

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Room 218, The Symington Building, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough on THURSDAY, 28 JUNE 2018

Present: Councillor R Hadkiss (Harborough) (in the Chair)

Councillors R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire), J Hallam (Harborough), C Ladkin (Hinckley and Bosworth) and T J Pendleton (North West Leicestershire)

Officers: Mr L Butler (Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council), Mrs C Hammond, Ms B Jolly (HDC), Mrs S O'Hanlon (Leicestershire Partnership - Revenues & Benefits), Mr S Shardlow (NWLDC), Mrs B Smith (NWLDC) and Mr A Wilson (HBBC)

In attendance: Ms J Stead (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor J Hallam, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R Hadkiss be elected Chairman for the ensuing year.

2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor R Hadkiss and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R D Bayliss be elected Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor R Allen and Mrs J Kenny.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2018.

It was moved by Councillor R Hadkiss, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

It was agreed that the Internal Audit Report be moved down agenda.

6. COUNCIL TAX - LOCAL DISCOUNTS

Mr L Butler presented the report to Members. He advised that the district and borough authorities had been asked by LCC to look at Council Tax discounts and that the report outlined the discounts that could be reviewed. Though, this piece of work had already

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been scheduled for Quarter 1 for the Partnership. He highlighted that the table on page 36 of the report provided Members with a snap shot of the current discounts applied by each partner authority adding that it was the intention of the Government, that from 2019, would give local authorities additional discretion to increase the premium to 100%.

Mr A Wilson advised that the County had paid a lot of attention to Council Tax collections and felt that a more unified approach would be more appropriate.

Members acknowledge that all three authorities had different schemes and that focus was to bring empty homes back into use which would help some way towards the housing crisis.

Mr L Butler advised that Members that the authorities had a duty to consult on changes, and to be mindful that Council Tax Base needed to be set in December so consideration of any changes would be required around September.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The proposals and engagement plan detailed within the report be agreed.

7. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2017/2018 REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP

Ms J Stead presented the report to Members. She advised Members that overall it was a low risk report that had identified five low risk findings. She outlined the five findings as detailed in the report and the actions that were required. She informed Members that the Risk Based Verification System had been analysed and that comparison with other organisations and the DWP, the proportion of cases that were expected to be classified were broadly around the same, however when the data was reviewed the distribution of the cases was significantly different to the expected risk model and recommended that officers met with the provider to see what was driving the difference compared to other software users. Ms Stead highlighted that by investing time upfront in the higher risk cases it is saving time and resources later by ensuring that the claims are accurate to begin with.

In relation to Risk Based Verification, Councillor T J Pendleton asked if there were any other authorities that used the same software that a comparison could be carried out on the outturns.

Ms J Stead advised that other authorities used the same software however their outturns were different.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Internal Audit Report 2017/18 Revenues and Benefits Partnership be noted.

8. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OUTTURN 2017/18

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He advised Members that there was a net underspend of £197,446 and this was due to salary and FERIS savings. He highlighted that the report outlined various options for the use of the reserves totalling £200,896 following carry forwards and reminded them that it had been agreed in the past that a General Reserve of £50,000 be held for contingency purposes, leaving £150,896. He informed Members that table 3 of the report outlined items that would require attention during the year and therefore an earmarked reserve would require setting up and £106,400 would be put into it to fund the work. This included small ICT kit replacements,

Chairman's initials

upgraded digital e-claims and e-change in circumstances and GDPR integration. He stated that this would leave £44,496 that could then be used to reduce future partner contributions.

Officers advised Members that some of the IT equipment that would need upgrading would be recording equipment for interviews that could be required as evidence in court cases.

Members felt that option 1 would be the preferred use of the reserves.

It was moved by Councillor J Hallam, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The financial performance of the Partnership be noted.
2. Option 1 as set out in the recommendations of the report be approved for the use of the year-end reserves of £200,896.

9. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY REPORT 2017/18 OUT-TURN

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised Members that she could confirm, following the April meeting that all three authorities had met their targets for processing new claims, change events and Council Tax and that the NNDR collection targets had been met and exceeded. She highlighted to Members that all three authorities were below the lower threshold for LA error and that whilst sickness levels all weren't on target, sickness had been managed really well with NWL achieving its target. She informed Members that the Revenues Manager had resigned and plans were being put in place to move forward.

She stated that the report was very positive and that the team had worked really hard towards the end of year to meet the targets.

Mr A Wilson stated that LCC still wanted the targets to move up by half a percent however there was no reasoning on cost or demographics and as such would require additional work.

Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that if a half percent increase was added to the target then there would be a cost as more resources would be required to ensure the new targets could be met.

Councillor J Hallam stated that the team had done extremely well but felt that if the targets were raised the team would be chasing a never ending goal and thought that the targets should be realistic.

Councillor R Hadkiss stated that it was an exceptional performance for the whole team and asked that the Committee's thanks be passed to them all.

RESOLVED THAT:

The performance summary report 2017/18 out-turn be noted.

10. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2018/19

Mrs C Hammond presented the report to Members. She highlighted that there were two proposed schedules for Members to consider the best way forward following a request at the last meeting,

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Members felt that the best option would be to schedule the meetings quarterly and then through discussions between officers and the Chairman, if it was felt that a meeting was not required it would be postponed.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

That the schedule attached at appendix 1 be agreed.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.23 pm