

The Highland Council
ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
19 February 2014

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	ACS/27/14

School Office Review

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Summary

The School Office review commenced in July 2013 under the governance framework of the corporate Business Support project board. This report summarises progress to date and the next steps, including:

- The governance and establishment of the project
- The work carried out so far and main themes established
- The next phase of work around those themes
- The communication and engagement plan.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Highland Council is committed to a programme of modernisation and continuous improvement across all its Services. In recent years the Shared Business Support Service was created following a corporate review of the administrative support functions in all Council locations out-with schools. It was agreed by the corporate Business Support project board last year that a similar review of the school office support function should be undertaken. As a result a dedicated Project Manager was appointed in July 2013 to oversee the project. In the intervening period good progress has been made and this report outlines progress to date and the next steps.

1.2 The school office is an integral part of a well-run school. It is highly valued by school staff, parents and pupils and is often the first port of call for many issues arising in and around a school. School office employees display great commitment and loyalty to their individual schools. There is a real sense that they are an integral part of the school community. However, there has been little change to the post role and staffing structure for some time. The Shared Business Support Service review therefore provided a catalyst for undertaking a similar review of the school office support function in schools.

1.3 It is also important to highlight at the outset that there are a number of other major projects currently on-going that will ultimately impact on the school office function. These include SEEMIS (the new school Management Information System (MIS) that will replace Phoenix e1 this coming August), the integrated payroll and personnel system in Resource Link and the corporate Information Management project. As a result there is a need to ensure that there is an awareness of how these work-streams will impact on the school office. Also, it

is important that the outcomes of the school office review recognise and reflect the potential system and process changes that will arise from these other reviews.

- 1.4 The Project Initiation Document (PID) at **Appendix 1** provides details of the project rationale, objectives, benefits, outcomes and risks. The PID was approved by the Corporate Business Project Board in December last year.

2.0 Progress to date

- 2.1 The School Office review commenced in July 2013 with the appointment of a dedicated full-time Project Manager. The initial phases included a review of the data and information gathered in previous projects along with an assessment of further information needs. This process was progressed in conjunction with colleagues in the Shared Business Support Service, the Resource Link project, other Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP) projects and related project groups within ECS.

- 2.2 Thereafter the following tasks were progressed:

- A series of interviews with Clerical Assistants, Administrative Assistants and Head Teachers was conducted with 25 schools, involving 55 office staff;
- A wide range of Primary and Secondary School types were visited including cluster, small, medium, large, rural, urban, campus and special schools;
- These interviews were extremely valuable in determining what the main areas of activity were and main issues in carrying out those duties;
- Whilst unique aspects of each school's operation was evident amongst the sample interviewed, consistent themes were also evident;
- A series of presentations and discussion were held at the November 2013 Primary Head Teacher area meetings and as a result a large proportion of Primary School Head Teachers were therefore able to provide comment and feedback.

- 2.3 Work is also ongoing with colleagues managing other projects within ECS and corporately to understand the possible opportunities that the outcomes from these projects might present in the school office.

- 2.4 The tasks and issues documented from the research and engagement work have been structured into a collection of themes and this work is complete. The themes and work behind them can now be used as a starting point for redesigning the tasks and processes particularly in light of the likely impact of other projects. This work will form the next phase of the project.

3.0 Emerging themes

3.1 The following themes have emerged as a result of the above work;

- School office employees have a deep sense of loyalty to their school.
- The school office is the primary port of call within the school and is therefore a busy place with a large number of unplanned interruptions.
- School office staff perform an essential role as the consistent link between the outside world and life within the school.
- Whilst a single school is in many ways unique there are consistencies around the tasks that are carried out and the issues and frustrations that are faced.
- How tasks are completed and ways of working can be variable across schools.
- There are a number of tasks that are frustrating and time consuming for staff due to outmoded processes, systems and interfaces with corporate and school office functions that lead to errors and additional effort for all stakeholders in order to resolve.
- There is in general a lack of appropriate ICT within school offices which could be used to enhance productivity and service within schools. For example security systems, telephony and mobile ICT capability.
- There is some variability in the breadth and level of responsibility at which office staff operate.

3.2 The identification and structuring of school office tasks and related corporate initiatives identified the following work-streams;

- **SEEMiS** – all office tasks that it is envisaged will be deliverable via the SEEMiS system when it is implemented were identified. As a result the opportunity exists to fully use SEEMiS to manage information and reporting from a single source in consistent way;
- **Managing interruptions** – this work-stream will examine how best to use Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to manage unplanned interruptions. Such interruptions are disruptive and add a disproportionate time to office staff's workload;
- **Financial** – these activities include School Fund management, purchasing and banking;
- **Management support and information** – these relate to the management support given to Head Teachers and Teachers. They also include organising parents evenings, emergency protocols, supporting management meetings, handling mail and email;
- **Pastoral care** – this relates to care of pupils, for example when they are in the medical room or are awaiting collection by parents/guardians;
- **Facilities management** – office staff are often involved in managing

issues around the building such as requesting janitorial assistance and managing school lets. Also, in some instances ensuring that building contractors were in possession of the appropriate documentation before entering the building to undertake work;

- **HR and ResourceLink** – some office staff assist in managing supply cover and absence/attendance records.
- **Job content and staffing structures** – the aim of this area of work will be to introduce consistency across schools on issues of induction, training, career progression and job descriptions.

4.0 Next Phases

- 4.1 The next phase of work is an extensive series of workshops to explore new ways of working for each of the work-streams described in section 3 above. Workshops have commenced tackling specific issues and tasks. These groups have representation which is appropriate for the work-stream in question and can be drawn from staff at all types of schools, related project staff from within ECS or corporately. These workshops will produce options on how the school office could operate in the future. The key issue is to ensure maximum input from a range of school-based practitioners, including Head Teachers and office staff.
- 4.2 As outlined above, there are a significant number of other projects which could impact on the school office. This project will continue to work closely with other relevant projects to ensure that there is a shared understanding of potential opportunities and also to avoid duplication of effort.
- 4.3 It is recognised from the work to date that a point of presence within the school office is essential to provide the critical conduit role between the school and the outside world. A future phase of this work will be to examine what opportunities might exist to build upon this requirement, for example to examine what other activities could be potentially be carried out in a school office.
- 4.4 Following this phase, the next critical activity will be to cost and further refine proposals.

5.0 Communications

- 5.1 There is an extensive communications plan in place and this includes:
- A newsletter to all office and Head Teachers at least every term but more frequently if appropriate.
 - A programme of interviews and visits to schools
 - Presentations to and workshops with Head Teachers
 - An intranet site for information sharing to be readily available, including a question and answer facility
 - Communication with project stakeholders on an individual basis
 - Regular Trades Union briefings
 - Reporting to the Business Support Project Board
 - A programme of design workshops enabling an in-depth involvement of staff
 - Committee reports to members when appropriate

6.0 Implications

- 6.1 **Resources** - The project is ongoing and is yet to determine its recommendations. However, some investment in ICT and school office environs may be necessary to achieve the transition to a more stream-lined and efficient operating model. In addition, the project is expected to deliver savings totalling £350,000 (equivalent to 10% of the gross school office staffing budget) through revised office processes, structures and relationships with corporate processes. This saving has to be achieved by the end of financial year 2014/2015.
- 6.2 **Legal** - None identified
- 6.3 **Equalities** - None identified
- 6.4 **Climate change/carbon clever** – future process changes and ICT usage may reduce travel and paper printing.
- 6.5 **Risk Implications** – There is a risk to the savings target date which is associated with original project documents dated early 2012. This project was halted due to lack of resources and reinstated in July 2013. However, the original target date was not changed to account for the period of low activity.

There are a number of key Council projects in various stages of progress that will heavily impact on the school office in coming months and years. There is some risk to the project due to the reliance on some of those projects for the delivery of new systems and practices.

By establishing a better support network for school office staff the project seeks to manage risk by providing better disruption management and absence cover amongst school office staff providing an improved continuation of service.

7.0 Recommendation

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7.1 Members are asked;

- To note progress to date and to comment on the School Office review project.

Designation: Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Date: 4 February 2014

Joint authors: Ron MacKenzie, Head of Resources, ECS
Felix McGunnigle, Project Manager Schools Support Project

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 - Project Initiation Document

Appendix 1 - Project Initiation Document

Project Initiation Document (PID)

INDEX <u>Section 1</u>	
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Document Information	This section will be completed and controlled by the programme office.

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Context, Approach and Objectives	Section Overview
2.1 Project Rationale	This section is a largely narrative but concise description for the purposes of creating a shared understanding of why the project exists, what the high level objectives of the project are, the general approach and who the project board are, they will drive and manage the project.
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2.3 Project Approach	
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Project Definition	Section Overview
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INDEX <u>Section 4</u>	
Plans	Section Overview
4.1 Project Plan Gantt Chart	The plans are at the heart of the PID and within that the plan that will define others in terms of schedules is the project plan. As the projects are part of a programme the interrelationships with the programme are also key.
4.2 Costs & Benefits	
4.3 ICT Requirements	
4.4 Programme Interrelationships	
4.5 Project Tolerances	
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SECTION 1**DOCUMENT INFORMATION****Project Name****School Support Project**

Release:	2.3
Draft/Final:	Draft
Date:	19/11/12

Author:	Felix McGunnigle, Project Manager
Owner:	Derek Yule, Director of Finance

Revision date	Summary of Changes
11/11/13	Edit from 2012 version
19/11/13	2.3 update all sections except: team members; detailed project plan
13/12/13	2.4 Feedback incorporated

Approvals

Name	Signature	Title	Date of Approval	Version
CIP Business Support Project Board			16/08/12	1.0
CIP Business Support Project Board	Approved at board		18/12/13	2.4

Distribution

Name	Signature	Date of Issue	Version

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2.1 Project Rationale

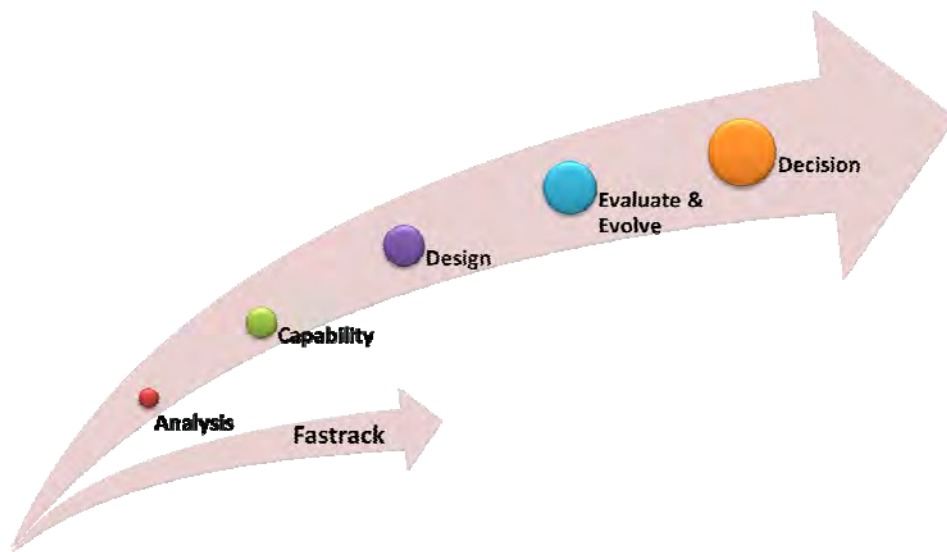
- **Modernisation** – The School Office role and structure have not been changed for a considerable period of time despite significant change within schools and the Council corporately. Continuous improvement in schools should be part of the Council's change programme (for example Managing Information, Mobile Flexible Working, Shared Business Support and Unified Communications) which is aimed at optimum management of processes, information and resources and removing duplication and fragmentation in activity as far as possible.
- **Responding to Internal and External Changes** - There are a number of recent changes which impact upon schools and necessitate the redesign of School Office support requirements. These include: Planning for Integration; National review of Devolved School Management; Business Support Project. Forthcoming system changes are likely to have a large impact on schools due to training and process change needs. Within these changes lies an opportunity to ensure processes are fit for purpose both within schools and the schools interaction with the rest of the council and external agencies. The Highland Council has also changed its organisational structure with resultant changes in processes. The impact is considerable and just a few of the systems introductions are: SEEMiS, ResourceLink and Unified Communications.
- **Creating Capacity** – Senior Managers in schools are facing a period of unprecedented change and increased responsibilities during the next 3 years including: implementation of changes to the national curriculum; implementation of the Donaldson and McCormac Reviews; implementation of the outcomes of the Planning for Integration initiative; implementation of a revised classroom support model; increase to 600 Hours of preschool provision; significant on-going reductions in devolved budgets and reduced management time. It is critical that there is an effective and consistent support model in place to ensure that senior managers have capacity to manage these significant and varied changes.
- **Resource Allocation** - School office staff are allocated to schools by a formula based upon school roll. This can create difficulties because key tasks must still be carried out irrespective of the number of pupils. It is necessary to review the current method of allocation in order to establish the most effective, appropriate and flexible model.
- **Structure and Job Design** - Currently, there is no clear and consistent job role for school office staff across Highland. There are few real career and development opportunities; limited collaboration and best practice sharing and little available cover for school office staff when absent or posts are vacant. A new structure and job design may therefore be required in order to provide effective support for learning and teaching.

2.2 Project Objectives

1. To understand what is required of the school office function in order to optimise support for learning, teaching and assessment, taking account of sectorial and geographic factors.
2. To create capacity for school management teams to implement major initiatives and manage significant budget reductions e.g. Curriculum for Excellence, Donaldson Review, McCormac Review, Planning for Integration, 600 hours preschool.
3. To understand the extent of all clerical and administrative tasks undertaken in support of learning, teaching and assessment in schools.
4. To establish the tasks and accountabilities that should be carried out by school office staff in the future.
5. To bring about efficiencies through redesign/re-engineering of processes, including:
 - elimination of duplication
 - elimination of unnecessary tasks and processes
 - standardisation of good practice through increased consistency and collaboration
 - realisation of the benefits of improved ICT and management information
6. Identify savings to the Highland Council of £350,000 (equivalent to 10% of the gross school office staffing budget) through revised office processes, structures and relationships with corporate processes. To be achieved by end financial year 2014/2015.
7. To link with other CIP Projects (e.g. Business Support) to realise Programme benefits.
8. To further professionalise and consider the creation of career opportunities for School Office staff by re-defining resource allocation, structure, roles and job descriptions.
9. To explore opportunities for collaboration with other schools and corporate support functions with defined interfaces and service standards.
10. To define the performance management standards for the future delivery of school office support in order to ensure continuous improvement.
11. To explore the potential for corporate business support functions to be carried out in school offices.

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2.3 Project Approach



PHASE 1 = Analysis

- Analysis of baseline data e.g. allocation model, staffing costs, staff levels (establishment), age profiles, school rolls
- Analysis of survey seeking to identify the needs and requirements for supporting learning, teaching and assessment most effectively
- Identify tasks currently undertaken in school offices
- Identify interfaces between schools and other agencies/parts of the Council
- Establish nature and extent of the use of ICT systems in school offices
- Identification of staff who will be “in scope” for the Project
- Select services/areas/processes for redesign/re-engineering

PHASE 2 = Capability

- Assess current technologies and capabilities relevant to tasks in school support
- Planned imminent IT implementations and their impact
- IT and capabilities under development in The Highland Council
- Future Technologies and their opportunities

PHASE 3 = Service Redesign

- Review of modern good practice models
- Consider Lessons Learned and outcomes from Shared Business Support – Structure, Posts, Processes, etc and Corporate Improvement Programme
- Redesign/re-engineer processes, procedures and systems
- Options appraisal for Target Operating Model, assessing impact of options on schools – if required
- Establish ICT requirements

PHASE 4 = Evolve

- Review new designs and operating model and evolve

- Review structure and job descriptions to reflect redesigned processes
- Testing
- Training Requirements

PHASE 5 = Decision

- Recommendation and approval
- Implementation planning

BUSINESS CHANGE (throughout Project)

- Communication
- Organisation and process redesign
- Identification and organisation of training/development requirements

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2.4 Project Quality Statement

To design and deliver the most efficient and flexible school office staffing model that meets the learning, teaching and assessment requirements in all Highland schools and ensures a consistent and rewarding role for all school office staff.

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2.5 Project Board

The CIP Business Support Project Board take responsibility for the School Support Project, with Board membership as follows:

Role	Name (Post/Service)
Project Sponsor	Derek Yule (Director of Finance/Finance)
Senior Supplier	Allan Gunn (Head of Business Support/Finance)
Senior Supplier	Dawson Lamont (Head of Exchequer & Revenues/Finance)
Senior Supplier	Vicki Nairn (Head of E-Government/Chie Execs)
Senior Supplier	John Batchelor (Head of Personnel/Chief Execs)
Senior User	Ron MacKenzie (Head of Support Services/ECS)
Senior User	Caroline Campbell (Business Support Manager/H&PS)
Senior User	George McCaig (Business Support/NHS)
Senior User	Lyn Brown (Business Support Officer - Integrated Childrens Services/Health and Social Care)
Non Board Members	
Project Manager	Felix McGunnigle (Project Manager/ECS)
Project Assurance	John Robertson (Programme Manager/CIP)
Business Change Manager	Lynnsey Urquhart (Change Manager/CIP)

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2.6 Project Team

Role	Name (Post/Service)	Role
Project Manager	Felix McGunnigle (Project Manager/ECS)	Managing the project according to PRINCE2 standards
Project Officers	Laura Husher (Project Support Officer, Schools/ECS);	Supporting and coordinating project activity, ensuring key tasks are carried out
Business Change Manager	tbc	Helping to prepare users to accept and embed the new structures and ways of working in order to realise the benefits
Project Team Member		Providing operational input to Project deliverables, and quality review. Subsets of team for specific objectives.

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SECTION 3

PROJECT DEFINITION

3.1 Project Scope

People = all staff undertaking clerical and administrative tasks in order to support learning, teaching and assessment in schools.

Process = all clerical and administrative tasks undertaken in order to support learning, teaching and assessment in schools.

Technology = review existing systems used, imminent and future systems available and ICT in the wider marketplace but not under consideration.

Environment = review working environment and ergonomics.

The definition of the school support role and therefore the scope of the project will be refined throughout the project lifecycle.

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3.2 Project Deliverables

The following are the high level Products that will be further broken down as part of the Project Planning activity, with specific Products reflecting the defined and agreed Project approach and deliverables.

Product ID	Product	Purpose	Composition
SS1	Analysis	To provide a baseline for the current service delivery model, identifying what processes are carried out, the application of ICT and the staff carrying out clerical and administrative tasks in support of learning, teaching and assessment in schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Analysed baseline data e.g. allocation model, staffing costs, staff levels (establishment), age profiles, school rolls.▪ Analysed Headteachers survey to identify the needs and requirements for supporting learning, teaching and assessment most effectively.▪ List of the current clerical and administrative tasks and processes undertaken in order to support learning, teaching and assessment in schools.▪ Analysed task and process list.▪ Identified interfaces between schools and other agencies/parts of the Council (including workflow within and across Schools).

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “In scope” staff identified. ▪ Services/areas/processes selected for redesign/re-Engineering. ▪ Analysis of existing ergonomics environment and IT.
SS2	Capability	Document the possible ICT and organisational opportunities and shortfalls in delivering the School Office duties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Established understanding of the use of ICT systems in school offices. ▪ Understanding of forthcoming ICT implementations and capabilities of new systems. ▪ Appraisal of potential future ICT applications.
SS3	Design	<p>To design the most effective and efficient service delivery model for carrying out clerical and administrative tasks in support of learning, teaching and assessment in schools – redesign will focus on people (e.g. role and structure), process, technology and property.</p> <p>To identify what other wider business support opportunities might exist in a school environment.</p> <p>Identify quick wins in process effectiveness and implement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assessed and shared good practices (e.g. within Schools and through Shared Business Support). ▪ Lessons Learned and outcomes accounted for from Shared Business Support – Structure, Posts, Processes, etc. and Corporate Improvement Programme. ▪ Completed options appraisal for Target Operating Model, assessing impact of options on schools – if required. ▪ Identified and delivered “Quick Wins” (i.e. immediate improvements that can be implemented). ▪ Redesigned/re-engineered processes. ▪ Redesigned structure (posts, reporting lines, etc) and job descriptions to reflect redesigned processes. ▪ Established ICT requirements. ▪ Appropriate office environment, ICT, offices, ergonomics, security.

SS4	Evolve	Evolve Initial designs to a small selection of workable solutions. Specifically will ensure organisational model fits new and forthcoming processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Test and pilot designs. ▪ Evolved architecture. ▪ Corporate engagement.
SS5	Decision	Approval at Board.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Committee report.
SS6	Implement redesigned support in schools	To fully implement new service delivery model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Built Structure, Processes, and Technology. ▪ Skills requirements identified ▪ Recruitment to new structure as required. ▪ Defined training requirements. ▪ Completion of testing (e.g. pilot new way of working) ▪ Training delivered. ▪ Business Change managed (e.g. support for transition from old to new service delivery model).

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3.3 Project Exclusions

The Project Scope in the first instance is broad, and exclusions will be identified as the project matures.

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3.4 Project Constraints

Time and project resources are the primary constraints for this project. Some activities within the project plan are resource-heavy and will take longer than scheduled if resources are not made available to the project.

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3.5 Project Assumptions

- That the baseline of 222.36 full time equivalent business support staff in schools with a related annual budget of £3.53M (as reported to the January 2012 ECS Committee) is accurate.
- That the existing and proposed ICT is fit for purpose for future use in supporting redesigned processes.
- Redesign activity will be informed by other projects and/or opportunities within the Corporate Improvement Programme.
- Requested resources will be allocated to the project.
- Through the revised school support processes, structures and relationships with corporate processes £350,000 of savings to The Highland Council will be made.

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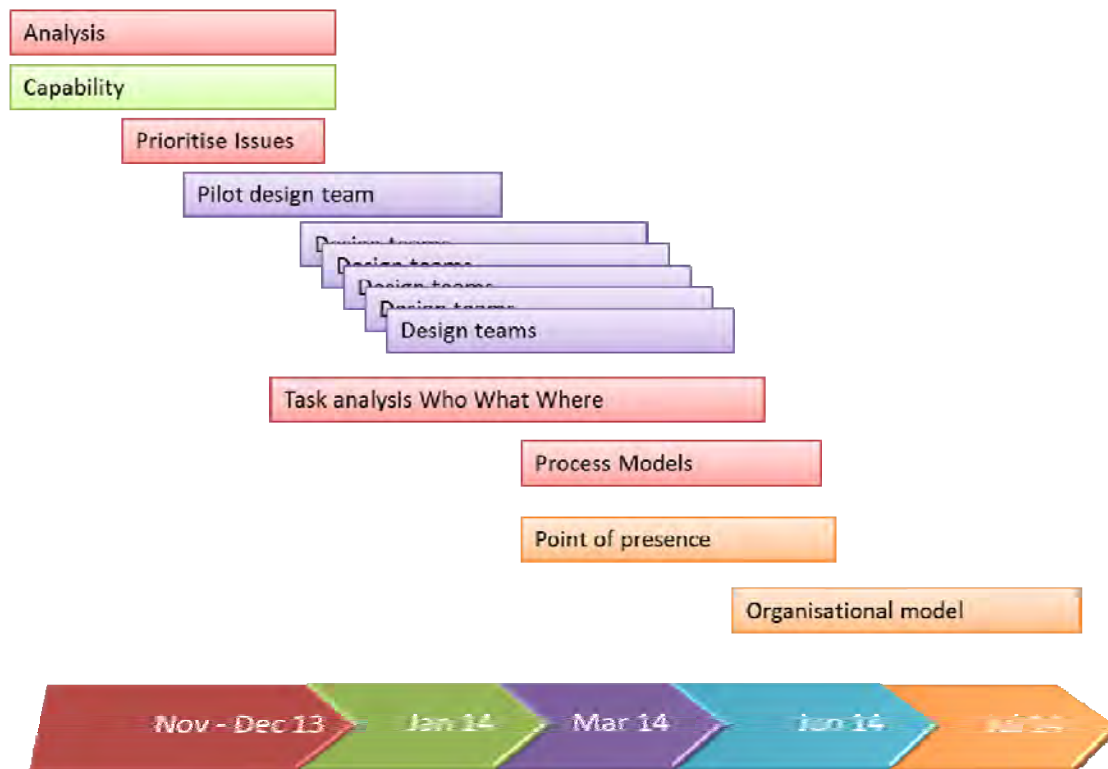
4.1 Project Plan Gantt Chart

To be completed post discussion at Project Board 18/11/13.

Main decision points are:

Prioritisation of design streams	Dec 19th	Availability of attendees.
Process change agreements	Jan to June	Agree individual changes to process as designed and evolved. E.g. Staff absence entered into SEEMiS or ResourceLink.
Agreement of task analysis	End May	Who and where best placed to carry out tasks in light of process changes.
Point of Presence	End June	In light of task analysis and process changes agree level of presence required at schools.
Organisational Model	End July	In light of above finalise Organisational Model.

Decision Points



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4.2 Costs & Benefits

The Benefits Map below has been produced based on the outputs from the Benefits and Products workshops held with the Project Team 05 & 22/06/12.



benefits_map_School
Office_ver0_2.vsd

The following table summarises the expected benefits, along with how these will be measured.

Outcome Description	Benefit Measure
Increased effective use of ICT and Information	Baseline & Comparatives
Increased process efficiency	Time
Eliminated double handling	Staff Review and Volumes
Reduced costs of service delivery	Budget
Created jobs that are up to date and effective	PDPs
Increased productive time for Senior Management Learning, Teaching and Assessment tasks	Time
Maintained school focussed ethos	Questionnaire
Increased cross service working with Shared Business Support	Review
Increased effectiveness of communication	PDPs & Staff Survey
Increased staff motivation and morale	Staff Survey
Created a new consistent and collaborative operating model	Review/Comparative Information/ Performance Indicator
Increased efficiency	Time / £

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4.3 ICT Requirements

The product SS3 and SS4 Evolve will establish ICT requirements

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4.4 Programme Interrelationships

The following are seen as the key Projects that may impact on the School Support Project through shared good practice, and the application of improved processes:

- **Shared Business Support** = includes, improved processes to include Personnel Admin, Information Management, Purchasing & Financial Transactions, pooled/shared resource, application of technology to enable virtual working
- **Customer Engagement & Assessment** = channelled customer contact processes, improved/integrated benefits assessment processes (e.g. Free Schools Meals and Clothing Grants - as part of assessment for council tax/housing benefit rather than separate application)
- **SEEMiS** = New school office MIS to be deployed 2014
- **Resourcelink** = Integrated payroll/ personnel system

- **Unified Communications** = replacement systems & infrastructure
- **Management Information** = Information handling across all media

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4.5 Project Tolerances

Tolerances will be variable for work packages.

TYPE	TOLERANCE LEVEL
Time	10% across the work package life
Cost	10% of the work package budget
Benefits	10% of the cash benefit or significant deviance from Product Description for non-cash

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4.6 Communication Plan

Initial communications to all identified stakeholders has taken place. A comprehensive list of stakeholders and communications plan is attached.

The following lists a summary of the stakeholder groups to be communicated with, and the related approach to communication:

<u>Stakeholders</u>	<u>Communication Approach</u>
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate committees under new directorates - Respective Committee Chairs
BS Project Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BS Project Board/Monthly Meetings and for escalation
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ECS SMT meetings - All Head Teachers
Project Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Day to day collaboration with other CIP Project Managers
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All Staff Working in School Offices, refined once in-scope staff are identified - All Class Teachers - Dedicated SharePoint Activity Site - Face to Face Briefings - Group Workshops and design groups - Newsletters
Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIP/TU Liaison Group - ECS quarterly TU meeting - Ad hoc and informal communication - Face to Face Briefings
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parent Councils

[Stakeholder communication plan](#)

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