

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Collaboration Agreement with Newark and Sherwood and Rushcliffe Borough Councils

Date: 19 December 2013

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Wards Affected

All

Purpose

This report recommends approval of an agreement to develop collaborative working between Gedling Borough Council, Newark and Sherwood District Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council.

Key Decision

This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.

Background

1.1 One aspect of the Council's strategy for responding to on-going budget reductions is to seek out opportunities to share with others, including procurement of goods and services, employment of staff and occupation of facilities.

1.2 Gedling already has a number of shared service arrangements in place and provides services to a number of other Councils. Examples include payroll, information technology, procurement and housing strategy. Management of car parks, refuse collection and fleet maintenance are also being considered and we share our accommodation with an increasing number of partners, the full range of which is soon to include:-

- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Gedling Homes
- Nottingham North and East Clinical Commissioning Group
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner

- East Midlands Ambulance Service
- Central College

1.3 Building upon successful working relationships formed over a number of years and the shared desire to protect services, the Collaboration Agreement aims to save money and strengthen the resilience of each Council as they come under increasing pressure to further reduce budgets.

1.4 Through the Collaboration Agreement, it is proposed that the three Councils will actively pursue new opportunities to share capacity, merge services and work together on common objectives.

1.5 Subject to the approval of the Collaboration Agreement, a programme to explore and develop shared arrangements will be produced. Such arrangements will not preclude the involvement of other local authority partners where there is interest in being involved as all three partners recognise that there will be occasions when more extensive partnership arrangements make sense.

Proposal

2. It is proposed that the Collaboration Agreement set out at Appendix 1 is approved.

Alternative Options

3. The Council could choose not to collaborate with other Councils but that would not be advisable given the need to strengthen our resilience and find financial savings. The Council could choose to develop an agreement with other local authorities, however, as Appendix 1 identifies there are reasons for developing the relationship with Newark and Sherwood and Rushcliffe and the agreement will not preclude partnerships with other Councils in any case.

Legal Implications

4. The Collaboration Agreement sets the framework for joint working between Gedling and two neighbouring Councils but it is important to emphasise that each individual Council will retain decision making sovereignty over the policies, services and finances for their areas. Detailed Service proposals will be subject to further reports.

Financial Implications

5. It is anticipated that the agreement will contribute to the funding challenges set out in the medium term financial strategy. There are no immediate costs resulting from entering the collaboration agreement and any future financial implications will be considered as they arise.

Appendices

6. Appendix 1 – GNSR Collaboration Agreement

Background Papers

7. None.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Collaboration Agreement with Newark and Sherwood District Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council set out at Appendix 1 is approved.

Reasons for Recommendations

8. To enable the council to develop shared services in a systematic way and to improve the efficiency and resilience of service delivery.

GNSR Collaboration Agreement

1. Gedling Borough Council, Newark and Sherwood District Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council (the GNSR councils) are committed to the principle of ensuring that their communities have efficient and resilient public services. The GNSR councils have therefore entered into this agreement which sets out ways in which they will collaborate to achieve financial savings, avoid cost escalation and ensure that they work together to improve and innovate in public services.

2. In recent years, the GNSR councils, like all councils across the UK, have entered into a number of arrangements to share costs and services. This agreement takes such activity a step further by building on the concept of 'preferred partners'. Under this agreement, the GNSR councils will actively seek out opportunities between themselves to innovate, save money and build resilience. Our approach is not exclusive and we will continue to work with other partners where this makes sense. But when an opportunity arises, our preferred partnership will be where we look first.

3. Our three councils serve communities that are a balanced mix of urban and rural communities. We have common boundaries. The River Trent has an impact on many parts of our communities. We share ambitions, an ethos of good service and a willingness to work at pace to innovate and improve what we do.

4. In exploring these opportunities we recognise that:

- local government has experienced unprecedented reductions in funding and will continue to do so for at least another three years,
- protecting frontline services which underpin our communities is a priority.

5. We are committed to sustained collaboration over the coming years by:

- sharing capacity,
- merging services where it makes sense,
- changing the way we work to manage demand effectively,
- working together to join-up back office services and procurement.

6. Our collaboration is based on:

- elected councillors of each of the councils retaining decision-making sovereignty over the policies and services for their area including setting levels of council tax, spending priorities and the ability of councillors to question and scrutinise performance,
- a commitment to share learning, innovation and financial benefits.

7. To make the most of this collaboration agreement we recognise:

- the need for strong relationships between political and managerial leaders across the GNSR councils,
- that effective governance arrangements for shared activities needs to be complemented by an entrepreneurial and 'can do' approach within our organisations,
- that the potential for greater integration and collaboration will develop through a sustained relationship over time.