

Committee:	Full Council	Agenda Item
Date:	20 October 2009	9
Title:	Strategic Solutions	
Author:	John Mitchell. Strategic Management Board	Item for decision

Summary

- 1 This report follows the decision of full Council in July to agree in principle to a Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits partnership with the Anglia Revenues or similar Partnership. A business case has been commissioned and a copy sent to all members as a document which contains exempt information within the meaning of s.100 I and paragraphs 1 and 3 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.
- 2 The report to July Council made it clear that, whilst developing partnerships is expected to be key to the survival of the council, it is important to look at the whole picture. Partnership working is only one element in addressing the financial position facing the authority, as forecast in the Medium Term Financial strategy (MTFS). This report also explores other options in more detail. A summary of the workstreams with the anticipated cost reductions is appended
- 3 This report makes reference to papers that have been discussed in depth at workshops. Because the decision affects staff and the wider community, SMB consider that the decision should be taken in public. If however detailed explanation of the background papers is required during the course of debate it may be necessary for Officers to recommend that the Council votes to exclude the press and public on the basis that it will entail the consideration of exempt information. This is because the Business Case contains confidential commercial information, and at this time Officers consider that maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in the information being disclosed. Interest has been expressed by some staff in promoting an internal solution rather than a partnership approach. At the time of writing no proposal had been put forward, but any developments will be reported to the meeting.

Recommendations

- 4 That Council confirms its support for pursuing a partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council, in respect of the services listed in paragraph 15 of this report, and on the lines indicated in Option 3b of the business case; and authorise the officers to:
 - a. enter into detailed discussions with South Cambridgeshire District Council to agree in principle the terms of the partnership agreement with a view to the partnership commencing in October 2010, or as soon after that date as practicable;
 - b. take the necessary steps to secure interim project management support for the project and to ensure that the relevant services are managed satisfactorily throughout the period of transformation;
 - c. seek financial support from Improvement East for (or towards) the cost of b. above– any financing required to be met by this Council to come from the Change Management Reserve;
 - d. undertake appropriate discussions with, and seek advice from, other agencies, such as the Audit Commission, to ensure the robustness of the proposed partnership agreement and the simplification of audit procedures;
- 5 That, as part of the processes referred to above, officers consult, as appropriate, with the Strategic Partnerships Reference Group or with a Member Task Group to be nominated at this meeting
- 6 Updating reports be submitted to each full council meeting.
- 7 That authority be given to Officers to proceed with the subjects in the five workstreams and report to the relevant Policy Committees for decision.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Staff and Unison have been included in discussions throughout the process.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	It is recognised that there will be Equalities issues arising from this project, primarily around implications for staff as well as customers. An Equalities Impact Assessment is being undertaken as part of this piece of work and will underpin the detailed partnership arrangements. Some of the likely issues arising are set out in this report.

Finance	Financial impacts are included within the body of the report.
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	These are included within the report as relating to individual proposals
Sustainability	Additional travel to work may be involved for seconded staff but this could be mitigated by additional homeworking, reducing the need for travel to work
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	Staff and Unison have been included in the process. Space may be freed in the building, and the use of that is covered in the workstreams.

Situation

- 8 The latest version of the MTFs was considered by Finance & Administration Committee on 12 October 2009 and confirms the continuing need for the council to address an anticipated deficit of approximately £1.4m by 2014/15

Partnership working – Revenues and Benefits Service

- 9 The financial situation facing the country is well known, and all three main political parties are putting forward policies for reducing public expenditure. A significant reduction in Revenue Support Grant may be expected whatever the outcome of the next general election, and all Councils will be looking for means of reducing expenditure while trying to maintain key services. Members will be aware of the position of the Council's finances from the MTFs and 2010/11 budget interim reports considered at the F&A Committee on 12th October. In short, by 2014/15 it is estimated that the Council will need to have permanently removed £1.4m from its base budget.
- 10 The vision for Uttlesford, set out in the Corporate Plan, is to sustain a high quality of life in which the benefits of the unique character of the district are equally available to all residents, workers or visitors. "Partnerships" - working to deliver effective and co-ordinated services with partners and others, at reduced cost while helping those in hardship - is a key theme of the Corporate Plan and a Corporate Plan

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action is to seek opportunities for delivering services in partnership, with or by third parties and /or devolving service provision and developing shared service provision.

- 11 The proposal brought before Members is fully in accordance with the Corporate Plan and MTFs. The extent to which the vision for the Council might be developed further is a matter for the Corporate Plan review.
- 12 It has to be acknowledged that, despite all the best efforts of the staff involved, Uttlesford has struggled to maintain the high level of performance that we would wish to provide in some service areas. Equally, there are areas of excellence which could suffer because of an increase in workload, with no additional resources to deal with the increase. In developing partnership options, the approach to a prospective partnership has been attuned to the need to ensure:
 - a. Improved performance for service users
 - b. Stronger more resilient services
 - c. Reduced base costs of the service
 - d. Flexible and innovative culture
- 13 Officers have had discussions with a number of neighbouring district councils. In so doing, it became clear that South Cambridgeshire District Council offered the prospect of a partnership that met the needs of the two councils. Both are large attractive rural Districts sharing similar values and both are facing strong growth pressures from their position on the M11 Corridor. Both face looming financial deficits and are looking to address the issues through:
 - a. Efficiency gains
 - b. Improved service provision and performance
 - c. Optimum use of existing and emerging technology
 - d. Reduction in operating costs
 - e. Improved integration between front and back office processes and systems
 - f. Improved use of resources, skills and knowledge
- 14 Moreover, South Cambridgeshire -
 - a. are keen to pursue partnership working
 - b. are happy with a timescale that would allow early progress to be made
 - c. recognise the gains for both authorities
 - d. have a lead officer who had a key role at his former authority in enabling them to join and become effective partners of the original Anglia Revenues Partnership
 - e. adjoins Uttlesford.

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- 15 In order to test the viability of an appropriate partnership model, the two councils jointly commissioned a business case to cover the various options. The services identified for inclusion with the partnership are:
- a. Council Tax
 - b. Business Rates
 - c. Recovery and Reconciliations
 - d. Fraud
 - e. Housing Benefits
 - f. Council Tax Benefits
 - g. Sundry Debtors (billing)
 - h. Some of the Mailroom

Transfer of these services to a partnership would also impact on other services within the council (e.g. IT; customer service centre, printroom and finance), which currently provide support to those going into a partnership.

- 16 Work on the business case has been undertaken by Anglia Revenues Partnership, whose expertise in this area and practical experience are well known. A copy of the business case has been circulated separately to all councillors. The “vision” set by the commissioning Councils was “to provide excellence in the provision of revenues and benefits services through a shared service that provides both improved service performance and reduced cost”.
- 17 Members can see that the business case demonstrates clearly that a partnership between the two Councils would meet the criteria set out in paragraph 13 above. The ‘back office’ functions relating to the partnered services would be undertaken at Cambourne (at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council), where there is sufficient space. However, service users from Uttlesford would continue to have the same, indeed better, facilities for face to face contact as at present, and telephone contact would be through the present dedicated numbers. Facilities would be provided to allow some staff to work from home. Most importantly, the business case is as much about improving quality and developing resilience as it is about reducing costs.
- 18 An analysis of the options available is set out in the appended Executive Summary: Officers are of the view that Option 3b (setting up a shared service using external support to manage the change) is the best way forward. The potential savings identified in the business case are set out in the table below. It is stressed that these are for both Councils and the split remains to be determined. There are initial set up costs set out in the business case. These will be primarily capital costs. Savings would probably not start to materialise before year 2.

Cost	Potential Saving
Staffing	£352 628

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ICT & ICT support	£144 900
Accommodation	£41 740
General Administration and support services	£53 560

- 19 Whilst the proposal would be to establish a partnership between the two councils in the first instance, there would be an opportunity to consider expressions of interest from other local authorities who might wish to join at a later date. This could result in further financial benefits for the two Councils who established the partnership.
- 20 The business case emphasises the amount of work involved in setting up such a partnership and neither council has the capacity to manage the changeover. As indicated in Option 3b of the business case, it would be appropriate to procure a managed service provider to manage the services throughout the period of transformation, as well as ensuring that the process is undertaken as smoothly as possible. Officers of both councils favour this option and preliminary discussions are being held with Improvement East about the possibility of a substantial contribution of financial support. There is also money in the Change Management Reserve that could be used if support were not forthcoming
- 21 If Council approves the partnership approach outlined in this report and the business case, we could look to target a commencement date of October 2010. Obviously, this would be subject to the preparation and implementation of a detailed project management programme and the recruitment of appropriate interim support.
- 22 Adoption of the recommendations contained in this report (and in particular the agreement to option 3b) would enable the council to progress the project on the lines indicated in the business case.
- 23 Staff Issues
- 24 Staff affected have been kept informed throughout the process, as have Unison, and the dialogue will continue.
- 25 A key characteristic of the business case is that staff would be seconded to the partnership rather than transferred to it, and they would thus retain their current terms and conditions. All staff would, in principle, be seconded. Consideration should be given to the possible reimbursement for staff who relocate to Cambourne. Dependent on the outcome of the Council's decision on this report, details would be discussed with the HR partnership and any decision taken by the F&A Committee.
- 26 Homeworking is taken into account in the business case. It is however understood that for some individuals their personal circumstances

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would mean that any of the proposed partnership arrangements would not be compatible with their lifestyle requirements, such as childcare. Until the position becomes clearer it is not possible to give an accurate assessment of numbers of people. One-to-one interviews will be held and those unable to make the transition would be able to claim redundancy. The whole process will of course be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Additional options for addressing the Council's financial position

- 27 As indicated in the report to July Council, it has also been necessary to explore other means of addressing the council's financial position, additional to the partnership working referred to above.
- 28 The Appendix to this report puts into context the potential savings from the partnership with South Cambridgeshire and identifies four further workstreams that need to be considered as a means of securing the Council's longer term financial future
- 29 The five workstreams are: shared services; devolution; income generation; service reduction and efficiency savings. Projects include breaking even with pest and building control, disengaging from the "Supaloos" contract, passing control of community assets to the relevant town and parish Councils, reducing our contribution to the Saffron Walden Museum and making better use of our assets. Together with the proposed partnership outlined above the total savings come to slightly less than the £1.4m. These proposals are not absolutes, and will be subject to change. Further partnership/outsourcing may be necessary, as the Corporate Plan makes plain. Staff in the relevant affected service areas have been made aware of the proposals.
- 30 One of the workstreams involves a restructure of the management team, and this will be a subject of a report to the next Council meeting.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Business Cases and/or contractual	2 The matter will not proceed	3 could cause drop in standards	Ensure that business cases and proposed contracts are reviewed by Section 151

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arrangements underpinning new partnerships are not robust so that desired objectives are not met	without proper safeguards in place		Officer and Monitoring Officer with reference to independent financial and legal advisers as appropriate.
The Council lacks the corporate capacity and capability to operate effectively in a partnership environment	2 The Council is aware of its capacity and officers are recommending commissioning external support	3 The project could fail without thorough preliminary work	Set up call off contracts with independent financial and legal advisers. Engage specialist consultancy advice where needed. Ensure that UDC structure includes partnerships/commercial manager with appropriate skills and experience.
Major change of circumstances in a strategic partner e.g. insolvency of private sector partner or change in local government structure	1 No change in local government structure is currently proposed	2 The arrangements for service delivery would need to be comprehensively reviewed in such circumstances	Robust business continuity and succession plans incorporated into contractual arrangements. An exit strategy will need to form part of any plans
The Council may not have the right levels of staff and skills mix to operate effectively in a partnership environment	1 The Council operates many partnerships successfully	3 Any partnership depends on a willingness among the partners to make it successful	Prepare and implement a Workforce Strategy that covers diversity & equality, capacity building, succession planning, health & safety, etc. Review the management structure to ensure it reflects the priorities of the Council
Audit costs may increase	2 The Audit Commission has sought to audit all partners' accounts	3 This causes duplication of effort.	Ensure that the Audit Commission is engaged in the establishment of the partnership so that only one audit is necessary

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	separately where partnerships have been formed elsewhere		
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1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

Appendix 2 – the five workstreams

		2010/11 £000	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000	2014/15 £000
Workstream 1: Shared Services	Joining with other local authorities to deliver services in partnership and share costs	185	310	410	410	410
Workstream 2: Devolution	Transferring services and assets to town/parish councils with UDC funding provided on a reducing basis	49	97	154	229	243
Workstream 3: Income Generation	Maximising revenue from council assets	23	90	147	199	242
Workstream 4: Service Reduction	Stopping providing services or reducing contributions	60	170	170	170	170
Workstream 5: Efficiency Savings	Ensuring that overheads are proportionate to the current business needs and size of the Council	131	164	207	210	213
	Total Saving	448	831	1,088	1,218	1,278
	Target Saving	200	400	800	1,250	1,450
	Overall Saving	248	431	288	-32	-172

Appendix 2 – the Business Case Executive Summary

Executive summary

The attached business case considers the introduction of a shared service for the delivery of Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire's Revenues and Benefits services.

Recommendations

- The business case demonstrates that there are immediate financial gains to be achieved from working together and potentially with others. A shared service is the recommended route to efficiency as it will allow financial benefit to be delivered whilst still retaining an ability to deliver high quality and high performance.
- Based upon this business case, it is recommended that the councils formally agree to pursue a shared service model to achieve their ambitious efficiency targets for their Revenues and Benefits services.
- It is recommended that the Council's create a shared governance structure through a joint committee, with a shadow committee created early to guide the authorities through the transition process. It is strongly recommended that the proposed joint committee members and key officers from both Councils visit the existing Anglia Revenues Partnership to meet the joint committee and officers of that existing shared service as part of the commencement of the transition programme.
- Following an agreement to proceed the Councils would need to review the capacity of the Councils to undertake such a significant transition programme. The business case considers the additional resources that will be required to provide support throughout the transition process. Three options are provided for the Councils to consider. These options are
 - To employ individuals to provide the key resources required to support such tasks as project management, HR support and financial support.
 - To employ an appropriately qualified company to provide a complete transformation package
 - To employ an appropriately qualified company to maintain the existing services throughout the transformation programme and provide the full transformation to shared services, (this option allows for the services to be handed back to the Council's upon completion of the transformation or to continue to a longer term relationship if desired.)
- It is recommended that the preferred level of external support is agreed early and the two procurements that will be required commenced to limit the affect of procurement upon the timescales of the programme. The procurements required will be the appointment of external help to achieve the transformation and a competitive procurement to unify the existing IT systems. (it is strongly recommended that this is

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undertaken as a competitive process to ensure the most competitive price for the implementation and continued supply of the systems).

- It is recommended that a programme delivery structure as outlined within the business case is created and a project programme manager appointed.
- The work has highlighted that significant additional savings and future opportunities will be gained from working with the existing ARP and other partners it is recommended therefore that early negotiation is entered into with the joint committee of the ARP to agree the terms of their involvement.

Background

Both Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire seek a reduction in the delivery cost of their own services and understand that working together to achieve this aim offers a solution that will give the Councils an efficient service model to meet the financial challenges on the horizon. Both authorities also recognise that to act decisively now will place them in the strongest position to achieve gains, and control their destiny, within a changing service delivery environment.

The proposed shared service solution offers the opportunity to reach the highest national levels of service performance. It will demonstrate that reducing costs does not mean reducing quality, but rather provides the double benefit of lowering cost whilst at the same time increasing performance and quality. This combination of service improvements and cash saving has already been proven within the existing Anglia Revenues Partnership, who are pleased to work with the two Councils to achieve their own efficiency agenda.

Scope

The scope of the Revenues and Benefits shared service initially includes the two district authorities of Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire. (Although it is anticipated that this could expand in due course to increase the efficiency of the arrangement)

The services being considered within scope for this shared service include:

- Council Tax Collection
- NNDR collection
- Council Tax and Housing Benefit administration
- Fraud and visiting management
- Related support functions for the Revenues and Benefits services, including Systems Administration, Finance, Control and performance monitoring functions, General administration functions, Mail room and Training services.

Analysis of options

To achieve the Council's aims, five options have been identified and considered, one of which is a variation on another option.

Additional options in each case could also include the existing ARP and these have been separately considered within the business case.

Option 1 – Retain current arrangements - no change from current working arrangements, with each council continuing to operate independently.

No impact on efficiency or performance but simple to achieve

Option 2 – Collaboration – distinct Revenues and Benefits services remain but some collaboration to share expenses. Commonly authorities have taken a collaborative approach to the procurement of services such as printing, IT or bailiff services.

Low impact on efficiency, no impact on performance, simple to achieve. Most Revenues and Benefits services will already be undertaking some collaborative work.

Option 3 – in-house provision of shared services: this option brings together the Revenues and Benefits services to create a single in-house shared service, created from the amalgamation of the two original services under one shared management.

This would have significant impact on the two authorities in both terms of the efficiency and improvement gains but also on the resource requirement to achieve the change management programme. It is unlikely that either authority has the immediate capacity to affect such change and appropriate change / project management resource may need to be recruited or bought in.

Option 3B – in-house provision of shared services, using external support to manage the change:

As above, however external support could be used to manage the change. This could be through procurement of a contract for service transformation or through an experienced interim management team. This will attract a higher initial cost but is more likely to ensure change and results.

Option 4 – procurement of shared services from a partner organisation: The shared procurement of the delivery of a shared revenues and benefits service under a single contract has advantages for both parties. Business change would be ensured and future delivery provided with reduced risk to the partner councils. The private partner would provide the change capacity but the Council's would need to provide capacity for the procurement process. Consideration would need to be given to the procurement route and care would need to be taken to advertise in such a way to allow additional partners to join the arrangement. This may require a clearer vision of the potential for future expansion and discussions with potential partners before the procurement process begins.

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Having considered all options option 3b is recommended as the option for the two authorities to pursue, the table below looks at this particular option in more detail.

Option 3b – in-house provision of shared services using external support to manage the change

This option mirrors option 3 but works with, or replaces, the in house team with an external resource. This resource would undoubtedly exceed the current OJEU procurement thresholds and would require an initial procurement for either a transformation contract or an interim managerial resource to lead and shape the project.

This option would attract greater initial cost than the in house transformation models but it would provide the benefit of providing greater leadership and expertise to begin to achieve cost benefits earlier than within option 3.

One extended option that the authorities may wish to consider would be to procure a managed service provider to manage the services throughout the period of transformation. This would enable a short term contract to be entered into of perhaps up to 2 years to protect the service delivery throughout the transition period but also to provide the resource and skills necessary to undertake the transformation. At the end of the transformation period and upon completion of the contract the transformed services could then be handed back to the councils as an operating shared service.

This would of course be more expensive than the in house option but it would protect the authority during the transition period, provide the resource required and reduce the risk of the project.

Issue	Evaluation
Capacity	The capacity issues of this option would be absorbed by the contractor. In specifying the contract the councils could balance the requirements between the in house team and the contractor. So the specification could define the management of the whole process or it could support the efforts of the in house team if resource and skills are available internally.
Timescale	It is estimated that by purchasing the capacity to deliver the project that timescales would be reduced by this option. To achieve the fully operational shared service it is estimated that the transformation could be achieved in 12 months to 18 months once the procurement of a transformation partner is complete. To ensure that the procurement is completed in the minimum timescales it is recommended that national procurement partner for UK public services 'Buying Solutions' is used. A range of managed service providers have framework agreements already in place for this type of work and the Council's could make an informed choice as to the best supplier for their needs.
Governance	The recommended governance structure of the partnership would

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	<p>be a joint committee, legal advice would be required to draft a partnership agreement that confirmed the constitution of the joint committee and confirmed the arrangements between the two parties. This would need to be confirmed by a written resolution of the two Councils in due course before the partnership went live. The delegation of the responsibility of the Council's services will require amendment within the relevant sections of the constitutions</p>
Management	<p>The single management for the shared service should be agreed and responsibility for the delivery of the two partner's services delegated as appropriate by the joint committee. The manager will formally report to the joint committee acting on behalf of the two authorities. However, it will be necessary to agree appropriate mechanisms for the partnership management to participate in the executive management of the two authorities to ensure that the Revenues and Benefits service of each council is not fractured from the delivery of other services. Within this arrangement there is no need for a client so it is recommended that some form of line management with the partnership manager or general participation within management groups is continued in each authority. One advantage of option 3b is that it would enable a clear managerial recruitment path to be followed that is perhaps less confused and influenced by the transformation work being undertaken.</p>

Governance

In the circumstances proposed by Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire it is suggested that the primary governance option would be the joint committee.

This operates under the terms of section 101(a) of the local government act and allows the two local authorities to delegate the delivery of the proposed service functions to the joint committee. The legislative framework provides that a joint committee exercising the functions of two or more Council's at the same time can be established.

In practice a joint committee is formed with representatives of each authority taking the responsibility for service delivery under the terms of an agreement to be negotiated between the two Councils. This is an arrangement that has the advantage of being relatively simple and low risk to introduce. This will, as a result, allow the two authorities to introduce the shared service more easily and promptly than some of the perhaps more complex structures available

It provides a structure that requires no procurement to create, requires no client management and provides a relatively straightforward financial model, creating no particular tax issues, that can be contained easily within the authorities own financial regime.

The financial case

Option 3 allows the economies of scale inherent within any shared service arrangement to be demonstrated.

The cost savings will be seen in four major areas:

- Staffing
- ICT & ICT support
- Accommodation
- General Administration and support

It has been calculated within the business case that the savings shown in the table below can be anticipated from the shared service arrangement between Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire.

▪ Cost	▪ Potential Saving
▪ Staffing	▪ £352 628
▪ ICT & ICT support	▪ £144 900
▪ Accommodation	▪ £41 740
▪ General Administration and support services	▪ £53 560

In addition to these savings there will be some minor savings in other areas such as procurement, current duplication, and improved processes, and there will be some ongoing minor increases in cost to enable the shared service arrangement to operate.

However the total saving that can be anticipated is demonstrated on page 66 of the business case and amounts to:

£590,728 or 15.36% of the original budget.

The initial transition costs of the project are estimated at £620 000 spread over the first 2 – 3 years of the project. The effect of these costs on the potential savings are demonstrated in the spreadsheet at page 73, which also demonstrates the potential saving over 12 years. This shows a total saving (without taking into account any inflationary costs) of £6,246,008 between the two authorities over the 12 year period.

The Anglia Revenues Partnership

In addition to the option above the business case also explores the potential for additional saving through directly working with the existing Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP).

The ARP will be pleased to provide support to whichever option the two authorities choose to follow for the future delivery of their services. The business case clearly outlines an opportunity for Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire to work together to reduce the cost of their Revenues and Benefits service delivery. However an additional three ARP options are also considered that directly assist the two councils to achieve their aims.

- The external support needed to achieve the option of working together, as outlined above in option 3b.
- Delivery of the service from the existing ARP centre at Thetford.
- The creation of two hubs, one at Thetford, and one at Cambourne, with shared support services to create additional efficiencies.

The first option is explained above and offers the opportunity to support the transition programme with experienced resources from the ARP.

The second option is considered in more depth within the business case and provides a potential additional saving of £282 828 per annum to be shared between all parties participating within the larger partnership, this increases the potential total savings to £873,556 per annum.

The third option offers a longer term opportunity to seek additional savings across the two partnership hubs through the sharing of support services to both sites. These savings are initially quite low, as greater development needs to be given to a larger shared service model beyond just the Revenues and Benefits services. In the long term however it is believed that this model offers real opportunity for the significant innovative change that may be required to ensure that the efficiency required is achieved.

Within all of these options however it is recognised that the two Councils will benefit from some significant added value by working with an established shared service.

Added value

Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire will also benefit from the following additional non cashable efficiencies and services and from a greater opportunity to reduce some of the risk factors considered within the business case.

- A dedicated training team to provide:
 - ARP's training expertise during the set up period.
 - Tried and tested training courses for new staff and refresher training for experienced staff

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- Close monitoring and control of individuals training needs
- A more efficient usage of the training budget to purchase additional specialised training
- Access to procedure manuals updated regularly through an external specialist.
- Access to proven management expertise reducing the risks associated with the recruitment of staff during the set up period.
- Existing expertise, experience and knowledge from a proven work force already achieving an excellence of performance.
- Future potential for further efficiencies with additional partnership working
- Increased resilience of performance within the larger staffing structure available to the Council. The partnership is staffed to provide continual long term resilience rather than to just deliver the service.
- Access to national forums to ensure staff are fully conversant with current legislation and best practices.
- The partnership has negotiated excellent deals with suppliers that can effectively provide an additional income stream to the partners. For example new software provide for new legislation is provided at a 60% discount. This enables governmental set up money to be used to enhance the introduction of new legislation.
- A dedicated partnership website that provides comprehensive information for the public about their Council Tax, Benefits and NDR that is regularly updated, revised and improved. This website also provides a secure portal to the public to interrogate their own accounts;

Conclusion

The business case concludes that there are three clear models for the delivery of a shared service for the two Council's Revenues and Benefits services.

All of these models provide significant savings to Uttlesford and South Cambridgeshire District Councils. But the choice will require a consideration of the long term strategic advantages of working within a wider arrangement with other authorities, such as those within the existing ARP, against the immediate and perhaps short term requirements of just addressing the current shortfalls in funding.

In conclusion therefore all of these models offer the immediate opportunity to reduce delivery costs of the Revenues and Benefits services. All of the models will encourage and ensure high performance and high quality services for Council residents.

The choice for the two councils to consider is the preferred long term future and the best arrangement to maximise future opportunity. It is suggested therefore that the greater

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resilience, efficiency and opportunity provided by one of the two options for a wider partnership with the existing ARP authorities, and eventually others, will provide the greater opportunity to compete for the future delivery of these services.

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