

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

7 APRIL 2009

DEVON DISTRICTS' DRAFT BLUEPRINT FOR INTEGRATED DEVON

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This Report informs Members of the proposals that have been developed to facilitate closer working between Devon Authorities.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Government White Paper 'Strong and Prosperous Communities' published in 2006 invited local areas to develop cases for Unitary Status or Pathfinders for Enhanced Two-Tier. As Exeter City Council began the development of its Business Case for Unitary Status, the remaining Districts and the County Councils began work which although not seeking Pathfinder status, was designed to develop closer working between the Devon Districts and the County Council.

3. Development of the Draft Blueprint for Integrated Devon

- 3.1 The Devon Local Government Steering Group (DLGSG) is currently working to develop high level proposals for the implementation of the outcome of the current review of Local Government structures in Devon. Membership of the DLGSG comprises the Leaders and Chief Executives of the nine Devon Local Authorities affected by the current Review of Local Government Structures in Devon being conducted by the Boundary Committee for England, together with the Chair and Secretary of the Devon Association of Parish Councils. The DLGSG is working on each of the three possible outcomes: a single unitary council for Devon, two unitary councils for Devon and Integrated Devon. The latter alludes to closer working between local authorities in the event that the status quo is retained.
- 3.2 In relation to the third scenario described above, Devon District councils have worked over the last two years through various facilitated workshops to develop the proposals for closer and more joined up working between Devon local authorities. The most recent of these workshops took place at the Guildhall on 20 February and was attended by District councils. At that meeting, the final document was agreed for submission to individual councils for their endorsement. Attending that workshop from the City Council were the Leader of the Council, Leader of the Conservative Group, the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executive. A further workshop is planned which will include the County Council.
- 3.3 The City Council has been involved to a degree in the on-going discussions on the understanding that our aim is to secure unitary status. Officers felt that it was necessary to be aware of the developing proposals to ensure that they delivered positive outcomes for the City should unitary status not be secured. In any event, the City Council has always worked positively with other Devon Districts to plan and

deliver services jointly. Regardless of the outcome of the unitary debate the Council is likely to continue with this approach where there is a persuasive business case to do so.

4 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The Blueprint is attached as an Appendix to this report and is structured to address: The Business Case Design Principles, the Service Delivery Design Principles, Governance, Organisational Structure and the Support Infrastructure.
- 4.2 The Blueprint proposes four cluster areas for service delivery. These Clusters are:
- East (East and Mid),
 - South (Teignbridge, South Hams and West Devon) ,
 - North (Torrige and North Devon),
 - Exeter
- 4.3 Members may wish to note that the Draft Blueprint for Integrated Devon was considered at a meeting of DLGSG on 23 March. The County Council indicated that whilst the Districts could obviously choose to organise their service delivery between themselves according to any cluster that Districts considered appropriate, the County Council would not endorse the four-cluster approach and would adopt the most appropriate service delivery model for their services on a case by case basis. A form of words to go some way towards bridging this gap is currently being negotiated.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no resource implications arising from the recommendations of this Report.

6 RECOMMENDED

- (1) That Members consider the proposals contained in the Draft Blueprint for Integrated Devon.
- (2) That Members specifically indicate their support for the four-cluster approach defined in the Blueprint and communicate this to the Devon District and County Councils.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Titles of supporting documents

Date 24 March 2009

APPENDIX

Draft Blueprint for Integrated Devon

1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose

To set out the vision, principles and design of an 'Integrated Devon' to show how two tier local government in Devon will undertake a joint approach for the benefit of customers and communities.

Objectives

Be used by all Devon councils as a basis for joint working and collaboration
Enable a review and monitoring of shared services and joint working

Background

Initial agreement to improved joint working following the publication of the White Paper on Strong and Prosperous Communities and to seek approval for a way ahead.

In 2007 Devon Councils agreed:

- i) that an "Integrated Devon" would be developed by Devon District Councils, the County Council and other key partners with the aim of improving service for local people and communities and achieving efficiencies;
- ii) over the coming months to work together to develop more detailed action plans to deliver change;
- iii) to consult and work with other stakeholders, particularly Parish and Town Councils and the Devon Unitary Authorities;
- iv) to authorise officers to pursue the above and, where possible and appropriate, involve Members informally and to bring back to an appropriate Council body any matters requiring a Member decision and note the establishment of a Devon Programme Management Group comprising the Leaders of Devon Local Authorities.

Background

1. Devon Authorities have customarily been working together for several years on a countywide and sub-county basis in search of improved service delivery, improved access and public engagement, delivery of major projects and greater efficiency. A mixed picture of arrangements has grown up and, since the Commitment to Improve Two-Tier Working was signed in January 2007, confidence in relationships has grown and the benefits of further joint working have been recognised

The October 2006 Local Government White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities", provides a platform to reform local government and challenges local

councils to make significant transformational change. This submission has been prepared by the local authorities in the Devon two-tier (county) area in response to Government's invitation to come forward with innovative proposals for improved ways of working. Sections 2 and 3 set out our vision, ambitions and guiding principles.

For some time now all tiers of local government in Devon have been working effectively together for the benefit of the community. The Local Strategic Partnerships and other local partnership arrangements have brought about real, tangible change and improvement.

The range and extent of improvements which have been achieved are a reflection of a range of historical, geographical and political differences between authorities. In the last year a mutual understanding of the need for more significant and accelerated change has emerged. The Leaders of Devon's district and county authorities are committed to a collaborative approach to transform services and improve quality of life for Devon's communities. They have also committed themselves to involving our unitary neighbours, parish and town councils, national park authorities and other public sector partners in that work.. This will be a long term programme. Leaders recognise the need to create capacity and trust and to motivate and empower Members and staff to deliver.

2. THE TRANSFORMATION/BUSINESS CASE DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Vision

(based on the 'Transforming Public Services in Devon' paper – Integrated Devon)

We will work together to provide cost-effective services which are designed around the needs of the people who use them and address the priorities of local communities.

By working together, our shared ambitions are to:

- Support, empower and respond to the aspirations and needs of the people and communities of Devon
- Strengthen communities through engagement with local people
- Provide effective local democratic control of appropriate services
- Transform services so as to improve them, simplify access to them and reduce costs
- Remove duplication of effort; simplify systems and processes and maximise economies of scale
- Work in partnership with other public, private, voluntary and community sector agencies and organisations

- Deliver quality and value for money services to all Devon's communities.

Design principles

(a) Fundamental

In delivering our shared Vision, we will have regard to the following principles:

- Improve access to and quality of services for all
- Provide strong customer service facilities using trained staff with local knowledge
- Take decisions at the lowest reasonable level and provide effective opportunity for public input
- Recognise the different needs of different communities and plan services and facilities accordingly
- Decisions should be based on evidence supported by knowledge of the differing needs of individuals and communities
- Achieve cost effective services which enable resources to be released
- Flexibility – recognise that some initiatives and services are best delivered across Devon, others will benefit from a more local focus
- The benefits of relevant activity planned and delivered across the public sector and take advantage of the opportunities to work with the voluntary and private sectors
- Provide town and parish councils with opportunities to strengthen their role through devolved functions, powers and responsibilities
- Strong and effective community leadership through clearly linked political and partnership management arrangements

NB – The statutory role of Members in decision making and their accepted regulatory role, such as Planning and Licensing functions, will be built into any proposals. It is likely that existing office sites will be retained and exploited to grow a range of employment opportunities in these locations.

(b) Service Transition/Transformation

In delivering our vision we recognise that the key drivers of transformation change management in local government arise due to the clear need to achieve greater economies of scale, cost reduction, efficiency and flexibility in delivering robust services.

3. THE APPROACH/SERVICE DELIVERY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Operating environment

Information on future demographic and other relevant changes which will impact on service delivery, local residents and communities will be shared across Devon.

Services

Services will continue to be provided, based on resource allocations, local community needs and expectations.

As a starting point, we will look to a Four Cluster approach across Devon. These Clusters will be –

- East (East and Mid),
- South (Teignbridge, South Hams and West Devon) ,
- North (Torrige and North Devon),
- Exeter.

Spatially delivered services are likely to be particularly suited to this approach. There will be other services and activities where the business case may identify a different approach, be that County wide, joint cluster, District based or at market town level, which would result in better outcomes

We accept that there will be local differences and the need to take managed risks, but will work together on areas of mutual interest and benefit to the community. We aim to reduce costs through initiatives such as shared management arrangements and reducing overheads. We will also take the opportunity to work with neighbouring councils, such as Torbay and Plymouth, and other partner organisations when mutual benefits are identified.

Locality working

Flexible and shared working arrangements will need to be put in place to ensure a minimum of travelling and wasted resource. Best use will be made of technology such as video conferencing, Sharepoint (for information) and other software. Advantage will be taken of mobile technology to achieve equal access to services.

Certain services, particularly 'back office' support, may be provided from one central point across Devon. In such cases there will need to be access to, and by, officers in other geographical areas. Officers from different services should be able to access information conveniently and work across councils, where reasonable.

Customer experience/access

Customers will need access to services at an appropriate level. Because Devon has a large number of rural, isolated communities, local residents will want to access a range of service information and advice either face-to-face or by telephone. Although much can be accessed through websites, with on-line forms or payments available, we will ensure that there are sufficient alternative ways of accessing services and information. A joint approach to the provision of advice and information will be taken, where possible, to include a range of Devon councils and other

relevant partners. The use of visiting officers taking a range of public sector services out to communities will be investigated as part of the service transformation.

4. GOVERNANCE

4.1 Decision Making

Joint decision-making involving all Devon councils will be required, to agree on various aspects of the programme. It is envisaged that existing structures will be used where possible, such as the Devon Local Government Steering Group. A Project Team and workstreams will be required to ensure progress, depending on the programme to be delivered.

For services, decision making structures will vary, depending on the operating and constitutional implications of the model which is chosen.

A strong performance management culture and systems will be essential so that Integrated Devon delivers benefits for the people and communities of Devon.

4.2 Political Management

This blueprint is prepared on the basis that existing local authorities in Devon, and current electoral arrangements will continue.

4.3 Partnerships

The principle of working with other service providers in the public, voluntary and business sectors will remain a key part of Integrated Devon's approach. A common approach to partnership working will be sought based on cluster arrangements.

5. ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

5.1 High Level Organisational Design

There are many operational models which can be adapted for shared services. In some cases services may be provided by one local authority or partner and supplied to other Devon authorities.

The appropriate operating models will be determined on a service by service basis. A key initial task in the transition to Integrated Devon is to develop a Design model which is fit for purpose and based on strong business planning methodology.

An important principle on which Integrated Devon will be based is that of distributed work/access hubs and not solely on centralisation of services. Optimum locations should be determined on a service by service basis and other material factors.

5.2 Staff

People who deliver services at all levels are Integrated Devon's most valuable resource.

Effective change management which guides people through the process of change and maintains a motivated and skilled workforce is essential. Integrated Devon will

not achieve success unless there is effective communication, support, training, and leadership.

Comprehensive human resource planning will be a key element of the Organisation Design model which is developed for Integrated Devon.

Maximising the use of flexible, remote and mobile working is essential.

6. SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

6.1 ICT Infrastructure

Integrated Devon will be based on streamlined and consistent business processes.

ICT provides the platform which allows shared services to operate.

A key part of the process of transition to Integrated Devon is the preparation of a Devon Technology Integration plan, which is flexible enough to adjust to changing situations.

In drawing up the Technology Integration Plan, the basic objective will be to create a consistent architecture which will support the most appropriate customer focused IT systems.

6.2 Property & Other Infrastructure

Other key information includes the assets of each council to enable informed decisions to be made around service delivery and customer access. This could also include the assets of partner agencies such as other public service organisations and town and parish councils.