



## LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**DECISIONS** to be made by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change,  
Councillor Nick Bennett

**TUESDAY, 21 APRIL 2026 AT 3.00 PM OR AT THE CONCLUSION OF STANDARDS  
COMMITTEE, WHICHEVER IS THE LATER**

### **REMOTE MEETING VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

#### **AGENDA**

1. Decisions made by the Lead Cabinet Member on 31 March 2026 (*Pages 3 - 6*)
2. Disclosure of Interests  
Disclosure by all Members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct
3. Urgent items  
Notification of any items which the Lead Member considers urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda.
4. Orbis Shared Service Review - Consultation Outcome (*Pages 7 - 22*)  
Report by the Chief Operating Officer
5. Any urgent items previously notified under agenda item 3

PHILIP BAKER  
Deputy Chief Executive  
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent  
LEWES BN7 1UE

13 April 2026

Contact Grace Addison, Governance and Democracy Officer,  
01273 337011  
Email: [grace.addison@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:grace.addison@eastsussex.gov.uk)

NOTE: *As part of the County Council's drive to increase accessibility to its public meetings, this meeting will be broadcast live on its website. The live broadcast is accessible at:*  
<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/your-council/videos-of-council-meetings/webcasts>

This page is intentionally left blank

## LEAD MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

DECISIONS made by the Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change, Councillor Nick Bennett, on 31 March 2026 at Remote Meeting via Microsoft Teams

---

### 58. DECISIONS MADE BY THE LEAD CABINET MEMBER ON 2 MARCH 2026

58.1 The Lead Member approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2026.

### 59. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

59.1 There were none.

### 60. URGENT ITEMS

60.1 There were none.

### 61. REPORTS

61.1 Reports referred to in the minutes below are contained in the minute book.

### 62. WRITE-OFF OF DEBTS 2025/26

62.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer together with exempt information in a later agenda item.

### DECISIONS

62.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

- 1) Approve the writing-off of 14 debts amounting to £308,272.83 in the Council's 2025/2026 accounts;
- 2) Note that provision is made for bad and doubtful debts; and

3) Note the current debt position and positive steps being put in place to make improvements.

#### REASON

62.3 There is no prospect of recovering the 14 outstanding debts. Despite efforts made to recover the outstanding sums, all routes have now been exhausted.

#### 63. DILAPIDATIONS SETTLEMENT - ST MARK'S HOUSE, EASTBOURNE

63.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer together with exempt information in a later agenda item.

#### DECISIONS

63.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to:

- 1) Agree that the Council seeks to settle the claim by mutual agreement in the first instance, as set out in paragraph 2.2 of the report; and
- 2) Delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer, to take all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in the report, including, but not limited to, approving the amount of any settlement.

#### REASONS

63.3 The Council has taken appropriate professional advice with regard to the Landlord's dilapidations claim in respect of St Mark's House, Eastbourne.

63.4 The Council will seek to mutually agree the settlement of the claim with the Landlord in the first instance to limit the Council's exposure to additional risk and cost.

63.5 Delegating authority to the Chief Operating Officer in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer to take all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in the report, including, but not limited to, approving the amount of the settlement, the estimate for which is detailed in an exempt report later on the agenda, will facilitate the timely completion of the settlement.

#### 64. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

64.1 It was RESOLVED to exclude the public and press from the meeting for the remaining agenda item on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as specified in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), namely information which relates to one or more individuals and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

65. WRITE-OFF OF DEBTS 2025/26 - EXEMPT INFORMATION

65.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer which provided exempt information in support of an earlier item on the agenda.

DECISION

65.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to note the exempt information in relation to an earlier item on the agenda.

REASON

65.3 The report contained exempt information in relation to an earlier item on the agenda.

66. DILAPIDATIONS SETTLEMENT – ST MARK’S HOUSE, EASTBOURNE – EXEMPT INFORMATION

66.1 The Lead Member considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer which provided exempt information in support of an earlier item on the agenda.

DECISION

66.2 The Lead Member RESOLVED to note the exempt information in relation to an earlier item on the agenda.

REASON

66.3 The report contained exempt information in relation to an earlier item on the agenda.

This page is intentionally left blank

**Report to:** Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change

**Date of meeting:** 21 April 2026

**By:** Chief Operating Officer

**Title:** Orbis Shared Service Review – Consultation Outcome

**Purpose:** To consider the outcome of the staff consultation on the proposals for Orbis and to seek agreement to proceed with the recommended changes to the Orbis operating model.

---

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) note the feedback and conclusions from the Orbis staff consultations;
  - 2) agree to proceed with a sovereign only model for IT & Digital and Procurement, and a shared model with Brighton & Hove City Council for Internal Audit; and
  - 3) delegate authority to the Chief Operating Officer, to take all actions necessary to give effect to the recommendations in this report.
- 

## **1. Background**

1.1 The Orbis partnership was established in 2015, originally covering Surrey County Council (SCC) and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) with Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) joining later in 2016. Originally incorporating several services, in 2021 the partnership was reduced to the current service offering of Internal Audit, IT & Digital (IT&D), Procurement, Insurance and Treasury Management.

1.2 Orbis has operated as an integrated shared service and, in support of this, some staff are employed in 'true partnership' roles whereby they are contractually required to operate in and across each of the 3 Councils, with a physical presence in each of the headquarter locations. These staff remain employees of their sovereign employer with a secondment agreement in place to enable them to work across the other 2 Councils.

1.3 The Lead Member considered a report on the Orbis shared service reviews on [22 January 2026](#) and agreed to the undertaking of a staff consultation on the proposals, and to receive the outcome of the consultations at a later meeting.

1.4 Staff consultations in Internal Audit, Procurement, and IT&D have consequentially now been undertaken, and this report sets out the results and conclusions from those consultations and the recommended next steps for the services.

## **2. Supporting Information**

2.1 As each of the Orbis functions have their own specific context and challenges, separate reviews and staff consultations were undertaken for each service. The feedback and conclusions from those consultations is set out below.

## IT&D

2.2 The IT&D consultation ran from 10 March 2026 to 8 April 2026 to obtain views on the proposed structure for the IT&D department. A high number of the IT&D team attended both the initial session and a further session for those who missed the initial session. Feedback and conclusions are summarised in Appendix 1.

2.3 Key themes from the staff feedback are:

- The consultation was well engaged with individual and trade union responses, and the opportunity to contribute was welcomed.
- Some concerns were raised about the proposed structural changes and the potential impact on roles, grading, and ways of working, which were explored further with affected staff.
- A number of responses raised suggestions outside of the scope of the Orbis exit, including wider transformation proposals, and will be explored at a later stage.
- Several suggestions, particularly relating to reporting lines, were positively received and are reflected in revised proposals.
- Feedback was received on the proposed inclusion of Cyber Security within the structure and on the availability of role and grading information. Management acknowledged these points and explained that the service area was included in the structure charts for completeness and transparency, and that detailed arrangements sit outside the scope of this consultation.

2.4 Upon reviewing the responses to the consultation it is considered that the proposed structure provides the most appropriate approach to supporting the Council's transition to a sovereign IT&D function following the exit from the Orbis partnership, whilst acknowledging that this transition will provide the stable foundation for meeting the challenges ahead for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

## Procurement

2.5 The Procurement consultation feedback ran from 12 February 2026 to 13 March 2026 and sought views on the proposed structure of the Procurement Team if brought back into ESCC. A total of 10 responses were received; the questions raised and feedback provided, together with the conclusions, are summarised in Appendix 2. In addition to written responses, 2 team meetings were also held to enable a broader discussion of issues.

2.6 Key themes from the staff feedback included:

- A positive commitment to the consultation, including team meetings and the offer of individual meetings.
- Understanding of the rationale for moving from the Orbis model to an ESCC Procurement service.
- Recognition of the opportunities this provided for ESCC to have a Procurement Team that focused on the needs of the Council, particularly at a time of significant service changes and also future LGR.
- An opportunity to address staffing pressures, particularly in meeting new regulatory requirements, including reviewing staff training and development opportunities.

2.7 In reviewing the consultation feedback, together with further understanding of the impacts of the disaggregation of Orbis Procurement, the recommended approach is the proposed ESCC Procurement Team, as set out Appendix 2. This will provide a strengthened

team that can meet the challenges of procurement within the new regulatory regime and facilitate a good position to deal with LGR.

### Internal Audit

2.8 The Internal Audit consultation ran from 12 February to 13 March 2026, and feedback and conclusions are collated in Appendix 3.

2.9 Key themes from the staff feedback included:

- The commitment to consult and to provide an opportunity for staff to contribute was welcomed.
- The strategic rationale for moving from the Orbis model to a new ESCC and BHCC was recognised.
- It was recognised that the change represents a cultural and operational shift and that the transition would need to be handled carefully.
- Some changes to the team roles were proposed, namely the creation of a Counter Fraud Lead who would manage the Counter Fraud team and a Principal Auditor role with specific responsibility for leading on the Audit Management System and AI, alongside the delivery of IT audits.

2.10 The constructive and positive nature of the feedback received from staff and the trade union was welcomed. The feedback has been valuable in preparing for the transition and, as a result, particular consideration will be given to the following:

- Training offer and ongoing continued professional development, including mentoring and shadowing.
- Establishing a clear sense of identity/name of the new service model – including a team away day and regular whole team meetings.
- Undertaking a system service implementation review.
- LGR engagement and planning.
- The design of a simple and clear governance structure for the new service.
- The development of joint working practices for the service.

2.11 In conclusion, the proposed changes to the team roles from staff strengthen the service, build a more sustainable model, and provide resilience and continuity in a flexible way to respond to new opportunities such as LGR and Devolution. The structure chart in Appendix 3 in a BHCC and ESCC shared model is therefore the recommended option, including interim acting up arrangements to be put in place for the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) given that the existing Orbis CIA has transferred over to SCC under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006).

## **3. Implementation approach**

3.1 Subject to Lead Member approval of the recommended approach, the proposed implementation would involve a two-staged approach for the exit from the current Orbis arrangements in order to avoid the need to transform the services twice (once on exiting Orbis and once due to LGR). This will also enable the transformation to be undertaken in partnership with the district and borough councils and front-line services.

3.2 The two stages overlap and in summary are:

- 1) Stage 1 – exit from Orbis in a measured way and ensure service stability with staff returning full time to their employing authority. Transitional arrangements will be put in place to keep the services stable and are predominantly in relation to the continued use of the SCC data centre.
- 2) Stage 2 – transform the service. Shape the future service offer with the district and borough councils and input from front line services, subject to the decision in relation to LGR.

#### 4. Financial Implications

4.1 Financial modelling undertaken as part of the Orbis service reviews identified that exiting the shared service arrangements and moving to new operating models, as reported to the Lead Member on 22 January, could result in potential ongoing cost pressures of up to c. £1.9m. These pressures reflected the loss of shared service economies of scale and the need to ensure capacity within new arrangements.

4.2 To mitigate these anticipated pressures, £1.7m was included within the ESCC Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) specifically to cover costs associated with disaggregation from Orbis and the transition to new service models.

4.3 In addition to the £1.7m provision within the MTFP, the sovereign budgets returning to ESCC as part of the exit from Orbis are:

- **Internal Audit:** £0.535m, representing ESCC's contribution to the new shared Internal Audit service with BHCC;
- **Procurement:** £1.656m to support a fully sovereign ESCC Procurement service;
- **IT & Digital:** £1.027m to enable delivery through a fully sovereign IT&D operating model.

4.4 The proposed structures for Procurement and Internal Audit are expected to be managed within the devolved budget contributions returning to ESCC. Any additional cost pressures within IT&D arising from the move to a sovereign model can be mitigated through the provision included in the MTFP, subject to ongoing financial management during transition.

4.5 On this basis, the proposed operating model for the services are considered affordable within the funding provided for in the MTFP, subject to continued financial management. The recommended approach balances affordability with the need to establish resilient and sustainable services.

#### 5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 The reviews of the Orbis IT&D, Procurement and Internal Audit functions concluded that given the significant changes to the operating context, the current models no longer meet the current and emerging requirements of ESCC (including known and potential future changes due to LGR). Staff consultations were therefore undertaken on those changes and the findings presented in this report.

5.2 The Lead Member is recommended to note the feedback from the consultations and agree to proceed with a sovereign only model for IT&D and Procurement, and a shared model with BHCC for Internal Audit.

5.3 In the event that these proposals lead to changes in structure, the Council's usual change management processes will apply.

**ROS PARKER**  
**Chief Operating Officer**

Contact Officer:

Ros Parker, Chief Operating Officer

Tel: 07522 618 418

Email: [ros.parker@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:ros.parker@eastsussex.gov.uk)

Background Documents

None

This page is intentionally left blank

## IT & D Orbis Exit Proposal - Consultation Response Summary

### Introduction

There was good engagement during the consultation with 25 consultation responses submitted by 15 individual colleagues plus collective responses from Unison. In general, the commitment to consult and to provide an opportunity to contribute was welcomed. However, anxiety was expressed at some of the proposed structure changes and the impact the changes would have working within those services.

Whilst the intention of the consultation was to provide a mechanism for feedback on the specific changes required as a direct result of a decision to cease the Orbis partnership, numerous other suggestions were received regarding wider transformation ideas. These suggestions are out of scope for the consultation; however, they may be considered as part of future changes, as required.

Themes varied between the service areas and are summarised below.

In summary the consultation has been helpful in shaping some of the details of the proposed changes, and the proposal to exit the Orbis IT and Digital partnership is still recommended for East Sussex County Council (ESCC).

### Summary of Themes:

#### **Engagement, Information, and Assurance**

The consultation was well engaged, and the opportunity to contribute was welcomed; however, concerns were raised about the clarity of information provided, particularly in relation to job descriptions, grading, and processes. These concerns were addressed through further explanation, individual follow-up discussions and clarification responses.

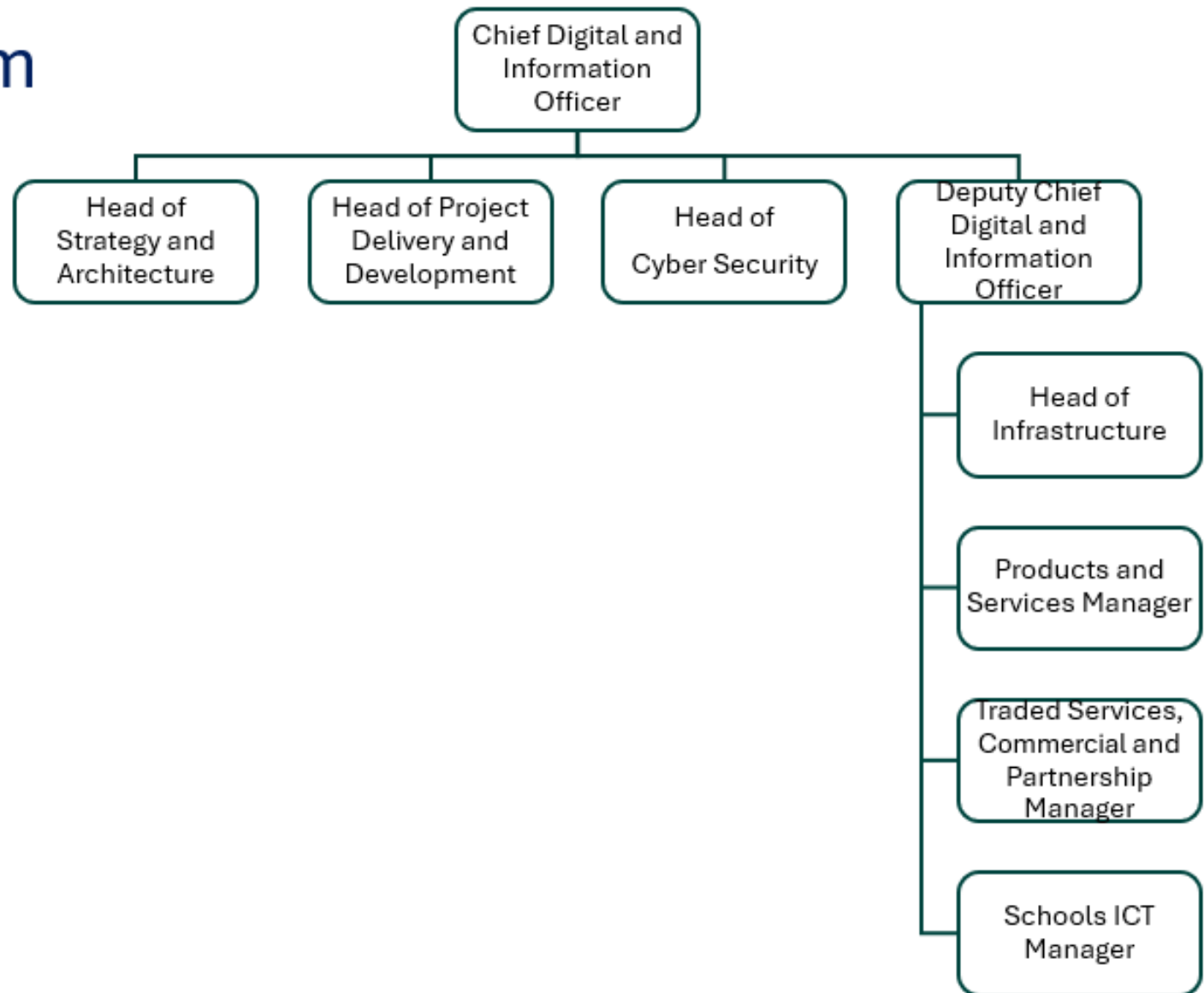
#### **Impact of Structural Change on Roles and Services**

Responses reflected anxiety about the proposed structural changes, including reporting lines, role design, grading, and job security, with impacts differing across service areas. Management considered feedback on a service-by-service basis, accepting and incorporating some suggestions (notably related to reporting lines), further exploring grading concerns with HR and affected staff, and clarifying where proposals were unchanged due to operational needs or financial constraints.

#### **Scope of the Consultation and Future Considerations**

Many responses extended beyond the scope of the Orbis exit, raising wider transformation and service redesign ideas. While these were acknowledged and recorded, management clarified that such matters were outside the remit of the consultation and would not be progressed at this stage, though some may be progressed as part of future changes, as required.

# Overall Team Structure:



## Procurement – Consultation Response Summary

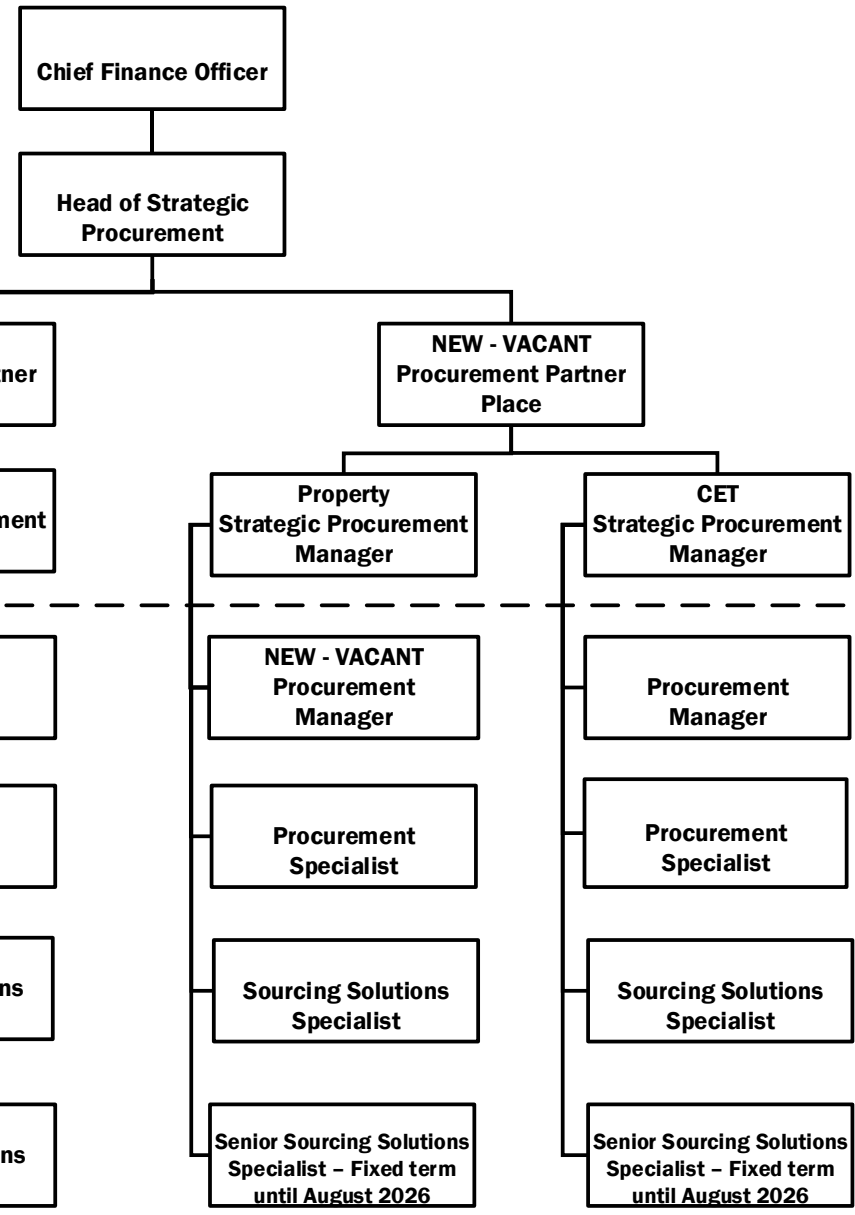
### **Feedback by theme**

Overall there has been a positive response to the consultation, through written responses and at specific consultation team meetings.

The strategic rationale for moving from the Orbis model to a new East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Procurement service has been recognised as a positive opportunity to develop and strengthen the service and to seek to address, where possible, day-to-day operational pressures and ensure that the service is in a good place to meet future challenges, such as Local Government Reorganisation.

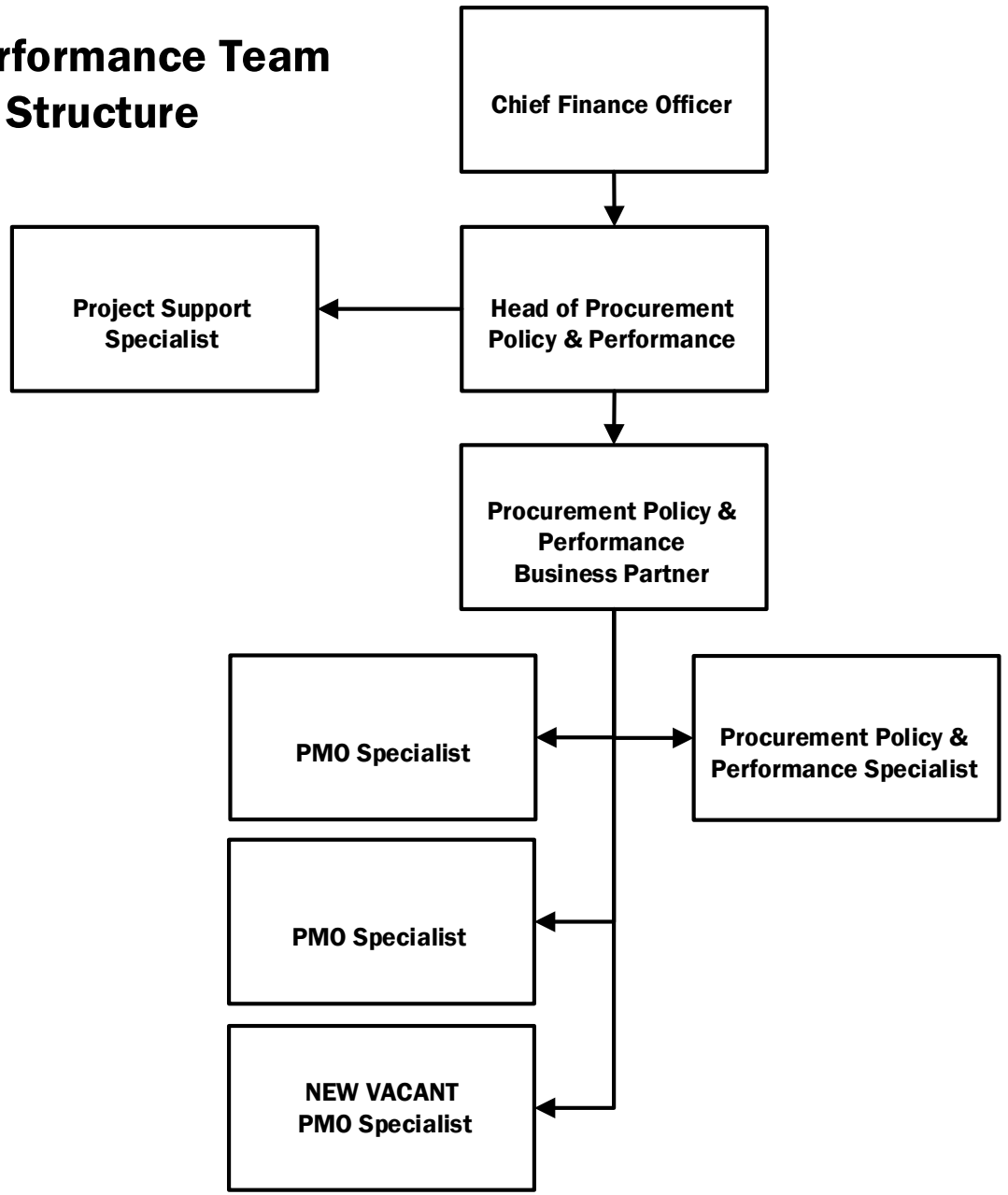
It is also recognised that the changes will provide the opportunity to strengthen staff development and provide opportunities for promotion within the new structure. The new structure, revised as a result of consultation feedback, will include 5 new posts, over and above the existing resources which will transfer back to ESCC.

# Strategic Procurement Team Final Structure



--- Resources within marked area denotes 'Hub' style resources flexing across categories to meet demand.

# Policy & Performance Team Final Structure



## **Management responses to questions raised during the consultation:**

There were three main themes from the consultation:

1. Recruitment to post – whether currently vacant or currently filled with agency staff, secondments or fixed term contracts.

We were clear that after the consultation has concluded and the new structure approved, options for permanent recruitment would be set out in the final consultation pack. The consultation was not about making permanent agency, fixed term contract or secondment arrangements. These would be addressed at a later date.

2. In separating Orbis Procurement would we need to buy in specific resources or services that do not form part of the new structure?

Operational requirements of the new Procurement Team in support the requirements of the Council may require specific services to be procured from outside the current structure. These would be on a demand basis.

3. Further clarity was sought on how certain roles would work in the new structure, including meeting service pressures, line management and development opportunities.

Concerns were noted and have been used to inform the structure presented above.

## Internal Audit – Staff consultation outcome

### Feedback by theme

In general, the commitment to consult and to provide an opportunity for staff to contribute was welcomed, as was the positive tone of the consultation.

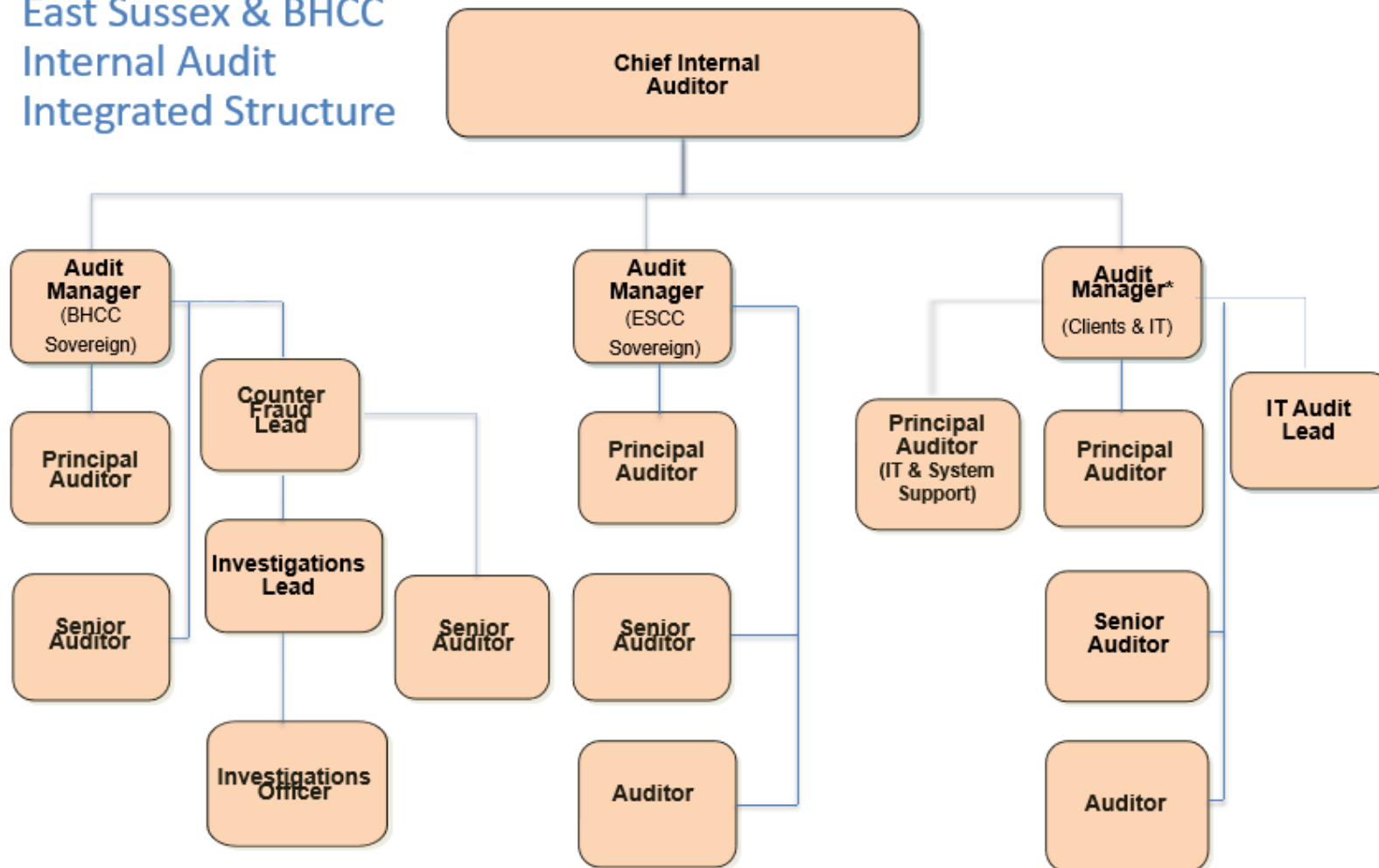
The strategic rationale for moving from the Orbis model to a new East Sussex and Brighton & Hove approach was recognised, as was the opportunity to strengthen the function, acknowledging that the transition needs to be handled carefully.

It was also recognised that the change represents a cultural and operational shift. Staff have raised concerns about the potential loss of established Orbis ways of working, shared expertise and resilience, particularly during periods of peak demand or specialist audit activity. There is an acknowledged risk that knowledge, consistency and informal peer support built up over time could be weakened if the transition is not fully supported.

As well as feedback on the transition, some changes to the roles in the structure have been proposed, as included in the structure chart below and summarised as follows:

- The creation of a Counter Fraud Lead with management responsibilities is proposed, reflecting the importance of the function within the service. This role would report to the Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) Audit Manager position, but with all current counter fraud members moving under the new position to create a single 'team'.
- The importance of an Audit Management System and harnessing productivity tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) was highlighted as critical for an effective and efficient Internal Audit service. The creation of a Principal Auditor role with responsibility for leading on these important areas alongside the delivery of IT audits is therefore proposed.
- Delivery to Horsham District Council (HDC) is proposed to be novated to Surrey County Council (SCC) to allow HDC to receive service continuity from their Chief Internal Auditor and to enable the new partnership to meet our commitments to our other partners and clients.

# East Sussex & BHCC Internal Audit Integrated Structure



\* Oversees client delivery at HBC & IT

## **Management response**

The constructive and positive nature of the feedback received is welcomed, and provides a range of insights and suggestions which, if implemented effectively, will put the service onto a stronger footing.

The importance of an effective transition with the necessary support and management of workloads is recognised, including the active management of differences in culture between the two authorities. Feedback from staff has been genuinely valuable in preparing for the transition and, as a result, particular consideration will be given to the following:

- Training offer and ongoing continued professional development, including mentoring and shadowing
- Establishing a clear sense of identity/name of the new service model – including a team away day and regular whole team meetings
- Undertaking a System Service Implementation Review
- LGR engagement and planning
- The design of a simple and clear governance structure for the new service overseen by the Chief Operating Officer (ESCC) and the Director of Property & Finance (BHCC)
- The development of joint working practices for the service, e.g. 121/performance management, calendar access etc (overseen by the above proposed governance structure) in order to be consistent and efficient. This will need to be underpinned by any necessary documentation.
- The need to appoint a Chief Internal Auditor as soon as possible.

The need to have stable and effective leadership at a time of change is particularly important and, as such, an interim Chief Internal Auditor has now been appointed in Mark Winton.

The need for the service to create a sense of identity is also strongly recognised. It is therefore positive to note that the proposed changes to the team roles are such that there is no need to rely on support from Surrey County Council.

It is also agreed that the proposed changes to the team roles strengthen the service, build a more sustainable model, and provide resilience and continuity in a flexible way to respond to new opportunities such as LGR and Devolution. This is the recommended post-consultation structure. The changes do not reflect any budgetary pressure.

This page is intentionally left blank