

**BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL AND REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**SHARED SERVICES BOARD**

**28th OCTOBER 2008 at 6.00pm**

**THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BROMSGROVE**

PRESENT: Councillors C. Gandy (Chairman), M. Hall, W. Hartnett, R. Hollingworth, J. Luck, P. McDonald and M. Webb

Officers in Attendance: K. Dicks and K. Firth.

Observer: Councillor S. Peters

1/08 **APOLOGIES**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor C. MacMillan.

2/08 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st September 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

3/08 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

In response to a query raised by Cllr Hollingworth, Cllr Gandy clarified that there was an unresolved issue with the secondment agreement not the Concordat document. She hoped the matter would be resolved but it may need to be referred to the full Redditch Council. Cllr Gandy undertook to contact Cllr Hollingworth outside the meeting.

In response to a query raised by Cllr McDonald in respect of the Board's previous decision with regard to the membership of the Leaders of the respective Labour Groups on the Board, it was noted that a verbal commitment to Shared Services had been given by each Labour Leader at their respective Council meetings. This had been accepted and their membership of the Board had therefore been duly approved.

Cllr Hollingworth suggested that the Board reconsider its decision not to allow substitute members. **It was agreed that the decision should stand.**

In response to a query as to whether the meeting had been publicised, the Board was informed that the agenda papers had been circulated to all Members of both Councils but not to the press or public. Kevin Dicks indicated that he would pick this up.

Cllrs Gandy and Hollingworth confirmed that the quick wins had been agreed by their respective Councils.

Cllr Hartnett raised the need for the Board to receive a regular financial summary of the running total of costs/savings.

4/08 **PROGRESS REPORT**

Kevin Dicks referred to the progress report which had been circulated to inform the Board of the work being undertaken by both Councils with regard to shared services and the wider Acting Joint Chief Executive arrangements.

Both Councils had ratified the terms of reference and governance arrangements within the Concordat agreement (subject to some alterations to the document), the proposed quick wins for joint working/shared services and the targets and objectives.

Cllr Hartnett queried what changes were made to the Concordat and Kevin Dicks undertook to circulate a version of the document showing the tracked changes.

**Quick Wins**

**Elections and Community Safety**

Kevin Dicks referred to the likely need for a special meeting of the Board to consider the respective business cases for Elections and Community Safety.

Cllr Hartnett commented that political parties may have views on shared services/joint working and there may be a need to seek their views rather than just consulting existing Members.

Cllr Hartnett queried whether relevant Portfolio Holders at each Council were being kept informed. Kevin Dicks replied that he believed this to be the case at Bromsgrove but he would ensure that they were fully briefed at both Councils.

Kevin Dicks referred to the membership of the Elections Project Board and advised that he would expect the lead officer to present the business case to the Board in due course.

With regard to Community Safety, Kevin Dicks advised that he had met with key officers from both Councils and the draft business case may be completed by the end of the week. He referred to the wish to share experiences between both Councils, to have a presence in both areas and indicated that the possibility of sharing skill sets between the two Councils would be looked into. Ultimately, there may be a wish to pursue the North Worcestershire Crime Reduction Partnership which had been put on the backburner.

### Performance Management

Cllr Hartnett sought further details with regard to the role of Fiona Cuzzens from South Staffordshire Council who had been seconded to help implement performance management arrangements at Redditch.

Kevin Dicks advised that she had been commissioned for a 6 week project, to be based at Redditch and that Redditch were dealing with the HR issues. The cost of backfilling her post would be paid direct to her home authority.

Kevin Dicks also referred to the need to look at performance appraisals for staff at Redditch and to embed this within the organisation.

### Equalities and Diversity

Kevin Dicks commented that the proposed way forward as outlined in the report represented a starting point with a view to then exploring the possibility of a joint Equalities Officer. It was noted that the report should have referred to level 2 (not level 3) of the Equality Standard.

### Member Development

Kevin Dicks highlighted the intention to align the training and development programmes at both Councils and the need to generally increase Members' attendance. He also drew attention to a forthcoming session on the Standards Committee regime to which councillors from both Councils had been invited. Cllr Luck suggested it may be better to invite Parish Clerks rather than just their Chairman. It was noted that Parish Clerks had been invited to similar events in the past.

It was suggested that, for some subject areas, one training session would be sufficient, whereas two sessions may be required in other cases. In such instances, each Council could host an event so as to give all Members a choice of which to attend.

### Head of Financial Services

Kevin Dicks stated that as the postholder had withdrawn her resignation, it was now proposed that the feasibility of a joint post should not be explored at this stage, but investigated as part of the business case for the longer term.

### Overall Project

Kevin Dicks queried whether the Board had any other issues they wished to be factored into the medium term.

Cllr Gandy suggested Estate/Assets Management.

Cllr McDonald suggested Planning but this was not supported by Cllr Gandy due to the staffing situation at Redditch.

Cllr Hartnett suggested that efforts could be made to match up issues with the skill set of the external resource recruited to undertake the analytical work of service areas that could be targeted within the business case.

Kevin Dicks undertook to email Board Members separately to seek views on areas that could be assessed within the 8 week timescale allocated for the analytical work.

### **Other Areas**

#### **Economic Development**

Kevin Dicks highlighted the need to look at how to work more effectively across the north of the County.

#### **Payroll**

Cllr Hartnett referred to the electronic payroll advice system adopted by the County in contrast to the paper payslip system used by Redditch and Bromsgrove and the potential savings to be made by pursuing an email approach. Kevin Dicks responded that it would be worth exploring the County's experience.

#### **IT**

Kevin Dicks clarified the details of the web developer post being shared by both Councils and undertook to provide details of how the costs were being apportioned.

#### **Climate Change**

Kevin Dicks drew attention to the investigations into the feasibility of a joint officer post to oversee a strategy across both Councils.

#### **Workforce Planning**

Kevin Dicks highlighted the wish to avoid duplication of effort, the intention to share a common approach and to undertake a skills audit across both Councils.

### **Financial Implications**

Kevin Dicks indicated that the progress report did not include the legal costs but that these would be reported to both Councils. He also advised that he had not yet put in place a 'first amongst equals' at Bromsgrove due to the need to assure the Government Monitoring Board that he was keeping on top of issues at Bromsgrove.

Cllr McDonald queried what the overall projected savings for the year end would be if the pension liability was not excluded. Kevin Dicks referred to the need to seek clarity due to the different accounting practices between each Council. It was further commented that the individual concerned would have been leaving the Council regardless of the Acting Chief Executive initiative.

Cllr McDonald also queried the legal costs for the secondment agreement. Kevin Dicks replied that this had been outsourced and would be around £10-15,000 but there was not yet a final figure as the agreement had not yet been resolved.

Cllr McDonald expressed support for the suggestion made by Cllr Hartnett earlier in the meeting with regard to the need for the Board to receive a regular running breakdown of costs/savings.

Cllr Gandy commented that Members would also need to take into account service improvements and issues such as improved Member training and development which may not necessarily be financial savings. She also added that all Members needed to be made aware of the costs/savings as ultimately they would be making the decisions.

5/08 **BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) - SELF ASSESSMENT**

Kevin Dicks referred to the copy of Bromsgrove District Council's CPA Self Assessment which had been circulated to the Board for information. In view of the Acting Joint Chief Executive initiative and the shared services proposals, it was possible that Redditch may be identified as a key stakeholder. The CPA inspectors would be on site in Bromsgrove during week commencing 10th November 2008.

6/08 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Board was next scheduled to meet on 18th December 2008 at 5.30 p.m. at Redditch. Kevin Dicks reiterated the likely need for a special meeting prior to this date to consider the business cases for Elections and Community Safety. He would liaise with relevant lead officers and then contact Members.

The Meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.