

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

This option proposes a review and restructure of Legal services, including fundamental changes to improve the service and restore confidence in corporate governance.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

There is a need to undertake a comprehensive review of systems, arrangements and practices (which have not been reviewed for some time).

The Legal and Member Services Section provides a wide variety of services, functions, support and assistance to the Council. This includes specialist legal advice in relation to major regeneration projects, planning, procurement, contracts, employment, child protection adult social care and enforcement.

A review and restructure of Legal Services will enable high quality services to be provided as required and importantly ensure greater economies of scale are achieved, efficiency improved and resilience strengthened. It is essential that Legal Services provides value for money, particularly in relation to the use of external legal support.

Proposal

Through the introduction of:

- performance management;
- reducing reliance on locums and fixed term staff;
- introduction of QA;
- case management;
- control of external cost including use of framework contracts;
- a complete restructure around professional competencies and business needs;
- repatriation in-house of legal work through more efficient working;
- exploring partnership with other authorities.

The net effect will be massively improved customer experience and improved quality of service and advice, restoring confidence in the corporate centre.

Undertaking a review and restructure of Legal Services will involve the rationalisation/review of posts.

Additional savings would be realised through improved working practices and staff reconfiguration that reduces the reliance upon external legal support and assistance. A saving of £300k can be achieved by doing so in 2013/14.

Further savings of £300k could be achieved in 2014/15 by adopting similar approach.

There will be a need to invest in certain posts to achieve the objectives/savings outlined

IMPACT

Legal Services needs to provide key support to the body corporate. The Council has been criticised for poor governance and it is imperative that Legal Services provides appropriate support and assistance to the Council to ensure that it conducts itself lawfully, appropriately and effectively.

Proposed changes would require consultation with all staff within Legal Services. Undertaking a review and restructure of Legal Services will require posts to be rationalised.

In terms of legal implications, Council departments are reliant upon the services provided by the Section. Any review and restructure will have regard to the Council's legal obligations and the needs of the departments.

MITIGATION

The proposals as outlined above directly impact staff. Alternative working practices and methods will be explored to mitigate the human resources implications