

Communities Select Committee

25 September 2014

Creation of a Joint Trading Standards Service with Buckinghamshire County Council

Purpose of the report: To consult the Select Committee on recommendations to create a new Joint Trading Standards Service with Buckinghamshire County Council. The recommendation is due to be considered by Cabinet on 21st October.

Introduction

1. The Trading Standards Service has been working on innovative proposals to create a joint Trading Standards Service with Buckinghamshire County Council.
2. The initiative has been overseen by a Project Board which has included the Strategic Director, Yvonne Rees and Portfolio Holder Helyn Clack. The Select Committee was advised of the initiative at its Priorities and Budget Setting Review Meeting of 20th February and expressed support in principle.
3. The Select Committee is now asked to consider the draft business case and supporting documents before further consideration and decision by Cabinet in October. The same process is underway in Buckinghamshire.

Background

4. The implementation of the Public Value Review of Trading Standards in 2012 delivered several service improvements. It also delivered savings of 20% (including a 50% reduction in management costs). That review recognised that further efficiencies would need to come from sharing services, and from increasing income. This project is a natural continuation from the outcome of the Public Value review.
5. As a result the service has been exploring partnership opportunities and this has led to the current work with Buckinghamshire. The proposals envisage a merger of the two existing Trading Standards Services. Both services would retain the same local presence in each county. There are no plans to relocate staff. The service would continue to operate from Redhill in Surrey and from Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. Staff in both local authorities have been engaged and closely involved as the proposals have developed.

6. A business case has been drafted which summarises the benefits of a new joint service for residents and for businesses. It also provides further detail on the financial benefits and income generation projections. This approach enables the savings required by the Medium Term Financial Plan to be made without damaging front line services.
7. The proposal will create a service better able to meet its statutory responsibilities, to achieve more to support corporate priorities in both Councils, and better positioned to deal with the new regulatory and consumer protection landscape. Building on the strengths of the current services, it will provide enhanced resilience and capacity to tackle unforeseen challenges and peaks in demand such as large scale investigations, complex frauds or animal disease outbreaks. It will continue to focus on protecting the most vulnerable and supporting businesses. It will be more influential regionally and nationally and have an enhanced capacity to generate income and future growth through the delivery of services for businesses and for other local authorities.
8. The Project Board has considered and applied lessons learned from other shared service initiatives for example in West Berkshire and Wokingham and in Devon and Somerset. Should the proposal be approved by the Cabinet in Surrey and in Buckinghamshire a communications strategy will ensure that key partners and customers will be re-assured that the service provided will not be adversely affected. In several respects it will be able to be enhanced as a result of the creation of the joint service. The service will retain a local presence and continue to work through local partnerships and relationships.
9. The Select Committee are asked to consider the proposal together with the business case and supporting appendices. The views of the Select Committee can then be taken into account when Cabinet considers the recommendations in October.

Governance of Joint Service

10. The Project Board and Project recommends Governance arrangements via a Joint Committee which would have responsibility for the service delegated to it from Surrey and Buckinghamshire. This will be underpinned by an “Inter Authority Agreement” (IAA) setting out the legal arrangements for the partnership. This will include issues such as the duration of the agreement (currently the Board is recommending a minimum of a 5 year term with scope to extend by a further 10 years). This is very much seen as a long term partnership. The IAA will also include agreement on financial arrangements. The IAA will also include termination and exit arrangements, data sharing, data protection, business continuity, health and safety, etc.
11. The joint service would have a single business plan and priorities, which will be aligned to the partner Authority priorities. Where there are specific local needs and issues they will continue to be met. Locally the service will retain local branding i.e. they will still be seen and be visible as “Surrey Trading Standards” and “Buckinghamshire Trading Standards”.
12. The joint service will be subject to the Scrutiny of the relevant Select Committee in both Surrey and in Buckinghamshire.

Recommendations

13. The Select Committee is invited to support proposal to create a new Joint Trading Standards Service with Buckinghamshire County Council.
14. The Select Committee is invited to highlight any particular issues where it would like to see further clarification

Next steps

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| 15. Cabinet decision in Buckinghamshire | 20 th October 2014 |
| . Cabinet decision in Surrey | 21 st October 2014 |
| Implementation of a new joint Trading Standards service, if both Cabinets endorse the proposal – | 1 st April 2015 |

Financial and value for money implications

The financial and value implications are set out in the attached business case.

Equalities implications

An Equalities Impact Assessment has undertaken – see supporting documents

Risk management implications

Appendix F summarises the key risks and mitigating actions

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy/Local Area Agreement Targets

A joint service will maintain engagement and support for council priorities.

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Sources/background papers:

Business Case

This Business Case is supported by a number of documents listed below.

- APPENDIX A: Draft Service Priorities Page 9
- APPENDIX B: Comparison of possible Governance Models Page 11
- APPENDIX C: Options for Future Growth Page 13
- APPENDIX D: Case Studies Page 15
- APPENDIX E: Anticipated Benefits Analysis Page 19
- APPENDIX F: Risk Register Page 25

Additional Supporting Documents:

- Equalities Impact Assessment

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