



**Performance and  
Administration Cabinet  
Committee**

Members of the **Performance and Administration Cabinet Committee** of **Gravesham Borough Council** are summoned to attend a meeting to be held Virtually on **Thursday, 25 March 2021 at 7.30 pm** when the business specified in the following agenda is proposed to be transacted. Details on how Members can attend the meeting will be sent separately.

In response to COVID-19, the Government has legislated to permit remote attendance by Elected Members at formal meetings. This is conditional on other Elected Members and the public being able to hear those participating in the meeting. This meeting will be streamed live and can be watched via Gravesham Borough Council's YouTube Channel:-

[www.youtube.com/graveshamtv](http://www.youtube.com/graveshamtv)

S Walsh  
Service Manager (Communities)

**Agenda**

**Part A**

**Items likely to be considered in Public**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes (Pages 3 - 8)
3. Declarations of interest
4. To considered whether any items in Part A of the agenda should be considered in private or those (if any) in Part B in public.
5. Review of the Working in Partnership Framework (Pages 9 - 58)
6. COVID-19 Portfolio Update (Pages 59 - 72)
7. Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency.

## 8. Exclusion

To move, if required, that pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public be excluded from any items included in Part B of the agenda because it is likely in view of the nature of business to be transacted that if members of the public are present during those items, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

### **Part B** **Items likely to be considered in Private**

None at the time of publication

#### **Members**

Cllr Narinderjit Singh Thandi (Chair)  
Cllr Brian Francis (Vice-Chair)

Councillors:           Helen Ashenden  
                              Harold Craske  
                              Dakota Dibben  
                              Sarah Gow  
                              Gary Harding  
                              Leslie Hills  
                              Elizabeth Mulheran  
                              Gurbax Singh

Substitutes:           To be notified

**Performance and Administration Cabinet Committee**

**Wednesday, 10 February 2021**

**7.30 pm**

**Present:**

Cllr Narinderjit Singh Thandi (Chair)

Councillors:       Helen Ashenden  
                           Harold Craske  
                           Dakota Dibben  
                           Sarah Gow  
                           Gary Harding  
                           Leslie Hills  
                           Elizabeth Mulheran  
                           Gurbax Singh  
                           Christina Rolles

Sarah Parfitt        Director (Corporate Services)  
 Pat Knight           Head of Revenues & Benefits  
 James Larkin        Audit and Counter Fraud Shared Services Manager  
 David Herrington   Digital Manager  
 Lauren Wallis       Committee Services Officer (minutes)

**87. Apologies**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Brian Francis. Cllr Christina Rolles attended as his substitute.

**88. To sign the minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 23 November 2020 were signed by the Chair.

**89. To declare any interest Members may have in the items contained on this agenda. When declaring an interest Members should state what their interest is.**

No declarations of interest were made.

**90. Annual Review of the Revenues & Benefits Shared Management Arrangement**

The Director (Corporate Services) introduced the report which was for information only. Since October 2019, the Council has had in place a shared service arrangement with Medway Council for the provision of management services for the Revenues & Benefits Service. This involved the Head of Revenues & Benefits and the Revenues Manager employed by Medway Council taking managerial responsibility for service provided by Gravesham Borough Council and Medway Council.

As per the Council's Working in Partnership Framework (which was adopted by Council on 16 April 2019), a formal review of the shared management arrangement had to be undertaken on an annual basis. This year's Review had been very positive and recommended the continuation of the shared arrangement. The Head of Revenues & Benefits and the Revenues Manager had proved very beneficial to Gravesham especially during the pandemic which had proven the benefits of the Council being able to access skill sets available across the two authorities. Members were advised that the service would continue to focus on the deployment of skills and looking at how this could be improved.

The following points were raised during discussion on the report:

- Following a question on the monthly dashboard reports to the shadow Portfolio Holder, the Director (Corporate Services) confirmed that she would ensure these would take place.
- In relation to the procurement of the IT and software for Revenues & Benefits, Members were informed that both authorities had separately procured the Northgate system before the shared arrangement had come into being. No IT or software had been procured since that time. Both councils had two Northgate systems, the first for the calculation of revenues and benefits and the second being a document imaging system and each authority had a different version of the system. This would need to be bought into alignment which would reduce the staff training required and increase resilience.
- The words "external resilience" referred to a service resource provided by Northgate which local authorities could buy in. It was noted that the Council had taken advantage of this service due to the Test and Trace work required to be administered by the team.
- The importance of Test and Trace payments for residents who had to self-isolate was highlighted and Members were advised that these payments had been prioritised as required by Central Government. The Committee was advised that the team had been able to process the applications for payment using the criteria laid down by the Government using existing resources and the Northgate resilience service. The Head of Revenues & Benefits confirmed that the Council had received 903 applications so far and, once the correct details had been received from the claimant, payment could be processed within 2 to 3 days. It was also noted that an average of 27 claims a week had been received in November, 59 in December and 160 in January. The highest number received per week had been 152 and the team had managed to keep up with processing the claims. A report on this subject would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.
- It was confirmed that the costing for the second period represented a full year and the relative increases were inflationary and included a cost of living increase.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

## **91. Corporate Performance Report: Quarter 3 2020/21**

Members were presented with an update against the Performance Management Framework as introduced within the Council's Corporate Plan, for quarter 3 2020/21 (October to December 2020)

The Head of Revenues & Benefits noted that information on performance over the period was presented in tabular and graphical form for all indicators. Where any data was not

presented, this related either to those indicators reported on an annual basis or, alternatively, where data had not yet been submitted in time for the presentation of the report due to the very short run in time to publication of the reports after the quarter-end.

The following key points with regard the figures were highlighted as follows:

- PI 23 – The officer was pleased to report that performance had improved. There was an error in the narrative in that 12.2 days should read 12.8 days, however, the graphical information was correct. Members noted that the national average was 17 days and the Kent average was 16 days.
- PI 24 – Performance remained strong although it was less than quarter 2 as the service had been impacted by the introduction of Test & Trace. Automation had been introduced which kept the number of days down. Members noted that both the national average and the Kent average was 6 days and the Council's performance had improved on quarter 3 last year.
- PI 28 – This remained the same as quarter 2. 49 complaints of the 52 in the quarter had been resolved at Stage 1 and the remainder had gone on to Stages 2 and 3. It was noted that the number of complaints being received had been reducing in the 3 months of quarter 3.
- PI 50 – at the end of the quarter there were 7,211 users of Citizens' Access, which was significant increase since the end of quarter 4 2019/20. It was acknowledged that there was a long way to go but activity had increased with barely any promotion.
- PI 49 – This was an annual indicator and it was noted that the review of the Planning & Development service was currently being considered by the Chief Executive.
- PI 55 – The Audit and Counter Fraud Shared Services Manager advised that this indicator was related to the percentage of audit recommendations and 18 of the 48 remained outstanding. Ten of the 18 had a completion deadline of 31 December 2020 and there had been a very tight turnaround to meet reporting deadlines, further impacted by the Christmas break and staff leave. In addition, planned delivery was based on the 9 months to 31 March 2021 and today's figure was 63% so matters were broadly on track and the first quarter of 2020/21 had been lost to the pandemic. Some investigation activity had been undertaken this year but the financial value had been lower than in previous years because of the lockdown and the inability to undertake face to face interviews.
- PI 56 – the officer was able to provide a verbal update to the committee, reporting that performance in Q3 was 84%. It was noted that this indicator was slightly down on quarter 2. However, the Council had received 165 information requests in the last quarter 3 whilst also responding to the ongoing COVID pandemic.

The following points were raised during discussion on the report:

- In relation to PI 50, it was confirmed that the main reason for the increase in people signing up for Citizens' Access was to do with Business Rates and Council Tax in particular. Clients had got used to accessing Universal Credit online and bringing benefit services online in future would be a focus of the team. However, at the present time the service remained involved in the effects of the pandemic and were focussing on promoting the grants available and not so much the day to day work. In the next quarter it was intended to look at benefits and the service had just gone live with online direct debits and the response had been very promising. In addition, online billing had also had a good response which meant less printing costs and paper use. The Head of Revenues & Benefits was working closely with the

Communications Team and a good example was the promotion of hardship payments which had resulted in a significant uptake.

- In relation to accessing the website, the Committee was advised that access was constantly being reviewed making it more simple to use and using plain English.
- Following a question on communicating with those people with disabilities or were vulnerable, the officer noted that the Council's website met with accessibility rules, however it was felt that improvements could still be made. The Head of Revenues & Benefits hoped to be able to arrange to meet appropriate groups to enhance his knowledge on these matters.
- A question was raised in relation to Housing Benefits being 1 of the 6 benefits being incorporated in Universal Credit and it was explained a new applicant would apply to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for Universal Credit and the claim would include housing costs. If there was a significant change, the claimant would move off of housing benefit and be transferred to Universal Credit. The Government intended to migrate the majority of housing benefits claimants over to Universal Credit but this initiative had been delayed. The pandemic had resulted in more applications for Universal Credit so the Housing Benefit workload for the Council was reducing but more slowly than anticipated. A pilot scheme in another local authority for mass migration had been abandoned. However, it was always the intention for local government to be left with the more complex housing benefit cases.
- The non-inclusion of a Council Tax indicator in the report was questioned and Members were advised that it had not been included in the past but had been reported verbally. Council Tax collection had been down by 1.83% and Business Rates had been 1.77% down. This meant the Council's performance had been positive against the 2% and 8% national averages respectively. The Director (Corporate Services) offered a verbal update on Council Tax figures at future meetings of the Committee where Corporate Performance was included on the agenda.
- In relation to PI 23 and PI 24 the Head of Revenues & Benefits confirmed the following:
  - The number of new claims processed in this financial year had been 1,499.
  - The number of changes of circumstances processed in this financial year had been 26,586.
  - The number of changes of circumstances received in this financial year had been more than 40,000 but some had been multiple changes.
- The Director (Corporate Services) confirmed that the subject of complaints varied but were usually matters of interest to the public. She offered to find out the details and include in the narrative of future reports.
- PI 55 - One of the outstanding recommendations regarding the back up of IT arrangements was highlighted. The Director (Corporate Services) agreed it was a priority in relation to home working but issues had been caused by the pandemic and the Council was in the process of updating IT systems but had experienced difficulties securing kit and getting it installed. The project was on target to be fully completed by the end of March.
- It was noted that PI 49 was an annual performance indicator and therefore showed quarter 4 and not quarter 3. As mentioned that Planning review was completed, had been submitted to the Chief Executive and there would be an update in the next few weeks.
- The policy document covering the Revenues & Benefits shared service arrangement was reviewed every 3 years and the review set out the criteria of entering such

arrangements and the rules of engagement. A report of Working in Partnership would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked officers for all their hard work achieving the high levels of performance during the pandemic and the lockdowns.

**Resolved** that the report be noted.

**Close of meeting**

The meeting ended at 8.18 pm

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**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

### **Gravesham Borough Council**

**Report to:** Performance & Administration Committee

**Date:** 25 March 2021

**Reporting officer:** Michelle Batstone, Corporate Change Manager

**Subject:** Revised Working in Partnership Framework

#### **Purpose and summary of report:**

To present Members of the Performance & Administration Committee with a draft of the updated *Working in Partnership Framework* for discussion.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Members are asked to review the draft *Working in Partnership Framework* and provide feedback/comments for consideration by Cabinet.

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In April 2019, the Council adopted an updated *Working in Partnership Framework* for the Council, with clear guidelines to review the framework every three years or when it is prudent to do so.
- 1.2 Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes to the way in which the council has required to operate in order to respond to the pandemic, it was felt that it would be prudent to review the Framework to ensure it is still 'fit for purpose'. It was also felt that it would be necessary to review the Framework to ensure it reflects current and future working arrangements in relation to partnerships and joint working arrangements.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Performance & Administration Committee with a copy of the draft revised Framework for review. Feedback from the committee will then be provided to the Cabinet as necessary, for consideration by Cabinet, prior to submission to Full Council for formal adoption.

#### **2. Review and update of the Working in Partnership Framework**

- 2.1 Appendix two to the report sets out the revised Framework (and accompanying appendices) for the council.

- 2.2 Specific changes that have been made are as follows:
  - 2.2.1 Amendments to the definition of a partnership to clearly set out the various types of joint working activities the council is engaged in. This has included revising the financial threshold for a significant partnership to £50,000.
  - 2.2.2 Provisions for commencing partnership or joint working where there is an urgent need (ad hoc arrangements).
  - 2.2.3 Clarification of the approval process for all forms of partnerships and joint working arrangements
  - 2.2.4 Reference to the council's revised Equalities Aims and Objectives and the requirement for new partnership arrangements to demonstrate how they are able to contribute to these.
  - 2.2.5 Reference to the council's Climate Change commitment, ensuring consideration is given to how a partnership may support the borough in mitigating climate change.
  - 2.2.6 A detailed breakdown of the governance requirements for shared working arrangements.
  - 2.2.7 Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of council Officers and Members with regards to partnerships and joint working arrangements that the council has engaged in.
  - 2.2.8 Updates to the annual review process for partnerships and shared working arrangements to reflect the introduction of a revised approach for reviewing shared service arrangements from year three onwards.
- 2.3 Following review by the Performance & Administration Committee, the report will be presented to Cabinet for approval, followed by submission to Full Council for formal adoption into the council's Policy Framework.
- 2.4 The Working in Partnership Framework will continue to be reviewed at least once every three years, or unless deemed necessary during this period, with the outcomes of this review reported to Cabinet and Council accordingly.
- 2.5 As previously agreed by the Cabinet and Full Council, changes which do not have a material effect on the document and its content will require only Cabinet approval.

### **3. Background Papers**

- 3.1 There are no background papers pertaining to this report.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
<b>Legal</b>	There are no legal implications arising from this. As a requirement of the council's Working in Partnership Framework, all potential partnership opportunities and shared working arrangements are formally considered by the Monitoring Officer to ensure that the legal aspects of proposals are taken into account prior to entering into a new arrangement.
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	Partnerships and shared working arrangements can present financial and value for money savings to the council. The council's Working in Partnership Framework requires all potential partnership opportunities and shared working arrangements to be formally considered by the Section 151 Officer to ensure that the financial aspects of all proposals are taken into account prior to entering into a new partnership.
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<p>Partnerships and shared working arrangements are becoming more and more prevalent in the work of the council and the efficient and effective delivery of services and corporate objectives. It is therefore important that the council has a clear framework for identifying and progressing partnership and shared working opportunities to ensure those which truly assist in delivering the council's objectives and/or present an efficiency saving to the council are progressed.</p> <p>The council's Working in Partnership Framework requires all potential partnership opportunities and shared working arrangements to be risk assessed but also for the risk assessment process to be undertaken on a regular basis throughout the life of the arrangement.</p>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>? No</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>. N/A</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>No</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	The Working in Partnership Framework provides provisions for all partnership and joint working arrangements across the council and therefore supports delivery of all council objectives.
<b>Climate Change</b>	There are no climate change implications arising from this report.
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	The Working in Partnership Framework will be used for the development of all new partnerships and will therefore pick up any issues relating to the Crime and Disorder Act.
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	There are no digital or website implications arising from this report.
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	Consideration of Safeguarding implications has been built into the process for implementing and revising partnerships, as set out in the <i>Working in Partnership</i> Framework.

# GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Working in Partnership

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### A Framework for Members and Officers

To aid effective partnership and shared working arrangements

April 2021

DRAFT

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<b>Appendix three</b>	Drawing up a partnership or shared service agreement
<b>Appendix four</b>	a) Shared Service Review Template (initial)
	b) Shared Service Review Template (from year three onwards)

## Introduction

- 1.1 The council approved its first Partnership Framework in January 2006. The Partnership Framework forms part of the 'Policy Framework' under Article 4.01(1) of the Council's Constitution and was formally adopted by the Council in March 2006.
- 1.2 Since the Partnership Framework was first set-up, the landscape within which local government operates has changed significantly with councils moving even more to partnership working and developing shared service models across organisations. The need for partnership working was further highlighted in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to work together to support communities at one of the most challenging times for local authorities and communities alike.
- 1.3 This framework document is intended to assist both Members and officers engaged in contemplating, setting up, funding, managing, participating in, monitoring, scrutinising or ending both partnership arrangements and shared service arrangements between the council and other organisations. It should be considered at every stage of the process.
- 1.4 The Partnership Framework will be reviewed at least once every three years.

### Why Have a Partnership Framework?

- 1.5 Over recent years, the council has become involved in an increasing number of partnerships and shared working arrangements which contribute to the delivery of council objectives and services. In the years ahead, it is anticipated that even more activities will come within the scope of partnerships, both between the council and various other organisations including community groups, and shared working arrangements with other local authorities.
- 1.6 The council must ensure it is accountable for the public money it spends, that this money is used efficiently and that it achieves the intended results. It is equally important that the partnerships or shared working arrangements in which the council is involved do the same - especially where substantial funding is provided by the partners and/or external funding agencies.
- 1.7 The *Working in Partnership Framework* sets out the key principles by which all council officers and Members will operate when engaging in any form of partnership working.

### What is a Partnership?

- 1.8 Partnership or joint-working is a term that is used to cover a vast array of working arrangements between two or more organisations. These can range from informal networks to joint delivery on specific projects and service provision. The council differentiates between true partnership working and what is defined as a 'shared service' to deliver specific council services.
- 1.9 The council defines a partnership as "an agreement between the Council and one or more independent bodies to work together to achieve the council's Corporate objectives".

- 1.10 This can cover a wide range of partnership arrangements; from an agreement to work with an organisation to deliver a specific project or piece of work to a long-term formal arrangement delivering important services over a borough-wide area. It is therefore important that the council can distinguish between the different types of partnerships and the impact they have on the delivery of the council's corporate objectives for the borough and its residents.
- 1.11 Partnerships and/or joint-working arrangements that the council becomes involved in will be categorised in three ways:
- a. **Ad hoc arrangements** – those that are set up to meet a specific need and are often established rapidly to address an immediate/urgent need for a defined period of time.
  - b. **Significant arrangements** – those arrangements for which there is a council resource provision of £50,000 or greater or one that is fundamental to the delivery of a corporate objective as established within the council's Corporate Plan. Without this effective partnership therefore, the delivery of Gravesham Borough Council's key corporate goals would not occur. This will also include those partnerships that have been established to deliver legal or statutory requirements on behalf of the council.
  - c. **Other arrangements** – all other partnership and joint-working arrangements that are in place to ensure delivery of services to the borough of Gravesham, but do not have the significant level of financial resource or are not a fundamental delivery tool for GBC objectives. These arrangements contribute to overall achievement on the council's objectives.
- 1.12 Partnerships most commonly take the form of 'unincorporated associations'. This means that they do not have a separate legal existence and each of the partner organisations remains legally and financially responsible for the actions they take within, or on behalf of, the partnership.
- 1.13 Another, less common, form of partnership is where the partners create a separate company or a charitable trust to achieve particular purposes. This is a more complex matter involving detailed legal and financial arrangements and as such, these types of arrangements are not covered by this Framework.
- 1.14 It should be noted that the council also provides funding to a number of community organisations to enable them to provide specific services to the residents of Gravesham. These grants are reviewed every three-years. Consideration will be given to whether or not these arrangements meet the definition of a partnership, as per this Framework.
- 1.15 There is no 'one size fits all' set of arrangements for partnership working – they have to be tailored to the specific purposes involved. Regardless of the form, purpose, size, or importance of a partnership, however, there are several things that should be considered in creating, managing, monitoring and reviewing the partnership arrangements, and it is these that this Framework deals with.



## What is a Shared Service/Working Arrangement?

- 1.16 When exploring opportunities for joint-working between local authorities, there are a number of different types of initiatives:
- a. **A full shared service** – this type of arrangement involves teams from two or more authorities joining to form one team, hosted by one authority. For example, this could involve the internal audit team from two authorities joining to form one internal audit team, employed by one authority but serving the needs of both authorities.
  - b. **Joint-management** – this type of arrangement involves the manager from one authority taking on the management responsibility of a team of officers at one or more other authorities. For example, this could involve the IT Manager at one authority taking on the management of the IT team at another authority. The employee remains under the terms and conditions of the employing authority, but it is agreed that the officer will be seconded to another authority (or authorities) to provide management support with the other authority (or authorities) paying a fee for the services of the manager.
  - c. **Joint-officer** – this type of arrangement is very similar to the joint-management arrangement. This involves officers, who are not managers, providing resilience to another authority either on a long-term or permanent basis.
  - d. **Ad-hoc resilience** – as the name suggests, this type of arrangement involves an officer (or officers) from one authority providing additional capacity to another authority on a short term basis (this could be as maternity cover or on an 'as and when' basis). These types of arrangements tend to be agreed on quite short-notice as a short-term 'fix'.
- 1.17 The type of arrangement that is entered into will dictate the level of legal agreements and governance arrangements that are required.

## Other arrangements

- 1.18 The council is also involved in a number of commissioning arrangements, whereby the council is paid to deliver a service on behalf of another organisation. This is not a partnership arrangement although some of the principles within this framework may apply to this way of working and it will be important for these arrangements to have agreed terms of reference or service level agreements. *In addition, this Framework does not cover an arrangement that is in place and covered by a formal client-contractor contract.*

## 2. Council Policy for Partnership Development

- 2.1 The council recognises the importance of ensuring that its partnerships serve a useful public purpose, are effective in achieving their aims and provide good value for the time, effort and money put into them.
- 2.2 As such, the council will be willing, in principle, to enter into partnership arrangements with other organisations and bodies where the following one or more conditions are satisfied:
- a. there is a clear purpose for the partnership that will contribute to fulfilling the council's statutory duties and/or meeting its policy objectives (including the general well-being of Gravesham's communities);
  - b. this purpose cannot be achieved satisfactorily by the council or any of the partners acting alone or by some other method;
  - c. the partnership will benefit the council through providing resilience to its services, efficiency in the use of the council's resources, potential savings and /or income to the council in delivering service in a more efficient and joined-up way.
  - d. there is an urgent need for a partnership/joint-working arrangement to be in place to respond to an emergency situation.
- 2.3 Key factors for consideration in all partnership arrangements, will be if and how the establishment of the arrangement is likely to aid the council in fulfilling its statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults, as well as ensuring that all regulations under GDPR are fulfilled.
- 2.4 In addition, consideration will also need to be given to ensuring that the partnership is going to operate in line with the Equalities Act, , in order to ensure that partnership arrangements help support the council's duties and obligations to make a positive difference to its communities.
- 2.5 Finally, consideration will also be given to the council's Climate Change commitment, and identifying opportunities for the partnership to assist in delivering action to mitigate climate change in the borough.

### Opportunities for Partnership Working

- 2.6 For all potential partnership working opportunities, an evaluation of the partnership is required to be carried out by senior officers from the department(s) most concerned, in consultation with the Head of Legal (Shared Service) (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and the Director – Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer), whilst keeping the Corporate Change Manager informed of discussions.
- 2.7 In the case of a partnership with Member level involvement proposed i.e. when council Members will form part of the Partnership Board, the relevant Director will be required to be involved as well.
- 2.8 Other officers with specialist knowledge of the service area should be consulted if necessary, especially if there are few, if any, precedents for the proposed partnership elsewhere.

- 2.9 Appendix one provides a template for a Partnership Evaluation Form to assist in the assessment of a new partnership. Whilst it is not necessary for this **specific** form to be completed, it does cover all of the issues that need to be considered when contemplating entering into a new partnership and therefore its use is strongly recommended, in particular as it documents the consideration and comments from the council's Statutory officers.
- 2.10 The evaluation of a proposed partnership should attempt to draw up a list of the likely benefits, costs, risks and any potential equalities issues that the partnership may raise and, if possible, to quantify them, or at least describe them clearly.
- 2.11 A risk assessment of the proposed partnership **must** be undertaken to identify any barriers to the delivery of the partnership objectives along with clarifying any mitigation that has already been undertaken or is planned.
- 2.12 The evaluation form includes a section specifically to give consideration to an 'exit strategy' for the partnership. This is to ensure that, before the partnership is formally approved, it is clear how partners can either end the partnership or remove themselves from the partnership if required. It is understood that, at this stage, a comprehensive exit strategy may not be known, but consideration to this should be given at an early stage. This is a very important aspect of the partnership evaluation whether the template is used or not; Members, Directors, the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer should only look to approve a partnership where proper consideration has been given to an 'exit strategy'. **An exit strategy must be explicit within the partnership agreement.**
- 2.13 For those partnerships or joint-working arrangements that need to be established rapidly, it will not be necessary to complete a detailed evaluation form. Consideration **must** be given however, to any potential Safeguarding or GDPR/Data Protection regulations, particularly where customer data is being used, to ensure there are no potential data breaches.
- 2.14 Before formally entering into the partnership the opinions of the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Section 151 Officer must be sought and recorded accordingly (ideally on the evaluation form if it is being used). Approval must then be sought as follows:
- a. A proposed 'significant' partnership must be discussed at Management Team prior to being submitted to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder for formal approval alongside the Leader of the Executive. It is the responsibility of the lead officer to present the item to Management Team.
  - b. A proposed 'other' partnership must be formally approved by the Director, Leader of the Executive and relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder.
  - c. A proposed 'ad hoc' partnership must be approved by the Director. Given that these types of arrangements are likely to be put in place at speed, Member approval is not required, although the Lead Member must be kept informed of the development of the arrangement as well as ongoing monitoring.

### 3. Council Policy for Shared Services Development

- 3.1 The council appreciates that there may be alternative ways to delivering council services, and that working with other local authorities presents a number of benefits to the public.
- 3.2 As such, the council will explore opportunities for shared working and shared services development where one or more of the following conditions are satisfied:
- a. the shared service/shared working arrangement will provide a saving or income stream to the council whilst maintaining a good standard of service for the public;
  - b. the arrangement will benefit the council through providing resilience to its services, and efficiency in the use of the council's resources
- 3.3 Key factors for consideration in all shared working arrangements, will be:
- a. if and how the establishment of the arrangement is likely to aid the council in fulfilling its statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
  - b. how the arrangement will ensure that all requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are to met in order to protect the personal data of GBC residents and service users.
- 3.4 In addition, a set of core principles for the development of shared services has been drawn up with colleagues from other authorities in Kent, which will be the guiding principles used moving forward in any shared working arrangements. These principles are set out across two key areas:

#### Central Principles

- **No detrimental impact to our community and residents:** services will only be shared where new arrangements offered do not result in the detriment of services received by our community and residents. Unless there are specific reasons not to, there will be a presence retained at each site, even if minimal.
- **Clarity of purpose, vision, objectives, values and intended outcomes:**
  - Shared service arrangements will be founded on clearly articulated, common aims and outcomes. This could include improved customers services, better resilience, reduced revenue costs, building a momentum towards a bigger, more formal partnership. In each case these will be clarified at the outset.
  - Business cases will include consideration of the extent of risk transference that is acceptable, the degree of formality/informality in any agreement, and the extent of prescription/variation.
- **Working in partnership:**
  - Openness and transparency will be displayed from the outset.
  - All decisions will be taken collectively, in the spirit of partnership working.
  - Regular Project Board meetings will be established to ensure the momentum of projects continues.
  - Opportunities generated as a result of the shared service will be considered benefits for each of the partners; e.g. if the shared service creates an opportunity to let out space in one organisation, the proceeds of this will be shared amongst the partners.

## Operational Principles

- **Engaged, flexible and resilient workforces:**
  - Staff will be communicated with about any proposed new arrangements at an early stage, with senior management representatives from the authorities involved to present a fully joined-up approach regardless of the host authority.
  - Staff will all be transferred to the same employing organisation (likely via TUPE transfer), supported by a formal delegation of responsibility for that service from one authority to another.
  - Staff within the shared service will be seen as employees of each respective authority regardless of the host authority, with messaging reinforcing this at every opportunity.
  - Staff will retain access to all resources necessary at each respective authority, regardless of the host authority in the same way as they would if they were directly employed by that authority.
  - Recruitment exercises will be undertaken involving all interested parties (unless agreement is reached to leave this to the host authority); e.g. when the head of the service leaves, the recruitment panel consists of officers from each of the respective partner organisations.
- **Funded fairly:**
  - Agreement to the split of costs will be made early in the development of shared services and the agreed split will be the basis for annual cost sharing and the sharing of set-up costs.
  - Budgets for shared services will be agreed as early as possible, with any review mechanisms and subsequent shared service payments also established at an early stage.
  - Budgets consist only of directly attributable costs relating to service; back-office overheads are not recharged into the arrangement.
  - Where possible, additional funding will be allocated at the outset of the shared service to cover costs arising from the set-up of arrangements e.g. IT costs, furniture, equipment etc.
- **Consistent, effective ICT support:**
  - Staff will be provided with the necessary equipment and IT hardware to carry out their roles efficiently across multiple sites, even if this means providing them with equipment beyond that provided to non-shared service officers.
  - ICT teams will work together to establish the necessary flexibilities in firewalls and network access, e.g. allowing another authority's network to operate within the buildings.

When considering any new shared working arrangement, these principles will be shared between all parties to clearly set out the principles by which all parties will operate.

## Opportunities for Shared Service Arrangements

- 3.5 The Director (Corporate Services), supported by the Corporate Change Manager, has responsibility for the exploration and progression of shared working arrangements across the council. They will work closely with the relevant service Director and Assistant Director/Service Manager in processing these arrangements as required.

- 3.6 Where opportunities for shared working are identified, an initial discussion should take place with the Director (Corporate Services) and further discussions can then take place with the authority/authorities that have been identified or are supportive of shared working arrangements.
- 3.7 It will be necessary for a business case to be prepared for all full shared service and joint management arrangements. Appendix two provides a template for a Shared Services business case to assist in the assessment of a new arrangement. Whilst it is not necessary for this form to be completed in this format, it does cover all of the issues that need to be considered when contemplating entering into a new shared service arrangement and therefore its use is recommended.
- 3.8 For joint officer and more ad-hoc arrangements, it is not necessary for a full business case to be drawn up. It is however, useful to consider the key points within the business case for such arrangements in order to ensure that they will provide the service that is required by the council as a whole.
- 3.9 Before formally entering into any shared service arrangement the opinions of the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Section 151 Officer must be sought to ensure that there are no legal implications and a thorough financial analysis has been completed.
- 3.10 Approval must then be sought as follows:
- a. For all full shared service arrangements, the business case for the shared service should be presented to the Cabinet for approval, once it has been approved by the Director, Leader of the Executive and relevant Cabinet Portfolio holder.
  - b. For all joint management or joint officer arrangement, the Leader of the Executive, in conjunction with the relevant Cabinet Portfolio holder(s), has delegated responsibilities for all shared services/joint-working initiatives. In practice, a report on shared management arrangements is usually taken through the relevant Cabinet Committee to enable Member discussion, ahead of the Leader of the Executive and Lead Member making a final decision.
  - c. For ad-hoc arrangements, formal Member approval is not required, although it is important that the Leader of the Executive and the Cabinet Portfolio Holder are kept informed of current working arrangements. In addition, it may be prudent to keep the relevant Cabinet Committee updated with the progression of such an arrangement.

### Key factors to be considered in setting-up shared working arrangements

- 3.11 There are a number of factors that need to be taken into account when establishing shared services:
- a. **Delivering savings/income and/or Increased Resilience** – a key driver for shared working is the realisation of savings/income for all authorities involved. Secondary to this is the potential to increase resilience for services, which is particularly important where the individual teams are small.



- b. **Officer Consultation** - where significant changes to working arrangements are proposed, it will be necessary to undertake a consultation with the officers that are to be affected by the change. The Personnel/HR Teams should be kept informed of all proposals and will be able to advise if a consultation is necessary. Where a consultation process with officers is required, the consultation will take place in accordance with all relevant guidance and/or legislation.
  - c. **IT Requirements** – consideration needs to be given to the specific IT requirements of officers to ensure they are able to operate effectively. This may include the purchase of new hardware, additional software license and training, all of which should be factored into the business case for the shared service where appropriate.
  - d. **Facilities Management** – consideration needs to be given to the location of the shared service/joint working arrangement and the impact this may have on the employee and the employer. This may result in additional travel costs, hardware costs etc. and these need to be considered when establishing the arrangement.
- 3.12 With any shared service, it is imperative that all staff affected by any change are kept up-to-date with any potential changes. Communication is a key factor in the success of any type of shared or joint-working arrangement. As such, it will be important to liaise with the Communications Manager at each authority to ensure regular and consistent messages are communicated to all sites.

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## 4. Procedure for Managing Partnerships and Shared Service Arrangements

- 4.1 It is important that there are suitable governance arrangements in place for both partnerships and shared working arrangements. The partnership or shared service agreement will be the key governance document, although what they should actually include will differ depending on the type of arrangement. Appendix three provides a summary of the key elements to consider in both types of arrangements.
- 4.2 Whatever type of arrangement is in place, the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer) must be involved in the development of any formal agreement that the council enters into. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and covers everything that is necessary for the type and level of arrangement in place.
- 4.3 Specifically in terms of governance arrangement for partnerships, there are a number of things that need to be considered:
- a. eligibility for membership and rules for the admission of new partners, for the exit of partner(s) and for termination;
  - b. representation of each of the partners in the direction of the partnership's activities, and their authority to act on behalf of their parent organisations;
  - c. rules for making decisions on behalf of the partnership;
  - d. rules governing meetings (frequency, notice, quorum, chairing, voting, etc.);
  - e. recording decisions and reporting them to the partners and to the public;
  - f. ensuring that decisions are properly carried out;
  - g. the responsibilities of the partners to each other;
  - h. reviewing of performance and financial information of the partnership;
  - i. ensuring there are arrangements for any individual or partner organisations to declare and record a personal, pecuniary or other interest in the activities of the partnership.
  - j. ensuring that where interests are declared there are procedures for managing and resolving potential conflicts of interest –
    - i) to adopt rules to distinguish different categories of decision according to their importance and whether or not to permit majority voting to decide issues; and
    - ii) between the interests of individual decision-making representatives and the interests of all or some of the partners (i.e. rules for declaring personal interests and taking/not taking part in decisions);
  - k. maintaining high ethical standards in the conduct of the partnership's business, including the promotion of equality and respect for all sections of the community
  - l. amending the Partnership Agreement;
  - m. dealing with breaches of the Agreement.
- 4.4 The proposed governance arrangements for any new partnership should be considered prior to entering into the partnership and should form part of the evaluation criteria for the partnership.



- 4.5 It is recognised that where a partnership arrangement is set up rapidly to meet an immediate need, it may not be possible to formalise an agreement of this type. However, it is important that the key areas of safeguarding and GDPR are considered prior to commencing the working arrangement and it may be useful to seek the advice and guidance from the council's Internal Audit Team at this time.
- 4.6 Specifically in terms of governance arrangement for shared services, the following elements need to be considered:
- a. Scope of the shared service arrangements - what activities are specifically included as part of the shared working arrangement and which are not included.
  - b. Where applicable, details of any transfer of staff, setting out specific requirements of both parties in relation to the TUPE regulations.
  - c. Details of how the shared service arrangement will be funded including details of pay increases and approval process for this.
  - d. Details of how future restructures and recruitment in the team will be undertaken.
  - e. Details of how the arrangement can be terminated and consequences of the termination.
  - f. Process for dispute resolution.
  - g. Consideration of Data Protection and GDPR regulations.
  - h. Formal monitoring arrangements are in place which includes key performance measures and establishment of regular client/contractor meetings to discuss performance and developments within the shared working arrangement.

### **Performance and Financial Management**

- 4.7 The partnership or shared working arrangement should have proper arrangements for:
- a. stating the specific expected outcomes to be achieved through partnership or shared working.
  - b. setting key performance measures with associated targets to demonstrate these expected outcomes, the actions to be taken to achieve them and the responsibilities for those actions;
  - c. reporting regularly on performance against targets and the progress made towards the partnership's aims generally;
  - d. reviewing and updating targets.
  - e. regular monitoring of finances through quarterly (as a minimum) budget monitoring reports.
- 4.8 It is important that the performance of all partnerships and shared working arrangements is monitored in order to ensure that the partnership/shared service remains fit for purpose and is achieving its stated objectives and is not having a detrimental impact on the overall performance of the service and/or council.
- 4.9 In addition, these arrangements will enable the council to assess whether it is achieving good value from the money it spends and the time put into it by the partners and officers.

## Managing Risks

- 4.10 Risk management is a key feature of good corporate governance and sound business practice. The risk management policy of Gravesham is to adopt best practices in the identification, evaluation and cost-effective control of risks. Specifically with regards to partnership working and shared services, risk management needs to be applied at the commencement of any arrangement but also during the setting of objectives at a strategic or operation level.
- 4.11 Risk assessments are intended to ensure that risks are eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level, thereby safeguarding the partnership's assets, employees and customers and also the delivery of services to the local community.
- 4.12 A risk assessment should be delivered in the form of a risk register (the format of which is not prescribed but should consider the likelihood of the risk occurring, the impact the risk will have and any mitigating factors). The register must be monitored and reviewed and this process will contribute significantly to the performance management of the partnership with regards to progress against objectives.

## Public Information and Complaints

- 4.13 If a partnership or shared service is providing services directly to the public, it is important that it gives clear information about those services, how to access them and what to do in the event of a problem or complaint. Such partnerships or shared service arrangements should have clear written Complaints Procedure (in respect of a shared service, this will normally form part of the Corporate Complaints procedure for the host authority).

## Maintaining Ethical Standards

- 4.14 Members and Officers are expected to maintain the highest standards of conduct when working in a partnership or in a shared service context. The relevant Codes of Conduct and Protocols set out in Annex 3 to the Council's Constitution should apply, including when working on a secondment or exchange basis. These include the "Seven Principles of Public Life":
- a. Selflessness: They should serve only the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
  - b. Honesty and Integrity: They should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.
  - c. Objectivity: They should make decisions on merit, including when making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.
  - d. Accountability: They should be accountable to the public for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities, and should co-operate fully and honestly with any scrutiny appropriate to their particular office.
  - e. Openness: They should be as open as possible about their actions and those of their authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those actions.

- f. Respect for Others: They should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person, and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers, and its other employees.
- g. Duty to Uphold the Law: They should uphold the law and, on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.

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## 5. Responsibilities for Partnerships and Shared Service Arrangements

- 5.1 The following provides guidance to Members and officers of the council participating in, managing or overseeing established partnership and/or shared working arrangements on behalf of the council;

### Cabinet Portfolio Holders

- 5.2 In relation to partnerships the Cabinet Portfolio Holders, in consultation with the Leader of the Executive, have overall responsibility for overseeing and reviewing the partnerships in which the council participates. In particular, the Cabinet Portfolio Holders will:
- a. review all new partnerships that fall within their portfolio areas and, ensure these are approved *in line with this Framework*.
  - b. receive updates, *as necessary*, of the partnerships in which the council is involved to ensure that they continue to be fit for purpose and are operating effectively and efficiently. *This will culminate in an annual review of the partnership published in the form of the Corporate Register of Partnerships*.
  - c. exercise a particular responsibility for those partnerships where the council is represented at Member level.
- 5.3 In relation to shared service arrangements, the Cabinet Portfolio Holders in conjunction with the Leader of the Executive, have delegated responsibilities for all shared-services/joint-working initiatives. In particular the Cabinet Portfolio Holders will:
- a. review and, where appropriate, approve all new shared service arrangements that fall within their portfolio areas, *following discussion at the relevant Cabinet Committee*;
  - b. receive regular updates from officers on the shared service and in particular, how this is actually working for the council. *This will culminate in an annual review of the shared working arrangement (not including ad hoc arrangements) which will be reported to the relevant Cabinet Committee or Cabinet as required*.

### Chief Executive, Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Managers

- 5.4 The senior management of the council are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the Partnership and Shared Working Framework are met for all partnerships and shared working arrangements in which their departments are involved.
- 5.5 The Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer) and the Section 151 Officer are responsible for ensuring sound advice is given in relation to legal and financial aspects of the partnerships and shared service arrangements either in place or being proposed.

- 5.6 The Corporate Change team are responsible for ensuring that:
- a. effective arrangements exist to make sure that partnerships and/or shared working arrangements are created, managed and reviewed in accordance with the requirements of this Partnership Framework;
  - b. support and guidance is provided to departments to assist them in the effective implementation of this Framework;
  - c. a formal register of the council's partnership and shared working arrangements is maintained and published, and reported to the Leader and through the Cabinet Committees at least once a year. The register will not include those ad hoc arrangements that are established.

### **Responsibilities in Individual Partnerships and Shared Service Arrangements**

- 5.7 Those involved in partnership and shared service work have a responsibility to the council and the wider public to help make it a success, and so should collaborate with their colleagues in the arrangement to achieve its aims, exploit opportunities and overcome problems.
- 5.8 At the same time, they also have a duty to the council and the wider public to ensure that the arrangement is effective, gives value for money and is conducted in a proper manner.
- 5.9 Therefore, any Member or officer of the council appointed to represent the council's interests in a partnership or working in a shared arrangement should be made aware of these responsibilities at the time of their appointment.
- 5.10 Although the Partnership Agreement or the Shared Service Agreement should provide a framework for fulfilling these responsibilities, in the event of concern or uncertainty about how the partnership is working, the relevant Director, Assistant Director or Service Manager should be consulted and, if the matter is of serious concern, the Head of Legal (Shared Service) (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and the Director (Corporate Services) should also be consulted.

## 6. Partnership monitoring and review

- 6.1 Those Members and officers appointed to represent the council on partnerships, or officers who work in a shared service arrangement, have the primary responsibility for day-to-day monitoring – through their involvement in meetings, reading of reports and discussions with officers, the public and others as required.
- 6.2 They are expected to consult with and keep the Chief Executive, the relevant Director, Assistant Director, Service Manager and Cabinet Portfolio Holders (as appropriate) informed of important issues, achievements and any problems that may arise.
- 6.3 The Chief Executive, Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Managers, in consultation with the Assistant Director (Governance and Law) and the Director (Corporate Services) have a responsibility to make enquiries and take appropriate action concerning any issues that may arise from the various sources of information available to them about the council's partnership work or shared service arrangement.
- 6.4 Sources of information for the successful monitoring of partnerships or shared working arrangements may include:
  - a. Minutes of partnership or shared service meetings;
  - b. Budget monitoring information;
  - c. Performance reports both annual and more frequent;
  - d. Enquiry and complaints monitoring;
  - e. Formal and informal feedback from the Council's representatives on partnerships or shared working arrangements;
  - f. Bi-lateral discussions with partners/shared working authorities.
- 6.5 Information obtained from the monitoring and review process may be confidential or subject to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Members and officers have duties to ensure that relevant information is treated confidentially and complies with data protection legislation. The Partnership Agreement or Shared Service Agreement will contain obligations upon the council and its partners for handling of confidential information and compliance with GDPR.

### Annual Review Process

- 6.6 A full review of the council's Partnership and Shared Service Register will be undertaken on an annual basis with the revised Register reported to the Leader of the Executive and the Cabinet Committees, and published on the council's website. This review will be undertaken during the Spring of each year in order to reflect current budgetary provisions, but updates will be made to the register throughout the year should it be necessary, such as with the introduction of new partnerships/shared working arrangements.
- 6.7 All full Shared Service arrangements and Shared Management arrangements are subject to an annual review, which will be presented to the relevant Cabinet Committee or Cabinet as required. The annual review will take the following format:
  - a. For the first two years of operation, a comprehensive annual review will be undertaken which will require detailed analysis of all aspects of the shared service in terms of officer feedback, achievement of goals set out when establishing the shared service etc.

- b. From year three onwards, the reviews of the shared service or shared management arrangements will look to focus on progress against specific objectives, reporting against the identified key performance measures, updates against any recommendations identified in the previous review and recommendations for future years.

Appendix four (parts a and b) provides copies of the templates that will be used for these reviews.

- 6.8 Cabinet Portfolio Holders will keep the partnerships and shared working arrangements within their own specific remit under regular review. Should they feel it necessary, they may seek the advice of the Members within their Cabinet Committees if they have any concerns or wish to raise any matters for wider discussion.
- 6.9 In addition, as part of the annual work programme of the Overview Scrutiny Committee, the Committee undertake a number of specific Scrutiny reviews. Any partnerships that are related to the topic areas that are selected for review will form part of the overall review. The responsible officer for the partnership will be required to provide additional detailed information on the partnership or shared service to aid the review process.
- 6.10 A review of the governance arrangements of partnerships and shared service arrangements will be undertaken in February/March each year to feed into the council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The review will look at gaining assurance from the relevant Director, Assistant Director, Service Managers and other key managers, that each partnership/shared service has the appropriate governance arrangements in place and will ask responsible officers to provide assurance that the arrangement is still meeting the objectives set out in the register.
- 6.11 The Corporate Change Manager is responsible for co-ordinating the reviews detailed above.

#### **Internal Audit Review of Partnerships**

- 6.12 The council's Internal Audit team may conduct audits of partnership and/or shared service arrangements where a need is identified either;
  - a. Through the annual audit needs assessment. This selects the audits for the coming year on a 'risk' basis following discussions with the relevant Director.
  - b. Where the organisation seeks assurance from internal audit on either the framework as a whole or over individual partnerships/shared service arrangements.

# Gravesham Borough Council Partnership Evaluation

## Partnership Assessment

<b>Name of Partnership</b>	
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<b>Date partnership due to commence</b>		<b>Date partnership due to terminate (if applicable)</b>	
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<b>Statutory Status</b>	
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<b>Where will the partnership operate (please specify)</b>	<i>Please state whether or not this is a partnership for just the Gravesham area or if it is wider i.e. Dartford and Gravesham, Kent-wide etc).</i>
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<b>Lead Organisation (if applicable)</b>	
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<b>Overall resources available to the partnership</b>	
• Overall partnership budget	£
• Has external funding been secured for the partnership? If so, how much and what will it be used for?	Yes/No £ <i>Use: i.e. funding to be used to pay for two members of staff to manage the partnership.</i>
• Potential external funding that could be sought?	<i>Please provide brief details of other potential external; funding – this will be covered in more detail in the 'Costs Analysis'.</i>
• Number of dedicated staff (FTE and costs if possible)	FTE £
• Other (e.g. resources provided in kind)	

<b>Organisation involved in the partnership and budgetary contribution</b>	Name	Contribution (£)
• Businesses/Private Sector		
• Individuals		
• Community Groups		
• Voluntary Sectors		
• Other		

<b>Resource input by Gravesham Borough Council</b>	
• Dedicated budget	£
• Staffing (enter number of staff and estimation of time in working days per year)	FTE No. working days
• Other (e.g. resources provided in kind)	

<b>Member input to the partnership</b> (if 'Yes' please specify which Member and their role in the partnership)	
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## Gravesham Borough Council Partnership Evaluation

<b>Does the partnership contribute to the council's overall corporate objectives?</b> (if 'Yes' please identify, in detail)	
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<b>What are the anticipated outcomes for the council?</b>	<i>Please provide brief details of the anticipated outcomes for the council entering the partnership – community outcomes will be covered in more detail in the 'Benefits Analysis'.</i>
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<b>Lead officer from Gravesham Borough Council</b>	
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<b>Name and title of person completing the assessment and date</b>	
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Significant partnership<sup>1</sup>


Other partnership

If this is to be a '**significant**' partnership, please complete the self-assessment form fully. This will then be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer) and the Section 151 Officer (Director – Corporate Services). Following their review, the proposed partnership must be discussed at Management Team prior to being submitted to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder for formal approval alongside the Leader of the Executive. It is the responsibility of the lead officer to present the item to Management Team.

If this is to be an '**other**' partnership please complete the self-assessment form; it is accepted that the level of detail required may differ to that of a significant partnership. This will then be reviewed by the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer) and the Section 151 Officer (Director – Corporate Services). Following their review, the proposed 'other' partnership must be formally approved by the Director, Leader of the Executive and relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder.

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<sup>1</sup> A significant partnership is defined as a partnership for which there is a council resource provision of £50,000 or greater or one that is fundamental to the delivery of the goals and objectives of the Council's corporate plan. Without this effective partnership therefore, the delivery of Gravesham Borough Council's key corporate goals would not occur

## Gravesham Borough Council Partnership Evaluation

### Proposed Partnership - Assessment

#### Self-assessment - Benefits, Costs, Risk and Equalities Assessment

<b>Benefits analysis:</b>	
<b>What is the partnership planning to achieve?</b>	<i>Main aims and/or objectives of the partnership.</i>
<b>What evidence is there that this is needed (e.g. from research and analysis or from experience elsewhere)?</b>	<i>How do we know that we need to have this partnership? What information do we have that supports the need for this partnership?</i>  <i>Have consultations been undertaken with the public and/or stakeholders. If so, what has been their response?</i>
<b>Will it make a contribution to achieving the council's own aims and objectives? If so, what are the corporate priorities/targets that the partnership will help to deliver?</b>	<i>Please specify the Corporate Plan areas of focus that this partnership will contribute to.</i>
<b>What are the contributions towards the council's objectives that will be made by the partnership in the first year?</b>	<i>By entering into the partnership, what will we expect to actually see delivered by the partnership within the first year – specifically for the council?</i>
<b>What will be the outcomes for the community as a result of the partnership?</b>	<i>What will be the outcomes of the partnership for the actual users? What will the community be able to see as a result of this partnership?</i>
<b>If the partnership is not established, what are the alternatives for delivery of the objectives?</b>	<i>Can the objectives/outcomes be achieved through other means other than the partnership? What would be the cost implications to the council for an alternative approach?</i>
<b>What are the consequences of not establishing the partnership?</b>	<i>If the council does not enter into this partnership what will be the consequences of this action?</i>
<b>How will we know if the partnership is a success?</b>	<i>What measures are in place to enable monitoring of the partnership? Specifically, will VfM Indicators be introduced (monitoring cost, partnership/service performance and customer satisfaction).</i>
<b>How does the partnership contribute to the council's overall Safeguarding objectives?</b>	<i>Will this partnership have any impact on the lives of children and/or vulnerable adults? If so, how? How does this partnership support the council's wider Safeguarding commitment? Is there a clear procedure to follow in the event that the work of the partnership and/or its members uncovers a safeguarding issue?</i>

<b>Costs analysis:</b>	
<b>What is the estimated financial cost of setting up the partnership (for GBC)?</b>	<i>How much will it cost to set up the partnership? Will this be met by existing budgets or is additional funding required? Is this capital or revenue expenditure?</i>
<b>What is the estimated financial cost of running the partnership (for GBC)?</b>	<i>What will be the ongoing running costs of the partnership? Will this be met by existing budgets or is additional funding required? How long will these costs have to be found by the council?</i>

## Gravesham Borough Council Partnership Evaluation

<b>Costs analysis:</b>	
<b>What additional resources are required for the partnership, provided by GBC?</b>	<i>What other resources will the council provide to the partnership in terms of officer time (and level of officer support i.e. admin, senior officer etc.)? What other resources will the council provide 'in kind' such as property etc.</i>
<b>What other potential sources of income exist and have they been explored?</b>	<i>Are there any grant funding streams that could be utilised for the partnership or other government funding? If so, provide details of how this has been explored or is expected to be explored.</i>
<b>Will the creation of this partnership have an impact on the council's ability to deliver any other services/ objectives?</b>	<i>If this partnership is created, will resources have to be taken from one task and re-allocated elsewhere. Will this have an impact on other services?</i>
<b>How will the partnership be able to demonstrate value for money?</b>	<i>What measures are to be introduced in order for the council to assess whether or not the partnership is delivering value for money. Specifically, will VfM Indicators be introduced (monitoring cost, partnership/service performance and customer satisfaction).</i>

<b>Risk analysis:</b>	
<b>Has a risk assessment of the proposed partnership been undertaken</b>	<i>Yes/No If 'Yes' please ensure a copy of the risk assessment is attached. If 'No' a risk assessment must be completed prior to the partnership being put forward to Cabinet for formal approval.</i>
<b>How likely is it that something could cause serious problems</b>	<i>Examples - external funding being withdrawn, accidents, vandalism, changing public demand or taste, shortages of expertise, legal claims, other partners withdrawing and leaving the Council with liabilities, etc.)?</i>
<b>Does the council and partners have adequate insurance to cover the partnership?</b>	<i>Have you checked with the Finance Team that the council's insurance is adequate for the partnership that is being entered into? Do the partner organisations have adequate insurance and how can you be sure of this.</i>
<b>Where there are risks not covered by insurance, is it possible to insure against any of these risks?</b>	
<b>What does experience elsewhere tell us about how risky this type of partnership is?</b>	
<b>Is it possible that the nature of the risks involved and their impact on the partnership could change dramatically over the expected life of the partnership (e.g. due to demographic changes, political or economic uncertainties)?</b>	

## Gravesham Borough Council Partnership Evaluation

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Equalities Analysis	
<b>Does the proposed partnership support the council's Equalities Aims and Objectives</b>	<i>Do the partnership arrangements help support the council's duties and obligations to make a positive difference to its communities?</i>
<b>How will the partnership operate in terms of ensuring equality across the nine protected characteristics?</b>	<i>The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civic partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. A summary should be provided to show the partnership has been reviewed to determine if there is any 'negative impact' on any of the protected characteristics.</i>
<b>If there is any 'negative impact', what action will be taken to mitigate it?</b>	<i>Provide details of how any potential 'negative impacts' are being managed to ensure the partnership can work fairly across all protected characteristics.</i>

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)	
<b>Does the proposed partnership pose any potential issues in respect of GDPR? If so, what and how are these to be overcome?</b>	<i>Consideration must be given to the GDPR regulations and ensuring that the partnership is able to operate within the constraints of GDPR. A Data Protection Impact Assessment may not be required but if it is, should be appended to the evaluation form.</i>

Climate Change	
<b>Does the proposed partnership contribute to the council's overall Climate Change commitment?</b>	<i>Consideration to be given to how the partnership may benefit the council, and the wider borough, in mitigating Climate Change in Gravesham. If the partner organisations have their own specific commitments, these should be summarised here.</i>

### Partnership Governance Arrangements

It is essential that all partnerships that the council enters into has good governance arrangements. As a council we have a responsibility for ensuring that we are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It is therefore essential that for any partnership that the council is involved in, there are clear arrangements in place to ensure we are meeting all of the above elements of good governance. .

The partnership has the following governance arrangements in place (or drafted ready for formal approval):	
<b>Terms of reference and/or Constitution</b>	<i>Yes/No and provide details of where this will be held if the partnership is formally adopted.</i>
<b>Eligibility for membership and rules for the admission of new partners</b>	
<b>Rules for making decisions on behalf of the partnership</b>	
<b>Rules governing meetings (frequency, notice, quorum, chairing, voting, etc.)</b>	

## Gravesham Borough Council Partnership Evaluation

<b>The partnership has the following governance arrangements in place (or drafted ready for formal approval):</b>	
<b>Rules for recording decisions and reporting them to the partners and to the public</b>	
<b>Policy for managing conflicts in the partnership</b>	
<b>Code for maintaining ethical standards</b>	
<b>A (draft) Partnership Agreement outlining the above</b>	
<b>Performance monitoring arrangements</b>	
<b>Financial monitoring arrangements</b>	
<b>Risk monitoring arrangements</b>	
<b>Dealing with public complaints and compliments</b>	
<b>Audit requirements</b>	

**NB:** a number of the above may be included within the Constitution and/or terms of reference and therefore may not be separate documents.

### Partnership Exit Strategy

<b>Please provide details of the 'exit strategy' that has been discussed in relation to the partnership.</b>	<i>Before agreeing to enter into a partnership, an understanding of how the partnership can end will be required. The exit strategy should include details of how the partnership will be suspended, dissolved or terminated as required.</i>
--	---

**Gravesham Borough Council  
Partnership Evaluation  
Partnership Endorsement**

Officer Completing the Form \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Based on the information above, should the partnership be agreed and put forward for formal adoption at Cabinet?</b>	Comments to be provided by the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer) and the Section 151 Officer (Director – Corporate Services) to provide their endorsement of the partnership or to provide details as to why the partnership will not be endorsed.
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**Agreed (put forward to Cabinet for formal approval if a significant partnership)**

Chief Executive/Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Leader of the Executive \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Cabinet Portfolio Holder \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Shared Services / Joint Working Business Case



**Author:** *Relevant Directors who will be presenting the report for approval at each authority involved.*

**Client:** *Relevant departments involved at each authority*

**Date:**

## Contents

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		<b>Page Reference</b>
<b>1.</b>	Introduction and Strategic Requirements of the Service	
<b>2.</b>	Strategic and Operational Benefits	
<b>3.</b>	Constraints and Dependencies	
<b>4.</b>	Legal and Constitutional / Governance Issues	
<b>5.</b>	Equalities Impact Assessment	
<b>6.</b>	Risks	
<b>7.</b>	Existing Working Arrangements	
<b>8.</b>	Cost/Benefit Evaluation of Options and Recommendation	
<b>9.</b>	High-level Options	

## Appendices

1. Business Case History
2. Current Staffing Arrangements



**1. Introduction and Strategic Requirements of the Service**

---

**1.1 Scope for shared service/joint working arrangements**

*Brief outline of the shared service/joint-working opportunities and the services involved in the proposed arrangements.*

**1.2 Potential stakeholders/partners**

*The councils and/or any other organisations that may be involved in the proposed arrangements.*

**1.3 Current service provision arrangements of potential stakeholders/partners**

*Explain whether the existing services are in-house, shared or outsourced and give high-level reporting lines. (NB: section 7 will provide details of the existing working arrangements)*

**1.4 Contribution to key council objectives**

*Service links to corporate plan or corporate objectives.*

**1.5 Statutory Obligations**

*List any statutory obligations regarding the service.*

**2. Strategic and Operational Benefits of Joint Working**

---

**2.1 Strategic Benefits**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Measure</b>
<i>List the benefits to the councils and customers.</i>	<i>How will we know each 'benefit' has been achieved – satisfaction, processing times etc?</i>

### 3. Constraints and Dependencies

---

#### 3.1 Constraints to the project progressing

- **Organisational Constraints**
  - *E.g. geographical locations, legal issues, cultural differences, political issues*
  -
- **Resource Constraints**
  - *E.g. system/equipment compatibility, staff terms & conditions, other staff issues, availability of skill sets*
  -
- **Time Constraints**
  - *E.g. key deadlines which may impede the progression of this arrangement*
  -

#### 3.2 Dependencies for the project progressing

- *Impact of other factors on the long-term viability or ongoing return on investment of the project e.g. known or predicted future events*
- 

### 4. Legal and Constitutional/Governance Issues

---

- 4.1** The partnership/joint-working arrangement will be made pursuant to section 113 of the Local Government Act 1972, which allows a local authority to place any of its officers, who consent to the arrangement, at the disposal of another local authority on such terms as may be agreed between the parties.
- 4.2** *Details of committees and reporting mechanisms along with details of any schemes of delegations in place and other constitutional issues that need to be taken into account.*

### 5. Equalities Impact Assessment

---

- 5.1** *An equalities impact assessment should be undertaken for all proposed shared/joint-working proposals. This should focus on:*
- *What will be the equalities impact on the customer*
  - *What will be the equalities impact on officers/staff involved*
  - *If there is any 'negative impact' on either groups, how will this be resolved in order for the initiative to be progressed.*

## 6. Consideration of General Data Protection Requirements (GDPR)

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- 6.1 *A consideration of any specific requirements in relation to GDPR should be considered and recorded . A full Data Protection Impact Assessment may not be required but if it is, it should be appended to the business case.*

## 7. Risks

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### 7.1 'Do Nothing' Risks – if there is no change to existing arrangements

Risk identified	Action to mitigate risk
<i>Risks to either council if there is no change to existing working arrangements</i>	<i>Action that could be taken to mitigate this risk?</i>

**NB:** A risk assessment has been undertaken for each option and is contained within section 7.

## 8. Existing Working Arrangements

---

### 8.1 Departmental Structures

*Insert current departmental/team structures of both authorities (liaise with Corporate Change Manager re: format for this).*

### 8.2 Summary of arrangements –

	Gravesham BC	
<b>Salary costs (including oncosts)</b>		
<b>Staff numbers (FTE)</b>		
<b>Staff numbers (actual)</b>		
<b>Scope of service</b>	<i>Provide details of the areas of work covered by the departments/teams at each authority to identify similarities/differences.</i>	
<b>Performance levels:</b> <i>List key performance indicators and most recent outturns.</i>		
<b>Current IT systems in use</b>	<i>Provide details of the key IT systems currently being used by the service</i>	

***NB: there may be more than one team involved in the shared service/joint working arrangements and therefore it may be necessary to show the set-up of the different teams separately:***

**8.3 Summary of arrangements – where more than one department/team is involved**

	<b>Gravesham BC</b>	
<b>Salary costs (including oncosts)</b>		
<b>Staff numbers (FTE)</b>		
<b>Staff numbers (actual)</b>		
<b>Scope of service</b>		
<b>Performance levels:</b>		
<b>Current IT systems in use</b>		

**9. Cost/Benefit Evaluation of Options and Recommendation**

---

- 9.1** *Clear evaluation of the options contained in section 10.*
- 9.2** *Recommended option including copy of financial summary box from recommended option.*

**10. High-level options**

---

**10.1 Service delivery options**

**10.1.1 Option 1 –**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsible Lead</b>	<b>Other Stakeholders</b>	<b>Implementation options</b>

*Insert organisation/department structure diagram for this option (liaise with Corporate Change Manager re: format for this).*

<b>Key Benefits of this arrangement</b>	<b>Key disadvantages of this arrangement</b>
<i>Key benefits to either organisation of taking this option forward.</i>	<i>Any potential disadvantages to either authority of taking this option forward.</i>

<b>Risks of progressing the option</b>	<b>Mitigating factors</b>
<i>Identify any risks associated with progressing this option.</i>	

**Investment/set-up costs**

*Include all initial and one-off set-up costs*

**Additional ongoing costs**

*Include any ongoing, additional costs resulting from this e.g. travel costs etc*

**Staff cost analysis**

*Insert staff costs table (liaise with Corporate Change Manager re: utilisation of costs spreadsheet template as well as the Finance Team).*

<b>Option 1 – Financial Summary</b>			
	<b>Year 1 (£)</b>	<b>Year 2 (£)</b>	<b>Year 3 (£)</b>
<b>Investment/set-up costs</b>			
<b>Additional ongoing costs</b>			
<b>Staff cost savings at GBC</b>			
<b>Staff cost savings at</b>			
<b>Total savings</b>			

**Evidence of similar projects (where applicable)**

- *Provide details of any areas where this type of arrangement has already been applied and whether it has been successful.*

**ADDITIONAL OPTIONS TO BE ADDED AS NECESSARY TO SET OUT ALL OPTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED.**

# Appendices

**1. Business Case History**

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**1.1 Revision History**

Revision Date	Summary of changes	Changes marked
		--

**1.2 Approvals**

This document requires the following approvals:

Name	Job title	Date Approved
<i>Provide details of the officers/Members at each authority who will need to be involved in the 'approval' process of the Business Case. This should meet the requirements of the approval process set out in the Shared Services Toolkit.</i>		
<i>The Monitoring Officers and Section 151 Officers at both sites will always be included.</i>		
	Monitoring Officer at Gravesham Borough	
	Section 151 Officer	

**1.3 Notification List**

The following need to be notified when revisions are made:

Name	Job Title	Date
<i>Provide details of the officers/Members at each authority who need to be notified once the business case is approved and ready for discussion. This will normally include the Chief Executive and any other key officers/Members.</i>		

**1.4 Document storage**

This document and supporting information is held within the ##### department at ##### Borough Council.



## Drawing up a partnership agreement

1. The detail and complexity of any partnership agreement will vary according to the size and importance of the partnership and the resources it consumes, but the following key elements will apply in all cases:
  - 1.1 The council and its partners should agree, and state within the Partnership Agreement:
    - a. the partnership's aims and objectives and what it plans to actually achieve;
    - b. an outline of the rationale for forming the partnership - including why it will enable the partners collectively to achieve results that could not be achieved by each of them acting independently or by some other means.
  - 1.2 The Agreement should state whether the partnership is intended to last indefinitely or for a fixed period (and if so, how long). It should also provide details of any renewal arrangements for the partnership.
  - 1.3 The Agreement should clearly set out the governance arrangements for the partnership (covered fully in section three of this framework).
  - 1.4 Where a partnership will provide services directly to the public, the Agreement should require it to adopt and publish agreed arrangements for:
    - a. informing and consulting the public about the services provided;
    - b. handling complaints, with the aim of ensuring that they are resolved speedily and without 'buck-passing'; and for
    - c. performance monitoring and performance reporting procedures.
  - 1.5 Each Partnership Agreement should set out the following matters clearly:
    - a. the responsibilities for providing funding for the partnership;
    - b. who has the authority to make decisions on how partnership's money and other resources is to be spent;
    - c. whether and how resources can be re-allocated between various activities;
    - d. the partnership's financial reporting arrangements (including arrangements for reporting back to the Council and the other partners)
  - 1.6 The Agreement should require the partnership to adopt an information sharing, data protection and confidentiality protocol to ensure that:
    - a. All the partners are kept informed about matters of mutual interest and concern in order to build trust and understanding across the partnership;
    - b. The confidentiality of privileged information is respected by all partners;
    - c. a consistent and agreed approach is taken to data protection and client confidentiality in those partnerships handling and sharing personally identifiable information;
    - d. suitable indemnities are provided when considered appropriate by the Monitoring Officer (or Deputy Monitoring Officer).

- 1.7 In addition the Agreement should include a specific protocol for dealing with Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. The partnership should designate one officer from a public sector organisation as the FOI officer for the partnership and that officer should consult other partners as necessary regarding any potentially contentious enquiries.
- 1.8 The Agreement must also include provision for:
- a. resolution of disputes between partners
  - b. details of an 'exit strategy' for the partnership members:
  - c. dissolution of the partnership by mutual agreement or on completion of agreed purposes (as appropriate); and for
    - the withdrawal of individual partners from a continuing partnership.
    - within the 'exit strategy' the agreement must ensure that proper consideration is given to:
      - o the Equalities Act 2010, and the impact that dissolution will have on the equalities protected characteristics.
      - o The Children Act 2004 (s11) and Care Act 2014 (s42) and the impact that dissolution will have on the council's statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

In either case, these provisions should include arrangements for the disposition of any resources contributed by the council and held by or for the partnership; and for dealing with any outstanding liabilities that could fall on the council.

2. Once a formal partnership agreement is drawn up, the partnership will commence operation. In deciding on the tasks of the partnership, further key projects or work streams may be agreed. It may therefore be necessary to draw up specific service level agreements for the duration of said projects or work programmes
3. It may not always be necessary to have service level agreements and this will be dependent upon the type of project or work programme that is being agreed. The partnership will need to decide whether the work is covered by the overall partnership agreement or if something more specific is required.

## Drawing up a shared service agreement

1. As with a partnership agreement, the detail and complexity of any shared service agreement will vary according to the level of the shared working arrangement in place and the resources it consumes. Key elements for consideration are as follows:
  - 1.1 Details of how the functions of each organisation are delegated (as required).
  - 1.2 How the services are to be provided within the shared service.
  - 1.3 Accommodation – details of where the shared service will be situated and where officers will be expected to visit as part of their duties.
  - 1.4 Staff transfers – if required, details of how staff will be transferred as part of the shared working arrangement along with details of how and when this will take effect.
  - 1.5 Funding – details of how the shared service will be funded by those parties involved and how the payments are to be made.
  - 1.6 Details of any assets and liabilities that need to be taken into account in the agreement.
  - 1.7 Termination – details of how the arrangement can be terminated including the notice period required.
  - 1.8 Freedom of Information and how these requests will be dealt with within the shared service.
  - 1.9 Scope of service – the agreement should also provide, as an annex to the agreement, a detailed description of the services that will be provided by the shared service.
  - 1.10 Safeguarding – as relevant, details of how the establishment of the arrangement is likely to aid the council in fulfilling its statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
  - 1.11 Any specific requirements in relation to the General Data Protection regulations (GDPR) that are appropriate to the service.
2. Joint Manager and Joint Officer arrangements are likely to be a lot less in-depth than the full shared service; this does not however take away from the importance of having a formal agreement in place.

# Review of the ##### Shared Service

(Shared service Commenced: #####)

Author(s):

Date:

[DATE]

In line with all shared service/shared working arrangements, it is necessary to undertake an annual review of the arrangement. The purpose of the review is two-fold; to ensure that the shared service is delivering against its agreed objectives and to identify any improvements/changes that need to be made to ensure the successful continuation of the arrangement.

The objectives identified for the ##### shared service are as follows:

- 
- 
- 
-

## Review Findings

### How is the shared service operating?

1. Has the shared service delivered on the objectives that are set out on page two of the review document?

Yes  No  In part

*Please provide details of how the objectives have been met. If they haven't been met or have been met in part, please provide the reasons for this and any action identified to rectify this.*

2. Have there been any other, unforeseen benefits, as a result of the shared service?

Yes  No

*Please provide details of any other benefits, which were not anticipated at the start, which have come about as a result of the shared service.*

3. Have there been any unforeseen issues or problems resulting from the shared service?

Yes  No

*Please provide details of any other issues of problems that have arisen which were not previously identified and how these have been managed/rectified.*

4. What has been the financial impact of the shared service on both authorities?

*Please provide details of the financial impact of the shared service i.e. confirmation of any savings achieved, if these are above/below anticipated levels, any costs that were not previously considered or have arisen etc.*

5. Feedback from officers involved in the shared service:

*Please provide details of feedback that you have received from officers involved in the shared service. This section could be completed via a short team meeting for example, whereby officers views are sought.*

**Moving forward with the shared service**

6. Based on the review that has been undertaken will the shared service continue to operate?

Yes

No

*If 'No' please provide details of why it is felt that the shared service should not continue and any exit plans that have been discussed/agreed.*

*If the answer is 'Yes' but there are changes that need to be made to ensure the shared service is effective, please provide details of the changes that are required and how they will be addressed.*

7. If the shared service is to continue to operate, what are the key areas of focus for the coming year for both authorities?

[DATE]

*If answered 'Yes' to question 5, please provide details of the key aspects of work that are going to be undertaken in the year in order to ensure the shared service continues and is further strengthened.*

**Summary of recommendations**

*Please list any recommendations that you feel need to be reviewed by the relevant Directors at both authorities. This may include changes to processes or potential supplement increases (if applicable) if it is felt that partnership is working well.*

1.	
2.	
3.	



**Shared Service:**

**Shared Service Commenced:**

**Author:**

**Review Date:**

**Overview of the shared service arrangement:**

*A summary of the structure of the shared service and the services provided. Include any details of changes that have taken place with regards to the shared service in the past 12 months.*

**Progress against objectives:**

	Objective	Update
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

**Key performance measures:**

		Target 2020/21	Outturn 2020-21
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

**Update against recommendations identified in previous year review:**

	Objective	Update
1		
2		

**Recommendations/Service Improvements for the coming year:**

1	
2	
3	

**Classification:** Public

**Key Decision:** No

### **Gravesham Borough Council**

**Report to:** Performance & Administration Cabinet Committee

**Date:** 25 March 2021

**Reporting officer:** Director (Corporate Services)

**Subject:** Portfolio COVID Update Report

#### **Purpose and summary of report:**

To provide Members of the Performance & Administration Cabinet Committee with an update against how the council has responded to the COVID pandemic, both in terms of specific activities in response to the pandemic and how the council has managed to maintain service delivery across council services.

#### **Recommendations:**

None – the report is for information purposes only.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The practical impact of the global Covid-19 health pandemic for the council emerged in late 2019-20, principally via the Prime Minister's speech to the nation on 23 March 2020 and the enactment of the Coronavirus Act 2020. This resulted in the council undertaking a number of different work streams in order to support the community and the council's employees during the pandemic.
- 1.2 In June 2020, a report was presented to the Committee to set out the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic upon the practical delivery of the respective services within the portfolio.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the approach to the pandemic, both throughout the first lockdown and in response to any additional work streams that have been implemented as a result of the subsequent lockdowns announced by central government in November 2020 and January 2021. In addition, it provides an overview of how the council has continued to deliver its services, despite the additional pressure brought about by the pandemic.

## 2. Response to the COVID workstreams

2.1 Throughout the pandemic, the council has taken responsibility for providing support to thousands of residents and local businesses across the borough, both in response to government initiatives but also in its role as a Community Leader. Specifically in relation to the Performance & Administration Portfolio, the following actions have been taken:

### 2.1.1 *Allocation of business grants*

In response to the COVID pandemic, central government implemented a business grant scheme to provide support to small businesses, and businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. Local authorities were required to administer the grant process, including the payment of the grants to eligible businesses, with central government fully reimbursing local authorities for the value of the grants paid out.

During the first lockdown period, the council allocated a total of £15,229,000 to eligible businesses in Gravesham:

- 1,191 businesses were allocated funds under the Small Business Grant Fund and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants.
- 75 businesses under the Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund.

Following the subsequent lockdowns announced in November 2020 and January 2021, the council has continued to work with businesses in the payment of grants. Since the start of November 2020, the council has administered seven grant schemes and paid out a further £6,634,595 through individual payments to businesses across the borough.

The council continues to provide weekly data to the department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on support issued, alongside returns on post payment assurance activity. The council's Counter Fraud team has checked the records of all Small Business Grant payments, Retail, Hospitality & Leisure Grant Relief, and Discretionary Business Grants awarded during the first national lockdown, against bank accounts that have been flagged as part of the national alerts from the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) due to potential connections to organised crime; no matches were found. The council has also recently provided grant payment data to the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to enable comparison with the data from other local authorities to identify potential instances of fraud.

### 2.1.2 *Council Tax Support*

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, local authorities were allocated a proportion of central Government's Hardship Fund to be provided to residents in the borough in providing financial support at this unprecedented time. A total of £500m of new grant funding was provided to local authorities across the UK to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area. The allocation of funding to GBC was £893,182. The fund is currently on track to be sufficient to enable further awards for any new working age claims received until the end of the scheme on 31 March 2021.

2.1.3 *NHS Test and Trace Support Payments*

From 28 September 2020, persons receiving a positive COVID-19 test result or who have been told by the NHS to self-isolate because of close contact with someone who has COVID-19 are able to apply to receive a £500 lump sum payment, intended to address any financial hardship that may be associated with the need to self-isolate. Local authorities were required to administer NHS Test and Trace Support Payments to those on means tested benefits, as well as discretionary payments to others who may be experiencing financial hardship due to being unable to work. At the end of February, some 961 applications had been received and assessed by the Benefits Team, resulting in 307 payments totalling £153,500.

**3. Maintaining council services**

- 3.1 Staff have continued to predominantly work from home with staff being strategically redeployed within the service to assist in the processing of business support grants and test and trace support payment applications as needed, as well as support other workstreams, such as the council's support for vulnerable persons.
- 3.2 The Revenues and Benefits teams have continued to offer telephone support for customers who require assistance. Requests for face-to face interactions have been limited to urgent situations only, or where there is no other way of providing the service; demand for this service has been extremely low from customers.
- 3.3 Debt recovery processes have been reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they provide relevant and up to date support and guidance for those experiencing financial hardship due to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3.4 Despite the substantial challenge presented by the pandemic, with the authority having to divert significant resources and, equally, adapt to a suite of new statutory requirements introduced by the government's legislative programme, the council has continued to deliver quality frontline community services.
- 3.5 For the Performance and Administration portfolio, this includes but is not exclusive to:
- the council's Revenues and Benefits service maintaining its strong performance averaging 12.9 days for the processing of all new Housing Benefit claims, considerably ahead of comparative national and Kent averages (17 and 16 days respectively). In addition, claims for the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme have continued to be processed promptly with an average of 18.1 days against a target of 20 days, despite the increased workload.
  - The collection rates for council tax and business rates have been maintained, which is a credit to both the council and residents/businesses in the borough. At the end of February 2021, 93.60% of council tax had been collected, compared to 95.36% at this time last year; 95.02% of business rates has been collected compared to 94.82% in February 2020. Comparatively, it is estimated that collection rates nationally are down by an average of 2% for council tax and 8% for business rates.

- Maintenance of a sufficient level of work against the 2019-20 workplan to ensure that there is an adequate level of assurance work across the council. This will enable the Head of Internal Audit & Counter Fraud to deliver an annual opinion on the framework of internal control, which is a required as part of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Annual Governance Statement process.
- The identification of an additional £70,000 in council tax from erroneous discounts, and recovery of two council properties, one of which was also linked to a fraudulent right to buy.
- Maintenance of response times for Freedom of Information Requests in line with previous year performance (84% of requests responded to within 20 working days).

For reference, Members may wish to review Appendix 2, which provides the latest quarterly performance report as considered by the Performance and Administration Cabinet Committee on 10 February 2021. The report presents a statistical analysis of the council's frontline service delivery for the portfolio throughout the pandemic.

#### **4. Next Steps and future workstreams**

- 4.1 The COVID-19 pandemic is still affecting the borough of Gravesham, and the entire country, and as such, it is necessary for the council to continue to be responsive to the needs of its community, as well as supporting officers and Members alike. Key activities that are underway to support the council's recovery plan are as follows:
  - 4.1.1 Maintenance of performance of the Benefits service to ensure claims for benefits are processed as quickly as possible, whilst looking to increase accessibility through the rollout of Citizens Access.
  - 4.1.2 Application of the decisions taken by Gravesham Borough Council and Kent County Council to reduce the liability of working age residents in receipt of Localised Support for Council Tax during the 2021/22 billing period.
  - 4.1.3 Continuation of support to people suffering financial hardship through the Local Support for Council Tax Scheme, as well as the Exceptional Hardship Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments.
  - 4.1.4 Making use of the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) Platform to identify persons and households most likely to enter financial crisis and target support to help them.
  - 4.1.5 In accordance with the Corporate Debt Strategy, offering advice and support to those who are having difficulty meeting their payment obligations to the council.

#### **5. Background papers**

- 5.1 Background papers pertaining to this report are held by the Corporate Change Manager. Anyone wishing to inspect background papers should, in the first place, be directed to Committee & Electoral Services who will make the necessary arrangements.

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
<b>Legal</b>	In response to the pandemic, the Government put in place the Coronavirus Act 2020 as well as updating the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and other key health-related regulations.
<b>Finance and Value for Money</b>	<p>Specifically in relation to the council's own budgets, updates have been provided in the quarterly budget reports that have been presented to and reviewed by Cabinet over the course of the year.</p> <p>In relation to funding specifically for COVID, the council has received funding from central Government in two key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific grants have been provided to enable the council to administer the schemes put in place by the Government, such as the various Business Grants schemes that have been put in place.</li> <li>• The council has also received c. £1.8m of non-ring fenced funding from the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government (MHCLG) to help meet the unprecedented pressures resulting from the pandemic.</li> </ul>
<b>Risk Assessment</b>	<p>The COVID-19 pandemic presented, and continues to present, significant risks for the council, particularly in terms of delivery of critical services to the public. As has been demonstrated through this report, the council's overall response to the pandemic has enabled those services to continue to operate effectively.</p> <p>The pandemic also presented risks to the Gravesham community, both residents and businesses. The council has been able to support both groups in minimising these risks by ensuring prompt payments of grants and allowances to support them through this tough time.</p>
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	<p><i>A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) should be carried out at the start of any major project involving the use of personal data or if you are making a significant change to an existing process.</i></p> <p>a. Does the project/change being recommended through this paper involve the processing of <a href="#">personal data</a> or <a href="#">special category data</a> or <a href="#">criminal offence data</a>? N/A</p> <p>b. If yes to question a, have you completed and attached a DPIA including Data Protection Officer advice? N/A</p> <p>c. If no to question b, please seek advice from your nominated DPIA assessor or the Information Governance Team at <a href="mailto:gdpr@medway.gov.uk">gdpr@medway.gov.uk</a>. N/A</p>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment</b>	<p>a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? If yes, please explain answer. No</p>

IMPLICATIONS	APPENDIX 1
	<p>b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality? If yes, please explain answer.</p> <p>N/A</p> <p><i>In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above</i></p>
<b>Corporate Plan</b>	The way in which the council has responded to the pandemic has ensured that services have continued to operate effectively, which is fundamental to the delivery of all objectives within the Corporate Plan.
<b>Climate Change</b>	N/A
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	N/A
<b>Digital and website implications</b>	N/A
<b>Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults</b>	N/A





# PERFORMANCE & ADMIN PORTFOLIO

Performance report  
Q 3 : 2 0 2 0 - 2 1

*Delivering a Gravesham to be proud of*

POLICY COMMITMENT

**1. Put our customers first:** implement a suite of quality and effective frontline services accessible to all.

Revenues & Benefits update - Pat Knight

Performance continues to remain strong against a backdrop of exceptional resourcing pressures placed on the service due to the implementation of Covid-19 measures such as 'Test and Trace Self-Isolation grants'.

PI 23: The average processing time for housing benefit claims has continued to improve from an average of 13.8 days in Q2 to 12.2 days at the end of Q3. This compares favourably with the latest available data (Q1) nationally 18 days and Kent 19 days.

PI 24: The average processing time to assess changes of circumstance for housing benefit claims is now 3.4 days compared with 3.3 days in Q2. This continues to compare favourably with the latest available data (Q1) nationally 5 days and Kent 4 days.

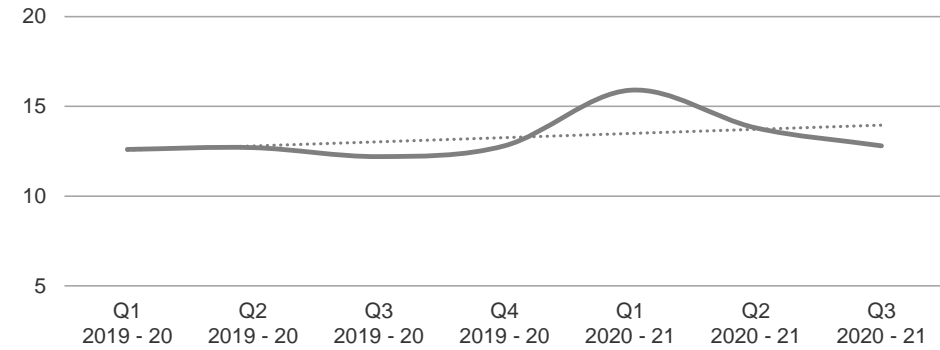


#1 PEOPLE

a proud community; where residents can call a safe, clean and attractive borough their home.

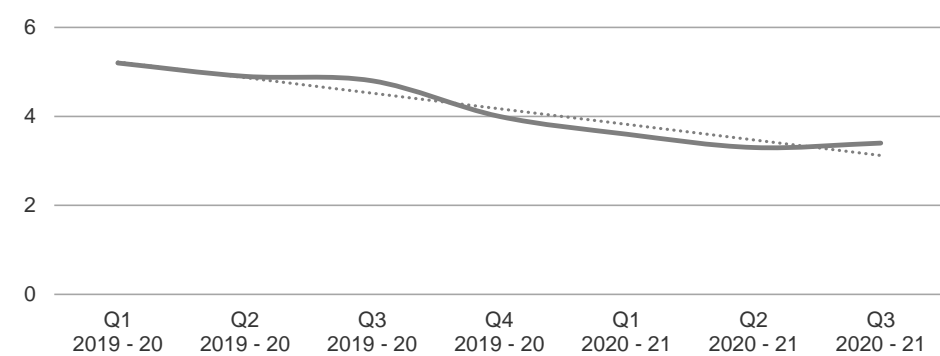
PI 23 Average processing time taken for Housing Benefit claims (days)

OUTTURN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21
	12.6	12.7	12.2	12.8	15.9	13.8	12.8	



PI 24 Average processing time for changes of circumstance in Housing Benefit claims (days)

OUTTURN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21
	5.2	4.9	4.8	4.0	3.6	3.3	3.4	



POLICY COMMITMENT

**2. Put our customers first:** implement a suite of quality and effective frontline services accessible to all.

Corporate Complaints update - Simon Walsh

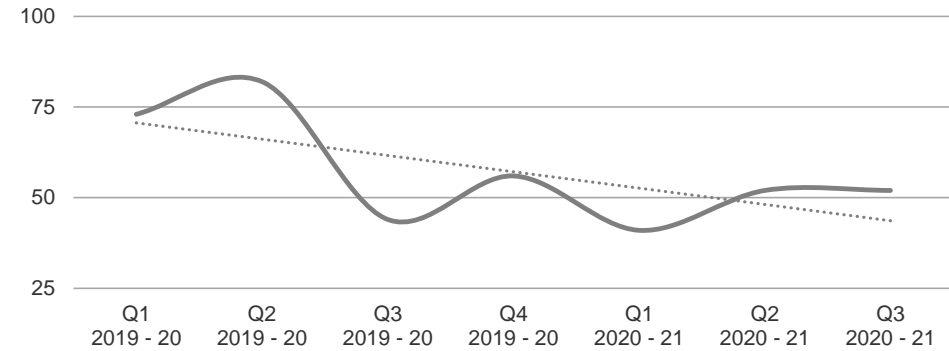
During Q3 there were 52 complaints, the same amount as during Q2. During October there were 24 complaints, 23 Stage One and one Stage Two. Of the Stage One, 11 were responded to within the 15 day deadline and 12 did not meet the deadline and remain open. The Stage Two response met the deadline. During November there were 16 complaints, 15 Stage One and one Stage Three. Of the Stage One, nine cases met the response deadline and six did not and remain open..The Stage Three did not meet the response deadline and remains open. In December there were 12 complaints, 11 Stage One of which five met the 15 day deadline and six didn't meet the deadline and remain open. The one Stage Three did not meet the deadline and remains open. Therefore during Q3 50% met the 15 day response deadline.

#1 PEOPLE

a proud community; where residents can call a safe, clean and attractive borough their home.

PI 26 Total number of reported corporate complaints

OUTTURN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21
	73	82	44	56	41	52	52	

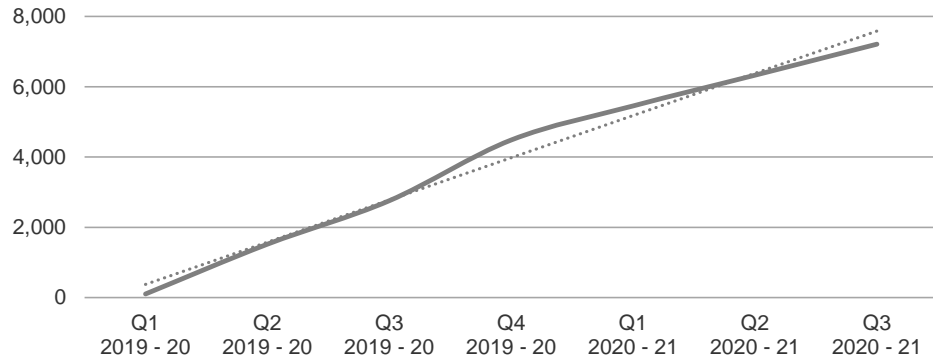


# #3 PROGRESS

"an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment."

PI 50 Total number of people signed up to citizens access

OUTTURN	Q1 2019 - 20	Q2 2019 - 20	Q3 2019 - 20	Q4 2019 - 20	Q1 2020 - 21	Q2 2020 - 21	Q3 2020 - 21	Q4 2020 - 21
	103	1,519	2,757	4,484	5,453	6,328	7,211	



POLICY COMMITMENT

**1. Deliver a more resilient, creative and cost-effective council:** implement a programme of 'continuous change', overhauling business processes and delivering new, innovative service design.

The recommendations resulting from the review of the Planning Service (Development Management) is currently in the process of being considered by the Chief Executive.

Following the council's LGA Peer Challenge in October 2019, a virtual follow-up review is in the process of being scheduled, likely to take place in March 2021. This will review the council's response to the recommendations made following the initial review.

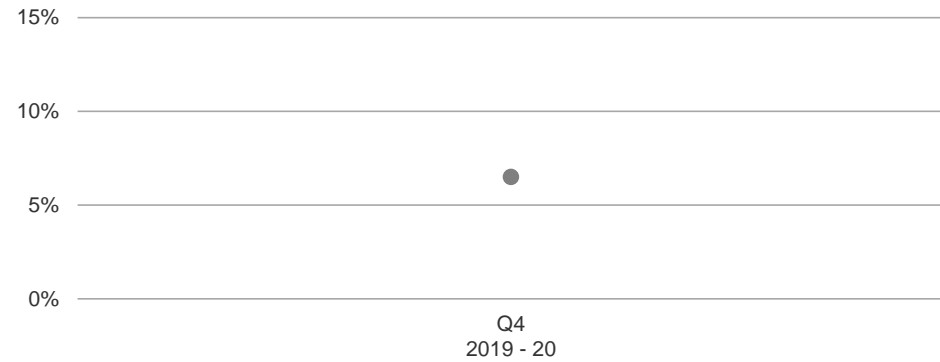
A review of the councils Working in Partnership Framework has also commenced to take account of the changes that have been made as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and to ensure it is still fit for purpose. Outcomes from this review will be reported to Members as required.

# #3 PROGRESS

"an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment."

PI 49 % of posts involved in shared service arrangements

	Q1 2019 - 20	Q2 2019 - 20	Q3 2019 - 20	Q4 2019 - 20	Q1 2020 - 21	Q2 2020 - 21	Q3 2020 - 21	Q4 2020 - 21
OUTTURN	Annual indicator			6.5%	Annual indicator			



## POLICY COMMITMENT

**2. Drive service improvement and corporate governance:** a robust and benchmarked performance management framework, delivered by services underpinned with sound internal controls.

### Internal Audit update - James Larkin

Members of the Finance & Audit Committee received their first update on progress against the revised Audit & Counter Fraud plan in October and as of 31 December, plan delivery (audit fieldwork completed) was 58%, while a further 21% was underway. The Internal Audit team has a performance indicator relating to the implementation of agreed recommendations. At the end of quarter two it was reported that ten recommendations remained outstanding. Of those, the following recommendations have now been implemented;

- Reviewing procedures for the calculation of housing service charges,
- Investigating a process to enable easy identification of council tax and NNDR card payments to aid the refund procedure, and
- The Terms of Reference for the Asset Management Corporate Working Group being reviewed.

A cumulative total of 48 recommendations were due to be implemented by the end of Q3 and as of 31 December 2020, 18 of these remained outstanding.

Outstanding recommendations relate to:

- Investigating a scheme working with private landlords to help prevent homelessness,
- Agreements being put in place for all enforcement services,
- Reviewing the Housing Allocations Policy,
- Reviewing the reporting arrangements set out in the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy,
- Establishing procedures for a periodic review of the housing waiting list,
- Reviewing procedures for the regular testing of IT back-up arrangements,
- Guidance / procedure notes relating to tenancy enforcement actions being created and shared with staff,
- Equality, Diversity & Safeguarding training for officers dealing with unauthorised encampments,
- A review of the information relating to Flexi, TOIL and overtime on the intranet,
- Managers being reminded of their responsibilities in relation to Flexi, TOIL and overtime,
- The creation of a council overtime policy document,
- Service managers being reminded of overtime rates, including guidelines for part time staff and working time directives,
- A strategy document for the council's apprenticeship scheme,
- A process being put in place to ensure ensure that apprenticeships are promoted and considered at the earliest stage of recruitment,
- A review of the apprenticeship policy,
- Arrangements for checks to be undertaken of all payments to and from the Apprenticeship Service Account to ensure accuracy,
- Credit card guidance being updated to remove references to individuals and replace with job roles, and
- An escalation process to deal with credit card holders who fail to provide requested information.

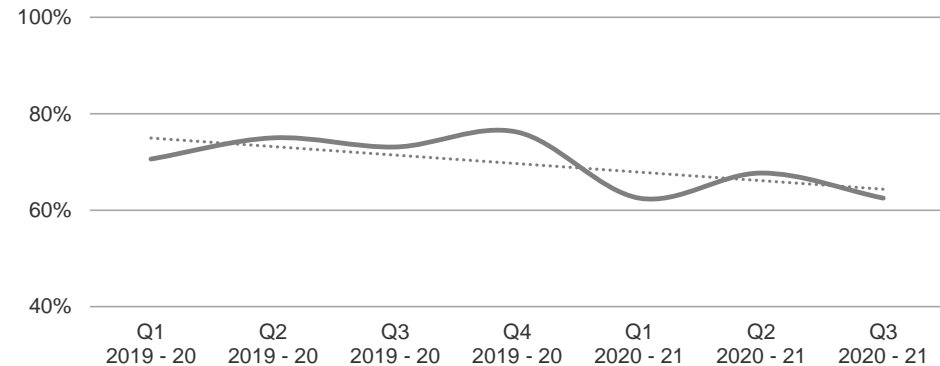
Progress made towards implementing outstanding recommendations is monitored on a quarterly basis, through reports to the council's Management Team. Details of all recommendations agreed, implemented and outstanding are provided to the council's Finance & Audit Committee as part of the quarterly and annual A&CF update reports. All recommendations that remain outstanding more than six months after their agreed implementation date are now specifically highlighted with updates from the relevant services provided.



"an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment."

### PI 55 % of internal audit recommendations implemented

OUTTURN	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2019 - 20	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21	2020 - 21
	70.6%	75.0%	73.1%	76.2%	62.5%	67.7%	62.5%	



### Counter Fraud update - James Larkin

All 993 matches received across three reports from the 2019-20 NFI exercise, which looks at Council Tax Single person discounts, have been reviewed with 806 now closed with no investigation required or evidence of fraud/error. 184 remain open for further enquiries and three have been concluded with the removal of the discount, resulting in additional liability of £4,785.05 and liability for future years of £1,335.05. Submissions for the 2020-21 Exercise took place in October, with some further submission now to take place in January 2021. Results are expected to be received for the majority of these reports at the end of January 2021, with results for business support grants expected in March 2021.

Investigation activity during Q3 has led to the following;

- Additional council tax (historic liability) of £10,137.88.
- Additional council tax liability of £4,622.64 for future years.
- Housing/Council Tax Benefit overpayments of £14,110.19.
- Three civil penalties totalling £210.
- One resignation linked to a disciplinary investigation.

Counter fraud reviews of the arrangements around lone workers and staff leave booking have now been completed and are going through the quality control process.

**4. Successfully manage key business risks:** embed a culture of compliance with all policy, constitutional and legislative demands.

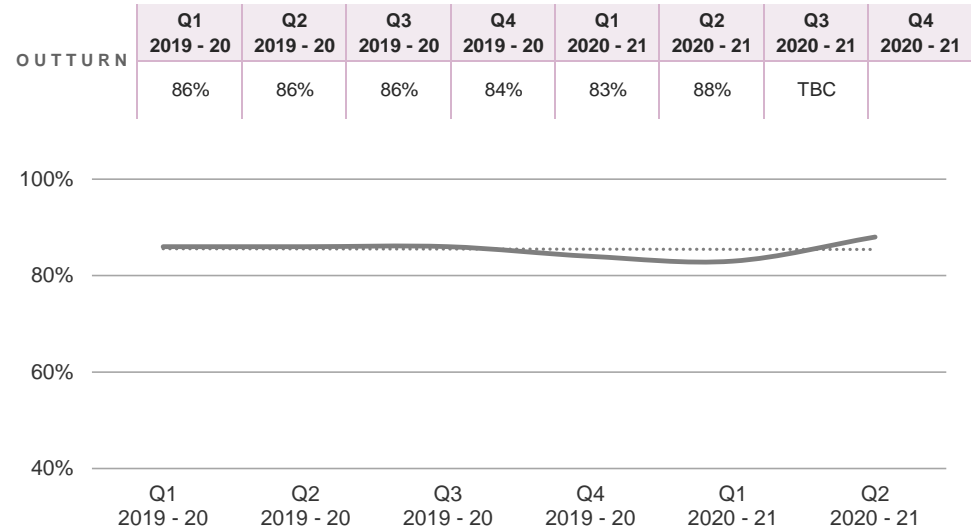
Q3 saw the commencement of the council's service business planning process for 2021/22.

Working in conjunction with the budget setting process, business plans are established to provide a road map for each service to work towards in the year ahead; identifying the key milestones, projects and initiatives and, equally, the risks to delivery and the respective resources required. Business plans also act as a key component of the staff performance framework, enabling all officers the opportunity to identify how their activities and level of individual performance contributes to the delivery of the council's Corporate Plan commitments.

A key part to business planning as a process is the requirement for an assessment of each service's statutory duties. This ensures effective controls are planned for and ultimately put in place to discharge the variety of legislative duties the authority is responsible for. An example of such a control includes council policy formation, where legislative demands include the need either to have an appropriate policy in place, or that any policy must account for specific statutory duties – or both. The service business planning process provides the Corporate Management Team the required assurance these legal requirements are captured as part of the timetable of activity for each service.

"an entrepreneurial authority; commercial in outlook and committed to continuous service improvement, underpinned by a skilled workforce and strong governance environment."

P I 56 % of information requests completed within statutory deadline



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