

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Room G10, Hinckley Hub, Rugby Road, Hinckley on THURSDAY, 9 JUNE 2016

Present: Councillor J Hallam (Harborough) (Chairman)

Councillors R D Bayliss (NWLDC), M Hall (Hinckley and Bosworth), P King (HDC), T J Pendleton (NWLDC) and M Surtees (Hinckley and Bosworth)

Chief Executives: Mr S Atkinson (HBBC)

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

In attendance: F Fenning (NWLDC)

1. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR ENSUING YEAR

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor M Hall and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R Bayliss be elected Chairman for the ensuing year.

Councillor R Bayliss took the chair and thanked Councillor J Hallam for taking on the role of Chairman in his first year and for doing an excellent job.

2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN FOR ENSUING YEAR

It was moved by Councillor M Hall, seconded by Councillor T J Pendleton and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor M Surtees be elected Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Ms C E Fisher.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2016.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2016 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Chairman's initials

6. PERFORMANCE REPORT APRIL 2016

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members and advised that the Benefits service was currently on track; however, collections were not, but it was too early to get concerned. She informed Members that the new recovery strategy had been implemented which would send out reminders to customers who had a very poor payment history earlier, thus allowing the risk of non payment to be dealt with sooner. She stated that so far feedback on the new scheme was positive and that notices for business rates were also being issued earlier to also maximise the collection income.

Mrs S O'Hanlon then went on to inform Members that, following the signing of a Service Level Agreement, the Partnership was to act as the DWP single point of contact on behalf of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council and that there were to be some legislation changes coming in around the processing of benefits.

In response to questions from Members, Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that the work that was to be carried out for Oadby and Wigston Borough Council would be charged for, the work would be carried out by existing staff and the fee would be £14,000; that would be reviewed on a regular basis.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Report April 2016 be noted.

7. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE YEAR END 2015/16

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He advised Members that by the end of the financial year the Partnership had underspent by £270,365 and that, once the carry forwards had been covered, there would be a saving of £197,697. He informed Members that it was proposed to place £100,000 in reserve to meet any costs for potential future development of the Partnership, which would leave £97,697 unallocated. He stated that it was proposed to use the remainder to reduce the Partnership contributions for the year.

Councillor T J Pendleton stated that it was prudent to have a healthy level of reserves and any of the £100,000 that was not spent could be put towards reducing the level of contribution from the partner authorities.

In response to a question from Councillor P King, Mr A Wilson advised Members that the money was in reserve to meet any costs that could be incurred when investigations were carried out into possible Single Employer status.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised Members that the money required to start the investigations would be around £5,000 per authority to see if it was a viable way forward and then external HR and Legal consultancy and ICT enhancements may be required if the decision is made to look at the matter further.

Councillor P King expressed concerns over the amount that was being reserved and that the amount could be halved with the rest of the money being returned to the partner authorities. He also felt that the decision as to whether the partnership went to a single employer would be down to the three authorities, as there would be corporate issues that would be required to be dealt with at a district level.

Ms B Jolly highlighted that there were two separate issues to be looked at. The first would be the work that was carried out by the Partnership, to see if moving to a single employer was viable, and then the second would be for each authority to look at the options and how it would effect their staff.

Chairman's initials

Mr A Wilson advised Members that the money was for the initial work to be carried out and then the findings would be reported back to the Committee to decide if the project should be carried forward.

Mr S Atkinson stated that he agreed that £50,000 could be enough; however, if more was required then Committee would need to agree the additional amount and it might be more sensible to retain the £100,000 and pay back the amount available, once the final position was confirmed

Councillor M Hall stated that the money would be in reserve and did not expect it all to be spent.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor M Hall and by a majority

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The financial performance of the Partnership be noted,
2. A reserve of £100,000 be set aside out of the savings achieved after carryforwards for future development of the Partnership and
3. The remaining £97,697 be split between the partners to reduce the level of contributions required in 2016/17.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015/16 OUT-TURN

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised Members that all the targets had been met and many exceeded. In relation to sickness figures she informed Members that sickness days for each authority were well above the targets, but gave assurances to the Committee that each authority was adhering to their HR policies, triggers were being observed when reached and everything was being done to manage the cases effectively.

Councillor R D Bayliss added the thanks of the Committee to the staff for the hard work over the past year.

Councillor M Hall requested that the sickness figures be shown in future without the long term sickness included – that being shown separately.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Report 2015/16 Out-turn be noted.

9. UPDATE - SINGLE EMPLOYER

Mrs S O'Hanlon provided Members with an update. She advised Members that the work that was to be carried out was following a recommendation from the IRRV and that a decision was needed as to whether to proceed with looking into the recommendation or to say that it was not the way forward. She reminded Members of the options that IRRV had suggested and added that officers would work towards looking at the three different terms and conditions that the staff were working to. She informed Members that it was planned to bring a detailed proposal back to the Joint Committee, but stressed that it was not a simple piece of work and at this stage there would be no immediate savings.

Following a question from Councillor M Hall, Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that the work was not to look at savings, but, as it was the intention to possibly bring in new partners in the future or increase income levels, consideration needed to be given to the issues that staff were working to three different sets of terms and conditions i.e. different definitions of long term sick, different trigger points and three managers having to manage staff on these different terms.

Following comments from Members, Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that it was planned to bring a report to the next meeting to look at the different options and would be seeking steer from the Committee as to the way forward.

RESOLVED THAT:

The update be noted

10. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2016/2017

Councillor J Hallam requested that consideration was given to holding the meetings at the three partnership authorities.

It was moved by Councillor J Hallam, seconded by Councillor P King and

RESOLVED THAT:

The proposed schedule of meetings be approved and that the meetings are held in rotation at the Partner Authorities.

11. FORWARD PLAN

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the forward plan Members and advised that an update report on Single Employer would be added to the plan for the next meeting.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.15 pm