HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Project Management Board – Update on Project Management
Meeting/Date:	**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) – 4th Sept 2014**
Executive Portfolio:	Cllr Gray - Executive Councillor for Resources
Report by:	John Taylor (Head of Customer Service) Adrian Dobbyne (Corporate Team Manager)
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

This report summarises progress made by the Project Management Board. This Board is one of a series of governance boards set up to improve compliance in key areas of operational performance.

The Project Management Board has achieved the following key activities:

- Terms of Reference for the Board were created. The Board recognised whilst there were pockets of sound project management, there was no HDC standard.
- A project management toolkit has been created and approved by the Board
- A training course has been designed and built around this toolkit
- The course has been delivered to the first intake of Officers.

The next steps are:
- The Board will revisit its membership and Terms of Reference in light of the new SMG structure. The new Chair for the Board will be the Head of Development.
- Ensure more Officers are trained to use the toolkit – a second intake of Officers will be trained in September 2014
- SMG will ensure opportunities are afforded to the trained Officers to deploy their new skills. Facing the Future will be a key area within which to deploy this new potential.
- The Board will now start to look at how HDC manages Programmes (i.e. sets of projects that relate to each other)

Recommendation(s):

The panel are recommended to note:

1. The steps taken to improve project management
2. The intention for the work of the Board to continue

1. PURPOSE

1.1   This report is intended to update Overview & Scrutiny on progress in improving project management.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1   In November 2013 the Corporate Governance Panel received a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources on proposals to introduce Officer Governance Working Groups to raise awareness of the importance of good governance throughout the authority. The approach had been prepared by the Chief Officers Management Team following concerns raised in the External Auditor's report over the lack of compliance in some areas.

2.2   Members were advised that the new arrangements would result in six working groups reporting to an Officer Governance Board consisting of Chief Officer's Management Team, the Monitoring Officer and the Internal Audit and Risk Manager. The Panel were advised that each group would be led by a Head of Service or Service Manager with no responsibility for that service area as part of their normal role in order to develop corporate working.

2.3   The lead officer for the Panel was initially the Head of Environmental & Community Services, but due to unforeseen circumstances the Managing Director assumed the role of chair for this group.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1   The Board has achieved a considerable number of successes since creation.

3.2   Following the establishment of Terms of Reference the Board asked a set of Officers to review current practices within the Council, relevant audit reports and to undertake some research into best practice.

3.3   A resulting Project Management Toolkit was created, and following review, was signed off by the Board. The toolkit consists of:

      3.3.1   A project management handbook
      3.3.2   A number of standard templates to ensure consistency across projects
      3.3.3   A flow chart to explain the options available to manage projects. A key element of the toolkit is to acknowledge that a 'one size fits all' methodology is not appropriate. The method gives guidance to a Project Manager as to which option should be selected.
      3.3.4   A Programme and Project management intranet site which allows projects to be stored in one place – allowing improved access to key documents and project status information.

3.4   Having a toolkit in itself does not translate into improvements in Project Management. A training course was created for Officers. The course needed to be designed, built and delivered.

3.5   The resulting course covers a number of key elements such as managing risks/issues, writing a business case, planning tasks, communication etc. The course also ensures HDC project templates are considered in the training – ensuring the 'theory' is joined to the 'practice'.

3.6   Twelve officers were selected from across the Council as the first intake for the training, and in July the first training course was delivered. A further course is scheduled for delivery in September.

4.   KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

4.1   Officers may not follow the toolkit. A number of measures will ensure this risk is minimised. Officers who have been trained will continue to meet regularly to discuss the use of the toolkit, the Project Management Board will examine how projects are using the toolkit and the normal cycle of internal and external audit will assess the delivery of projects.

4.2   Some Officers may consider all business as usual activities to be projects and deploy the toolkit when it is not necessary. The Project Management Guidance provides a simple assessment tool to reduce the likelihood of this happening.

4.3   Officers have received training, but this does not mean immediate competency. Many will be able to use their new skills competently, but others may make mistakes. This risk will be managed by using 'buddying' where necessary, but also by recognising that Project Managers ultimately work for Project Boards who are able to monitor progress and intervene where necessary.

5.   WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN NEXT?

5.1   The Board will revisit its membership and Terms of Reference in the light of the new SMG structure. The new Chair for the Board will be the Head of Development.

5.2   More Officers will be trained to use the toolkit – and a second intake of Officers will be trained in September 2014

5.3   SMG are working to ensure opportunities are afforded to trained Officers to deploy their new skills. Facing the Future will be a key area within which to deploy this new potential.

5.4   More effort is required to develop the use of the intranet site in the light of 'real world' use by Project Managers. The formation of the Project Management Board allows the Council to review the toolkit, determine whether amendments should be made and ensure changes are fed out to relevant Officers.

5.5   The next area for the Board to progress will be to consider how programmes of work can be better managed. A programme is a set of related projects that combine together to make a significant difference. A good example is the Facing the Future Programme – where a diverse and related set of projects are being delivered across the Council. Similarly a Shared Service Programme is underway with SCDC and City.

6.   LINK TO THE LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

6.1   Good project management has strong links to all elements of the Leadership direction. As a consequence Officers selected for training have been drawn from across the Council.

7.   CONSULTATION

7.1   None

8.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS
        (Comments from the Head of Resources)

8.1   None

9.   RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
        (Comments from the Head of Resources)

9. 1   The deployment of trained Officers to deliver projects outside of 'business as usual' may require some backfilling of posts. Should this be proposed the business case for change will include a full cost/benefit analysis. In the first instance, all relevant costs will be met from within existing resources and only as a last resort will a contribution be made from the Special Reserve (this will be subject to approval by the Responsible Financial Officer).
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10.   OTHER IMPLICATIONS
        (Equalities, environment, ICT, etc)

10.1   None

11   REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

11.1   The formation of the Project Management Board has led to some significant improvements to project management. More work is required.

11.2   A key outcome from the work is the creation of a flexible pool of trained Officers which will increase the organisation's capability to deliver projects. In addition Officers who have undertaken the training are being given the opportunity for development.

11.3   It is recommended the Panel note:

        • The steps taken to improve project management.

        • The intention for the work of the Board to continue.

12.   LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

        None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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