Planning Support Project Implementation Review – MKIP Board Response Mid Kent Audit Findings

In light of the significant concerns with performance, in August 2014 the MKIP Board commissioned the attached review undertaken by Mid Kent Audit of the implementation of the Planning Support Shared Service.

As such the MKIP Board welcome unequivocally the findings of the review and apologise to everyone affected by the delays in validating and processing planning applications. We are working hard to address the situation.

It is also important for contextual purposes to recognise that the vast majority of services being delivered in partnership are working well and have delivered considerable savings and efficiencies and improved our resilience during a period when our grant funding from central government has been cut by more than 40 per cent.

Attached is the response of the MKIP Board to the specific recommendations of the review.

It is in the nature of such responses that, in places, the undertakings of the MKIP Board as set out in this response go beyond the findings of the Audit, which understandably were restricted to the terms of reference that were set. This is because it is the responsibility of the MKIP Board to take an overview of the 'end to end' process of investigating, commissioning, and implementing shared services.

This response focusses on what we will do in the future for the "implementation" phase of shared service projects (which includes trial and testing of operational arrangements), rather than the "business case" phase that precedes it. Whilst it is important to run both phases according to good project management methodologies, it is the implementation phase that holds the greatest risks to successful project delivery.

Work has already commenced on implementation of the actions, though clearly some will take longer than others.

In closing, we thank Mid Kent Audit for their work in undertaking the review, and the joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees for providing the MKIP Board with the opportunity to set out its positive response to the Audit.

We will of course be more than happy to respond to any questions during the meeting scheduled for 23 February.

Cllr David Jukes
Current Chair of the MKIP Board

MKIP Board response to Planning Support Project Implementation Review – Mid Kent Audit Findings

Report Finding		MKIP Board Response
1.	**Not employing a recognised project methodology**	
1.1	Lack of clear, detailed project plan	The MKIP Chief Executives will appoint a project sponsor and project manager (which could be based upon a recommendation from the project sponsor or elsewhere). The expectation is that both will be trained and experienced in project management methodologies.
1.2	Inconsistent assignment and understanding of roles and responsibilities	The appointed project sponsor will follow the project methodology of the nominated host council, taking into account the checklist set out in the Audit of the implementation of the Planning Support Shared Service.
1.3	Lack of project risk register and lack of monitoring of risks	The project sponsor will ensure that the respective project methodology is followed, including as a minimum appointing the project manager and the wider project board, building a project plan, developing a risk register and issues log, and minuting of project board meetings. It will be the project sponsor's responsibility to ensure that all project documents are maintained and up-to-date.
1.4	Lack of minuting of project board meetings	As part of project inception, specific project tolerances, eg related to finance and timescales, are to be proposed by the project team. The final tolerances are to be agreed by the relevant MKIP chief executives.
		The host local authority chief executive, or his/her appointee, or if the host authority has not been identified then the lead authority chief executive, or his/her appointee, will regularly check with the project sponsor and project manager whether the project is running smoothly.
		Progress with the project will be formally reported to the MKIP Chief Executive's meetings using a project report reporting form, an example of which is attached.
		Progress with the project will also be formally reported on the same form to the MKIP Board.

		Any emerging issues of a substantive nature that risks the delivery of the project on time and/or to budget to be raised by the Project Sponsor with the host chief executive as soon as they come to light; the host chief executive will share this with the other chief executive(s) involved in that shared service.
2.	**Not fully establishing the project's scope and complexity**	
2.1	Failure to recognise the complexity of simultaneously running an ICT project, and attempting to view that project as separate when it was intrinsically linked	As part of the Gateway model, the presentation of the business case for a new shared service or extension of a shared service at Stage 2, to explicitly include a commentary about the novelty and complexity of the shared service, including its linkages and dependencies on other services, shared or otherwise.
2.2	Failure to clearly define the service; what was planning support and what was planning?	As part of the Gateway model, the presentation of the business case for a new shared service or extension of a shared service at Stage 2, to explicitly include a commentary on the scope of the shared service. This does not have to be definitive, as it may include the pros and cons of various options for inclusion/exclusion, pending a decision.
		This proposal to be ratified or subsequently amended once the implementation project board has been set up.
		In exceptional circumstances, the MKIP chief executives may invite in external challenge to combat any possibility of group think and optimism bias.
		The project plan to set out and highlight all dependencies identified.
		The final version to be agreed by relevant heads of service and MKIP chief executives.
		Any substantive changes in the project scope to be referred to the MKIP Chief Executives for agreement.
2.3	Appointment of a manager whose experience of planning was not extensive	The chief executives of the other party(ies) to that shared service are to be invited to participate in any recruitment and selection processes that take place, so that recruitment and selection is undertaken on a partnership basis, and they will take up that offer or

		delegate it or decline it as they see fit.
		As a result of this recruitment and selection, the host local authority will need to satisfy itself that it has the necessary management capacity in place to implement the new service and then run it in normal operating mode. This must reflect the complexity of the implementation project and service as set out in 2.1 above.
		Arrangements are in place both informally and formally through the respective collaboration agreement to raise matters of concern regarding management capacity and capability in any particular shared service.
3.	**Attempting to deliver within existing resources**	
3.1	Parallel running of EH which put pressure on the same resources	Establishing the project scope and a project board that fully represents all responsibilities within that scope will enable good decisions to be made about the use of resources, the dependencies with other projects, and the likely critical pathway for delivery, as captured in the project plan.
		The project plan and risk register should also raise any issues regarding the availability of technical and financial resources necessary to the successful completion of the project. Where there are any issues then additional resources will need to be identified.
		For larger and more complex projects, the MKIP chief executives will request a wider analysis of the level of demand upon the support services necessary for delivery of the new project, eg ICT and HR, such that any risks or issues can be identified and mitigated.
3.2	Failure to quickly appoint a project manager	The project sponsor must ensure that there is a project manager in place within four weeks of the commencement of the project to implement the shared service.
3.3	Failure to consistently identify the project manager for the project	This may or may not be the same as the intended manager of the shared service, depending on the particular circumstances.
		The project sponsor will ensure the audit checklist is completed at the first meeting of the project board, which includes a requirement to define and determine roles and responsibilities within the project.

3.4	No additional resources put into the project aside from consultancy for the ICT installation	As per 2.1 and 2.2 above, part of the Gateway model, namely the presentation of the business case for a new shared service or extension of a shared service at Stage 2, to explicitly include a commentary about the complexity and scope of the shared service, including its linkages and dependencies on other services, shared or otherwise. Given this, the chief executives and nominated project sponsor to determine the necessary timescale for implementation, and the resources necessary to meet that timescale.
3.5	Lack of an individual with sufficiently detailed oversight of the project	Adopting formal project management arrangements will resolve this, in particular the formal appointment of the project sponsor and project manager, clarity over the scope of the project, and establishment of clear accountabilities and formal reporting arrangements.
4.	**Additional issues/ actions**	
4.1	Project budget/timescales at risk	Based upon project tolerances agreed (as set out under the response to Recommendation 1 above), if there is any risk to project delivery to budget and/or timescale, the project sponsor is to formally raise this with the respective shared service chief executives, along with a formal recommendation on how to proceed. The chief executives will consider the appropriate action to take.
4.2	Project interactions	It may be that there are multiple projects in train at any one time, which call upon the same support services, in particular HR (eg for TUPE) and ICT. The heads of those services, the MKSD, and the MKIP Programme Manager will actively keep an overview of these calls upon resources, and will raise any issues of prioritisation and risk with the MKIP chief executives at the earliest opportunity.
4.3	Training	Where relevant staff, primarily those on the Project Board, are not familiar with project management techniques, the host authority for the shared service will arrange for urgent training to be carried out, as soon as practicable.
4.4	Review of the Gateway Model	A full review of the Gateway Model to be undertaken during 2015/16 – to be led by the MKIP Programme Manager with the input of the BDU/BIT and the project sponsors and shared service managers who have used it

MKIP BOARD: PROJECT UPDATE REPORT

Project title	
Report date	

1. Standard project information

Information in this section does not change from one update report to the next.

Project sponsor		Project manager	

Business need and project deliverables

This is a summary of the project inception document.

2. Summary project status

Select the one status which best applies.

X	**Green**	*Both*: No changes to timescales, budget or quality since last report. *And*: No future changes to timescales, budget, quality or risks envisaged.
X	**Amber**	*Either*: Minor deviation from timescales, budget or quality since last report. *Or*: Minor future changes to timescales, budget, quality or risks envisaged.
X	**Red**	*Either*: Significant deviation from timescales, budget or quality since last report. *Or*: Significant future changes to timescales, budget, quality or risks envisaged.

Where the status is Amber or Red, full details should be provided in section 4 below.

3. Backward look

Summary of progress since last update report

This should be a brief narrative summary, highlighting key milestones met or missed. A short list of bullet points is sufficient if the project status in section 2 is Green.

4. Issues and deviations from PID or from last update report

Completion of this section is **not mandatory** if the status is Green.

Finance issues (PID part B section 2)	*Narrative on issues including costs, funding and procurement.*
Personnel issues (PID part B section 3)	*Narrative on issues including capacity, capability and the availability of necessary personnel who are not managed by the project manager.*
Risk issues (Project risk register)	*Narrative on project risks.*
Project creep (PID part B section 4)	*Narrative on project exclusions, including any pressure for the project to deviate from the original business case and deliverables.*

5. Forward look

Summary of progress expected before next update report

This should be a brief narrative summary, highlighting key upcoming milestones. A short list of bullet points is sufficient if the project status in section 2 is Green.

6. Recommendations

Completion of this section is **not mandatory**.

This section should list any decisions the report author needs the MKIP Board to take, and provide appropriate recommendations.

Decisions taken by the MKIP Board should be recorded in change control and/or issues logs.