

Appendix 1

East Kent Projects

The range of projects reviewed under the shared service arrangements has included those that will have the greatest impact on the future operation of the Council. By tackling 'big ticket' items early, it is hoped that shared services can have the maximum impact in the shortest timeframe, in terms of service enhancement and cashable savings.

The Core Programme

The following services have been identified as the core programme of work by the joint committee.

- East Kent HR/Payroll
- Joint Waste Management project
- East Kent Housing Landlord Services
- East Kent shared support services

HR and Payroll has been the first to conclude and a short summary of the project is provided below. The Waste Management report was recommended for approval at the EKJAC meeting held on 25 November 2009 and is presently working its way through the decision making process of the constituent authorities. Similarly, Joint Housing was approved in December 2009 and is now progressing through the decision making of the four districts.

One of the key learning points from the HR, Waste and Housing projects was the amount of time and staff resource required to prepare a report for recommendation. Consequently the committee has endorsed a radical rethink of the approach for the support services project. A strategic case has been prepared that delegates authority for each Chief Executive, in consultation with their Leader, to transfer selected services into a joint hosting arrangement subject to savings and performance criteria having been met through the preparation of the business case. In January 2010, EKJAC recommended that the report go forward to the constituent authorities for consideration, anticipating that Shepway would not be participating in this particular project but that the EKJAC representatives of Canterbury, Dover and Thanet were supportive.

Case Study: Joint HR/Payroll

A detailed business case was developed that demonstrated that significant savings, in the order of £2m over 5 years, could be achieved by providing a combined HR service. The service is based on the provision of a range of specialist HR advice from a team combined from the four district authorities, supported by trained front-line support officers who would be capable of providing initial professional advice. An HR Manager has been appointed to oversee the new structure. A formal agreement based on the one prepared for the Audit Partnership will underpin the arrangement. The service will be hosted by Dover but line management will be collectively provided by Management Team representatives from each authority.

The proposals will increase the range of specialist advice available to the four authorities, improve resilient within what are currently four smaller teams and offer better career prospects and succession planning opportunities for those in the team. It is expected that further savings will be achieved as the shared service matures; these include:

- Learning and Development (current spend approximately £800,000 across the 4 authorities)
- Recruitment advertising (current spend approximately £200,000 across the 4 authorities)
- Occupational Health provision (Joint contract being let in summer 2009 is expected to bring savings)
- Reduction in the need for technology support to individual systems and individual upgrade costs.

The payroll service has been separated from HR and will be provided by Kent County Council, who as part of the arrangement will acquire new software through a joint procurement process with the HR team. It is expected that the new software will offer far greater self service for client officer, thus creating further efficiency savings.

Objectives

The overall aim of the programme has been the broad scale use of shared services to deliver cost savings and/or improved quality of service. These measures were stated in a report considered at the first meeting of the EKJAC. The importance of relationship building between the partners at the political and managerial level was also seen as critical, which is why the objectives also included a set of agreed behaviours.

Benefits achieved

The legal framework and structure for the East Kent Local Strategic Partnership and the East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee have been approved and are now in full operation.

Members and Officers have jointly developed the ethos of partnership working. Governance arrangements are in place to link the decision making of the Joint Arrangements Committee to the decision making bodies within each council. A East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee holds the body to account and examines the joint projects in some depth.

A number of the other councils in Kent are now adopting their own models of joint working. For example a Mid Kent Improvement Partnership consisting of Ashford, Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells is now actively looking at ways of cutting costs whilst improving services through joint working.

As the projects begin to come to fruition the real cashable savings will start to follow through. In the case of the HR/Payroll project, savings in the order of £2.2m over 5 years are expected to be achieved.

Conclusion

The justification for the provision of funding in the original submission to IESE was to pay for officer time and the communication needed to deliver the vision of East Kent joint working through the multi-agency Local Strategic Partnership and the local authority East Kent joint arrangements.

The officer time invested in bringing the projects this far has been significant, both in the planning, negotiation and execution of the objectives. Teams typically require management input from Chief Executives and political guidance from members to steer the negotiations. At officer level teams have included senior financial, legal and HR representatives together with expert input from service managers and users.

The outcomes of the process are still emerging. The implementation of the HR/Payroll project is well underway and the approvals needed to proceed to the implementation phase for Waste Management, Housing Landlord Services and Shared Support Services will have been granted by Spring 2010.

Copies of EKJAC committee reports can be found on the Canterbury City Council website .

<http://www2.canterbury.gov.uk/committee/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=303>