

SHADOW EXECUTIVE
10 JUNE 2008

SUBJECT	Service Delivery Options To report on proposals regarding services that should be provided on a shared basis between Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough, those services for which shared delivery does not seem appropriate, and services for which further work is required.
REPORT OF	Officer Programme Board
<i>Contact Officer: Simon Redmore (Tel: 01462 611255)</i>	

IMPLICATIONS

SUSTAINABILITY	The report refers to several services relating to sustainability but there are no specific service outcome implications arising at this stage.
FINANCIAL	This report is seeking agreement in principle. Value for money is a key factor in deciding on service delivery options and is referred to throughout the report.
LEGAL	Any shared service would need a robust service level agreement.
PERSONNEL/EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES	Staffing implications will be covered in business plans.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/SAFETY	The report refers to several services relating to community development and safety but there are no specific service outcome implications arising at this stage.
TRADES UNIONS	The staffing aspects of the various service delivery options will be considered in due course. Trade union involvement would take place at that time.
HUMAN RIGHTS	None
KEY ISSUE	Yes
BUDGET/POLICY FRAMEWORK	No

OTHER DOCUMENTS RELEVANT TO REPORT
“Central Bedfordshire, A Joint Proposal for Unitary Local Government” Volumes 1 and 2, December 2007.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. that the proposed way forward for service delivery as set out in respect of each service listed in Appendix A of the report now submitted, be approved
2. that, where further work is required, authority to determine the way forward be delegated to the Interim Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and relevant Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Recommendation: So that officers can develop draft business plans for Central Bedfordshire and draw up budget proposals based on an understanding of which services Central Bedfordshire will be providing itself and which it will buy-in from elsewhere.

Background

1. The proposal to create Central Bedfordshire submitted to the DCLG in December 2007 listed a number of services that could be delivered jointly by Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough. The proposal also noted (paragraph 4.9) key principles that will apply across all services, namely:
 - *“services will be based on existing infrastructure where possible;*
 - *we will adopt best practice nationally and from within all three authorities;*
 - *services will be developed on the basis of meeting the needs of our customers (internal and external) and value for money;*
 - *process and operational improvements, and efficiencies will be built into the implementation phase. We will not merely aggregate existing services. We will challenge existing practice to develop and evolve services in order to meet current and future customer needs;*
 - *we will share services with other authorities or organisations where appropriate;*
 - *wherever possible, transactions with external customers will be handled via customer services in line with our ambition of delivering a “one stop shop” for all services at first point of contact”.*
2. In summary, these principles recognise that the demands and challenges faced by Local Authorities today increasingly require a dynamic “mixed economy” approach to establishing service standards and models of delivery.

Transition or Transformation and Balancing Risk

3. A key factor in the decisions to be made on service delivery options is when to embark on the changes necessary to take services to a new (and improved) level so that individuals receiving services feel the benefit; in the jargon “transforming” them.

4. It has always been recognised that the transition to unitary councils would necessitate a programme of change extending over a number of years. In many service areas the national programme for change requires services to evolve in any case.
5. The much reduced timetable, because of factors outside the control of the Shadow Council, does mean that “pre vesting day” choices have been reduced. Assessment of risk has to ensure that the right balance has been struck between ensuring safe and secure services, especially where vulnerable people are concerned, and those same people losing out because the changes needed have been unnecessarily delayed.
6. This does not mean that change is sidelined; but it does mean that reviews must be programmed in, so that the new council has the opportunity to embrace the recommendations for improvement and innovation passed to it by the Shadow Council.

Work to Date and Next Steps

7. During April, officers from all four councils produced an initial list of services with the potential for sharing, across authorities, together with an indication of where further work is required. The list, especially the proposed way forward for each service, has been further developed by the relevant Transitional Task Force (TTF). The key objective for each Task Force is to focus on assisting secure transition. Each Task Force has also been asked to identify, and capture in a final legacy report, those matters within their remit that they view as priority for transformation by the new council.
8. The potential for sharing is clearest where there are small, specialist services and where economies of scale support the case for sharing. Large, complex services are being risk assessed in a “transition or transform” context to identify where disaggregation is in the best long term interests of service outcomes, and then whether they can be disaggregated effectively by April 2009 or whether a longer term plan is advisable.
9. The Officer Service Groups (OSGs) and TTFs have examined the case for sharing, taking into account detailed information from appropriate officers. The results are summarised in Appendix “A”, with recommendations for the best way forward in each case. In many cases background working papers have been discussed with the relevant Portfolio Holder. Those papers are not reproduced with this agenda.
10. It should be emphasised that the work summarised in this report for the more complex areas has not yet been completed. The reason for bringing the report forward now is to identify any clear candidates for shared delivery together with those where sharing would not be appropriate. Other service areas require more work. The very short time available requires that decisions on these services should be the subject of delegation to the Interim Chief Executive with appropriate consultation as set out in this report’s recommendations.

11. Progress on each individual service project is a function of the time and resources available. Resources are under constant review and the major injection of resource from the County Council is needed and welcomed. Where the combined resource, taken together with the district resources already committed, is not sufficient external resources will be utilised. The time available cannot be expanded and the short time available before vesting day inevitably means that, for some services, transitional arrangements will have to be in force on 1 April 2009 with change taking place at a later date.
12. Taking all the above factors into account, Appendix "A" groups the various services that have been considered so far into five categories:
 - 1 Services to be shared
 - 1a Hybrid – some aspects to be shared
 - 2 Services not to be shared
 - 3 Further work needed
 - 4 Transitional arrangements needed.
13. In total officers propose 19 shared services, with recommendations for Central Bedfordshire to host archaeology, countryside access, minerals/waste planning and the domestic violence support team. It is recommended that Bedford Borough should host archives, school transport services, pension fund and music services, with the rest (including youth offending, registration, adoption and fostering, printing team) to be allocated after discussion with Bedford Borough. In the case of libraries, waste disposal, ICT, legal service, HR and others a partial approach to shared service delivery is recommended.
14. Overall, it is important that Central Bedfordshire maintains sufficient capacity to cope with the totality of change that is recommended. Officers believe, that further transition will need to take place in year 1, and that there is unlikely to be capacity for further service reviews until years 2 and 3.

Background Papers: None specific

Location of Papers: Deputy Chief Executive's office, Priory House, Shefford

File Reference: CG3