



**Report Reference Number: E/19/49**

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**To: Executive**  
**Date: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020**  
**Status: Key Decision**  
**Ward(s) Affected: All**  
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**Lead Executive  
Member: Councillor Mark Crane, Leader of the  
Council**  
**Lead Officer: Janet Waggott, Chief Executive, Selby  
District Council**

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**Title: Better Together Collaboration Agreement Renewal**

### **Summary:**

Selby District Council (SDC) and North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) entered into a formal Collaboration Agreement in July 2015. The original term of the agreement ends on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. The “Option to Renew” deadline has been extended to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020 with the agreement of NYCC.

The purpose of this report is to set out the overall terms of the Collaboration Agreement, report progress and benefits already achieved and to recommend that the Agreement is renewed until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The Collaboration Agreement recognises that flexibility is required in relation to the services included in the arrangement. The specific services are provided for in separate schedules and can be added to and varied by agreement within the terms of the overarching Collaboration Agreement.

### **Recommendations:**

It is recommended that the Executive agree to renew the formal Collaboration Agreement with NYCC for a further 3 years.

### **Reasons for recommendation:**

Renewal of the overarching Collaboration Agreement will ensure that the successful model of joint working continues; the benefits and new opportunities identified by the

Better Together Programme can be delivered and to provide a legal framework to govern service specific agreements for any particular shared services.

## **1. Introduction and background**

- 1.1** Since 2013 North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and Selby District Council (SDC) have worked together to establish greater collaboration in service delivery to the benefit of both the public and the two organisations. The Better Together Programme was established to enable shared expertise, intelligence and leadership between the two councils to maximise how assets are used to deliver savings whilst redesigning services to achieve the best possible outcomes to all customers in the locality. The vision for the Programme is: “To enable the most effective use of joint resources of the two organisations in providing services to our shared client base”.
- 1.2** Following the establishment of the joint role of Chief Executive of SDC and Assistant Chief Executive of NYCC in October 2013 the Better Together Programme has gained strength, momentum and pace demonstrated by the excellent feedback that was provided on the programme within the NYCC LGA Peer Review (March 2016) and the SDC LGA Peer Review (November 2017).
- 1.3** The Programme is governed by a Joint Members Group and an officer Steering Group which includes the Chief Executives from both organisations. Officers consider that the governance model in existence ensures the right level of sponsorship and communication at the senior leadership level of both organisations to be able to resolve issues and accelerate progress. The governance arrangements have assisted in ensuring that the programme maintains momentum and has been supportive of the innovative approach to service delivery. It has also ensured that the principles of the collaboration are upheld and provides scrutiny to the projects being delivered.
- 1.4** In 2015 the two councils agreed to enter into a formal collaboration agreement to evidence the parties’ intentions, the principles of collaboration and the obligations in respect of the services to be provided. The Better Together Collaboration Agreement was agreed by the NYCC Executive at its meeting on 7th July 2015. SDC Executive delegated responsibility to the SDC Chief Executive in April 2015 to enter into the formal agreement. The initial term for the overarching Agreement was for 5 years.
- 1.5** The original term of the Collaboration Agreement ends on 30th June 2020 and the terms require a decision is made by 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020 to renew or end the agreement.

## **2 The Better Together Collaboration Agreement Review**

### **2.1 The Collaboration Agreement**

**2.2** The collaboration agreement sets out the governance arrangements and provides a legal umbrella and framework for the service specific agreements for any particular shared services. The original Collaboration Agreement document can be found at appendix A.

**2.3** The Agreement sets out the intended outcomes of closer working and the guiding principles which the Councils have agreed, namely that the Collaboration's governance will:

- provide strategic oversight, co-ordination and direction for the collaboration;
- provide a robust monitoring role to the overall progress of the collaborations project portfolio;
- provide coherent, timely and efficient decision-making;
- ensure that decisions are enacted appropriately within individual authorities; and
- correspond with the key features of the Collaboration governance arrangements as set out in the Agreement.

**2.4** Provision is made for the Better Together Steering Group to provide the strategic oversight and direction. Relevant decisions will be referred to the Executive for consideration where the powers are not delegated or where an Officer judges it to be more appropriate for the decision to be made at Member level. In other cases, the Better Together Steering group can add or remove services from the schedules subject to the limits of delegation of authority by each Council to steering group members.

**2.5** The Agreement contains standard provisions relating to health and safety, data protection, human rights, equal opportunities, freedom of information, confidentiality, intellectual property and insurance. The Agreement also provides for disputes to be resolved by discussions between service representatives under the schedules.

**2.6** The service specification schedules include:

- service specification and performance standards
- payment information and cost/savings sharing
- warranties
- monitoring and reporting
- information about termination of services under each schedule

**2.7** The Agreement provides for an option to renew for another three years commencing 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020. A decision must be taken by 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020. If the Term is extended, then at least 6 months before 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023 the Parties may also agree to extend the Term for a further 2 years commencing on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

**2.8** The Parties shall continue to provide the Services in accordance with the terms of this agreement (except for the option to extend in the above) for the Term(s) specified.

**2.9** The Party providing the individual Service shall provide that Service from the relevant Service Commencement Date for the term specified in the individual Schedules.

**2.10** The table below shows the current services covered by the Collaboration Agreement:

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Schedule Commenced</b>	<b>Schedule Ends</b>	<b>Renewal Option</b>
1	Registration Service	01/2015	12/2020	No option to renew as part of the service level agreement. New SLA required once current SLA ends.
2	Shared IT Infrastructure Service	02/2016	01/2021	No option to renew as part of the service level agreement. New SLA required once current SLA ends.
3	VOIP Telephony System	04/2017	03/2022	No option to renew as part of the service level agreement. New SLA required once current SLA ends.
4	Lagan CRM System	04/2016	03/2020	Option to renew for a further 3 years and then a further 2 years after 2023
5	SDC Website / Intranet Support	04/2016	03/2020	Option to renew for a further 3 years and then a further 2 years after 2023
6	Finance Service	04/2016	03/2021	Option to renew see separate Report concerning renewal of Finance Service Collaboration.
7	Payroll Service	04/2019	03/2020	Annual Agreement. New SLA required once current SLA ends.

8	Natural Environment Advisory Service and Landscape Architectural Advice	11/2017	11/2020	Three-year agreement. New SLA required once current SLA ends.
		11/2019	11/2020	Annual Agreement. New SLA required once current SLA ends.
9	Learning Zone	11/2017	11/2021	This has been extended for 2 years to 2021. New SLA required once current SLA ends.
10	Legal Services	04/2018	06/2020 (variation agreed between SDC and NYCC to the first option to renew deadline)	Option to renew for a further 3 years and then a further 2 years after 2023.

**2.11** There are instances as demonstrated in the table above where service specific agreements have terms which extend the end date of the initial overarching Collaboration Agreement or where service specific arrangements end prior to the end date of the initial overarching Collaboration Agreement.

**2.12** There are also contractual agreements between NYCC and SDC that are not delivered under the overall formal collaboration agreement. SDC carried out a procurement exercise for support to its Corporate Health and Safety service, which NYCC were awarded, the contract ends 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020, with the option to extend for a further year. NYCC also provide an Archaeological Development Control Advice Service to SDC which is part of a separate whole County Service Level Agreement between NYCC and District Councils.

### **2.13 Review of the Collaboration Agreement**

**2.14** To enable the Better Together Steering Group, and Executives Members for both authorities to make an informed decision on whether to renew the Collaboration Agreement for a further term each of the 11 service specific agreements have been reviewed to obtain feedback on the performance of the service, benefits and future opportunities. It is proposed that in the future

an annual review of the Collaboration Agreement is undertaken and reported to Executive should the Executive agree to the renewal of the Agreement.

**2.15** The reviews were led by the lead partners for each Service Level Agreement and a joint report was produced to present back to the Better Together Steering Group with a summary of the outcome of the review and recommendations in principle to renew the overall collaboration agreement.

**2.16** A summary of feedback from the review of service specific Service Level Agreements can be found in Appendix B of this report. The full feedback reports for all 11 services can be made available.

**2.17 Benefits of the Collaboration Agreement and Better Together Programme**

**2.18** There are a number of key benefits that have been identified across the Programme that have resulted from effective joint working initiatives and the specific services delivered under the Collaboration Agreement.

**2.19** Sharing of back office services under the Collaboration Agreement (resource and expertise) in an appropriate and sustainable manner which has enabled us to be much more customer focused. We have been able to achieve increased resilience in service delivery, increased level of skills from pooled resources, improved opportunities for staff career progression and succession planning (Finance Service). A more client focussed approach to service delivery and economies of scale have also been realised (E.g. Integrated Finance Functions, Shared ICT Infrastructure, Shared Telephony and Customer Relationship Management System, Payroll, E-Learning, Recruitment, Legal Services, Archaeology and Ecology Services).

**2.20** Focused, joined up delivery of services at a community level. Building capacity and strengthening local community networks that already exist in communities by developing Community Hubs designed on differing local needs. Ensuring wider partner involvement where required (E.g. Selby Safer Hubs Integrated Neighbourhood Management between SDC, NYCC & NYP is delivering efficient, integrated, multi-agency front line processes whilst reducing demand for services). The joint Customer & Community Programme supported:

- An increase in the number of online direct debit payments (139%)
- a 322% increase in the number of volunteers at community hubs
- across all libraries in the district volunteers gave 15,760 hours to deliver services, including assisting 1,865 individuals to access services online of which 732 related to NYCC or SDC services
- increased resilience for Community Hubs through enabling income generating services (meeting room hire at Tadcaster Hub and improved facilities at Sherburn Old Girls School)
- increased business levels resulted in Sherburn being awarded Highly Commended in the NY Library of the Year awards.

- Selby Library has seen a 27% increase in visits and a 12% increase in active users since the refurbishment
- broader health and wellbeing benefits such as improved mental health and reduced isolation which are all community led
- the establishment of Selby Health Matters

- 2.21** Innovative digital platforms for our customers and communities accessing information and services through modern online platforms, enabling service delivery re-design and channel shift (E.g. SDC Website).
- 2.22** Co-location opportunities have been implemented through an asset management review, improving working environments and generating income for both organisations (E.g. Registrars, NY Police and Align Property Partners colocation at SDC Civic Centre).
- 2.23** Joined up approach to planning services both in terms of communications, prioritisation, processes and consistent relationship management with developers and external organisations. As part of the recent Tour de Yorkshire event we have seen real benefits to the relationships formed in this area where we have been able to respond flexibly to customers and each other's needs which presents a joined up approach to the community. We were also able to complete works quickly and at a reduced cost to what had been anticipated.
- 2.24** Improved experience for business customers through joined up communications, relationship management and processes (E.g Planning services and Primary Authority Schemes).
- 2.25** Joint Investment in areas such as public transport to improve passenger experience (E.g. Selby Bus Station Upgrades), the Sherburn 2 development which will create around 2,000 new jobs and Community Hubs (see section 2.20 of this report).
- 2.26** Supporting our residents to “live well” through the joint work on Health, Social Care and Housing work (Multi-disciplinary team approach where we are taking a multi-disciplinary team approach to undertake accommodation reviews and the support needs of complex cases, homelessness prevention and DFG Assessments).
- 2.27** The Programme communicates publicly on key joint working initiatives through CitizenLink, the newsletter produced jointly by Selby District Council and North Yorkshire County Council. Recent articles have been published this year focussing on the joint work around:
- Better Together Overall
  - reducing carbon footprint
  - Church Fenton – creative industries
  - Investing in Selby – bus station and car parks improvements
  - Tour de Yorkshire success

- UCI Road World Championships investment and benefits
- Community Hubs – One year on
- Joint messages around how the two councils are supporting new investment in the Selby district as part of Place branding.

## **2.28 Further Opportunities for Joint working**

**2.29** As part of the recent review of the specific services under the Collaboration Agreement, a number of potential further opportunities have been identified.

**2.30** There has been an opportunity identified around the further use of accommodation space at the Selby Civic Centre for the NYCC Registrar's service, expanding capacity to improve the timeliness in which NYCCC can offer appointments for the registration of deaths.

**2.31** There are opportunities to review the ICT infrastructure support service to enable more capacity for SDC's Data and Systems Team and to align ICT provision with new technological developments. This could include more strategic support for long-term ICT planning across all ICT services that NYCC provide to SDC.

**2.32** There are opportunities to further embed financial management within the role of budget managers releasing more capacity for the Finance Service to invest on other value adding activity. There is also potential to revisit the use of a shared finance system to support operational efficiency and to utilise the recently purchased CFO Insights benchmarking tool to support value for money analysis.

**2.33** There are further opportunities within the Payroll and HR services to use technology for the validation and submission of payroll requests, reducing the potential for error. Both organisations are also currently exploring the potential for a shared HR and Organisational Development Service including increasing resilience for HR and Payroll support. Further access to online training and learning content is another potential opportunity for the future.

**2.34** There is the potential opportunity for other NYCC Heritage Services to be provided such as Natural Environmental Policy and Project Management where appropriate.

**2.35** Within the Legal Service the NYCC Lead considers that there are potential further opportunities for the development of the service with other Local Authorities. The SDC Lead proposes consideration be given to a revised approach focussed on creating shared resilience in legal disciplines that span across both County Council and District Council work and further exploration of the reason and scope of legal advice sought in the Planning, Licencing and Housing disciplines to inform future development in these areas. The Legal Service renewal date option is 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. In order to provide time to undertake work on a revised approach to focus on resilience, the Lead



Service Officers consider it appropriate to vary the Schedule to continue until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, and seek Member approval to do so.

### **3 Alternative Options Considered**

- 3.1** The other options considered for the services provided under the Collaboration Agreement include assessing the services provided against similar services provided by commercial third party suppliers on the open market and assessing whether SDC can deliver the services “in house”.
- 3.2** The specific services currently provided under the overall Collaboration Agreement are delivering best value. Under the collaboration agreement each specific service provided is reviewed to ensure that the service continues to deliver best value for SDC. Where a specific service level agreement is due to end SDC and NYCC review the service to ensure that SDC continues to receive best value and a decision is taken to renew, amend or end each Service Level Agreement on an individual service basis.
- 3.3** The other option considered is to no longer have an overarching Collaboration Agreement in place and that specific services could be delivered by SDC to NYCC and vice versa through a model where there are separate contracts for each of the services. This option is not favoured as this would not set out the joint working vision and principles for collaboration for services and projects that are jointly progressed as part of the Programme outside of contractual agreements.

### **4. Implications**

#### **4.1 Legal Implications**

- 4.2** The collaboration agreement sets out the governance arrangements and provides a legal umbrella and framework for the service specific agreements for any particular shared services as described in section 2 of this report. The original Collaboration Agreement document can be found at appendix A.
- 4.3** The Agreement provides that the Parties may agree to extend the Term for a further 3 years commencing on 1st July 2020. It has been agreed with NYCC that the deadline to take this decision is 29<sup>th</sup> February 2020. If the Term is extended, then at least 6 months before 30th June 2023 the Parties may also agree to extend the Term for a further 2 years commencing on 1st July 2023.
- 4.4** If the recommendation to renew the agreement for a further 3 years is approved, the Collaboration Agreement document will be reviewed to ensure that the standard provisions and terms and conditions relating to health and safety, data protection, human rights, equal opportunities, freedom of information, confidentiality, intellectual property and insurance are up to date and the new term dates are reflected for the next term commencing 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020.

#### **4.5 Financial Implications**

**4.6** Each specific service contained within the Collaboration Agreement has a cost associated with the delivery of the service. Costs for the specific services are agreed within each separate Service Level Agreement for the relevant service and are reviewed as part of the Service Level Agreement review processes and renewal processes.

**4.7** At present, the overall Better Together Programme including the services delivered under the Better Together Collaboration Agreement has achieved £1,407,436 of cashable savings and a further £496,468 has been identified. This, therefore, provides a current total achieved and forecasted saving for the programme from April 2014 to March 2021 of £1,903,904.

#### **4.8 Policy and Risk Implications**

#### **4.9 Policy Implications**

**4.10** Better Together is aligned to the delivery of the new Council Plan 2020-30 particularly in terms of the strategic priority of 'a Council Delivering Great Value'. This priority is focused around the digital agenda, workforce development and effective use of financial and physical assets – all of which are supported by Better Together. An early action is to: 'Explore further opportunities to build on existing Better Together arrangements with North Yorkshire councils'. Furthermore, the Council Plan incorporates a delivery principle around working collaboratively with others and using those best placed to deliver services even where it is not Selby DC.

#### **4.11 Risk Implications**

**4.12** Risk management services are currently delivered through the Finance SLA and Veritau. Furthermore, Better Together arrangements are integral to the management and mitigation of a number of corporate risks – including a number where the risk score is currently high such as:

- Financial Resources – Financial Services are provided through Better Together. Furthermore, re-modelling those services currently being provided through Better Together could have a future financial implication.
- Organisational Capacity – whilst not currently being delivered through a formal Better Together SLA, support around the HR and OD agenda is currently being provided by NYCC.

Health & Safety Compliance – NYCC currently provide health and safety advice and support to Selby DC.

- Systems and Technology – ICT infrastructure – including protection against cyber threat – is currently provided by NYCC through a Better Together SLA.

As a result, any changes to the delivery arrangements outlined above could impact on the Council's ability to manage these risks and will need careful consideration.

#### **4.13 Resource Implications**

**4.14** SDC Officers will be required to review and amend the formal Collaboration Agreement document in conjunction with NYCC if the decision to renew the Agreement is made.

**4.15** SDC lead officers for each specific Service Level Agreement will be required to manage the agreement from an SDC point of view.

**4.16** The overall Better Together Programme is governed by a Joint Members Working Group and the Better Together Steering Group represented by the Chief Executives of NYCC and SDC and Directors. SDC and NYCC Officers are required to deliver joint projects under the Better Together Programme.

**4.17** SDC provides accommodation and office support services for the NYCC Registrars service as a specific Service Level Agreement. SDC Officer resources are required to provide this service which is paid for by NYCC.

#### **4.18 Other Implications**

**4.19** The Collaboration Agreement also sets out fully both of the parties' obligations with regards to Data Protection including compliance with legislation and roles and responsibilities for data controllers and data processors.

#### **4.20 Equalities Impact Assessment**

The Collaboration Agreement formally sets out how both SDC and NYCC will ensure compliance with Equalities Legislation in the delivery of services to each other. The specific Service Level Agreements also set out that the services will be delivered in accordance with the Equalities statements agreed in the overall Collaboration Agreement.

### **5. Conclusion**

**5.1** The Better Together Programme continues to deliver benefits to SDC, NYCC and the public whilst also providing a joint platform to identify and deliver new initiatives for improvement. The Better Together Collaboration Agreement ensures that joint principles, governance and a legal framework are in place to deliver services and joint projects. It is recommended that the Executive renew the formal Collaboration Agreement with NYCC for a further 3 years.

### **6. Background Documents**

All relevant documentation to this report is contained with the Appendices of this report.

### **7. Appendices**

***Appendix A – The original Better Together Collaboration Agreement***

***Appendix B – Feedback from specific services***

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