

## ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SHARED SERVICE      OPTION 8: 'FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION'

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**Purpose of this report:**

Options have been put to the EH teams of the three Councils by MKIP for consideration. Each have responded as individual authorities via their respective Directors; in addition representatives from the 'food and health & Safety team' and 'Environmental Protection team' for each of the Councils have come together to consider the impact of change – including the opportunities provided by change – for their respective services. There is evidence of willingness for closer integration, and a significant concern that potential benefits could be overwhelmed by unnecessary staff or locational changes. Officers in MBC believe there is a strong case for an alternative option based around 'Functional Integration' to be considered. This report intends to outline the business case for development of this option.

**Summary of Option 8: Functional Integration**

Developing increased integration, co-operation, shadowing and secondment based on functions would allow for much greater flexibility between LA's about which services were included in the Shared Service. Because the range of services coming under EH varies considerably between the LA's it makes integration of full teams or partial teams very complicated. This option concentrates on the functions being delivered through agreements, protocols and maybe secondments in a developing overarching single culture of sharing and flexibility to the benefit of service delivery standards. Functional Integration could include joint contracts, joint procurement, officer's working across boundaries, and specialist expertise being made available across more than one LA area all offering better use of staff resources.

An option based around functional integration would provide an opportunity to develop a single shared mid-Kent culture. There are numerous functional links already in place including working groups for different aspects of EH such as contaminated land, food sampling, food safety, health and safety, air quality, public health, etc. This is predominately about sharing information and developing County wide protocols and policies where possible. This culture could be developed and backed up by protocols and endorsement of Senior management and could move towards 'Officer trading schemes', for sharing resources and expertise.

**Comments on alternative options**

MKIP have developed 4 success criteria by which a future model should be assessed - Resilience, Quality, Efficiencies and Culture.

An early report presented by MKIP contained 7 draft options. This included an option for no change, 4 options based around 1, 2 or 3 locations with a single EH Manager at the head and 2 options turning more towards outsourcing in varying degrees. Considering these in terms of the MKIP success criteria the following very brief comments are made:

**No change:** The impending legislative changes anticipated for EH service will make it increasingly challenging to deliver a competent and credible service within existing resources. Add to this the impact on service delivery resulting from changes to support services such as legal, HR and IT and it is clear the status quo is not a credible option.

*'No change' is unlikely to deliver Resilience, quality, efficiencies or mid Kent culture*

**Delivery from 1,2 or 3 sites with single EH Manager:** It is foreseeable that all of this group of options could be associated with serious upheaval for the services with the impact possibly lasting 2-5 years of reduced moral and potentially reduced performance. The introduction of a single EH Manager would represent an additional cost for 2 of the 3 Authorities which would have to be found from front line resources thus reducing service standards.

*May improve resilience. Unlikely to deliver quality, efficiencies or mid Kent culture within 5 years*

**Contracting out:** This is a serious option for parts of the service but not regarded as necessary or practical for the whole service.

*Very dependent on the quality of the contract. Could deliver efficiencies and resilience. Unlikely to deliver quality or mid Kent culture.*

### **Expected benefits of Option 8: Functional Integration:**

**Access to the public and businesses/ No increase in travel costs or time:** A significant proportion of the services delivered by EH involves risk based site audits/visit/inspections. Whatever model for management is put in place the requirement for the majority of resources to be 'in the field' will remain. Continuing to deliver the services from 3 sites will keep travel costs and time lost in travelling down and ensure reception facilities remain available to the public.

*(MKIP success criteria: Quality)*

**Shared expertise/Joint policies/Joint operational plans:** The breadth of work delivered makes it impossible for everyone to be an expert in everything. At the moment sharing of expertise and information is either through personal contacts, or through working groups. Development of functional integration could formalise and improve this relationship. The LA's could be encouraged over a period of 3-5 years to develop joint service plans, joint food law enforcement plans, joint H&S intervention plans etc.

*(MKIP success criteria Quality/Efficiencies/Resilience)*

**Communication opportunities:** There are opportunities with existing technology to introduce conference calls, shared access to sharepoint, joint email provision, conference calls. These can enhance existing communication arrangements.

*(MKIP success criteria: Quality/Resilience/Efficiencies/Culture)*

**Shared services:** Integration by function would mean that the LA's could choose which services to share – or not, and at which stage. Say for example 2 authorities chose to jointly appoint a contractor for food inspections (or any other function) – the third authority could come in at a later stage. If protocols and MOU's were put in place for a single unified Authority culture it would improve opportunities for recruitment and open the way for secondments and shadowing. This would improve career opportunities for existing staff.

*(MKIP success criteria resilience/quality/efficiencies/culture)*

**Secondment/Shadowing:** This option encourages development of a programme of staff shadowing and secondment which would improve experience, confidence, competence and resilience. It would encourage the single culture and in some instances offer increased transparency for directors and possibly members.

*(MKIP success criteria efficiencies/culture/resilience/quality)*

**Retain local place shaping:** Part of the work that are of a more strategic nature and influence place shaping such as contaminated land, comments on planning applications and air quality management can still benefit from the shared learning, shared expertise, secondment etc, but can retain local links and delivery as directed by local economic development and quality of life drivers . This would be lost if a single authority were introduced.

*(MKIP success criteria Culture)*

**Joint procurement:** Joint procurement of equipment, or resources could be encourage and achieved on an evolving functional basis.

*(MKIP success criteria Efficiencies)*

**Reduction in impact on human resources.** The impact of partnership and merged services in Kent and further afield have been observed and discussed with and by officers in MBC in detail. The reduction in service delivery during the consultation and discussion phases, implementation - and for a number of years post implementation is significant. It is difficult to see any tangible gains. Distraction from the key role of service deliver is easy to see whether it be about location, terms and conditions, car provision/allowance etc. Working to develop a single overarching culture around functional integration would not require any changes to terms and conditions or location in the short to medium term.

*(MKIP success criteria Resilience/Quality)*

**IT provision:** The LA's do not have the same IT systems, but implementation of Option 8 means this would not be insurmountable. The same secondment, learning and shadowing could improve dramatically the usage of the systems where more than one authority is involved, such as with M3. More opportunities for a shared approach will develop over the forthcoming 2-5 years as the IT shared service is rolled out.

### **Timescales**

Functional Integration is already happening. The pace, depth and breadth of it can happen as quickly as MKIP and the Board want. A protocol could be drawn up by April 2013 with milestones for increased integration over a period of 2 – 5 years depending on the agreed extent of the functional sharing.

As other services are integrated/developed, the timescale and nature of the programme for EH can adapt and change. There are massive advances to be made through true legal partnerships and IT development in particular.

### **Costs**

- EH can achieve its functional integration better with improved IT resources, possible use of 'magic pens' tablets and a full overhaul of how the service is delivered. It can start to integrate without this. Costs therefore will be influenced by other service developments outside EH.
- Functional Integration (Option8) does not require the appointment of a single service head and so funds would not need to be diverted to this.
- Team building to ensure the concept of a changed culture was taken on board would really help in the success of this project.

### **Major Risks**

LA's interpreting this as the status quo.  
A single culture being resisted by individual staff members.