

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director Change and Delivery	Shared Services Joint Committee	24 July 2023

Shared Services Future Options - Shared Building Control

Is this report confidential?	No
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Is this decision key?	No
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Purpose of the Report

- To discuss the opportunity for a shared building control service

Recommendations to Shared Services Joint Committee

- To approve a review into shared building control as set out in the report.

Reasons for recommendations

- To support exploration of opportunities for a shared service, in line with the principles and approach previously agreed.

Other options considered and rejected

- To not carry out a review into a shared building control service. This has been rejected as it would not allow the councils to explore the option of the shared service.
- Other potential options for sharing have been considered within this paper.

Background

- Both councils have agreed the aligned principles and approach to the future development of any shared services, which will seek to identify and bring forward opportunities for sharing functions that provide greater sustainability and resilience in service delivery and can be developed to a single operating model wherever possible.
- In February 2023, the Shared Services Joint Committee considered potential opportunities for the future sharing of services following the long-standing shared Finance and Audit and Risk service and the programme of shared services delivery that has been carried out from 2019-2023:
 - Phase 1 (2019-2020): Shared Policy and Governance directorate
 - Phase 2 (2020-2021): Shared Senior Management Team, ICT and Customer Services

- Future development (2022): principles for shared services refreshed alongside shared director roles and a shared pest control service
 - Review of management capacity (2022): creating several shared Head of Service roles
 - Phase 3 (2022-2023): Shared Property and Assets Service
8. The committee decided to have a pause on actively sharing new services to enable consolidation, whilst also continuing to identify opportunistic areas for sharing focusing on the following requirements for change:
- Lack of capacity due to current structure, changing service demands or recruitment challenges
 - Temporary or informal sharing arrangements which could be formalised to provide greater sustainability moving forwards
 - New priorities that have been identified in the service area which mean that a sharing arrangement would be beneficial for the councils
 - Potential for savings or efficiencies to be delivered
 - Area for common need/ potential for sharing to support one council to deliver a new function whilst maintaining or improving performance for the other
9. This paper provides an update on areas identified for sharing in line with the requirements set out above. against options for sharing, alongside considering the opportunity to carry out a review into a shared building control service.

Opportunities for sharing

10. Summarised below are several opportunities for sharing that have been identified:

	Summary of key considerations:
Building control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two small functions – opportunity to build resilience • Vacancies within service and hard to recruit to posts due to technical and specialist skills • Opportunities to reduce costs to councils for example by reducing service overspend • Similarities across services - work to same regulations and legislation • Identified as an option for sharing by staff through feedback to the management review consultation
Licensing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two small functions - opportunity to build resilience • Independent licensing committees • Independent licensing policies based on local context
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to share skills and expertise/ succession planning • Central Lancashire Local Plan already part of a joint team alongside Preston • Different structure at each council - planning policy sits within Planning and Enforcement at South Ribble and Spatial Planning at Chorley • Separate planning committees • Potential for conflicts of interest
Public protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Head of Service and pest control team already in place

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are smaller functions that could be considered for sharing such as community safety or animal welfare, to help build resilience and reduce duplication.
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11. Based on the opportunities identified above, it is proposed that building control is considered for a full shared services review based on benefits of sharing expertise and longer term resilience given the technical and specialist skills required.
12. Options for sharing Licensing and Planning require further consideration due to regulatory arrangements and local policy frameworks, therefore it is suggested that these are not brought forward at the moment as functions to be shared. It is suggested that opportunities in Public Protection are given further consideration to understand potential opportunities and limitations of sharing the services. If opportunities are confirmed, this item would be brought back to the joint committee.

Shared building control service

13. Chorley’s and South Ribble’s building control services are part of the Local Authority Building Control network and deliver the duty set out in the Building Act 1984 for local authorities to provide an at-cost building control service to the public. The function ensures that plans are compliant with Building Regulations and carry out inspections of work on site to ensure compliance throughout the construction process. Building Control sits within the Planning and Enforcement service for each council within the Planning and Development directorate.
14. Chorley has faced issues with recruitment and resilience within the building control service, with only one post currently filled within the team and a large reliance on agency staffing. This reflects wider challenges across the sector, with a high number of vacancies, high average age of building control surveyors and a large proportion of surveyors retiring each year.
15. New regulations are set to come into place over the next year as part of the Building Safety Act 2022. This will include competency requirements which will also make it more difficult to recruit new talent into the sector, with extra training to be required for surveyors. Councils will also require experienced staff to be able to manage upcoming changes to the regulations, including additional duties for higher-risk buildings.
16. Building Control is a small function in terms of the number of posts at each council which creates a level of vulnerability. A shared team would provide greater opportunity to share skills and expertise, whilst building resilience through a larger pool of staff.
17. To summarise, sharing building control would enable greater resilience in a hard to recruit area, effective succession planning for the future, less reliance on high cost agency staffing and enable the team to respond to new regulations.
18. As with all building control services both councils operate within the same regulatory frameworks; they also apply similar fees and charging schemes, and both use IDOX case management software.

Objectives

19. The objectives for a review into a shared building control service would include:
- Establishing the management and staffing arrangements for a shared service, with staff to move onto the new Terms and Conditions as part of the implementation process
 - Ensure resilience for the service by reviewing capacity and succession planning arrangements
 - Identify opportunities to share systems and processes for increased efficiency
 - To reduce service overspend and costs by ensuring that a sustainable structure is in place

Approach for review

20. It is proposed that a review is carried out into a shared building control service following the councils' Change Policy which would include a pre-consultation stage to engage with teams and feed into proposals for the service. These proposals would then be presented to the Shared Services Joint Committee for approval of a four-week formal consultation period. After the formal consultation period, the final proposals would then be presented to each of the councils for approval and implementation.
21. In line with all shared services reviews, this will involve thorough engagement with staff including multiple opportunities to provide feedback and ask questions, alongside consultation with Unison.

Pre-consultation	Engagement with staff and the union <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Testing and refinement of options for sharing • Informal consultation sessions • Written feedback
Present to Shared Services Joint Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Management Team review proposals and finalise operational risk assessment • Understanding of how shared model will be delivered to be included as part of the proposals • Proposals are presented for review at Shared Services Joint Committee and approval for formal consultation is sought from each council. • Job descriptions are created • Job roles are evaluated through a Job Evaluation Panel
Formal consultation	Formal consultation with staff and the Union including written feedback
Present final proposals to each of the councils	The final review report, including consultation feedback, to be presented for Member sign-off
Implementation	The new service is implemented including recruitment to any vacant posts and full induction

	and development programme for all new shared roles
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Climate change and air quality

22. The work noted in this report has an no impact on the Councils Carbon emissions and the wider Climate Emergency and sustainability targets of the Council.

Equality and diversity

23. This report has no equality or diversity implications at this stage. A full integrated impact assessment would be carried out on any proposals for the service.

Risk

24. Risk will be considered within the impact assessment for the service ahead of any proposals for sharing.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

25. There are no financial implications at this point. The review of shared building control services will have its own financial comments and explanations of the outcomes. Shared Services is already embedded within the budgets and monitored monthly.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

26. No comments.

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