

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, 30 NOVEMBER 2017

Present: Councillor M Hall (Hinckley and Bosworth) (Chairman)

Councillors R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire), R Hadkiss (Harborough), J Hallam (Harborough) and T J Pendleton (North West Leicestershire)

Officers: Mrs C Hammond, Ms B Jolly (HDC), Mrs J Kenny (HBBC), Mr C Lambert (NWLDC), Mrs S O'Hanlon (Leicestershire Partnership - Revenues & Benefits) and Mr A Wilson (HBBC)

25. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R Allen.

26. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Councillor M Hall advised Members that following a change of Membership from Harborough DC a new Deputy Chairman was to be elected for the remainder of the year.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R Hadkiss be elected as Deputy Chairman for the rest of the year.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

28. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2017.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

29. 100% BUSINESS RATES RETENTION/COUNTY REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX

Mr A Wilson updated the Members on the current position. He advised Members that officers were looking to see how to improve forecasting and identifying issues with a view to standardising across the partnership. He stated that the LTA would be discussing the Council Tax review with representatives from LCC the following week along with a wider debate to address growth. He informed Members that he had seen a module that would work for the partnership on the basis of forecasting Business Rates. He highlighted that the 100% retention would depend on the impact of the pilot and that there was a commitment to improve required from LCC as they wanted to see results in the collection rates.

Chairman's initials

In response to a question from Councillor T J Pendleton, Mr A Wilson advised Members that the software was a module base and that officers had already worked with the company and that it was felt that it would be worth investing in to improve the forecasts.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised Members that with the software the section 151 officers could forecast more accurately and be one step ahead.

Mr A Wilson advised Members that there was nothing formal in relation to the Business Rates and officers were just waiting for the bids to be announced.

In response to a question from Councillor M Hall, Mr A Wilson advised members that the Leicester and Leicestershire would be around £19m better off. He stated that the money would be split between the authorities and that a more detailed agreement would be required to decide how it would be distributed.

Members expressed that they were not overall optimistic of retention and in turn would destroy incentive.

In response to a question from Councillor M Hall, Mr A Wilson advised Members that the retention pilot would possibly be 2020/21 but he was unsure what it would be, however he did not think that the authorities would be worse off.

30. INTERNAL AUDIT SCOPING

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He reminded Members that the Committee had requested to see the report and that the document before them set out the key risks broken down by process. He advised that the report was as expected and that there was nothing that gave officers cause for concern.

Following a question from Councillor M Hall in relation to Risk based verification, Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that the key controls for Benefits had been tested as part of the subsidy audit for each authority, independently.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The Internal Audit Scoping report be approved.

31. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO OCTOBER 2017

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He advised Members that the figure detailed at paragraph 3.3 was the September one however the table in the appendix was showing the correct figure for October. He stated that there were no concerns and highlighted that the FERIS was underspent by £56,000 due to posts being filled on a part-time basis and salaries was underspent by £38,000 due to vacant posts, but interviews had been scheduled. He informed Members that £29k had been spent from the reserves and that a more detailed description of the reserves and carry forwards would be brought to the next meeting as part of the budget proposals for the next year.

Following a question from Councillor J Hallam, Mr A Wilson confirmed that some of the underspend would be used as the year went on with commitments for the server upgrade. He advised that there was a little more than £50k in reserve but overall there was nothing of concern.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

Chairman's initials

RESOLVED THAT:

The financial performance of the Partnership be noted.

32. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY REPORT OCTOBER 2017

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised that the performance was generally in a positive position. She highlighted that in relation to New Claim processing both HDC and NWL were below target and HBBC was only .9% over and in relation to Change Events all were meeting target. She informed Members that NWL was due to go live with Universal Credit in February 2018 but it would be a limited number of postcodes and that there would possibly be a change to the payments of Universal Credit as of April 2018. She added that HBBC had given guidance to NWL with a view to reduce issues on day one. She stated that the subsidy thresholds were below target and HBBC had now had their subsidy claim signed off from the previous year. She stated that the collection rates for Council Tax were above target or within tolerance and that NNDR were above target for all three Councils, adding that the Supporting Small Businesses Scheme had been implemented and further work was required on the Discretionary Rate Relief Schemes for both HBBC and NWL

In response to a question from Councillor M Hall, Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that she had not seen any papers yet in relation to the changes to Universal Credit following the budget announcement and an update, if more was known, would be brought to the January meeting.

Councillor M Hall expressed concerns in relation to the potential to over use bailiffs and asked if it would be worth investigating multiple collection agencies.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that with any high level debts the partnership must do everything possible to try to recover the debt which included looking at attachment of earnings, benefits etc.

Mrs J Kenny advised that work had done by HBBC on multi agencies and would be happy to share this with the partners.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Summary Report October 2017 be noted.

33. FORWARD PLAN

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the forward plan to Members.

It was discussed that the Internal Audit report would not be ready for the January meeting and that it should be moved to the April meeting.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The Forward Plan be noted, and updated and amended as detailed above

34. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the date and venue of future meetings.

Chairman's initials

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.08 pm