

# **Cherwell District Council and South Northamptonshire Councils**

## **Joint Commissioning Committee**

**16 November 2015**

### **Joint Customer Services – Draft Business Case**

#### **Report of Director of Community and Environment**

This report is public

Appendix A is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972.

#### **Purpose of report**

This report presents the draft business case for a Joint Customer Service across Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils (hereafter Cherwell or CDC and South Northamptonshire or SNC respectively).

#### **1.0 Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To consider the draft business case for a Joint Customer Service Team and endorse this business case as a basis for consultation with staff and trade unions.
- 1.2 To note that the financial case will be finalised once the job evaluation process has been completed. Costs are not expected to be higher than those included in the draft business case, but may be lower. The job evaluation process is expected to be completed by the 12 November 2015 and a verbal update will be provided.

#### **2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 The Customer Service business case sets out proposals to establish a two-way Customer Service team between CDC and SNC, which would create a shared service model that will deliver savings, facilitate improved customer access through channel shift and would allow additional partners to join in the future (either as part of a joint working partnership or as paying customers).
- 2.2 The business case (attached as Appendix 1) sets out the rationale for sharing a customer services resource building on the feasibility study for joint working in customer services that was endorsed by Members in 2014.

- 2.3 The business case for a joint customer service team is only one element of a much wider transformation programme workstream. This workstream includes the technology that underpins the service, channel shift and business process change to ensure that as much of our customer contact activity, (across both councils and all services) to be undertaken online or the through the customer contact centre.

### **3.0 Report Details**

- 3.1 The draft customer services business case is attached at Appendix 1, the key proposal is to:

- Establish a two-way Customer Service team between CDC and SNC and to begin a programme of consolidating, standardising, harmonising and developing shared practices and procedures between the teams, supported by a harmonised single suite of ICT systems.
- Deliver short term savings of £57,750 through bringing the teams together and establishing a resource within the team to ensure that business processes are harmonised and as much as possible first line customer contact is delivered either online or through the customer contact centre enabling the organisations to realise future savings (to be delivered through future business cases).

#### **3.2 Alternatives and Interdependencies**

The business case sets out alternative options and the reasons for these being discounted. Primarily a joint customer service function will facilitate or unlock the delivery of savings on a wider basis, improvements in efficiency or improved customer service, including:

- the realisation of savings through the delivery of channel shift and improved business processes
- savings and efficiencies to be delivered through ICT harmonisation
- potential savings that could be realised through any joint working on revenues and benefits (currently estimated at around £250k) will require a joint customer service function
- a right first time ethos, minimising double handling of customer enquiries

#### **3.3 Implementation Timescales**

If JCC agree the draft business case as basis for consultation the following timescales will apply:

- Staff Consultation to commence 20/11/15 for three weeks
- JCC Final Business Case (provisional date 13/14/01/16)
- Cabinet and Executive meetings (February 2016)
- Go Live (TBC subject to operational considerations)

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 The recommendation is to establish a Joint Customer Service between CDC and SNC.
- 4.2 There are advantages to joining up the customer services functions across both councils in order to increase resilience and to pool resources and expertise in order to improve services.
- 4.3 A two-way Customer Service team with a standardised approach to delivery and performance management would allow for demand to be measured (and managed) reliably across the Councils, including increasing the amount of service transactions delivered online.

## **5.0 Consultation**

The draft business case was considered by the Transformation Joint Working Group meeting on 4 November 2015. A number of issues were considered and strengthened within the draft attached for consideration by JCC, these included interdependencies with ICT.

Should the business case be endorsed, a three week staff and Union consultation period would commence on the 20 November 2015 [Provisional subject to JCC approval].

## **7.0 Implications**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 Section 13 of the draft business case sets out the financial implications.
- 7.2 The savings are allocated between the councils based on service volumetrics, set out in Section 13 of the Business Case (Appendix A).
- 7.3 The potential implementation costs should be split equally between the two Councils. With the costs being funded by earmarked reserves.

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### **Legal Implications**

- 7.4 As with all two way shared services this proposal, if implemented, will be covered by the section 113 agreement (as varied) entered into between the two Councils.
- 7.5 Following the decision of CDC and SNC Councils in February 2015 to approve the final business case for developing the approach to joint working and the delivery of local authority services, all services at both Councils are now included on the policy framework for the consideration of shared working. This means that the decision

making process has been streamlined as the Cabinet/Executive will be able to approve draft business cases for two-way shared working without the prior need of a decision of full Council.

- 7.6 A decision making timetable is included in Section 16 of the draft business case although, as indicated, this is based on the new joint governance arrangements agreed at the February Council meetings.

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### **Risk Implications**

- 7.7 Section 15 of the draft business case sets out the risk implications, many of the deliverables will require ICT change which is reflected in the ICT harmonisation programme.

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## **8.0 Decision Information**

### **Wards Affected**

All

### **Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework**

Cherwell, An Accessible Value For Money Council  
South Northamptonshire - To Enhance Performance

### **Lead Councillors**

Cherwell - Councillor George Reynolds, Deputy Leader;  
South Northamptonshire - Councillor Rosie Herring, Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Wellbeing

### **Document Information**

<b>Appendix No</b>	<b>Title</b>
A	Joint Customer Service – Draft Business Case EXEMPT
<b>Background Papers</b>	
None	
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