

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 15 APRIL 2014

Present: Councillor Mrs Gooch (Chairman), and
Councillors Black, Mrs Grigg, Hotson, D Mortimer,
Nelson-Gracie, Mrs Parvin and Pickett

1. THE COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER WHETHER ALL ITEMS ON THE AGENDA SHOULD BE WEBCAST

RESOLVED: That all items on the agenda be web-cast.

2. APOLOGIES

It was noted that apologies had been received from Councillor Butler.

3. NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no Substitute Members.

4. NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS/WITNESSES

There were no Visiting Members/Witnesses.

5. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

6. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the Agenda be taken in public as proposed.

7. MKIP UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS REPORT

The MKIP Programme Manager, Jane Clarke gave Members a brief précis of how she had come to be seconded to the role following the previous incumbent moving on.

The MKIP Programme Manager drew Members' attention to the outcomes of two reports from Trowers & Hamlins and Mazars LLP which considered the implications and the business case for two distinct models of operation:

- a separate legal entity

- a single host operational model

These reports formed the basis of a report considered by the MKIP Management Board in December 2013. It was explained that whilst there were no clear advantages that would differentiate between the two models, setting up a separate legal entity would require significant further investment, which was not considered practical at the time. The report also recommended that broader governance issues needed to be resolved regardless of the operational model chosen to provide shared services.

The Committee were informed that the MKIP Management Board had agreed not to proceed further with either of the two options but instead would explore an alternative operational model in the medium term. The option that was settled on in December 2013 was to enhance the status quo of operations. This would retain existing arrangements and keep MKIP within the three Authorities as a shared partnership but shared services would be reviewed to see if more efficiencies could be gleaned from them.

It was explained that, in March 2013, the MKIP Management Board had approved to trial a 'single lead provider director' who would line manage a range of current and future Mid Kent Services, acting as a single point of contact for shared service issues, and be accountable for provision to ensure they meet the objectives and levels of service individually agreed at each Authority. It was noted that Paul Taylor from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council would be seconded to this role on a year's trial with effect from 5 May 2014.

Alongside the trial of the new Director, there were a host of practical issues, considered to be 'model neutral issues' that needed to be addressed. These included shared service plans, performance indicators and ensuring communication was effective across the three Authorities.

It was noted that a clear distinction had been identified between Mid Kent Services, which were the operational services Paul Taylor would be responsible for delivering, and the Mid Kent Improvement Programme, which is a more strategic outward looking arrangement that would seek to improve efficiencies across the three Authorities in terms of partnership working.

The MKIP Programme Manager's report highlighted what work had been done over the past year and a flavour of what would be undertaken over the coming year.

The MKIP Programme Manager advised the Committee that she had been to a Scrutiny meeting at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council the night before to give an update. It was noted that those Members had been very positive about the shared services arrangements and could see the benefits. They were concerned, however, about the governance arrangements for the process and how Members could feed into this.

It was noted that there was support from Members of the Committee, and from Tunbridge Wells, for a Joint Scrutiny Meeting.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made to the following:

- the need for Members to be involved earlier, before a specific business case is put together;
- A Collaboration Agreement for ICT had been completed, and this would be used as a template agreement for all other services, and which set out the terms of exit were should an authority choose to withdraw from a shared service at any future point;
- Money was made available by each Authority during the set up period for a shared service, and was accounted for by each authority, although the way in which this was done could vary from partner to partner;
- When the Partnership initiative was originally set up it was intended to be as flexible as possible and so the Council could bid for other services from other authorities. There were many examples of partnership working at MBC that were not within MKIP, although this was the main partnership vehicle that had been used so far;
- The importance of trust when working in partnership;
- Disappointment was expressed that the new Director had not been able to attend the meeting. It was agreed that the Committee would like him to be invited to the next meeting and a written statement detailing the aims and objectives for the next year and his role and responsibilities be sent ahead of the meeting;
- The Committee felt that the Audit Partnership had been working well but concerns were raised about the Licensing Partnership . It was hoped that lessons would be learnt from both projects;
- Members felt it was important that service delivery should not be compromised in any way. It was envisaged that some authorities would have different KPIs, therefore Service Level Agreements should be drawn up to ensure it would not be compromised in any way;
- Concern was expressed that Member power and involvement had reduced as a result of some of the shared services;

RESOLVED: That:

- (a) Paul Taylor, Mid Kent Services Director, be invited to attend the next meeting of this Committee on 6th May to give a presentation on his aims and objectives and his role and responsibilities. A written briefing should also be submitted for Members. Should Mr. Taylor not be able to attend, then the Chief Executive of Maidstone Borough Council and/or David Edwards, Director of Environment and Shared Services, be asked to come along to the meeting in his

stead; and

- (b) the possibility of setting up a Joint Meeting of the three Authority's Scrutiny Committees be investigated with the aim of looking at governance arrangements and being kept up to date on key issues such as communication and engagement and performance monitoring.

8. DURATION OF MEETING

10.00 a.m. to 11.10 a.m.