

PUBLIC PROTECTION SHARED SERVICE

UPDATE – 12th NOVEMBER 2009

At the October meeting of the Chief Executives the Updated Business Case was considered and the three recommendations approved:

- To progress the project on the basic principles contained in the Business Case.
- Extend the project time by 6 months to allow time for systems redesign, consideration of TUPE and revisit the Business Case.
- To appoint a full time Project Manager.

Following the meeting it became clear that Lincolnshire County Council were not completely happy with the decision at all levels, Member, Senior Management and staff.

The project manager has been in communication with the Corporate Director, who has questioned the direction of the project and the potential impact on the existing Trading Standards Service. In the latest communication he has asked a number of questions relating to the Outline Business Case and requiring a detailed response before the County would commit to the next phase.

On 12th November the project manager met with the Chief Executive, and officers to see if we could agree a way forward that would keep everyone together in the partnership.

Unfortunately this has not been possible:

- The County want definitive answers to a number of questions relating to governance, risk and financial scrutiny of the Business Case. It is not possible to provide this until the Detailed Business Case is completed which requires further input from the County in respect of TUPE and budgets base data. The County position is that they will not commit any further resource to the project and will not cooperate to provide the base data. This appears to me to be critical and final because we cannot produce the Detailed Business Case without it. We have scheduled to meet head of service for Trading Standards at the County Council today (13th November), that meeting has been cancelled by the County

- The County are not prepared to commit to the systems redesign stage of the project and will not provide the necessary resources. They do not believe that a lean systems review will produce delivery framework that will improve the one they already have in place. They would be happy for the Environmental Health and Licensing teams to go through this process as long as the outcome is that it aligns Environmental Health and Licensing with the County Trading Standards delivery model.
- They cannot see how a County Public Protection Service can work without the inclusion of the City of Lincoln.
- The Outline Business Case identified savings at Senior Management Level and they do not agree with this as they are concerned about the loss of specialist management and technical skills.
- They are not convinced that the project will produce a satisfactory Business Case and consequently are not prepared to commit resource.
- Not raised at today's meeting but Assistant Chief Executive for the County Council is challenging the basis of the project financial assumptions and claiming that the Outline Business Case has double counted £200,000 of savings that is already taken as part of his New Ways of Working project and they will continue to challenge this.

On the positive side:

- They are prepared to wait until early in the New Year to see where Environmental Health and Licensing systems redesign takes us.
- Similarly they are prepared to wait until we can answer their specific Business Case questions before pulling out entirely even though this is not possible without their cooperation.
- They remain open to the principle of co-location of services if this provides savings.

An assessment of the situation is that they will not return to the project even if we could satisfy them on these points.

What does this mean?:

- Trading Standards represents 40% of a potential shared Public Protection Service both in terms of staff and expenditure. Without their inclusion it is difficult to see how a shared service so severely reduced in scope could produce the targeted efficiencies not least because of the high IT set up costs.
- We have one expression of interest for the role of Project Manager but the project is now potentially so fundamentally different that there has to be a danger that the expression of interest will be withdrawn.
- We could continue the project with a reduced scope of Environmental Health and Licensing but with the previous withdrawal of Lincoln this may not have critical mass and consequently may not be viable.

Conclusion

Recommendation would be that we abandon the project and look for alternative solutions through smaller local partnership initiatives.

