

## **minutes: Shared Services Review Group**

Tuesday, 20 September 2011 at 2.30pm

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### **Membership**

- absent

### **Councillors**

- Martin Wright (Chair)
- Chris Barnfather  
Joyce Bosnjak
- Ged Clarke  
Michelle Gent  
Liz Yates

### **Officers**

Jayne Francis-Ward – Assistant Chief Executive  
Ruth Rimmington – Governance Officer  
Beth Smith – Assistant Chief Executive - Mansfield District Council

It was reported that Councillor Michelle Gent had been appointed to the Review Group in place of Councillor Brian Wombwell.

### **1. Notes of meeting on 6 July 2011**

The notes of the informal meeting held on 6 July 2011 were agreed, subject to the word “Deputy” Chief Executive being replaced with the word “Assistant” Chief Executive at item 5 on page two of the notes.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

An apology for absence was received from:-

Councillor Chris Barnfather – other reason  
Councillor Ged Clarke - OCCB

### **3. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

### **4. Discussion with other Authorities about Shared Services**

An email had been circulated from John Robinson, Chief Executive, Gedling Borough Council who was unable to attend the meeting. It informed the Group on the Councils current involvement in shared service arrangements and of areas they were also exploring with others. Interest in shared services arrangements was focused on whether such a proposal would deliver financial

savings and/or improvements in service. For some District /Borough Councils this sometimes would simply be greater resilience by joining together two or more small teams that operated independently.

A number of the County's District Councils, including Gedling, had been procuring vehicles collectively in order to generate some savings from bulk buying. Opportunities to operate joint depots and rationalise the number of separate fleet maintenance services was currently being considered. There would be a discussion at the next Nottinghamshire Leaders Group to discuss other possible shared service arrangements.

A further consideration was the matter of what happens if a partner becomes dissatisfied with a shared service which was likely in the future as they become more common place, in view of the financial landscape not getting any easier. Within Nottinghamshire the delicate matter of sharing management teams had not been explored yet.

It was widely acknowledged that much effort was required for shared services to work and often a change in culture, particularly when the service had been provided at arms length and remote from the organisation.

Beth Smith, Assistant Chief Executive, Mansfield District Council talked to the members about Mansfield's position on shared services arrangements. Ms Smith commented that she had direct experience of shared services from working at a different authority, where it was done well and had benefited financially. She currently led on a group with Ashfield District Council that had had initial discussions about resilience and efficiency savings. She commented that there was a lot of protectionism and that people were very nervous.

Mansfield was looking into health and safety and emergency planning as a scope for shared services.

Ms Smith responded to member's questions and comments:-

- What was the situation regarding the transfer of staff between authorities? Employee benefits were retained for considerable time if they transferred. Whilst these differed, they were not that great between district councils. Obstacles between Lincolnshire and its districts concerning this had necessitated the need to have people at the right level to do the job. There had to be a commitment to work through problems for the good of the area. It was also about having the right exit strategy.
- Ms Francis-Ward said that in terms of legal and emergency planning, the relationship was already in place through EM Law Share. In terms of recruitment and retention the economies of scale were enormous.
- It was acknowledged that unitary status had caused some negative undercurrents.

- Was there scope for County Enterprise to service all Nottinghamshire's schools? At the end of the day it was about how a service is sold. Leadership and conviction were paramount to achieve. Council's were still nervous about a shared strategic direction.

Ms Smith concluded that she would be willing to look at the possibility of future shared services.

The committee thanked Beth Smith for sharing her knowledge and experience of shared services.

## **5. Current Shared Service Arrangements**

Members had received an appendix that had been omitted from the report. Ms Francis-Ward introduced the report that informed the committee of the current shared services and joint working arrangements operating within the County Council. She added that the information provided by departments consisted of many partnerships rather than a shared service. These were a starting point to build on in the future.

Following discussion it was agreed that, the Assistant Chief Executive would bring a report to the next meeting on the national picture in relation to Shared Services and an indication of any evidence that shared services were more successful or cost effective within single tier authorities.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm.

**CHAIR**

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