

Children and Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

6 September 2012

Sub-regional Collaboration

Recommendation

To scrutinise and comment upon the potential project areas of sub-regional work, so that the Committee's views can be incorporated into the programme presented for Cabinet decision.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 In March 2012, the Leaders of Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (see Appendix A) agreeing to seek to work collaboratively wherever possible. Programmes of activity have been considered by the relevant officers, initially led by the three Directors of Children's Services and more recently including lead Members. This report seeks to set out the areas of work where we will be exploring the feasibility for more formal collaboration, building on existing collaborative work. A further report will be made available in due course, covering anticipated savings as these become better understood.

2.0 Programme

- 2.1 A long list of items has been considered by officers and a shortlist identified that offers the best added value. Proposals were evaluated in terms of their ability to offer benefits in terms of improving the quality of service, achieving efficiencies and savings, and delivering each council's policy objectives.
- 2.2 We have developed a comprehensive understanding of our budgetary, savings and transformational landscape; and used this to review the potential for more joint procurement.
- 2.3 Existing collaboration includes:
- Sub-regional fostering framework agreement
 - CAMHS LAC service
 - Careers guidance
 - Children's rights independent visitor
 - Supervised child contract
 - Advice and mediation for foster carers

3.0 Projects being taken forward:

- 3.1 Fostering services – to start to consider the benefits and challenges of closer collaboration between services in each Council, and in particular to:

- Review the cost of Independent Foster Agency placements.
- Develop the feasibility of a 'bespoke' fostering service to add support services to foster placements, enabling children and young people to remain in their communities rather than be placed either out of county or in specialist independent-sector foster placements at significantly higher cost.
- There will be implications around foster placements of certain young people with certain protected characteristics and also the carers. Consideration will be given on equality issues and will be fully explored when developing the service.

3.2 Education – to explore the potential for sharing the costs of a monitoring and intelligence service to provide early warning of performance to inform local staff.

3.3 Transport – to explore ways to secure greater efficiency and find cost savings connecting with the wider sub-regional workstream on transport.

4.0 Projects considered, but found not to offer added value:

4.1 Music/performing arts – now largely funded via direct grant.

4.2 External residential placements – already an active regional project.

4.3 Training for foster carers and youth workers – already embedded in processes to supervise and retain staff.

4.4 Other services were considered but deemed to require a local response – e.g., child protection, family support, youth support.

5.0 Financial implications

While there are no financial implications arising from this report, any future financial savings or efficiencies that may be realised will be factored into the corporate budget planning process for consideration.

Background Papers

1. Memorandum of Understanding (**Appendix A**)

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Memorandum of Understanding

Coventry City, Solihull Metropolitan Borough and Warwickshire County Councils

March 2012

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 It is the expressed intention of Coventry City, Solihull Metropolitan Borough and Warwickshire County Councils to improve outcomes for the communities we serve.
- 1.2 By working together we recognise that we will be better able to deliver efficiency savings and reduce cost whilst building resilience across our organisations and thus improve the quality of services our customers and citizens experience, based upon agreed priorities by the three authorities
- 1.3 It is the purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to act as a Statement of Intent which will support the realisation of these benefits.
- 1.4 More detailed arrangements will be established on a service by service basis as required in support of this generic Statement of Intent.

2.0 Participating organisations

- 2.1 The Partners ("we") covered by this Agreement are: Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council
- 2.2 This is not an exclusive agreement and other public sector organisations (and third sector) in and outside the sub region will be extended both an open invitation to join this Agreement and an opportunity to participate on individual projects where there is considered to be a mutual benefit. This will include District & Borough Councils, Police and Health organisations

3.0 Approach

- 3.1 Through this Agreement we agree that when we are reviewing the way in which we commission and / or deliver a service our first step will be to consult each other to see whether a shared solution is the best way forward.
- 3.2 By shared solution we mean investigating the whole range of options from jointly commissioning a service from the private sector at one end of the spectrum to one of the partners delivering the service on behalf of all the partners at the other end of the spectrum.
- 3.3 Collaboration will only be implemented where there is mutual benefit and respect for local interests. Each of the Partner organisations will decide whether to participate in shared arrangements for a particular service based upon whether those arrangements "work for them".
- 3.4 Partner organisations will be open and transparent in all we do and recognise the impact of our decisions on each other.

4.0 Scope

- 4.1 The full scope of services (statutory and non-statutory) that each of the Partner organisations is responsible for, either through commissioning or direct delivery will be considered to fall under the scope of this Agreement, subject to the differing topology of local government in the respective areas
- 4.2 To ensure the preservation of local decision making and current accountabilities, the organisational and political sovereignty of the Partner organisations will be retained and deemed outside the scope of this Agreement
- 4.3 All staff will strive for effective collaboration across the Partner organisations.

5.0 Success criteria

- 5.1 Congruent with the intention expressed in Section 1 of this Agreement, success will be measured against the achievement of the respective outcomes across the Partner organisations.
- 5.2 The direct benefits of the collaboration across the Partner organisation will be considered, but not exclusively as:
 - Increased efficiency
 - Reduced service costs
 - Increased resilience in service provision
 - Improved quality of customer service experience
- 5.3 Any financial benefits accrued from the associated activity will be realised within the respective partner organisations and form part of our respective savings plans.
- 5.4 In addition to monitoring the realisation of the benefits above, effort will also be made to capture examples of greater joined up working, increased connectivity and improved ways of working across the Partner organisations.

6.0 Resourcing

- 6.1 Each Partner will provide the appropriate resources and will act with integrity and consistency to support of the intention set out in this Agreement.

7.0 Term

- 7.1 The term of this Agreement will be open ended, with regular review periods built in to monitor the realisation of benefits accruing from the collaboration.

8.0 Legal Effect

- 8.1 This Agreement is produced as a Statement of Intent and is not legally binding.

9.0 Signatories on behalf of the Partner Organisations

9.1 This Memorandum of Understanding is signed and dated by the following partners:

**On behalf of
Coventry City Council:**

Signed: J. R. Mutton

Cllr John Mutton
Leader of Coventry City
Council

Date 2nd MARCH 2012

**On behalf of Solihull
Metropolitan Borough
Council:**

Signed: Ken Meeson

Cllr Ken Meeson
Leader of Solihull Metropolitan
Borough Council

Date 2nd March 2012

**On behalf of Warwickshire
County Council:**

Signed: Alan Farnell

Cllr Alan Farnell
Leader of Warwickshire County
Council

Date: 2nd March 2012