

FUTURE OPTIONS: TECHNICAL NOTE

Title	Report Summary of Assumptions Testing Workshop with Members – 2nd August, 2011
Date	19.8.11
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Content	
<p>Report Summary of Members Workshop 2nd August 2011</p> <p>Assumption Testing : Future Options</p> <p>Background</p> <p>Harborough District Council has embarked on a far reaching and wide ranging review to explore future options for service delivery. The aims and scope of the review were approved by full Council on 25th July 2011. The project is now underway, being directed by a group chaired by the Leader of the Council that includes members of both main parties, including the Leader of the Opposition. A key element to the project is Member involvement and, in particular, gaining an understanding of the different views held as individual Members regarding the council's future options. To facilitate this, an Assumption Testing Workshop was organised with the following purpose:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encouraging debate amongst Members • to appreciate the assumptions and the different views held by individuals • to facilitate views and opinions being aired so that the project could develop and evolve with a better understanding gained about Members' underlying assumptions and values. <p>Process</p> <p>Prior to the 2nd August 2011 workshop, all Members were sent out a table with ten assumption statements made about possible future options for the council. Members where asked to indicate how they felt about the assumptions made, ranging from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I strongly agree with this assumption • I agree with this assumption • I disagree with this assumption 	

- I strongly disagree with this assumption

Members were asked to return their forms and then invited to an Assumptions Testing Workshop on 2nd August 2011, to discuss the results and debate the results. Twenty three councillors attended, as listed below:

Councillor	Councillor
Ackerley	Holyoak
Bannister	Johnson
Beaty	Knowles
Bremner	Liquorish
Burrell	McHugo
Dann	Pain
Evans	Rook
Everett	Simpson
Galton	Smith
Golding	Spendlove-Mason
Hall	Tomlin
Hallam	

The workshop was facilitated by the Interim Chief Executive Officer (ICEO), who also gave an overview to the group on the purpose of the workshop and the desired outcomes. The ICEO also gave a presentation to members that staff had received earlier. (See attached) The outcome of the workshop was to see how far, through discussion, Members can come to a common view on the assumptions. The discussion for the workshop would focus on the assumptions where there is significant difference of opinion as based on the returned forms (Assumption 1, 4, 7, 8 and 10). Members were split into three groups to debate the assumptions in more detail, and then fed back at a plenary session.

Outcomes

Twenty one forms were returned by members, over 50% return rate. A clear pattern has been established of Members’ initial views. The results are shown in Appendix A.

Five assumptions (1, 4, 7, 8 & 10) were used as part of the workshop process to encourage debate and gain a clearer view of underlying assumptions of Members. These were chosen as there was significant difference of opinion when the return sheets were analysed. The salient points from these discussions are captured below. Appendix B illustrates the results of the discussion. It is important to note that this weighting is based on a majority view so there are still individual opinions which will differ from the overall view of the groups. Whilst the scored conclusions do not indicate a specific outcome, the debate was important.

Assumption1- Sharing a Chief Executive can be with any type of organisation and is not limited to other councils. Sharing could be with a private organisation, voluntary, and/or community groups.

Group 1

- Concern was raised around sharing a CEO with the private sector. Not sure whether that was in the best interest of the authority.

Group 2

- Debate on whether CEO would have the right skill set coming from the private sector to transfer to the public sector. The public sector is risky; complex areas hence belief is that CEO should have a council background.
- Some members would be open to look at private sector CEO to assess whether there is a skill set match.

Group 3

- Open minded to the option of a private sector CEO. Think that it is a reasonable option to have. However, feeling is that for efficiencies to be gained need to be looking at sharing CEO with other Councils, not police etc.
- Discussion around the wording of the question. However the general feeling was to forget looking at voluntary sector, fire service and instead to look to other councils. Two councils sharing a CEO would be 2 & 1/2 days spent at each council as shared resource. Would a CEO from an industrial background get frustrated with dealing with the politics of two councils?
- Benefit could be the potential realised from sharing a management structure between councils, however the feeling is that this could not be possible or practical sharing a management team say between the police or a private sector management team.

Assumption 4 - It is critical to have a 'like minded' council to work on a shared approach. Like minded in terms of geography, size demographics, politics and culture.

Group1

- No agreement reached within the group as split on the decision. The list of assumptions in the question was too big, however the feeling was that matching geographically and the size of the council was not important when considering sharing.

Group 2

- Take the phrase "critical" out of the assumption and replace with beneficial.

- Size of the council was important but not geography or culture.
- Preferable to keep all options open.

Group 3

- Generally disagreed with the word “critical. The belief is that officers could be dealing with two different groups of members with different views so the belief is that for any sharing to be successful, the council must mirror our own council in terms of values. Good idea but must be balanced, and the assumption has already been made that someone wants to get in bed with you. They might not – so trust between councils is important.

Assumption 7 - The identity of Harborough District Council is of significant importance.
Group 1

- This assumption split the group. The discussion was around the word “significant”. Tension could be caused by the loss of identity, with Lutterworth Council being used as an example.
- Name of rural South Leicestershire is a possibility instead of HDC.
- For some identity is important therefore the use of a double barrelled name is important.

Group 2

- Feeling was that there was a historical need to keep it as Harborough. It did not matter if there was a change to the council structure as long as there was some reference to Harborough District.

Group 3

- Group strongly disagreed with assumption.
- It was felt that it was not of significance to residents that the Council retained its identity. Wherever you live in the district your natural inclination would be to gravitate to what was nearest to you in terms of shops, services. Leicester as a City is an option for some of our residents rather than travelling into Market Harborough itself.

Assumption 8 - The community cares about how we organise ourselves, and our local interaction. They care about more than just the level of council tax.

Group 1

- The main point is whether services are delivered or not. Residents are not concerned with our arrangements. Its about outcomes.

Group 2

- Feeling was that residents are not interested in the nuts and bolts of how a service is delivered but more interested in the outcome of service delivery. Do they get what they

need?

Group 3

- Group both strongly agreed as well as strongly disagreeing as felt there were 2 parts to the question
- Feeling was that residents did care, but that it was down to the council to deliver.

Assumption 10 - Saving money in the short term is a key objective.

Group 1

- The group agreed that saving money in the short term and longer term was important.
- Other objectives are equally as important as saving money

Group 2

- Agreed it was important to save money but not just in the short term but also the longer term as well.

Group 3

- Felt that it was a long term project

CEO Summary of Workshop

- Good debate being had amongst the members.
- Members were putting their values to the front what they felt was important; not a political debate but a debate centred on personal values.
- In the assumptions used for the workshop – there is no right or wrong. They were there to encourage debate.
- There was a lack of agreement as the groups still had split decisions.
- The workshop shows the power of the written word, and how this can be misunderstood, a reason for having an open debate.
- Members stated that they would be happy to change their current position on what they believe is right for the Council, based on more information, facts and evidence being presented. Open to moving their position on certain assumptions
- ICEO asked that members communicated back to other members the evening's workshop and what was debated. Key that those members who were not present are informed and involved.
- This is a start of a process that will continue to engage members in shaping the future options.

AOB

- Some Members were not happy with the Communication protocol for the Future Options Project. ICEO explained to members the purpose of the protocol and why it was there. Members have the right to talk to the press there is no “gagging order” but suggested that they speak to their Party Leaders first to make sure they have the most up-to-date position/progress on the project as both Party leaders were part of the members group on the Future Options Project.

Summary of Returned Assumption Testing Forms Prior to workshop Appendix A

	Description of assumption	I strongly agree with this assumption	I agree with this assumption	I disagree with this assumption	I strongly disagree with this assumption
1	Sharing a Chief Executive can be with any type of organisation and is not limited to other councils. Sharing could be with a private organisation, voluntary, and/or community groups.	4	6	7	4
2	Sharing across county boundaries into neighbouring counties is an option.	11	8	2	-
3	All services can be considered for sharing. No service is exempt.	9	9	3	-
4	It is critical to have a 'like minded' council to work on a shared approach. Like minded in terms of geography, size demographics, politics and culture.	3	8	8	2
5	The definition of local government is about providing community leadership, shaping places, protecting the vulnerable and enabling individuals, communities and businesses to achieve their potential	13	6	2	-
6	HDC can stay as it is, with limited need to change radically.	-	3	10	8
7	The identity of Harborough District Council is of significant importance.	5	5	9	2
8	The community cares about how we organise ourselves, and our local interaction. They care about more than just the level of council tax.	7	7	6	1
9	Developing services around what the public want and need is a key objective	11	9	-	1
10	Saving money in the short term is a key objective. 1 anonymous which was between agree/disagree	1	9	7	3

APPENDIX G – WORKSHOP 2.8.11

Summary of Assumption Testing Following Group Debate At The Workshop : Appendix B

	Description of assumption	I strongly agree with this assumption	I agree with this assumption	I disagree with this assumption	I strongly disagree with this assumption
1	Sharing a Chief Executive can be with any type of organisation and is not limited to other councils. Sharing could be with a private organisation, voluntary, and/or community groups.		Group 1	Group 2 Group 3	
2	Sharing across county boundaries into neighbouring counties is an option.	Not discussed			
3	All services can be considered for sharing. No service is exempt.	Not discussed			
4	It is critical to have a 'like minded' council to work on a shared approach. Like minded in terms of geography, size demographics, politics and culture.		Group 2 Group 1	Group 3	
5	The definition of local government is about providing community leadership, shaping places, protecting the vulnerable and enabling individuals, communities and businesses to achieve their potential	Not discussed			
6	HDC can stay as it is, with limited need to change radically.	Not discussed			
7	The identity of Harborough District Council is of significant importance.		Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
8	The community cares about how we organise ourselves, and our local interaction. They care about more than just the level of council tax.		Group 2 Group 1 Group 3		
9	Developing services around what the public want and need is a key objective	Not discussed			
10	Saving money in the short term is a key objective.		Group 2 Group 1		Group 3

APPENDIX G – WORKSHOP 2.8.11

Sources of Information	Outcome of member workshop 2.8.11
Consultees	All councillors