

<b>Policy and Resources Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	18 October 2023
<b>Report Title</b>	Revenues and Benefits proposed shared service progress report
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Lisa Fillery, Director of Resources
<b>Head of Service</b>	Zoe Kent, Revenues and Benefits Manager
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Zoe Kent, Revenues and Benefits Manager
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	1. That the proposed shared service timetable is noted

## **1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary**

- 1.1 In 2021 as part of a review of services a proposal was put forward for the Swale Revenues and Benefits team to join the Mid Kent shared service. This report provides an update on the progress so far.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 In August 2021 work commenced on the proposal for Swale to join the Mid Kent Revenues and Benefits shared service. The project was paused at the beginning of 2022 to allow work to be carried out to align systems and working practices before the proposal was considered again, and if approved moved forward. The Revenues and Benefits Manager took over the interim management of the Mid Kent Revenues and Benefits service. This was the first step towards the shared service and has been used to align processes and to measure the viability of the three-way partnership.
- 2.2 The Mid Kent full board requested that before the proposal was considered by the board again, the following changes were made:
- The Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) changed to a banded scheme
  - The Document Management system changed to NEC Information@Work (I@W) in line with Mid Kent and;
  - The Revenues and Benefit customer contact (phone calls and appointments) moved to Swale Customer Services Centre (CSC).
- 2.3 In January 2023 Full Council approved the CTRS banded scheme. The new scheme went live in April 2023. Automation of the daily Universal Credit

information received from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was implemented in July 2023 and 65% - 70% of alerts received are now automated on a daily basis. This has reduced the amount of work being dealt with by the team and will improve performance.

- 2.4 The move to the NEC I@W document management system is at the testing stage. Workshops have been held with Mid Kent Revenues and Benefits to ensure processes and document types are aligned.
- 2.5 A team made up of managers from Revenues and Benefits, the Customer Services manager and HR have been working on the project to move the Revenues and Benefits customer contact to the CSC. The team of five (including a team leader) has now been chosen. Training is being carried out and it is hoped that the new team will move into the CSC at the beginning of November. The Benefits and Council Tax teams will be available to provide support whilst the team beds in. Processes are being written and the website is being updated.
- 2.6 The business case is being written considering the structure and the costs of the shared service including the charging for the service. A Revenues and Benefits consultant experienced in setting up shared services is putting together the business case. Along side this, both Revenues and Benefits services are working on aligning processes to ensure if the shared service is approved, some processes are already aligned. Many processes are similar which would help towards any alignment.
- 2.7 The timetable below shows the decision-making stages for the approval of Swale joining the Mid Kent Revenues and Benefits service.

Table 1

<b>Proposed Shared Service - Timetable</b>		
6 <sup>th</sup> to 9 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	Approval of the business case by management teams	Maidstone Swale Tunbridge Wells
W/C 20 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	Approval of the business case by the MKS Executive Board (Section 151 officers)	MKS Executive Board
December 2023	Approval of the business case by the MKS Full Board	Mid Kent Full Board
January 2024	Decision on the approval of the business case for Swale to join the Mid Kent shared service by Swale Policy and Resources committee.	Swale
January 2024	Decision on the approval of the business case for Swale to join the Mid Kent shared service by Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Cabinets (separate decisions made by Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Cabinets)	Maidstone Tunbridge Wells

### **3 Proposals**

- 3.1 It is proposed following the timetable in table 1 that the business case is considered, and a decision is made once the report reaches Policy and Resources in January 2024 considering whether the Swale Revenues and Benefits team should join the shared service.

### **4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

- 4.1 An alternative timetable to make the decision could be provided.

### **5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed**

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with the Revenues and Benefits team members and Unison.

### **6 Implications**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>
Corporate Plan	The objectives and priorities in the corporate plan.
Financial, Resource and Property	The financial implications will be considered by the Section 151 officer and the Mid Kent Executive Board. If the business case is not financially viable this will be reported to the Mid Kent Full Board by the Section 151 officers.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	A collaboration agreement will be approved by Mid Kent Legal if the shared service is approved.
Crime and Disorder	Not applicable
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	Not applicable
Health and Wellbeing	Not applicable
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	Not applicable

Risk Management and Health and Safety	A risk assessment will be carried out as part of the business case.
Equality and Diversity	Not applicable
Privacy and Data Protection	Not applicable