

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE

15 April 2008

Amalgamation of Services

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek a decision from the Implementation Executive to approve a framework for the amalgamation of key services to ensure readiness for the new authority on 1 April 2009.

Main Considerations

2. The ambition, as set out in the One Council for Wiltshire submission, and one of the underlying principles driving the work of the programme is that the transition to one council should, so far as possible, appear seamless to users of services. In effect, when the public call the new authority on 1 April 2009, or look up information on the website, it should, to all intents and purposes, look like one organisation. That is going to mean a lot of activity by staff in the background, but the single look and feel of services is a prime consideration.
3. If the teams are brought together for the first time on 1 April it is unlikely that they will be able to perform to a standard which will meet this ambition.
4. The most obvious examples are perhaps in the areas of ICT and customer care (where 5 locations will continue to exist on 1 April 2009), where there is a need to reduce current complexity and to start integrating systems and processes. Doing this from the standpoint of five separate teams, employed by five separate organisations coming under common management for the first time on the first day is inherently risky.
5. While the examples above are the most obvious perhaps, there is nonetheless similar arguments to be made in respect of many of the other functions within both the resources and the front line work streams. The proposal is therefore to bring together teams on a case by case basis in order to best prepare for service delivery to customers on 1 April 2009. The basis upon which it is proposed to do this is set out below. Early establishment of the new One Council team will:

1. Give clarity to staff as to their future prospects and confirm that they have a role in the new organisation.
2. Create some additional capacity, through larger more resilient teams.
3. It will allow the teams to focus on the work that is important to the Implementation Executive, to ensure that it is best able to deliver its responsibilities in relation to the transitional functions.
4. It will significantly reduce the risk that services will fail to provide the essential support and customer service on day one.

Broad Principles

6. The Joint Implementation Team consider and approve requests to bring services together on a case by case basis.
7. Arrangements will be subject to consultation with the Trade Unions and staff and on final arrangements e.g. travel and relocation arrangements being settled.
8. Staff would transfer early to the employment of the County Council. They would do so on terms no less favourable than those which would apply on 1 April 2009. That is to say they will bring their existing terms and conditions with them. It will be treated so far as possible as if it were a TUPE transfer.
9. Completely new structures which will prevail with the new authority below Head of Service are likely to take a little longer to conclude, but the process of staff involvement and engagement will be easier from the perspective of single teams. There will be an interim issue relating to salary and budgets which can be resolved by the finance officers.
10. There will need to be provision to ensure that the ongoing services are properly supported, again it is proposed that the joint implementation team should approve arrangements on a case by case basis to ensure resilience of individual district council requirements.
11. In summary establishing teams in preparation for 1 April 2009 will ensure services are well prepared, and that staff have the answer to the question which most concerns them which is:

“Do I have a job, what and where will it be and how much will I be paid”.

Risk Assessment

12. The main risk is that teams are ill-prepared for working together on 1 April 2009 with risk to service integrity. It is suggested that this proposal will significantly mitigate that risk. It does potentially pose a risk to service integrity to district councils, but it is suggested that the certainty provided to staff, the economies of scale and the opportunity to build resilience significantly reduces those risks.

Equality Impact of the Proposal

13. The equality impact assessment of this proposal is that it would be no greater than would otherwise be the case if staff transferred on 1 April 2009.

Financial Implications

14. Overall to the combined expenditure of the five authorities there are no adverse financial implications.

Legal Implications

15. These are explicit within this report.

Proposals

16. The Implementation Executive is asked to delegate to the Chief Executive of the County Council in consultation with the District Council Heads of Paid Service:

- i. the power to establish single teams of staff employed by the County Council from among the staff of the five authorities.
- ii. to agree the detailed basis upon which staff will transfer, subject to the proviso that staff will be treated as if TUPE applies.

17. The Implementation Executive is asked to delegate to the County Council Section 151 officer in consultation with the District Council S151 Officers:

- i. the power to settle such financial arrangements as are necessary to give effect to such arrangements.

18. The Joint Implementation Team to agree and keep under review, agreed arrangements to ensure that the service requirements of district councils are properly met and discharged before 1 April 2009.

Stephen Gerrard, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer

Unpublished documents relied upon in the preparation of this report: none
Environmental impact of the recommendations contained in this report: none.