

**Committee:** IT Working Group  
**Date:** 14 October 2009  
**Title:** Welwyn Hatfield BC Partnership  
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**Agenda Item**

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Item for  
Information

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### Summary

1. This report is to advise Members on the recent partnership discussions with Welwyn Hatfield BC (WHBC).

### Recommendations

2. None

### Background Papers

None

### Impact

Communication/Consultation	None
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	None
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

### **Situation**

3. As part of the Strategic Solutions exercise aimed at identifying ways in which the Council can address its forecasted budget shortfall in 2013/14 officers explored a potential partnership with WHBC.
4. WHBC had in 2008 outsourced its Revenues, Benefits, Customer Service Centre and ICT to Steria Ltd in partnership with the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) Trading Ltd.
5. A period of information and data gathering took place over a two week period in May. A reasonable amount of time was spent with the ICT Manager however only a limited period of time was spent with team leaders.
6. Prior to the data gathering exercise the council had been asked whether it would consider changing the status of affected employees from 'at risk of TUPE' to 'at risk of redundancy'. The Council declined to do so.
7. Counsel advice was also sought as to the legality of the OJEU Notice placed by WHBC and whether competitive procurement was necessary. The advice from Counsel was that the OJEU Notice was not sufficient to enable a partnership to occur and that the only way to progress was via competitive procurement and therefore outsourcing.
8. The Council had already decided that it did not wish to enter into outsourcing of these services and therefore the partnership did not proceed.
9. With regards to the ICT element the Steria proposal had identified that they did not wish to retain any of the staff.
10. The Council has however decided to continue to explore the Revenues and Benefits partnership options by recommending to Council on 21 July 2009 that an ARP style hub be established with a willing neighboring authority.
11. As part of this partnership ICT would no longer be providing any support to the new hub and therefore the budget for ICT will be reduced by £80,000 if and when the new hub is up and running.
12. In September 2009 Officers were approached by an outsourcing company who, aware of the proposed Revenues and Benefits partnership, offered to takeover running the remaining ICT service for £100,000 less than the current figure. Given however that the ICT budget is reducing by £80,000 this offer was not felt to be sufficient to explore further. It was felt that given there was only an apparent £20,000 saving, after there was a budget for 'non-contract changes' set-up plus the first year inflation increase the savings would have been wiped out.
13. Whilst other partnership opportunities will be considered it is unlikely that any options will be available before 2013 when both Braintree DC and Colchester BC ICT contracts are due for renewal. Uttlesford will explore opportunities with those councils at that time.