

Harborough District Council

Report to Cabinet Meeting of 6 March 2023



Title:	Report 2: Leadership and collaboration: Waste and Environmental Maintenance Services
Status:	Public
Key Decision:	No
Report Author:	Russell Smith, Head of Environmental Services Vicki Jessop, Director of Communities and Wellbeing Michelle Howard, Director for Housing and Communities, Deputy Chief Executive, Melton Borough Council
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Jonathan Bateman, Planning, Environmental Services and Waste Management, Deputy Leader of the Council Cllr Alison Freer, Portfolio Holder for Climate, Access and Engagement (Melton Borough Council)
Appendices:	1 – HDC Environmental Services Team Structure 2 – MBC Environmental Services Team Structure

Summary

- i. In line with our corporate vision, which is working with our communities, we will build a future for the people of Harborough district that gives them the best life chances and opportunities through: The Covid-19 pandemic has really altered the way that public services are provided. The Council will continue to focus on improving the experience of our customers by looking at the needs of people in our communities, and the places they live in, and to focus on improving how residents interact with the council – everything from waste collection to making a planning application – making sure that we can improve and maintain services for everyone into the future.
- ii. To support the services that Harborough and Melton delivers, there have been discussions on the sharing of the management of the two Environmental Services Teams.
- iii. The initial 6 months is to share the Head of Environmental Services at Harborough District Council, to manage the two authority's Environmental Services Teams, along with sharing of the Team Leader for Waste Services, Team Leader for Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance and Lead Officer for Melton.
- iv. The aim of this joint working is to increase resilience, improve finances and continue the same expected level of services. There will be the ability to share experiences and expertise, and this continues the work that has been in place since February 2022, for the Leicestershire Waste Strategy. This report covers the full sharing of those services across the two councils at Management level.
- v. The initial work will be a trial for 6 months to see how this works, in terms of workloads and what joint synergies could be explored further. This will allow the

Head of Service to gain a better understanding of the services at Melton Borough Council and the delivery of those services across the Borough. After 6 months a review will be undertaken to make any suggested changes, across the two authorities and make the change permanent.

- vi. After which a section 113 notice will need to be put in place for the Head of Service to operate legally within the Melton boundary.

Recommendations

vii. **Cabinet is requested to:**

1. **Authorise leadership collaboration for Waste and Environmental Maintenance Services, through a shared Head of Service / Assistant Director for Waste and Environment, for an initial 6-month period from 1st April 2023 with Melton Borough Council.**
2. **Delegate to the Director for Housing and Communities, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Director for Corporate Services and Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environmental Services and Waste Management authority to:**
 - a. **Agree the terms of the reciprocal arrangement for leadership collaboration with Melton Borough Council and record the same in a memorandum of understanding;**
 - b. **Determine and conclude the practical actions required to give lawful effect to the leadership collaboration agreement;**
 - c. **Review the leadership collaboration arrangements by 1 October 2023; and**
 - d. **Determine whether to continue, by agreement with Melton Borough Council, the leadership collaboration arrangements;**
 - e. **Determine whether to extend the scope of the leadership collaboration;**

Reasons for Recommendations

- viii. Sharing of services with a partner has been actively considered and explored to build capacity and mitigate against future staffing issues or specific operation pressures.
- ix. By sharing resources, ideas, campaigns and good working practices, there will be the ability to make savings and save officer time, furthering the following objectives:
- strengthening each council and promoting shared leadership of the two authorities and shared working within Leicestershire as a whole.
 - enhancing organisational effectiveness: opportunity to share learning and good practice and through collaboration whilst increasing service resilience, stability and effectiveness.
 - increasing opportunities for job enrichment, growth and development and improve recruitment and retention.
 - improving financial resilience: realising efficiencies through joint working, reducing duplication, increasing purchasing power and achieving greater value for money.

- procurement efficiencies

x. The scope of this arrangement is limited to operational matters only. There will be no impact upon strategic and policy oversight of the council.

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To invite Cabinet to endorse the sharing of Harborough District Council's Head of Environmental Services and three Team Leaders with Melton Borough Council ("MBC") through leadership collaboration.

2. Background

2.1 Similar to other local authorities across the country, the council faces significant revenue financial pressures. These pressures result in the need for efficiencies to be found from services across the organisation.

2.2 As a District Council, Harborough District Council ("HDC") is a Waste Collection Authority. The waste function sits within the Environmental Services function alongside grounds maintenance, street cleansing and environmental enforcement.

2.3 HDC and MBC are similar size authorities in land coverage and demographics. Each faces similar issues in the delivery of Environmental Services (i.e Waste Management, Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing, optional Enforcement and Community Safety). The councils have discussed, at management and staff level what, if any, aspects of the service could be delivered collaboratively. Each operates the same waste collection system - alternate weekly collection of refuse and recycling in addition to a chargeable garden waste service. MBC retains an in-house grounds maintenance team while HDC contracts this function out. Both councils contract out the street cleaning service and use the same company to move recyclate from their respective depots to Casepak.

2.4 A joint team workshop considered the strengths and weaknesses of the Environmental Services teams. It identified that collaboration between the councils would allow each to address areas of strength and weakness in their own team. It confirmed that both councils face similar issues and want to:

2.4.1 continue to provide the statutory and non-statutory elements of the services to a high standard for both councils, adhering to all legislation for these areas;

2.4.2 work together on this service area to deliver the benefits that could be realised by:

2.4.2.1 having one manager for the environmental services team;

2.4.2.2 operating as one team with one manager across the two districts;

2.4.2.3 sharing knowledge and expertise

2.4.3 maintain the corporate vision and sovereignty of each council;

2.4.4 explore joint procurement options and shared projects.

3. Details

- 3.1 The purpose of collaborative management is to create better resilience, both through financial and staff resources; ensuring the continued expected service levels for both authorities. In this instance, the service areas that are in scope for both councils would be Waste Management, Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing. In the event that the collaboration is successful, it is anticipated that a collaborative approach would also be beneficial for each authority in respect of the enforcement function.
- 3.2 This approach will create a better depth of expertise, more strategic oversight and enable both teams to deliver better.
- 3.3 As statutory services, at present both councils each deal with the same or similar issues. Without collaboration, each needs to do the work separately, whereas in reality, one person can undertake the work on behalf of both councils and share the output. It is expected that particular efficiencies can be achieved in re-using or sharing work output for web sites, social media, marketing etc. To explore this further, a skills matrix is being developed to objectively identify the strengths and areas for improvement for both authorities and to recognise the skills and areas of expertise within both teams which can be utilised to the benefit of both authorities.
- 3.4 Public sector staff retention remains challenging, and broadening the scope of opportunity available to staff by operating across a wider geographic area enhances the ability to progress within either authority. Further, there will be a greater opportunity for succession planning, ensuring a supply of suitably experienced staff to step up as vacancies become available within the team.
- 3.5 Shared management creates a one voice approach, but respects the sovereignty of both councils where required. Many issues facing both authorities in the future are collective issues facing all waste collection authorities. Of particular influence will be the implementation of the Government's Waste Strategy, along with the Leicestershire Waste Strategy - both have significant potential impacts for the two authorities.

Systems commonality

- 3.6 In terms of shared systems, there are some similarities already between the councils:-
 - 3.6.1 Whitespace – Both Councils uses this system, HDC now use it as a work instruction for FCC and to manage play area inspection. There is an option to explore the use this more at MBC;
 - 3.6.2 Self-service options successfully implemented at HDC can be shared with MBC to improve efficiency;
 - 3.6.3 Website – two different companies are operated currently;
 - 3.6.4 MBC use Uniform to do contractor worksheets
- 3.7 There will also be the option to align shared processes, through better use of Customer Services, reducing the demand on the Environmental Services Team. In addition, the use of shared communications, joint press releases etc.
- 3.8 Both teams currently provide services which achieve high satisfaction ratings with residents, and have good working relationships with their respective contractors by working in partnership.

- 3.9 Implementing collaborative management will allow both councils to explore:
- 3.9.1 Capacity issues at certain operational points during the year;
 - 3.9.2 Tight working schedules;
 - 3.9.3 Managing the expectations of the customers;
 - 3.9.4 Improving Parish relationships and increased demands being met;
 - 3.9.5 Invoicing;
 - 3.9.6** Third party works – commercialisation of services on both sides, Grounds Maintenance
- 3.10 If the proposal is approved, it will be necessary for changes to be made to the employment contracts of employees, to reflect that they could provide professional services to more than one authority, across a wider geographic area. The potential for this has been discussed with employees and the recognised trade unions of each council, with the indication being that the required changes can be implemented by consent. Staff have, to date, welcomed the opportunity to expand the informal mutual aid arrangements with their counterparts at MBC.

Reasons for Change

- 3.11 As part of the ongoing savings and future proof planning for Environmental Services, the council need to find significant savings that are set out in the 2023 MTFS.
- 3.12 Staff recruitment, retention and turnover is an area the council needs to focus on across the organisation and leads to the loss of key skills and knowledge within our services. Within Environmental Services, there are currently 0.5 posts vacant, in addition there will also be some members of staff retiring within the team over the next 2-3 years.
- 3.13 Maintaining service quality in this environment is a challenge, and innovative solutions are required if improvement is to be maintained.

Proposal

- 3.14 To implement a shared management structure for Environmental Services with MBC, sharing some of the existing postholders across the services delivered by both organisations will be required. In practice this means that from 1 April 2023 for a 6-month trial period, the HDC Head of Environmental Services and two HDC Team Leaders would be working across the Environmental Services functions of both districts. This will reduce costs for HDC by securing an income from MBC and give the council access to a wider pool of resources, skills, knowledge and solutions that can support the service. Changes to roles and responsibilities, particularly at Team Leader level, will mitigate the impact of sharing existing management resources across two districts.
- 3.15 Work with MBC to develop this proposal pre-dates the aborted strategic partnership proposal and has always been considered as a separate and natural service alignment. There are many synergies with MBC including policy and response to national or regional changes, processes, internal structures, operations and technologies in place.
- 3.16 Other options considered include a smaller arrangement where just the Service Manager role would be shared, and the 'do nothing' position. These do not deliver comparable benefits for HDC as expected from the preferred option.

Outcomes

- 3.17 A trial leadership collaboration period would be implemented to ensure that the collaboration operates as anticipated and delivers the expected outcomes. This will be from 1 April 2023 until 1 October 2023. The initial outcome of the proposed change would be the implementation of a shared management arrangement for Environmental Services from 1st April 2023 for a 6-month trial period. During this time, it is anticipated that each authority will see an improvement on the processes delivered by both organisations, adopting the most efficient from each respectively.
- 3.18 Annual savings of £31,722 would be delivered to HDC as per the finance section, through MBC's contribution to the Head of Service role provided to MBC.
- 3.19 The collaboration will ensure HDC has access to a much wider pool of staff for Environmental Services, and would be able to draw upon their skills and knowledge to support service delivery and improvement. Similarly, HDC would gain access to IT systems and other solutions in MBC that could be used for improvement.
- 3.20 A plan for cementing successful shared management and for securing further improvements through collaboration would be developed during the trial period. If the 6 month trial period is successful, that plan would then be implemented from October 2023 onwards. The timeline can be summarised as:

	Start	End
Draft agreement with MBC	April 23	September 23
HR changes to HDC roles	March/April 23	To be made permanent
Introduction / 'get to know you'	April 23	April 23
Go live of 6 month trial	April 23	To be made permanent
Develop improvement plans	August 23	N/a
Review of trial period	--	August/September 23
Implementation of improvement plans	October 23	April 24

4. Implications

Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Priority 1: Community Leadership to Create a Sense of Pride and Belonging. The successes of the Environmental Service Team and Leadership approach can be shared across the two authorities. This will also create savings and efficiencies for both parties.
- 4.2 Priority 3: Creating a Sustainable Environment to Protect Future Generations – CO11, CO12, CO14, CO15, CO16. Through the sharing approach the two councils can make efficiencies that may have benefits for the environment, such as successful joint campaigns on fly-tipping and litter. Procurement of services and exploration of shared fleet.

Financial

- 4.3 The proposal is for the council and Melton Borough Council to share the Head of Service, Environmental Services role for a period of 6-months.
- 4.4 The detailed elements of the proposal are:

- 4.4.1 For the two HDC Team Leader roles to be uplifted by £4.8k (including oncosts) to reflect the additional responsibility required whilst the Head of Service, Environmental Services works for MBC. This uplift would initially be in the form of an honorarium, pending a full re-grading if the trial period is successful.
 - 4.4.2 The past service (deficit) pension costs (9.1%) are not to be charged to MBC.
 - 4.4.3 Sharing of all costs based on a 66% HDC / 34% MBC split, which is based on the 2023/24 Band D equivalent properties for each council (38,252 and 19,698 respectively).
- 4.5 On a full-year basis and on salaries at the top of grade, the overall saving to HDC will be £32k (34% of Head of Service, Environmental Services and Team Leader uplift).

Legal

- 4.6 Local Government Act 1972, Section 113: Placing of staff of local authorities at disposal of other local authorities. Without prejudice to any powers exercisable apart from this section, a local authority may enter into an agreement with another local authority for the placing at the disposal of the latter for the purposes of their functions, on such terms as may be provided by the agreement, of the services of officers employed by the former, but shall not enter into any such agreement with respect to any officer without consulting him/her.
- 4.7 The Chief Executive is required to “act on behalf of the council on all matters relating to the discharge of the Council’s functions” (Part 3, Section C(1) of the constitution) while Cabinet is responsible for approving agreements to place staff at the disposal of another authority (see Part 3, Section A.1.13 of the constitution).
- 4.8 To enable officers to work across both council areas, appropriate delegations of authority will need to be made by each council.

Policy

- 4.9 Harborough has a bin policy in place for how carrying out waste collections, bins sizes issued etc, this would remain in place for Harborough.
- 4.10 Other policies such as the tree policy would also remain for Harborough, there could be options to align both of the above in time.
- 4.11 The Leicestershire Waste Management Strategy would also be applicable for both authorities.
- 4.12 Each authority has several policies and procedures to support the delivery of the services. Working together is an opportunity to align these policies and procedures to avoid duplication which will improve the efficiency of both services.

Environment

- 4.13 The ability to share officer resource and deploy officers in the most efficient manner possible is expected to help minimise the extent of travel by officers, but it is recognised that the services provided by the Environmental Services Team necessarily requires travel around the area. Consideration of environment issues such as climate change and carbon emissions will be taken into account as the joint arrangements are implemented and developed however at this stage it is unknown what impact the proposal will have on the commitment to deliver a net zero council by 2030.

Risk Assessment

- 4.14 Whilst the informal arrangement which has been in operation since February 2022, for the Leicestershire Waste Management Partnership, has worked well, there is a risk that the formal arrangement will raise the expectations and demands on the Head of Service officer beyond the agreed split.
- 4.15 It is recognised that the demands will vary throughout the year, depending on circumstances and it is important to build in the review after 6 months as an opportunity for both authorities to reflect on the true impact of sharing the post, as well as identifying future opportunities.
- 4.16 In respect of staff, the risk is that the desired benefits do not materialise. That would leave the council with a statutory service with known single points of failure and concerns over retention and recruitment. The implementation of the collaborative delivery of services has been identified as the best mitigation that can be adopted by the council in the current circumstances. In the longer term, the joint arrangement will allow the service to take a more focused and strategic approach to career development, which will hopefully enable the council to strengthen resilience and succession arrangements by growing its own future officers and retaining them when they qualify.
- 4.17 The overall risk rating for this project is low/medium level with a 2 for likelihood x 3 for impact on scoring based on the delivery of the sharing approach

Overall Risk Rating						
Impact	5	A (5)	A/R (10)	A/R (15)	R (20)	R (25)
	4	A/G (4)	A (8)	A/R (12)	R (16)	R (20)
	3	A/G (3)	A (6)	A (9)	A/R (12)	A/R (15)
	2	G (2)	A/G (4)	A (6)	A (8)	A/R (10)
	1	G (1)	G (2)	A/G (3)	A/G (4)	A (5)
		1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood						

Equalities Impact

- 4.18 There will no additional equalities issues faced by this report.
- 4.19 There is a current equalities impact assessment for this service area available online.

Data Protection

- 4.20 No issues of data protection identified; the authorities respectively will have guidance in place which will be adhered to.

Consultation

- 4.21 Initial conversations have taken place with both parties, and a memorandum of understating will be created between both councils. Formal consultation will be required in respect of changes to job descriptions and terms and conditions of employment if the joint arrangement is formalised. This process will be supported by the HR team.
- 4.22 The relevant portfolio holders have been consulted throughout the operation of the informal arrangements for sharing the Head of Service, and in respect of the proposal to formalise the arrangement.
- 4.23 It is not considered necessary to consult with the wider public or members as the proposal is concerned with operational delivery of the statutory service and no reduction in service is anticipated.

5. Alternative Options

- 5.1 Not to share the Head of Service – Ruled out as the synergies for the sharing have made the project become a serious option to be considered.
- 5.2 To share the Head of Service Only – This was considered but felt, the better option to ensure maximum success in the delivery of the project was to go with the latter option
- 5.3 To share the Head of Service and part share the Team Leaders – This will ensure that the project can start well, resources and skills can be shared better between teams and that the Head of Service capacity can be covered by the team leaders.

6. Background papers

- 1.1 N/A