

Shared Services

Committee considering report:	Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission
Date of Committee:	6 October 2020
Lead Member:	Alan Law (OSMC Chairman)
Date Head of Service agreed report: <i>(for Corporate Board)</i>	09 September 2020
Report Author:	Report prepared on behalf of OSMC
Forward Plan Ref:	N/A

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission (OSMC) an overview of the Council's shared services and provoke discussions on whether any other Council services should be shared with other authorities.

2 Recommendation(s)

That OSMC:

- notes the content of this report;
- maintains a watching brief on existing shared service agreements, particularly those where concerns have been raised.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. However, there would be a requirement for additional revenue expenditure if it is agreed that additional feasibility studies are required to investigate further shared service arrangements.
Human Resource:	There are no direct human resources implications as a result of this report.
Legal:	There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

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Risk Management:	There are no direct risk management implications as a result of this approach.			
Property:	There are no direct property implications as a result of this approach.			
Policy:	There are no direct policy implications as a result of this approach.			
	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Environmental Impact:		X		
Health Impact:		X		
ICT Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		

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Council Strategy Priorities:	X			This report supports the Council Strategy Priority: Become an even more effective council, which involves identifying new ways of delivering each of our services to ensure better outcomes for service beneficiaries
Core Business:		X		
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	See full details in the report.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report provides an overview of the shared service agreements that West Berkshire Council currently has with other local authorities. It sets out the original rationale / business cases on which the shared services were based and provides an update on how they are currently performing where information is available.
- 4.2 The report also provides information on studies that the Council has undertaken, or is currently undertaking, to consider the potential for other services to be shared, focusing on HR, ICT, Legal Services and Planning.
- 4.3 In addition, the report considers what shared service agreements other local authorities have put in place, drawing on evidence and case studies produced by the Local Government Association. Further work has been undertaken in relation to a few case studies to look at how these have evolved and if they are still delivering the expected benefits.
- 4.4 The report concludes that West Berkshire Council is already party to a large number of existing shared services, and that with a few exceptions, the majority of these arrangements are continuing to perform well. However, there are a number where the original business cases are no longer being achieved, or where improved governance is required to better control expenditure.
- 4.5 There does not appear to be a systematic approach to reviewing shared service opportunities, particularly now that the New Ways of Working programme has been streamlined.
- 4.6 The recommendation is for OSMC to note the report and to maintain a watching brief on existing partnerships, which would be in addition to any governance arrangements already established for particular shared services.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.1 This report provides an overview of the shared service agreements that West Berkshire Council currently has with other local authorities. It sets out the original rationale / business cases on which the shared services were based and provides an update on how they are currently performing where information is available.
- 5.2 The report also provides information on studies that the Council has undertaken, or is currently undertaking, to consider the potential for other services to be shared, focusing on HR, ICT, Legal Services and Planning.
- 5.3 In addition, the report considers what shared service agreements other local authorities have put in place, drawing on evidence and case studies produced by the Local Government Association. Further work has been undertaken in relation to a few case studies to look at how these have evolved and if they are still delivering the expected benefits.

Current Shared Service Agreements

- 5.4 Current shared services have been identified in consultation with the Chief Executive, Executive Directors, and other senior managers. A summary of current shared services is provided in Appendix A. This includes information on: the services affected; the partner authorities; the start and end date for current agreements; the business case for the shared services; and the most recent annual expenditure.
- 5.5 The list of shared services included in this report is not intended to be a definitive list, but serves to demonstrate the number and variety of functions that are already the subject of shared service agreements across the council.
- 5.6 These shared service agreements have been put in place for a variety of reasons, such as: delivering cost savings; delivering improved customer service; and improving service capabilities, flexibility and resilience. Some of the larger and more recent shared service agreements are discussed in more detail below, particularly where there is evidence that there may be issues or concerns regarding financial and / or operational performance.

Berkshire Joint Arrangements

- 5.7 The 'Berkshire Joint Arrangements' cover a large number of services previously provided by Berkshire County Council, which were not considered practical or economic to duplicate across the six unitary authorities when they were established in 1998.
- 5.8 Most of these agreements are still in place today and discussions with the Chief Executive confirmed that the rationale for the agreements remain broadly unchanged and that the consensus of the Senior Management Team is that they are mostly performing satisfactorily. Some are on-going arrangements with no defined end date. This may be because they are statutory requirements that have no viable alternative means of delivery. Examples include: the Lower Way landfill site, the Coroner Service, and the Lord Lieutenant. It should be noted that the Coroner Service was flagged by the

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Senior Management Team as a service where costs were increasing and governance arrangements appeared less robust.

- 5.9 Other agreements are regularly reviewed and / or put out to tender. Typically these have five year terms, but some are as long as 15 years. These arrangements generally include provision for regular monitoring and reporting against key performance indicators to ensure they are delivering value for money, and the required service quality. In some cases, services are subject to national surveys and / or benchmarking to ensure that costs, quality and customer satisfaction are in line with equivalent services operated by other local authorities (e.g. Berkshire Record Office).
- 5.10 Some of the agreements have evolved over time to respond to changes in legal requirements. For example, the Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service became Adopt Berkshire and subsequently Adopt Thames Valley. This was done in order to ensure the Council is legislatively compliant through a regional adoption approach.
- 5.11 In many cases efficiency savings were a significant part of the rationale for the shared service agreements. However, it is often not possible to identify the level of savings currently being delivered, since the original business case was made many years ago and savings are no longer being routinely measured and reported.
- 5.12 Nevertheless, it is clear that existing arrangements are still being challenged where it is felt that they are no longer delivering the intended benefits or value for money is not being achieved. In the past, this has been done in a 'light touch' way as part of New Ways of Working reviews, or it has been progressed separately by directors or heads of service. For example, potential savings have been identified for the Urban Traffic Management and Control Systems agreement where West Berkshire Council is currently negotiating with partners and suppliers to implement a new system, with the potential for significant annual cost savings.

Building Control Solutions (BCS)

- 5.13 This brings together the Building Control Services of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council into one partnership hosted by Wokingham Borough Council. Building control resources and expertise is shared across the three local authorities, with the aim of delivering service improvements and resilience, whilst offering a more flexible, customer focused service.
- 5.14 BCS carries out a mix of fee earning and non-fee earning work, including administration and processing of building regulations, demolition notices and other associated advisory services. Chargeable works are funded wholly by fees paid by service users, which should also cover overheads. Non-chargeable work is a subsidised service and the level of cost for each partner organisation will depend on the demand for this service from within the local authority area.
- 5.15 The service is not shared in a traditional sense, but instead West Berkshire Council pays a fee to Wokingham as the host authority to run the service, as well as providing accommodation and professional support. West Berkshire's net annual cost is between £60,000 and £80,000. An outline budget is agreed in advance and the host bears the financial risk.

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5.16 The Building Control Shared Service Joint Board (Building Control Board) has been established to oversee the strategic leadership of BCS. This includes elected members from the three local authorities.

5.17 It should be noted that the original agreement is due to expire in 2021 and the Head of Public Protection and Culture is currently leading a review to consider what arrangements should be put in place from 2021.

Public Protection Partnership (PPP)

5.18 The PPP was established in January 2017 with Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Councils to deliver services across the three geographical areas. It provides the following services:

- Case Management;
- Environmental Quality;
- Energy and Programme Delivery;
- Licensing;
- Trading Standards;
- Operations Support;
- Residential (housing/HMO licensing, complex domestic nuisance, complex public health matters, pests, animal warden);
- Intel and Business (developing links between local information, professional risk management information, national and regional data to assist in target/priority setting);
- Response and Alcohol and Tobacco Strategy (alcohol reduction and smoking cessation activities).

5.19 The model has enabled the PPP to develop specialisms such as the Case Management Unit and a Communications function. By pooling knowledge and sharing resources across the authorities, the partnership aims to increase resilience and efficiency.

5.20 The Partnership is administered by West Berkshire Council as one team, with costs and revenues shared on a pre-determined basis between West Berkshire (39%), Wokingham (35%) and Bracknell (26%). This split is reviewed annually.

5.21 There are three distinct layers of governance:

- (1) Joint Public Protection Committee (JPPC)
- (2) Joint Management Board (JMB)
- (3) Joint Management Team (JMT)

In addition, the PPP may report to the Licensing Committees and Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission, as well as internal Corporate Boards, as appropriate.

5.22 An independent report (Quincetree Report) was commissioned in 2018 to consider the progress and success of the partnership against its stated priorities (Community Protection; Protecting and Improving Health; Protection of the Environment; Supporting Prosperity and Economic Growth; Improving Service Delivery) and the benefits

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identified in the initial Business Plan (sharing best practice and expertise; greater resilience to cope with emergencies and unforeseen events; elimination of duplication and providing cost-effective services; and building on success and innovation).

5.23 The final report was published in November 2018. It acknowledged the PPP's strengths: a high level of flexibility through delegations to a Joint Committee and directly to service management; a developing identity and a high local profile; an aspiration to develop a reputation that makes it the go-to authority when others are looking for joint working options; the delivery of services ranging from case management work to animal feed and petroleum to public health for a wide range of other authorities; and that it has consistently delivered across a range of key indicators. The report also acknowledged that the PPP had a range of highly skilled and committed staff.

5.24 However, the report concluded that there was still work to be done in ensuring that PPP could realise its aims and objectives. A major learning point identified from the establishment of PPP was the need for a managed change process, with adequate investment in staff development. At the heart of this was a change management plan with a focus on priorities and monitoring. The report identified that, in the absence of this, there was a risk that mistakes made in the establishment of PPP were likely to be repeated.

5.25 The report made recommendations covering:

- Governance
- Organisation and management
- Processes
- ICT
- Accommodation
- Communications
- Support services within PPP
- Embedding change

5.26 Following the review, an action plan has been put in place to drive change and address the issues raised.

Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU)

5.27 The JEPU was set up in April 2018 to provide the Emergency Planning and Business Continuity service for Bracknell Forest, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and West Berkshire Councils. The services is set up in a similar way to BCS, but with West Berkshire Council hosting and running the service and the other local authorities contributing.

5.28 The main focus of the unit is to ensure each of the Councils can respond to an emergency, whether directly affecting the Council and/or the community.

5.29 In order to meet this requirement, the team must comply with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and other specific legalisation by:

- assessing the risk of incidents occurring and using this to inform emergency planning and business continuity planning;

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- implementing and reviewing the plans;
- supporting the development of internal business continuity management plans;
- informing the public about civil protection matters and maintaining arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- sharing information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- co-operating with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency;
- providing advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.

5.30 The team works closely with all services in each of the Councils, with professional partners, and with the local community by way of individuals, residents, businesses and specific risk sites. It should be noted that the team has increased from 1.5 to 5 posts in the last few years in response to escalating demands on the service.

New Ways of Working Review – Public Protection and Culture

5.31 BCS, the PPP and the JEPU were collectively the subject of a New Ways of Working (NWoW) review by West Berkshire Council in 2019, as part of a wider review of the Council's Public Protection and Culture service

5.32 NWoW reviews were introduced in 2017 to examine the ways in which each of the Council's functional units are delivered and how they will continue to be delivered over the next five years. The rationale for the reviews is to ensure that services are sustainably, effectively and efficiently delivered to residents.

5.33 The relevant findings of the review are summarised below:

- **Stakeholder feedback** - Sessions with staff, service managers and elected members showed that current models for delivery, were seen as appropriate and offering resilience. However, there was some concern about whether they were operating to maximum effectiveness. Issues of transparency, performance management and governance were highlighted for the PPP as well as declining revenues and performance for Building Control.
- **Staffing** - The review found no immediate recruitment, sickness or establishment concerns. However, it did highlight an issue with low Employee Attitude Survey figures and recommended that this should be investigated. The review agreed with the findings of the Quincetree report, that co-location and the introduction of a single IT system for case management would have the greatest impact on staff morale.
- **Finance** - The absence of comparable financial data for Public Protection limited the conclusions that could be drawn, although the review noted that the PPP spend seemed high when compared with others. A number of recommendations were made to maximise income and minimise costs. The low variances between rankings for both JEPU and BCS relative to other similar services were considered to be relatively insignificant.

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It should be noted that cumulative savings for PPP are in the order of £330,000, which were mostly achieved in 2016/17 and 2017/18. To put this in context, West Berkshire Council's annual contribution was circa £1.6 million in 2016/17. However, from 2019/20 onwards, budget pressures start to exceed savings (before taking account of any fee increases). This suggests that "easy" savings arising from the efficiencies inherent in a shared service have all been taken and that structural changes are required to reduce costs going forward. (It should be noted that financial performance has traditionally been exceptional, coming in within around 1% variance.)

- **Demand, activity and performance** - The review found that demand for building control had reduced over time. Some activity within the PPP had also altered over time due to changes in market conditions, although it should be noted that COVID has added considerably to overall workload in recent months. The NWoW review found that data was limited for the JEPUs, but suggested a mix of changes in demand and activity across the services provided. (However, a conversation with the Head of Public Protection and Culture suggests that workload has increased significantly in recent years with staff number rising from 1.5 to 5 FTE in response.) The review expressed particular concern about performance in Building Control, with two out of five KPIs falling below targets and market share retention remaining below that of comparator authorities and falling.
- **Information and Communication** - Within the PPP, issues around information and communication are significantly hindering the partnership's ability to deliver on its original ambitions, as supported by the Quincetree report. Equally, the NWoW review found that the JEPUs are somewhat siloed in their use of IT and consolidation of systems would improve efficiency. As information and communication for the delivery of BCS is managed by Wokingham Borough Council, it was not included as part of the review.
- **Alternative Models of Service Provision** - The review indicated that following a period of significant transition, there would seem to be little merit in fundamentally changing the way in which the services' activities are delivered. It noted that the varied models of delivery for the Public Protection functions have resulted from ad hoc opportunities for partnership working and, whilst there is some concern about the performance of some areas, the delivery models, themselves, are believed to be appropriate and to provide a resilience and breadth of provision that would not otherwise exist.

5.34 The NWoW review identified a number of improvement actions, which have been incorporated into a delivery plan. These will be overseen and monitored by the Environment Board. The actions that are relevant to BCS, the PPP and the JEPUs are set out in Appendix B, which must be considered as a Part II item on the basis that it relates to the business affairs of the Council, and it is therefore exempt information under Schedule 12A, paragraph 3.

Previous Feasibility Work on Shared Services

5.35 The Council has already undertaken considerable work to look at the feasibility of sharing additional services with other local authorities. Examples of this work are described below in relation to:

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- Human Resources (HR)
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)
- Legal Services
- Planning

Human Resources

5.36 The HR Service has been the subject of an NWoW review. As identified above, the aim of the NWoW programme is to review the way in which each of the Council's functional units is delivered over the medium term, in order to ensure that we deliver effective and efficient services to our residents that are sustainable and make full use of the potential provided by our people, our money and digital technology.

5.37 HR comprises a number of teams which can be grouped as follows:

- Payroll
- HR Services
- HR Strategy & Operations

5.38 The teams carry out the activities shown in Table 5.1 below

Table 5.1 – HR Services

Team	Payroll	Statutory/ Discretionary
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMRC payments and deductions • Auto enrolment % pensions • Statutory payments/deducations/SMP SSP court orders etc • Starters/leavers/changes • Processing timesheets/travel • Admin of lease car scheme • General queries and payroll calculation • Providing payslips P60s, P11Ds • Voluntary deductions/Unison/Cycle/Childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory • Statutory • Statutory • Discretionary • Discretionary • Discretionary • Discretionary • Statutory/ Discretionary • Discretionary
Team	HR Services	Statutory/ Discretionary
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-employment DBS checks • Systems upkeep and upgrades • Establishment control and job evaluation • Schools traded service – contracts • Corporate – contracts • Safeguarding training • Training & e-learning • Recruitment • Occupational Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory/ Discretionary • Discretionary • Discretionary • Statutory/ Discretionary • Discretionary • Statutory • Discretionary • Discretionary • Discretionary

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Team	HR Strategy & Operations	Statutory/ Discretionary
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools traded service – employee relations • Corporate – employee relations • Policy development • Absence management • TUPE consultation • Redundancy consultation • Occupational Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discretionary • Discretionary • Discretionary • Discretionary • Statutory • Statutory • Statutory

- 5.39 For HR Services and HR strategy & Operations, there have been a number of preliminary discussions to explore the potential for shared services. An earlier proposal (2013) to share HR with South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse Councils was ultimately discounted as no business case was proven on the grounds of resilience or cost. Similar exercises were also undertaken in 2016 with Wokingham and in 2019 with Winchester. However, due to operational differences and initial assessments that no benefit could be realised, these proposals were not pursued.
- 5.40 The previous Head of HR who led the negotiations is no longer in post. However, conversations with other members of the Senior Management Team suggest that work did not progress beyond tentative discussions to gauge interest and fit between the local authorities.
- 5.41 It is acknowledged that the specialist skills needed to deliver the Occupational Health service are not held in house. Therefore a joint procurement exercise was undertaken with Bracknell Forest Council in 2016/17 for the provision of the service. This is an example of the service's flexibility around outsourcing where required. Whilst this does bring with it some issues around supply and demand, these are often down to budgetary constraints, rather than skills shortage.
- 5.42 A shared service was not recommended as an option for Payroll. Instead, the review highlighted that there may be economies of scale to be found if Payroll were placed elsewhere within the Council (e.g. Customer Services and ICT (due to links with Education ICT), Finance and Property (links with Schools Accountancy) or Commissioning (Schools Contracts)). It also highlighted that volumes of low complexity MyView telephone calls from users which could, theoretically, be handled by Customer Services or the ICT Helpdesk, without too much additional training. Similarly the processing of employee expenses could be handled by Exchequer.
- 5.43 The management team is receptive to a graduated expansion of trading of its service to other organisations, but only where there would not be an impact on the Council's ability to pay its own staff. It is thought that a Local Authority Trading Company or similar model would not be viable unless Payroll were to form part of a wider offering to schools sitting outside of the council completely.
- 5.44 Some authorities have outsourced Payroll and there is significant private sector provision of Payroll services elsewhere, but the view of the manager is that the authority would get less service whilst paying more, particularly in light of the income the team provides and the potential for future trading.

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ICT

- 5.45 Discussions with the Head of Customer Services and ICT highlighted some of the challenges associated with sharing or outsourcing ICT services.
- 5.46 The main challenge is related to the large number and complex nature of the ICT systems operated by each unitary authority. This is largely as a result of the diverse range of public services provided by a typical unitary authority, each of which has its own particular mix of specialist systems, many of which are unique to local government.
- 5.47 Also, each local authority has a slightly different mix of systems and providers, which may be configured in different ways, and their staff will use different feature sets to suit their particular needs and adopted practices. This complex ICT landscape requires specialist IT support, with people trained in particular systems.
- 5.48 In addition, local authorities are at different stages of migrating systems to the cloud, with some running almost totally cloud based, with others still using local servers.
- 5.49 These differences mean that it is very difficult to harmonise systems or have a single team working across multiple local authorities. While it is recognised that each of the Berkshire authorities has issues around capacity, the Heads of ICT do not consider that this could readily be addressed by shared services due to the reasons outlined above.
- 5.50 It is worth noting that one of the main barriers to local authorities sharing services other than ICT is difficulties in coordinating individual ICT systems. For example, this was recognised in the Public Protection and Culture NWoW review.
- 5.51 It is also interesting to note that most of the Berkshire authorities have outsourced their IT services at some point, but that all have either brought them back in-house or are in the process of doing so, because of performance or cost issues. West Berkshire last did this in 2002 with the Amey contract. In some cases, the cost and disruption associated with bringing services back has been considerable, due to the fact that in-house capability in terms of professional expertise and ICT infrastructure has been lost.
- 5.52 Previous discussions around shared services have focussed around particular systems or functions and it is considered that this is where there is the greatest potential for benefits.
- 5.53 One example was in relation to procurement of Wide Area Networks, where the Berkshire authorities sought to utilise the Unicorn Framework set up by Surrey.
- 5.54 West Berkshire and Bracknell Forest previously shared an information security officer (ISO) for 18 months, but the arrangement was not effective and was terminated when the ISO left the organisation to work elsewhere.
- 5.55 There has been some discussion with Bracknell around sharing the service to manage Capita SIMS, which is an information management system used by schools and Children's Services. However, despite initial interest from Bracknell, the initiative was never progressed. Similarly, discussions about joint procurement of the Capita One system have failed to progress to fruition.

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5.56 It should be noted that Customer Services and ICT are scheduled to undergo a New Ways of Working review in the autumn and it is scheduled to conclude early next year.

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5.57 The retirement of the Head of Legal Services in October 2016 provided the Council with an opportunity to review how Legal Services were delivered, and to consider whether these could be delivered in a more efficient and effective manner via a shared service.

5.58 At that time, Legal Services had a significant number of vacancies and had experienced ongoing difficulties recruiting suitably qualified staff. As a small team, the vacant posts had a significant impact on the ability to provide a comprehensive legal service to the Council and on morale within the Team. These combined circumstances meant that there was an obvious logic in entering into a shared service to increase the resilience of a small team.

5.59 A shortlist was made of prospective partners, which included Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council, Wokingham Borough Council, and Bracknell Forest Borough Council, and visits were made to each of these authorities.

5.60 Following the initial meetings, it was apparent that Bracknell Forest Council would be the most suitable partner for a shared service. The reasons for this were:

- Basingstoke & Deane was a district authority, so the scope of legal expertise in their team was limited and would offer limited resilience across significant areas of work.
- Wokingham Borough Council already operated a shared legal service with Windsor and Maidenhead, but all 'communities' based work (i.e. Children and Family Services, Adult Social Care and Education) was delivered by the Joint Legal Team in Reading. This again meant that the resilience hoped for may not be delivered across the team.
- The Legal Team in Bracknell provided the same range of legal support to their Council departments as West Berkshire. This meant that although they had fewer lawyers than West Berkshire, they were most likely to have the same range of legal skills and expertise. The Team in Bracknell also used the same Iken case management software.

5.61 A decision was made to explore the feasibility of a shared service with Bracknell Forest. It was made clear at the outset that there was no expectation for the proposal to deliver savings, but rather that it should deliver increased resilience and capacity.

5.62 The project was ongoing for almost two years and was a significant piece of work, involving officers not just from Legal, but also from Finance, ICT and HR. The business case produced was a comprehensive document, but could not demonstrate that it would deliver on the critical success factors identified at the outset of the project, so the shared service proposal was not progressed.

5.63 In particular, there were issues around ICT systems. The differences in how the Legal teams used Iken meant that both the dependency on the system and the understanding

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of how it operated, was very different in the two authorities. This difference in understanding was evident not just in the Legal Team, but in the ICT lead officers, with the ICT officer from West Berkshire having a far better technical understanding of the system and how it operated.

- 5.64 The cost of the requisite ICT infrastructure meant that the structure that was proposed under the business case would have delivered less resilience than the existing arrangements. As the project was being undertaken on the basis that there would be no additional costs, the ongoing costs of the proposed ICT solution would have had to be funded from costs currently allocated against salaries.
- 5.65 It should be noted that West Berkshire began looking for a potential partner at a time when there had been a turnover of approximately 50% of staff and as a result, the Service was under extreme pressure. However, a successful recruitment campaign was run with dedicated assistance from HR, which resulted in every vacant post being filled and so the case for a shared service was eliminated.
- 5.66 One aspect of Legal Services that is already shared is the specialist Childcare Legal Team, which is based Reading and serves the six Berkshire authorities. There have been issues with the cost of the service escalating in recent years, and insufficient data has been provided to adequately manage the service. It has been the subject of discussions at chief executive level, and Nick Carter led a review of the service, which resulted in additional governance measures being imposed. Representatives from West Berkshire Council's Legal Services and Children's Services now meet regularly with the team in Reading to discuss issues around cases, and to ensure appropriate allocation of resources and costs. Early indications suggest that costs are being better managed, but the situation is being kept closely monitored.

Planning

- 5.67 Discussions with the Head of Development and Planning and the Planning Policy Manger highlighted the following activity in relation to shared services.
- 5.68 The Planning Service already undertakes shared procurement with the other Berkshire local authorities on studies that are required to inform the development of planning policy (e.g. Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessments, Employment Needs Assessments, and Strategic Housing Needs Assessments). This avoids unnecessary duplication of effort when dealing with issues that cross local authority boundaries.
- 5.69 Extensive work has also been undertaken by the Planning Service to consider the potential for shared services with neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.70 **Minerals and Waste Planning** – Previously, the Berkshire Joint Strategic Planning Unit was responsible for delivering a Joint Minerals and Waste Plan for the Berkshire Councils. However, the unit was disbanded around 2010. This was followed by a discussion about preparing a new Joint Minerals and Waste Plan for Berkshire, but with the exception of West Berkshire, there was no appetite to progress this. Given the scale of potential mineral extraction sites and a number of waste sites in West Berkshire, the Council decided to prepare a plan. Work then followed to look at the potential to share with Hampshire and Oxfordshire, but they were on a different timetable, so a decision

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was made to progress a plan for West Berkshire alone. Work continues on the plan preparation with submission to Government for examination in 2021.

- 5.71 **Local Plan** - There have been a number of discussion across Berkshire looking at the potential for a joint Local Plan either in full or in part. There have been Officer level discussions a number of times in the last ten years, but after taking political soundings there was no appetite to progress.
- 5.72 In 2015 Berkshire Leaders / Chief Executives commissioned consultants to look at the potential to share Local Plan, Economic Development and Transport Policy services across Berkshire. Although some advantages were identified, including the potential for some financial savings, after consideration, the Berkshire Leaders decided not to progress with any shared service arrangements. However, the Berkshire authorities do work jointly on the Local Plan evidence base and have produced a West of Berkshire Spatial Planning Framework.
- 5.73 In 2016 The four authorities of Bracknell Forest, Reading Borough, West Berkshire and Wokingham Borough Councils worked together to identify large-scale opportunities to meet identified future development needs in the area. To maintain the competitive edge of the Thames Valley, which is acknowledged as a strong driver in the national economy, the area needs continuing investment to adapt as a place as well as an economy.
- 5.74 A key element of this is ensuring that we are creating the places where our current and future residents want to live, work and where businesses can thrive. Following the identification of the Western Housing Market area in the Berkshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), the four authorities have agreed to work collaboratively to consider how to meet the identified Objectively Assessed Housing Need for the market area. The councils will also be working collaboratively to identify how to meet future economic development and other development needs in the area.
- 5.75 Joint work has been undertaken in relation to housing market areas, employment land assessments and landscape character appraisals.
- 5.76 In addition to the above Wokingham, West Berkshire and Reading Council have worked together on a developer proposal for a large-scale Garden Town in the Grazeley area. The joint work is managed through a Member level Joint Board and supported by an Officer level working Group.
- 5.77 **Development Control** – In 2016 there was a detailed look at the potential to delegate planning decisions to Parish and Town Councils and realise a financial saving. It was ultimately decided by the then Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for Planning not to progress with the proposal primarily on the following grounds:
- The legal responsibility for planning application decisions would remain with West Berkshire Council even if a Parish or Town made the decision. This would include defending appeals and legal challenges.
 - Most Parish and Town Councils did not have the resources or expertise to undertake the function and so the bulk of applications and so resources would remain with We the Council.

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- Planning fees would go to the administering Parish / Town Council.
- Only one other Local Planning Authority (LPA) had piloted a similar scheme and, after an unsuccessful trial, decision making was reverting to the LPA.
- The net saving to the Council, based on the above, was very limited, but the risk was considered high.

5.78 West Berkshire has looked at and led discussion on the potential for sharing the administration, assessment and recommendations associated with processing planning applications. On both occasions, and after taking political soundings, there was no appetite to proceed with the proposal. The last time this was considered was in 2018.

5.79 **Transport Policy** - An option for establishing a shared Transport Policy Team across the six Berkshire local authorities was investigated, but was subsequently ruled out by West Berkshire Council due to concerns that this would be dominated by Reading and Slough which have the greatest traffic and transport issues. (It should be noted that the Transport Policy Team recently transferred to the Environment Service.)

5.80 **Archaeology** - The Planning Service also looked at the potential for joining a Berkshire-wide archaeology consultancy agreement with Reading University. However, this was discounted because there would be no financial benefit from this arrangement, since West Berkshire is so much larger than the other local authorities.

5.81 **Ecology** - The Ecology Team is currently looking at the potential for shared services in relation to District Newt Licensing to manage great crested newt populations.

National Situation

5.82 The Local Government Association (LGA) has published a summary of the main local authority partnership arrangements across England. This provides information on 626 partnership agreements, which have delivered £1.341 billion of savings. This figure is likely to be an under-estimate, since in many cases information on savings is not provided, or it is too early in the lifetime of the partnerships to be able to calculate savings. South East England has the highest number (120 agreements) and has achieved the greatest reported savings to the end of 2018/19 (£314 million).

5.83 The table below provides high-level information about partnerships currently in place across England as a whole.

Table 5.2: Local Authority Partnerships in England (source LGA)

Category	Count	Total Savings	Average Savings	Savings 2018/19
Cross Council Services	1	£23,600,000	£23,600,000	£6,100,000
Procurement & Commissioning	28	£388,647,925	£13,880,283	£96,981,525

Shared Services

Category	Count	Total Savings	Average Savings	Savings 2018/19
Back Office Services and Customer Services	6	£77,307,000	£12,884,500	£11,142,000
Shared Management	28	£214,685,423	£7,667,337	£42,925,000
Culture, Arts, Heritage & Tourism	9	£44,800,000	£4,977,778	£0
Human Resources	23	£83,045,500	£3,610,674	£23,000
Shared Leadership & Chief Executives	8	£23,457,153	£2,932,144	£1,202,901
Housing, Revenues & Benefits, Homelessness, Asylum, Immigration	22	£48,054,300	£2,184,286	£3,107,940
Democracy, Governance & Performance	12	£24,996,000	£2,083,000	£84,000
Finance & Financial Services	53	£96,371,591	£1,818,332	£9,164,923
Adult Services	14	£25,100,000	£1,792,857	£0
Business Support, Employment, Economic Growth & Regeneration	6	£9,825,000	£1,637,500	£0
ICT & Digital Services	38	£53,644,434	£1,411,696	£2,508,000
One Public Estate	31	£42,689,216	£1,377,071	£3,523,876
Property, Facilities and Utilities	42	£51,801,377	£1,233,366	£10,215,619
Environmental Protection, Waste & Regulatory Services	55	£61,049,261	£1,109,987	£5,267,704
Transport & Highways	14	£15,473,219	£1,105,230	£340,569
Legal Services	25	£16,210,526	£648,421	£628,458
Children & Young People	16	£6,330,000	£395,625	£0
Community Safety (including Fire)	100	£23,589,113	£235,891	£489,975
Planning & Building Control	28	£5,840,500	£208,589	£0
Library Services	8	£1,190,000	£148,750	£0
Health & Social Care	21	£2,298,000	£109,429	£2,037,000
Public Health	12	£504,746	£42,062	£0
Estates Property, Facilities & Utilities	15	£562,000	£37,467	£195,650
Parks & Open Spaces	3	£106,000	£35,333	£10,000

Shared Services

Category	Count	Total Savings	Average Savings	Savings 2018/19
Education & Learning (Adult/Schools)	3	£77,750	£25,917	£0
Capital Assets	3	£75,000	£25,000	£0
Building Control Services	1	£0	£0	£0
Sports & Recreation	1	£0	£0	£0
Total	626	£1,341,331,034	£2,142,701.33	£195,948,140

5.84 Services that are most frequently the subject of partnering arrangements are:

- Community Safety (including fire) – 16%
- Environmental Protection, Waste and Regulatory Services – 8.8%
- Finance and Financial Services – 8.5%
- Property Facilities and Utilities – 6.7%
- ICT and Digital Services – 6.1%

5.85 The greatest overall savings per partnership agreement come from the following areas:

- Cross-Council Services - £23.6 million
- Procurement and Commissioning - £13.9 million
- Back Office Services - £12.9 million
- Shared Management - £7.7 million
- Culture, Arts, Heritage and Tourism - £5.0 million

LGA Research and Best Practice

5.86 The LGA has produced a report 'Services shared: costs spared' documenting research carried out on five shared service arrangements in England:

- Cambridgeshire & Northamptonshire County Councils (LGSS): established 2010
- Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority: established 2007
- Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and Wye Valley NHS Trust (Hoople Ltd): established 2011
- All councils in Lincolnshire – Procurement Lincolnshire: established 2008
- Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils: started process in 2008.

5.87 The report focuses on the key themes that emerged from the research, specifically the nature and scale of the benefits delivered by shared service arrangements. Although somewhat dated, the findings remain relevant.

5.88 The report also outlines an evaluation tool that has been developed to help identify financial and non-financial benefits of partnership arrangements and to monitor delivery progress.

5.89 Key findings from the report are reproduced below:

Shared Services

1. Clear financial benefits can be made from sharing services through: consolidating organisation structures; integrating information technology; reducing accommodation; and improving procurement.
2. Early savings are made by reducing staff; removing duplication and management posts.
3. Initial benefits are typically delivered rapidly with strong top-down leadership.
4. As shared services mature and evolve they are able to benefit from wider business transformation, such as better use of IT and assets, improved processes and cultural change programmes.
5. Set up and integration costs for emerging services are modest, with less than a two year payback period for all the shared service arrangements.
6. Baseline financial and performance information is essential to make the case for change and track the benefits of shared service arrangements in terms of efficiencies and service improvements. This is not always available.
7. The shared service arrangements studied have all succeeded in providing the same or better levels of performance at less cost.
8. Good performance against organisations' KPIs are complemented by good staff indicators, such as high staff morale, low staff sickness and low turnover rates.
9. Rapid implementation helps build momentum for change.
10. Expanding established shared services to provide services for other public sector partners in a locality is a useful way to generate income and ensure efficiencies through greater economies of scale.
11. A key challenge is integrating different organisational cultures, IT systems, structures and processes.

5.90 The report also identifies a number of factors that need to be present for a shared service to succeed:

- Strong leadership
- Visible commitment from senior managers and councillors
- Good project management
- Effective consultation with trade unions and staff
- Good communications with staff.

5.91 The following table provides a summary of the set-up costs and financial benefits in the first two years for each of the case studies.

Table 5.3: Summary of Financial Benefits and Set-Up Costs from Case Studies

Shared Services

	Start Date	Baseline Cost	Total Year 1 & 2 Savings		One-Off Set Up Costs
			Staff	Other	
LGSS	April 2010	£83m	£1.06m	£2.73m	£3.32m
Devon & Somerset FRA	April 2007	£67.2m	£734,000	£637,000	£966,000
Hoople Ltd	April 2011	£11.5m	£620,000	£0	£800,000
Procurement Lincolnshire	July 2008	£0.6m	£0	£5.14m	£148,000
Vale of White Horse / South Oxon	2007	£19.9m	£2.83m	£2.12m	£1.9m

Case Studies

5.92 The LGA report was published in 2012. It is worth noting that all of the above partnerships are still in operation and in some cases have continued to expand the range of services that they deliver. Two of these, Hoople and LGSS are described in further detail below. These cover some of the most commonly shared public sector services, including those that typically have been shown to deliver the greatest savings. They also provide interesting long-term case studies that serve to highlight some of the challenges and opportunities facing public sector partnerships as they mature.

Hoople Ltd

5.93 Hoople Ltd is not a traditional form of public sector partnership. Instead, it was established as a joint venture company with public sector shareholders to deliver significant savings on back office services and to tender for external private sector work in order to generate an income.

5.94 It was set up as a 'Teckal' company, which means that it benefits from contracts for works, services or supply from its controlling contracting authority (or authorities) without having to go through a competitive tender process.

5.95 The original partners included Herefordshire Council, Herefordshire Primary Care Trust and Wye Valley NHS Trust. Hoople Ltd was established in April 2011 with 315 staff joining from the Council at the outset, with 134 additional staff from the two NHS partners joining in November 2011.

5.96 Herefordshire Primary Care Trust was abolished in 2013 as part of a restructuring of NHS services, leaving the other two partners as the sole shareholders. The savings attributed to the PCT have been transferred in part to Wye Valley NHS Trust which took on some of the PCT's functions.

5.97 The original aims of the partnership were to:

- Enable the three partners to work in full partnership to focus on their shared priorities of delivering a better quality of life and improved health and wellbeing.

Shared Services

- Revitalise public services to help them become more efficient, joined up, customer focused and responsive.
- Pool resources, such as human resources, IT, finance and purchasing across organisations.
- Strengthen investment in new ways of working, so employees are supported by modern systems, training and development, and services are designed around the needs of individuals.
- Boost employee skills, achieve best practice, increase capacity and flexibility and improve collaboration between organisations and service areas.

5.98 From its inception in 2011, Hoople Ltd has grown and developed into a business that now delivers a wide range of services for local authorities, the public sector, local healthcare providers and others, including:

Human Resources:

- Delivering HR services to the vast majority of local authority schools in Herefordshire and most of the academies, as well as to schools in Worcestershire and Shropshire
- Working with Herefordshire Council and other public sector organisations to deliver a wide range of HR services

Payroll and Employee Services:

- PAYE payroll functions
- Fully integrated payroll services with expert advice and management of end-to-end payroll requirements
- Employee services including professional advice and guidance on a whole range of transactional HR services related to conditions of service and contracts of employment

IT Services:

- A range of service packages from essential desktop support, security and procurement to a fully-integrated enterprise resource planning solution, providing both operational support and strategic management to organisations that face rapid, on-going change

Finance:

- Accounts payable – processing and recording of purchase orders, goods received, invoices and contracts
- Debt collection services - council tax and business rate collection, housing benefits and rental property collection

Shared Services

- Court appointee and deputyship – providing services for those unable to manage their own finances

School Financial Services:

- Offering a wide range of back-office services from a strategic budget planning level down to basic services, including payments management

Training and Education:

- Providing a wide variety of training courses including: mandatory training for the care sector; vocational skills; IT training; and personal and professional development for all types of businesses and organisations

Recruitment and DBS:

- Hoople Recruitment operates across the public and private sectors, dealing in permanent positions, contract roles and temporary jobs.
- They are the lead supplier for Herefordshire Council vacancies and are the 'go to' provider for over 70 schools in Herefordshire
- Hoople also offers Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking options.

5.99 The business case for Hoople Ltd suggested that the organisation would deliver £12 million of savings in the first 10 years, with around half of this projected to come from the first three years. Savings were forecast from streamlining the management structure and reducing the number of staff involved in repetitive or routine transactional work. Further savings were forecast from service redesign. The company made a significant contribution in its first year of operation, delivering savings of over £619,000 on a turnover of £11.5 million, but subsequent annual reports suggest that financial performance has failed to meet expectations.

5.100 When it was set up, the intention was for surpluses generated by third party services would be retained and reinvested to initially support the growth and development of the business. However, the organisation has come in for criticism in recent years for failing to win sufficient external contracts, leading to several years of operating losses.

5.101 Despite these shortcomings, both shareholders remain committed to the partnership, and Hoople continues to perform strongly in key areas (e.g. collection of council tax and business rates is above target) and continues to evolve and adapt (e.g. developing deeper partnerships with the clinical commissioning group and securing a place on a new framework to provide staff into school settings).

Local Government Shares Services (LGSS)

5.102 LGSS was established in October 2010 by Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire County Councils. The councils were concerned that they had already cut costs and services to the point where further reductions would make services unviable. LGSS presented an opportunity to provide shared services across two counties, creating cost

Shared Services

savings through economies of scale, whilst maintaining or enhancing performance standards.

5.103 LGSS provides a wide range of business support and advisory services, including HR, Finance, Legal, ICT, property and payroll. Some front-line services are also included, notably social care financial assessments.

5.104 LGSS was established under a joint committee consisting of six elected members (three from each council). Each council appoints two members from its leading party and one member from the main opposition party to the Joint Committee, which helps to depoliticise LGSS. This arrangement allows public bodies to transfer the management of their services without the need for expensive tendering and was used as an alternative to setting up a Teckal company.

5.105 Cost savings and the net operating surplus from the partnership arrangements are divided at the end of each year on an equal basis between the two authorities.

5.106 In its first year of operation LGSS made ongoing savings of £3.79 million (4.6% of the cost base), largely through the consolidation of management positions and economies of scale through integration of services and procurement efficiencies. Further savings were delivered through integration of teams beyond senior and middle management.

5.107 Annual property savings of £936,000 were forecast as a result of falling staff numbers and improved space utilisation, while ICT savings of £3 million per annum resulted from the reprocurement of the Cambridgeshire IT network.

5.108 The above savings were delivered with no detriment to service standards with customer satisfaction increasing from 89% to 90% in the first year.

5.109 Opportunities for further savings were identified as a result of:

- Business process transformation, including further service integration, convergence and standardisation
- Cultural integration and development
- New technology.

5.110 Other non-financial benefits identified include:

- Improved operational resilience.
- The ability to deliver some specialist services in-house rather than having to procure them externally.
- Improved staff motivation with greater opportunity for career development.
- The opportunity for staff to learn from each other's experiences.
- A wider pool of resource and expertise that can be made available to third parties at public sector rates.

5.111 Milton Keynes Council became the third full partner and co-owner of LGSS in 2016, which was by that time supporting a number of different customers including: local authorities, health and social care organisations, the emergency services, arm's length management companies, schools and academies.

Shared Services

- 5.112 It was a clear intent from the outset that LGSS would provide services to other public sector entities and that positioning LGSS as 'by the public sector, for the public sector' would help attract third parties that might be cautious about contracting with private sector organisations. The intention was that all savings generated would be invested back into the public purse for the benefit of front line services. LGSS had some success in selling services to other local authorities including Northampton Borough Council and Norwich City Council.
- 5.113 Unfortunately, LGSS was badly affected by the financial collapse of Northamptonshire Council in 2018. A government report into the financial difficulties at Northamptonshire County Council uncovered significant issues in relation to LGSS, suggesting that: *"the scope of services within LGSS included service areas where there was no demonstrable evidence that these services benefited from any sharing"*.
- 5.114 This view was echoed in a Cambridgeshire County Council report: *"It is the view of all the partners that this [the government report] is correct. It would appear that service areas were included within the scope of LGSS simply to increase the financial turnover of the organisation. Many service areas such as Democratic Services, Finance and HR business partners, and operational IT simply support the organisations that they work in. There is no sharing of skills or resources and therefore the only benefit that is derived is through areas of significant procurement - the same outcome of which can be delivered without a shared service offer."*
- 5.115 As a result of this review, LGSS is expected to cease to operate as a stand-alone organisation, but will continue to provide shared transactional functions where there are clear operational and financial advantages, with the other services being brought back in house. Equally, the financial arrangements for the shared service will be reformulated to ensure that the costs to each partner accurately reflects the value they obtain from it.
- 5.116 Max Caller, the inspector appointed by the government to probe what went wrong in Northamptonshire, criticised the way LGSS had been used, and said in his report: *"There appears to be little strategic capacity for strategic thinking on support service within the council with the expectation that is it discharged by staff in LGSS. That could work if the council had strong commissioning, but that is not apparent."*
- 5.117 LGSS Law is not part of these changes having been set up as a social enterprise separate from the original LGSS in 2015. However, LGSS Law had also suffered from significant problems, including: transparency issues; confused business planning and pricing; poor performance; and excess costs. Significant resources had been invested in an aborted merger with three London Councils - consequently, it filed a £1.2m loss in 2018/19.
- 5.118 It has since seen the introduction of new leadership. As a result, the organisation generated a six figure profit within 2019/20 and was praised by Lexcel Legal Practice Quality Mark inspectors who described the practice as 'well run', 'well managed' and should be 'highly commended.'

Proposals

- 5.119 This report highlights some of the key benefits that can be derived from shared service agreements, which are often as much about improving service resilience, flexibility and quality of service, as financial savings.
- 5.120 However, it also identifies some of the challenges and risks associated with setting up new agreements or maintaining established shared services. Issues with ICT systems are amongst the most commonly cited barriers to setting up new shared services, including the availability and usage of common systems. Also, communication and staff engagement is widely acknowledged as another critical area for success.
- 5.121 It is interesting to note that even where there may be a sound business case on paper, the decision to enter into a shared service agreement may also be affected by political considerations. This is particularly notable in respect to Planning.
- 5.122 For established shared service arrangements, there are numerous examples of where business cases are affected by external factors, such as changes to the wider economy, government funding, the legislative framework, the competitive environment, or technology, as well as changes in circumstances of the partner organisations themselves. This highlights the need for business cases to be subjected to sensitivity testing and scenario forecasting. It also suggests that operating models should be regularly reviewed and that robust and open systems of governance are needed to ensure appropriate and ongoing oversight and review.
- 5.123 The programme of New Ways of Working reviews previously included a section on alternative delivery models, which included consideration of the potential for shared services. However, this was only a small part of the review process and it is understood that this has been dropped entirely from the more recent reviews.
- 5.124 Consideration of alternative delivery models was considered as part of the NWoW review of Public Protection and Culture services. This also covered many of the issues that would potentially be picked up by OSMC, including issues in relation to the need to improve governance and transparency.
- 5.125 There is some evidence that services are continuing to review and challenge established shared service agreements outside of the NWoW process where they feel that they are no longer effective or represent value for money, but this may be rather ad hoc in nature.
- 5.126 It may be beneficial to have a strategy and a systematic consideration of assessing and deciding on sharing opportunities, potentially as a component of the Corporate Programme due to the transformational nature of such initiatives. Ideally, this should be done independently to avoid internal bias. However, it should be noted that the process of conducting a review of the potential for sharing services is very resource-intensive and can be disruptive to the services involved.
- 5.127 The New Ways of Working programme could potentially provide this, but previous reviews appear to have been relatively light-touch in relation to this alternative delivery models and in particular shared services options, and it is difficult to see how this could be achieved without additional resources.

Shared Services

- 5.128 There is good evidence that working is ongoing across the Council to explore different ways of working, including shared services. It may therefore be appropriate to have a formal policy on shared services, and to undertake an initial sifting exercise to identify areas with the greatest potential to deliver benefits, and to identify potential partners.
- 5.129 For existing shared service agreements, reviews should be undertaken before the end of the contract period. Where available, this should utilise existing governance arrangements to consider alternatives and agree a preferred solution.
- 5.130 There remains a clear role for OSMC to maintain a watching brief, both on the existing shared service arrangements as well as on any new process set up to look at shared services. This could be achieved by way of annual updates.

6 Other options considered

6.1 Other options considered include:

- (a) Do nothing – lessons learned from existing shared service arrangements elsewhere suggest that this should not be considered as an option.
- (b) Set up a task group to review one or more of the existing shared service agreements.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 The recommendation is for OSMC to note the report and to maintain a watching brief on existing partnerships, which would be in addition to any governance arrangements already established for particular shared services.
- 7.2 However, it is recognised that the current COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented set of challenges for all services but particularly for Public Protection Services, which makes it more difficult to assess 'business as usual' performance. Also, because Public Protection staff are currently heavily involved in the response to COVID and it would therefore be an unwelcome distraction from this essential work to respond to any scrutiny review at this time. For this reason, annual updates are considered to be sufficient.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Summary of Existing Shared
- 8.2 Appendix B – BCS/PPP/JEPU New Ways of Work Review Recommendations (Part II)

Corporate Board's recommendation

Report approved (15 September 2020)

Background Papers:

'Shared services: costs spared? An analysis of the financial and non-financial benefits of local authority shared services' (2013), Local Government Association

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

Wards affected: All wards

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1			
2			

Summary of Existing Shared Service Agreements

Service area	Partner(s)	Start & End Date	Business Case	Value of Service (2019/20)
Landfill Site, London Road, Bracknell	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. No end date identified.	To provide a cost effective landfill site Site is now dormant with management costs split between the six authorities.	Total cost is £276,790 per annum WBC share is £50,763 per annum
Landfill site, Lower Way Tip, Thatcham	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. No end date identified.	To provide a cost effective landfill site. Site is now dormant with management costs split between the six authorities.	Total cost is £10,000 per annum WBC share is £1884 per annum
Berkshire Adoption Advisory Service – which became Adopt Berkshire. To deliver the statutory duties of Adoption to children, adopters and birth family members.	Five Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. Ended November 2017	To secure cost efficiencies and better service quality	N/A
Sensory consortium service – to provide a specialist education support service to support children and young people with a hearing and/or visual impairment from diagnosis to entry into the workplace.	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. Current agreement ??????	To secure cost efficiencies.	Total cost is £1.473 million per annum WBC share is £227,571 per annum
Coroner Service	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. No end date identified.	To secure cost efficiencies	Total cost is £1.774 million per annum WBC share is £288,128 per annum

Shared Services

Service area	Partner(s)	Start & End Date	Business Case	Value of Service (2019/20)
Lord Lieutenant – appointed by the Queen to be her personal representative in Berkshire. Assisted by the Vice Lord Lieutenant and by Deputy Lieutenants (currently 27 in Berkshire)	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. No end date identified.	To provide Lord Lieutenancy function for Berkshire	Total cost is £67,416 per annum WBC share is £12,121 per annum
Urban Traffic Management and Control System	Currently four of the Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. Currently negotiating with partners and suppliers to implement a new system	To secure a more cost effective and consistent service	Total cost is £185,500 per annum WBC share is £57,353 per annum.
Winter Maintenance Forecasting – to provide weather forecast for winter service.	Six Berkshire authorities (West Berkshire as lead authority)	Since 1998. Current agreement extended and will be retendered in advance of 2021/22 season.	To secure a more cost effective and consistent service	Total cost is £48,307 per annum WBC share is £17,000 per annum
Archives – to fulfil the statutory duty for care of historic public records.	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 1998 15 year legal agreement was renewed in 2013 and is due to expire on 31 March 2028	To allow the Berkshire authorities to fulfil their statutory duty for the care of historic public records.	Costs are split according to Council Tax base uplifted by 6% which is retained by Reading to cover hosting costs. Total cost is £36,000 per annum WBC share is £6,664 per annum
Modern Records – to provide a Records Service to manage the records which existed prior to the dis-aggregation of Berkshire County	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 1998. No end date identified.	To provide a single service for records relevant to social care and personal data that has a	Total cost is £187,228 per annum

Shared Services

Service area	Partner(s)	Start & End Date	Business Case	Value of Service (2019/20)
Council and the establishment of the Archive Service.			long 'closed file' life.	WBC share is £33,661 per annum
Berkshire Equipment Store – to purchase equipment for children and adults with disabilities.	Six Berkshire authorities and the Clinical Commissioning Groups	Since 2004. Current contract expires March 2024	To secure cost efficiencies.	Total cost is £9.91 million WBC share is £1.031 million per annum
Library Management System – computerised catalogue and loans record system for Borough libraries stock and customers	13 South East and London public library authorities in membership of the SELMS consortium.	Since 2006. Current contract was awarded in 2017 and expires in July 2022, with possible extension to July 2024	To provide a better and more cost effective service to residents.	Total cost unknown WBC share is £9,120 per annum
Emergency duty team – to provide out of hours service for adults and children's social care services	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 2012. Current contract was awarded in August 2020 and expires in July 2027	To secure cost efficiencies.	Total cost is £1.6 million per annum WBC share is £219,920 per annum
Berkshire Public Health – to share a Director of Public Health, Contracts and Shared Service Team	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 2012.	To secure cost efficiencies and better value in contract monitoring.	Total cost is £7,741,386 per annum WBC share is £1,022,884 per annum
Childcare Lawyers – to provide specialist legal services for children's and adults social care services	Six Berkshire authorities	Since 2013. No end date identified.	To secure cost efficiencies.	Total cost is £5,813,875 per annum WBC share is £550,000 per annum This is a variable cost due to being demand led

Shared Services

Service area	Partner(s)	Start & End Date	Business Case	Value of Service (2019/20)
Adopt Thames Valley (formerly Adopt Berkshire)	Seven local authorities who combine to form one adoption agency. The lead authority is Oxfordshire.	Since December 2018. No end date identified.	To secure cost efficiencies and better service quality. To be legislatively compliant through a 'regional adoption' approach.	Total cost is £4,620,100 per annum WBC share is £291,00 per annum The cost is variable because the numbers of children adopted each year influences cost
Building Control Solutions	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham Borough Council and West Berkshire Council	Since 2015, with West Berks joining in July 2016. 5 year term	Shared resources enable service improvements, resilience and a more flexible, customer focused service.	Total cost is £XX,XXX per annum WBC share is £XX,XXX per annum
Public Protection Partnership - a fully integrated service incorporating Environmental Health, Licensing and Trading Standards	Bracknell Forest Council, West Berkshire Council, and Wokingham Borough Council	Since 2017 10 year term	To secure cost efficiencies and better service quality.	Total cost is £3,715,780 per annum WBC share is £1,486,020 per annum
Joint Emergency Planning Unit	Bracknell Forest Council, Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, West Berkshire Council	Since 2018 5 year term	Provides enhanced resilience and effectiveness	Total cost is £256,470 per annum WBC share is £100,021 per annum

Shared Services