

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

RECORD OF DECISIONS

(in terms of Access to Information Rule 18)

SPECIAL CABINET

Monday 25 October 2010

**Present: Councillor Roy Bullock (Chairman)
Councillors Len Horwood and Mrs Catherine Mayhew.**

Officers in Attendance: Paul Cummins, Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer; Kevin Hetherington, Head of Housing and Wellbeing; Bill McCafferty, Revenues and Benefits Manager; Paul Taylor, Director of Change and Communities; and Samantha Timms, Senior Committee Administrator.

Other Members in Attendance: None.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

CAB088/10 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul Barrington-King, Mrs Elizabeth Thomas and Mrs Tracy Moore.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

CAB089/10 There were no declarations of interests.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

CAB090/10 There were no visiting members wishing to speak.

EXEMPT ITEM

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100A (4)

RESOLVED – It was proposed and seconded that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public be excluded from the meeting for the item of business referred to below on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of the Schedule 12A of the Act namely: -

DECISIONS CAB091/10

Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Paragraph (4) - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office-holders under, the authority.

CABINET DECISION

DECISION NO. CAB091/10

EXEMPT

PORTFOLIO:

LEADER

PORTFOLIO HOLDER:

Councillor Bullock

REPORT TITLE:

**Shared Service Proposal for Revenues and Benefits
(101015/CAB003)**

PRIORITY:

The report supports the Council's three customer service commitments.

DISCUSSION:

Both Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone Borough Councils were given a presentation by Stephen McGinnes, Maidstone Borough Council and Bill McCafferty, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. The presentation outlined the Shared Service proposal for Revenues and Benefits.

Following the presentation, both Councils' Cabinet met separately to discuss and make a decision on the report and information presented.

Cabinet was informed that substantial work had been undertaken in relation to a shared Revenues and Benefits which included: review analysed data from a wide range of sources and market testing.

Following the work, the proposal before Cabinet was for a two-way shared Revenues and Benefits service between the two authorities, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone Borough Councils. A full structure chart for the shared service was shown as Appendix B to the report.

It was noted that a shared service between the two councils would deliver a range of benefits, which would include: annual staff savings and IT savings; a large pooling of staff which would be able to manage the peaks and troughs in service demand and provide cover for specialist roles; the cost and skills needed to drive out further savings in areas such as, channel migration, staff training and procurement of services, would be shared; there would be opportunities to actively sell the service to other councils in order to further reduce cost in the future; and maintain and seek to improve standards of customer service and performance.

Cabinet was informed of the implementation plan, this would be divided into three stages: Service Infrastructure, Back Office Implementation and Service Review. The Implementation Plan and target dates were Appendix C to the report.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager highlighted to members the alternative actions and gave reasons for not recommending them.

Cabinet was informed that whilst a number of shared service initiatives had been progressed through the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership, the delivery of a shared service for Revenues and Benefits would represent the most ambitious shared service to date. The work that had been undertaken had confirmed the scope for efficiencies and savings, which had been further validated through comparison with the private sector, providing a high level of assurance that the savings were both realistic and achievable.

It was noted by Cabinet that it would be essential for both partners to deliver cashable savings; this would be met by the proposal as it provided an opportunity for saving, whilst building service resilience and improved service delivery.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's Revenues and Benefits Manager stated that the savings should be viewed as a minimum baseline with the project progressing to deliver further savings both within the service and for support services such as scanning operation and corporate contact centre. Cabinet was informed that other possible opportunities would include broadening of existing fraud partnership; these would be explored as part of the project and considered by the Head of Service and the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership.

Cabinet was informed that communications and consultation would take place with staff, Unison and key stakeholders prior to entering a shared service.

The Chairman thanked all the officers involved in the work carried out to date and asked that a joint press release be issued setting out the shared partnership initiative. Members after due consideration agreed with the recommendations as set out below.

DECISION MADE:

1. That the Council enters into a five-year shared service arrangement with Maidstone Borough Council for the future delivery of its Revenues and Benefits function, subject to consultation with staff and service stakeholders;
2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Change and Communities and the Portfolio Holder of Finance and Governance, in consultation with the Council's Legal Services Manager and Section 151 Officer, to agree the terms of the agreement as necessary for the formation and operation of the shared service, and that the Legal Services Manager be authorised to enter into an agreement on those terms; and

3. That an Invest to Save principle be applied to the development of the service and realisation of the savings, with the necessary investment for implementation funded through the ongoing revenue savings to be realised.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

There would be staff savings across the two authorities with an investment cost being paid off within the first two years of operation.

There was a strong track record of partnership working between Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells, with an existing partnership already in place for benefit fraud.

There would also be additional ICT savings from combining the ICT platforms.

The partnership arrangement would improve performance standards and enhance value for money, as well as providing resilience in the service.

Contact Officer: Bill McCafferty, Revenues and Benefits Manager
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(NOTES:

(1) The meeting closed at 4.30pm.)