

Meeting of the Cabinet – 16th March 2011

Report of the Chief Executive

Black Country Collaborative Working

Purpose of Report

1. To present Cabinet with an overview report of the Joint Black Country Cabinet Team meeting held on the 24 November 2010, outlining the opportunity for collaborative working and the proposals for taking this agenda forward.

Background

2. A joint meeting of Black Country Cabinet Members was held on 24 November 2010. The meeting considered how the Black Country authorities could all benefit from more collaboration in the delivery of services.
3. The meeting was informed by development work undertaken by the four Black Country authorities, with support from Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands (IEWM). This included an initial meeting of the joint Black Country management teams held on 21 September 2010 at Himley Hall to explore the potential for greater collaborative working across the sub-region.
4. In anticipation of the outcomes from the Himley event, IEWM had given approval to a sum of £300,000 from the Locality Investment Fund to support possible areas that may emerge. This resource is to be managed by Wolverhampton City Council on behalf of the four authorities.

Moving Forward with the Agenda

5. The selection of service areas for consideration and the development of the project have been undertaken using a number of principles including:

- Follow a customer-centred approach.
 - Create capacity for change.
 - Grow capability to see things through.
 - Show leadership and commitment.
 - It is not necessary to involve all four authorities in any shared arrangement.
6. The joint Cabinet meeting endorsed the approach being taken and agreed a set of essential criteria which should be used to prioritise future action. These being:
- Introduce new ways of working to generate savings.
 - Ensure implementation costs are affordable and linked to a clearly identified rate of return.
 - Have a clear understanding of the financial and service risks involved, along with appropriate mitigating actions.
 - Understand the implications on services and service improvement.
 - Apply a consistent approach to joint working with the requirements for local accountability and discretion for that service.
 - Joint working should be essential to the achievement of economies of scale to sustain professional services.
 - Consider the relative ease of delivery for the proposed change.
 - Consider the potential for the change programme to contribute to wider public or social outcomes e.g. supporting the local economy.
7. The joint Cabinet was also clear that any programme developed on behalf of the Black Country authorities needed to acknowledge and be consistent with the emerging national policy framework. Leadership will be critical to the success of any attempts at collaboration and engagement of the political leadership in the process will be essential.
8. The programme is being led by a small working group. The Group includes representatives from each of the four Black Country authorities and provides regular update reports to the joint meeting of Black Country Chief Executives. I have agreed to take the lead role on this initiative.
9. The working group was initially established to progress the priorities identified by the joint management teams. Any opportunities identified through the process will be agreed individually by the participating authorities. Specifically, in developing ideas to be brought forward, the process will ensure that the Cabinet has agreed the proposals.

10. For each of the service areas, a Review Lead Officer has been appointed and a review team formed which consists of a service area representative from each authority. In addition all four authorities have nominated a Cabinet Lead Member, according to existing portfolios, who will be kept updated on the progress of the review as appropriate. Appendix 1 provides further details.
11. In progressing the review work, each review team will:
 - Undertake an evaluation of the opportunity for collaborative work.
 - Work to start assessing the exploration of alternative models of service delivery.
 - Facilitated by IEWM, work to review and assess the approaches to change within each authority.
12. Following this first phase of activity there will a report back to Joint Black Country Chief Executives and Leaders to agree the next stage of work. There will then be a further report on the proposals to a future meeting of the Joint Black Country Cabinets Group.

Finance

13. The project is supported by £300,000 of funding from IEWM. This resource is being managed by Wolverhampton City Council on behalf of the four authorities. As the project progresses, only collaboration proposals which generate efficiencies will be taken forward for decision by the individual authorities.

Law

14. The Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 has allowed local authorities to provide goods and services to other authorities, to secure the benefit of economies of scale.

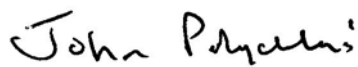
Equality Impact

15. For all services each authority will separately consider the equality implications of future Black Country collaborative working as well as considering the equality implications for the project as a whole.

Recommendations

16. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- Endorse the principles outlined in paragraph 5.
- Endorse the key criteria for driving the agenda outlined in paragraph 6, and
- Note the initial phase of review activity and endorse the proposed process for taking forward this project as outlined in paragraphs 10 and 11.



John Polychronakis

Chief Executive

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Leisure Trust	Keith Heyes Support to Service Director - Learning and Culture (to June 2011) Sandwell MBC 0121 5698203 keith_heyas@sandwell.gov.uk	Duncan Lowndes Assistant Director - Culture & Leisure 01384 815500 duncan.lowndes@dudley.gov.uk	Cllr David Stanley Cabinet Member for Environment and Culture
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Children's Out of Borough – Fostering Service	Pauline Sharratt Assistant Director Children and Families Dudley MBC 01384 815803 pauline.sharratt@dudley.gov.uk	See Lead Officer	Cllr Patrick Harley Cabinet Member for Performance Management and Quality Assurance (Children's Services)
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