

TITLE: Continuation of the East Lancashire e-Partnership
TO/ON: The Cabinet / 22nd February 2006
BY: Executive Director of Resources
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: Cabinet Member for Customer Services
STATUS: For Publication

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Council's continued participation in the East Lancashire e-Partnership for a period up to 31st March 2009.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1.1 To approve the Council's continued participation in the East Lancashire e-Partnership for a period up to 31st March 2009.
- 2.1.2 To note the benefits which the Council has received from its involvement in the Partnership and the proposals for extending the Partnership to the financial benefit of the participating Councils.

3. REPORT AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS AND TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 Members of the Cabinet will recall receiving a presentation prior to a recent meeting from the East Lancashire e-Partnership. This partnership comprises the five district authorities in East Lancashire and was created with a view to levering in additional financial support for the e-government programme through the sharing of knowledge and expertise across the five organisations. The Partnership has been particularly successful in terms of attracting external funding and in delivering some joint services. In particular:
- The e-Consultation Service has developed innovative practice in consultation in particular in the involvement of young people and has allowed the 5 Councils to reduce the cost of delivering their statutory satisfaction surveys.

- The East Lancashire Procurement Partnership has won a number of awards for its work on shared sourcing and joint procurement and savings of £70k per annum are being made in Rossendale alone as a result of the joint contracts already put in place with a number of further contracts planned. As we are encouraging partners such as the Rossendale Leisure Trust and Green Vale Homes to participate in these arrangements the impact on the Council will ultimately be even greater.
- The Web Transactions Project has put in place a range of standard web forms and tools to facilitate electronic interaction between Councils and the public. In Rossendale the benefits of this work have been seen to good effect in terms of the speed of achievement of targets in relation to BVPI 157.

3.2 The Partnership was originally created with a view to a fixed term life up to 31st March 2007. However, the value of the joint work between the 5 East Lancashire authorities has been demonstrated and discussions are now being held with District Councils in the rest of the County over their participation in further work. Clearly there are potentially benefits to all parties from this and the economies of scale created could allow the costs of participation to be reduced over time from the current level of about £60k per council. Any reduction in costs would depend upon the number of other Councils participating in the initiative which is to be renamed Excellence Lancashire.

3.3 Given the clear wish of all partners at officer level to continue with the arrangement and to involve further partners the Council, along with the other four founding partners has been asked to commit to continuing participation until 31st March 2009. The view of the Council's officers is that the continuation of this work will provide the Council with access to further economies of scale which would not otherwise be possible and members are therefore recommended to approve this course of action.

4. CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

4.1 FINANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

4.1.1 As indicated above joint work through the partnership has resulted in significant benefits to the Council both in hard cash savings, which will increase, but also in terms of other costs avoided and through the sharing of risk in projects such as consultation and web transactions.

4.2 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS

4.2.1 The Partnership is currently governed through a Joint Committee set up under the appropriate Local Government legislation. The Council's representative on this body is Cllr A Swain.

4.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

4.3.1 None.

4.4 ANY OTHER RELEVANT CORPORATE PRIORITIES

4.4.1 None.

5. RISK

5.1.1 The Partnership represents an appropriate vehicle for minimising and sharing risk in a number of areas e.g. in terms of procurement negotiations and the recruitment of specialist staff to undertake consultation activity.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE REPORT

6.1 None apparent.

7. EQUALITIES ISSUES ARISING FROM THE REPORT

7.1 None apparent

8. WARDS AFFECTED

8.1 None

9. CONSULTATIONS

9.1 Chief Executive / Deputy Chief Executive

Background documents:

Excellence Lancashire – Business Case.

For further information on the details of this report, please contact:

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