



## **Report to Cabinet**

**Subject** Joint Working with Rushcliffe Borough Council

**Date** 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2005

**Author** The Leader of the Council

1. Members will recall that in October last year officers were authorised to begin negotiations with their counterparts in Rushcliffe Borough Council with a view to establishing closer working relationships between the two authorities. The extent to which joint working could be developed would depend on the nature of the service under consideration and could vary from the exchange of best practice through joint procurement of a service or one authority providing a service on behalf of both.
2. These discussions have progressed well and the two Chief Executive's have recently instigated two joint meetings of the two Cabinets in order that the progress could be evaluated and the future way forward considered.
3. I am pleased to report that following the most recent joint meeting of the Cabinets on 8<sup>th</sup> September both authorities are being recommended to establish a Joint Board to oversee the establishment and progression of the joint working initiative. Attached at Appendix 1 is a copy of a report considered at the joint meeting setting out the constitution and terms of reference of the proposed Joint Board. Appendix 2 sets out the current progress that is being made in individual service areas.
4. I am advised that approval of the establishment of the Joint Board is an executive function exercisable by the Cabinet but in view of the importance of this initiative I propose that the Cabinet invite the next Council meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> October to endorse the establishment of the Board.
5. This is a unique approach in the history of local government in Gedling and I am excited by the prospect that this initiative will bring in delivering even more efficient and better services to our residents and continuing our reputation for providing high quality, value for money services. I hope that Members will join with me in welcoming this proposal.

## **Recommendation**

6. It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet agree to the establishment of the Joint Board and that the Council be requested to endorse this decision.

**JOINT MEETING OF CABINETS –8 SEPTEMBER 2005**

**ITEM**

**JOINT BOARD CONSTITUTION**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES**

1. Gedling Borough Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council agree to establish a joint Board to oversee the joint and partnership working initiatives undertaken by the two Councils in accordance with the protocol attached as an appendix to this agreement.
2. For the avoidance of doubt it is confirmed that nothing in this agreement is intended to give rise to legally enforceable obligations between the two Councils, although the Councils do intend that suitable contractual arrangements will be put in place for each instance of joint working or procurement agreed upon.
3. The Board will comprise the full Cabinets of both Councils.
4. The Board will meet quarterly (more frequently if required), the meeting venues alternating between the Civic Centre, Arnold and the Civic Centre, West Bridgford.
5. The Leader of the host Council will chair each Board meeting.
6. The Board will exercise a monitoring, deliberative and advisory role for the two Councils. Its meetings will not be formal meetings of the two Cabinets but will be open to the public.
7. Each side agrees that it will use its best endeavours to secure the implementation by its own organisation of any action agreed upon by both sides at any Board meeting.
8. The Board will operate within the following terms of reference:
  - a) To consider proposals for the joint procurement and/or delivery of services within each Council area
  - b) To make recommendations to each Cabinet/Council in respect of any proposals under consideration, based on a consensus with no Member on either side voting against the proposition
  - c) To establish and monitor appropriate performance indicators for the jointly provided services and report to each authority on a quarterly basis
  - d) To monitor the effectiveness of the joint working arrangements and make proposals for any appropriate amendments
9. The secretarial support for the Board will be provided by each Council on an annually alternating basis, with Rushcliffe Borough Council providing the support for the first year.

## **Joint Working Protocol**

Gedling Borough Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council recognise the benefits in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, quality and resilience of service delivery that can be derived from mutual support, partnership work and joint procurement and service delivery. They therefore agree that they will work together to identify and take advantage of joint and partnership working opportunities.

This Protocol sets out the principles upon which such work will be based.

### **Underlying Principles**

- Joint or Partnership working will be entered into to achieve one or more of the following objectives:
  - To improve performance of a service
  - To improve efficiency of an already well-performing service
  - To share knowledge, experience and learning between partners
  - To maximise capacity, for example by sharing specialist staff
- Joint or partnership working will be outcome oriented, with outcomes defined and agreed in advance.
- Joint or partnership working will be entered into for mutual benefit of the partners, agreed jointly between the partners involved.
- Joint or partnership working will be based on mutual trust between partners involved.
- Joint or partnership working will be approached from a positive standpoint, with an emphasis on problems solving to overcome barriers, rather than letting any barriers become obstacles to progress.
- Accountability for services delivered through joint and partnership working will remain with the organisation(s) with whom statutory responsibility rests.
- Joint or partnership working will be underpinned by appropriate legal and contractual arrangements between partners, with a presumption towards minimum bureaucracy consistent with meeting legal requirements.

### **Operational Principles**

- Day-to-day managerial responsibility for services delivered through joint or partnership working should rest with the agency providing the service, though overall accountability remains with the organisation(s) with whom statutory responsibility rests.
- Performance standards and targets will be agreed from the outset, which link to and contribute to the desired outcomes. These standards may vary between partners, depending on the level of service required by each partner. The agreed standard(s) will be suitably documented.

- Performance against the standard agreed will be managed by the agency providing the service, linking into constituent partners' performance management arrangements.
- Staffing and other resource costs will be allocated fairly and transparently between partners. Salary levels will generally be in line with those of the organisation delivering the service
- Joint or partnership working may be introduced on either a permanent or temporary/interim basis as required. Where the latter applies, the duration of the arrangement should be agreed from the outset.
- Detailed process and contractual issues will need to be agreed in each instance of joint or partnership working, drawing on these overall and operational principles.

**JOINT MEETING OF CABINETS – 8 SEPTEMBER 2005**

**JOINT WORKING – CURRENT POSITION**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVES**

1. At the last joint meeting of the Cabinets, members requested information on the discussions that have taken place between officers since the decision to investigate joint working was taken last October. The appendices to this report set out a comprehensive review of the current position.
2. Appendix 1 repeats the information presented to the last joint meeting about the possibility of a joint homelessness and strategic housing service updated to refer to the proposed visit to Derbyshire Dales/High Peak Councils which already have a joint working agreement in these service areas.
3. Appendix 2 deals with all the other discussions that have taken place.
4. A critical aspect of joint working will be the extent to which resources can be released either as actual financial savings or by allowing an increase in throughput to be achieved at the same cost. If joint working is to be successful it is essential that any 'savings' are shared equally between the authorities. Senior financial officers are therefore discussing how this can be achieved, recorded and monitored and a further report will be submitted to a future meeting of the Joint Board.
5. There has also been some discussion about the achievement of savings through the outsourcing of some back office functions such as financial services, HR etc. Pendle Borough Council has successfully achieved this and arrangements are currently in hand to enable a visit to be made by officers and members.
6. Members will also be aware that there are proposals for the establishment for a county-wide Building Control service and a bid to the East Midlands Centre of Excellence (EMCE) for funding for consultants to assist with this has been successful. There is to be a presentation to the Notts Chief Executives group in late September about the next steps.
7. Members are requested to note the progress that is being made and to consider whether any priorities should be identified.

**Joint Strategic Housing and Homelessness Service**

**Outline of proposal**

1. The proposal is for a Cross-Authority Strategic Housing Service covering the Boroughs of Rushcliffe and Gedling. The Service would cover the “retained” housing functions which normally continue following the transfer of the local authority’s stock to a registered social landlord or ALMO, and include
  - a) housing strategy and housing policy, including development
  - b) homelessness and housing options advice
  - c) housing support and home alarms
  
2. The purpose of the cross-authority service would be to:
  - a) achieve economies of scale thus realising significant financial benefits for both authorities**
  - b) agree cross-authority policies and approaches wherever possible, thus achieving greater political and management influence at local and regional level
  - c) benefit from increased flexibility of operational resources, thus allowing the authorities to become leaders in the fields of housing strategy, enabling, housing support and homelessness and housing options

**Homelessness and housing advice**

3. The service would deliver 24 hour homelessness services to the public in Rushcliffe and Gedling, acting as a single team across the whole of the geographic area for maximum flexibility of staffing resource.
  
4. A single service for the two Boroughs would offer the following benefits:
  - a) Increased economies of scale meaning better flexibility within existing establishment staffing resources
  - b) Staffing savings as management structures could be rationalised
  - c) Better service to clients through increased ability for specialist knowledge to be developed in specific areas (e.g. around domestic violence, BME needs, private sector tenancies etc.)
  - d) Prevention work could be carried out within establishment resources, meaning no need to continue with temporary posts should ODPM “Tackling Homelessness” funding be withdrawn
  - e) 24 hour cover for homelessness enquiries on a rota stand-by system
  - f) Specialist support, potentially with Supporting People funding, for residents in temporary accommodation

5. The service will provide community alarm and related telecare services across the two Boroughs for vulnerable adults to promote independent living in the community, by visiting clients to assess needs and installation of appropriate technology. The service will also have the strategic planning responsibility around services for vulnerable adults, including involvement in the County Strategies for Older People, and Supporting People. The service will be the principal point of contact with Health, Social Services, Fire, Police and voluntary sector agencies.

### Housing support

6. A single service for the two Boroughs would offer the following benefits:
  - a) Increased economies of scale meaning better bargaining position in relation to Community Alarm Monitoring services when contracts renewed
  - b) Potential for services to develop and link into the wider Strategic Housing team (especially Housing Options team) to deliver 24/7 support to clients with Lifeline through out-of-hours staffing arrangements

### **Housing development and policy**

7. The service will provide the strategic and policy background for the development of the housing service in the two Boroughs. It will be responsible for carrying out research on housing needs to inform housing related planning, and development; liaising directly with registered social landlords on the provision of new affordable housing and management of existing stock; developing the housing and homelessness strategies and liaison at cross authority and regional level.
8. A joint service would deliver the following benefits
  - a) Reduction of duplication of officer time at County meetings, leading to increased capacity to deal with the range of local, sub-regional and regional housing and planning related issues currently emerging, including the Housing Market Assessment, and connected policy and research
  - b) Improved bargaining power with developers through compatible planning policies in relation to affordable housing requirements
  - c) Potential joint developments of affordable housing provision or cross boundary arrangements on nominations
  - d) Potential joint arrangements around nomination of housing across the Boroughs leading to increased flexibility of housing options for homeless households
9. A date has been agreed for a joint visit to Derbyshire Dales/High Peak, where there is a simple service level/funding agreement in place covering the pure strategic housing function.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

**Existing Arrangements**

1. There is already in existence a strong tradition of joint working within the environmental health profession to ensure consistency and maximise efficiency in the delivery of services. This is achieved through work activities co-ordinated by the Nottinghamshire Chief Environmental Health Officers Group which has under its control a number of technical working groups which cover the main environmental health disciplines including Food, Health and Safety, Licensing, Environmental Protection, Contaminated Land, Pest Control and Housing.

Current Progress

2. Responsibilities are arranged differently in the two authorities but managers have held a number of meetings over the last 6 months to scope current and future work areas and identify particular aspects of the service which may benefit from further detailed work. The current position statement in relation to these areas is summarised below.
3. **Energy/Empty Homes** – Following the transfer of the energy function at GBC to the housing team a meeting has been held to discuss any opportunities for sharing the energy function but GBC is also keen to link this with an empty property role. No obvious 'quick win' could be identified to take this issue forward.
4. **Private Sector Housing** – The introduction of the Housing Act 2004 has offered some new opportunities for joint working which are being co-ordinated through the Notts CEHO housing working group to ensure that consistency and efficiency issues are addressed. Initially it was felt that there may be the potential for RBC to undertake House in Multiple Occupation mandatory licensing and inspection activities on behalf of GBC but following further work by GBC there are only 5 properties that may potentially be licensed thereby negating any efficiency saving.
5. **Pest Control/Dog Warden Service** - Feasibility for a joint service was initially identified following staff cover issues at GBC. However the impact of the new arrangements to deal with stray dogs under the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act may provide a further incentive and any potential economies of scale and efficiencies will be investigate later in 2005/06.
6. **IT Development/ CAPS Uniform** - Opportunities for sharing the development of procedures and training costs have been explored in relation to the impact of the new Uniform 7.3 update. In addition the introduction of a new housing module for the Housing Act 2004 has been identified as an area where joint training can take place and this is being progressed by relevant staff.
7. **Food Hygiene/ Health and Safety Inspections** - GBC uses contractors for some of its inspection programme but RBC has recently out-sourced all low risk and medium risk food and health and safety programmed inspections and



reduced the establishment accordingly to achieve a Gershon saving. There may be some scope in the future to procure contractors jointly in order to assist with any economies of scale and to work jointly to deliver the requirements of new food legislation which will require businesses to be trained to implement and operate food safety management systems.

8. **Contaminated land** - Discussions have been held between relevant staff over the potential to share expertise and resources with site investigation and remediation.
9. **Health Development** - In response to a number of national and local strategic initiatives discussions were held earlier in 2005 to identify the possibility of a jointly funded post with respective Primary Care Trusts (PCT) to deliver shared public health priority actions. However despite a high level of interest from all partners GBC was required to identify alternative priorities for its funding stream. RBC has now successfully agreed a jointly funded post with the PCT and the post holder will deliver an agreed work programme based on the health priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership.

## **DEPOT SERVICES**

10. In accordance with the draft programme established in March between the two councils a detailed action plan has been developed with a view to implementing joint working where practical. Initially there are ten activities where it is considered that some benefit will be gained as a result of co-operation between the two councils. The list was not intended to be exhaustive and other activities will be added if they are considered to be viable. Progress to date is set out in the following paragraphs.

### **Trade Waste Recycling**

11. A series of meetings has been held between appropriate officers of the two councils. It is considered that there is sufficient work to establish a service comprising one vehicle and a crew of two operatives collecting paper and card full time and a further crew collecting glass from trade premises in areas where there is a high density of trade customers. Officers are currently considering market prices for recycled materials, appropriate charges for the service and operational issues. They are also considering marketing and managerial arrangements and preparing budget proposals for the various options. There will be a need for both councils to provide capital investment for wheeled containers. It is hoped, subject to it being financially viable, that a twelve-month trial can be carried out commencing in November using either surplus or hired vehicles.

### **Clinical Waste**

12. It is proposed that RBC will operate a service providing a clinical waste collection service across both boroughs. The work in Gedling is currently undertaken by Cannon Hygiene. RBC has the capacity and the specialist vehicle to undertake this work for GBC and can provide a more economic service. Work is currently underway in developing a combined collection round and confirming the customer database. There is no formal contract with Cannon and therefore the service could be launched having given Cannon Hygiene 4 to 6 weeks notice. It

is proposed that the whole service would be managed by RBC. Details of the collection requirements are currently being assembled.

### **Bring Sites**

13. There are possible savings to be made by providing a joint collection service of materials from bring sites. Work in this area is due to start in April 2006 to allow time for the roll out of the third bin in RBC to be completed and the impact on bring sites to be assessed.

### **Gully Emptying**

14. It is proposed that a joint contract be let for the maintenance of gullies on council owned land as neither council has the capacity to undertake this work following the termination of the highways agency agreements. Tender documents have been sent to four organisations and are due for return by late September.

### **Street Lighting**

15. It is proposed that a joint contract for the maintenance of street lighting on council owned land be let as neither council has the capacity to undertake this work following the termination of the highways agency agreements. Tenders are due for return on 9 September. It is hoped the contract will start in October.

### **Countywide Joint Waste Collection Service**

16. Following an unsuccessful bid to the East Midlands Centre of Excellence (EMCE), consideration is being given to the appointment of Deloitte and Touche to undertake some follow-up work to the report they submitted in July 2003. The objective is to ascertain whether there is any financial benefit in the districts working closer together on refuse collection issues. Four of the seven districts (including both GBC and RBC) are committed to the project and two are giving it further consideration.

### **Tree Maintenance**

17. Arrangements have been made for GBC to undertake tree maintenance work on behalf of RBC. Work commenced at the end of August.

### **Vehicle Maintenance**

18. The possibility of GBC undertaking the maintenance of RBC vehicles rather than RBC building a vehicle workshop at its proposed new depot at Cotgrave has been investigated. It is believed that the proposal is not viable. There would be no significant capital savings as GBC would have to extend its workshop and RBC would still have to provide a single bay workshop on site to deal with inspections, lubrication and non-starting vehicles at the beginning of shifts. There would also be increased operational costs with additional vehicles being required and the cost of transporting vehicles between the two sites. Dealing with vehicle breakdowns over such a large area would also have an impact on workshop staffing.

## **Joint Depot Provision**

19. Consideration is being given to developing a new purpose-built depot for both councils on a site convenient to both. The preferred location would be in the Colwick area. Both estates sections have been investigating but no suitable sites have been identified.

## **Joint Procurement**

20. The purchase of vehicles has the potential for the biggest savings and as a result it is hoped that a joint tender for refuse freighters for the whole county can be developed. At a meeting on 19 August the districts transport managers were tasked with identifying a draft specification and vehicle requirements for the next five years and to report back to the District Technical Officers Group by early November. One problem is the diverse needs of the different councils but it is believed there is sufficient similarity to make the project worthwhile. It is hoped that a three to five year partnership relationship can be established with suppliers in an endeavour to maximise savings. Other procurement opportunities including tyres, fuel, wheeled containers and protective clothing are also being considered.

## **CRIME AND DISORDER**

21. Each council has been responsible over the last six years for producing (with the Police, County Council and more recently the Primary Care Trusts and the Fire and Rescue Service) crime and disorder reduction strategies for their respective areas. Although Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe areas form the South Notts Division of the Police with a single divisional commander, each partnership has operated very much in isolation and even the sharing of best and/or similar practice has been in little evidence. There is a strong feeling that now might be an appropriate time to consider whether a single partnership could be established. The Divisional Commander understandably is supportive of this idea and all three partnerships have agreed to establish a working group to investigate what would be required and to report back in October.

## **FINANCIAL SERVICES**

22. Following the unsuccessful bid to EMCE to fund a joint Procurement Officer, both authorities have agreed to proceed using their own funding and an appointment has been made. The officer will start in October.

## **Payroll**

23. There has been an exchange of information, but the whole issue is currently on hold due to staff absences in RBC and the requirement for RBC to test the market.

## **Sundry debtors**

24. Preliminary meetings were held in November and December 2004 to discuss the feasibility of RBC providing a collection and recovery service for sundry debts on behalf of GBC. Following a demonstration to key GBC staff of the RBC debtors

computer system in February 2005, it was agreed that the project should progress with an anticipated "go live" date of 1 April 2006.

25. A project team has been formed and a project initiation document (PID) has been approved. This covers, amongst other things, the purpose and scope of the project, business success criteria, project management, acceptance criteria and a post-implementation review. A project plan has also been prepared.
26. Meetings of the project team are held monthly and are used to agree controls and requirements as well as to monitor progress against the project plan. A further system demonstration has been given to GBC staff in order to clarify more precise requirements from the system in terms of making enquiries, reporting and management data extracts.
27. IT Staff from both authorities are currently establishing the requirements necessary to be able to access systems on each other's IT network. Definitions have been established for both format and content of the various data files that need to be transferred between the 2 authorities. The GBC sundry debtors base system has been created and should be populated with initial test data during September 2005.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES/HEALTH & SAFETY**

28. There have been several meetings between officers to discuss the joint provision of health & safety / emergency planning / risk management arrangements. Whilst it may be possible for GBC to provide the H&S work it would be unable to provide the business continuity, risk management, emergency planning or emergency planning call-out functions. Costs for the H & S work are proving problematical but these are currently being reassessed.

### **LEISURE SERVICES**

29. Officers have agreed that there are good opportunities for joint working/procurement in the immediate future in respect of the Collection of Direct Debits and membership sales and the purchase of managed vending services.
30. RBC is currently carrying out a study into the provision of its leisure facilities and their management and details of this have been shared with GBC officers. There may be some benefit in considering joint management arrangements for the future.