

INTER-AUTHORITY SUPPORTIVE WORK ASSISTANCE SCHEME

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report gives details of an initiative being developed by Essex Authorities for partnership working arrangements between Local Authority Legal Departments.

2. THE SCHEME

- 2.1 The scheme which has been devised in furtherance of achieving Best Value, provides participating Authorities with a formal mechanism for sharing knowledge, expertise and experience in legal matters.
- 2.2 The practical benefits of the proposed partnership include:-
- Establishing a database of the areas of legal expertise within respective authorities.
 - Sharing knowledge, experience and working practices.
 - Ability to call upon effective assistance from another authority subject to available capacity.
 - Cost effective use of resources.
 - Development of best practice.
 - Assist in achieving efficiency, economy and effectiveness in the context of the requirements of best value.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 The opportunity through Partnership to utilise available resources within the respective authorities is a valuable resource, particularly in specialist areas of legal work where in house skills may often be more developed but premium rates would apply if procurement in the private sector was necessary.
- 3.2 The scheme would enable one Authority to assist another if its own resources were unable to deal with workloads, for instance, due to staff shortages or a sudden influx of work, or particular expertise exists within one Authority which might be called upon.

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- 3.3 The provision of any legal service by one authority to another through the proposed partnership is entirely voluntary and would be dependent on capacity existing within an Authority to offer its services. Charges for work undertaken would apply at agreed rates according to the type of work involved.

4 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The scheme imposes no obligation on any of the participating Authorities beyond sharing of information as to legal expertise and in the context of Best Value would be a useful arrangement for the Council to support.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Participation in the scheme will assist in securing efficient use of resources.

6 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That the Council supports the initiative and joins the Inter-Authority Supportive Work Assistance Scheme.

Albert Bugeja

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Background Papers:

Letter from Chelmsford Borough Council dated 5 June 2000.

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