

KENNET DISTRICT COUNCIL

RESOURCES EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

To be held on 18th September 2007

Report of the Director of Resources

Minimum Service Standards for Finance, Legal, Democratic, Policy and Information Services

1. Purpose of the report

To seek Members agreement to and acknowledgement of a series of minimum service standards for those services it manages which are likely to have to be introduced as a result of staffing changes brought about by the unitary council process.

2. Introduction

At the Council meeting held on the 4th September the Director of Resources set out the need to establish a series of minimum service standards which the Council will use as a basis for staff resource allocation in the time leading up to the establishment of the new unitary authority for Wiltshire.

It is inevitable that as 'vesting day' approaches the number of staff employed by the Council will decrease because a number of factors. Staff will have left to work elsewhere, the proposed recruitment freeze will begin to bite and some key staff will effectively be working full time for the new authority setting up the unitary services.

3. Financial, Staffing, Risk and Legal Implications

Given that the predicted problem will arise because there will be fewer staff employed to run Council services, it is considered unlikely that the content of this report will give rise to any untoward budgetary problems. If it transpires that the Council has to employ contract staff to fill certain key positions it is anticipated that the cost will be covered by a net loss of staff elsewhere in the organisation.

There will clearly be legal implications if the Council fails to provide statutory services or puts the health and safety of its staff or the public at risk but the aim of this report is to ensure that both key services and health and safety standards are maintained throughout the transition period. Members should note, however, that occasions may arise late in the transition process where the Council simply does not have the staff to undertake some functions, either

because it cannot transfer staff from other parts of the organisation or because it simply cannot recruit suitably qualified temporary staff.

This is something which is outside the Council's control and is a risk it will have to face as a result of the unitary process.

4. Background

The Council has to ensure that certain of its services continue to be provided. To do so in coming months it will probably be necessary to divert resources from other services. Ideally these resources will come from discretionary areas but it may become necessary to take some resources from statutory services. The Council obviously cannot stop providing statutory services but it can decide to lower some performance standards. For example it could decide that it cannot carry out benefit fraud investigations as frequently as it does at present because the remaining staff are focussing on the calculation and payment of benefit entitlement.

Officers have examined the services for which they are responsible and the tables appended to this report rank all of the main services in order of priority. The ranking is based on the following: -

1. Essential services where internal secondments **will** take place from less essential work;
2. Services where there **is likely** to be redistribution of some work between departments where staff are available;
3. Services which the Council will try to maintain but replacement staff will only be provided in extreme cases **where budgets allow**; and
4. Services where the withdrawal of staff resources is **less critical** than others and where, if the situation generally becomes increasingly difficult, services may be discontinued.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Members will appreciate that officers do not want to reduce service levels or standards but this is a situation which may be forced upon us as we progress to vesting day. Officers believe that it is far preferable to plan now for this eventuality than adopt an ad hoc approach later.

By early planning, staff will be made aware as early as possible that their roles may have to change or that they may have to stop doing certain jobs to focus on others with Member backing.

In addition, Members will have a reasonably firm idea about which services are likely to be 'squeezed' or even terminated and which ones officers will try to maintain and the reasons for this.

It is therefore **recommended that the Committee:**

- 1. endorses the service priorities set out in the tables are the correct ones;**
- 2. accepts that in certain circumstances the Council will have to withdraw some services and reduce service levels/standards in others;**
- 3. delegates to the Director of Resources authority to vary the priorities if circumstances dictate (for example if there is a change in legislation which mean activities have to be given a higher or lower priority).**

Director of Resources

INFORMATION SERVICES MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS

This document shows the *minimum* service standards that could apply across each of the discrete services provided by Information Services. It is not designed to be a scenario for Information Services or a desired way of providing services. Its aim is to be an indication of the different areas that a reduction in staffing could be achieved if additional resources were required elsewhere. As the majority of services provided by IS are support services, reduction in the levels of services provided may well have a significant knock-on effect to other areas of the Council and to the minimum service levels that they have identified. In the light of these comments the services are shown in alphabetical order and not in priority order.

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
Admin & Facilities					
Administration work (typing, cover etc) & management of reservations	Typing the benefits interview tapes which are required for prosecution.	Supporting a front-line service.	Prosecutions will be delayed or prevented from happening	0.5fte	The typing could be undertaken by a temp or by someone from another section working overtime.
	Enveloping & checking cheques for suppliers and benefits claimants	Ensuring payments are sent out	Creditors must be paid		
	Ensuring that room and equipment bookings are maintained	Meetings are likely to increase particularly those with external people	If not managed rooms will not be prepared and the car park could be chaos		
Browfort Campus cleaning	Clean Browfort and Devizes TIC 3 times per week rather than daily	Offices need to be clean as they are open to the public. A reduced service could be provided should the number of staff reduce.	3 times per week	6 people	
Caretaking	Opening & closing the building and some level of portage. Collection of post from Reception to post room. This could be undertaken by a single member of staff	The building needs to be opened at the start of each day and secured at the close. There also needs to be a person on the call out rota should there be an incident out of hours in the building.	Having a single caretaker on permanent shifts would be very difficult to maintain as the person will not have any free weekends or time when they are not on call	1fte (on shift)	This could be achieved by 2 people covering this role and another one, such as post and filing room and swapping roles weekly.

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
	working shifts				
Filing Room	General day to day filing needs to be maintained in order that people can access the information as and when required. Archiving would not be undertaken. 1.5 days per week	The planning service will require information at all times and this needs to be accessible.	Filing room could become full	0.3 fte	This could be passed back to the Planners and their admin staff to undertake should they have available resources
Post room	All post received will be opened in a single session (rather than morning & afternoon). Out-going postal services will remain as at present with the franking undertaken once a day. Post will need to be collected from the departments and probably delivered to them.	To maintain a service to the public and to maintain the Council's standards	Need to ensure that the other services provide staff as well, if not then the post will be delivered later in the day Must have a cashier.	1fte	
Reprographics	NONE	There are plenty of printers around the building that can be used in extreme circumstances. For bulk printing it can be outsourced to other organisations such as the police or WCC. It is likely that the volumes of printing will significantly reduce, particularly as agendas and minutes are being sent out electronically and the			

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
		number of meetings/reports could reduce.			
Business Unit					
Application support	Applications (such as Revenues & Benefits, planning etc) will need support over the coming years. There will be releases and patches to be loaded and bugs to resolve.	To ensure that service to the public is maintained	Increased downtime for applications should this service not be available. Increased costs as a result of greater dependency on suppliers	1fte	
Business analysis	NONE	No development work will be undertaken			
IT Project management	There are a number of on-going projects that need to be managed to ensure that they are completed, eg integration	To maintain service standards and to ensure that projects complete to time and budget	Increased costs or delays	0.5fte	
Research	NONE	No development work will be undertaken			
Software development	NONE	No development work will be undertaken			
Software maintenance	Existing in-house applications and interfaces need to be maintained to reflect changes in the way rules and regulations and service delivery	To ensure that service delivery is maintained to the public	Inaccuracies and faults will occur	1fte	

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
Web development & Maintenance	The web site is the public face of Kennet and needs to provide the latest information about the services that the Council provides.	<p>The availability of accurate information on our web site will impact on the number of contacts that the Council receives through other access channels, so the number of personal callers and phone calls will not be as high as they could have been if no other form of information is available.</p> <p>Customer services also use this as a primary source of information if it is not maintained then this will impact on the accuracy of information available to them and a greater number of contacts being passed to the back office.</p> <p>It is likely that this is one of the first areas that service departments will cut in times of staff shortages.</p>	Accuracy of information	1fte	
Corporate Work					
Strategies & policies	NONE	Existing policies and strategies will suffice for the remainder of the life of the authority			
Transformation programme	NONE	Reviews that are already complete need to be implemented but new ones will not be undertaken			
CRM & Support					
CRM script development	NONE	New services will not be moved into the Contact Centre and so there will be no requirement for new scripts			
CRM script	The scripts used by the customer services	It is necessary to provide accurate	Giving out inaccurate	0.5fte	

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
maintenance	department are essential to maintaining the service to the public. Scripts will require maintenance to reflect the latest changes	information to the public	information to the public		
Member training	NONE	Those members that become members of the “new” organisation will require different training.			
Quality management	NONE	No requirement to revise and review procedures or undertake audits			
Customer Services					
Complaints	Management of complaints and handling them needs to continue.	Public will still want to complain about the Council and we therefore have a duty to deal with them effectively	Increase in Ombudsman cases and negative publicity should this service stop	0.5fte	
Contact centre	The service needs to continue in its current format as people will still want to contact the Council and will require services from us	Provision of services to the public.	Increased abandonment rate Longer calls & more calls?	10fte	
Reception & Advice	The service needs to remain as it is currently.	Impact on back office if the number of staff are reduced. Could consider reducing the opening hours of reception should the numbers of staff available reduce significantly. Could also consider changing shift patterns and	Passing more queries back Interviews passed to back office Calls not handled Longer queues	8.5 fte	

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
		staggering lunch breaks over a longer period	Increase phone calls? Any reduction will impact on the ability to provide a service		
Scanning	This service is required but it could be passed to the back office to do at the same time as indexing.	Necessary for maintaining services in Revenues and Benefits	Increase delays in dealing with benefits applications Increase in queries from members of public		
IS Technology					
Data transfer & back ups & closedown	Data transfers are required for a number of applications, including banking, and take considerable time on a daily basis to carry out	This is an essential service to maintain the systems that support service delivery.		0.5fte	Should in-house staff not be available there is the option to use the support contract with Alexsys
Disaster recovery	Use support contract		Use Alexsys		Should in-house staff not be available there is the option to use the support contract with Alexsys
Infrastructure development	NONE				
Infrastructure maintenance	Alexsys contract supplies this area	Maintain service delivery	Contract with Alexsys expires at the end of December 2007		
Security	Alexsys contract covers this area	Maintain service delivery	Contract with Alexsys expires at the end of December 2007		

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
Support desk, telephony support & user access	Respond to users requests and problems and to maintain the access authorities to both IT and telephony	Likely to be considerable changes in staffing requiring user ids to be removed and created. In order for users to provide the services they need support from ICT		2fte	Should in-house staff not be available there is the option to use the support contract with Alexsys
Procurement					
Advice & support	NONE	Types and levels of complex procurement will reduce closer to vesting day			
Contract tendering	NONE	New and replacement contracts will be unlikely to be tendered.			
Management of Corporate Contracts	The council have a number of contracts in place that will need to be managed, such as energy, stationery, mobiles	To ensure that all purchasing undertaken is appropriate	Increased costs	0.5fte	
Order & invoice processing	Paying invoices and raising orders for the goods and services that are required to maintain services	Some goods and services will be required to maintain service delivery		0.5fte	
Up-keep of internet and intranet sites	NONE				
Tourism					
Running Tourist Information	Maintain a service at Avebury and close	Some level of service needs to be maintained for visitors to the area and also	Close DTIC & move bus	2ftes	

Service/ Activity	Minimum service level	Why	Risks/ Issues	FTE for minimum service	Comments?
Centres	Devizes TIC. This will enable the greater number of visitors to be seen and all phone calls can be transferred there.	to ensure that the accommodation providers receive a return for the money that they have paid to be advertised	passes to Browfort		
Bus passes	This service needs to be provided. It does not necessarily need to be provided from the Devizes TIC it could be provided from Browfort	This is a statutory service and a service to the residents of Kennet.		1fte	
Destination management partnership	NONE	This is planning for a different organisation for tourism in Wiltshire. Involvement is good but should the resources no longer be available then the County will continue with it			
Marketing & promotion	A limited level of promotion should be maintained to ensure that the area attracts visitors	Contribution to the economy of the area by attracting visitors. Also part of the agreement with the accommodation providers		0.5fte	
Tourism development	NONE				

MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS PRO FORMA – LEGAL SERVICES

Service/Activity Ranked in Order of Importance	Minimum Standard That Should Be Applied	Why the Suggested Minimum Standard Should Apply	The Risks or Consequences of Not Maintaining The Minimum Standard	The Staff Equivalent Needed For This Activity or Service	Any Other Matters To Take Into Account
1. Response to Ombudsman Investigations / complaints	Correspondence, liaison with Ombudsman office regarding investigation to complaints	Duty to assist Ombudsman	To protect Council's reputation and avoid recommend financial penalties	Current establishment	
1. Respond to Standards Board referrals for investigation.	Complaints referred for local consideration to be investigated and reported to Standards Committee. Standards Committee to be supported.	Statutory duty.	Breach of statutory duty. Delayed investigations are detrimental to members ability to carry out effective representation.	Current establishment	
1. Litigation : Institute legal proceedings and prosecute Council's regulatory functions and debt collection.	Institute proceedings and represent Council before civil and criminal courts.	To assist Council's services to achieve their regulatory aims and responsibilities. Recover debts owed to Council.	Front line services failing in their targets/responsibilities. Debts to Council going uncollected.	Current establishment	

<p>1 Contracts/procurement To advise upon and carry out the Council's contractual functions/liabilities.</p>	<p>Advise and draft contracts for the Council.</p>	<p>To protect the council's liabilities and achieve best value.</p>	<p>Breaches of contractual obligations having financial consequences for the Council.</p>	<p>Current establishment</p>	
<p>1 Property: To advise and carry out Conveyancing in matters of sale / acquisition of land</p>	<p>Provide advice, draft leases and carry out conveyance procedure where Council sells/acquires land</p>	<p>To enable Council to realise its programme in relation to land sales/acquisitions.</p>	<p>Failure of Council to achieve it's aims and receive capital.</p>	<p>Current establishment.</p>	
<p>1 Planning : Provide planning advice and representation at Inquiries and Committee</p>	<p>Provide advice, draft enforcement and other planning notices. Draft and agree s.106 agreements.</p>	<p>To enable the Council to carry out it's development control responsibilities.</p>	<p>Failure to meet 8 week performance measurement for determination. Effect on planning support grant. Failure to remedy breaches of planning control.</p>	<p>Current establishment</p>	

MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Service/Activity Ranked in Order of Importance	Minimum Standard That Should be Applied	Why the Suggested Minimum Standard Should Apply	The Risks or Consequences of Not Maintaining The Minimum Standard	The Staff Equivalent Needed for This Activity	Any Other Matters to Take Into Account
Electoral Register Canvass	1	This is an absolute legal requirement	Breach of electoral law	2.5 FTE + up to 25 casual	
Polling Station Review	1	Required by Electoral Administration Act 2006	Breach of electoral law	60 hours? Initially being undertaken by Building Control. Later input from electoral staff	Possibly controversial with the public At present 2x inspections per week by each building control officer
Elections	1	Absolute requirement to perform this function	Breach of electoral law	As required Depending on the function being performed	Timing of next General Election is unpredictable
Council/Committee meetings	1	Decisions will need to be made on a variety of matters until the final days of the Council	Non delegated decisions must be made by members	2.5	Staff level could be achieved if committees were stopped and only Council, Regulatory and HR had meetings.
Local Strategic Partnerships	2	There is a legal requirement to have these but meetings could be reduced in number	Some local community ill feeling	40 hours per cycle	Staffing at this level would be very difficult but just possible. However, see previous item
Election costs from Government and Income Tax to Govt	2	Desirable but could be completed by new council	Loss of income/Penalties	As required	Must be election staff
Member training	3	Some members are still showing a keen interest as they may wish to be members of the Unitary Authority	Some ill feeling from a minority of councillors	As required	Staffing level refers to Democratic Services in conjunction with WIP/I&DeA
General Binding and Archiving of Minutes and Agendas	3	Desirable for a clean finish to the Council's records		As required	Little or no budget for this at present

Collating and storing Parish and KDC Declarations of Interest	3	These will need to be in good order to hand to the Unitary Authority	These declarations are a legal requirement and can be inspected by the public	As required	Now the parish elections are over minimal input required
Community Area Forums	4	No legal requirement and only Devizes and SEKCF are operated by KDC	May or may not upset some parishes although many never attend	0	
Twinning	4	Not a district function	No risk to KDC	0	This can easily be transferred to the Town Council at the earliest opportunity
Best Kept Village	4	Long term annual competition which next occurs August 2008	No risk to KDC	0	
Street Closure Orders	4	The police in uniform can achieve the same result	No risk to KDC	0	KDC is the only council that I have ever known to bother with this
General internal admin such as EDRs, BVPIs	4	Will not harm if not done	No risk to KDC	0	

Committee/reorganisation2007/minservicestandards

Corporate Services Minimum Service Standards

Service/Activity Ranked in Order of Importance	Minimum Standard That Should be Applied	Why the Suggested Minimum Standard Should Apply	The Risks or Consequences of Not Maintaining The Minimum Standard	The Staff Equivalent Needed for This Activity	Any Other Matters to Take Into Account
BVPP	1	Still a statutory requirement.	Qualified Audit & Inspection letter	0.1	
Performance Management system	1	Still a statutory requirement.	Adverse Audit & Inspection letter	0.3	
Other audit work eg VFM	1	May be audited for 2007/08.	Adverse Audit & Inspection letter	0.1	All other inspection related work ceased.
Public Relations (inc of internal staff communications)	1	The priorities are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to respond to press enquiries. • internal communications. • Kennet Times. 		0.6	Planned activity is responses to and issue of press releases, weekly staff bulletin and other internal communications as necessary, final copy of Kennet Times in March.
Chief Exec/Leader/Chairman's secretary	1	The need to respond to correspondence.		0.4	If the level reduces may curtail functions organisation such as chairman's events.
Community Planning Partnerships & KLSP	2	Quasi statutory reason for the KLSP, goodwill in the transition phase for the others	May make the transition phase more difficult	1	Staff may eventually need to work with county to establish new structures.
Scrutiny	2	Core meetings only when topic relevant to post unitary status. There may also be some joint working to oversee the new unitary for district services	Audit comment if some scrutiny not undertaken.	0.2	Task groups already been deferred.
Corporate Policy & Strategy development	3				Currently ceased.
Communications	3				Currently ceased.

consultation					
Community Area Fora	3	May be superseded by new structures anyway.			
Community strategies/action plans etc.	3				

MINIMUM SERVICE STANDARDS – FINANCIAL SERVICES

(Revenue Collection, Benefits & Corporate Finance)

Service/Activity Ranked in Order of Importance	Minimum Standard That Should Be Applied	Why the Suggested Minimum Standard Should Apply	The Risks or Consequences of Not Maintaining The Minimum Standard	The Staff Equivalent Needed For This Activity or Service	Any Other Matters To Take Into Account
Housing Benefits Assessment incl New Claims, Change of Circumstance, Appeals, Subsidy, Overpayments and Interventions (1)	New Claims 30 Days Change of Circumstance 15 days	National Performance Standard	1) Local Authority error rate would increase with possible loss of subsidy. 2) Reputation with the public would suffer 3) Benefit Claimants could be evicted in worse case scenario 4) Negative Direction of Travel Statement from Audit Commission	17.89 FTE Currently operating at 13.49 FTE	Introduction of Local Housing Allowance April 2008 is a major project requiring staff resource
Cashiering (back office) (1)	All payments accounted for on day of receipt	Avoid financial loss	1) possible loss of reputation if reminders / summons are issued even though payments have been received	1 FTE	

Council Tax Collection and Recovery (1)	98.8%	Maintain current collection level to avoid negative direction of travel	1) Cash flow cost 2) Negative Direction of Travel statement from Audit Commission	8.15 FTE	
NNDR Collection and Recovery (1)	99.1%	Maintain current collection level	1)Cash flow cost 2) Negative Direction of Travel statement from Audit Commission	1 FTE	
Fraud Investigation (2)	Reduced number of sanctions achieved per annum	Only investigate the highest scoring cases	Risk of increased fraud and error within Benefits system	5 FTE	
Final Accounts including preparation of the Statement of Accounts and associated Government Returns (1)	By 30 th June 2008	Statutory requirement. Accounts and Audit Regulations 2006	Adverse external audit report	Chief Accountant + 4 FTE	Chief Accountant is leaving Kennet at end of October 2007 Interim will be required Mid Feb – July 2008

Budget Preparation and associated budgetary control (1)	Balanced budget for 2008/09 by January 2008	Statutory requirement	Failure to set council tax, risk of overspending, excessive use of reserves	3 FTE	
Debtors / Creditors (1)	Payment of all invoices within 28 days. Raise debtors within 2 weeks of request	Creditors - Avoid pressure on small traders. Debtors - Avoid cash flow issues / increased chance of write off	Cash flow Negative direction of travel statement Write offs	3 FTE	
Insurance, Tax management, VAT, treasury management etc. (Technical team) (1)	Maintain current levels of service but drop any work that is not statutory required	Good governance / financial management	Cash flow and interest charges could increase. Financial loss. Loss of reputation	1.5 FTE	
Internal Audit (3)	At least the main systems audited each year in line with Audit Commission requirements	Audit Commission replies on the work of internal audit. Failure would result in increased costs with AC carrying out the work.	Loss of reputation Fraud and corruption	2 FTE (3 on establishment)	Will need to get in an interim auditor to complete the Fire Authority Audit Plan