

Project Brief : Future Options for Harborough District Council (HDC)

Author : Anna Graves Interim Chief Executive

Date 19 July, 2011

Background

At Harborough District Council (HDC), we work to provide local people with excellent services as efficiently as possible. For this to be sustainable for the long term it is our duty to regularly review the nature of the work we do and the way in which we do it. The economic and policy environment today suggest that such a review is both timely and appropriate.

The Comprehensive Spending Review has presented challenging financial scenarios for all councils. In line with many other authorities across the country, we must explore how changed methods of delivery could help to mitigate these difficult circumstances regarding public sector budgets.

The Localism agenda presents opportunities for councils to look at delivering their business in new ways. For example the Community Budgets, when a reality, will fundamentally change the way in which councils operate. Given HDC's successful track record in sharing services and management, the authority should explore these opportunities and others as it develops an efficient and appropriate response to national circumstances.

The Chief Executive Officer Recruitment Advisory Panel 10th March 2011 outlined that an Interim Chief Executive, once appointed, would be responsible for exploring shared services. A report to Full Council on 27th April 2011 entitled the 'Appointment of Interim Chief Executive confirmed that appointment.

Project Objectives

- Sustainable budgets going forward, including significant savings
- A customer focused organisation
- High quality services, efficiently delivered
- Mutual interest and understanding with partners to support long term high quality service delivery
- Solutions that work locally and fit appropriately into a national and countywide framework

Project Deliverables

- An options assessment that is fully costed and identifies potential savings
- A set of recommendations by end of November 2011
- Councillors, staff and stakeholders have been engaged with in the right way and at the right time

Project Scope

The project will explore a range of options. Putting these options on the table now is testament to due diligence and not a commitment to take any or all of them forward. Options to be explored fall into three broad categories:

- Re-engineering 'in house' provision which could involve:
 - Re-structuring to reflect new requirements (Localism, Big Society)
 - Delivering savings through a transformation programme
- Outsourcing certain functions or services, which could involve:
 - Re-structuring to reflect outsourcing business models
 - Ceasing provision of certain functions or services, and exploring other models of delivery by private or third sector providers
- Entering into shared management or service delivery arrangements, which could involve:

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- Sharing a Chief Executive or management teams
- Building on the momentum of HDC’s existing programme of shared services

Recommendations could include a mixture of all the above developed around strengths and opportunities.

Project exclusions and constraints

- This project is exempt from the TENS performance management system.

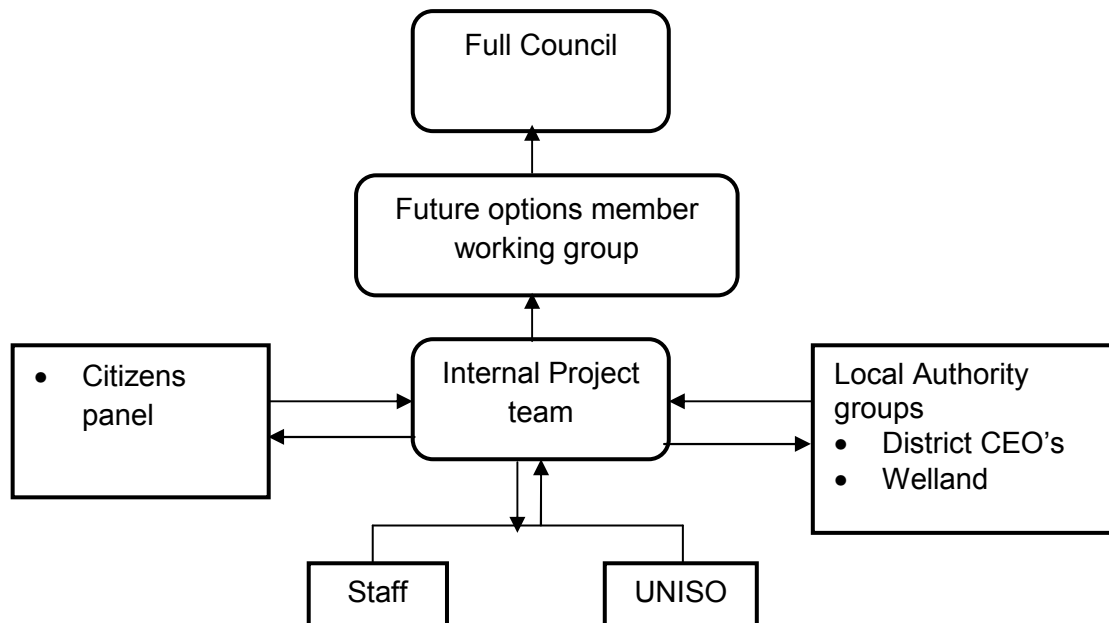
Project Interfaces

The project should give due regard to:

- Welland Partnership
- Existing shared service arrangements between HDC and other local authorities
- Leicestershire Together re-organisation and implications at a district level including the development of Locality Executives
- Emerging development on the implications and implementation of Localism Bill.
- Property review of Council Offices

Project Governance

The Structure Chart below sets out the layers of governance, together with the respective duties and responsibilities.



Future Options Member Working Group

Terms of Reference

1. To provide political direction
2. To ensure political groups support for direction
3. To make recommendations to Full Council
4. To guide and ensure the Interim Chief Executive delivers according to the agreed project brief
5. To agree the communications strategy

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Membership

1. Cllr Mike Rook, Leader (Chairperson)
2. Cllr Blake Pain (Deputy Chair)
3. Cllr Jeanette Ackerley
4. Cllr Simon Galton
5. Cllr Sarah Hill
6. Substitution is by exception only and in discussion with the Chair.

Meetings

1. Monthly for two hours
2. Where there are matters of urgency, meetings can be called at short notice.
3. Quorum is 3 members in attendance

Project Team

Responsibilities

1. To get approval for the brief across the council
2. To manage the work programme and deliver the brief
3. To identify risks and unblock problems
4. To report to the Member Group on key risks, financial expenditure and options assessment
5. To facilitate the procurement of external support as required
6. To develop and implement the communications strategy
7. To ensure members have all the information about best practise and models of delivery
8. To review current position regarding shared services
9. To explore and develop relationships with other partners and local authorities

Membership Roles

1. Project Manager
2. Project support
3. Project Researcher
4. Service perspective
5. HR
6. Finance
7. Legal
8. Communication

Meetings

1. Frequency - bi weekly
2. Report to Future Options Member Working Group

Project plan

Phase 0 : Project set up

- 1) Map out existing activity, business case and costs
- 2) Agree Project Brief with members at HDC
- 3) Build relationships with local authorities, staff, unison and partners

Phase 1: Establish what HDC wants to achieve

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- 1) Understanding of the needs and wants of the community for services now and in the foreseeable future
- 2) Test assumptions with councillors to ensure political priorities are established
- 3) Establish previous efforts by HDC to deliver services more efficiently – how much this cost, what has been saved, issues and successes
- 4) Analyse best practice elsewhere and a value for money benchmarking process
- 5) Assess within Medium Term Financial Plan what the efficiency programme is for HDC

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Phase 2: Establish the right option to pursue

- 1) Explore legality and contractual issues
- 2) Establish business case for sharing particular services
- 3) Establish if there are opportunities for HDC to share across the councils and other partners within Leicestershire and beyond
- 4) Establish when the time could be right, given contractual and other timing constraints
- 5) Establish the alternatives to sharing if appropriate
- 6) Establish a list of potential partners based on agreed criteria

Phase 3 : Establish the business case for preferred options

- 1) Explore joint working, principal partner lead, third party arrangements
- 2) Examine governance arrangements
- 3) Consider implications for communities
- 4) Consider implications for staff
- 5) Consider 'big bang' or organic implementation approach

Phase 4: Develop costed recommendations

Phase 5 : Develop Implementation Plan

Phase 6 : Deliver Implementation

Indicative Timescale

Some of the options will be deleted from the options assessment as we progress through the project and we need to document the decisions around this. We will need to refine this to establish key decision points to take to Full Council.

	may	june	july	aug	sept	oct	nov	Dec
Phase 0 Project set up								
Phase 1 Establish What HDC wants to achieve								
Phase 2 Establish the right option to pursue								
Phase 3 Establish the business case for preferred options								
Phase 4 Develop costed recommendations								
Phase 5 : Develop implementation plan								
Phase 6: Deliver implementation								

Project Costs

A provisional budget of £50,000 has been provisioned within the current 2011/2012 budget. It is envisaged this will be used for specialist advice regarding Legal, Finance and Communications. This is to provide objectivity in the option assessment and not place some permanent staff in contentious positions.

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Communication plan

A comprehensive and thought through communication plan is important to deliver this project. It is important that a commission is developed on this during Phase 0: Project set up.