

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE REVIEW – EUROPEAN OFFICE STAFF COMMENTS

The views of the European team have been consistent throughout the entire Review process and have been appended to reports when required. Our prime concern has always been to ensure that the City Council derives maximum benefit from its European and regional work. Our comments are intended to be constructive and we hope that they will be used to inform the Review process.

ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

In terms of the proposal from the Environment & Development Department, we are concerned that the regional and equalities role of the proposed team has not been addressed. These roles are currently supported by a part time secondment from the Corporate Equalities Team. Consequently, we believe that the current staffing structure put forward by E&DD will not be sufficient to deliver the new European and regional roles.

Government Office have indicated that Objective 2 should link strategically and operationally into mainstream regeneration programmes. The structure submitted to the Review Liaison Group for the E&DD Regeneration and Development Division seems to provide an effective framework for corporate work around regeneration issues. However, at present, the E&DD proposal does not provide an adequate framework to support the equalities and social inclusion element of European and regional work. Should these issues be resolved, It would not be unreasonable for the entire European Team to be located within E&DD under this structure at a later date. However, It is the view of the entire European Team that the proposal put forward by E&DD, as it is currently structured, will not be sufficient to deliver the new European and regional agenda.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE PROPOSAL

In terms of the CEXO proposal, the staff accept that this provides a framework for the delivery of European and regional work which goes beyond the regeneration agenda. All members of the European Team agree that European and regional work would be best delivered from the CEXO and would prefer to remain located within the CEXO.

However, staff are very concerned that merger of the current European Office into the Strategic Policy & Performance Unit will not provide the best structure to deliver European and Regional work. We feel that it is essential for the City Council to retain a dedicated team of European specialists within the CEXO for the following reasons:

- Specialist Roles – We are very concerned that merger will dilute the effectiveness of our European work and that Europe, as an issue, will lose its focus if the Office is absorbed into a generic unit. Most European

work is ongoing (rather than time limited or project based) and requires permanent dedicated resources. As a result of the Review, most officers will have generic Job Descriptions. The consequence of this will be that once existing staff move on to new posts, they will not be replaced with European specialists.

- External perception – The external perception of Leicester’s European work (particularly the image portrayed to the European Commission and regional authorities) has enabled the Council to respond to and shape European Developments. We are concerned that the proposal to merge most of the European team into a generic policy unit could send out the wrong message to external partners and important decision-makers.
- External Funding – The European Office recently secured Objective 2 status for ten Leicester wards. This will be worth approximately £21 million over a seven-year period. We have worked closely with the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate Management) to build up an effective European Office. This process has enabled Leicester to compete with other East Midlands Unitary and County Councils and made a significant contribution to our successful case for Objective 2 status. To enable us to build upon this success, it is essential that we demonstrate to external organisation (such as GOEM, EMDA and the European Commission) that “Europe” is taken seriously by the City Council. In our view, maintaining a dedicated European Team within the CEXO is the best way to achieve this.
- Benchmarking – It has taken three years to establish a dedicated European Team comparable to other Unitary and County Councils. Although the location of these varies across the region, all major authorities have dedicated European teams. The proposal to merge most of the European Office into a generic Unit will leave Leicester City Council as the only East Midlands Unitary/County Council without a dedicated European team. To ensure that the team continues to address social inclusion and equalities, we propose that existing secondment arrangements should be maintained.
- Cost Centre Management & Budget Strategy – The European Office has generated external income for the CEXO as part of the Three-year Budget Strategy. External funding for 2001/02 has already been secured from the European Union and will be match-funded by specialist staff within the European Office. Without dedicated European staff it will be extremely difficult to generate similar levels of income in the future.

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