

TITLE OF REPORT: TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT - THE INVESTIGATION INTO SHARED SERVICES

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This paper reports the key findings and recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group's report on Shared Services and the group's recommendations with regard to taking this agenda forward as appropriate.

2. FORWARD PLAN

- 2.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key decision and has not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

3. BACKGROUND AND KEY FINDINGS

- 3.1 The Task and Finish group review into the potential for sharing services, models of shared service etc commenced in December 2010, and was carried out over the following four months, one meeting per month.

- 3.2 In the original scope for the review, attached as **appendix 1** to this report, there was a clear intention expressed that an outcome of the review should be the development of a 'toolkit' for application in the event of considering sharing NHDC services with other agencies. However, as the review was delayed in its commencement due to resource and other work constraints, it was evident that much had moved on in terms of potential to share services, initial discussions with other authorities and agencies and thus the review also considered 'work in progress', in particular with the Shared Internal Audit Service and joint work between Stevenage/East Herts/North Herts' authorities.

- 3.3 The final review document itself, attached as **appendix 2** to this report, contains not only a summary of findings collated from interview of witnesses, but also the recommendations of the group for future shared service work, which are;

3.3.1 That everyone who may be affected by the sharing of a service is involved in discussions at the earliest possible opportunity

3.3.2 That the Authority must be aware of, but not unduly averse to, risks posed by sharing services

3.3.3 That the Authority must ensure sufficient capacity to resource shared service project teams

- 3.3.4 That communication is key and must be central to the process
- 3.3.5 That the Authority promote and increase awareness among officers and members of the existence of the RIEP (Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership) toolkit, for use in future shared services discussions
- 3.3.6 That the Authority should ensure sufficient investment in IT systems and migration of data exists in order that IT compatibility does not hinder any potential for sharing services and achieving relevant efficiencies.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Group derive from the terms of reference for Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.2 The legal framework to support any proposal for the sharing of services will need to be reviewed and established in line with those individual requirements, as they will vary considerably according to the number of parties included in the shared arrangements, statutory functions of the service subject to legislative requirement and other relevant issues.

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct financial or risk implications arising from this report, as the any areas of financial gain or investment will be subject to, and measured by, individual shared service business plans, benefits realisation and governance arrangements. Officers will have access to the suite of shared services guidance from the RIEP (Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships) in the development of future shared service arrangements, each subject to their own approval in due course.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The potential to share services with other agencies or authorities forms part of the Authority's overall improvement and efficiency agenda, and as such is resourced by officers through existing budgets.
- 6.2 However, any progression from those initial soundings to the establishment of a business plan and in time implementation will need to be allocated sufficient resource at an appropriate level in order for these arrangements to progress. This may therefore require reprioritisation of other work commitments and/or funding in order to provide capacity (noting 3.3.3)
- 6.3 There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report per se, but each proposal for shared service will need to be mindful of equality impacts, both in regard to any members of staff affected, and to the service thereafter provided under shared arrangements. It has therefore been agreed by Corporate Management Team that any such proposal should be evidenced by use of a corporate Equality Impact Assessment.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the attached task and finish report and its recommendations.
- 7.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to recommend the final report on the Investigation into shared services to the Council's Cabinet.

8. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 To allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and comment on the shared Services Task and Finish Group report.

9. APPENDICES

- 9.1 Annex 1: Scoping document
- 9.2 Annex 2: Final report and recommendations from the review

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