

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

7 September 2009

### Report of the Management Team

#### Part 1- Public

#### Matters for Recommendation to Council

### 1 PARTNERSHIP WORKING ARRANGEMENTS – GUIDING PRINCIPLES

#### 1.1 Introduction and Background

1.1.1 In February 2007, Council endorsed a set of principles to support the 'Kent Agreement' following a Kent-wide response to the white paper "Strong & Prosperous Communities". Members may recall that the white paper raised some concerns about the potential for new unitary authorities.

1.1.2 Attached at **[Annex 1]** is a copy of the set of principles endorsed by Council. The purpose of mentioning these principles in this report is that there is reference to partnership working viz:

*"The Council is committed to working in successful partnerships where these add value to the provision of services. It believes this value is proportionate to the closeness of the partnership to the issues it is addressing. The Council could therefore not agree to the merging of partnerships across wider areas unless clear benefits could be demonstrated."*

1.1.3 As Members are aware from other forums, we have been working with some of our neighbouring councils to test and progress partnership working where this is appropriate. The "cluster" of authorities we are working with includes ourselves, Sevenoaks District Council, Gravesham Borough Council and Dartford District Council. Our Management Teams now hold regular quarterly meetings to explore opportunities for partnership working where benefits (both financial and operational) can be achieved.

1.1.4 The Central Services Director sits on a "sub-group" formed from the cluster which meets monthly to monitor existing partnerships, identify new opportunities and undertake liaison with external agencies to explore potential sources of funding and follow best practice.

1.1.5 The partnerships currently "up and running" that involve TMBC are:

- Benefit Investigation (Fraud) – the Fraud Manager, employed by Gravesham BC, is shared on a 50:50 basis with T&M;
- Revenue – the Principal Revenue Officer, employed by TMBC, is shared on a 50:50 basis with Gravesham;
- Legal – Sevenoaks DC have been providing planning legal advice on an as and when basis and the arrangement has been working well. It is currently being extended to cover more general areas of legal advice;
- Out of Hours Service- our service has recently transferred to Sevenoaks DC (previously provided by Invicta Telecare).

Other opportunities are being considered. Presently, we are receiving temporary support from Sevenoaks DC for our licensing function to cover a period of sickness. We have supplied assistance to Sevenoaks DC for Building control Services. In addition, we are, as a cluster, sharing best practice for the Land Charges and Development Control functions.

## **1.2 Arrangements for Joint Working**

- 1.2.1 Joint working brings with it a set of new challenges and, potentially, new procedures and processes. Accordingly, a group of our personnel officers have been meeting to discuss a range of issues including training and development.
- 1.2.2 Members will appreciate that there are a number of advantages to the “sharing” of staff. Firstly, savings can be achieved – and in the current climate this is to be welcomed. There is also the opportunity to learn from others and take on board good practices and also to improve resilience by forming closer bonds with other operational teams within the Cluster. However, on the days the staff concerned are serving the other authority, there is naturally a reduction in our own capacity. All things considered, the partnerships we have up and running thus far are achieving the desired results and are ‘manageable’ from the capacity point of view.
- 1.2.3 One specific issue which has arisen from the personnel group is the need to consider “partnership supplements” for those staff involved in partnership working. The principle has already been adopted by two of the other partners in the Cluster, but as yet this is not something we at T&MBC have considered. In essence, we are talking about rewarding officers who are sharing their time between different authorities via an enhancement to their remuneration package. In many cases, officer will have more staff to supervise and could even have slightly different roles at the different authorities. Naturally, this is something we have been trying to agree with the cluster so that we have some uniformity.
- 1.2.4 An alternative way forward would be the regrading of a post involved in a partnership arrangement, but we do not believe this is the right approach. Regrading tends to imply permanency of an arrangement or new responsibility,

and as Members will appreciate a partnership arrangement could be terminated (with notice) at any time.

- 1.2.5 The Cluster has considered the principle of “partnership supplements”, whereby for the life of the partnership, or that officer’s personal involvement in the partnership, the relevant officer’s remuneration package would be enhanced by a determined percentage. As mentioned above, this approach has already been adopted by two members of the Cluster.
- 1.2.6 TMBC would be responsible for considering and awarding partnership supplements for any relevant staff directly employed by ourselves. Naturally, it would be appropriate to consult the partner who would, ultimately, be part-funding any additional costs. (This arrangement would of course, also need to work in reverse when an officer is directly employed by the partner organisation).
- 1.2.7 We feel it would be inappropriate to agree a set percentage that would apply to any partnership that we may enter into, given that duties and responsibilities will vary. Rather, we would suggest that Members agree in principle to a ‘range’ which the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee, could then determine having regard to the individual circumstances of the case. If this approach were to receive support, an amendment to the Council’s Constitution would be required in order to delegate such responsibility and discretion to the Chief Executive.
- 1.2.8 The “range” we suggest could be from 3% to 10% of the officer’s salary. The Chief Executive would take into account
- the savings being achieved from the partnership opportunity;
  - any additional responsibilities the officer has;
  - Any additional pressures put upon the officer as a result of the partnership opportunity;
  - The numbers of staff the officer supervises;

As explained above, the partner authority would be consulted regarding the uplift proposed and any additional costs would be then shared with the partner authority. So, for example, in a 50:50 sharing arrangement, each of the partners would equally share the additional costs of the enhanced remuneration.

### **1.3 Consultation**

- 1.3.1 There has been discussions across the Cluster with the individuals involved in partnership working, and the matter has been considered at the quarterly meeting of the Cluster’s Management Teams.

- 1.3.2 Unison are currently being consulted and any updated will be reported to Members in the night of the meeting.

## **1.4 Legal Implications**

- 1.4.1 These proposals are in accordance with the principles of partnership working as previously endorsed by Council.
- 1.4.2 Where partnership supplements are awarded the contractual arrangements with individuals will clearly define the framework within which this payment is made and specifying that should the partnership cease to exist, the supplement will no longer be payable.

## **1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

- 1.5.1 As Members are fully aware, the Council's financial position is extremely challenged. Elsewhere on this agenda is report in part 2 setting out a raft of proposed savings to our establishment in response to the need to make significant savings.
- 1.5.2 The part 2 report includes a proposal to accept the partnership arrangement for our Principal Revenue Officer, and formally recognise the savings and benefits that can be achieved through (selective) partnership working. Members should note that the savings have been "netted down" to reflect the potential for a partnership supplement. Some of the recommendations in that report hinge on Members' support for issues contained within this report.

## **1.6 Risk Assessment**

- 1.6.1 The savings that can be achieved from partnership working will assist the Council in the updating of financial plans and the reassessment of priorities. There is also the opportunity to learn from others and take on board good practices and also to improve resilience by forming closer bonds with other operational teams within the Cluster.
- 1.6.2 However, on the days the staff concerned are serving the other authority, there is naturally a reduction in our own capacity creating additional pressures on other staff. On balance, provided that the business case and circumstances of each proposal are considered "up front", the risks can be appropriately managed.

## **1.7 Policy Considerations**

- Human Resources
- Business Continuity/Resilience
- Customer Contact

## 1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members recommend to Council that:

- 1) The **principles of partnership working** as set out in this report are **endorsed**, including the provision for partnership supplements;
- 2) Decisions regarding the award of **partnership supplements** are **delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of General Purposes Committee**, within the parameters contained in this report, and Part 3 of the **Council's Constitution** (functions delegated to officers) is **updated** accordingly.

Background papers:

Nil

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For Management Team