

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

9 MARCH 2011

**REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FAMILY AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

TRI-BOROUGH CHILDREN'S AND LIBRARIES SERVICES

The Tri-Borough report published on 16 February sets out a vision for combining services to save money, reduce bureaucracy and improve management efficiency, whilst protecting the sovereignty of the three individual authorities. The committee is asked to provide critical challenge to the plans presented within the report, for combining Children's and Libraries Services.

FOR DISCUSSION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Earlier in February 2011 the '*Tri-borough Proposals Report: Bold ideas for challenging times*' was published jointly by the Chief Executives of Westminster City Council, the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- 1.2 The report is the product of nine months of intensive and collaborative thinking across the three Councils, which accelerated from September when the Chief Executives commissioned feasibility work across four service areas, including Children's Services and Libraries (considered within the Environment block of services due to the service structure in neighbouring boroughs).
- 1.3 As the report states the commissions were designed to '*ascertain whether the instinct that there were economies to be obtained through greater collaboration was likely to be well-founded.*' All of the Royal Borough's work to test this hypothesis within this commission has been coordinated through Stronger Families - Family and Children's Service's change programme.

2. BACKGROUND

Children's Services

- 2.1 Six months ago senior officers from the three Council's Children's services met to define which services would be in and out of the scope of tri-borough working. Parallel work began on Library services (see below). Looking across the spectrum of services from universal to high need, a key principle was agreed. If combined working was the future it must be delivered with minimal impact on front line services. To this end safeguarding and family support/locality social work teams whose work depends upon local partnerships and relationships, would remain out of scope. The remaining services were examined to consider which would be worthy of further investigation in order to inform the cooperate hypothesis.
- 2.2 Four priority areas were selected: Education Services, Youth Offending Services, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Fostering and Adoption. Project teams were established, comprising of senior managers from the respective services and strategic programme support officers, reporting to the three Directors of Children's services, and ultimately to Derek Myers as the Chief Executive overseeing this commission.
- 2.3 Each of the four project teams were tasked with developing an outline business case for combining services across the three boroughs. In each case the business case needed to demonstrate some key objectives;
- Reduce management costs by 50%
 - Reduce overheads
 - Protect front line duties
 - Show how any risks of combining services could be managed effectively
 - Highlight opportunities to build upon individual service teams' strengths and support weaknesses where known
 - Provide a sovereignty guarantee in accordance to the needs of residents and Members
 - Outline the timetable and process for moving from the 'as is' to the 'to be'.
 - Illustrate when benefits would be realised.
- 2.4 Further to these focused studies, consideration has been given to the feasibility and benefits of having a single Director of Children's Services and management team. Preliminary discussions on combining other services beyond the four priority areas have begun, although thinking is

less advanced. The product of this work is outlined in chapter 9 of the triborough report, with specific proposals on the four services mentioned above set out on pages 32 to 38.

- 2.5 Prior to proposals being published within this triborough report, each outline business case has been subjected to scrutiny by a combined panel of the three Directors of Children's Services.
- 2.6 A report on the proposed combining of education services was presented to the Royal Borough's Cabinet in December 2010. In principle agreement was given to proceed and work continues at pace to maintain the feasibility of having a new model in place for September and the start of the 2011/12 academic year.

Libraries

- 2.7 In the summer of 2010 the Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey MP, launched a support programme led by the Museums Libraries and Archive Council (MLA) and LG Improvement and Development (part of the Local Government Group). The programme was designed to encourage councils considering or about to begin major and innovative change in the way they deliver library services, including new partnerships, delivery arrangements and mergers. Interested authorities were invited to make expressions of interest and ten projects were selected to form the programme. Amongst them was a joint expression from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, signed by the Leaders and Chief Executives of both boroughs with Kensington and Chelsea acting as the lead partner.
- 2.8 In October 2010 the programme was extended to include Westminster City Council (WCC). The project team was reconfigured, comprising of senior managers from the respective services and strategic programme support officers and ultimately reporting to Mike More (WCC) as the Chief Executive overseeing this commission. The Minister received a briefing on progress, on 25 January 2011, from the Royal Borough's Cabinet Minister for Education and Libraries.
- 2.9 The fieldwork carried out during this time formed the basis of the libraries element of the triborough report, within the Environment block (pages 54-55). The proposal in the report recommends the creation of a single combined libraries and archive service across the three boroughs, but with local branding and delivery in line with local community needs and requirements as determined by the three councils.

3. NEED

- 3.1 The triborough report sets out the context for these proposals within Chapter 2 (pages 13-14). Further to this, an overview of the scale of financial savings to be achieved through combining Children's Services is set out on page 30, and for the Library service on page 55. Non-financial savings and efficiencies are detailed within the sections on priority service areas.

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Whilst much of the early thinking on triborough work has been led by senior managers within FCS, all staff have had the opportunity to hear about and contribute towards these draft proposals, through service teams, staff engagement sessions and established business change processes. FCS staff have also attended the Chief Executive's staff engagement sessions following the publication of the report.
- 4.2 A degree of consultation with service users, in particular the Royal Borough's schools, has been essential in understanding how a triborough combined service could continue to meet need.
- 4.3 Further consultation with service users is planned. Key to this will be the importance of determining how combined and leaner services continue to deliver the desired outcomes. This consultation will inform the development of detailed business cases for combined services.

5. OPTIONS

- 5.1 The triborough report was welcomed by the Cabinet on 17 February, with Members endorsing the further examination of the proposals therein. However given the significance of what is being considered it must be reiterated that no decisions have yet been made. The current timetable would see detailed plans for combined services being taken back to Cabinet on 5 May for decisions to proceed. The coming months will provide sufficient time for officers to test this hypothesis to the full, and for Members and residents to scrutinise proposals as they develop.
- 5.2 This report offers the prospect of an unprecedented degree of service transformation. Family and Children's Services proposes to use its Stronger Families programme to manage this change, to ensure all key officers are engaged as required, and maintain the delivery of excellent services to our residents. Through this programme we will develop our future model of service delivery at universal, early intervention and high needs levels, whether or not the decision is taken to proceed with triborough working.

5.3 At the heart of all we do remains the commitment and desire to strengthen families and the communities in which they live and work.

6. Financial and Property, Legal, Sustainability, Risk, HR and Equalities Implications

6.1 Financial savings for those services that have been examined to date are outlined within Chapter 11 (pages 76-79). It should be noted however that further analysis will be required to validate these indicative figures. This work will be undertaken between now and May.

6.2 Reference to the implications for rationalising the asset base across all services through combined working is made on pages 70 and 71. This will also be examined on a service by service level to ensure that as far as is practicable services are located close to areas of need.

6.3 General legal issues are referenced on pages 83-88, but as with property issues, consideration of specific legalities at a service level will be necessary.

6.4 Chapter 13 provides a high level risk log for the proposals Council-wide. An integral part of every business case for combined services within FCS will be a detailed risk assessment. These will be developed in full between now and May to ensure that all threats and opportunities identified to the proposals in this report will have been considered and risk mitigation actions addressed where necessary.

6.5 Representatives from the Royal Borough's Human Resources department are working with each of the priority service areas to advise on personnel and employment issues that may arise as a result of the proposals. As stated within section 2.1 the proposals seek to protect frontline staff so as to minimise disruption to service users. Efficiencies and savings are to be found through reductions in middle and senior management posts, and rationalising back office functions.

6.6 It is the duty of Family and Children's Services to ensure that the services it provides promote positive outcomes for vulnerable children. Using a diverse and multi-skilled front line workforce the Service reaches out to all the Borough's children and those who attend its Schools whilst living in neighbouring boroughs. The characteristics of the most vulnerable as well as those who live in poverty often coincide with those groups protected under equalities legislation. In pursuing tri-borough arrangements the intention is to

protect the ability to continue services to these groups by making the necessary financial savings from management and overhead reductions.

- 6.7 Safeguarding vulnerable children remains at the heart of the tri-borough children's services proposals. A decision was taken at an early stage not to include combining the social work safeguarding teams in the scope of the proposals in order to continue the strong partnerships that already exist in each local area, and to maintain a stable and consistent approach to the work at a time of major change. However there is thought to be professional benefit from exploring the options to share best practice through a single combined Local Safeguarding Children's Board.

7. RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 FCS Scrutiny is invited to consider the triborough report, and in particular the proposals outlined for Children's Services and Libraries, and to provide the business group with the necessary critical challenge to help shape future thinking.

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Background papers:

Tri-Borough Proposals Report: Bold ideas for challenging times (executive summary and main report)