

Worcestershire Regulatory Services Board
22nd June 2016

Progress on reconstitution of Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership

Recommendations

The Board is recommended to note the content of this report

Contribution to Priorities

Reconstitution of the Worcestershire Shared Services Partnership and restructuring of WRS management contributed 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 2015/16 and WRS Business Plan 2015/18.

Summary

All partners completed the sign off of the previous Joint Committee's decision, allowing the legal agreement creating the district-only partnership for delivering the relevant regulatory functions to come into effect for the 1st April 2016, as scheduled.

The County Council's exit from the partnership to the role of customer was facilitated by the Head of Regulatory Services, working with the County's Head of Community Services just ahead of the new financial year and the second process to enable the County Council to take back control of its Trading Standards and Animal Health functions was completed in time for the scheduled transfer of staff under TUPE arrangements on 1st June 2016.

Report

At its meeting on 25 June 2015 the previous Joint Committee agreed to recommend partner councils dissolve the then 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 the County Council for the provision of trading standards and animal health services



Partner councils completed the approval of the recommendations agreed in June 2015 early in 2016, leaving the legal officers to draft a new agreement for the six districts to sign. At the same time, the Head of Regulatory Services entered into discussions with the County Council to facilitate its move from being a partner to a customer of WRS and, from there, to agree the basis for it to take back direct control of its Trading Standards and Animal Health functions.

An agreement was created by the legal officers of the six district partners and ratified in the way required by each partner so the new agreement came into effect on 1st April 2016, dissolving the previous partnership and creating the new one for which this Joint Committee is the key governance element.

The Head of Regulatory Services also entered into the agreement with the County Council for the delivery of Trading Standards and Animal Health functions under contract, signing this with the Head of Community Services from the County Council on 31st March 2016.

A further agreement with the County Council that allowed it to take back control of its functions whilst continuing to purchase some elements of support from WRS was also signed in May 2016, ensuring that the proposed date of 1st June 2016 for transferring staff back to the employment of the County Council was achieved.

All elements envisaged in the former Joint Committee's decision of 25th June 2015 have now, therefore, been discharged.

Financial Implications

The County Council's exit from the partnership resulted in a payment to the partners to cover the overheads that would have been allocated to the Trading Standards and Animal Health cost centre had the County Council remained engaged with WRS. This figure has been modified to reflect:

- The County's purchase of ICT and Accommodation from Wyre Forest, resulting in a subsequent reduction to the charge on WRS
- The County's agreement to purchase certain support functions like Legal Administration of case files from WRS

This will be held by the Host as a WRS reserve to support the service in seeking business to replace the County Council's contribution and to help fund any changes to the establishment that may need to take place should this not be successful.

Legal Implications

WRS continues to discharge the functions identified on behalf of the district partners but no longer discharges any County Council regulatory functions. However, the co-location of WRS and the TS team will continue to facilitate joint working on various aspects of work and project activities.

Risk

Risks have been reduced by the payment to the service from the County Council to help support any changes that may be required at a later date. Co-location and continued close working will limit any risks associated with common areas of delivery like statutory food controls.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

Copies of the executed partnership agreement should be available to members through their respective legal services teams.

