

Countryside Partnerships Team

Business Plan

Apr 2014 – Apr 2019

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1. Introduction

An introduction to the history and function of Countryside Management Partnerships (CMP's) is attached at **Appendix A**.

The 3 CMP's hosted by Surrey County Council (SCC) have always been known as Countryside Management *Projects*, reflecting the fact that they were initially established for a fixed period. This is at odds with a vision of the CMP's providing a continuing service and they are therefore referred to individually as Partnerships throughout this document. The three partnerships together are referred to as a service.

The main focus of this plan is on improving the capacity of the CMP's to deliver an efficient and effective service that people value and are willing to pay for. For this reason, the plan refers to core funding partners, local communities, Trusts, volunteers and other stakeholders who benefit from their services as customers.

A central feature of CMP's is their ability to attract, motivate and empower volunteers and this is central to their ability to deliver exceptional value for money. Volunteers are not only able to assist with the practical delivery of the service, but are also powerful advocates for the countryside. The key to unlocking their potential is to recognise that each volunteer is an individual who brings a unique mixture of skills and motivations. The only thing that they all share is a willingness to give up their time in exchange for non-monetary rewards. The success of this plan will largely be judged by the extent to which volunteers can be integrated throughout the service, utilising their existing skills to the full and developing new ones as appropriate. Whilst many of the proposals in this plan are framed in business terms, they are all conceived with volunteers in mind.

Public Value Review of SCC Countryside Service

In 2010 Surrey County Council (SCC) carried out a public value review of its countryside service. On 1 March 2011 the SCC Cabinet accepted a recommendation that the county council should apply the following tests to its involvement in countryside partnerships:

- (1) Surrey County Council to be involved in a strategic enabling role - i.e. normally not to host the partnership or employ partnership staff except possibly where the partnership extends to all or a substantial part of the County area.
- (2) Surrey County Council to provide financial support to partnerships only where they provide Surrey County Council statutory services or deliver Surrey County Council service priorities.

It was further recommended that a consultation be conducted on the proposal to cease hosting the Downlands, Lower Mole and Surrey Heathland Projects. A large number of submissions were received in response to this consultation, including a joint response from the chairmen of the members steering groups. This included the following recommendation:

“The County Council should work with partners to refocus activities, ensure long-term development and sustainability by:

- a) realigning strategic roles and core responsibilities
- b) developing relevance to local communities
- c) improving governance and formal agreement with funding partners
- d) rationalising working arrangements”

Business Process Review

In December 2011, Improvement and Efficiency South East (iESE) was commissioned to carry out a Business Process Review (BPR) of the 3 Countryside Management Partnerships hosted by SCC. A copy of the brief is attached at **Appendix B** and the output from the BPR is attached at **Appendix C**.

Subsequent work on the outcomes of the BPR have been taken forward by a Task Group comprising the chairmen of the Members Steering Groups; Project Managers and key staff from partner Authorities.

This plan is shaped around the conclusions of the BPR and extracts from the iESE document are included throughout this document in quotation marks and italics.

It should be stressed that not all of the iESE conclusions apply equally to all of the CMP's and good progress has already been made on implementing some of its conclusions, in particular the preparation of Service Level Agreements. Because the CMP's have each taken a very individual approach in the past, there are also pockets of good practice, which can be built on and adopted consistently across the service.

Local Government background

As a result of the prolonged economic recession that started in 2009, there has been severe and ongoing financial pressure on many partner Authorities, which has led to a search for savings, contraction and uncertainty. The 2010 Conservative manifesto 'Invitation to Join the Government of Britain' set out a political vision of the 'Big Society' which encompassed localism and volunteerism. Whilst it is still unclear to what extent this vision will be delivered at a national level, it has served to reinforce the potential of countryside management partnerships to deliver exceptional value for money.

It is likely that partners will continue to reduce capacity during the period of this plan and a flexible and efficient shared countryside service could offer an attractive alternative to an in-house service. Whilst in the past much has been made of the 'stand-alone' nature of the CMPs, in practice SCC is responsible for day to day management and carries most of the risk if other funding partners reduce or withdraw funding. This is because budgets have not been managed to ensure a sufficient contingency to cover redundancy costs. The current economic situation

threatens the sustainability of small stand-alone projects carrying out non-statutory countryside work and this plan envisages the partnerships working together more closely in future, delivering an efficient and effective shared countryside service under the direction of a single Board.

2. Executive Summary

This is the first time a single business plan has been prepared for the three countryside management projects hosted by SCC and it covers the 5-year period from April 2014 to April 2019. It is a high-level plan, which sets out a vision for the future and the key objectives to reach this vision. Many of the proposals contained in it have significant practical implications, the details of which will be worked out as the plan is implemented. Monitoring implementation of the plan and working through its practical implications will be a key task for the new Countryside Partnership Board.

Given the ongoing and severe pressure on Local Authority funding, there is a pressing need to reshape the service to increase resilience, control risk and focus on efficiently and effectively delivering partner priorities.

If this plan is successful, in future the CMPs will

- Operate in a more efficient and businesslike way
- Achieve greater financial stability
- Reduce reliance on public sector funding
- Attract and retain a wide cross-section of people as volunteers

The **vision** for the service is:

‘A flexible and responsive county-wide shared countryside management service working across boundaries and delivering exceptional value for money’

To realise the vision, this plan proposes the following:

- ✓ That the 3 separate CMPs be redefined as a shared countryside service, whilst retaining their own individual brands
- ✓ That the management structure and staff roles be revised to facilitate effective one team working and reduce costs
- ✓ That administration be combined to reduce duplication and free up resources to focus on service delivery
- ✓ That the governance model be revised to create a single influential county-wide body focused on strategic issues including performance monitoring; risk management and shaping the future direction of the service
- ✓ That several areas of work be separately reviewed, including the provision of conservation grazing; fees and charges; and volunteer development

- ✓ That future work be focused on the core services set out below
- ✓ That future work be defined in Service Level Agreements and Annual Work Programmes agreed with core funding partners
- ✓ That key outcomes be measured and consistently reported
- ✓ That alternative legal forms and hosting arrangements be investigated once the new ways of working are embedded

The **values** of the service will be to:

- ❖ Work together
- ❖ Cross boundaries
- ❖ Make things happen
- ❖ Inspire and engage
- ❖ Enjoy what we do

3. Themes and Strategy

In order to take forward the conclusions of the business process review, five key themes have been identified, as follows:

- Defining Core Services
- Business efficiency
- Sustainability
- Governance
- Hosting

The overall **strategy** is in two phases:

Phase 1 - reorganize and refocus the service within the existing hosting arrangement

Phase 2 - review options and explore alternative hosting arrangements

Implementation of the strategy will be monitored and overseen by the new Countryside Partnership Board (see page 18).

4. Defining core services

The business process review noted that *“the purpose of CMP’s [is] not defined or articulated nor fully and equally understood by all partners”*.

This conclusion may seem surprising, given that the core objectives of CMP’s were clearly defined at the outset and, despite being reviewed several times, have remained largely unchanged ever since.

A task group comprising the chairmen of the steering groups and officers from the partner Authorities carried out some detailed work to explore this question. The group firstly identified all of the tasks that the CMP’s had performed and then

categorised them according to the core objective that they satisfied. This exercise demonstrated the huge variety of tasks that had been undertaken and went some way to explain a perceived lack of clarity of purpose.

The business process review noted a *'mixed perception on quality and usefulness of the practical services provided'* but that *'in some cases partners would like an increase in CMP services'*. Partners were invited to rank the value of the various services to their Authority. This exercise served to emphasise the value that partners place, in particular, on the following:

- Community involvement
- Strategic cross-boundary working
- Acting as a catalyst for action
- Delivering value for money
- The ability to design and implement solutions
- A centre of excellence and innovation.

Whilst it is clear that the original **objectives** are still understood and supported, they have been further refined and reflected in the Service Level Agreements, as follows:

- Environmental Conservation
- Public Access
- Community Involvement
- Strategy and Planning
- Sustainability

There is a general consensus that the CMP's have evolved into shared countryside services. In the past, there have been debates about where the boundaries of their operations should be drawn. To reinforce the shared service approach, in future the service will cover the whole of the partner authority area, unless they decide otherwise. There are 3 District Councils in Surrey that do not currently core fund the partnerships and it is possible that they might be attracted by the prospect of a shared countryside service. It is also likely that there will be increasing delegation of services to Parish Councils during the period of this plan and they could therefore be attracted to purchase services.

Key actions

- ✓ Rationalise range of services offered
- ✓ Redefine objectives
- ✓ Refocus on core business: community involvement; cross-boundary working; intelligent contractor

✓ Develop role as centre of excellence and innovation

5. Business efficiency

The issues to be addressed under this theme are as follows:

- Increasing integration and sharing resources
- Improving skills and innovation
- Improving use and capability of IT
- Managing workloads

5.1 Increasing integration

The business process review noted that the partnerships were *“too small, fragmented, unfocussed and insular”* and that *“minimal management support [was] provided in a difficult financial environment”*.

Surrey County Council took the first step to address these issues in April 2012, when it created a Countryside Partnerships Team with a full time team leader. In order to fully realise the benefits, however, it will be necessary to take this a step further by sharing resources between the 3 projects and co-locating administration. This, in turn, will help to avoid duplication and increase efficiency. For operational reasons it will be necessary to retain 3 separate operating bases.

To provide a clearer focus on core delivery and greater clarity of individual staff roles, a staff reorganisation will be undertaken. The revised staff structures will reflect the following issues:

- Revised role profiles/ grades within SCC
- Enhanced focus on core delivery role
- Greater flexibility in allocation of staff resources
- Enhanced contract management role
- Sustainable conservation grazing team
- Enhanced fundraising/publicity role
- Single set of financial accounts
- Single point of contact for strategic issues/reporting and operations
- Core staff costs to be covered by core income

There are currently 3 project managers, who each prepare separate budgets and accounts and carry out other administrative tasks that are duplicated. This function will be combined and carried out by the Countryside Partnerships Operations Manager.

There is considerable loyalty to the individual project ‘brands’ and they are valuable in maintaining local connection and engagement. There would also be significant

costs involved in creating new branding. The existing branding will therefore be retained, but the staffing structure will be more flexible to allow for more effective one-team working.

The Lower Mole and Downlands Trusts are stand-alone charitable bodies that raise funds and operate independently to support the work of the partnerships. They each operate in a defined geographical area and there are no plans to merge them.

Modern working practices will be adopted, including effective use of IT; improved financial and resource management; knowledge management and best practice in management of staff and projects.

✓ Reorganise staff structure to focus on core delivery
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5.2 Sharing resources

The business process review noted that there was *'little or no cross project communication, work and sharing of resources'*.

The three projects developed separately and have always been regarded as stand-alone entities. Consequently they each maintain separate tools and equipment inventories; vehicle fleets; administrative systems; volunteer records; reporting structures and working practices.

Whilst there is some local differentiation, largely reflecting the dominant habitats in their areas of operation, most of the focus and operation of the Downlands and Lower Mole partnerships is the same, namely small-scale local environmental enhancements using volunteers. By combining administration, a significant amount of duplication would be avoided, freeing up frontline staff to deliver core objectives.

The role of the Surrey Heathlands partnership has evolved to focus on contract management and management planning, reflecting the increasingly large-scale mechanized nature of heathland management work. Whilst it must remain principally focused on heathland management in order to deliver service level agreements and justify continued partnership funding, there is potential to utilize, disseminate and embed these contract management skills more widely across the service.

After staff costs, the use and maintenance of vehicles is the most significant element of the core running costs. The Downlands and Lower Mole Trusts have both helped to raise funds and purchased capital equipment such as vehicles, and the Heathlands Partnership has received gifts of vehicles and equipment in lieu of direct financial support. In the past, grant funding has often been available to purchase capital equipment. Because of this, little account has traditionally been taken of the cost of depreciation of tools and equipment and depreciation does not currently appear in the accounts. By adopting standard accounting practices across the

service, including the costs of depreciation and in-kind contributions, transparency will be improved and the Board will find it easier to understand the overall financial position.

Maintaining a single tools and vehicle inventory would also improve transparency and enable standard maintenance procedures to be adopted, although it is likely that most tools and equipment will continue to be kept separately for practical reasons.

- ✓ Combine tools inventories
- ✓ Standardise tools maintenance procedures
- ✓ Combine financial systems
- ✓ Review vehicle fleet
- ✓ Include depreciation costs
- ✓ Integrate administration of Downlands and Lower Mole partnerships
- ✓ Introduce modern working practices

5.3 Improving skills and innovation

The business process review noted that *'there is a recognition from many partners that professional knowledge and advice is generally good'* but that there was *'a lack of commercial practice and skills'*.

As part of the reorganisation, role profiles will be reviewed and a new set of competencies developed to focus the service more clearly on delivering partner priorities and increasing commercial skills. It is essential, if the partnerships are to consistently add value, that training is put in place to ensure that staff and volunteers have the most up to date skills to fulfill their roles. Training also needs to be put in place specifically to enhance innovation.

The key skills that have been identified are as follows:

- Budget management
- Commercial operations
- Contract Management
- Fund raising
- Interpretation
- Negotiation
- Publicity and communications
- Volunteer management
- Community engagement
- Practical skills

Many volunteers bring valuable skills that they have acquired elsewhere, often in the commercial world, and by using these skills more effectively the need for staff

training could be reduced and the overall effectiveness of the service increased. In some parts of the service, volunteers are trained and developed systematically and gradually given more responsibility to the point that they can lead tasks. This best practice will be adopted across the service. Volunteer development is so significant that it justifies a separate in-depth analysis, which will be implemented following adoption of this business plan.

There are currently a number of trainees and apprentices who are placed within the service. The main object of these arrangements is to give the trainee or apprentice the skills that they need, although they can also carry out useful and productive work at the same time. A learning plan will be agreed with every trainee or apprentice working within the service to ensure that sufficient resources are in place to deliver the training and experience they require and to monitor delivery to ensure that they receive it.

- ✓ Review role profiles
- ✓ Develop competencies for individual staff roles
- ✓ Undertake training needs analysis
- ✓ Train staff and volunteers where necessary to deliver new roles
- ✓ Record key skills and ensure volunteers are fully integrated into service
- ✓ Review volunteer development
- ✓ Agree and monitor training plans for all trainees and apprentices

5.4 Improving use and capability of IT

The business process review noted that there was a *'lack of IT capability'*, *'inconsistent use of IT'* and *'lack of knowledge management and sharing'*.

The Downlands and Heathlands partnerships are located in SCC offices and have full access to County Council ICT systems. The Lower Mole partnership is located in a building owned by Epsom & Ewell Borough Council and currently has a stand-alone ICT system with very limited access to the wider SCC intranet. An upgrade is underway, which should allow full access in future. It is essential for effective knowledge management and sharing that all documents and data are held on an open shared drive. This will be possible once all teams have full access to the system. By combining administration, it will be possible to make a more powerful business case for non-standard software, particularly if it is partnership funded, where justified to deliver business priorities. Whilst SCC ICT systems are occasionally inflexible, they nevertheless represent a significant benefit in-kind.

The use of mobile handheld devices is very limited at present, but offers considerable potential to increase effectiveness and flexibility for site-based staff.

The use of social media too is limited, but they could provide a very effective communication tool, in particular amongst younger volunteers and supporters. There is currently no sharing of information with data held on individual team drives. To make most effective use of the intellectual capital that the projects have accumulated, it will be necessary to keep all data on a shared drive.

A review of ICT capability will be conducted once the reorganisation is complete to identify any gaps in provision and areas of opportunity. An ICT strategy will then be developed and implemented.

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Transfer all documents and data to an open shared drive✓ Prepare an ICT strategy |
|---|

5.5 Managing workloads

The business process review noted that *'individuals demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment to the work the projects undertake'* but that *'managers and staff [are] working excessive hours'* there was *'poor planning, coordination and balancing of individuals' workloads'* and *'some communication issues within teams'*.

The issue of excessive working hours is a long-standing and intractable issue which is often excused by the fact that countryside management is not a 9 to 5 business; staff who work in countryside management are highly committed and prepared to 'go the extra mile'; and funding partners demand value for money. Whilst all these points are true and partners appreciate the commitment, in particular, to out of hours and weekend working, there is a pressing need to control working hours. The current situation is exposing Surrey County Council as the employer to an excessive degree of risk. The situation does not apply to all teams, but where it is a problem it will be addressed through more effective 'one team' working –sharing staff and other resources; engaging and empowering front-line staff; and agreeing realistic work programmes annually with partners.

Excessive working hours are particularly prevalent in the management of conservation grazing, which is currently delivered by 2 of the teams. Even with excellent volunteer support, livestock management is a 24 hour a day, 365 day a year business. To provide a safe and sustainable service requires a minimum of 2 staff in the grazing team and the staff structure will be revised to reflect this.

Reviewing the costs and commitments of the existing grazing programme is an urgent task and a separate review will be commenced immediately following the adoption of this plan. As part of this review, an early discussion will be held with Surrey Wildlife Trust and the City of London Corporation to examine whether there may be opportunities to coordinate more effectively with their grazing teams.

Future work programmes will be agreed so that teams are not fully committed and retain the flexibility to respond to urgent issues or unexpected opportunities.

Key actions

- ✓ Adopt formal project management techniques
- ✓ Engage and empower frontline staff to manage working hours and workloads
- ✓ Urgently review the costs and commitments to conservation grazing

6. Sustainability

Sustainability is defined here as the ability to continue to secure funding and provide services. The issues to be addressed under this theme are:

- Delivering customer objectives
- Reducing reliance on Local Authority core funding
- Measuring performance

6.1 Delivering customer objectives

The business process review noted several issues in this area, including *‘a lack of understanding of the role of the funding Authorities as the customer’, ‘customer meetings are inconsistent and irregular’, ‘work programmes not defined or directed by Partners, including financial sign off’, ‘purchaser supplier relationship not recognised’* and *‘work plans and priorities often identified and then carried out by CMPs, with minimal references to customer’*.

It was a founding principle of countryside management partnerships that they should have a degree of autonomy to identify and resolve local issues and it is clear that partners still value this flexibility. However, it is critical to the long-term sustainability of the partnerships that they are responsive and deliver services that partners value and are willing to pay for. Draft service level agreements have been prepared and these, combined with regular customer meetings, will ensure that future work programmes are clearly focused on delivering customer objectives. Responsibility for ongoing maintenance and aftercare of projects will be agreed and recorded in standard works agreements before works commence. Annual work programmes will include a small amount of free time to allow for flexibility.

The business process review noted that *‘customer satisfaction appears to be mixed’, ‘customer relationship management mixed’* and *‘some partners [are] receiving a significantly higher level of service than others’*.

In this context, ‘customer’ refers mainly to core funding partners and others who rely on the partnerships to deliver a service. These issues could be largely addressed by regular customer meetings, but to fully realise the benefits, funding partners need to redefine themselves as customers and start behaving as such.

Local members are also key customers and there is a risk that, unless alternative arrangements are put in place, the new steering arrangements could reduce direct contact with them and erode local support. The existing steering groups will therefore continue, but redefined as Local Partnership Groups as set out below.

The business process review noted that there *was 'poor financial management including poor future planning and financial transparency' and a 'lack of clear cost or budget information therefore neither customers nor staff are able to assess value for money'*.

Currently there are 3 separate sets of accounts, all prepared in slightly different ways, which come under a single budget head within SCC. A single set of accounts will be prepared in future with separate lines for each CMP so that core funding partners can identify their individual contributions.

Currently several partners make substantial in-kind contributions, for example by providing accommodation, and a consistent method of accounting for these in-kind contributions will be developed. The value of in-kind contributions will then be included in the accounts and reported to the Board to improve transparency and enable more effective forward planning.

The profile of existing volunteers will be reviewed and a Volunteer Development Plan prepared and monitored. This will ensure that there is a clear strategic approach to attracting and retaining a representative cross section of the population to volunteer.

- ✓ Complete service level agreements with all partners
- ✓ Introduce regular customer meetings
- ✓ Prepare works agreements for all projects before works commence
- ✓ Include free time in work plans to allow for reactive work
- ✓ Prepare single set of accounts with separate lines for each partnership
- ✓ Account for in-kind contributions
- ✓ Prepare a Volunteer Development Plan

6.2 Reducing reliance on Local Authority core funding

Countryside management projects have traditionally supplemented their core funding with grants, fees and charges and other income. More recently, separate trusts have been established, which are able to access grant funding which is not available to Local Authorities. Combining administration will enable greater specialisation amongst staff and in particular a more coordinated focus on accessing grant funding. It will also enable improved forward planning of work. One of the key tasks for the new Business Development Officer will be to coordinate fundraising both within the service and with core funding partners.

There is currently no consistency in charging for professional services such as project management or organizing and supervising volunteers. A revised charging scheme will be prepared in consultation with partners, with rates for core and non-core partners, and applied consistently across the service. The commercial discipline of asking customers to pay a daily charge for volunteers would provide a strong incentive for the service to increase the number of volunteers and for customers to prioritise work effectively. By setting a maximum number of volunteers that can be funded, costs to the customer will be defined and will provide an incentive to ensure that volunteers are used in the most effective way. Any charging regime needs to allow some flexibility, so that work can continue with customers -private landowners, for example - who are unable or unwilling to pay for the service. The ability to provide advice and support without charge is one of the reasons that continued core funding will be required. This proposal requires partner agreement and detailed planning before it could be implemented. A separate review of fees and charges will be commenced immediately following the adoption of this plan.

The Trusts were set up to apply for grants that were not available to a Local Authority hosted service, but in practice many of the larger grant schemes, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, are open to public bodies as well as charities and the trusts are too small to bear the risk of managing substantial grants. They are well placed, however, to capitalize on local support by fundraising and increasing membership and they will continue to manage small grant applications as appropriate. The Business Development Officer will coordinate applications for grant funding, working closely with the Trusts to help maximize their fundraising potential.

- ✓ Create Business Development Officer role
- ✓ Coordinate grant applications across service
- ✓ Agree schedule of fees and charges

6.3 Measuring performance

The business process review noted that there were *'no measures of customer satisfaction'*, *'no quality indicators'*, and *'no KPIs or other outcome based measures'* and *'performance [was] not measured or reported'*. The primary focus was on *'volunteer groups rather than Partners and, in some cases, the wider community'*.

Service level agreements will set out high level objectives to be achieved over the next 3 years and these will be supplemented by annual work programmes, which can be monitored and reported. This will ensure that individual partners can clearly see value for money. Regular customer meetings will help to ensure a consistent level of satisfaction and an annual customer survey will be carried out and reported to the Countryside Partnership Board. The service will continue to report on outputs with reference to the works outlined in the annual work programme.

The Board will define the overall outcomes for the service, and key performance indicators will be developed to effectively measure those outcomes. High-level indicators such as the number of volunteer hours as a ratio of the hours of paid staff; the amount of Local Authority core funding as a proportion of the total budget; and the proportion of public and private land managed will be reported annually. Annual surveys of customer and volunteer satisfaction will also be carried out and reported.

Whilst there may be some resource implications to more effective monitoring this will be offset by the reduced frequency of meetings.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Report on completion of annual work programme✓ Report value added – volunteer hours and third party funding✓ Report proportion of public and private land managed✓ Conduct and report annual customer survey✓ Conduct and report volunteer satisfaction survey |
|--|

7. Governance

The issues to be addressed under this theme are as follows:

- Governance model
- Countryside Partnership Board
- Officers Working group

7.1 Governance model

The business process review noted that the *'roles, responsibilities and terms of reference of Member and Officer Groups are unclear, therefore meetings lack purpose and usefulness'*. It also noted that there was *'lots of personal goodwill , but ... little evidence of wider Cabinet influence'*.

There are currently 3 Member Steering groups with 2 representatives from each core funding partner, which meet twice per year. Originally, there were also 3 officers groups, but only 1 now remains in operation, due to a perceived duplication of effort and poor attendance. To fully realise the benefits of one team working, the members steering groups will be combined to form a Countryside Partnership Board. This will have the advantages of avoiding duplication, reducing administration costs and creating a more powerful body with county-wide coverage.

Chairmen are currently elected from amongst the membership of the steering group and serve for one year. This has led to issues around continuity and has made it difficult for members to gain sufficient experience to effectively advocate for the partnerships. To reinforce the status of the chairman and ensure continuity, the Board will seek to appoint an independent opinion-former to act in a voluntary capacity as chairman for a minimum period of 3 years.

It is clearly desirable that members and officers on the steering groups should be in a position to report back to their Authorities and influence policy and budget setting. Another potential benefit of creating a single county-wide Board is that it would have the status to attract members who are in a position to directly influence the strategic direction of their Authority.

In order to fully integrate volunteers into the organization and give them a stake in the future, the Lower Mole and Downlands Countryside Trusts will be entitled to a seat on the Board. Their charitable objectives coincide with the aims and objectives of the countryside partnerships and individuals who support the work of the partnerships can pay a modest membership fee to join. This in turn gives them the right to participate in the decision making of the Trust and ultimately influence the direction of the partnerships. The Surrey Heathlands Project does not have an associated Trust, but its business model currently relies less on volunteers. If such a trust were established in future, it too could have a place on the Board.

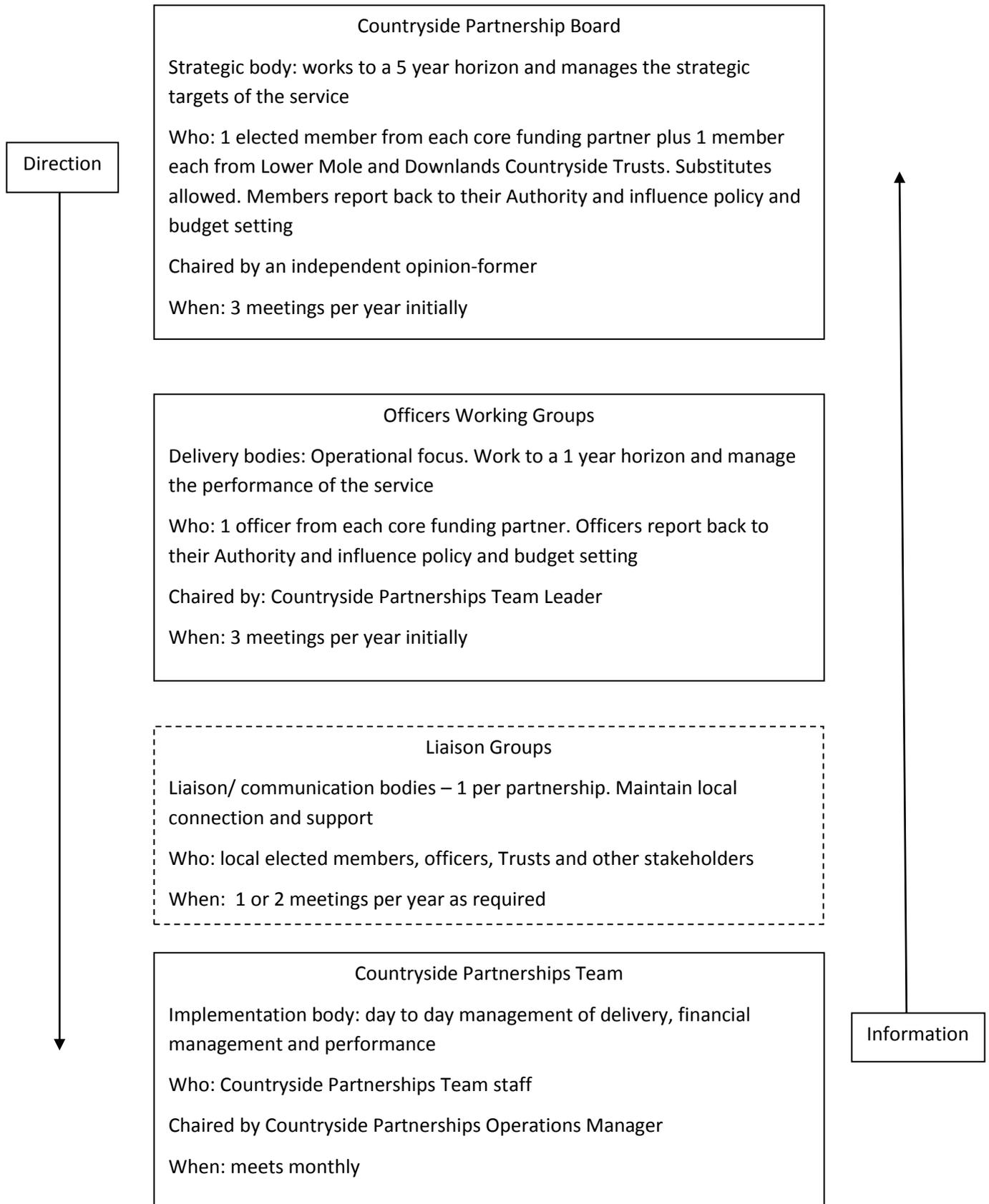
There is a concern that the strong connection with local members supported by the existing steering arrangements, which has proved so valuable in maintaining local support over the years, could be weakened by having a single Board. The existing steering groups will therefore be redefined as Local Liaison Groups. Regular informal meetings and site tours will continue to be held with the Liaison Groups, subject to local demand. The purpose of these meetings will be to update local members on operational issues and to exchange information, but without any unnecessary bureaucracy. Officers, representatives of the Trusts and other stakeholders may also be invited to join these groups, to provide an opportunity for informal liaison.

The Board will comprise one member representative from each core funding partner. Partners will be entitled to nominate a substitute representative in case their main member representative is unable to attend. It is expected that the substitute will normally be a member of the Local Liaison Group.

The Business Development Officer will prioritise the flow of information to elected members and information will be provided using all available methods including social media.

The Officers Working Groups will manage the performance of the individual partnerships - monitoring delivery; resolving issues and identifying opportunities; and acting as a local support network for staff. There will be 3 separate Officers Working Groups - one for each partnership – which will meet three times per year initially with the aim to reduce to two meetings per year once the key changes have been embedded. They will be managed in a light touch way so as to minimize the administrative burden.

The revised governance model is as follows:



7.2 Countryside Partnership Board

The business process review noted that the members steering groups had *'no risk management role'*, *'no issue resolution role'* and *'minimal decision making function'*.

A risk and issue log will be prepared and presented to the Countryside Partnership Board for discussion at every meeting. A standard reporting format will be adopted for items requiring a decision and information reports will be avoided. One of the meetings will take the form of an Annual Partnership Meeting, to be held in September/October, which will provide an opportunity to engage opinion formers more widely; celebrate the achievements of the partnership over the previous year; and reinforce the value of the partnerships in advance of the local authority budget setting process.

The BPR also noted that there was *'little strategic direction provided by members'*, a *'focus on the detail with little clarity on higher level issues'* and *'meetings were retrospective in focus'*.

The improved performance reporting described above will ensure that meetings focus on higher level objectives, enable target setting and provide a forward-looking perspective.

- ✓ Prepare risk and issue log
- ✓ Adopt standard reporting format
- ✓ Avoid information reports
- ✓ Introduce Annual Partnership Meeting
- ✓ Set and monitor performance targets

7.3 Officers Working Group

The business process review made similar criticisms of the officers working group, and noted in addition *'little discussion of operational issues'*, *'no prior discussion and agreement of work programme'* and *'insufficient focus on finances and value for money'*.

Under the revised governance model there will be three officers working groups focusing on operational, financial and value for money issues. Their focus will be on monitoring implementation of the annual work programme; managing risks and issues; and reviewing performance targets. They will also have an advisory and problem-solving role and carry out regular horizon scanning to identify opportunities.

Officers who attend the working group tend to be countryside staff, who deliver countryside services within their Authority. It is clearly desirable that officers who are in a position to influence policy and budget setting within their Authority are fully

engaged, but it would not be appropriate for them to attend the officers working group. They will therefore be invited to attend the Annual Partnership Meeting.

- ✓ Monitor risk and issue log
- ✓ Adopt standard reporting format
- ✓ Monitor annual work programme
- ✓ Review performance targets
- ✓ Develop advisory/ problem solving role
- ✓ Regular horizon scanning
- ✓ Invite senior officers to Annual Partnership Meeting

7.4 Hosting

The business process review recommended longer term actions, as follows:

- *Undertake deeper analysis of implications of other legal forms, including taking legal advice*
- *Undertake detailed negotiation with potential hosts*
- *Assess TUPE and other legal/contractual issues*
- *Develop transition plan*

Setting up the projects on a more streamlined, integrated business footing, but still hosted by SCC, will allow an opportunity to assess whether that is their best future and if they could be transferred to a viable external service in future, if that is the agreed way forward. Some alternative forms may have legal implications for the existing Trusts.

All of the options for alternative hosting arrangements will be identified and evaluated once the reorganisation outlined above is complete. This will be a strategic project and as such will be directed by the Countryside Partnership Board, but it will be a major piece of work and it is likely that a project team will need to be established to take it forward.

8. Action Plan

Reference	Action	Level	When
4.1	Rationalise services	1	3
4.2	Define objectives	1	3
4.3	Focus on core business	2	1
4.4	Develop centre of excellence and innovation	1	2
4.5	Realign boundaries	2	1
5.1	Reorganise staff structure to focus on core delivery	3	1
5.2.1	Combine tools inventories	3	2
5.2.2	Standardise tool maintenance procedures	3	2
5.2.3	Combine financial systems/ adopt standard accounting practices	3	1
5.2.4	Review vehicle fleet	3	2
5.2.5	Integrate administration	3	2
5.2.6	Introduce modern working practices	3	1
5.3.1	Review role and competency profiles	3	1
5.3.2	Undertake training needs analysis	2	2
5.3.3	Train staff and volunteers to deliver new roles	3	3
5.3.4	Record volunteer skills and integrate into service	3	2
5.3.5	Prepare training plans for trainees and apprentices	3	1
5.4.1	Transfer data to open shared drive	3	1
5.4.2	Prepare IT strategy	3	2
5.5.1	Adopt formal project management techniques	3	2
5.5.2	Manage working hours and workloads	3	3
5.5.3	Review costs and commitments to grazing	1	2

6.1.1	Complete SLA's with all partners	2	1
6.1.2	Arrange regular customer meetings	2	1
6.1.3	Include free time in work programmes	3	1
6.1.4	Prepare works agreements for all projects before works commence	3	1
6.1.5	Prepare combined accounts, including in-kind contributions	3	1
6.1.6	Prepare volunteer development plan	2	2
6.2.1	Create dedicated fundraising role/ coordinate grant applications	3	1
6.2.2	Agree schedule of charges	1	2
6.3.1	Record and report on completion of annual work programme	2	2
6.3.2	Conduct and report annual customer survey	2	2
6.3.3	Conduct and report annual volunteer satisfaction survey	2	2
6.3.4	Measure and report value added	2	2
6.3.5	Record and report proportion of public/ private land managed	2	2
7.1	Implement revised steering arrangements	1	2
7.2.1	Arrange Annual Partnership Meeting	2	3
7.2.2	Prepare and report risk and issue log	2	2
7.2.3	Adopt standard reporting format	3	1
7.2.4	Set and monitor performance targets	3	1
7.3.1	Prepare and monitor annual work programme	3	1
7.3.2	Develop advisory/ problem solving/ horizon scanning role	2	1
7.3.4	Invite senior officers to APM	2	3
7.4.1	Undertake analysis of alternative legal forms	1	3

7.4.2	Assess TUPE and other legal/contractual issues	1	3
7.4.3	Undertake detailed negotiation with potential hosts	3	3
7.4.4	Develop transition plan	1	3

Key:

- Level 1 – Board**
- Level 2 – Officers Steering Group**
- Level 3 – Countryside Partnerships Team Leader**

When:

- 1 – April 2014**
- 2 – December 2014**
- 3 – April 2015**

Appendix A

An introduction to Countryside Management Partnerships in Surrey

1. Introduction

The concept of countryside management partnerships was developed by the Countryside Commission in the late 1970's as a way to improve access to the countryside and tackle environmental degradation around towns and cities. The concept was widely adopted and there are numerous partnerships throughout the country. Habitat-based partnerships were also established to promote the management of specific habitats.

The Countryside Commission initially contributed pump-prime funding and the partnerships were referred to as projects to reflect this. As the Countryside Commission funding was withdrawn, the funding shortfall was made up by income from third sector partners, private landowners and land-based grants.

2. Countryside partnerships in Surrey

In Surrey, the first countryside partnership was established in the Blackwater Valley. They were subsequently established in the urban fringe areas of Elmbridge; Epsom & Ewell; Mole Valley and London Borough of Kingston (Lower Mole); Reigate & Banstead; Tandridge and London Boroughs of Croydon and Sutton (Downlands); and Gatwick areas. A habitat-based partnership was also established in the south west of the county to preserve and enhance heathland throughout the county.

Details of the partnerships are as follows:

Name	Established	Type	Based at	Hosted by
Blackwater Valley Partnership	1979	Urban fringe	Ash Lock	Hampshire County Council
Downlands Countryside Management Project	1988	Urban fringe/ habitat-based	Redhill	Surrey County Council
Gatwick Greenspace Partnership	1994	Urban fringe	Crawley	Sussex Wildlife Trust
Lower Mole Countryside Management	1983	Urban fringe	Epsom	Surrey County Council

Project				
Surrey Heathlands Project	1989	Habitat-based	Merrow	Surrey County Council

The core funding partners are as follows:

<u>Blackwater Valley:</u>	Downlands:	Gatwick:	Lower Mole:	Heathlands:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ash PC • Blackwater & Hawley TC • Farnham TC • Finchampstead PC • Guildford BC • Hampshire CC • Hart DC • Rushmoor BC • Sandhurst TC • Surrey CC • Surrey Heath BC • Wokingham DC • Yateley TC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of London • LB Croydon • Reigate & Banstead BC • Surrey CC • LB Sutton • Tandridge DC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BAA Gatwick • Crawley BC • Horley TC • Horsham DC • Mole Valley BC • Reigate & Banstead BC • Surrey CC • West Sussex CC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of London • Elmbridge BC • Epsom & Ewell BC • LB Kingston • Mole Valley DC • Surrey CC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guildford BC • Surrey CC • Waverley BC • Woking BC

The partnerships are governed by steering groups, consisting of 1 or 2 elected members from each of the core partners, and meetings are held once or twice per year. In some cases there are also officers steering groups, which consist of parks and countryside officers from the partner Authorities, meeting at a similar frequency.

3. Aims of countryside management partnerships

The aims and operation of the partnerships have been reviewed many times over the years, but have remained substantially unchanged. The aim of urban fringe projects is to conserve and enhance the environment in partnership with local communities, providing a more accessible countryside experience with improved opportunities for wildlife and people. Their objectives typically include:

- **Access and public enjoyment:** improving access to the countryside for the peaceful enjoyment of all members of the public
- **Landscape:** conserving the character of the landscape in the local area and enhancing its quality

- **Biodiversity:** carrying out and promoting appropriate land management which increases biodiversity
- **Co-ordination:** acting as a focus for the co-ordination of initiatives to conserve and enhance the local countryside
- **Information:** increasing public knowledge and understanding of the countryside
- **Community involvement:** encouraging greater community involvement in the countryside
- **Sustainability:** demonstrating and promoting environmentally sustainable practices
- **Funding:** developing funding and partnership opportunities

Whilst some of these objectives could potentially be delivered in house, the key feature that sets countryside management partnerships apart is that they are able to operate at a landscape scale, working across boundaries on both private and public land.

4. Value for money

It is widely recognised that countryside management partnerships deliver exceptional value for money through their focussed and systematic use of volunteers. The use of volunteers has been widespread in the countryside management sector for many years and typically achieves 1 volunteer hour for every 2 hours of site staff time. Countryside Management Partnerships reverse this ratio, typically delivering about 2 volunteer hours for every hour of paid staff time. Because they have a separate 'brand' from their Local Authority funding partners, they are also able to attract volunteers to carry out administrative tasks, which the partners would struggle to do.

The table below shows the total amount of core funding and the proportion provide by Surrey County Council, together with the total volunteer hours:

Name	Gross expenditure (£)	LA funding (£)	SCC budget (£)	Volunteer hours	Core staff (fte)	Core staff (hours)
Blackwater Valley Partnership	203146	111505 (55%)	13086 (12%)	9225	3.5	5871
Downlands Countryside Management Project	292090	123500 (42%)	31800 (26%)	14274	4	6710
Gatwick Greenspace	96900	53800	13400	4660	1.5	2516

Partnership		(55%)	(25%)			
Lower Mole Countryside Management Project	157547	134344 (85%)	45000 (33%)	13118	3.13	5250
Surrey Heathland Project	102542	58565 (57%)	28537 (44%)	n/a	2	3355

Gross expenditure typically exceeds the Local Authority contribution by 30 – 40% as a result of grants and other income generation. The figures shown are the out turn for 2011/12. Income varies considerably and occasionally project funding is carried forward from year to year. Three of the partnerships have established separate charitable trusts, which are able to access grant funding and generate additional income that would not be available to the Local Authority partners direct.

The Surrey Heathland Project is included in this table for the sake of completeness, but as a habitat-based partnership it operates in a very different way. Heathland management involves the use of large-scale machinery and the main focus of the Project is on consultancy and project management work, much of which is unsuitable for volunteers. Volunteers are used where appropriate, for example checking livestock, but the core funding serves mainly to maintain a centre of expertise, which would not otherwise exist.

Appendix B

BPR Project Brief

Introduction

As part of our specification we scoped the BPR to remain focused on:

- Identifying key **strengths** of the existing governance & working arrangements
- Highlighting **weaknesses** of existing arrangements
- Proposing **opportunities** to improve performance, reporting & quality assurance
- Assessing any risks or **threats** associated with the projects ceasing to exist
- Considering how the projects can help deliver local & **strategic planning** objectives
- Exploring the validity of the '**trust status**' option originally proposed
- Recommending an appropriate '**host**' to sustain projects in the short & medium term
- Providing a specific, measureable, achievable, realistic & timely **plan for change**

Strengths

1. What are the strengths of existing governance & working arrangements?
2. Is there clear & effective governance & funding streams?
3. Is there appropriate & efficient working arrangements?
4. Do the existing arrangements deliver effectively for partners & stakeholders?
5. How do the CMPs compare with other similar organisations?
6. How do partners rank these strengths in terms of importance for delivery?

Weaknesses

1. What are the weaknesses of existing governance & working arrangements?
2. If governance & funding streams not clear & effective – why not?
3. If working arrangements are not efficient & effective – why not?
4. If the existing arrangements do not deliver for partners & stakeholders – why not?
5. If the CMPs do not compare well with other organisations – why not?
6. How do partners rank their weaknesses in terms of priority to resolve?

Opportunities

1. What alternative governance models and working arrangements could we consider?
2. What options are available for cost sharing across the three CMPs?
3. What opportunities are there for generating any or more income?
4. Are there any appropriate ways for reducing costs or planning cost savings?
5. How can we make the CMPs more financially secure and sustainable?

Threats

1. What risks or threats face the funding partners if the CMPs cease to exist?
2. What are the best & worst case scenario of doing nothing about these threats?
3. What other issues (staff, capital assets, legal agreements, existing grants etc.) are involved in terminating the existing and future agreement?
4. Who will deliver the existing grant schemes subject to legal agreements?
5. Could the CMPs survive the domino effect of individual partners withdrawing?
6. What are the actual implications of SCC reducing funding & charging for offices?

Quality assurance

1. How is quality assurance conducted & what procedures are already in place?
2. What is the consequence of non-compliance with quality assurance?
3. Are there measurable and realistic targets in place for monitoring performance?
4. If yes - how does current performance compare against existing targets?
5. If no – why not & how are the CMPs currently demonstrating their performance?
6. What are appropriate targets to be set for the CMPs in the future?
7. Are there effective mechanisms in place for reporting progress to stakeholders?
8. Is the information reported to stakeholders clear, concise, accurate, reliable & relevant?

Strategic planning

1. Why is the service needed by partners – statutory or discretionary?
2. Why are the partners involved with the CMPs – what are their strategic aims?
3. How well are the CMPs delivering their partner's strategic aims & objectives?

4. How could the CMPs improve their delivery of partner's strategic aims & objectives?
5. What is the potential for CMPs to deliver green infrastructure planning objectives?
6. Where do the CMPs see their place in the world with regard to strategic initiatives?
7. Is there a suitable alternative model for the future legal/constitutional agreement?

Trust status

1. Are the recommendations about transferring to trust status in SCC's PVR report valid?
2. Where are the examples of a similar trust model being used successfully?
3. What are the actual unique advantages of adopting trust status?
4. What are the disadvantages of trust status?
5. Are there examples of similar trust models failing – and why did they fail?
6. What are the implications of not being able to achieve trust status?

Host body

1. Who are the bodies potentially available to host the CMPs in the future?
2. Where are the examples of a transfer of host being delivered successfully?
3. What are the pros & cons for each potential host?
4. What are critical factors that will influence success or failure of a transfer?
5. Are these bodies actually interested in hosting the CMPs in the future?
6. What are the implications of not being able to find a willing host?

Plan for change

1. What viable alternative structures & arrangements are we going to recommend?
2. What form of legal/constitutional agreement are we going to adopt in future?
3. Are we going to create a protected contingency fund to cover future liabilities?
4. What is the outline of the plan for implementing the recommendations for change?
5. What are our SMART objectives for this programme of change?

6. What are the timelines, milestones, deliverable targets & risks associated with plan?
7. What, if any, additional resources will be needed to deliver change?
8. Who is going to manage the process of change?

NB: These 'big questions' have been collated by the Supervising Officer from various meetings conducted over the last few months since the PVR Report was issued by Surrey County Council. They have been circulated to the Review Team and Sponsors and their feedback incorporated into this document. This represents a collection of questions about what partners want to know before agreeing recommendations for the final report, albeit that some may need to be included into a second phase of review because of the restriction of time.

Appendix C

Output from Business Process Review

Review Overview

Purpose

- To carry out a Business Process Review (BPR) of the three CMPs to identify what improvements could be made to their governance, working arrangements and financial sustainability.

Aim

- To ensure the sustainability of the CMPs so that funding partners continue to achieve their strategic aims, while developing the relevance of the CMPs and improving the value of their services to those partners, and local people and communities.

Scope

- Identifying key strengths of the existing governance & working arrangements
- Highlighting weaknesses of existing arrangements
- Proposing opportunities to improve performance, reporting & quality assurance
- Assessing any risks/threats from doing nothing or following the existing proposal
- Considering how the projects can help deliver local and strategic planning objectives i.e. green infrastructure
- Exploring the validity of the 'trust status' option originally proposed
- Recommending an appropriate 'host' to sustain the projects in the short & medium term
- Providing a specific, measureable, achievable, realistic and timely programme of change

Methodology

Combination of:

- Interviews with staff
- Interviews with Officers
- Meetings with Members
- Meetings with Trusts

- Meeting with volunteer workers in the field
- Meetings with other CM organisations
- Desktop analysis research of current practices
- Desktop research of other CM practices
- Interviews with Senior Managers
- Workshops with PM

Purpose and Aims

The Management Project aims to tackle urban fringe problems through a range of practical projects that can be implemented using private and volunteer labour, will be cost effective and promote local goodwill and interest. The aims of the project can be summarised as:

- To increase public knowledge and understanding of the countryside
- To safeguard the interests of agriculture and forestry
- To improve public access to the countryside for informal outdoor recreation
- To protect landscape features and enhance the natural beauty of the area
- To conserve areas of natural history and archaeological features.

Are the CMPs Fit for Purpose?

Findings and Observations

Is there a focus on customer needs and strategic priorities?

- There is a lack of understanding of the role of the funding Authorities as the customer
- The purpose of CMPs not defined or articulated nor fully and equally understood by all Partners
- Work programmes not defined or directed by Partners, including financial sign off
- Primary focus is on volunteer groups rather than Partners and, in some cases, the wider community
- CMP plans do not recognise strategic priorities of Partners

- There is a recognition from many Partners that professional knowledge and advice is generally good
- Mixed perception on quality and usefulness of the practical services provided
- There are no measures of customer satisfaction
- Customer meetings are inconsistent and irregular
- In some cases Partners would like an increase in CMP services

Do the CMPs provide an appropriate level of service and value for money to the Partners?

- Purchaser: supplier relationship not recognised
- Service provision not agreed through any formal structure
- Work plans and priorities often identified and then carried out by CMPs, with minimal references to customer
- Performance not measured or reported
- Customer satisfaction appears to be mixed
- Customer relationship management mixed
- Some partners receiving significantly higher level of service than others
- Lack of performance information and no KPIs
- Lack of clear cost or budget information therefore neither customers nor staff are able to assess VFM
- Lack of commercial approach
- Focus on income gathering
- Focus on inputs and outputs rather than outcomes

Is work managed efficiently, with modern working practices?

People Based Issues

- Individuals demonstrate enthusiasm and commitment to the work the projects undertake
- Managers and staff working excessive hours
- Little/no cross project communication, work and little sharing of resources
- Need to develop set of competencies
- Quality of staff management mixed (e.g. staff meetings)

- Poor planning, coordination and balancing of individuals' workloads
- Some communication issues within teams
- Management of volunteers an on-going issue
- Uncertainty causing stress among staff

Practice Based Issues

- Some entrepreneurial skills
- Poor financial management including poor future planning and financial transparency
- Minimal management support provided in difficult financial environment
- No quality indicators
- No KPIs or other outcome based measures
- Multiple projects without appropriate levels of transparency
- Lack of IT capability
- Inconsistent use of ICT
- Lack of knowledge management and sharing
- Lack of commercial/business skills

Do the governance arrangements ensure that the needs and ambitions of Partners are fully met?

Members

- Infrequent meetings – but time and effort needs to be proportionate
- Little strategic direction provided by Members
- Focus on the detail with little clarity on higher level issues
- Meetings retrospective focus
- In some cases sufficient knowledge of the work of the CMPs
- Lots of personal goodwill, but with little evidence of wider Cabinet influence
- Reliance on individuals rather than sound business principles
- Insufficient clarity on finances and vfm
- No risk management role
- No issue resolution role

- Minimal decision making function

Officers

- Terms of Reference and format of Joint Partner meetings not defined
- Focus on the detail with little clarity on higher level issues
- Little discussion of operational issues
- No prior discussion and agreement of work programme
- No risk management
- Insufficient focus on finances and vfm
- Meetings focus on the past
- Little use made of advisory/problem solving function of the Officer group
- Meetings infrequent, with excessive and irrelevant reporting
- Opportunities for the future neither raised nor discussed
- Need for frequent, structured individual Partner meetings

Volunteers and Trusts

- Highly localised
- Highly motivated and vocal
- Key supporters of CMPs
- Provide significant funding streams
- Have choice to allocate funds to others
- Access to grants
- Plays into Big Society agenda
- No stated ambition to grow beyond current structure and size (e.g. do not wish to take on staff)
- Not only voluntary/charitable organisations operating in localities
- Increase in volunteering in some localities
- Increasing need for management of volunteer labour
- Trust/volunteers primary point of contact with little contact with communities beyond

Key Issues

Working Practices

- Structurally too small, fragmented, unfocussed and insular
- Lack of commercial practice and skills within projects
- Volunteers passionate about the work in their locality but no wish to increase remit

Governance

- Roles, responsibilities and TOR of Member and Officer Groups unclear, therefore meetings lack purpose and usefulness
- There is no clear remit for future work from Authorities

Finances

- Facing a radical reduction in funding from 2012-13, including some Authorities total withdrawal, making projects unviable
- Legacy of funding commitments and liabilities into the future
- CMPs are valued by some funding Partners, but goodwill not supported with long term financial commitment

Future Options

- Do nothing
- Retained by public sector operating under SLAs
- Charity/Trust Status
- Various Legal Forms
- Individual Options
- Abolish

Do Nothing

Pros

- Familiar
- Flexible

- Least short term disruption for staff and volunteers
- Meets local issues and Big Society agenda
- Good reputation within communities
- Success in securing grant funding

Cons

- Financially unsustainable and therefore likely to fold
- 'Hand to mouth' leading to uncertainty among staff and volunteers
- Fails to meet funding partner objectives
- Mixed Member buy in
- Unsatisfactory governance arrangements
- Insularity leads to lack of resilience
- Lack of resilience leads to excessive working hours and little opportunities for development

Partnership Operating under SLA

Pros

- Requirements, including outcomes would be defined by funding partners
- CMPs have clarity over funding and what is required of them
- Medium to long term assurance over funding and delivery
- Clear governance arrangements
- Flexible call off (Dependent on partner needs)
- Transparent arrangement
- Deliver value for money
- Focus of delivery
- Longer term security

Cons

- Current arrangement may not have capability to deliver agreed outcomes and future needs
- Administrative effort
- Set up could be bureaucratic

- Projects will continue to operate at a small scale with a tendency towards insularity.

Trust/Charitable Status

Independent Trusts

Pros

- Familiar and established legal structure
- Charitable status delivers financial benefits
- Separate to LAs

Cons

- Current Trusts have no wish to take on staff and other liabilities
- Will need a subsidiary company to trade without restrictions, adding to complexity and costs
- Attaining charitable status lengthy and significant set up costs (e.g. legal fees)
- Limited size and on going full costs question viability and sustainability

Trust/Charitable Status

Arrangement with Existing Trust(s)

Pros

- Familiar, tried-and-tested legal structure
- Charitable status delivers some financial benefits
- Greater resilience and sustainable business model
- Larger Trust gives economy of scale and access to proven viable business
- Access to career progressions for individuals
- Customers have access to a wider range of skills, knowledge and services
- Join up with other Surrey CC arrangements

Cons

- Trusts would have no wish to take on liabilities
- Potential TUPE transfers
- Need to retain link with localism agenda

- Need for intense negotiation/consultation in order to make transition within limited timescale
- Need to conduct due diligence to ensure CMPs not at future risk

Legal Forms

Pros

- Has mechanisms for holding income and assets in trust on behalf of its members
- Free from LA control and restrictions (including staff salaries etc.)
- Offers optimal legal basis for trading
- Relatively quick and cheap to register, with commensurate costs for accounting and reporting year-on-year.

Cons

- Doesn't have the same tax benefits (can only be achieved via delivery outsourced to charitable partner)
- Profits subject to tax
- Less well-known legal format
- Potentially in competition with other private suppliers
- Question how it would play into Big Society agenda
- Question over future governance structure and ownership
- Potentially high set up costs and time (e.g. legal costs)

Abolish

Pros

- Partners able to reallocate funding to other work or organisations
- Potential cost savings
- Quick and easy

Cons

- Potentially long term costs
- Possible loss of legacy of past work, long term degradation of environment
- Possible resistance from Members and others

- Loss of model of good practice (partnership working, Big Society etc.)
- Possible longer term discontent from communities
- Remaining liabilities need to be met

Key Recommendations

Delivery of Local and Strategic Planning Objectives

- It is recommended that CMPs develop a 5 year business plan which would include agreed purpose, vision, mission and values of the CMPs, with underpinning high level objectives. In addition detailed objectives would describe the outcomes of the work programme.
- As part of the business planning process, it is recommended that CMPs work with Partners to ensure that local and strategic planning and other key objectives are met.
- It is recommended that appropriate 'light touch' KPIs be developed to enable on-going monitoring of how objectives are being met.
- It is recommended that the establishment of a structured annual reporting cycle would check performance and provide an opportunity to adapt plans and priorities as appropriate.

Improving Performance, Reporting and Quality Assurance

It is recommended that an agreement be developed with funding partners to include the following elements:

- Minimum service requirements
- Options for additional services
- Programme of works
- Deliverables
- KPIs
- Quality indicators
- Financial reporting, funding and pricing
- Reporting systems and protocols
- Comms (including Partner meetings)

It is envisaged that all elements would form the backbone of a future SLA or contract.

It is recommended that the roles, functions and activities of Member and Officer Groups be reviewed and revised in order to better support CMP activities. In particular, Member and Officer Groups should review:

- Terms of reference, to include an articulated purpose and description of responsibilities
- Meeting frequency and priority
- Meeting format and protocols (i.e. information, reporting, advice and decisions)
- Communications
- Roles, functions and meetings outside Group framework

It is recommended that Members and Officers consider the benefits of joint meetings or part meetings in order to ensure consistency in understanding and decision making

Hosting

8. While a range of differing hosting arrangements could be considered for the individual projects, it is recommended that all the projects remain with a single host in order to gain the benefits of working within a wider organisation and to provide breadth, flexibility and resilience.

9. It is recommended that the contract should be managed and coordinated from within Surrey County Council but working with Partner organisations

10. It is recommended that further exploratory discussions take place with both Surrey Wildlife Trust and Groundwork to assess the following:

- Whether all the projects would fit into a future arrangement (i.e. define what would be in and out of scope)
- What financial structures would need to be put in place
- What the financial implications of any transfer of work would be to either organisation
- What organisational and/or structural impact is likely to be of any arrangements
- What contractual arrangements would need to be put in place
- What the contract would include and how it would be managed
- What governance arrangements would need to be put in place

11. It is also recommended that the horizon continued to be scanned to identify other potential organisations suitable for hosting.

Programme of Change

Issues

- Timescales are extremely tight
- Pace of change programme to be dictated by reduction/withdrawal of funding for 2013-14.
- Requirement for full project planning and management to meet tight timescales
- Multiple activities required, with initial 'pinch point' April – July 2012
- Need to ensure appropriate resources and skills are in place
- Comms plan to run alongside all technical activities
- Need to maintain 'business as usual' throughout transition – Project Managers will need support

Immediate Actions

- Secure agreement of findings, next steps and timescales with key stakeholders
- Agree single final report for distribution
- Communicate outcomes to all stakeholders, including staff
- Further detailed discussions with all funding Authorities
- Define resource and skills needs for next stages and agree with contributing Partners
- Appoint project board, PM and develop detailed project plan

Medium Term Actions

- Develop, agree and implement communication plan (internal and external perspective)
- Develop, agree and implement revised governance structures and arrangements
- Develop 5 year business plan
- Undertake negotiation of SLA details with Funding Partners, making explicit links to Authorities priorities
- Write first draft of SLA and test with partners
- Review financial protocols, structures and processes to ensure transparency
- Undertake training needs analysis and put provision in place
- Wrap up OSD project

Longer Term Actions

- Review and approve of 5 year business plan to ensure fit for purpose
- Undertake deeper analysis of implications of other Legal forms, including taking legal advice
- Undertake detailed negotiation with potential hosts
- Assess TUPE and other legal/contractual issues
- Develop transition plan(s)
- Go live