

## EAST KENT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS COMMITTEE

18 December 2009

- Subject:** **East Kent Joint Services – Strategic case**
- Director/Head of Service:** Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Canterbury)  
Head of Policy and Improvement (Canterbury)  
Head of Finance and ICT (Dover)  
Corporate Director (Shepway)  
Director of Customer Services and Business Transformation (Thanet)
- Decision Issues:** These matters are within the authority of each Council
- Decision type:** Treated as Key
- Classification:** This report is open to the public.
- Summary:** *Attached to this report is the Strategic case for the sharing of certain services between the District Councils of East Kent. It makes recommendations to each council of the services to be considered in a first tranche and the process by which each council will determine whether or not it will participate in each proposed shared service.*
- To Recommend:** The East Kent District Councils of Canterbury City Council, Dover District Council, The District Council of Shepway and Thanet District Council ("the East Kent Authorities") are minded to merge the delivery of each of the services generally described as ICT, face to face and contact centre customer services, revenues and benefits, residual housing services and building control ("the services") between two or more of them subject to the following process:-
- (a) A business case or business cases shall be prepared in respect of each of the services which shall amongst other things describe the proposed merged service, the arrangements between the parties, the savings to be achieved both generally and for each Council and the level of service it is proposed to provide, such business cases to be presented in an agreed format to each of the East Kent Authorities.

- (b) Each of the East Kent Authorities shall delegate to its Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader the power to approve a business case on its behalf mindful that the business case shows to his satisfaction that savings of 10% against the existing combined budgets must be achieved in the first two years and that an acceptable level of service to his council can be delivered.
- (c) If the Chief Executive is not so satisfied for those or any other reasons he shall expeditiously refer the business case for consideration to the Council's executive if it concerns an executive function or to the appropriate committee if it is a council function
- (d) If The Chief Executive or the executive or the committee as the case may be is so satisfied then a delegation to the East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee shall thereupon occur of the powers and duties of the Council as defined in the business case such delegation to take effect on 1st April 2011 or such other date or dates as the Chief Executives of the East Kent Authorities who have made similar delegations shall mutually agree in respect of that service.
- (e) The East Kent Joint Arrangements Committee will delegate such powers to officers as it thinks fit in relation to the services and is requested to appoint one of the East Kent Authorities as the host authority by whom all such officers will be employed.
- (f) Vacancy management arrangements shall be developed by the Chief Executives of the East Kent Authorities in relation to each of the services proposed to be merged pending such merger.
- (g) Any decision regarding the delivery of the services by other methods by each of the East Kent Authorities be deferred and be reconsidered no earlier than May 2011.
- (h) To authorise the Chief Executives of each of the East Kent Authorities to take any steps necessary on behalf of their authorities to explore or facilitate the joint delivery of the services.
- (i) To appoint the Director of Shared Services with the intent he or she will take up their post as quickly as possible after the East Kent Authorities have adopted these proposals.

**Next stage in process:** Each council will take this report through their own decision making process.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1. Introduction**

Against a background of anticipated significant reductions in government spending and a desire to improve services, the four district councils, working in partnership with Kent County Council are addressing joint working in different areas. On district council functions, the four East Kent Districts propose to share a raft of services over the next three years. The proposal in this report relates to what is described as the first tranche, but establishes a process which may be used for further services.

### **2. Detail**

Members are advised to read the East Kent Joint Services Strategic case attached to this report carefully. There is much detail yet to be worked up, but it sets out an approach which is intended to allow reasonably quick and efficient decision making, whilst enabling wider consultations to be held by individual councils, if it is felt necessary to do so. It is hoped that would be on an exceptions basis. In other words, if for example, a business case showed the two prime criteria of savings and service standard were met, members would accept very limited if any consultation.

In the background section the Strategic case describes how the four councils arrived at this point. The proposal has evolved, after discussion and debate, to the point where it needs now to be considered by each council through their own processes. It is to be hoped that all the recommendations will be endorsed by all parties but each council is sovereign and will come to its own view.

### **3. Relevant Council Policy/Strategies/Budgetary Documents**

See the Strategic case. Each council will have their own budget.

### **4. Consultation planned or undertaken**

See the Strategic case. Each authority either has or will have both informal briefings and formal scrutiny processes. In addition the East Kent Joint Scrutiny Committee is considering the Strategic case before this committee and its comments will be presented to this committee.

### **5. Options available with reasons for suitability**

Each council will be free to accept, reject or amend the recommendations. The best option is for each council to agree the recommendations in their entirety as we will then have a single approach which will make the delivery of this difficult project on time much more likely. A patchwork of resolutions is likely to cause delay and perhaps differing expectations between the parties. Rejecting the recommendations in their entirety would be disappointing but the process could still carry on between two or three councils.

**6. Reasons for supporting option recommended, with risk assessment**

For the reasons given above supporting the recommendations at this stage presents least risk. The councils are being asked to commit to a process, not that inevitably each will share all the services identified. Those service decisions will be taken on behalf of each council considering whether in any case it is in its best interests to share a particular service.

**7. Implications**

- (a) Financial Implications  
See the Strategic case.
- (b) Legal Implications  
See the Strategic case. We will be using the powers identified in the existing East Kent arrangements for sharing services.
- (c) Staffing/resource  
See the Strategic case. In particular the section headed Future investment needs for the project.

**8. Conclusions**

The Strategic case sets out a considered proposal which it is intended delivers what the four East Kent Districts collectively want. It provides a means of increasing the pace of joint working while seeking to preserve the independence of each council.

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