

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 4th September 2007

MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS

Report by the Director of Resources

1. Introduction

The purpose of the report is to explain the need for, and recommend the process for determining what are the minimum service standards that must apply in the time between now and the “vesting day” for a new unitary authority for Wiltshire.

2. Financial Implications

None.

3. Staffing Implications

The staffing implications are discussed in detail in the body of the report.

4. Legal and Risk Management Implications

There is the risk that without setting clear minimum service standards staffing resources will be inappropriately allocated and the Council will fail to meet those standards in respect of core, essential services. Failure to meet statutory requirements could give rise to litigation.

5. Introduction

This report is predicated on the assumption that staff resources available to provide services will significantly diminish over the coming months, for a variety of reasons:

1. Increased numbers of staff seeking employment elsewhere.
2. The imposition of a recruitment freeze, (except for certain front-line workers) to avoid unnecessary redundancies.
3. The involvement of staff in the work of preparing for the new authority, up to and including full-time secondment for this purpose.

An expectation of reduced staff resources will necessitate a range of strategies to cope with the new situation.

6. Background

All the Council's service managers and heads of service have been asked to carry out an analysis of the services and activities that they manage. They have been asked to identify services that are essential to maintain; those that are important to maintain; those that are desirable to maintain; and, those that can be stopped or curtailed.

For each category the service managers and heads of service have been asked to give their professional opinion on the minimum service standards that should apply, and the numbers and types of officer they would need to maintain those minimum standards.

The Management Team will then review the submissions made by each manager prior to consideration by the relevant executive committee, (and the Human Resources Committee in respect of work in that department) in the forthcoming round of committee meetings.

7. The Need for Minimum Service Standards

The purpose of establishing minimum service standards is mainly to provide the management team with an agreed framework upon which to base decisions on how to focus staff resources on critical areas by:

1. internal secondments to essential services from less essential work;
2. redistribution of some work between departments;
3. engagement of interim staff in extreme cases where budgets allow; and
4. withdrawal of staff resources from services or activities that are less critical than others if the situation generally becomes increasingly difficult

This will not be an easy exercise for the managers or the committees because both will be concerned to provide the best services possible, but there will need to be a realisation that what is possible may look significantly different as time goes on.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a very real possibility that reduced staff resources will prevent the Council from operating its services at their current levels, and difficult decisions will have to be made in this regard. However, it must be better to address the issue now and provide a rationale framework in advance rather than react in an ad hoc and potentially inappropriate manner under the pressure of events.

It is therefore **RECOMMENDED THAT:**

- (1) The Council endorses the concept of setting out minimum service standards; and**
- (2) Commends the process of setting realistic, minimum service standards to the relevant committees during the forthcoming round of committee meetings.**

Director of Resources