

## **Joint Committee: 18 February 2016**

### **Progress on reconstitution of Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership and service level agreement with Worcestershire County Council**

#### **Recommendations**

The Joint Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the content of this report

#### **Contribution to Priorities**

Reconstitution of the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership will contribute directly to delivery of partner authorities' priorities for economic, social and environmental well-being, including the agreed priorities for WRS set out in the WRS Service Plan 2016/17 and WRS Business Plan 2016/19.

#### **Summary**

All partner councils other than Worcester City Council have approved the recommendations agreed by this committee in June 2015. Worcester City Council is scheduled to consider the recommendations on 23 February.

Work is progressing on preparation of the new partnership agreement. The new financial arrangements were agreed by partner S.151 officers at the turn of the year and drafting of the main text is in hand.

Agreement has been reached with the County Council on the terms of a short service level agreement for provision of its trading standards services pending transfer back in house. This includes provision for some on-going specialist support from WRS.



## **Background**

At its meeting on 25 June 2015 this committee agreed to recommend partner councils dissolve the current Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership on 31 March 2016 and constitute a new partnership comprising the six district councils on 1 April 2016 along with a service level agreement between the new partnership and County Council for the provision of trading standards services.

## **Reconstitution of the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership**

All partner councils other than Worcester City Council have approved the recommendations agreed by this committee in June 2015. Worcester City Council is scheduled to consider the recommendations on 23 February. With this final approval in place partners will be able to proceed with the dissolution and reconstitution of the partnership as recommended last year

Work is progressing on preparation of the new partnership agreement. Future partnership financial arrangements were agreed by partner S.151 officers at the turn of the year. These incorporate the changes necessary to implement the fee earner model and deliver the new WRS cost sharing arrangements. They also underpin the new WRS business model providing the necessary mechanisms to enable delivery of services to other local authorities and public bodies.

The future partner cost sharing arrangements will be informed by WRS time recording data for fee earning staff. There will be a three year transitional period during which existing costs shares will be maintained to ensure that there sufficient time recording data is accrued to avoid risks of volatility in costs shares due to recognised fluctuations in partner service demands.

Bromsgrove DC legal is leading on drafting of the new partnership agreement. It is anticipated that the first draft of this will shortly be circulated to partner councils' legal teams. This will ensure ample time for signature prior to 1 April.

## **Service level agreement with Worcestershire County Council**

The terms of a short service level agreement (SLA) have been agreed with officers of Worcestershire County Council to facilitate transfer back in house of Trading Standards Services.

It is anticipated that 10.3 full time equivalent staff will transfer back to the County Council on 1 June 2016. This number comprises all staff engaged in trading standards work plus

one of the Intelligence Officers.

Following transfer, the County Council Trading Standards team will continue to be based at Wyre Forest House alongside WRS personnel. Discussions are well advanced for this Wyre Forest DC which will provide ICT support as the Trading Standards team will continue to utilise the WRS Idox management information system.

A longer term SLA between WRS and the County Council is also envisaged under which WRS will provide specialist legal administration services. This will be aligned to arrangements between the County Council and Bromsgrove DC which provides legal advocacy services.

## **Financial Implications**

The WRS budget agreed by this committee at its November meeting reflects the operating cost of the new partnership.

Subject to the foregoing SLA being concluded, the County Council will make a one-off payment to the new WRS partnership in respect of the loss of 22 months contribution to overhead costs. This is estimated at £173,147 and will be held as an earmarked reserve to meet cost pressures whilst WRS secures new income streams and adjusts its cost base.

## **Legal Implications**

There are no new legal implications arising from the matters set out in this report.

## **Risk**

As noted in previous report there are risks in relation to securing the unanimity necessary to dissolve and reconstitute the partnership. These risks will be eliminated after an affirmative vote by Worcester City Council.

## **Sustainability**

This report outlines the significant steps that have been taken to ensure the future financial and operational sustainability of WRS and the Worcestershire Shared Service partnership.

## **Contact Points**

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## **Background Papers**

*'Future arrangements for Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee and Worcestershire Regulatory Services'* – report of Acting Head of WRS and Chair of WRS Management Board – Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee – 25 June 2015

*'Business Plan for Worcestershire Regulatory Services 2016-2019'*

Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership Agreement 1 June 2010