

Cabinet Meeting		Agenda Item: X
Meeting Date	5 November 2015	
Report Title	Planning Support Shared Service Review and Update	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Gerry Lewin, Cabinet Member for Planning	
SMT Lead	Abdool Kara – Chief Executive	
Head of Service	James Freeman – Head of Planning Services	
Lead Officer	James Freeman – Head of Planning Services	
Key Decision	Yes	
Classification	Open	
Forward Plan	Reference number:	
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To agree the Business Case prepared and presented by the Mid Kent Services Director, subject to any amendments following necessary consultation with affected staff. 2. To agree to the disaggregation of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council from the Mid Kent Planning Support Service. 3. To agree to continue Swale Borough Council's partnership in the Mid Kent Planning Support Service with Maidstone Borough Council, subject to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ moving to a 'volume based' contribution mechanism; and ▪ undertaking a joint review of the service with Maidstone Borough Council by June 2017. 4. To note the continuation of the shared Land Charges Service between Maidstone, Swale, and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils. 5. To agree delegated authority to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader and the Cabinet Member for Planning to finalise the detail of any collaboration agreement(s) that are required as a result of the decisions taken by the Committee. 	

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on the discussions and respective positions of the partner local authorities following an 'in-principle' decision by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to disaggregate from the Mid Kent Planning Support (MKPS) shared service, and to consider what approach the Council may wish to take with regard to its future role within the shared service.

- 1.2 It should be noted that the three partner authorities wish to continue with a shared Land Charges service, and therefore this function is not part of the review.

2 Background

- 2.1 In June 2013 the Cabinets of Maidstone (MBC), Swale (SBC), and Tunbridge Wells (TWBC) Borough Councils agreed a business case for a shared planning support service, and the service went live on 1 June 2014.

- 2.2 The new service combined the administrative functions of the three councils' planning services, leaving the Development Management and Planning Policy functions with each Council. The service has now been operating for 16 months.

- 2.3 The major operational components of the shared service consists of:

- a shared Planning Support Manager;
- the service operated from a single location in Maidstone;
- all staff became employees of MBC; and
- a single software package (IDOX) was installed replacing the three previously in use in each of the three partner authorities. The contract is between MBC and IDOX as the supplier.

- 2.4 Following a number of issues with the service following the 'go live', in September 2014, Mid Kent Audit carried out a review of the Shared Planning Support Project Implementation, and concluded that there were failures in the project management which resulted in system break down, and the consequential adverse impacts on performance and customer service.

- 2.5 Whilst there has been a significant recovery in performance since the start of the shared service operation, the legacy of the project implementation has meant that the original intentions for moving to 'paperless' systems have been stalled, and that some of the original efficiency savings have not yet been secured. Some quality control issues within the shared service remain, although these are being resolved primarily through IT improvements and ongoing training.

- 2.6 At its meeting on 6 August 2015, TWBC's Cabinet agreed 'in principle' that the Planning Support service be brought back in-house, subject to the agreement of MBC and SBC. The reason stated for the decision was to "ensure the Council's Planning Service could meet the expectations of the Council and stakeholders and provide the best prospect for achieving this would be to re-establish a standalone in-house service".

- 2.7 MBC as the employing authority and holder of the contract with IDOX recognise the problems which have arisen since the inception of the shared service. Given this, both MBC and SBC members have requested that work be undertaken to consider the option of having their stand-alone planning support services based at their respective offices.

2.8 Appendix I provides a summary and accompanying business case setting out the proposed route for achieving disaggregation of the MKPS. This business case is based on the assumption that TWBC disaggregate and MBC/SBC maintain a joint shared service.

Performance Review

2.9 Appendix II provides tables and graphs reviewing performance of the MKPS since its inception and the impacts on SBC Development Management (DM) performance against the corporate performance indicators.

2.10 The main conclusions regarding performance at MKPS and Swale DM include:

- the inception of the shared service was accompanied by a significant drop in performance due to system failure and integration/ communication issues between MKPS and Swale DM team;
- initial training issues with MKPS staff resulting in poor quality control and delays in service provision;
- SBC was particularly hit by the drop in performance because of the need to adapt to a new IT system and an isolated back office operation;
- this in turn has led to a significant backlog of old planning applications, which further exacerbates the service's ability to improve performance in the short to medium term;
- consultants have been appointed at least until January 2016 to help reduce the backlog to acceptable operational levels, which should be achieved early 2016, subject to maintaining capacity within the DM Team;
- improvements in performance have been secured, although to some extent this has been achieved through the use of 'extensions of time', and reverting some back office functions in the short term to DM teams;
- initial quality control issues and issues with the support provided by IDoX are being resolved through the roll out of the Improvement Action Plan;
- the introduction of new document management and 'paperless' system development over the next 12 to 18 months will see the full potential of the shared service, and the IDoX being realised;
- there has been positive feedback (including via a mystery shopper exercise) regarding the Customer Services Centre operation at Maidstone and the new public access system (noting initial teething problems at inception);
- the introduction of the UNIFORM system has enabled customer improvements to securing real time information on progress of planning enforcement cases and S.106 agreements.

2.11 Whilst MKPS and SBC DM teams are recovering from the operational difficulties arising from the shared IT and back office service inception, MKPS are currently hitting their set targets with no significant backlog, and are considered to have reached a position which enables the team to take on their original full responsibilities, particularly regarding validation (except for majors – see para 3.5).

- 2.12 With specific regard to SBC DM, the lag time relating to dealing with planning applications, combined with handling a major backlog of work, is reflected in the performance figures. However, resources have been put in place to significantly reduce the backlog to more manageable levels by early 2016, after which DM officers should be able to focus on current cases.
- 2.13 The Improvement Action Plan is also expected to secure further improvements in IT development, including 'DocLoader' file management system to be in place by March 2016, and more comprehensive 'paperless' systems in place by January 17.

Planning Advisory Service Review

- 2.14 The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) were invited to review Swale BC's current performance and operational issues in respect of the MKPS, and to interview officers from the SBC DM service and MKPS officers. The summary of their report is included at Appendix IV and the main conclusions are:
- a general consensus about the quality of the Planning Service and its contribution to development in Swale;
 - vastly improved customer service and public access system;
 - MKPS staff are very positive about their role – noting improvements in performance etc;
 - the IT systems are not yet fully functional, are operationally slow, have missing data, and are not trusted by officers;
 - a lack of change management and a failure to appreciate the learning curve required for Swale DM officers to be able to effectively use the new systems and processes; and
 - a failure to communicate, including:
 - the lack of feedback loops to enable learning from mistakes;
 - between managers and staff, so that everyone understands why a change is happening; and
 - with parishes, agents and residents.
- 2.15 In response to the issues raised in the PAS review, the following actions are being taken forward:
- the Planning IT systems need to be implemented in full as a corporate priority;
 - Swale managers need to take visible ownership of the DM service changes;
 - all post-1974 history to be accurately uploaded into UNIFORM. This means that 40,000+ records need amending, and an assessment of the outstanding records is currently being undertaken to identify the scope and extent of work required to put right;
 - ensuring there is an up-to-date procedure and processes manual in place, with clear definition of responsibilities and reporting lines;
 - undertake an audit of the understanding of each officer in terms of new IT and processes, and training them in the gaps;

- training the planning officers in the validation procedures to increase understanding of how it works in practice;
- moving away from ‘validation light and back to MKPS, except for ‘major’ planning applications;
- embracing and promoting the use of quality circles;
- MKPS staff to be developed to understand role of parish councils at respective authorities;
- officers to be managed more closely to ensure that their full use of the IT system (ie not circumventing it), that they are sticking to the agreed validation protocols, and that their overall behaviours are supportive of the approach; and
- updated website and guidance.

Financial Review

2.16 The following table shows the SBC approved budget savings and the additional costs as a result of the implementation of MKPS.

Details	2013/14 £	2014/15 £	Net Cost/ - Saving £
Savings on back office (Rev Budget & Cap Prog 2013/14 page 10)	-25,000.00	-25,000.00	-50,000.00
Shared Service Implementation (Rev Budget & Cap Prog 2014/15 page 9)		-19,500.00	-19,500.00
Local Land Charges - Additional MKIP charge (Financial Outturn Report 2014/15 Appendix 1 Table 2)		17,650.00	17,650.00
Additional costs of implementing the MKPS (Financial Outturn Report 2014/15 Appendix 1 Table 2)		87,600.00	87,600.00
Additional costs of implementing the MKPS (Financial Outturn Report 2014/15 Appendix 1 Table 2)		18,000.00	18,000.00
Final difference between forecast used in outturn report and final invoice received.		-30,940	-30,940
Planning MKIP payments funded from SBC reserves		58,748.00	58,748.00
TOTAL NET DUE TO MKPS	-25,000	106,558	81,558

2.17 It should be noted that the three authorities experienced a significant increase in workload over and above those levels forecast levels at the commencement of the shared service starting. SBC in particular saw a significant increase in the number of ‘major’ planning applications received, which whilst reflected in the increased planning fees above forecast budget levels, further hindered the

ability of MKPS to bring about the necessary changes to handle the difficult operational issues arising.

- 2.18 Additional temporary staff were recruited to deal with the backlog of work arising from the problems in initiating the shared service and ongoing qualitative issues and increased workloads, and a significant proportion of the overspend related to the recruitment of an interim head of the shared support service. There have also been difficulties in recruiting permanent staff. These issues are now largely resolved, and the Planning Support Service is now managed via the interim Mid Kent Services Director arrangements.

3 Alternative Options

Introduction

- 3.1 The Council will be requested at the Tri-Authority meeting arranged for 5 November 2015 to consider whether they accept TWBC's request to disaggregate from the shared service (with the exception of the Land Charges service). The reason for this is that under the collaboration agreement for all MKIP shared services, any decision for one or more partners to exit from a shared service must be agreed by all parties to that shared service.
- 3.2 At this stage, there is co-operation between the three authorities to reach an amicable position to enable a decision to agree to disaggregation. The business case for the disaggregation of TWBC is based on the assumption that SBC remain as part of the remnant shared service with MBC, and this is included in Appendix I. Should SBC or MBC decide to pull out of the shared service, a new business case would need to be drafted.
- 3.3 With regard to the Land Charges service, it is considered that there are significant benefits of remaining a three-way shared service. The service competes with personal search companies without the benefit of making a profit i.e. the costs of the service should match the service charges. Having a tri-authority approach provides the capability to provide a single service to solicitors covering the three areas which should drive efficiencies, which in turn improves the quality of the service for the benefit of customers whilst maintaining the resilience within the service. This will be particularly important with potential future changes arising from increased automation of information, and to respond to Government proposals for switching responsibility for part of the land charge service to the Land Registry.
- 3.4 The Council is faced with two options given TWBC's request to disaggregate from the shared service:
- (i) a two-way shared planning support service between MBC and SBC remaining on the existing IDoX enterprise solution, and remaining located at a single site in Maidstone; or
 - (ii) a single SBC Planning Support service, located on-site in Sittingbourne, with a separate new version of the IDoX Enterprise solution hosted centrally at MBC.

- 3.5 The working assumption is that, should SBC remain in the shared service, the proposed structures and costings would be based on a mutual agreement that all validation of 'major' planning applications will be carried out by the respective DM officers, whereas currently only very significant major applications are validated by officers.
- 3.6 This reflects the complex nature of validating such casework, the added value officers can bring to such applications that fall outside the standard requirements, and the combination of the 13 week deadline and the appropriate use of 'extensions of time' to provide greater flexibility for completing validation and registration.

Options Comparison

- 3.7 Appendix IV sets out the pros and cons of staying within a shared MBC / SBC shared planning support service retained at Maidstone, and of SBC returning to a stand-alone planning support service based at Sittingbourne

A Performance

- 3.8 It was always recognised that there was likely to be a short to medium term adverse impact on performance of introducing the shared service across three partner authorities. However, the severity and extent of impact was significantly beyond that originally anticipated, and has been exacerbated by the project implementation failures which have been previously reported. The impact on performance indicators (PIs) can be clearly viewed in the data included in Appendix I.
- 3.9 However, the most recent trends have seen a significant improvement in validation turn-around times within MKPS, although this has been helped by switching some validation responsibilities to DM teams. In effect, MKPS are providing a basic validation service, and cases are passed onto DM officers to then request changes from applicants, with resultant delays. Operational decisions have been made to return those responsibilities back to MKPS (except for 'majors') now that performance is improved, experienced and dedicated validation staff have been recruited, and effective in house training has been put in place.
- 3.10 Whilst performance at MKPS appears to have significantly improved and there are no significant backlog issues, the implications for the whole DM lifecycle remain given the lag time for determining planning applications, the legacy of 'qualitative' issues of previous MKPS process work, and the impact of handling a backlog of cases. The introduction of additional capacity by appointing planning consultants should enable the backlog to reduce to normal levels by early 2016, subject to maintaining officer capacity given the current difficult recruitment market.
- 3.11 As indicated previously, DM performance is steadily improving with a gradual reduction in the reliance on the use of 'extensions of time' to maintain performance levels against the corporate performance targets. Subject to maintaining capacity within the DM Team, it is forecast that we should be in a position of attaining high performance against the corporate PIs without reliance on 'extensions of time' by the start of the next financial year.

- 3.12 An Action Plan has been developed through the current Shared Service Board which provides grounds for optimism that the current good validation performance can be maintained whilst taking on full responsibilities – noting the ‘majors’ exception. An overview of the Action Plan is included at Appendix VI.
- 3.13 It is also likely to be the case that it should be easier to tailor a service to the needs of two development management services rather than the three authorities, with their different expectations and ways of operating.
- 3.14 Should the Council be minded to set up its own planning support back-office function, a major issue to recognise is the potential for further short to medium term adverse impacts on performance. Whilst lessons have been learnt about project implementation and the need for significant system testing in advance, there will always be the initial down-time, process/procedure malfunctions, and team embedding issues to resolve. This needs to be set against the potential long term benefits of being able to tailor the approach to the DM service needs without compromise because of another authority’s expectations.
- 3.15 Any decision to disaggregate from MKPS would require extensive project planning and the expertise in IT service delivery, workflow management understanding, and project management expertise. The ability to secure this expertise to fully ensure successful implementation would be critical, and this is discussed later in the report.

B Costs and Efficiencies

- 3.16 For the current financial year, the most recent forecast is that the SBC share of the total overspends for the shared service would be £21,800. A significant proportion of the additional costs relate to temporary staff within MKPS to provide the level of service required by the three authorities. However, it is considered that the implementation of the Improvement Action Plan, which includes moving towards the original objective of ‘paperless working’, will eventually bring about the efficiency savings originally sought.
- 3.17 Funding has been set aside within a Planning Services reserve fund of £181,000 to cover any additional costs of agency or consultant support for the Swale DM service. The reserve fund has been accumulated from increased planning fees.
- 3.18 Appendix II sets out the revenue and ‘one-off’ costs relating to the options available to SBC. For an SBC/MBC shared service option there are not expected to be any significant one-off set up costs as these would need to be met by TWBC under the terms of the collaboration agreement.
- 3.19 By way of contrast, the estimated one-off set up costs for an SBC-only service would amount to approximately £161,000 including project management costs. As stated earlier, this is a major risk and research indicates that at this stage no such expertise is readily available within Swale BC, the MKIP partners, or from agencies who are familiar with finding such talent. A ‘make do’ approach using existing staff would not be appropriate in this case, and finding an external source is anticipated to cost £700 to £800 per day over the six-months plus of the implementation programme, at a total cost of approximately £80,000. It is

assumed that TWBC would not contribute to any of these costs on the grounds that SBC are making their own decision to disaggregate rather than being compelled to do so because the two-way shared service is unviable following TWBC's decision to withdraw.

- 3.20 Currently SBC's proportion of a two way shared service with MBC is based on current contribution of £302,970. However, the intention is that the contributions made by the respective authorities will be based on the volume of work derived from each of the authority areas.
- 3.21 Since the shared service inception, it has become evident that MBC has a greater proportion of the work. The table below sets out the potential savings that could be accrued to SBC based on moving to a volume-based calculation using the current volume split rather than the one in place at the start of the shared service. Discussions will take place between SBC and MBC to correct this disparity and bring SBC in line with the volume of applications dealt with on their behalf.
- 3.22 Rather than assuming that volumes of work remaining static, they will be monitored on a rolling three-year period, and one of the aims of the shared service will be to meet increased volumes from existing costs (effectively delivering a non-cashable efficiency saving in such cases).
- 3.23 A target will be put in place for each authority to measure the proportion of planning spend on the shared service. By doing this the shared service efficiencies can be measured by reducing the proportion of spend on support, even if spend in planning were to increase to deal with increased volumes.

MBC & SBC Partnership Costs based on	MBC Recharge to SBC	Savings
Existing split between SBC & MBC 2016/17	£302,970	
Volume split between SBC & MBC 2016/17	£241,090	-£61,880
Volume split between SBC & MBC 2017/18	£185,080	-£56,010
Total saving compared to existing split of costs between SBC and MBC		-£117,890

- 3.24 SBC's 2015/16 budget for MKPS is £278,970. The annual cost of running a new Swale-only service has been estimated to be £240,410, but the set up costs would be £160,250 (see Appendix III). Therefore the running cost of a Swale-only service is lower than the cost of a shared service with MBC based on the existing split of costs for 2016/17 of £302,970. However, the shared service with MBC would not incur any set-up costs, and would result in a lower annual cost than the SBC-only option over the next two years, as the cost to SBC is forecast to reduce to £185,080 by 2017/18 based on current workload split between MBC and SBC. This saving would be a result of moving to an up-to-date volume-based contribution following the recovery of the service, and the delivery of future efficiencies.

C Reputational and Staff Implications

- 3.25 The poor performance and communication issues arising from the inception of the new shared service has given rise to a significant dent to the reputation of the Swale DM service amongst councillors, agents and applicants. Whilst performance is much recovered now, there is an increased sensitivity to any service quality issues arising.
- 3.26 However, with further improvements in systems development and ongoing officer training, quality issues should significantly reduce and aid the recovery of the reputation given that many agents retain a 'goodwill' towards the Council.
- 3.27 The introduction of the shared service has also seriously affected team morale, and given rise to higher levels of stress absence. The views of DM officers on the shared service are expressed in the PAS report – see Appendix IV. Whilst many of the views relate to IT issues and the difficulties of securing common processes and procedures across three authorities, there is a basic concern about the problems arising from the lack of integration and communication between MKPS and the DM teams.
- 3.28 Whilst there are ongoing efforts to significantly reduce and overcome these issues, having a physically remote back office inherently brings communication and co-ordination challenges. However, this issue needs to be balanced with the benefits of having a shared back office service in relation to greater resilience and the potential cost efficiencies arising from system and workflow development across partners, and the adoption of best practice over time.
- 3.29 The MKPS Team also appear to show signs of significantly improved morale with the recent management changes being made, and genuinely believe that they can secure the improvements sought. The PAS report identifies their commitment to better customer service and performance, and a general view that they do not wish to transfer back to the separate authorities.

General Conclusions

- 3.30 Whilst the previously high performance of the SBC Planning Service was significantly undermined following the inception of the shared planning support service, there are now signs of significant recovery, and it is likely that there will be further improvement to restore performance back to UK upper-quartile levels for the main corporate planning indicators within the next 12 to 18 months.
- 3.31 An Action Plan is in place to deliver improvement to the efficiency and performance of the SBC DM and MKPS services, including the introduction of new document management and 'paperless' systems. The eventual benefits arising will significantly outweigh any continued inherent risks of difficult communications and co-ordination with a physically remote DM service.
- 3.32 Whilst a decision to bring the shared service back in-house will incur significant savings within the first year, the proposal to moving to a real-time volume-based contribution, combined with increased efficiencies driven by IT improvements, will give rise to potentially significant revenue cost savings in the longer run by staying in the partnership.
- 3.33 The pros and cons relating to the two options are balanced and it is difficult to confirm whether either option would give rise to a faster rate of overall

performance improvement across the whole of the DM service. However, should a decision to disaggregate be made there would be significant one-off costs, and this would be accompanied by significant risks in relation to project management and the potential for systems and process breakdown, further damaging the reputation of the Council's Planning Service.

4 Proposals

- 4.1 There are arguments in both directions as to whether SBC should remain in partnership with MBC for this particular shared service. This is in part because the operational issues that occurred at inception have not yet been fully resolved, in particular because the full functionality potential of the IT system has not been realised.
- 4.2 This, combined with the significant one-off costs that would need to be met by the Council should the Council be minded to disaggregate, and the project risks involved, suggests that a further period of operation should be agreed to enable the outcomes from further planned service improvements to be assessed.
- 4.3 Given the above, it is recommended that the Council continues within MKPS in partnership with Maidstone BC, subject to Maidstone BC accepting a joint review of the operation by June 2017. This proposed review date corresponds with the review period set out in the existing Collaboration Agreement, and provides the appropriate timespan to enable the full implementation of the IT system, including going 'paperless', and to be able to monitor the effectiveness of such improvements.
- 4.4 The intention will be to remain within the partnership beyond that date unless the action plan does not give rise to significant further improvements in the quality and performance of the service, including customer satisfaction.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 This report has been considered by the Strategic Management Team and the Cabinet Member for Planning.
- 5.2 The Planning Advisory Service report included in Appendix V sets out the responses from staff at MKPS and the Swale DM Team, as well as interview responses from key customers and stakeholders.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The report reviews the planning support service having regard to ensuring the service meets highest standards and performance and being fit for purpose to meet the objectives of the Council, in particular a Borough to be proud of, and a Council to be proud of.
Financial, Resource and Property	The financial implications are dealt with in detail within the main body of the report in Section 3B Costs and Efficiencies.
Legal and	The three current partner authorities jointly obtained external legal advice on particular aspects of the Collaboration Agreement which

Statutory	<p>governs the relationship between the three authorities and the role of Maidstone BC as the host authority and the signatory to the computer software contract with IDoX. Similarly, joint legal advice has been obtained by the three authorities regarding TUPE.</p> <p>The process for disaggregation would need to follow the terms set out in the Collaboration Agreement, noting that each authority has reserved the right to seek further advice on this project and its position where appropriate.</p> <p>The Collaboration Agreement relies on the three partner authorities reaching agreement in relation to any variation or termination of the shared service. Where the Councils do not reach agreement there is a dispute procedure set out within the Collaboration Agreement.</p>
Crime and Disorder	None.
Sustainability	None.
Health and Wellbeing	<p>Following the initial shared service / IT implementation breakdown and the resultant backlog of planning applications, there has been evidence of stress within the Swale DM Team, although this had also been recognised prior to the shared service project. Sessions have taken place jointly with HR to deal with the underlying stress issues, and where appropriate individual counselling sessions have been arranged.</p> <p>A new service improvement plan will be in place by December 2015, which will include a communications plan and sessions to resolve service culture issues aimed at reducing work-based stress issues.</p>
Risk Management and Health and Safety	There are significant risks associated with any decision to end the shared service partnership collaboration agreement. Appendix VII sets out the disaggregation project risk register.
Equality and Diversity	None at this stage. This will be considered further regarding relevant staff should Swale BC decide to withdraw from the shared service.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Planning Disaggregation Proposed Option and Business Case
- Appendix II: MKPS / Swale Development Management performance review
- Appendix III: Costs review of Swale Borough Council Options
- Appendix IV: Pros and Cons matrix for Swale Borough Council options
- Appendix V: Planning Advisory Service Review – Summary and Actions
- Appendix VI: MKPS Improvement Action Plan overview

8 Background Papers

8.1 Mid Kent Improvement Partnership Joint Cabinet 12 June 2013 - planning Support Shared Service – minutes:

[http://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/celistdocuments.aspx?MID=313&DF=12%2f06%2f2013&A=1&R=0&F=embed\\$Minutes\\$.htm](http://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/celistdocuments.aspx?MID=313&DF=12%2f06%2f2013&A=1&R=0&F=embed$Minutes$.htm)

8.2 Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Cabinet 6 August 2015 – Planning support shared service Update – minutes:

<http://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=1009>

Planning Disaggregation Proposed Option and Business Case

Planning Support Disaggregation Board				12 October 2015	
Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?					No
Planning Support Disaggregation Proposed Option					
	<i>Maidstone</i>		<i>Swale</i>		<i>Tunbridge Wells</i>
Final Decision-Maker	Policy & Resources Committee		Cabinet		Cabinet
Cabinet Member(s) or Portfolio(s)	Chairman of Policy & Resources		Leader of the Council		Leader of the Council
Lead Officer	David Edwards		Lee Colyer		James Freeman
Head of Service	Ryan O'Connell, Denise Haylett (proposed)				
Lead Officer/Report Author	Michael Josh, Project Manager				
Key Decision?	Yes – Affects more than one ward.				
Classification	Non-Exempt				
Wards affected	All				
This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:					
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree any changes or amendments that might be necessary to the business case. 2. Agree that, to the best of its knowledge, the information presented in the attached business case is correct at the time of presentation to the Disaggregation Board. 3. Agree what recommendation(s) it will make back to the client authorities, via the individual authority covering reports, in order for a decision to be made at the co-located Cabinets and Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 5 November 2015. 					
This report relates to the following corporate priorities:					
<i>(please explain how your report relates to the corporate priorities, delete those not applicable)</i>					
<i>Maidstone</i>		<i>Swale</i>		<i>Tunbridge Wells</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate and customer excellence 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A council to be proud of 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A prosperous borough 	
Timetable					
<i>Maidstone</i>		<i>Swale</i>		<i>Tunbridge Wells</i>	
Meeting	Date	Meeting	Date	Meeting	Date
Planning Support Disaggregation Board	12/10/15	Planning Support Disaggregation Board	12/10/15	Planning Support Disaggregation Board	12/10/15
Policy & Resources Committee	5/11/15	Cabinet	5/11/15	Cabinet	5/11/15

Planning Support Disaggregation Proposed Option

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This summary and the accompanying business case at appendix A, sets out a proposed route to achieving disaggregation of the shared Mid Kent Planning Support Service (MKPS).
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The service was launched in June 2014 to provide a centrally shared planning administration service, which covers a range of functions that are set out in the business case. Although the service is now meeting its performance targets, during implementation, and following the launch of the service, several problems were encountered that limited the service's ability to consistently meet expected performance targets. This led to a considerable backlog in processing planning applications building up over a period of months.
- 2.2 These problems and the performance of the service have been well reported at other forums and are not covered here. The purpose of the report is to set out one potential way forward, based upon certain assumptions, and which allows each authority to achieve a style and level of service that they consider satisfactory to their requirements.
- 2.3 The Planning Support Disaggregation Board was set up following a notification from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council that they wished to investigate withdrawal from the Mid Kent Planning Support Shared Service. The Disaggregation Board held its first meeting on 27 April to discuss the scope and workstreams of the initial phase of the project, which was essentially to gather the information needed to assess the likely financial and operational impacts of disaggregating some or all of the service.
- 2.4 Meetings were held on a monthly basis, with relevant officers from all three authorities attending to provide professional advice and support to the formation of a business case that would be based on the following assumptions:
- That Swale Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council will remain in the existing Mid Kent Planning Support Shared Service.
 - That Land Charges will continue to be delivered as a three way shared service.
 - That only minor changes that are considered necessary to the MBC/SBC service and the TWBC service will occur following disaggregation.
- 2.5 A business case was produced with the assistance of the Planning Support Shared Service Manager, Human Resources officers at Mid Kent Human

Resources, and Human Resources officers at TWBC, Finances officers from each authority, and officers from Mid Kent ICT. Client side input was provided by the Heads of Service and Service Managers for Planning at each authority, and strategic direction was provided by the Director of Environment and Shared Services (MBC), the Head of Planning Services (SBC) and the Director of Finance and Resources (TWBC). The Mid Kent Services Director was the Project Sponsor.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 3.1 This business case is presented to the Planning Support Disaggregation Board as the most likely scenario based on current information. It has been created at a particular point in time and some or all of the details may be subject to change or amendment.
- 3.2 It is recognised that there are several other options available to the authorities, and this is only one proposed route that may or may not be taken, subject to Member decision at the co-located Cabinets and Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 5 November. The Disaggregation Board felt the most effective route to formulating a detailed business case would be to model the most likely option, and use the information from this to highlight the likely expenditure, costs, implications and risks that would apply to any scenario.
- 3.3 It is also recognised however, that this business case does not cover all of the costs, risks and implications for every type of option that could be chosen, and so should a different option be agreed by members, a new business case would need to modelled and created.
- 3.4 The Project Board continue to recognise the role that Maidstone Borough Council plays in this project as both the employer of the majority of staff who would be potentially affected by changes to the Mid Kent Planning Support Service, and also as the contract holder for the IDox Uniform software.
- 3.5 Lastly, it is clear from both the Collaboration Agreement, and from legal advice received to date, that any changes to the Mid Kent Planning Support service must be mutually agreed by all three authorities before they can be implemented. This agreement can be reached through the Shared Service Board where it does not significantly affect service provision, or make changes to the agreed budget, or otherwise through each authority's normal decision making procedures.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The option described in the business case has been created as, at the time of writing the business case, this was the most likely scenario. The two-way MBC-SBC service and the single TWBC service have been designed through consultation with service managers and clients to ensure the best 'fit' for each organisation going forwards, but will be subject to staff consultation and potential amendment should Members agree to the business case.

(1)

- 4.2 The reasons for recommending, or otherwise, the option presented in the business case will be the responsibility of each authority in the individual covering reports produced as part of the agenda for the decision making meeting on 5 November 2015.

5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 No consultation has taken place on the business case at this stage. Should Members confirm at the meeting on the 5 November that the option presented in the business case is the option they would like to proceed with, this will give Maidstone Borough Council the authority to launch a 30 day staff consultation, at a point to be determined in the future, to gain the views on staff on the proposals. The results of the consultation may affect the final designs for each proposed service, and the business case will need to be updated to reflect this.

6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The Planning Support Disaggregation Board on 12 October 2015 will need to:
1. Agree any changes or amendments that might be necessary to the business case.
 2. Agree that, to the best of its knowledge, the information presented in the attached business case is correct at the time of presentation to the Disaggregation Board.
 3. Agree what recommendation(s) it will make back to the client authorities, via the individual authority covering reports, in order for a decision to be made at the co-located Cabinets and Policy & Resources Committee meeting on 5 November 2015.

7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off (name of officer and date)
Legal including Human Rights Act	<i>Legal implications are dealt with in the accompanying business case.</i>	Legal officer
Finance and other resources	<i>Financial implications are dealt with in the accompanying business case.</i>	Section 151 Officer or Head of Finance and Procurement
Staffing establishment	<i>Staffing implications are dealt with in the accompanying business case, and the resulting staff consultation should the option presented be agreed at the co-located meeting.</i>	Head of HR or deputy

Risk management and health & safety	<i>A risk register is available for the proposed project. Key risk are highlighted in the accompanying business case.</i>	Head of Audit Partnership, Deputy Head of Audit Partnership or Audit Manager
Environment and sustainability	<i>The service supports the Planning Functions at each authority, which are regulated functions that ensure necessary environmental considerations are taking into account when assessing planning applications for each of the boroughs. An efficient and effective Planning Support service will assist the Planning functions to meet these requirements.</i>	Sustainability Manager
Community safety	<i>There are no implications under the crime and disorder act.</i>	Community Safety Manager
Health and wellbeing	<i>The business case will have implications for staff in the affected service. This has been dealt with in the staffing implications section of the business case, and will be covered in the staff consultation, should the decision be made to proceed with the option proposed.</i>	Healthy Lifestyles Co-ordinator
Equalities	<i>It is not expected that this business case will improve or negatively affect protected equalities characteristics for residents, applicants or agents. Protected equalities characteristics for staff will be addressed through the staff consultation and project plan should the decision be taken to proceed with the presented option.</i>	West Kent Equalities Officer

8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Planning Support Disaggregation Business Case.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Planning Support Disaggregation Risk Register.
- Planning Support Disaggregation Communications Plan.

BUSINESS CASE

Project ID	• BDU0054
Project Title	Planning Support Disaggregation Project
Project Executive	Paul Taylor, MKSD
Project Manager	Michael Josh

This business case has been produced using the most likely scenario based on current information at the time of writing. It has been created at a particular point in time and some or all of the details may be subject to change or amendment following further discussion between the authorities, or through the staff consultation process.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to:

1. Disaggregate the three-way shared Mid Kent Planning Support (MKPS) service, currently located at a single site in Maidstone.
2. Re-constitute the service into:
 - a. A single Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) Planning Technical service, located on site in Tunbridge Wells, with a separate new installation of the IDOX Uniform solution hosted centrally at Maidstone Borough Council (MBC); and
 - b. A two-way shared Planning Support service between MBC and Swale Borough Council (SBC), remaining on the existing installation of the IDOX Uniform solution, and remaining located at the single site in Maidstone.
 - c. A three-way shared Local Land Charges service, remaining on the existing installation of the IDOX Uniform solution, and remaining located at a single site at Maidstone.

The target 'go live' date for disaggregation to start transition is end June 2016.

It is noted as part of this business case that Maidstone Borough Council are both the contract holders for the IDOX contract, and the employer of the majority of staff affected by the business case proposals.

It is also recognised that any changes that are proposed to the Mid Kent Planning Support Service need approval from all three authorities before those changes can be implemented.

CURRENT SERVICE OPERATIONS

CURRENT FUNCTIONS

MKPS is a support service that is shared between MBC, SBC and TWBC. The service was launched in June 2014 from a centralised location in Maidstone, and currently performs a variety of planning administration functions on behalf of the Development Management (DM) teams at each council, which have not been shared.

These functions are set out in the collaboration agreement for the service shown in table I below.

Table I – MKPS Functions Listed in the Collaboration Agreement

Planning Support	Registration, Validation, Amendments and re-consultations, Conditions Registration, Decision notices, History and Research Requests, Pre-application Registration and Administration, First Point of Contact Calls, Committee Support, Scanning.
Enforcement	Registration, Enforcement administration, First Point of Contact Calls, Scanning
Appeals	Appeals Administration, First Point of Contact Calls, Scanning
Land Charges	Official searches, CON29 requests, Personal searches, All calls, Scanning
Miscellaneous	Website maintenance, Planning, Enforcement, Appeals and Land, Charges IT system administration, Performance reporting, Business improvement, Finance and budget advice, Invoice processing, Responding to Government consultations, FOIs/Complaints – advice and review and completing those assigned to Mid Kent Planning Support

CURRENT SERVICE LEVELS AND PERFORMANCE

Due to issues that occurred during implementation of the service, and to assist with returning the service back to normal performance levels, it was agreed that the DM teams in each authority would take back certain elements of work on a temporary or permanent basis, to allow a period of “recovery” to take place. As such, the current service performs a smaller set of functions as shown in table II.

Table II – MKPS Current Functions

	Tasks Carried out by MKPS	Tasks Carried out by DM Teams
Planning Support	Registration, Validation, Amendments and re-consultations, Conditions Registration, Decision notices, History and Research Requests, First Point of Contact Calls, Committee Support, Scanning	Validation – quality checks and remaining tasks completed by DM teams Pre-application registration and administration performed by DM teams (permanently taken out of service)
Enforcement	Registration, Enforcement administration, First Point of Contact Calls, Scanning	
Appeals	Appeals Administration (simplified tasks), First Point of Contact Calls, Scanning	Appeals administration – quality checking and remaining (majority) tasks completed by DM teams
Land Charges	Official searches, CON29 requests, Personal searches, FOI requests, All calls, Scanning	
Miscellaneous	Website maintenance, Planning, Enforcement, Appeals and Land, Charges IT system administration, Performance reporting, Business improvement (in conjunction with HoS), Finance and budget advice, Invoice processing, Responding to Government consultations, FOIs/Complaints – advice and review and completing those assigned to Mid Kent Planning Support	Business Improvement led by Heads of Planning Some FOIs/complaints dealt with individually by authorities (in particular TWBC)

The service is expected to perform against a number of measures agreed in a Service Level Agreement (SLA), and these have been agreed at the Shared Service Board.

Performance monitoring takes place on a weekly basis and is reported to the Shared Service Board. The service has been steadily working through a backlog of applications that were created as a result of setting up the partnership service, but this was cleared for the first time in July 2015. Going forwards from this, a snapshot across a limited selection of indicators that are currently informally monitored is shown below in table III.

Table III – Informal Performance Indicators MKPS

Indicator	Month	MBC	SBC	TWBC	Target
% of decision notices issued in 1 working days or less	July	95.4	90.4	95	90%
	Aug	98.4	95.7	98.9	
	Sept	95.9	94.3	97.9	
% of enforcement cases logged within 1 day	July	86	92	93.5	90%
	Aug	63.5	73.53	90	
	Sept	91.2	90	100	
% of MKPS Appeal Questionnaires within target (rolling 3 months)	July	100	100	100	90%
	Aug	100	100	100	
	Sept	100	100	100	
Average number of working days to validate (majors, minors and others)	July	4	4	4	5
	Aug	3	4	3	
	Sept	3	4	4	
% of majors, minors and others validated in time	July	79.7	77.6	77	80%
	Aug	90.5	82.8	97.4	
	Sept	91.5	88.0	86.9	
Average number of working days to validate all other application types	July	2	2	3	5
	Aug	2	2	2	
	Sept	2	2	1	
% of all other application types validated in time	July	86.4	88.9	86.5	80%
	Aug	94.5	91.5	93.6	
	Sept	94.8	94.4	98.5	

For completeness, the informal performance measure for local Land Charges is included below, but it remains out of scope for this project on the basis that the function has continued to perform well throughout the period of set up and go live, and has been meeting the expectations of all three authorities. It was also recognised during the development of this business case that the Local Land Charges function is likely to be discontinued from 2023 as the Land Registry takes on responsibility for providing this function.

% searches in 10 working days or less	July	99.6	99.6	99.6	90%
	Aug	100	100	100	
% searches in 5* working days or less	Sept	99	99	99	

* Measure changed from September 2015 onwards.

CURRENT STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

There are currently 30.18 FTE permanent posts within MKPS, of which 3.81 are vacancies. In total there are 8.81 FTE temporary staff that have been employed to help the service improve performance and address the backlog issues.

The temporary members of staff are on contracts, some of which that are due to end by 31/03/2016. It is the intention to extend these contracts until the anticipated delivery date of the disaggregated services thus allowing these contracts to expire naturally where possible, although it may be the case that following the TUPE process and transfer of permanent staff, those in contracted roles may be able to apply for any remaining posts left over in the two structures.

The staff currently employed in MKPS will be consulted with, but TUPE will only apply to permanent staff or those staff whose contracts would run post April 2016. The implications for staff are dealt with in a later section of the document. Table IV shows the current staffing levels for MKPS.

Table IV – MKPS Current Staffing Levels

Permanent posts	Temporary Posts	Total Posts	Permanent Staff	Temporary Staff	Vacancies
30.18	8.81	38.99	26.36	8.81	3.81

Alongside these staff, the service also relies on additional roles in each authority to assist with liaison and on-site administration tasks for the DM teams, and staff in the Maidstone Call Centre to take customer service calls and queries for MKPS. The staff in the contact centre are currently on fixed term contracts due to expire by 31/03/2016 and so would not be affected by the disaggregation. The staff in the DM teams are permanent however, and would be affected, and so included in the staff consultation for the service. These staff are paid for through separate budgets however, and are not included in the financial appraisal section below.

Table V – Additional Support Staff for Planning

Planning Technical Officers / Customer Service Officers	
MBC DM Team	2
SBC DM Team	2
TWBC DM Team	2
MBC Contact Centre	2.4
Total	8.4 FTE

CURRENT LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

Whilst the current collaboration agreement for the service is unsigned, all authorities have agreed to abide by its terms in order to progress the disaggregation process. The collaboration agreement sets out the terms by which the authorities can withdraw from the partnership, and on this basis, advice has been sought from Bevan Brittan regarding the implications of this for the authorities. Consideration of this advice is included in the legal implications section below.

The collaboration agreement includes clauses on how the service is structured, the delegations and responsibilities of the MKPS service manager, the delegations and responsibilities of the Shared Service Board (see below), how finance shall be treated within the partnership including the percentage contributions to be made by each authority, who the relevant employees of the service are and how they should be treated, and other such clauses that support the effective running of the partnership.

SHARED SERVICE BOARD

The Shared Service Board is 'the Board' referred to in the collaboration agreement, which has specific responsibility to oversee the day to day operations of the shared service. The terms of reference for the Shared Service Board are as follows:

- a. Agree the Service Plan for each Financial Year.
- b. Advise on the management of and agree variations to the budgets for the shared service including approving items of savings and growth to go forward to each partner authority to

form part of their annual budgeting process and consideration in setting their budgets for the service.

- c. Advise the relevant Head of Paid Service (or nominee) on the appraisals of the Joint Head of Service.
- d. Receive reports on and consider the finance and performance of the shared service.
- e. Provide strategic direction as required.
- f. Provide reports to the MKIP Board when requested, when the Shared Service Board wish to raise a general MKIP issue or when the service underperforms (i.e. fails to meet the majority of targets over 3 quarters) or the Shared Service Board wish to make significant changes to the agreed service plan.

MKIP OBJECTIVES

Alongside the service plan and agreed performance levels for the shared service, MKPS sits within the context of the wider Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP), which has specific objectives that all shared services and initiatives should meet:

- a. To improve the quality of service to communities;
- b. To improve the resilience of service delivery;
- c. To deliver efficiency savings in the procurement, management and delivery of services;
- d. To explore opportunities for trading in the medium to long-term;
- e. To share best practice; and
- f. To stabilise or reduce the environmental impact of service provision.

TWBC NEW SERVICE PROPOSALS

NEW FUNCTIONS AND STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

TWBC are proposing to return all planning administration work listed in the collaboration agreement, with the exception of Local Land Charges, back to TWBC. It is also proposed that the contact centre arrangements which are part of a separate agreement with Maidstone are also returned to TWBC.

The new TWBC Planning Support team, which will be called the *Planning Technical* team, will sit under the Head of Facilities and Business Support. Notwithstanding this, they will be an integral part of the Planning Service – working closely on a day to day basis with the TWBC DM team. Provision has been made within the town hall to accommodate the new team next to the Planning Officers.

The posts within the team will be multi-disciplinary and expected to cover all parts of the planning administration process. This will ensure 'ownership' of an application from the point of submission, to the point of decision at the end of the process. TWBC recognises that this is a departure from the way the current MKPS service is run, which has three teams that cover different functions. There is currently very little cross-over of work between these teams, and so TWBC has accepted that in order to implement the proposed new way of working, any staff that transfer back to the Council will need to undergo full training and up-skilling in the areas of work they do not currently perform in MKPS. This is covered further in Staffing Implications below.

The proposed structure for the Planning Technical Service will comprise:

- 9 permanent FTE
 - 1 FTE Team Leader
 - 2 FTE Senior Technical Officers
 - 6 FTE Technical Officers

ANTICIPATED SERVICE LEVELS AND PERFORMANCE

Table VI below shows the expected performance levels for the new TWBC service, compared against the current performance targets for MKPS.

Table VI – Performance Indicators MKPS and TWBC

	Indicator	MKPS Target	TWBC Target
1.	% of decision notices issued in 1 working days or less	90%	100% ¹
2.	% of enforcement cases logged within 1 day	90%	Removed ²
3.	% of appeals registered in 1 working day	90%	95%
4.	Average number of working days to validate (majors, minors and others)	5	Merged with new indicator (a)
5.	% of majors, minors and others validated in time	80%	Replaced with new indicator (a)
6.	Average number of working days to validate all other application types	5	Merged with new indicator (b)
7.	% of all other application types validated in time	80%	Replaced with new indicator (b)

• ¹When received before 3pm.

• ²TWBC Enforcement Officers will be responsible for logging enforcement cases going forwards.

Additionally to the above indicators, the new TWBC Planning Technical team are proposing the targets in table VII below, some of which replace or merge the above targets with enhanced measures.

Table VII – TWBC new indicators

	New TWBC Indicators	Target
a.	% of majors, minors and other applications validated within 5 working days	95%
b.	% of prior notifications, SUBS, and tree applications validated within 2 working days	100%
c.	% of scanning and indexing completed for all documentation/	100%

	applications within 1 working day	
d.	% of scanning and indexing of all planning comments within 1 working day	100%
e.	% of consultations to be carried out within 1 working day of request or validation of application	100%
f.	% of amended plans to be scanned, indexed and linked within 1 working day of receipt or request	100%
g.	% of history requests to be dealt with in 3 working days	100%

The new TWBC service will also aim to achieve through the delivery of the project:

1. An improved quality of validated applications received by the DM team.
2. Recruitment and training delivered to the new Planning Technical team.
3. A separate and secure instance of the IDOX solution installed.

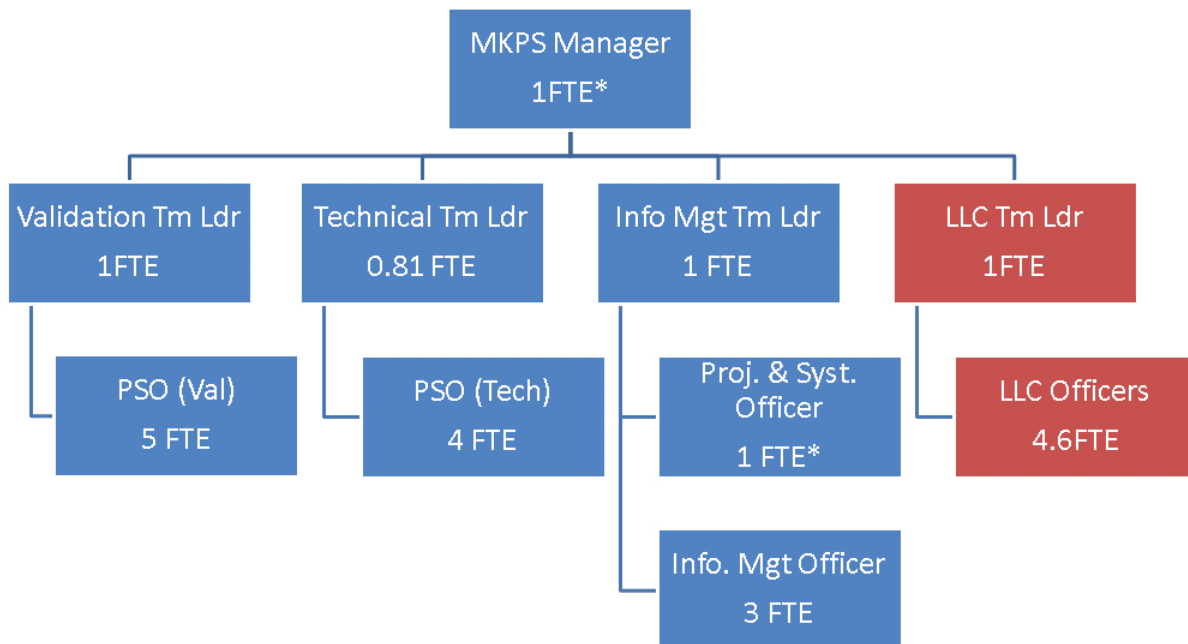
MBC-SBC NEW SERVICE PROPOSALS

NEW FUNCTIONS AND STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

The MKPS two-way structure is designed to take advantage of the delivery of IDox software products already scheduled to be delivered prior to disaggregation, and to learn the lessons of service delivery and feedback from officers over the last 14 months. The structure has been considered with the Heads of Planning for each authority and builds in client feedback.

The structure does not include temporary staff and is designed to be an optimum structure based on delivery of outstanding ICT requirements (i.e. ideal scenario). It does not assume that paperless working will have been delivered (as the original MKPS structure did) but does assume that the service will work towards paperless. To be successful this will require the commitment of Heads of Planning, MKPS and planning staff to deliver the changes.

The fundamental changes to how the service will work going forwards are outlined below, but essentially will involve better management of the electronic applications from the planning portal (over 80% of applications in July) via the use of 1App software, which is due to be installed by IDox before disaggregation. This software will allow the seamless reorganising, printing and uploading of information by the newly designated Information Management Team, which will then be processed and passed on in both electronic (e) and hardcopy (h/c) to the Validation Team.



*Denotes part of salary recharged to land charges

Validation Team

The Validation Team will take complete responsibility for the validation of applications, including managing both the e-files and h/c files. This is anticipated to vastly reduce the number of interactions the team makes with the Information Management Team and therefore improve the speed of the process. Ownership of the process from start to finish within one team will also ensure that quality remains high. The current checking process applied to significant major applications, where planning officers can add the most value to the validation process, will be expanded to all major applications.

Technical Team

The functions of the Technical Team will remain broadly the same, but with a stronger focus on the administration of appeals. This will be achieved by allocating 'lead' officers to the process, who will ensure that appeals are recorded and presented (in terms of files and information) in a timely manner that is understandable to planning officers. To help facilitate this focus 'SUBS' (conditions applications) and Non-Material Amendments (NMAs) will move to the Validation Team who have the skillset to deal with them, which will create the extra capacity needed in the Technical Team.

Information Management Team

The Information Management Team will retain a team leader. This role is considered important to managing the requirements of the Data Protection Act, Environmental Information Regulations, and other necessary legislation, as well as helping to manage the volume of feedback the service now receives from customers using the public access website. The team leader will be the nominated Information Liaison Officer (ILO) for the team and the Project and Systems Officer will be the second ILO to ensure resilience. Issues that cannot be dealt with at this level will then be escalated to the MKPS Manager for action.

Re-designation of the team highlights the importance of the information that is handled by the service, which also includes consultations, and open and transparent planning decisions. As such the team leader will also be in charge of website updates and public and internal communications.

Maintaining a third team leader within the structure will provide additional capacity across the service and allow both the Technical Team Leader and Information Management Team Leader to carry out routine application processing in addition to providing supervision and specialist knowledge. This extra capacity will result in a 0.5 FTE reduction in operational staff work being taken out of each team to sit with the team leaders, and therefore minimising the costs of retaining an additional team leader (approx. £3k).

The IM Team also includes a Project and Systems Officer which is anticipated to manage ongoing change and system projects (such as paperless working, data quality initiatives and Land Charges transferral) and will be part-funded through Land Charges revenue. In addition to providing critical project management capacity, in particular for ICT change projects, they will act as a single point of contact for ICT and IDox helpdesk calls, be able to amend and edit the IDox Uniform system (to provide a more responsive service to MKPS and planning teams) and support the integrated Land Charges system. By combining systems and projects, skills can be shared across both MKPS and Land Charges and peaks and troughs in workload evened out. This role will also act as deputy when the Information Management Team Leader is absent. The cover for this post on projects will be provided by the MKPS Manager, and systems work will be covered by training other members of the team as 'super users'.

Contact Centre – First Point of Contact Calls

Consideration is being given to how first point of contact calls will be handled within the new two-way shared service. The Customer Service Team at MBC has requested a review of where call handling takes place, which is separate and prior to the Disaggregation Project. It is considered that this review should take place as part of the setting up of a two-way shared service to minimise disruption for staff and the number of changes within the new service.

The three-way shared service currently pays for the equivalent of 2.4 FTE within the Contact Centre to handle planning calls. Fewer transactions as a result of TWBC withdrawing from the shared service would reduce resource requirements to an estimated 1.4 FTE. However, further work needs to be done to establish the percentage of calls handled entirely in the contact centre without being put through to MKPS staff for enquiries or resolution. This will help to establish the actual increase in volume of calls that can be expected should the calls be received directly by MKPS.

This review is currently underway and will impact on the costings of the shared service. There is a strong preference from the Customer Services Team for calls to be handled by MKPS, so this is a likely outcome. Based on volumes a decision would then need to be made as to whether the calls can be absorbed into the new structure, or the appropriate funding transferred with the calls to enable resourcing.

ANTICIPATED SERVICE LEVELS AND PERFORMANCE

MBC and SBC will use existing performance measures that will be reviewed by the Heads of Planning at Maidstone and Swale with the MKPS Manager upon 'go live' of the new service. Service Level Agreements will also be monitored, and as service performance continues to improve, will be adjusted operationally if required.

FINANCIAL APPRAISAL

MID KENT PLANNING SUPPORT

ORIGINAL MKPS BUSINESS CASE AND ACTUAL COSTS

The original business case for the project, which was agreed at a joint Cabinet meeting in June 2013, was set out over a period of four years from 2013/14 – 2016/17. The estimated total costs for implementation of the project, and the revenue costs of the shared service going forwards are set out in table VIII below. This does not include a contingency, or project finance tolerance of 10 percent above estimates, which was also agreed in principle.

Table VIII – Original Business Case Costs

Project Costs £	MKIP Project Support £	Forecast Revenue Costs £	Total £
195,700 (inc. capital costs)	20,000	785,394	1,001,094

Due to various issues that occurred during implementation, and necessary amendments that were made to the staffing structure before the 'go live' date, the actual implementation costs and service revenue costs in year one (a part year of 11 months as staff transferred from 1 May) were as shown in table IX below.

Table IX – Actual Project and Service Costs for year 1

Actual Project Costs £	MKIP Project Support £	Revenue Costs 2014/15 £	Total £
156,910 (inc. capital costs) 14,250 (ldox) 71,760 (consultant)	20,000	862,853	1,125,773

MKPS REVENUE BUDGET AND ONGOING COSTS TO 2016/17

The current budget for the Mid Kent Planning Support Shared Service is shown in table X and table X (a) (which excludes the Local Land Charges element) below. The tables exclude the liaison posts in the DM teams and the contact centre posts.

Table X – 2015/16 MKPS Budget and Forecast

MKPS	2015/16 Budget £		2015/16 Forecast Qtr. 1 £
	FTE		
Staff Costs	38.99	932,346	878,539
Controllable		74,838	74,838
Total	38.99*	1,007,184	953,377
	%		
MBC	27.00	269,447	257,412
SBC	34.80	347,383	331,775
TWBC	38.20	381,344	364,190

* Includes 8.81 temporary staff posts.

Table X (a) – 2015/16 MKPS Budget and Forecast (excl. Land Charges)

MKPS (excl. Land Charges)	2015/16 Budget £		2015/16 Forecast Qtr. 1 £
	FTE		
Staff Costs	31.56	823,516	734,633
Controllable		74,838	74,838
Total	31.56*	898,354	809,471
	%		
MBC	27.00	242,556	215,196
SBC	34.80	312,627	277,363
TWBC	38.20	343,171	304,463

* Includes 6.05 temporary staff posts.

The table XI below shows the ongoing project costs (for mileage payments and salary protection etc.) should the MKPS service continue to operate in its current form. These costs would only continue up to 2016/17. Following disaggregation, some of these costs may cease to occur, but new costs may be created. TWBC will continue to contribute to its proportion of the costs below that may continue following disaggregation, and have agreed to bear 100 percent of any similar new costs that are created as a direct result of the disaggregation process.

Table XI – Remaining MKPS Project Costs

	2015/16 £	2016/17* £
Business case budget	20,000	15,000
Current forecast	25,800	24,700

*These costs would not continue past 2016/17.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

FORECAST DISAGGREGATION COSTS AND FUTURE REVENUE BUDGET

TWBC have agreed to reimburse MBC and SBC all direct costs associated with the consequence of TWBC leaving the three-way shared service, and to pay for any dis-economies of scale that might occur by only having two partners left in the remaining partnership, up until the date of the break clause in the collaboration agreement, or the point at which those costs cease to be incurred, whichever is the sooner. These costs are set out at table XII below.

Additionally, TWBC have agreed to consider payment of significant indirect costs which have occurred as a result of the project, which would be over and above that which would have occurred as part of the efforts to improve performance in the service. These costs will be identified and discussed as appropriate during the implementation of the project.

The process of disaggregation by TWBC may create dis-economies of scale, whereby the costs of providing the service between two parties rather than three are increased. In this instance, TWBC had agreed to consider paying the balancing difference in order that MBC and SBC are not adversely affected by TWBC's departure. An assessment from the MKPS Manager has shown so far that there are no significant dis-economies of scale arising from this disaggregation process however, but this will be kept under review during the project implementation.

Table XII – Predicted Disaggregation Project Costs

Direct Costs to TWBC (100%)	2016/17 £
Project Management	18,000
Legal advice	5,000
Software implementation costs	52,000
Server licence	5,000
Redundancy (TBC following due process)	70,000
Total	150,000

Alongside the above estimated costs, the TWBC Cabinet meeting on 6 August agreed to the following financial delegation to the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources:

“That delegated authority be given to the Finance Director to conclude negotiations with Maidstone and Swale Borough Councils to enable Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to exit the shared service collaboration agreement, and to reimburse any direct financial consequences of this Council leaving the agreement.”

Based on the structure chart proposals for the new TWBC Planning Support Service, the anticipated revenue budget is set out in table XIII.

Table XIII – TWBC Planning Technical Team Proposed Budget

TWBC Planning Technical Team	Forecast 2016/17 £	
	FTE	
Staff Cost	9	252,190
Controllable		10,500
Less posts from DM	2	56,240
Total		206,450

ANTICIPATED SAVINGS FROM DISAGGREGATION

A comparison between tables X (a) and XIII shows that TWBC will make a revenue saving compared to the current 2015/16 MKPS budget of £94,001 in 2016/17.

This is only compared with the current 2015/16 MKPS budget, and does not take into account any future savings MKPS may be able to achieve through the streamlining and rationalisation of the service, which are anticipated (although not currently costed) now that the backlog issues have been cleared and the service is achieving a consistent level of performance against agreed indicators.

IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

It has been agreed that all reasonable implementation costs for the new two-way service, which are as a direct result of early withdrawal, are to be met by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

ANTICIPATED COST SPLIT & SAVINGS FOR THE NEW SERVICE

The basis for splitting the costs of the new service has been revisited with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council intending to withdraw from the shared service. The original method for splitting the costs was based on the historical costs of providing planning administration at each authority.

As a result of this approach the funding for the service is not currently linked to volumes of work dealt with. The original Cabinet report in June 2013 to form the shared service gave approval to moving towards a volume based costing model over time.

Table IX – MBC/SBC Original Cost Split Against Actual Volumes

	Original Split %	Volume %
SBC	59%	38%
MBC	42%	62%

The above table highlights the current disparity that exists between the level of funding for the service from each authority compared with the level of service received. Whilst this is based on an initial volume/complexity model both authorities are keen to move towards a volume based cost apportionment. Discussions will take place between Swale Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council to correct this disparity and bring SBC in line with the volume of applications dealt with on their behalf. Once that position is reached, any further savings will be split in accordance with the current volume split adjusted over a three year rolling period.

This model for balancing the budgets and delivering initial savings is dependent on volumes of work remaining static. Volumes will be monitored on a rolling three year period and one of the aims of the shared service will be to meet increased volumes from existing costs (effectively delivering a non-cashable efficiency saving in such cases). A target will be put in place to measure the proportion of planning spend that is on the shared service for each authority. By doing this the shared service efficiencies can be measured by reducing the proportion of spend on support even if spend in planning were to increase to deal with increased volumes.

Table XI - Cost Summary Tables*

	2015/16 MKPS Budget (SBC & MBC only)	New two-way structure (2016/17)
SBC	£292,971	
MBC	£227,231	
	£520,202	£458,316

*Notes:

1. Contact Centre review is not complete and could impact on total cost and profile of savings to be delivered.
2. Assumption that volumes of work remain constant over balancing period.

PROJECT MILESTONES AND KEY RISKS

PROJECT MILESTONES

MILESTONE *	DATE
Co-Located Meeting Decision Point	05/11/15
Staff Consultation – earliest Start	08/02/16
Staff new contracts issued – earliest completion	11/04/16
Separated System Available for Testing	12/05/16
Acceptance Testing Completed	24/06/16
Service Transition Starts	27/06/16

* To be confirmed upon detailed implementation planning (end Nov).

KEY DELIVERY RISKS

Title	Risk*	Owner	Mitigating Action
IDOX inability to meet deadlines	Timescales may slip if IDOX do not have the required resources to complete the work by required delivery date.	Project Exec	Senior Supplier for ICT and Project Manager to hold meeting with IDOX to discuss timescales and gain agreement to planned project dates.
Decisions made outside the project governance framework	The project could be affected if decisions made outside of the project governance framework are not captured and co-ordinated	Project Exec	An increased level of engagement with the corporate bodies of each authority made be needed by the Project Manager and Project Sponsor. Key decisions log to be implemented by Project Manager
Multiple disaggregation by partners at different stages	Choosing to disaggregate at different speeds will add complexity to the project, and may affect the successful delivery of certain tasks within an agreed timeframe	Project Exec	Project Sponsor and Project Manager to build as much consensus as possible regarding simultaneous timescales, and to plan the project around mutually agreed dates.

*Risks listed above have the Highest Severity Rating in the Project Risk Register.

PROJECT DELIVERY APPROACH

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

This project will be managed through a PRINCE2 (Projects in Controlled Environments) type method, tailored for local government use in a partnership environment. Project Plans, Risk and Issue Logs will be maintained by a dedicated Project Manager.

PROJECT ASSURANCE

Early discussions have taken place with Mid Kent Audit, who will perform external project assurance on a stage by stage basis for the project. The results of this assurance work.

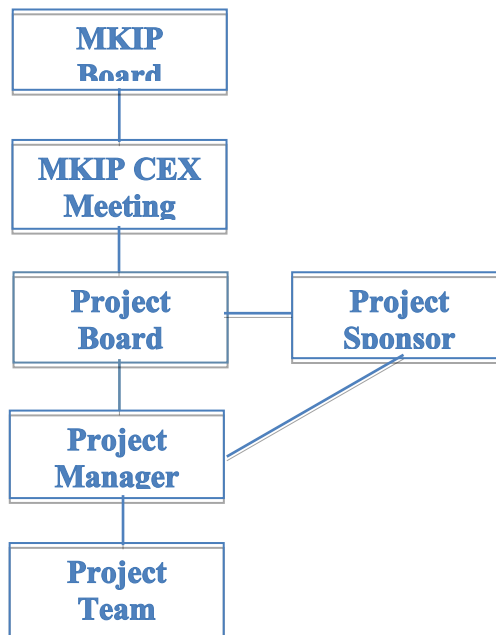
The first piece of assurance work, which will be reported independently to the Project Sponsor and the Chief Executives of the three authorities, will look at the information that has been provided to the Disaggregation Project Board over the last few months. This will provide assurance that the Board has been given the correct information in order to come to a decision on the PID and Business Case.

PROJECT ORGANISATION

The Project Board will be supported by a Project Manager who will be responsible for reporting to the board on progress and risks. Individual Project Team Members at each authority will be responsible for reporting to the project manager on a day to day basis regarding progress.

The Project Board, through the Project Sponsor will be responsible for reporting to the MKIP CEx Meeting, and the individual Project Executives will be responsible for reporting progress corporately within their own organisations.

The Chief Executives will be responsible for reporting to the MKIP Board, but may require the Project Sponsor, and/or Project Manager to attend the meeting.



PROJECT ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Project Sponsor	Paul Taylor Responsible for: Chairs and organises (with Project Manager) Project Board meetings. Day to day project delivery. Day to day ownership of risks. Day to day ownership of project initiation checklist. Monitoring (with Project Manager) project tolerances. Creation (with Project Manager) of exception reports. Creation (with Project Manager) of exception reports to Project Board or MKIP CEx Meeting.
Project Executives	David Edwards, James Freeman, Lee Colyer Responsible for: Overall project delivery. Ownership of PID and ensuring it aligns with corporate strategies. Securing funding for their organisation when required. Holding Senior Suppliers to account for project and product quality. Holding Senior Users to account for ensuring the benefits can be realised. Overall ownership of risks. Escalation of exception reports to MKIP CEx Meeting. Overall ownership of project closure.
Project Manager	Michael Josh Responsible for: Production and monitoring of Project Governance documents. Monitoring of project work streams. Preparing project update reports for Project Board. Preparing escalation reports (with Sponsor, Senior User and Senior Supplier) for Project Board. Producing and monitoring risk register, action log and issues log. Preparing (with Project Sponsor and Senior Users) project closure document and benefits review plans. Directing and monitoring work of Project Teams as required (in collaboration with Senior Users and Senior Suppliers).

IMPLICATIONS

STAFFING AND HR IMPLICATIONS

It is important to note that all figures used in this document are for business case purposes only. Actual staffing structures and budgets for each authority may change following the staff consultation period, or as a result of continued discussion and refinement between the three authorities before the staff consultation is launched.

It is also noted here that MBC are currently the employers of the staff, and so have additional responsibilities in this area that may result in additional implications to be considered for that authority only.

The staffing arrangements that are currently proposed for the TWBC stand-alone service and the two-way MBC/SBC service are as follows (staffing figures may change depending on the needs of the business case before the staff consultation is launched, or following the staffing consultation to reflect comments received):

	TWBC Standalone	MBC/SBC Two-way
Team Leader	1 FTE	
Senior Technical Officer	2 FTE	
Technical Officer	6 FTE	
MKPS Manager		1 FTE
Team Leader*		3.81 FTE
Planning Support Officer		9 FTE
Projects and Systems Officer*		1 FTE
Local Land Charges Officer		4.6 FTE
Information Mgt. Officer		3 FTE
SUB-TOTAL	9 FTE	22.41 FTE
TOTAL	31.41 FTE	

* Various specialisms

TUPE PROCESS

TWBC’s withdrawal from MKPS will have a significant impact on all of the staff currently working within the service. Whilst the collaboration agreement deals with the correct process for withdrawal of an authority from a shared service, additional advice has been sought from ASB Law regarding the clauses in the collaboration agreement, and how the TUPE regulations apply to the project proposals.

The advice has indicated that TUPE principles should be applied to this situation, and therefore any staff transferring into a new service will transfer on identical terms and conditions, with any continuous employment and membership of the LGPS being recognised.

STAFF CONSULTATION

Following the decision to disaggregate, a staff consultation will be launched that will last for a period of 30 days. During this time, staff will be provided with detailed information regarding the available roles and structure of the TWBC new service, and the proposed two-way MBC/SBC service, including detailed job descriptions, gradings and pay information. Staff will be asked to express an interest in the available roles for both services, and an explanation will be given of the process for allocating staff to roles (which has been mutually agreed by the HR leads from each authority), should any roles be oversubscribed. During the consultation period, 1:1 meetings will be held with all affected staff to discuss their individual circumstances in more detail.

Trade Unions representatives' at all three authorities will also be sent the proposals for consideration, and will be asked for comments.

Following the consultation period, the three authorities will consider the consultation comments, and MBC will prepare a response on behalf of all three. It is at this point that any proposed changes will be jointly agreed or otherwise by the three authorities.

DM LIAISON STAFF

The liaison staff currently working in Development Management (DM) will be included in the staff consultation for Planning Support Disaggregation as their roles are materially affected by the changes. However, these roles are funded separately by the DM teams in each authority, and perform a mix of some Planning Support work, and some DM work. The authorities will need to decide separately whether they wish to retain these posts following disaggregation, and how the current DM and Planning Support work that is performed will be handled in the future.

TRAINING AND UPSKILLING OF STAFF

TWBC has committed to ensuring that any members of staff that are transferred into the new team as part of the TUPE process will be given appropriate training and “upskilling” to allow them to competently perform all parts of the Planning Technical role, as defined by TWBC. This is because TWBC is proposing to operate a multi-disciplinary team that will perform all identified functions for this service, rather than splitting the service into disciplines as is the current practice at MKPS.

Training plans for all staff will be created and delivered by the Head of Facilities and Business Support, and will be executed as part of the implementation plan for the new service. Successful delivery of these training plans will be monitored through the project objectives, and will continue to be monitored post implementation through a Benefits Management Plan.

The proposed MBC-SBC two-way service will continue to operate as three distinct specialities within the service, but will more effectively use the skills of staff within each team to deliver a high quality and efficient service.

TECHNOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is important to note here that Maidstone Borough Council are the contract holders for the current Idox contract. As such there may be additional implications that relate solely to Maidstone Borough Council, which will need to be considered by that authority only.

Detailed discussions with MKIP ICT and the software providers, IDOX, have confirmed that the Uniform software solution and associated modules, which is used to process planning applications, can be technologically disaggregated.

Several options were presented to the Disaggregation Project Board, along with associated implications for each option, however it was the option to continue with the existing contract with IDOX, and install a separate instance of Uniform for TWBC, which was chosen as the most cost effective, secure and manageable solution going forwards.

Moving forwards, this would mean that all software licensing costs would continue to remain as part of the current IDOX contract, and each authority would be committed to meeting its financial obligations under this contract. All authorities can then continue to benefit from the saving that was achieved through the joint procurement of the contract.

Within the contract and as part of the technological solution, MKIP ICT will then set up a separate instance of the Uniform software. This will take a “snapshot” of the information on the

planning administration modules, and load it into a separate area for secure use by TWBC officers. The separate instance will allow TWBC to make changes to its software without affecting MBC/SBC, and vice versa. Additional set up costs to secure this separate solution would be incurred by TWBC, and this has been initially estimated at around £52,000.

Whilst the separate solution is on balance the best option for the three authorities, there are still long term implications that must be recognised as a part of this option.

1. The unilaterally agreed MKIP ICT strategy aims to consolidate and share software solutions across the partnership authorities. A decision to create a separate instance of the Uniform application and associated modules will lead to Mid Kent ICT having responsibility for supporting multiple systems across the MKIP partners. A consequence of this deviation from accepted strategy will be a reduction in capacity of the Mid Kent ICT team to support partners in general and a negative impact on predicted shared service savings.
2. There will be consequential changes needed to Gazetteer management, GIS systems and Land Charges, which transfer information between their systems and the planning IDOX Uniform system. The ongoing management and updating of these systems into what will be two separate ICT systems will need to be considered by the relevant departments.
3. This solution will be highly dependant on the software provider, IDOX, and their ability to deliver the required changes in time for the project to progress.
4. Significant work will be required from MKIP ICT to deliver the separate solution, which may have an impact on routine work plans for the year.
5. A new agreement will need to be established between TWBC and the remaining partners regarding protocols and priorities for future upgrades of the separate systems, as these will no longer be completed concurrently.
6. Implementation of the new secured instance of IDOX Uniform cannot take place until the remaining work to complete the original installation of the service for MKPS has been completed. This will impact on timescales for disaggregation, and is a direct dependency for the disaggregation project.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

LEGAL ADVICE ON THE CURRENT COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

Legal advice was sought from Bevan Brittan on clauses in the collaboration agreement. In summary the advice stated the following:

1. The (Planning Support) Shared Service is a contractual and not an administrative arrangement under Section 101 Local Government Act 1972.
2. The draft Collaboration Agreement is the contractual document which the parties agree will govern the Shared Service, and will be relied on in relation to TWBC's withdrawal from the Shared Service. This has been drafted in consensual way and relies on the three councils reaching agreement in relation to any variation or termination of the Collaboration Agreement, and the operation of the Shared Service.
3. The (Shared Service) Board established by the Collaboration Agreement is the decision making forum for the Shared Service, unless any decision affects the agreed budget; in which case each of the council's Cabinets (or relevant decision making body) would independently need to make such a decision.

4. The Collaboration Agreement contains provisions to deal with the TUPE of the staff and also brief exit provisions.
5. Where the councils do not reach agreement there is a dispute procedure contained in the Collaboration Agreement.
6. The Idox contract has only been entered into by MBC; the licence is stated to be done non-transferable and the only scope is for non-material variations.

The main point from the collaboration agreement is that it is based on the authorities reaching consensus, and gives the authorities a very wide remit to vary any terms and conditions, provided that they are agreed on a consensual basis.

Where consensus cannot be reached, the authorities will ultimately need to rely on the arbitration clause (clause 19) of the document, whereby any authority can refer the matter to an independent arbitrator, who should be jointly agreed to arbitrate the dispute. If the authorities cannot agree on an independent arbitrator, the appointment shall be determined by the President or Vice President of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

NEW MBC-SBC COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

Following the withdrawal of TWBC from the partnership, MBC and SBC will need to negotiate a new collaboration agreement for the revised two-way service. This is anticipated to be a fairly simple process however, as all MKIP collaboration agreements follow the same template with identical legal clauses for the majority of the sections in the agreement, however the two authorities will need to agree a new Service Level Agreement that will be used to monitor the two-way service going forwards.

NEW LAND CHARGES SHARED SERVICE COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

It has been confirmed that the three authorities wish to continue sharing arrangements for the Local Land Charges service. Performance levels for this part of MKPS have remained fairly consistent and on target, and it is anticipated that the service will be discontinued by 2023 as the Land Registry takes on the responsibility for providing this function from local government.

As such, a new collaboration agreement that deals exclusively with a three-way shared partnership for the Local Land Charges service will need to be created between MBC, SBC and TWBC.

DATA SHARING AND SECURITY AGREEMENT

Whilst it is intended that the separate instance of the IDOX Uniform system that will be created for TWBC is a secure and independent system, there may still be some limited scope for information to be inadvertently seen by officers from MBC and SBC, and vice versa.

In this instance, it is felt prudent that the authorities create and agree a data sharing and security agreement to ensure that any data held by each authority is treated appropriately and securely, and that data held by other authorities, which may be inadvertently seen, is not intentionally accessed, amended, deleted or otherwise altered in any way without the express consent of the authority that owns the data.

The agreement will also cover how temporary/contracted Development Management staff, or consultants, will be treated and expectations of conduct when accessing the system.

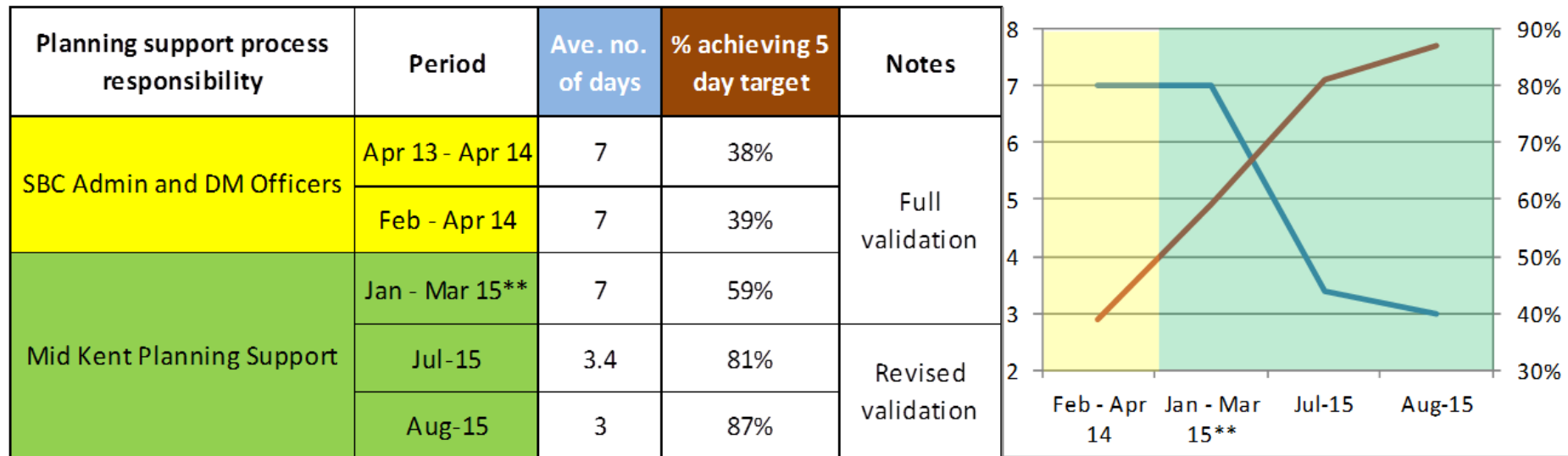
OTHER IMPLICATIONS

FUTURE COST OF REPROCUREMENT OF SOFTWARE

There is a risk to revenue budgets that should be noted by each authority for future years, as it is unlikely that another software contract can be procured at such advantageous rates as the current contract achieves, if each authority has to re-procure the system separately.

Validation Performance

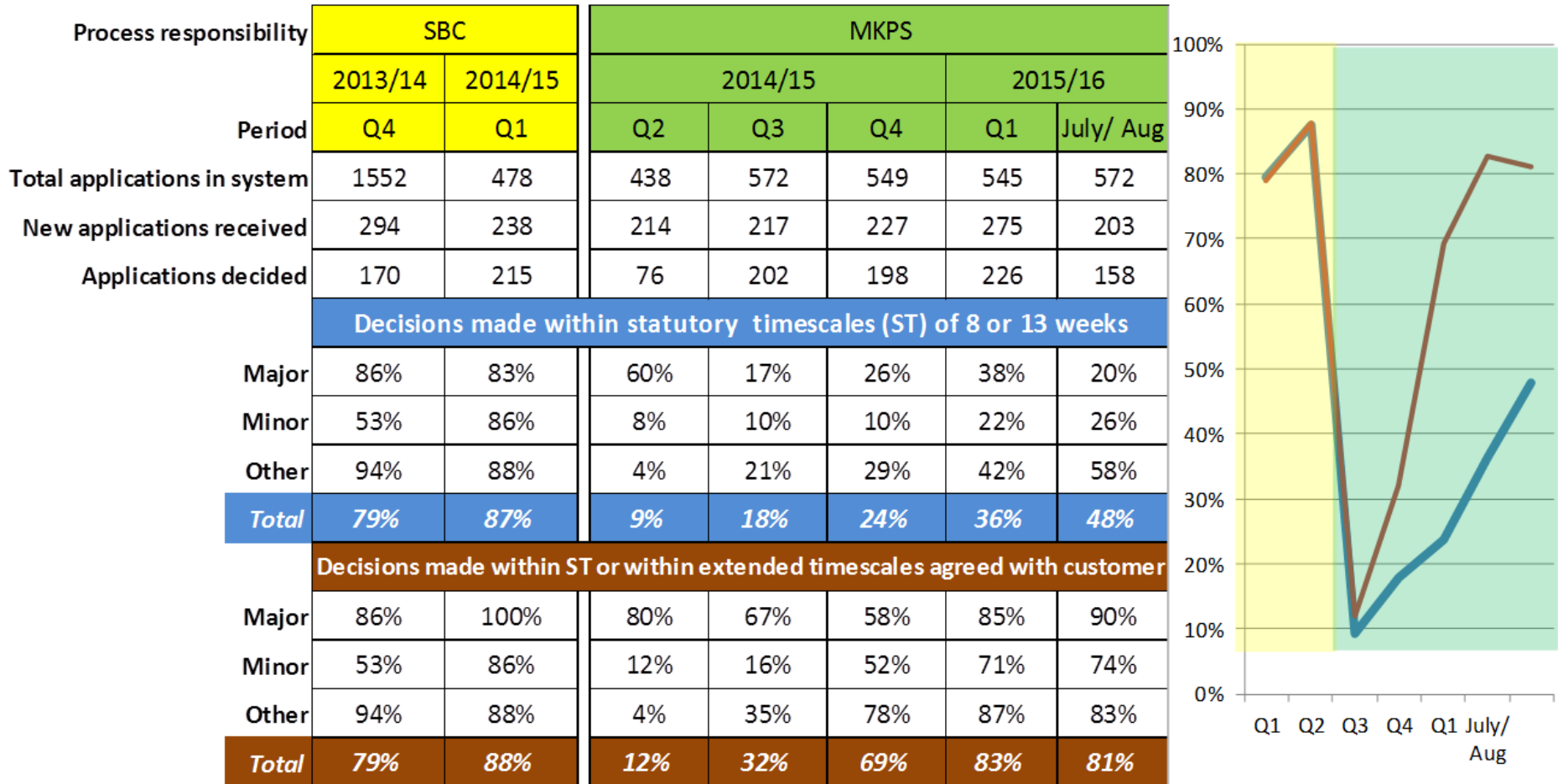
(Application registered to acknowledgement sent - working days)



** Higher than expected levels of validation quality issues hence revised validation levels implemented

Decision Making Performance

% Decisions made within statutory timescales (with and without time extensions)



Cost Review of Swale Borough Council Options

Type of cost	2015/16 SBC Budget Current Partnership	2015/16 MBC Budget Current Partnership	Latest 2015/16 Forecast Current Partnership	Partnership with MBC Only	Partnership with MBC Only	SBC Alone	SBC Alone
	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual 2016/17	Annual 2017/18	Annual	One Off
Recharge from MBC	£278,966	£312,630	£277,360	£302,970	£185,080	£0	£0
Project Manager						£0	£80,000
Staff						£194,600	£0
Other staff costs						£0	£8,000
Additional CSC support						£22,500	£0
Office running expenses						£5,170	£0
Postage						£7,340	£0
IDOX						£0	£52,250
Software maintenance						£10,000	£20,000
Scanning						£800	£0
Total	£278,966	£312,630	£277,360	£302,970	£185,080	£240,410	£160,250

Pros and Cons Matrix of Swale BC Options

	Pros	Cons
Option 1 – SBC/MBC shared service		
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Limited disruption and risks to service continuation – except TWBC disaggregation ▪ Action Plan in place with expectation of overcoming/reducing current ‘quality’ issues in MKPS service ▪ Performance within shared service, particularly in relation to MKPS speed of delivery is hitting agreed targets and expectation of returning to full validation responsibilities in October 15 ▪ Any IT development would relate to a shared benefitting from joint learning and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whilst performance within MKPS has reached target levels, continuing problems with quality of outputs hinder DM performance to meet corporate PIs – after 16 months all issues not resolved ▪ Can lead to lack of flexibility or slow response within support team to deal with SBC DM team issues ▪ It system development would need to be tailored to more than one authorities needs/wants – sometimes conflicting and difficult to resolve ▪ Prospects for improvement dependant upon successful roll out of Action Plan and those actions giving rise to expected improved efficiencies and performance
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No costs to SBC (and MBC) with TWBC meeting all disaggregation costs ▪ Costs in medium to long term significantly lower than a single alone service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current shared service reliant on additional temporary staff and their associated costs ▪ Costs in immediate term higher than cost of a joint SBC/MBC shared service
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Given partnership reduced to two partners – should be able to tailor service to needs of less authorities e.g. moving validation of ‘major’ applications back to officers ▪ Increased resilience by sharing support staff in terms of numbers ▪ Should be able to secure long term good practice benefits ▪ Delivery of a defined service level from support with agreed practices and procedures that when followed reduce the likelihood of challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On occasions where required, less able to make immediate / urgent decisions either at head of service level or through the team being able to make an adhoc decision to speed up processes or decision making on an application ▪ Continuing efforts to improve performance and quality of service does involve significant senior manager and officer resource and input
Reputation and Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue with proven customer response service based at Maidstone based on proved flow charts and knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SBC service will be dependent upon compromise decisions regarding operation of shared service, and cannot meet all swale expectations – although workflows should be agreed by SBC and followed unless

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With improved performance – speed and quality – customer confidence will increase ▪ Maintain staff morale within MKPS – recognition of desire to continue with shared service ▪ Maintain resilience of back office service less susceptible to staff changes 	<p>otherwise agreed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of visual or verbal communication has led and could continue to lead to issues arising without early warning and resolution and impact on customer confidence (noting efforts to reduce such occurrences) ▪ Quality of service is dependent upon performance and quality control within the shared service, not under the direct control of Swale Head of Planning ▪ Existing customers, particularly agents have lost some confidence in the principle of the shared service, due to the initial delays and errors in validation ▪ The publicising of the problems with the service may undermine the chances of recruiting quality staff
Option 2 – SBC alone		
Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could reduce potential conflict between teams when things go wrong as resolved quickly by head of service at single location ▪ Swale planning management would be solely responsible for Swale planning performance – increased accountability ▪ DM Team have suffered significant increased stress issues during shared service initiation – they would generally support return of back office functions to swale and improve morale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MKPS are meeting targets regarding speed of outputs and there is no reason why many of the ‘qualitative’ issues could not be resolved by joint action with MBC – see action plan ▪ Opportunity for shared support to improving IT system to establish increased efficiencies through ‘paperless’ working and other IT improvements ▪ Major disruption to MKPS staff – affecting morale and staff retention ▪ Returning to a single alone service could undermine the need to bring about transformational change in the use of IT systems with the inclination to return to ‘old ways’ of operating
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expected revenue costs are higher in the medium term as the partnership moves to a volume based contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incur significant disaggregation costs in short term circa £80k ▪ Incur significant project management costs in short term circa £80K ▪ Would require significant time and resource input from senior managers and staff significantly beyond that of continuing with partnership and the potential consequence on maintaining focus on handling case work

Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maximum flexibility for swale head of service to deliver what SBC wants without needing to discuss with another authority with SBC solely accountability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inevitable short term impacts (two to three months?) on performance through IT start-up issues and workflow unknowns will need to be managed, and need to provide additional back office and DM resource to manage potential backlog
Reputation and Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subject to good project outcome, would provide significant milestone to re-establish good customer relationships ▪ Subject to successful implementation of disaggregation project) – improve morale of DM Team by meeting staff expectations and potentially reduce stress. ▪ Customer recognition that planning services provided in Swale is provided by Swale Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant set up risks for new alone service and further loss of reputation amongst customers ▪ Significant short term risks of undermining PI performance, and potential for Government intervention in accordance with new government regulations regarding poor performing authorities ▪ Current Customer service provided by MBC is well regarded. Establishing separate service could undermine the high quality service provided and may be difficult to replicate at Swale BC

Planning Advisory Service Review - Summary and Actions

1. Introduction and Focus

Swale Borough Council asked the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to undertake a mini review of the development management service, particularly the planning applications and customer interface elements of the service following the recent introduction of a new IT systems and the setting up of shared planning support service with Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells. This review was undertaken by Gilian Macinnes and Phillipa Silcock of the Planning Advisory Service (on site 15th and 16th September 2015).

The intention of the review is to collate and reflect views of the DM service and identify potential areas for improvement. This is not a full planning service review and the focus is on the areas where there are the most challenging issues and need for action to improve the service.

2. The Positive

- Quality of planning services contribution to development in Swale
- Dedicated planning officers that take a pride in their work
- Customer Service Centre- general view that is has improved
- Document management (Public Access) vastly improved access for all interested in planning, giving communities a better chance to engage in planning.
- Shared service staff positive about their role
- Initial application scanning is proficient and up to date
- Validation ('light') is meeting the current KPI
- Shared major application validation role (recognises complexity, minimises handling/notification/consultation, builds officer/ shared service relationships, applicant benefits)
- Many Tech team functions generally effective
- Swale's leadership and management acknowledgement of need for additional resources to clear the backlog

3. Quotes

"The Council need the customer to be happy – first time every time" (Councillor)

"Management of our planning service inward looking rather than providing a good outward facing service" (Councillor)

"The new approaches do not all appear to be working in the public interest. However – [Swale Planning Department] joined the 21st Century" (Parish)

"Overall impression it does work well 90% of the time but they need to sort out the other bits, and work together to improve the rest" (Parish)

*[Swale were]."**the best planning authority in Kent, or one of the best, to work with"* (Agent)

“Doing validation from the start is easier than unpicking a partly done process and correcting it” (Officer)

“Fair to say that Swale’s website guidance on planning is all out of date.....therefore this applies pressure to contact centre and to case officers phoned for advice” (Officer)

4. Fundamentals

Swale made a decision to enter the shared service on the basis of deciding that planning support, including validation, were processes that could be separated out from the rest of the planning application service.

It has been acknowledged that the implementation of the new shared service, the IT systems, procedures and processes was very poorly executed – some of the ‘promised’ IT is still not in place and much of it is not fully trusted.

It is apparent that the shared service has been unsuccessful in many areas particularly IT system implementation and validation. However, these serious project implementation, on- going IT and communication issues make it very difficult to assess how successful the overall shared service could be if, or when, they are addressed.

The reduction in the level of service provided by Development Management has adversely affected the reputation of Swale’s Planning Service. However, although wearing thin in some quarters, there has been, and remains, a lot of good will towards the service.

The new IT system and shared service is a massive cultural change for Swale planning officers, moving from paper based systems where they felt fairly autonomous and in control to IT based systems. People generally don’t like change – they need to feel involved, listened to and supported through change which has not happened effectively. In addition, they were ‘sold’ change that did not happen- e.g. parts of the system missing causing confusion and uncertainty.

It was also a massive cultural change for planning support staff that were ‘TUPEd’ over to the new shared service – many of whom moved working location, to a different IT system, different processes, different colleagues and managers.

There has been a lot of ‘blame’ and lack of communication between the Swale planning officers and the shared support service. The change has not been a shared experience- with the two sites experiencing it separately. The behaviour of some officers has been unacceptable. If this delivery model is going to succeed, there is a need to significantly improve the channels of communication and build relationships

5. The Big Issues

The three big issues are:

- (i) IT: the systems are not fully functional, are operationally slow; have missing data; include ‘work arounds’ to try and overcome the deficiencies of the systems provided by IDOX; and are not trusted by officers.

- (ii) The lack of change management – the failure to appreciate the distance Swale officers have to travel to effectively use the new systems and processes to undertake their role in the service to achieve the previous performance level.
- (iii) The failure in communication throughout the project to date:
 - Feedback loops are missing which would help all those involved understand where there is a mistake (or perceived mistake) and learn from it.
 - Lack of communication between the managers and staff – in terms of understanding that these are Swale’s procedures – agreed by their managers in the interests of the service- not being imposed from the MKIP/ support services entity. Managers need to take ownership of the change – everyone needs to understand why change is happening in the way it is.
 - Lack of communication with those that have contributed to shared service changes/ processes/procedures. Have their contributions been a success/ failure/ required changes etc.?
 - Lack of communication with parishes, agents and residents.

Note: the legacy of the poor implementation of the project, from the start and throughout, means that Swale and the management of the shared service have an even higher hill to climb in terms of changing attitudes to the IT systems and the shared service, training and building confidence.

6. Actions

IT issues

- 1) To ensure that Swale has an effective and efficient planning Development Management Service fully functional planning IT systems need to be implemented as a corporate priority for Swale (and for the shared service). Issues to be addressed include :
 - i) identify the key elements of the IT system that are not currently operating in the desired manner and ensure effective implementation;
 - ii) identify and undertake the further work required to ensure that the current IT systems work and can be trusted by officers (e.g. GIS capture- see 2 below);
 - iii) implementation of all the elements of the IT systems as promised pre-implementation of the shared service and IT platforms (e.g. DOC Loader, Redact etc); and
 - iv) improve the operational speed of the system which is hindering efficiency in planning support.

There are a number of actions, set out below that will only be effectively implemented when the full functionality of the system is available and utilised by the appropriate staff. Swale managers need to clearly define to IT/shared service (and through them IDOX) what they want the service to look like and make sure that they receive an IT plan from the shared service that is properly resourced; managed to ensure testing, training and delivery of the systems; and a reliable timetable for the completion.

- 2) Trust issues with the system need to be addressed as a priority –e.g. to overcome the issues with histories and constraints (i) all the post-1974 history and all constraints need to be accurately located on GIS and (ii) the Planning support officers that will be required to check the pre-74 histories (plotting sheets etc) need to be trained. Failure to sort out these issues and build trust will make it very difficult to achieve effective and efficient implementation of the shared service.
- 3) Identify the further IT procedure changes that would improve the use of the system e.g. electronic notification to Parish Council Clerks of application going to committee; officers generating additional consultation letters etc (although any errors need to be appropriately identified to improve learning).

Change management, training and communication

- 4) Swale managers need to take ownership of the DM service changes:
 - explain why changes have been made to the process/procedures and why they are the right ones for Swale;
 - listen to officer/support service and external concerns, and respond;
 - challenge the negativity expressed by officers;
 - support the team leaders to consistently implement the changes and encourage them to get their teams to do so;
 - require officers to execute the changes rather than circumventing them; and
 - enforce a 'three line whip' on all training – no opt outs.
- 5) Make sure that there is a procedure and processes manual in place (dynamic) defining clear responsibilities and reporting lines. This will make processes more consistent, increase clarity about who does what in the process, facilitate training new members of staff, and reduces uncertainty which reduces stress.
- 6) Audit the understanding of each officer in terms of the new IT and processes and training them in the gaps.
- 7) Train the planning officers in the adopted validation procedures – explaining the approach - to increase their understanding of how it works in practice and therefore helping them to identify mistakes and aid learning and development of the validation team.
- 8) Going forward (full implementation/ updates etc) - allow enough time for officers to receive training in IT and new systems/procedures.
- 9) Identify the officers that are more IT literate and able to accept the change and use them to help others in the service to utilise the IT and accept the change - although initially there may not be enough (additional hand holding resource might be required).
- 10) Embrace and promote the quality circles and act upon/respond to their finding. Also make sure that feedback loops are identified and recognised to promote learning – the results of these must be supported or they will be counter-productive.
- 11) Make sure all support staff, including the CSC, appreciate the role of Parish Councils.

- 12) All support staff need to understand critical issues for Swale (including CSC), that may be different from the other authorities and how their actions may impact on decision making. e.g. delegated powers - committee reference based on Parish objection.
- 13) Create a communications plan – identify meetings, communicate all changes in approach/ procedure to the relevant party in a timely way.
- 14) Performance manage officers in relation to:
 - allocation/reallocation aligned with Shared service – part of the validation process.;
 - use of the system (not circumventing it) - two screens are there for a purpose;
 - sticking to validation and amended plan protocols;
 - use the system and minimise printing (e.g. consultation/ notification responses);
 - inputting application reports;
 - positive benefits of identifying improvements to IT and use of it to improve flow;
 - responsiveness to system change issues (e.g. new templates); and
 - overall behaviours – towards the new system/other staff.
- 15) The support team resources should be carefully monitored to make sure that it is kept at a level to facilitate full IT system and process implementation and achieve, speed, quality and confidence.

Mitigation and other actions

- 16) The temporary measure of ‘validation light ‘– might have been desirable to clear the backlog from validation but this only moved the issues further down the line and increased the potential handling of the applications. There now needs to be a full validation service for householders, others and minors.
- 17) Application assessment backlog measures:
 - review the quality of consultants work;
 - review signing – blockage – need more signing officers? and
 - remove officer names as contact- communicate with applicants and agents.
- 18) Update web site and guidance
- 19) Minimise any further organisations changes that affect the Swale planning officers until the full functionality of the shared IT system and planning support is realised. These changes will need to bed in, achieving certainty and stabilisation of the team, removal of the backlog, return to higher performance/service levels and hence increased team morale.

Note: Many of the issues and actions that have been identified above relate to the poor implementation of the new IT systems and therefore regardless of any decision Swale may make on the Shared Support Service these IT implementation issues will still need to be addressed to see a marked improvement in the Swale Development Management Service.

MKPS Improvement Action Plan Overview

	Proj No.	Project	Progress	Notes	Resources	Owner	Lead Officer	Start Date	Target Date	Costs	Benefits
Partnership Wide (in priority order)	1	Disaggregation Project	Underway	Being run at an MKIP level but need to be aware of for resourcing.	HoP, ROC, AJ, (planning resources only)	PT	HoP, ROC,AJ				
	2	Data Quality	Underway	Scoping work has begun. Feedback from departments by 1 November, simple issues are being solved by IT.	IT, IDox, ROC, Team Leaders, CY	PT	CY	Jul-15	Jan-16	Direct costs - IDox/temp staff	Improve data reliability within multiple software programmes which will reduce errors and reduce risk of legal challenge by ensuring the use of incorrect information and decision are made using correct/full information. Decrease officer time spent locating information and generally provide a better service for customers.
	3	Reduce Invalids	Scoping	Reputation work/ Communications/workshops with agents. Initial discussion held with comms.	Planning Team Leaders, ROC, CY	PT	ROC	Jul-15	Mar-16	Internal	Improve service reputation, decrease the time an application is with planning support without compromising validation quality. Increase validation officer time spent on other core work activities.
	4	IDox Delivery Plan (including 1App, CICO and Docloader)	Underway	Upgrade plan has been confirmed as separated into four phases (PA, Uniform, Oracle and DMS) between November 2015 and February 2016. 1App reception page will be turned on October 5, DocLoader will be reviewed on October 12.	IT, IDox, ROC, Team Leaders, CY	PT	ROC	Sep-15	Mar-16	Upgrade £££	Benefits of new upgrades and solving current IDox software issues will improve speed of service as a whole. Remove the risk of down time caused by unforeseen system errors. Allow staff to see changes before it goes live therefore preventing the service to slow as a consequence of upgrades.
	5	Customer Experience (Websites)	Underway - with KCMP	Unify and update information , KCMP completing website analysis recommendations in Nov'15. KCMP brief provided and signed of by SSB 20/08/15.	Web Team, Team Leaders, Legal, ROC, CY	PT	CY	Nov-15	Feb-16	Internal	Improve reputation and external impression of the service, reduce phone calls and time spent on queries by having information easily accessible on the website.
	6	Review	Underway- IDox Plan & with HoS	Pre-step to paperless, establish ideal procedures and expectations of the service. Draft specification provided at SSB (20/08/15) awaiting HoS comments.	ROC, CR, CP, CY, Planning	ROC	CY	Sep-15	Jan-16	Not yet scoped (could be significant)	Increase planning officer productive time, decrease time spent retrieving information and processing hardcopy files. Decrease cost of printing, scanning and uploading.
		Paperless			IT, IDox, Planning Officers, ROC, CY	PT	ROC	Jan-16	Jan-17		
7	Communications & Support	Scoping	Sharepoint has been created, documents are currently being added, awaiting feedback from IT regarding user permissions before	Planning, ROC, CY	PT	ROC	Sep-15	Dec-15	Internal	Internal benefits of improving communication between DM teams and PS and promoting culture change. A place to share knowledge (e.g procedure	

				access can be given.							manuals), cascade decisions (e.g minutes) and generally improve support for officers.
	8	Improve Reputation	Scoping	Communication plan including Parish/Wards. Reputation improvement underway due to performance improvement but need to review what additional actions are required.	Team Leaders, ROC, CY	PT	ROC	Aug-15	Mar-16	Internal	Increased trust and reputation for each Council.
Planning Support (in priority order)	9	Land Charges- Performance Reports	Complete	ROC is creating a LLC report. Report finished 06/10/2015.	IT, Land Charges, ROC	ROC	CW	Jul-15	Sep-15	Internal	Easily understand work load and productivity within LLC team. Improved information for decision making and to provide partners confidence in service.
		Land Charges Online Service 1) Online Submission Module	Underway	Swift Data have created the template, MKIP to test and establish payment methods. ROC is creating a LLC report.	Swift, IT, Finance, Web Team, ROC, CW, CY						Improve customer experience, promote a paperless work ethic and decrease time officers spend on administration work.
	10	2) Website	Underway	Research underway on other Councils, discussion to be had with the web team regarding options for a single website for all three. ROC is creating a LLC report.	Web Team, CW, ROC, CY	ROC	CY	Jul-15	Sep-15	Swift time £££	Improve customer experience, present accurate information about service, standardise and improve information encourage customeronline self service and decrease queries by phone.
	11	Land Charges - Align Fees	On Hold	Changes set for 2017/18, need to be approved in September 2016. There is significant work to sort out LLC budgets before this can be progressed, ROC is creating a LLC report.	IT, Legal, Finance, Swift, CW, ROC	ROC	CW	Jan-16	Sep-16	Internal	Improve customer experience and officers would spend less time on administration tasks. Fees to meet business requirements.

Projects	Red	Amber	Green	Blue	Other
15	0	7	2	1	2