

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Finance (Introduced by the Executive Member for Resources)	Executive Cabinet	9 November 2006

COLLABORATIVE WORKING UPDATE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To inform members of a number of opportunities for collaborative working currently being pursued and delivered.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- The opportunities being pursued will in the main have a positive impact on the Council's corporate priority to become a performing organisation.

RISK ISSUES

- The issues raised in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy	√	Information	
Reputation	√	Regulatory/Legal	√
Financial		Operational	
People		Other	

- The main risks for the Council remain around ensuring the Council's corporate priorities are met. In this instance Chorley being seen as a performing organisation and that it meets its regulatory obligation and maintains its reputation as an organisation that delivers high performing services.

BACKGROUND

- The Council has traditionally been prepared to deliver services via a mixed economy approach whereby the best delivery vehicle has been adopted whether that be in-house, outsourced or via collaborative working.
- A greater emphasis is now being placed on collaborative working, particularly public/public partnerships. The reasons for this are that the model offers opportunities to sustain and enhance service performance and achieve some economies of scale. This is particularly relevant and important for District Councils whereby issues such as staff retention and recruitment, and the scale of the service often means the depth and breadth of the services required cannot always be secured internally.
- For these reasons the Council is constantly exploring and utilising ways to procure and provide services and recognises public/public partnership as a possible solution.

OPPORTUNITIES BEING EXPLORED

8. The Council is currently considering Public/Public working in both the Human Resources and Financial Services areas. More details are provided below.

HUMAN RESOURCES

9. The Unit is working on two fronts, namely Health and Safety and Senior Management Support. In regard to Management Support, the current Director of Human Resources vacancy has meant that a significant risk to the Council exists in a period of significant change, with both Stock Transfer and Job Evaluation currently ongoing. Consequently an arrangement has been agreed with Stockport Council to provide Senior Management Support for 3 days a week until the new Director of Human Resources is in post. There are significant advantages being secured through this arrangement particularly in relation to job evaluation where the experience of officers who have been involved in job evaluation is invaluable.
10. In relation to Health and Safety, the Council has seen all of its Health and Safety staff secure other employment with other Councils in the last six months. This areas has traditionally been difficult to recruit to and for this reason an alternative delivery vehicle is currently being agreed. Collaborative working is being developed with Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council who will provide the Council with Health and Safety support for a trial period of twelve months. Further consideration of the situation will be undertaken within the next twelve months so that a more permanent solution can be made. The arrangement compliments the work currently undertaken in relation to Occupational Health Services that are also secured via Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

11. As with the Human Resources Unit, the Financial Services Unit has also experienced some difficulties in terms of staff retention and recruitment and has a number of small units where sustaining and improving performance can be difficult given the scale of resources available.
12. For these and other reasons I have been working with the North West Centre of Excellence and South Ribble Borough Council to explore whether shared working is something that firstly both Councils can sign up to and secondly how the opportunities might be explored further.
13. An outline business case has been produced that suggests some of the benefits that might occur through shared working, these include:
 - Increase job satisfaction, staff retention and development
 - Providing additional capacity
 - Provide access to additional skills, knowledge and experience
 - Sharing of best practice and building upon each others strengths
14. Both Councils currently have a number of vacancies at a senior level which could provide a catalyst for change. For all the above reasons and others, I feel that it is important that the opportunities are explored further. Both Councils are therefore committed to producing a full business case that will identify a potential model to implement should one exist.
15. Clearly there are a number of barriers and risks associated with the proposal but the potential benefits massively outweigh that risk.

16. To mitigate some of the risks, the review will be restricted to:

- Accountancy and Audit Services
- Exchequer Services
- Property Services
- Procurement

17. Therefore, over the coming months a full business case will be produced for Members to consider further sometime towards the end of this financial year. The Governance arrangements for the project will include Member and Staff input and I shall be presenting some proposals as the project progresses in terms of engaging key members and other staff members.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18. It is anticipated that the arrangement with Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council for the Health and Safety work will generate some ongoing savings for the Council and once the arrangements are finalised I will identify and report that to Members. In respect of the financial services work there will be a cost of undertaking the work as additional resource is required to undertake the work. However whilst details are not yet finalised the North West Centre of Excellence have committed a project manager and some additional cash to the project. Any costs over and above these sums will come from the two Councils, but will be met from existing resources and budgets.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

19. At this stage there are no Human Resource implications but the Director of Finance is working with his staff to ensure the proper process and protocol is followed in relation to this project.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

20. That the report be noted.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

21. None

GARY HALL
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Gary Hall	5480	23 October 2006	ADMINREP/REPORT