

Summary of findings from the Member survey

Purpose

As part of the scoping report, the Joint Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish Group agreed that it would be helpful to survey the non Executive members of the three authorities on how much they know about MKIP, what decisions it takes, what would be the best method of influencing decision-making and whether they know who to contact if a member of the public has a query about a shared service.

Methodology

The survey was produced on online survey software, Survey Monkey. Elected members in each of the three authorities of Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells were informed that the survey was taking place and provided with a link to access the online questionnaire. Provision was also made for those without computer/internet access with hard copies being circulated to members where necessary prior to or after meetings.

Response rate

The survey was open for a period of two weeks and received a total of 35 responses. With a total of 150 elected ward members across the three authorities (this equates to a 23.3% response rate). Of the 35 responses, 13 responses were received from Maidstone, 5 from Swale and 17 from Tunbridge Wells.

Members of the Task & Finish Group acknowledged that there had been a low response rate but agreed that the information received had provided some insight into members' understanding and would be considered as one source within a wealth of information gathered during the witness sessions of the Task & Finish Group's work.

Findings – awareness of the Mid Kent Shared Services

There are seven shared services provided under the umbrella of the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership, with five reporting to the Mid Kent Services Director.

- 69% of respondents thought there were five shared services
- 14% of respondents thought there were six shared services
- The remaining respondents recorded responses of 4, 8 or 9 shared services

When asked to name the five Mid Kent Shared Services that report to the Mid Kent Services Director, only four respondents managed to name all five correctly, two from Maidstone and two from Tunbridge Wells.

Of the responses provided, those which were not Mid Kent Services were sharing or partnership arrangements for service delivery such as licensing and planning support.

Four of the Mid Kent Shared Services featured in the top five responses. Overall, 80% of respondents thought that Legal was an Mid Kent Services shared service and 69% said that ICT was an MKS shared service. Just over half of respondents identified Audit (54%) and the Revenues & Benefits shared services as being part of the Mid Kent Services group (51%).

Findings – confidence in understanding the difference between a Mid Kent Services shared service and other shared services provided by MKIP

- 36% of respondents were confident in their understanding of the shared services provided under the umbrella of the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership
- 21% of respondents provided a neutral response
- 42% of respondents did not feel confident

Findings – confidence in knowing where to get information about what is being discussed by the MKIP Board

- 33% of respondents felt confident in obtaining this information
- 18% of respondents provided a neutral response
- 48% of respondents did not feel confident

Findings – understanding of the MKIP governance arrangements

- 30% of respondents felt confident and understood these arrangements
- 18% of respondents provided a neutral response
- 51% of respondents did not feel confident in understanding these arrangements

Findings – which authority is the current lead for MKIP

This question could have been confused to members as the question asked who was the lead for 2014/15. The lead authority changes on an annual basis and changed to Tunbridge Wells BC in September 2014.

- 21% of respondents correctly named Tunbridge Wells
- 21% of respondents thought it was Maidstone
- 9% of respondents thought it was Swale
- 45% of respondents reported that they did not know

Findings – who is the Mid Kent Services Director

Paul Taylor is the Interim Mid Kent Services Director.

- 45% of respondents correctly named Paul Taylor
- 48% of respondents reported that they did not know

Findings – obtaining information on MKIP

The most popular option for gaining information about what was happening with MKIP was member email bulletins (39%), the second most popular answer was to speak to officers with 33% of respondents selecting this option.

Findings – confidence in explaining shared services to the public

- 39% of respondents felt confident in their ability to explain shared services
- 30% of respondents provided a neutral response
- 27% of respondents did not feel confident

Findings – how would members influence a cabinet decision about MKIP before it was made

Overall, 30% of respondents said that if they wanted to influence a decision about MKIP before it was made they would raise it with their group leader. 25% would speak to the relevant officer. A further 18% of respondents would raise the matter with the relevant portfolio holder and 15% said they would raise it with their Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Most importantly, 77% of respondents said that they were aware that all key decisions in relation to MKIP remained with the individual cabinets of the three authorities. 23% of respondents were not aware of this.