Officers and one of the Council's Section 151 Officers.

The aim of this session is to get an understanding from the Monitoring Officer(s) on what they consider good governance for the partnership, what constitutes openness, transparency and accountability, what legal powers fall to which body and how to ensure appropriate oversight.

- C. Communications Part

To receive evidence from the Head of Communications from each of the three authorities.

The aim of this session is to get an understanding of what constitutes a good communications plan, the differences between internal and external communications, how to engage stakeholders and the public and how to deal with feedback.

3. Start a Members Survey – October 2014

To survey the non Executive members of the three authorities on how much they know about MKIP, what decisions it takes and what would be the best method of influencing decision-making and whether they know who to contact if a member of the public has a query about an MKIP service.

4. Session 3 - October 2014

A. To invite representatives of the MKIP board to give evidence with a request that minimum representation be provided of one Leader and one Chief Executive.

The aim of this session is to get an understanding from the MKIP board on what their role is, how they make decisions, where the limits of their decision making are and how their decisions are communicated.

B. To receive evidence from a local authority good practice example(s).

This will enable the group to hear first hand from a local authority on how they dealt with the governance and communication issues and what has worked, what the pitfalls are and how to overcome them.

5. Session 4 - Early November 2014

A. Feedback from Members Survey

To consider the implications from the Members Survey for the governance and communications aspects of the partnership.

B. To receive evidence from a national perspective with input from, for example, the Department for Communities and Local Government, Local Government Association or Local Government Information Unit.

The aim of this session is to get an understanding from national bodies on what is considered best practice for the governance and communications of a shared service and to understand any future national plans.

6. Session 5 - Mid/Late November 2014

To receive the draft report that details the evidence received and proposes some recommendations.

To consider the contents of the draft report, agree the Group's final report and recommendations for submission to the joint meeting of the Scrutiny Committees.

7. Joint Committee Meeting - December 2014

Report back to joint Committee meeting of the three authorities with final report/recommendations.

6. Cost/Community Implications

The financial implications will be staff time in:

- supporting the review,
- presenting evidence to the Task and Finish Group,
- undertaking a members survey exercise.

Non Executive members and the community need effective governance arrangements to provide appropriate assurance about the performance and delivery of shared services. The need for openness, transparency and accountability is important for these services and the work of Overview and Scrutiny can help to further these areas.

Similarly, key messages properly communicated are essential to ensure members of the public are well informed by changes to services on which they rely.

7. What are the expected outputs?

It is expected that the Task and Finish Group will produce a report, summarising the evidence they have gathered and containing specific recommendations for a Joint Committee meeting of the three authorities to consider. The Scrutiny Committees would then submit recommendations to their respective decision makers.

8. Timescale

It is anticipated that the group will conclude the outcomes of the review in time for a joint meeting of the three authorities in December 2014.