

Forest Heath District Council

(This report is a key decision and has been subject to appropriate notice of publication under the Council's access to information rules)

Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste

CABINET

29 MAY 2012

CAB12/005

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SHARED SERVICE – TRANSITIONAL STRUCTURE

(Forward Plan Reference - May 12/05)

Summary and Reasons for Recommendation(s)

This report updates Members on progress on shared services across Environmental Health and recommends approval of a transitional structure and subsequent savings ahead of the transformational opportunities that will be possible following changes to the corporate approach to customer access.

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet are recommended to support the transitional structure for Environmental Health, as recommended by the Shared Services Steering Group on 20 April 2012.

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How will the recommendations help us meet our strategic priorities?

1. The recommendations will enable early transition of separate services into one, which will assist in providing a flexible workforce across West Suffolk with sufficient resilience to enable sufficient staff time to be allocated to the strategic priorities

Wards affected

2. The proposals do not directly impact on individual Wards in terms of specific change but, as a whole, will indirectly impact on all Wards in regard to sustaining ongoing service provision.

Key Issues

3. Environmental Health as a major front line service was selected as a phase two service within the shared service programme with three distinct aims:
 - ◆ To integrate the services of two different councils into one
 - ◆ To make savings
 - ◆ To transform the services and change radically the way that they operate.

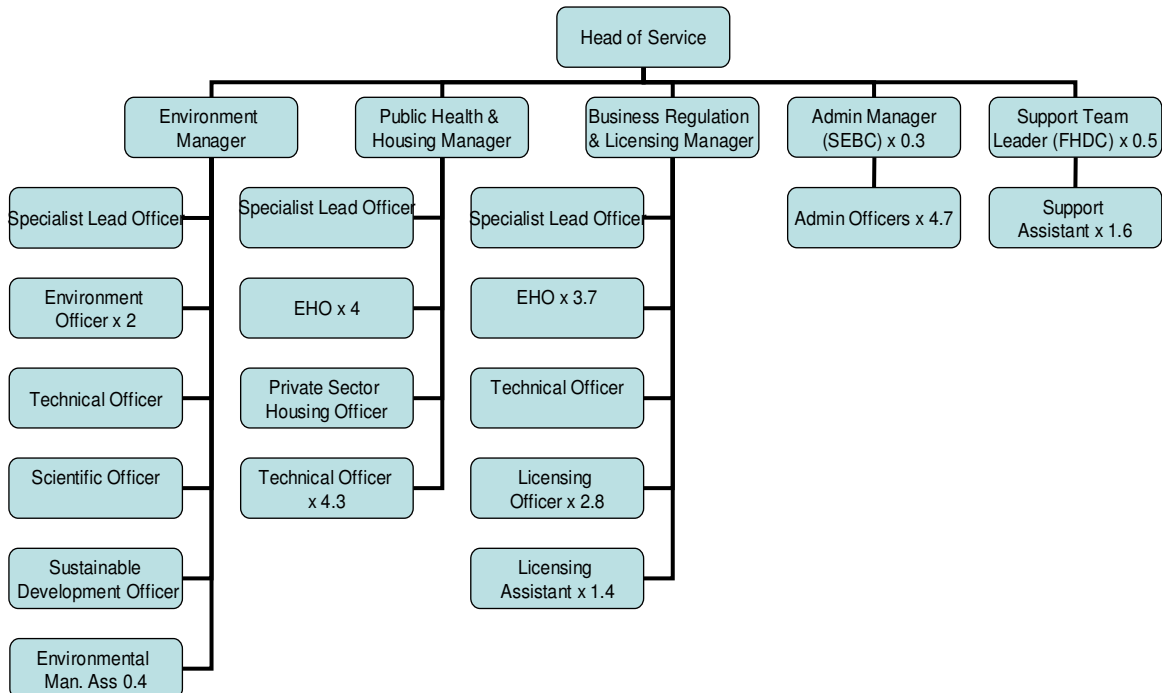
Considerable work has been undertaken to understand the views of customers and identify the change opportunities available resulting in a business case that includes both transitional and transformational opportunities. However, it was felt that transformational opportunities would take longer to introduce and should therefore be deferred and better progressed alongside other services as part of the wider Customer Access Strategy work.

4. The Shared Services Steering Group considered Report No SSG12/015 at its meeting on 20 April 2012 and resolved to support the transitional structure for environmental health. This would enable early savings and emergence of new service team arrangements to be achieved ahead of more transformational change.
5. The current annual combined salary budget is approximately £1.6 million and the transitional structure will produce savings of approximately £120,000 per annum (7.5%). The transformational phase, where more fundamental changes are expected to be made, is anticipated to deliver further savings to both councils.
6. The transitional structure as detailed below would bring the two services together through three teams led by three managers, reporting to a Head of Service. The current structure includes seven managers across both authorities, which would be reduced to three new service managers and three new specialist, professional lead officers, resulting in a net reduction of 1 senior post. Whilst the structure shows a specialist lead officer in each team, in practice this would need to remain flexible based on the workflow needs of individual teams and may, on occasion, lead to one team having two specialist lead officers and another not having any. The need for flexible capacity across the service depending on workloads will be necessary.
7. The functions undertaken by each team would also need to remain flexible but in general are expected to be as follows:

Functional Structure

- **Environment** – Corporate Environmental Management, Air Quality, Contaminated Land, Environmental Permitting, Climate Change, Sustainability, Carbon Reduction, Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty.
 - **Public Health and Housing** – Housing Standards, Housing Policy, Housing Grants, Drainage, Filthy & Verminous Premises, Caravan Sites, National Assistance Burials, Public Health Nuisance, Private Water Supplies and Stray Dogs.
 - **Business Regulation & Licensing** – Food Safety & Hygiene, Health and Safety, Infectious Disease Control, Licensing/Registration Administration, Licensing Enforcement and Licensing Committee.
8. Under the transitional structure the remaining environmental health, technical and licensing staff would continue with their current working arrangements but with a degree of flexibility to allow for workload peaks and troughs that may occur. In addition to the reduction of 1 Manager Post, 3 current vacant posts – a Senior Licensing Officer (0.8fte) and Licensing Assistant (0.6fte) at SEBC and a full-time Technical Officer at FHDC will be deleted from the establishment. Administrative support staff would continue in their current arrangements, pending subsequent transformational changes.

Environmental Health Shared Service Preferred Option



9. The services need to be integrated quickly in order to achieve the required level of savings in the current financial year and to provide stability to the staffing structures that have a variety of temporary arrangements in place. Transforming the services will take longer but should result in further savings from 2013/14 onwards. The business case identifies the opportunities for transforming the service and the way the service should operate in the future. It will, however, be difficult to make this level of change and improvement in isolation from other departments of the council because of interdependencies and there are likely to be greater opportunities for savings through a new corporate approach to Customer Access, which is currently being developed.

Other options considered

10. Whilst the business case does identify other options for providing the service which could be investigated further, as both councils have formally agreed to share services, only that option was considered in any detail. Clearly the option to go straight to transformational change was considered, but deemed impractical until the corporate Customer Access Strategy can be implemented and there is a common approach to customers accessing all council services.

Community impact

11. The proposed transitional structure is expected to meet the statutory requirements of the Council. There will be a need for some flexible capacity within the teams in the transitional phase and also flexibility in working across both locations to ensure there is no reduction in ability to meet the statutory requirements. An equality impact assessment is contained within the business case. The assessment does not indicate any negative impact as a result of shared services.

What consultation has been undertaken and what were the outcomes?

12. Formal staff consultation will be carried as a part of the process in line with council policy and legal obligations. Staff have, however, already been made aware of the proposals informally and appear to be broadly supportive.
13. A 'Let's Talk' survey of customers who had used either council's environmental health service in the past six months was undertaken in January and February 2012. In general, customers thought the service they received was very good and their feedback was very positive.

Financial and resource implications

14. The transitional proposal is expected to produce savings of approximately £120,000 per annum split on a 50:50 management split and a 35:65 officer split in line with agreed conditions, giving £49,757 to FHDC and £70,316 to SEBC. There would be a maximum £65,000 one-off revenue cost required to realise the savings and a £5,000 annual ongoing revenue cost for a joint online regulatory information system.

Risk management implications

15. Temporary staff arrangements will not be sustainable in the longer term and therefore formalising a transitional structure ahead of a more radical transformation should offer some stability and re-assurance to permanent members of staff.

Legal/Policy implications

16. Both Councils will be required to meet all of the requirements of employment law in redeploying or releasing staff.

Documents attached

None.

Background Papers

Report No SSG12/008 – Shared Services Steering Group – 24 February 2012

Report No SSG12/015 – Shared Services Steering Group – 20 April 2012

Business Case for Transitional Shared Environmental Health Service