

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL -1

FROM THE EXECUTIVE held on 24 March 2014

539 HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL AND THE WELLAND PARTNERSHIP

The Executive considered the withdrawal of the Council from the Welland Partnership. The Welland Partnership was established circa 2000 and operated for some years as a formal 'sub-regional strategic partnership'. Its role initially was to develop and manage shared services across the Welland Valley rural area (Harborough, Melton, Rutland, East Northants and South Kesteven); it established subsidiary partnerships to deliver shared procurement and internal audit services.

Each shared service is managed by a Project Board with a nominated representative from each partner council, (including those 'Other Councils' that receive the shared service but which are not full members of the Welland Partnership).

This Council withdrew from the Procurement Unit Partnership in July 2013 although the financial terms of this exit are yet to be agreed.

It is important that the Council has access to a suitable internal audit service; the Welland Internal Audit Unit has provided this function since it was established and the review of partnership working concluded that this arrangement offers the Council value for money and effective provision.

Up until 2011-12 the Partnership funded some work in support of market towns, (Lutterworth and Market Harborough) but in recent years this funding has significantly diminished: in 2008-9, it amounted to approximately £17,500 per annum, but from 2010 onward was reduced to less than £1,500 per year. In 2012-13, no funding was forthcoming. It is probable that this return is less than the resource that HDC has invested; it would be more efficient, if finance is available in future, for the Council to invest directly in initiatives of its own, and joint working within the LLEP framework is more likely to secure external funding.

RECOMMENDED to COUNCIL that

- i) Harborough District Council withdraws from the Welland Partnership;
- ii) delegated authority be given to the Head of Financial Services (Section 151 officer) to negotiate and formalise the best possible terms for the Council's withdrawal.
- iii) the Council continues its membership of the Welland Internal Audit Partnership; and that delegated authority is given to the Head of Financial Services (Section 151 officer) to negotiate revised terms for the relevant agreement.

Summary of Reasons

The Council's recent internal review of partnership working concluded that membership of the Welland Partnership does not provide value commensurate with the investment of officer and member time and resources and recommended that the Council should withdraw. The outcome of the review of the partnership policy and partnership register was considered by the Resource and Performance Scrutiny Panel on 16 January 2014 and by the Executive on 10 February 2014 who approved the Council's withdrawal from the Welland Partnership.

This excluded withdrawal from the Welland Independent Remuneration Panel as further consideration will need to be given to HDC's future involvement. The Council is required to appoint an independent remuneration panel and if it were to withdraw from the joint panel it would need to go through a separate appointment process.

The Welland Internal Audit Unit provides an important service to the Council and it is considered in the Council's interests that it secures future provision of the service and therefore the Executive agreed in February that HDC should continue to use the service whilst it provides value for money.

(The report which led to the Minute above has been previously circulated to Members and has been made available to the public. The report is also available on the Internet.)