



Transformation Committee 22nd January 2020 Update on Joint Working

Purpose of report

To provide an update on progress with East Northamptonshire Council's programme of joint working with the Borough Council of Wellingborough and to provide an update on progress with Corby Borough Council for joint working on facilities management and property.

Attachment

Appendix 1: Progress update per service

1.0 Background

1.1 At its meeting on 2nd July 2018 the Transformation Committee agreed a report recommending to Council the adoption of principles for the following services to work jointly with the Borough Council of Wellingborough (BCW):

- Revenues & Benefits
- Building Control
- Local Land Charges and Planning Administration
- Democratic Services
- Elections
- Communications

The report was approved at Council on 23rd July 2018.

1.2 The principles agreed were:

- To optimise value for money for our customers and residents
- To build on the investment in our shared IT platform
- To create best practice processes, procedures and policies
- To build capacity and resilience in our teams
- To develop the skills of our workforce
- To provide resilience during a period of change

1.3 At its meeting of 16th December the Finance and Performance Sub Committee agreed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and associated budgets, as the basis for developing a joint working approach with Corby Borough Council (CBC) to support ENC's facilities management and property function in addressing the challenges identified by the recent Audit of the service.

1.4 This report provides an update on progress made on the joint working programme since the last Committee on 6th November 2019.

2.0 Update on progress with the Joint Working Programme

2.1 Since the last meeting of this Committee members of the Business Transformation Team have continued progress in establishing, communicating and developing ENC's

joint working arrangements with the BCW. The key areas of activity are:

- A series of regular scrutiny meetings with each service from each council are established and underway, measuring progress against their Team Plans and Charters.
- Group meetings with all involved services have been held, to share learning and best practice across services and councils.
- Communication and engagement continues with UNISON to keep them informed about the programme of work.

2.2 A more detailed update by service is provided at Appendix 1:

2.3 Governance - The joint working governance arrangements are as follows:

- Reporting to members in line with relevant constitutions is in place at all councils. At ENC this is to the Transformation Committee.
- Regular reporting via Highlight Reports to the Transformation Programme Board, which is made up of CMT members.
- The Programme Board, formed of a senior manager at each of ENC and BCW, conducts regular scrutiny sessions with each service pair to challenge and approve their progress.
- Joint project teams for each service are established.
- A Project Board with CBC will be established as part of the MoU.

2.4 Local Government Re-organisation Proposal - Following the Secretary of State's announcement of 13th May 2019 about moving to unitary status, the constituent councils will ensure that this project's progress is aligned with the wider unitary journey as they develop their plans.

2.5 Future direction – At its meeting on 4 September 2019, the Transformation Committee approved the exploration of developing the joint working approach to support the Local Government Reform programme forming a North Northamptonshire unitary council.

2.6 At its meeting on 6th November the Transformation Committee were invited to note that having explored options to enhance joint working with North Northamptonshire councils, proposals had been developed with BC Wellingborough to enhance joint working within Electoral Services as part of the journey to moving towards a North Northants approach on elections.

2.7 Members were also invited to resolve that the Personnel Sub-Committee considers the proposal for enhanced joint working with BCW within Electoral Services at its next meeting. The Sub-Committee subsequently approved the proposal at its meeting of 18th November 2019.

2.8 More details about the proposal are included in Appendix 1 to this report.

3.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

3.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared and is available on request.

4.0 Privacy Impact Implications

4.1 A series of Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) have been completed in conjunction with ENC's Data Protection Officer. These will be reviewed and developed as required for existing and new services.

4.2 Data Sharing Agreements at service level are being prepared between the two councils where necessary, covering the staff of one council accessing relevant data of the other council, if required, for their own services and vice versa.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the proposals. Any legal implications will be assessed as joint working plans develop and reported to this Committee accordingly.

6.0 Risk Management

6.1 The following are considered to be the major risks to the proposal, with mitigations:

Number	Risk	Mitigation
1	Negative service level impact	Regular communication and review
2	Failure to agree common objectives	Careful planning and communications between parties
3	Local government landscape in Northamptonshire doesn't move forward at the anticipated pace	Regular review of current position and alignment of activities
4	Lack of business transformation capacity and skills to successfully deliver the change	Regular review of workload and priorities.
5	Wellbeing of staff during a time of change is undermined	Regular and effective communication to staff and evaluation of responses

6.2 The reason for bringing this proposal forward is to directly influence these risks and mitigate them. They will be managed in accordance with the council's risk management framework.

7.0 Resource and Financial Implications

7.1 There are no direct resource or financial implications arising from the proposals at present, as all work is being covered from services' budgets and any efficiency savings will be reinvested into the services. Further requests may come forward as the project develops.

7.2 At individual service level there may be more resource provided by one council or the other, but across the programme the resource allocation is evenly balanced between councils.

8.0 Constitutional Implications

8.1 The report does not have any constitutional implications, as each council will continue to retain its own autonomy and decision making processes. Any constitutional implications will continue to be assessed as part of the process of producing the detailed proposal.

9.0 Implications for our Customers

9.1 Service levels are planned to be at least at the same level they are currently. There are expected to be benefits to customers through streamlined and best practice working, as well as enhanced resilience within both councils. Any implications for customers will be assessed as part of the service teams reviewing opportunities to implement best practice approaches.

10.0 Corporate Outcomes

10.1 This proposal contributes to the following Corporate Outcomes.

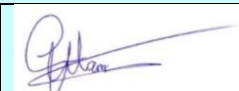
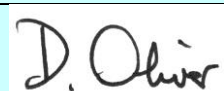
- **Good Value for Money** – This project will deliver the benefits of joint working from within existing revenue budgets and capital programmes. Any savings made will be reinvested to further improve service delivery.
- **Effective Partnership Working** – This project is a step towards the harmonisation that a unitary council will demand, allowing both councils to learn lessons and develop techniques and processes such that future joint working (either across more services or with more councils) can be achieved more effectively.
- **High Quality Service Delivery** – Sharing best practice and harmonising processes will ensure that service delivery improves. For services that serve the same customer across council areas (e.g. for Building Control) a possible single “front door” and account management structure would be beneficial.
- **Employees and Members with the Right Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours** – This project will offer employees and members the exposure to best practice from the other council, leading to them improving their knowledge and skills.

11.0 Recommendations

11.1 The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) Note the progress being made on joint working with the Borough Council of Wellingborough and Corby Borough Council,

(Reason - To provide members with oversight of the joint working programmes with BCW and CBC)

Legal	Power: Local Government Act 1972				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:	Reports on Joint Working with Borough Council of Wellingborough to Transformation Committee on 2 nd July 2018, 5 th September 2018, 7 th November 2018, 16 th January 2019, 17 th April 2019, 29 th May 2019, 1 st July 2019 and 4 th September 2019.				
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Date: 19 December 2019					
CFO 13/01/20		MO		CX 19/12/19	

Progress update per service

Each service is working at a different pace and will launch its formal joint working at different times. Text in bold indicates the service's Business as Usual (BAU) status where appropriate.

This appendix explores each service in more detail; any subsequent updates will be given verbally to Committee at the meeting.

Revenues and Benefits

The electronic document management system (EDMS) was successfully launched on Monday 25th November as planned with no impact on the wider ICT systems. Academy users across ENC and BCW in Benefits, Council Tax, Overpayments and Recovery are now using the EDMS, moving away from lengthy paper processing.

The project team (formed from Revs and Bens, ICT/EntecSI and Business Transformation) has spent many months preparing for the launch, including project planning, process re-engineering, testing and colleague training. Thanks to the floor walkers and training, users were able to start using the new system knowing that there was dedicated support on hand. The team is now developing support collateral based on user feedback; floor walking; supporting issue identification and resolution and implementing a quality assurance process to support the introduction of the EDMS and new ways of working.

Users have been very positive in their feedback and have appreciated the level of support provided. For a go live with a new system this has been smooth with a low level of low impact issues which the project team is working through with Capita and end users to resolve.

Going forward the project team will continue to support teams as they transition to new ways of working. The BA will capture early lessons identified and build user feedback into the training and process collateral. The project manager for the initial phase is working on project closure documentation; a lessons learned workshop is scheduled for the new year. Elements which were de-prioritised in the lead up to go live, including reports and related tasks will be revisited with business users to understand requirements and develop a suitable solution.

The Business Rates team was not included in the initial launch due to further development work that needs to be undertaken by the supplier. The project team is still working with our supplier to confirm the next steps and implications for this and it is likely to be managed as a separate project in the new financial year.

In anticipation of closer joint working a Service Level Agreement (SLA) is under development and currently undergoing peer and legal review. The SLA will inform a data sharing agreement; this is part of the critical activities in advance of installation of a shared desk top, and greater joint working, at which point the transition to Business as Usual will become possible.

Democratic Services

Recent enhanced joint working proposals to share officer support across both councils have not progressed, following a review by BC Wellingborough of available resources.

Also, a new chief legal officer has been appointed covering responsibilities across Kettering BC, East Northamptonshire Council and BC Wellingborough. The role includes Monitoring Officer responsibilities for both ENC and BC Wellingborough, but for the management of Democratic Services he only has responsibility at Kettering BC and ENC because BC Wellingborough are retaining their own management structure.

The chief legal officer was formally appointed as Monitoring Officer for East Northamptonshire Council on 20 December 2019 and there will need to be a period of discussion and reflection as to the implications this has on future joint working with BCW, depending on the plans that the new Chief Legal Officer has for running the KBC and ENC Democratic Services teams.

Electoral Services

The key aims for joint working are set out in Section 1.2 of the report. Notwithstanding those principles, the key drivers for exploring enhanced joint working within the elections team are to:

- Create improved resilience through a joint working structure with BCW
- Share best practice and streamline processes accordingly
- Remove the need for duplicate recruitment ahead of unitary, in attempt to better safeguard the existing workforce.
- Relieve pressures within the workforce created by the increased Monitoring Officer duties recently realigned to the Electoral and Democratic Services Manager post at ENC.

Both ENC and BCW have recently recruited to the post of Visiting Officer (VO), following coinciding resignations. Both Councils have recruited to the posts on a part-time, annualised hour's basis, on the understanding that the resource will be expected to accept work in either council, as work demands dictate. At the time of this meeting, both VO's will now have commenced in post.

At recent by-elections and neighbourhood planning referendums, the two teams have shared some duties and been able to demonstrate good practice and provide mutual support. For the recent General Election, officers worked closely together at all stages as part of the East Northamptonshire District is included in the Wellingborough constituency. Lessons learned will be considered alongside Corby Borough Council officers, for which we also 'give-away' part of our District to the Corby constituency.

In the run up to Unitary we would like to maximise the relationship with our colleagues in BCW and the joint working proposals aim to build some formal structure to this approach. As reported to the last meeting of this Committee, new enhanced joint working proposals have been drawn up and approved in principle by both Transformation Committee and Personnel Subcommittee for wider consultation.

A decision has not yet been made to progress the next stage of joint working with BCW whilst we wait to see what plans there are for the May elections. Further direction for this is expected shortly from Kettering Borough Council which will be the lead authority for elections for the Police and Crime Commissioner and for both Shadow Unitary councils.

Local Land Charges and Planning Administration

Local Land Charges depend on other teams' data, from Planning Administration and other teams inside ENC and BCW, and from external organisations (e.g. NCC or national statutory bodies).

There are differences between how each council record their data, and we cannot control the quality of data from external parties; accordingly significant alignment work is required before full joint working is possible.

The separate project to transform the management of our land and property data has three focussed issues, listed below:

- Address linking
- Plotting methods and standards
- Roles and responsibilities

Address linking – This process now sits with Planning Administration, following training by ICT Services. The team manager will use incoming tasks to iterate processes, followed by creating process documentation and cascading training to the whole team to build resilience. Due to resource challenges, and the complexity of the linking process, this is taking its time and extra support has now been added from the Business Transformation Team to process map in more detail. The team remain committed to owning and embedding the process for all new cases from 15th July 2019.

Plotting methods and standards – Planning Services and ICT have agreed suitable plotting techniques to improve speed and accuracy, and escalation thresholds where complicated plots (e.g. the boundaries of large development sites) can be completed using specialist plotting software within the team, or beyond to ICT Application Support who have the same specialist plotting software and significant plotting and technical experience. This process went live on 1st September 2019. The team hold regular Quality Assurance (QA) meetings, where they review and discuss a sample of that period's work and refine their criteria for escalation. Local Land Charges and ICT are working together to achieve similar goals and the Head of Service has approved the team having access to ArcView software for specialist plotting activity.

Roles and Responsibilities – This work is underway but is not on the critical path and can logically follow once more iteration is completed.

The Head of Service has sought approval for additional resources to improve plotting and address linking in historical records. This has been approved by Finance and Performance sub Committee and Personnel sub Committee and recruitment is now complete, with conditional offers made to fill the new posts.

Resource challenges remain in Planning Services so the Project Sponsor and Business Transformation Team are working closely with the Planning Services management team to ensure resources are used effectively and staff wellbeing is maintained.

Facilities Management & Property (FMP) joint working with Corby Borough Council (CBC)

Discussions have been on-going with CBC to develop a work programme to support East Northamptonshire Council's FMP function following the completion of the FMP Audit in November, which highlighted a number of challenges that need addressing. The Audit has

been reported to the FPSC on 16 December as the basis for identifying the budget requirement to support the joint working arrangements from January 2020 to March 2021.

The Audit and proposed joint working arrangements with CBC will be formally reported to the Governance and Audit Committee in January 2020. In the meantime, a Memorandum of Understanding and Privacy Impact Assessment (which may lead to a Data Sharing Agreement) are currently being produced for an inception meeting in January at which these documents will be agreed as the basis for developing and delivering a work programme.

Communications

This service has completed its Joint Working Plan and has now successfully become Business as Usual and is removed from the Joint Working Programme. Both councils are enjoying the benefits of a shared Communications Officer.

Building Control

The Building Control service is pleased to announce that it has formally started its joint working as of 9th September.

The service has now launched its [Building Control Charter](#).

The service will continue to develop its joint working in future with:

- A Document Management System with a shared data retention policy
- Shared document templates
- Development of a shared application form
- Working to achieve a shared LABC Quality Management and ISO accreditation, based on ENC's existing accreditation.