

Maidstone Borough Council

CABINET

Wednesday 11 March 2015

**Report of the Joint Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP)
Task and Finish Group**

Report of Poppy Brewer, Democratic Services Officer

1. Joint Mid Kent Improvement Partnership Task and Finish Group report on governance and communication

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the recommendations within the 'Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group report on governance and communication' attached at appendix (i) and the draft responses to these recommendations set out at appendix (ix)

1.2 Recommendation of the Joint Mid Kent Improvement Partnership Task and Finish Group

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for Maidstone Borough Council, Swale Borough Council and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council each request that their individual Cabinets should jointly consider and respond to the following recommendations that have arisen from the joint scrutiny of governance and communications:

MKIP Governance

- a) That opportunities for pre-scrutiny should be provided within existing governance arrangements at each authority prior to any new shared service proposals being considered at a tri-Cabinet meeting (i.e. after MKIP Board consideration, if not before);
- b) That joint Overview & Scrutiny task and finish groups should be convened by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s) of the individual authorities, as necessary, to jointly review any major issues that arise in regard to shared service delivery and also any new options, such as the possibility of contracting to deliver a shared service for an authority outside the partnership;
- c) That the MKIP Board will notify the Overview and Scrutiny functions of each authority when there are potential items of interest that a joint task and finish group could review on their behalf;
- d) That the creation of the Mid Kent Services Director post should be favourably considered in light of the value already placed on this role by members of the Shared Services Boards and others, as it

provides a single point of contact for the MKIP Board and Mid Kent Service Managers;

- e) That the role of the MKIP Programme Manager should be re-examined and aligned with the reporting arrangements arising from the appointment of a Mid Kent Services Director (if the post is confirmed);
- f) That early consideration should be given to transferring the management of the Planning Support and Environmental Health shared services under the Mid Kent Services umbrella as soon as possible;
- g) That a toolkit is created to assist managers in their role as internal clients of shared services;
- h) That (where appropriate) shared services create a service catalogue for their service that will help internal clients to better understand the extent of the service they provide;

Communication

- i) That a joint communications plan is developed to improve staff and member awareness and understanding of MKIP (shared service development) and MKS (shared service delivery);
- j) That the MKIP Board has responsibility for the effective implementation of an agreed communications plan and ensures its delivery is resourced appropriately;
- k) That communication should be improved between the newly created Shared Service Boards and the MKIP Board to ensure the latter is fully aware of any major service issues and any suggested options for change;
- l) That client representatives on the Shared Service Boards should ensure the outcomes of their meetings, including any related direction coming from the MKIP Board, are effectively cascaded to relevant staff within each authority;
- m) That future MKIP Board meetings should be held and papers published in accordance with the appropriate local authority access to information regulations;

Corporate governance

- n) That given the change in Maidstone Borough Council's governance arrangements in May 2015, that consequential amendments will be made to reflect the absorption of the Overview and Scrutiny function within the Policy and Resources and the three other service Committees.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 1.3.1 A special meeting of the three Overview & Scrutiny Committees of Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils was held on 7 July 2014 to review the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP). At this meeting, it was recommended that a Joint Task & Finish group be established to consider how MKIP's governance arrangements should be taken forward and how an MKIP communications plan should be developed.
- 1.3.2 A review was conducted by the Joint Task and Finish group through a number of question and answer sessions which involved speaking to members of the MKIP Board, Shared Service Managers, client Heads of Service from each of the authorities, Heads of Communication, S151 officers, Monitoring officers and external partners.
- 1.3.3 The Joint Task and Finish group carried out detailed analysis of the governance arrangements for MKIP and questioned witnesses on the methods of communication currently used internally and externally. The key findings of this review are presented in the attached report and highlight where enhancements could be made to improve current procedures and strengthen the practices of MKIP.
- 1.3.4 A second special meeting of the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees of Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils was held on 12 January 2015 to consider the report of the Joint Task and Finish group and the recommendations made.
- 1.3.5 Draft responses to the Overview and Scrutiny recommendations are set out in appendix (ix) for consideration by Cabinet.
- 1.3.6 Several of the recommendations relate to improvements in the engagement of Overview and Scrutiny in the decision making arising from the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership and scrutiny of MKIP shared services. The current MKIP governance arrangements are set out in appendix (iv); these were reviewed in 2012. The draft responses reflect the fact that Maidstone Council will change its governance arrangements from May 2015 from which point a Committee system will replace the current Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny arrangements.
- 1.3.7 A number of recommendations from the Joint Overview and Scrutiny group step outside the agreed scope of the review and relate to management arrangements for MKIP shared services; these are identified in the draft responses.
- 1.3.8 The responses from the Cabinets from Maidstone, Swale and Tunbridge Wells will be available when the MKIP Board meets in late March.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.4.1 The Cabinet could decide not to consider the recommendations within the Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group report, however the recommendations are based on evidence from a wide range of sources and delivers against the Council priority: 'Corporate and Customer Excellence' outlined in 1.5.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

- 1.5.1 Seven shared services are delivered through the Mid Kent Improvement Partnership. Five shared service managers currently report to the Mid Kent Services Director – a role that is currently being trialled. Maidstone is a partner in all seven MKIP shared services and "hosts" five of these services by virtue of being the employer for the shared service manager and in several cases being the employer for the whole team. The work of MKIP is therefore vital to ensuring the delivery of a number of key services and the corporate priorities for Maidstone Borough Council.

1.6 Financial Implications

- 1.6.1 The majority of the recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny do not have any direct financial implications. For example improvements to communications could be achieved within existing resources.
- 1.6.2 The recommendation to favourably consider creation of a Mid Kent Services Director, if followed through, would have financial implications. However this recommendation strays beyond the remit of the Joint Scrutiny Task and Finish Group. This post is currently being trialled and will be considered by the MKIP Board on an evidential basis before any conclusions are reached or decisions made by partners through their individual governance arrangements. These considerations will take into account the report due from the MKIP independent review group set up for the purpose and take into account the resources available to fund the post.

1.7 Relevant Documents

- 1.7.1 Appendix i – Mid Kent Improvement Partnership Joint Task and Finish Group report on governance and communication
Appendix ii - Scoping Report
Appendix iii - Witness Sessions and Papers Reviewed
Appendix iv - MKIP Governance Arrangements
Appendix v - Diagram of governance arrangements for MKIP and MKS
Appendix vi - Summary of survey findings
Appendix vii - Draft Communications Plan
Appendix viii - Glossary

Appendix ix - Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action And Implementation Plan (SCRAIP) Draft Responses

1.8 Background Documents

1.8.1 None

1.9 Other Implications

1.9.1

- 1. Financial
- 1. Staffing
- 2. Legal
- 3. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
- 4. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 5. Community Safety
- 6. Human Rights Act
- 7. Procurement
- 8. Asset Management

<u>IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?</u>	<u>THIS BOX MUST BE COMPLETED</u>
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, this is a Key Decision because:	
.....	
Wards/Parishes affected:	
.....	