



Harborough District Council,

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council,

North West Leicestershire District Council,

Working in Partnership to provide better services...

Meeting	Joint Committee
Time/Date	4.30 pm on Thursday, 6 JULY 2017
Location	Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville
Officer to contact	Democratic Services (01530 454512)

All persons present are reminded that the meeting may be recorded and by attending this meeting you are giving your consent to being filmed and your image being used. You are kindly requested to make it known to the Chairman if you intend to film or record this meeting.

The Monitoring Officer would like to remind members that when they are considering whether the following items are exempt information under the relevant paragraph under part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 they must have regard to the public interest test. This means that members must consider, for each item, whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure outweighs the public interest in making the item available to the public.

AGENDA

Item		Pages
1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN		
	To elect a Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.	
2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN		
	To elect a Deputy Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.	
3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE		
	To receive and note any apologies for absence.	

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Under the Code of Conduct members are reminded that in declaring disclosable interests you should make clear the nature of that interest.

5. MINUTES

To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2017 **5 - 10**

6. FERIS ACTIVITY

The report of the Benefits Operational Manager **11 - 12**

7. RISK BASED VERIFICATION SOFTWARE UPDATE

The report of the Benefits Operational Manager **13 - 16**

8. UNIVERSAL CREDIT - UPDATE

The report of the Benefits Operational Manager **17 - 22**

9. RIGHT BENEFIT INITIATIVE

The report of the Benefits Operational Manager **23 - 28**

10. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE YEAR 2016/17

The report of the Section 151 Officer **29 - 34**

11. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY REPORT MARCH 2017

The report of the Head of Partnership **35 - 44**

12. DISCUSSION ON THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CABINET REPORT "DISTRICT COUNCIL COLLECTION OF COUNCIL TAX

13. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2017/18

The report of the Committee Clerk **45 - 48**

14. FORWARD PLAN

To note the Joint Committee's Forward Plan **49 - 50**

15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The officers consider that the press and public should be excluded during consideration of the following items in accordance with Section 100(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 as publicity would be likely to result in disclosure of exempt or confidential information.

16. COUNCIL TAX RECRUITMENT

The report of the Revenues Manager **51 - 56**

Circulation:

Councillor R Allen
Councillor R D Bayliss (Chairman)
Councillor J Hallam
Councillor M Hall
Councillor P King
Councillor T J Pendleton

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MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Hinckley Hub, Hinckley on THURSDAY, 26 JANUARY 2017

Present: Councillor R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire) (Chairman)

Councillors M Hall (Hinckley and Bosworth), P King (Harborough) and M Surtees (Hinckley and Bosworth)

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

In attendance: Ms J Stead (PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP)

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Hallam and T J Pendleton, and Mr B Cullen and Ms C E Fisher.

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

32. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2016.

It was moved by Councillor M Hall, seconded by Councillor P King and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held 17 November 2016 be approved and signed as a correct record.

33. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2016/2017

Ms J Stead presented the report to Members. She advised Members that the report was a high classification but only just. She informed Members that overall there was a strong system of governance and control in place. She highlighted to Members that there were only five risk findings outlined in the report and the action plans that had been put in place along with the general observations that were not considered to be a specific risk but needed to be brought to the attention of the Committee.

Councillor P King expressed concerns over the recovery of Council Tax overpayments and that it was a large amount of money to be outstanding. He added that he understood that it would take time. He stated that if he reported back to Council that no action had been taken for a year and half Members would not be happy and that he would struggle to justify why nothing had been done sooner.

Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that in isolation the figures were cause for concern, however it is important to note the figures detailed represented all overpayments outstanding. A significant amount were already subject to action, and she gave further detail on the figures with regard to arrangements and direct deductions in place. A rigorous programme has commenced to recover the overpayments. Staff had needed significant training in this area due to the restructure as a generic way of working had been agreed. She advised Members that the figures had been reduced since the time of the audit and of those still outstanding decisions were being made on how to progress, but that would depend on the

level of debt. It should also be noted these are difficult matters to recover, due to the nature of why the overpayment has arisen in the first instance.

Ms J Stead informed Members that the new process post business process reengineering had started to recover overpayments whilst the auditors were on site.

It was agreed that a report be brought to the next meeting outlining the action taken and the procedure for overpayments.

Councillor M Hall sought reassurances from officers that they were happy with the actions.

Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that some of the findings had been actioned however the alignment of procedures with regard to refunds may present issues as whilst Mrs S O'Hanlon is the owner of this recommendation, she has no remit to change policies back at the host authorities.

In response to a question from Councillor P King, Mrs J Kenny advised Members that when the Partnership was first set up it was agreed that HBBC would carry out the auditing of the Partnership and Pricewaterhouse Cooper had been contracted to provide the auditing service to the Council.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Partnership Internal Audit Report 2016/17 be noted.
2. A report outlining the issue and procedure for overpayments be brought to the next meeting.

34. SERVICE PLAN 2017/18

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the Service Plan to Members. She highlighted that key impacts on the service would be the server replacement and the roll out of Universal Credit. She advised that the impacts will be monitored and the risk register maintained and reported to Management Board on a quarterly basis.

In response to a question from Councillor R D Bayliss, Members were advised that Royal Mail would require addresses to be formatted a different way from 2018 and as such the Partnership would need to speak to the software provider and tidy addresses up within the system to ensure that no additional costs were accrued.

Councillor P King advised that Members of Harborough DC had asked if it would be possible to increase the Council Tax collection rate to 99% as a higher rate would mean more money.

Officers advised that the request could be looked into. However resources and time would need to be considered, and the focus should be on total value of monies collected as opposed to % collected.

It was moved by Councillor R D Bayliss, seconded by Councillor M Hall and

RESOLVED THAT:

The Service Plan 2017/18 be noted.

35. CIPFA BENCHMARKING CLUB 2015/16

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised Members that the results of the exercise carried out in 2014/15 could not be compared to 2015/16 as the restructure had taken place in April 2015. She informed Members that in relation to the first four bullet points on page 46 the Partnership was achieving but there was little scope for improving and that the issues that had been flagged would be monitored closely. Members were advised that a separate piece of work was ongoing to ensure that the indirect costs remained accurate and up to date.

In relation to what was working well, Mrs S O'Hanlon highlighted that all three authorities were above the group average for collection rates, direct debit and flexible worker. The authorities were lower than average on the number of appeals, processing new claims and direct costs - which was positive.

Councillor P King stated that it was a good piece of work and good results and felt that the information should be communicated to all Members to highlight how well the Partnership is working.

Ms B Jolly stated that Management Board had discussed the communication with Members and ensuring that the same information was passed to all three Councils.

In response to a question from Councillor M Hall, Mrs S O'Hanlon advised Members that key items highlighted in the report would be closely monitored but it would not be cost effective to continue with the benchmarking.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The many areas of good practice that have been identified as part of the benchmarking exercise be noted.
2. The areas identified as weak compared to others and the work being undertaken to secure a better situation among comparators be noted.
3. The Partnership does not participate further in the CIPFA benchmarking exercise.

36. PERFORMANCE REPORT NOVEMBER 2016

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised Members that performance for all three was positive and the collections rates for the additional debt that had been raised following the single person discount review for HDC and NWLDC was marginally below target. She informed Members that all three authorities had agreed to keep the LCTSS the same and currently only one member of staff was on long term sick. She asked Members for their views on the layout of the report for future meetings.

Councillor P King requested more information with regard to the existing schemes in the other Leicestershire authorities, Mrs S O'Hanlon committed to recirculate the paper to HDC with the requested information included.

Cllr P King also made reference to improving collection rates with a view to collecting more monies, Mrs S O'Hanlon advised the distribution is based on the Council Tax base, and any surplus is dealt with at the end of the year. Also, that she was meeting with HDC's section 151 officer the following day and would have a discussion with regard to look at the financial viability of this proposition.

In relation to the layout of the report, Members felt that visual representation i.e. graphs, key performance indicators and less detail would be better received.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Report November 2016 be noted.

37. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO NOVEMBER 2016

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He advised Members that there was no real change from previous reports and that as at the end of November the partnership was forecasting a year end saving of £58,000. He informed Members that it was proposed to use the Restructure and Efficiency reserve to fund the migration to the new server.

In response to questions from Councillor P King:-

Mr A Wilson advised Members that the £5,000 was a one-off payment to renew the warranty - not an annual cost.

Mrs J Kenny stated that the work would be contracted to ICT and that the cost outlined at line 6 in appendix 2 was indicative.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that the migration may produce some issues that may require ICT to spend additional time and therefore increase costs.

Councillor P King stated that the Partnership should drive suppliers to ensure that they gave the best value.

Mrs J Kenny advised Members that the first price was never taken and that best value was always expected.

It was moved by Councillor M Hall, seconded by Councillor M Surtees and

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The financial performance of the Partnership be noted.
2. The use of the Restructure and Efficiency reserve to fund the server migration costs be approved.

38. 2017/2018 PROPOSED BUDGET

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He advised Members that a 2.1% increase had been applied to contractual budgets, the budgets for the virtual mail room and postage had been increased by 6% following notifications from the mail suppliers which increased the budget to £11,390 and the salary costs included associated pension costs and annual pay increments that would be due during the year. He added that due to the new pressures that were arising there would be an increase in expenditure by £81,800.

Councillor P King suggested that the Partnership had a Medium Term Financial Strategy so that the Members could have a clearer understanding of the pressures that were being faced. He expressed concerns that the proposed budget was less than before but more than the revised and sought assurances that the Partnership was doing all it could to push

the costs down. He also asked whether the budgets for the shared services had been looked at.

Mrs J Kenny advised that the budgets for shared services could be revisited if Members wished and that the increased staffing costs were not in the control of the Partnership.

Councillor P King requested that a breakdown of the actual spending against each budget was provided for Members for reassurances that the inflations were required.

Mrs J Kenny advised Members that it was the responsibility of each budget holder to scrutinise that level of detail but the information could be made available for members.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that, as discussed in the Service Plan, if the take up of submitting information online increased the budget for the virtual mail room could be decreased.

Mr A Wilson advised that a final outturn report would be brought to a future meeting.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The 2017/2018 budget proposals for the Partnership are approved by the Joint Committee.

39. FORWARD PLAN

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the forward plan to Members. She advised Members that she would amend the forward plan to include a report on the recovery of overpayments and arrange for it to be re-circulated.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Forward Plan be noted.

40. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

41. PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She highlighted the options that were being considered and explored with a view to expanding and creating income for the Partnership.

Members, in general, were supportive of the options that were put before them but felt that officers should not be distracted from the current work of the Partnership.

Officers advised Members that any significant change to the Partnership would require the agreement of all three Partnership Authorities.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The contents of the report be noted and directions agreed,
2. A full feasibility study be commissioned to support delivery of enforcement services in the Partnership.

42. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the date and venue of the future meetings.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 6.15 pm



Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

FERIS ACTIVITY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To advise the Management Board of the planned FERIS activity during 2017/2018.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Management Board note the reduction in Housing Benefit spend achieved by the FERIS team to date and the priority activities.

3. REDUCTION IN HB SPEND AS A DIRECT RESULT OF INTERVENTIONS

(Source: Single Housing Benefit Extract)

	2015/2016	2016/2017	2017/2018	Total to date
HBBC	£10,882	£61,722	£11,865	£84,469
NWLDC	£36,697	£122,984	£0	£159,681
HDC	£0	£54,050	£0	£54,051

4. PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

A high level snapshot of a sample of cases reviewed has been taken in order to target our resources on those claims that contain a specific attribute and result in a reduction of housing benefit/LCTS spend.

Claim containing:	Cases sampled	Number adjusted	Weekly HB Red'n	Success rate
Childcare	55	33	£1,407.00	60%
Capital	120	17	£113.00	14%
New claims (RBV review) *	40	10	£300.00	25%
Occupational Pension	136	60	£196.75	44%
Earnings	174	74	£2,336.82	25%

(*As part of the RBV process all new high risk claims are reviewed by the FERIS team within six months of the assessment)

It is clear from the above that those claims with childcare costs or have entitlement to occupational pension included within them are most worthy of review and these will be prioritized over the coming months.

Over and above that we will be looking at claim types containing the following:

1. Capital over £14k
2. Large tax credit changes
3. Childcare costs due to increase in free hours
4. Self Employed income.
5. Earnings unchanged since august 2016
6. Contribution Based JSA more than 3 months



Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

RISK BASED VERIFICATION SOFTWARE UPDATE

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update to the Committee on the use of the RBV software.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the content of the report be noted.

3. BACKGROUND

The Partnership is responsible for the calculation and award of Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support, subject to receipt of an application form and verification of that application. Risk Based Verification (RBV) is a method of applying different levels of checks to benefit claims according to the risk associated with those claims. The approach allows for a more intense verification activity to be focused on claims more prone to fraud and error.

3.1 Benefit processing days saved for low risk claims

One of the advantages of RBV is that the assessor is able to process low risk claims much quicker than medium/high risk because the evidence requirements are much lower. As a consequence the partnership is able to use the days saved to focus the assessment time on medium and high risk cases.

HDC

Month	Average Medium Risk	Average Low Risk	Saved Days
October	18	10	8
November	17	8	9
December	25	15	10
January	22	12	10
February	23	17	6
March	25	14	11
Grand Total	130	76	54

HBBC

Month	Average Medium Risk	Average Low Risk	Saved Days
October	15	14	1
November	15	9	6
December	19	11	8
January	15	8	7
February	20	8	12
March	20	13	7
Grand Total	104	63	41

NWLDC

Month	Average Medium Risk	Average Low Risk	Saved Days
October	12	8	4
November	15	10	5
December	17	11	6
January	18	12	6
February	14	8	6
March	23	14	9
Grand Total	99	63	36

3.2 Risk Distribution (October to March inclusive)

Authority	High Risk Claims %	Medium Risk Claims %	Low Risk Claims %
HDC	27.4	39.3	37.3
HBBC	23.3	34.2	42.5
NWLDC	25.7	32.4	41.9

It should be remembered that the risk distribution is looking at the likelihood of fraud and error within a claim type and not necessarily the % of fraud or error discovered. The whole point of the RBV software is to reduce the incidence of fraud and error at the point the claim is assessed.

When the statistics are generated for a full year we would expect the data to be closer to the national trends which are: Low risk 52%; Medium risk 27% and High risk 21%.

There are significant implications for the authorities/claimants if we do not allocate resources to focus on high risk claims::

- The consequences for the claimant which can include a criminal record and imprisonment
- The ability of the authority to recover the overpayment if undiscovered for some years.
- Subsidy implications if thresholds are exceeded by LA error.
- Reputation-a qualification of the subsidy claim is something we would wish to avoid wherever possible.

3.3 The requirement to review

In addition to providing a risk level (low, medium or high) each claim will also be given a specific score. As you will see from the table below a high risk score is broken down into 3 sub-categories 1 being the highest level of risk and 3 the lowest within that risk category

Risk band #	Risk level
1	HIGH
2	
3	
4	MEDIUM
5	
6	
7	LOW
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
13	
14	
15	

Therefore it is important that we review all high risk claims within a reasonable time frame according to the risk score.

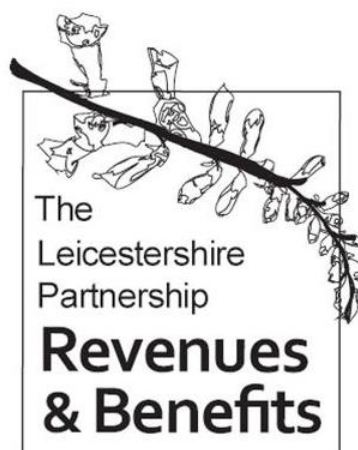
- Risk score 1 will be diary dated and reviewed within 3 months
- Risk score 2 will be diary dated and reviewed within 6 months
- Risk score 3 will be diary dated and reviewed within 9 months

3.4 Intervention

It is the responsibility of the interventions team to review any high risk claims within the timescales described above and an analysis of the high risk claims looked at confirmed that a review was required in a quarter of cases.

Cases sampled	Number adjusted	Weekly HB reduction	% Identified
40	10	15 £300.00	25%

Although the claimant may have advised us in their own time of the change in their circumstances the software allows us to be pro-active thereby reducing any potential benefit overpayments.



Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

Universal Credit – Update

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the migration to Universal Credit Full service and its implications for each of the three partner authorities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the content of the report is noted.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Universal Credit was introduced on 29 April 2013 in selected areas of the North West and is intended to support people who are on a low income or out of work and will replace the following benefits:

- Jobseekers Allowance income based
- Employment and Support Allowance income related
- Income Support
- Working tax credit
- Child tax credit
- Housing benefit

3.2 Full Service

Prior to going live the DWP arranges a 'handover event' which explains how Full service differs from the Live service and the customer journey. This event is normally attended by Customer Services, Benefits and the Housing team (if appropriate)

The "Full Service" is being phased in and the partner authorities have gone live or will be going live on the following dates

- Harborough District Council - 30 November 2016
- Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council - 8 March 2017
- North West Leicestershire - February 2018

UC full service will be introduced on a phased basis postcode by postcode, once a postcode goes onto full service the following will happen:-

New claimant's that would normally have claimed, for example, Job Seekers Allowance or Employment Support Allowance will have to claim UC and should be signposted to the DWP Jobcentre if they wish to claim Housing Benefit.

Those on existing legacy benefits, including Housing Benefit will remain on those benefits until there is a change of circumstances and then they will migrate onto UC, such a change in circumstance can include a change in their employment status (e.g. working more than 16 hours) or a change in their family circumstance (e.g. change of address).

The claimant's postcode will determine whether they migrate from the live to the full service and currently both HDC and HBBC have gone live with seven postcodes.

3.3 Main Differences between Live and Full Service.

- UC Full Service is a much more interactive service. You will often come across the Full service roll out being referred to as the digital roll out.

- Once an on-line claim has been completed the claimant will be instructed to book an interview via the service centre. If a customer does not book their appointment within 7 days of making their UC claim online, the claim will be cancelled and they will need to reapply again..
- Claimants can manage their claim using an internet-enabled device such as a smartphone, tablet or PC. Claimants will also be able to report changes in circumstances on-line, contact their work coach and access details of their payments and awards.
If a claimant declares that they cannot claim online they should be signposted to the nearest DWP Jobcentre
- Live Service will be available for all claimant groups from the start; full service has a number of gateway conditions that exclude claimants with certain circumstances from making a new claim. .
- In order to verify housing costs the service centre will contact the housing team directly.

3.4 Funding

The DWP previously funded Universal Support through Delivery Partnerships; the new funding arrangements will mean that from April 2017 funding will come directly from the DWP. This will be based on our respective caseloads.

Funding has been split into several elements, based on a number of assumptions and will be paid to LA's quarterly:

Assisted Digital (Full Service)	It is currently estimated that 6% of those seeking to claim Universal Credit will need Assisted Digital support
Personal Budgeting Support (Full Service)	It is currently estimated that 7.5% of those seeking to claim Universal Credit will need Personal Budgeting Support
UC Implementation Support	UC Implementation Support will be paid via 'New Burdens payments'
Management Support	This is to support Universal Credit Implementation
Support for complex housing cases (Full Service)	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of providing further information for complex housing costs to Universal Credit.
Housing Benefit Stop Notices	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of closing down a Housing benefit claim that has since migrated to Universal Credit
Payment Deduction Programme	This is to fund Local Authorities for the clerical process of closing down a Housing benefit claim that has since migrated to Universal Credit

3.5 Timetable

The original timetable has been refined to take account of the welfare reform changes made during 2016, the full service roll out will now proceed as follows:

- 5 jobcentres a month until June 2017.
- 30 jobcentres in July 2017
- There will be a break between August & September
- 55 jobcentres a month from October to December 2017,
- 65 jobcentres a month from February 2018 until September 2018.

The managed migration of the existing caseload will now not start until July 2019 and will finish in March 2022. This means that local authorities will continue to administer the existing housing benefit caseload for working age applicants until at least July 2019.

The Government also announced that it will not begin the incorporation of Housing Benefit for pensioners into Pension Credit until the completion of the Universal Credit timetable so we can expect to be delivering HB for pensioners for some years to come.

3.6 Our responsibilities (Benefits team)

- To ensure that all members of staff whose job roles will be impacted by UC are fully trained and able to support claimants as and when required.
- Sign post claimants to the job centre where appropriate-this will include instances where the claimant is unable to apply on-line.
- To not accept a claim for HB from those persons within the prescribed post code areas.
- Stop paying housing benefit when requested to do so and provide details of any overlapping HB that may have been paid during the migration of the claim.
- Identify and alert the DWP to those cases where the claimant is in specified accommodation (in these cases HB will continue to be paid)
- Pay LCTS based on their UC income, UC is paid monthly and we will need to make any monthly adjustments to LCTS entitlement based on any revisions to their award.
- Assess and award claims for Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Ensure the website is updated with the latest prescribed postcodes

3.7 Early Learning

The partnership has been assigned a DWP partnership manager through which concerns are raised and outcomes of early learning from both perspectives are shared. The DWP adopt a 'test and learn' approach and it is therefore essential that any issues we come across are shared which will help to improve and shape the service moving forward.

Examples of such early learning and concerns raised include:

- DWP insisting that Universal Credit is to be paid for specified accommodation
- Housing costs not being in payment for up to 3 months
- DWP staff unsure if housing costs are paid by Universal Credit..
- DWP having no computer available (or help) for people to make claim for Universal Credit on line.
- The Apollo register provides the DWP with a list of approved LA staff who are able to access DWP data. Unfortunately UC full service has not yet caught up and even though our names show on the Apollo list, the UC service centre are not allowed to disclose any information if a claimant is receiving UC in a full service area.
- Customers are having problems printing off their Universal Credit award from their journal.
- Universal Credit awards not including correct incomes, leaving off PIP, carers allowance etc.

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Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

RIGHT BENEFIT INITIATIVE

(FORMERLY THE FRAUD & ERROR
REDUCTION INCENTIVE SCHEME)

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the re-refresh of the Fraud & Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) which, moving forward, is to be known as the Right Benefit Initiative (RBI)

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the content of the report be noted and that a decision is taken to opt into the national initiative.
- 2.2 Approve the option to use the RBI funding to recruit 1 temporary assessment staff to be responsible for the optional RTI's
- 2.3 Approve the option to use the unspent FERIS funding to recruit 1 temporary assessment officer to be responsible for the work generated by the interventions team and support completion of the optional RTI's

3. BACKGROUND

The latest published HB Fraud and Error (F&E) national statistics for 2015/16 indicate that earnings related fraud & error accounted for approximately £560 million which is 40% of the total estimated housing benefit monetary value of fraud and error. In view of this, DWP have reconsidered the approach to FERIS to a better way of targeting RBI funding to combat fraud and error more effectively.

The main differences between FERIS and RBI are :

- Payments will not be staged and all funding will be made as an up-front payment to LAs.
- LAs should use the additional funding on staffing costs only to focus purely on combating incorrect earnings and to process as many Optional Real Time Information (RTI) referrals as possible each month.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) have a joint Fraud and Error Strategy and seek to work together where possible. Real Time Information (RTI) is HMRC's system for collecting Pay as You Earn (PAYE) information from employers and pension providers

The DWP matches RTI data with social security benefits, including housing benefits, to try and identify cases where claimants have either failed to declare or have under-declared earnings and non-state pension. The RTI service cannot be used presently for council tax support only claims, although this may change in the future.

Each month we currently receive compulsory RTI files for each authority from HMRC, the approximate numbers received for each authority are 40 cases. The information provided confirms details of earnings & private pensions that differ to those held on our database.

The files are loaded directly into a module on our database from where our staff can upload them onto each individual claim to make a reassessment. We have to ensure that these files are actioned within 4 weeks.

3.1 Funding

There will be no requirement to submit a bid for funding; it will simply be the case that a local authority will opt into the initiative, by doing so it will be confirming that the funding will be used to enable resources to be put in place to review earnings cases identified by RTI referrals.

It is anticipated that funding will be received mid May 2017 and funding levels are:

NWLDC £17,403
HDC £9,335
HBBC £13,897

3.2 What are we being asked to do?

Each month we are being asked to process as many of the optional RTI referrals we can. We have 4 weeks in which to deal with each referral loaded into our system.

The volumes of optional RTI referrals we expect to receive each month are as follows:

HBBC

April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	Aug 2017	Sept 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
104	137	155	173	190	190	190	144	144	144	147	147

NWLDC

April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	Aug 2017	Sept 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
104	148	166	184	201	201	201	155	155	155	147	147

HDC

April 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	Aug 2017	Sept 2017	Oct 2017	Nov 2017	Dec 2017	Jan 2018	Feb 2018	Mar 2018
74	98	110	123	136	136	136	103	103	103	105	105

3.3 Staffing

The move to checking RTI cases will be an assessor function and a departure from how the FERIS work is currently done. We have done a high level calculation (using 30 mins per referral) and anticipate that the increased workload will equate to 50 hours per week across all 3 LA's.

Based on HBBC salary (top of scale 4 including on-costs) an assessment officer would be paid £28,184 and by opting we have the option to employ up to 1.4 FTE's.

In their letter of the 8 March 2017 the DWP have confirmed that LAs who are currently using FERIS funding for proactive activities should now refocus their priorities and use funding to focus on combating incorrect earnings.

We have also spoken with the DWP FERIS team to confirm that we will be using the unspent ring fenced FERIS grant to support this activity.

It is feasible that the work of the FERIS officers can continue with a focus on the following activities:

- review self-employed earnings where a new set of accounts is available since the last HB entitlement calculation.
- review earnings cases that have not been reviewed for more than 12 months.
- review cases with irregular earnings patterns.
- review those cases that have been determined as high risk by the RBV software.

Once it has been established that there is a discrepancy in the claim it is the responsibility of the assessment team (the decision makers) to suspend and re-assess the claim.

Given the available budget from the unspent FERIS funding (see below) it is feasible that we also employ a temporary assessor who will be responsible for completing the work generated by the existing FERIS officers and to support the RBI initiative which is entirely consistent with the requirements of the funding.

Ring fenced Budgets	
FERIS maintenance funding	£56,600
RBI funding	£40,635
Total	£97,235
Expenditure	
FERIS staffing costs (1 FTE inc on-costs)	£22,080
Assessor staffing costs (1 FTE inc on costs – FERIS & RBI)	£28,184
Assessor staffing costs (1.4 FTE inc on costs – RBI)	£39,458
Total	£89,722

3.4 Why opt in?

- Funding will only be available to those LA's opting in, but can only be used for staffing costs.
- According to the DWP 70% of LA's had opted in at the 20 April.
- Protecting the public purse is very high on the political agenda and LA's have both a moral and statutory duty to have measures in place that reduces fraud and error in the benefits system.
- LA's have had the option of processing optional RTI's for a little while however enhancements to the software now mean that earnings information can be automatically loaded into our IT system and crucially funding is now available.

- The DWP will be increasing the amount of earnings cases that are matched with HMRC data this means that changes will be picked up much quicker and will reduce the value of overpayments.
- LA's will not be penalised for failing to deal with referrals they do not have the capacity to deal with so there are no HB subsidy implications for those cases that are not transferred into our system. The DWP are keen not to penalise LA's for spikes in the number of referrals and at this point in time there is no indication that funding will be reduced if a LA has taken reasonable steps to deal with the cases in hand.

3.5 Concerns with opting in?

- The forecasted volumes of referrals are indicative and we may receive more than those projected which will impact on our core processing
- If the overpayment cannot be collected from on-going benefit there will be an impact on the enforcement team. There is no additional funding to support recovery of the overpayments.
- Failure to carefully monitor the number of optional RTI's loaded into our system and not completed within 4 weeks could result in subsidy loss as a technical LA error.
- Conversely, we may not receive the referrals predicted
- We may not be able to recruit to the additional roles on a temporary basis, leaving us in a poor starting position.

3.6 Monitoring and Reporting

Management Information (MI) requirements are being developed to monitor and evaluate the RBI performance. The DWP's performance development team (PDT) will work collaboratively with LA's who have low levels of productivity, e.g. the volume of Optional RTI referrals processed, or case reviews are below expected levels.

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Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

Financial Performance Year 2016/17

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Joint Committee of the financial performance for 2016/17 financial year

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The financial performance and in year savings of the Partnership be noted.

2.2 Earmarked reserves of £16,000 are moved back into the general reserve as not required for the purchase of the new Server.

2.3 That £84,000 of savings and reserves are carryforward into 2017/18 to meet the costs of the purchase of the server, hardware, software and business development and recruitment.

2.4 A general reserve of £50,000 be retained for contingencies of the partnership

2.5 That £105,250 of reserves are used to reduce the contributions for the 2017/18 financial year.

3. INFORMATION

Budget Position

3.1. The financial position of the Partnership has been outlined in **Appendix 1** to this report. The key headlines have been detailed below for information.

3.2. The Joint Committee approved a budget for the Partnership for 2016/2017 that indicated that £3,505,850 would be spent on the Partnership, matched by income from the partners and use of reserves. This has since been adjusted down by £122,000 of salary costs in relation to staff being transferred to the DWP in relation to fraud investigation as detailed below.

	£	Savings £
Original Budget 2017/17	3,505,850	
Staff transfer savings	(122,000)	(122,000)
Adjusted budget	3,383,850	
In year savings and income increases	(169,586)	(169,586)
Actual Cost	3,214,264	(291,586)

3.3. Actual spend as at 31 March 2017 against the annual budget is summarised below.

Provisional year end position	Budget to Mar 2017	Actual to Mar 2017	Over / (Under) Spend Mar 2017
	£	£	£
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	3,383,850	3,284,870	(98,980)
INCOME	(3,383,850)	(3,454,455)	(70,605)
	0	(169,586)	(169,586)

3.4. As at 31 March 2017, the Partnership has year-end saving of £169,586 in total. Though it should be noted the FERIS funding of £56,618 included within this is ring-fenced and cannot be redistributed back to partners. The main elements of these savings are:

- Salary savings of £70,512 as a result of current vacancies
- FERIS is underspent by £56,618, mainly due to £30,446 of additional grant income not budgeted for in 2016/17, and posts being filled on a part-time basis, rather than fulltime due to the nature of the work. This will be carried forward to cover salary costs for staff on fixed term contracts employed for this specific purpose.
- £11,000 of savings on Audit Fees (£4,000), Legal Fees (£3,000) and Consultancy Fees (£4,000).

Review of Reserves and carry forwards

4. The reporting of reserves has been on an exception basis in the past. This section brings together the overall position as covered by the monitoring of approved carry forwards and use of reserves.

Reserves	General	Earmarked	Total
Balance bfwd from 2015/16	325,550		325,550
Transfers from Reserves	(97,697)		(97,697)
Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(100,000)	100,000	0
Carry forwards used in 2016/17	(72,000)		(72,000)
	55,853	100,000	155,853
Year-end Savings 2016/17	169,586		169,586
Use of Reserves expected 2017/18			
Purchase of Server		(68,000)	(68,000)
Purchase of support hardware*(1)		(16,000)	(16,000)
Software and IT requirements*(2)	(7,870)		
Business development and recruitment*(3)	(6,200)		
	(14,070)	(84,000)	(84,000)
Less			
FERIS (Ringfenced c/f)	(56,618)		(56,618)
Carry forwards for use in 2017/18*(4)	(15,500)		(15,500)
	139,250	16,000	155,250

*(#) see appendix 2 for detail.

- 4.1 The level of general and earmarked reserves of the partnership is £155,250. There are no other specific items that require reserves to be put aside to meet. Therefore the proposals for the Joint Committee on the use of savings and reserves are:

- A general reserve be retained of 1.5% of the annual budget, based on 2016/17 adjusted budget of £3.4m this is £50,000 (Rounded down) to meet unforeseen costs.
- The Earmarked reserve is closed and the £16,000 remaining balance moved back into general reserves.
- This leaves £105,250 that can either be used to reduce next year contributions for 2017/18.

- 4.2 . A table summarising the position is noted below:

	Total	HBBC	HDC	NWLDC
Allocation method %		37.69%	28.72%	33.59%
Savings	155,250	58,514	44,588	52,148
Less Retained	(50,000)	(18,845)	(14,360)	(16,795)
Potential reduction in contributions	105,250	39,669	30,228	35,353

Appendix 1:Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership Monitoring Report to 31st March 2017

Expenditure / Income Type	2016/17 Latest Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance after Timing Differences	2016/17 Total Estimate (Original)	2016/17 Total Estimate (Revised)
	£	£	£	£	£
Employees	2,484,010	2,406,417.58	77,592	2,604,010	2,484,010
Premises Related Expenditure	79,530	81,436.22	-1,906	79,530	79,530
Transport Related Expenditure	35,000	24,393.27	10,607	35,000	35,000
Supplies & Services	754,110	741,555.92	12,554	750,110	754,110
Central & Administrative Exp	31,200	31,066.77	133	31,200	31,200
Revenue Income	-3,280,153	-3,294,140.21	13,987	-3,499,850	-3,280,153
Approved Cfwd	-72,000	-72,000	0	0	-72,000
Transfer from Reserves	-97,697	-97,697	0	0	-97,697
Other Expenditure - FERIS	66,000	41,994.90	24,005	0	66,000
Other Income - FERIS	0	-32,613.15	32,613	0	0
Sum:	0	-169,586	169,586	0	0

Explanations

	Variance at 31/03/17 (Over) / Under Spend £	Explanation £5k+
Salaries	70,512	Variance is due to vacant post
Training	7,081	Variance > £5k
Premises Related Expenditure	-1,906	Variance > £5k
Car Allowances	10,607	Mileage lower than anticipated, a proportion of which will be due to mileage no longer being claimed by Fraud Staff
Computer Software Maintenance Costs	-7,452	Variance > £5k
Postages	-3,693	Variance > £5k
Liability Expenses	-5,632	Variance < £5k
Flexible Working	7,071	Variance > £5k
Audit Fees	4,000	Variance > £5k
Legal Fees	3,350	Variance > £5k
Consultancy Fees	7,175	It is anticipated that there will be a year end underspend of £4k. There will be a request to carry this forward to 2017/18 to cover server work
Subscriptions	5,569	Variance > £5k
Remote Access	1,510	Variance > £5k
Other Minor Variances	789	Variance > £5k
Other Minor Income	13,987	£7k income from Town Centre Partnership for the administration of the BIDs, £9k other Misc Income
Net Other Expenditure & Income - FERIS	56,618	Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) this is a ring fenced grant. £21K grant has been received during 2016/17. A budget of £66k has been b/wd from 2015/16. This underspend will need to be c/wd to 2017/18 to cover salary costs for staff on fixed term contracts employed for this specific purpose
	169,586	

Appendix 2

Purchase of support hardware*(1)

Table 3: IT Costs

	Description	Number required	Cost £	Total £
	IT Equipment replacement -contingency *	10	760	7,600
	Replacement scanning equipment (HDC/NWLDC)	2	1,100	2,200
	IT Kit - New Flexible homeworkers	8	760	6,080
	Total			15,880
	4G connectivity – Tablets for inspectors **	5	320	1,600
*	Dual screens/Thin client			
**	For your information, the view is that this is met from ringfenced reserves from each Council for a two year period and pending whether successful or not will build into the base budget from 2018/19. In addition it is based no change to HBBC existing contract.			

Software and IT requirements*(2)

Supplier	Description	Value required
Capita	Total Mobile	3,600
Lloyds Telephony	Report writing software	4,270
Total		7,870

Business development and recruitment*(3)

Supplier	Description	Value required
HDC	Recruitment to Business Development & Support Officer, funding required to fill to post in advance of post holder leaving for handover and continuity of service	6,200

Carry forwards for use in 2017/18*(4)

Carry forwards	
Training Incl Conferences & Seminars	7,000
Flexible Working	7,000
Remote Access	1,500
Total	15,500

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Revenue and Benefit Service

Performance Summary Report

March 2017

Caseload Analysis

Position at:	01/04/2011	01/04/2012	In Year Movement	01/04/2013	In Year Movement	01/04/2014	In Year Movement	01/04/2015	In Year Movement	01/04/2016	In Year Movement	2016/17		Overall Movement	
															%
Council Tax Dwellings												As at 31/3/2017	In Year Movement		
HBBC	46,172	46,505	333	46,788	283	47,405	617	48,135	730	48,810	675	49,488	678	3,316	6.7%
HDC	35,923	35,965	42	36,494	529	37,048	554	37,312	264	37,899	587	38,505	606	2,582	6.7%
NWLDC	40,026	40,271	245	40,833	562	41,292	459	41,761	469	42,405	644	43,204	799	3,178	7.4%
	122,121										Total No.	131,197			
NDR Rated Assessments															
HBBC	2,876	2,867	-9	2,932	65	2,968	36	2,985	17	3,067	99	3,082	15	206	6.7%
HDC	2,616	2,730	114	2,762	32	2,835	73	2,894	59	2,909	74	2,949	40	333	11.3%
NWLDC	3,182	3,170	-12	3,175	5	3,210	35	3,223	13	3,249	39	3,287	38	105	3.2%
	8,674										Total No.	9,318			
HB/CTLS Live Caseload															
HBBC	7,100	7,579	479	7,555	-24	7,161	-394	6,832	-329	6,459	-702	6,177	-282	-923	-14.9%
HDC	4,189	4,246	57	4,345	99	4,274	-71	4,086	-188	3,689	-585	3,520	-169	-669	-19.0%
NWLDC	7,187	7,287	100	7,213	-74	6,770	-443	6,550	-220	6,145	-625	5,816	-329	-1,371	-23.6%
	18,476										Total No.	15,513			

Dashboard Performance Summaries for each Council follows below:

HBBC													2016/17	Year-End 2016/17 Target	2015/16 Same month cumulative comparison
BENEFITS	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Cumulative		
In month: Right Time (days)	8.5	9.5	12.2	12.4	10.5	9.7	10.5	9.8	11.1	10.8	2.8	9.9	9.8	11	
Position for 2015/16	11.2	11.0	11.8	10.7	9.8	11.1	13.7	10.9	10.5	10.8	3.1	6.9			10.1
In month: New Claims (Days)	15.9	24.2	22.1	23.0	19.2	16.9	16.1	16.6	16.3	14.5	16.3	17.8	18.3	19	
Position for 2015/16	24.0	22.4	16.9	18.3	12.8	20.5	21.7	18.4	12.8	16.2	15.1	16.3			17.9
In month: Change Events (Days)	7.1	7.4	10.7	10.5	8.6	8.2	9.4	8.6	10.3	10.1	2.3	8.7	7.3	9	
Position for 2015/16	9.0	9.2	10.8	9.4	9.3	9.6	12.2	9.3	10.0	9.5	2.4	5.8			7.6
Right Time profiled in month target 16/17	14.1	14.8	14.7	11.0	10.9	10.2	10.8	9.3	10.4	9.8	3.4	10.9			
New Claims profiled in month target 16/17	19.0	24.0	22.0	22.9	18.4	16.8	16.7	14.4	15.0	16.2	17.5	18.9			
Change Events profiled in month target 16/17	13.5	13.7	13.2	9.8	9.8	9.1	10.0	8.2	9.0	8.6	2.5	9.4			
COUNCIL TAX	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	11.0%	20.3%	29.4%	38.6%	48.0%	57.5%	66.5%	75.9%	85.1%	94.3%	96.5%	98.1%	98.1%	98.0%	
This years profiled target	11.0%	20.0%	29.3%	38.4%	47.9%	57.1%	66.3%	75.9%	85.1%	94.2%	96.4%	98.0%			
Position for 2015/16	11.1%	20.4%	29.7%	38.9%	48.2%	57.6%	66.9%	76.2%	85.4%	94.4%	96.4%	97.7%			
In Year Arrears Reduction (£)	£2.7m	£2.5m	£2.5m	£2.3m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.0m	£1.9m	£1.8m	£1.8m	£1.8m	INFO	
Position for: 2015/16	£2.1m	£2m	£1.9m	£1.9m	£1.8m	£1.8m	£1.8m	£1.7m	£1.7m	£1.7m	£1.6m	£1.5m			
NON DOMESTIC RATES	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	10.1%	19.0%	28.1%	37.1%	46.0%	55.7%	64.9%	74.1%	83.5%	92.9%	96.9%	98.9%	98.9%	98.3%	
This years profiled target	11.2%	20.0%	28.1%	37.1%	46.0%	55.0%	63.8%	73.0%	82.7%	92.0%	96.5%	98.3%			
Position for 2015/16	11.5%	20.2%	29.7%	38.7%	47.7%	56.8%	65.6%	74.9%	84.3%	93.4%	95.9%	98.5%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£1.4m	£0.7m	£0.6m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.2m	INFO	
Position for: 2015/16	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.6m	£0.6m	£0.6m	£0.6m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.5m	£0.3m			
HB DEBT RECOVERY	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments outstanding at year end	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	INFO	
Position for 2015/16 (£m)	£1.1m	£1.1m	£1.1m	£1.2m	£1.2m	£1.2m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.4m	£1.3m	£1.4m	£1.4m			
HB Overpayments Recovered	4%	7%	10%	12%	15%	18%	20%	21%	25%	26%	29%	31%	31%	36%	
2016/17 profiled target	5%	9%	15%	19%	23%	25%	27%	28%	30%	32%	34%	36%			
FRAUD	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
CTLS Sanctions gained	2	1	0	1	1	3	1	2	0	0	0	2	13	6	
This years profiled target	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0			

HDC													2016/17	Year - End 2016/17	2015/16 Same month cumulative comparison
BENEFITS	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Cumulative		
In month: Right Time (days)	9.1	9.3	12.2	10.4	10.9	11.8	11.3	9.8	12.7	9.5	3.0	8.8	9.9	11	
Position for 2015/16	9.8	11.1	11.9	10.1	10.2	10.8	12.0	10.8	11.8	10.9	3.0	6.1			9.9
In month: New Claims (Days)	15.5	20.1	22.0	18.1	18.9	20.2	15.3	14.5	22.2	14.7	17.9	18.7	18.1	19	
Position for 2015/16	20.6	22.6	20.9	18.0	16.7	18.9	19.3	19.3	13.1	16.4	15.4	17.8			18.5
In month: Change Events (Days)	7.8	7.9	10.5	9.3	9.2	10.3	10.7	9.0	11.1	8.6	2.5	7.8	7.6	9	
Position for 2015/16	8.3	9.5	10.2	8.8	8.9	9.4	10.8	8.9	11.6	9.6	2.4	4.7			7.3
Right Time profiled in month target 16/17	9.8	11.1	11.9	10.1	10.2	10.8	12.0	10.8	9.6	9.5	3.0	8.0			
New Claims profiled in month target 16/17	20.6	22.6	20.9	18.0	16.7	18.9	19.3	19.3	19.1	19.2	19.1	19.0			
Change Events profiled in month target 16/17	8.3	9.5	10.2	8.8	8.9	9.4	10.8	8.9	8.5	8.2	3.0	9.0			
COUNCIL TAX	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	11.3%	20.4%	29.9%	39.1%	48.4%	57.9%	67.2%	76.6%	85.7%	94.7%	96.8%	98.5%	98.5%	98.6%	
This years profiled target	11.3%	20.8%	29.9%	39.0%	48.3%	57.7%	67.9%	76.9%	86.1%	95.0%	97.0%	98.6%			
Position for 2015/16	11.4%	20.8%	30.4%	39.4%	48.7%	58.1%	67.9%	77.0%	86.2%	95.1%	97.0%	98.4%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£2.2m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.0m	£1.9m	£1.9m	£1.9m	£1.8m	£1.7m	£1.6m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	INFO	
Position for: 2015/16	£2.0m	£1.9m	£1.8m	£1.8m	£1.7m	£1.7m	£1.6m	£1.6m	£1.6m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m			
NON DOMESTIC RATES	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	10.4%	19.9%	28.7%	37.6%	46.7%	55.1%	64.0%	74.0%	82.6%	92.8%	96.9%	99.6%	99.6%	99.2%	
2016/17 Target	10.6%	19.6%	28.7%	37.6%	46.5%	56.5%	65.3%	74.1%	83.6%	92.4%	96.9%	99.2%			
Position for 2015/16	10.8%	19.8%	29.5%	38.8%	47.8%	57.7%	66.5%	75.3%	85.2%	93.9%	97.0%	99.6%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£0.4m	£0.3m	£0.3m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.1m	£0.1m	£0.1m	£0.1m	INFO	
Position for: 2015/16	£0.6m	£0.6m	£0.6m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.4m	£0.3m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.2m			
HB DEBT RECOVERY	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments outstanding at year end (Academy)	£0.9m	£0.9m	£0.9m	£0.9m	£0.9m	£0.9m	£1.0m	£1.0m	£1.0m	£1.0m	£1.0m	£1.0m	£1.0m	INFO	
Position for 2015/16 (£m)	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.9m			
HB Overpayments Recovered	3%	5%	8%	10%	13%	15%	16%	19%	22%	24%	26%	29%	29%	31%	
2016/17 profiled target	3%	5%	8%	10%	13%	16%	18%	21%	24%	24%	27%	31%			
FRAUD	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
CTLS Sanctions gained	1	0	0	4	0	4	1	1	1	1	2	2	17	6	
This years profiled target	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0			

Leicestershire Partnership - Revenues and Benefits Performance Indicators

NWLDC													2016/17	Year End 2016/17 target	2015/16 Same month cumulative comparison
BENEFITS	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Cumulative		
In month: Right Time (days)	10.4	9.3	12.3	11.7	10.8	11.1	10.8	10.4	11.7	11.6	3.4	8.9	10.2	11	
Position for 2015/16	12.3	10.5	14.2	11.3	11.4	11.6	10.3	12.4	11.7	11.1	3.0	5.5			10.4
In month: New Claims (Days)	16.1	19.8	19.1	21.7	22.9	19.2	16.3	14.1	16.4	18.1	15.3	18.5	18.1	19	
Position for 2015/16	23.8	22.2	20.8	20.0	17.6	19.7	20.7	19.4	18.8	15.1	16.2	14.0			19.1
In month: Change Events (Days)	9.5	8.1	11.2	9.7	9.1	9.5	9.8	9.8	10.7	10.2	2.8	7.7	7.8	9	
Position for 2015/16	10.5	8.9	12.9	9.5	10.5	10.1	8.9	10.9	10.5	10.2	2.4	4.3			7.9
Right Time profiled in month target 16/17	14.9	15.5	15.1	11.5	10.6	9.9	11.1	8.6	10.1	10.2	3.0	8.3			
New Claims profiled in month target 16/17	21.0	23.0	25.1	20.4	20.3	14.6	16.2	13.7	15.9	16.5	15.4	18.5			
Change Events profiled in month target 16/17	13.6	14.3	13.3	10.3	9.1	9.2	10.0	7.7	8.6	8.9	2.4	6.6			
COUNCIL TAX	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	10.2%	19.6%	28.9%	38.0%	47.3%	56.5%	65.5%	74.8%	84.1%	93.1%	95.7%	97.8%	97.8%	97.6%	
This years profiled target	10.4%	19.5%	28.8%	37.9%	47.2%	56.4%	65.6%	74.9%	84.3%	93.3%	95.8%	97.6%			
Position for 2015/16	10.5%	19.7%	29.0%	38.2%	47.4%	56.7%	65.9%	75.2%	84.6%	93.7%	95.8%	97.4%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£3.2m	£3.1m	£2.9m	£2.8m	£2.7m	£2.6m	£2.6m	£2.5m	£2.4m	£2.4m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.1m	INFO	
Position for: 2015/16	£2.6m	£2.5m	£2.4m	£2.4m	£2.3m	£2.2m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.1m	£2.1m	£2.0m	£2.0m			
NON DOMESTIC RATES	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	9.8%	20.1%	30.9%	39.2%	48.4%	57.1%	67.1%	76.0%	84.8%	91.6%	95.2%	99.3%	99.3%	99.0%	
This years profiled target	11.0%	19.0%	30.9%	39.2%	47.3%	56.4%	65.6%	74.2%	82.4%	90.7%	96.0%	99.0%			
Position for 2015/16	10.8%	20.2%	29.5%	38.6%	46.9%	56.8%	65.6%	74.9%	84.5%	93.0%	96.0%	99.0%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£0.9m	£0.8m	£0.7m	£0.6m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.2m	INFO	
Position for: 2015/16	£1m	£1.1m	£1.1m	£1.1m	£1.0m	£0.7m	£0.6m	£0.5m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.3m			
HB DEBT RECOVERY	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments outstanding at year end (Academy)	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.4m	£1.3m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.5m	£1.5m	INFO	
Position for 2015/16	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.1m	£1.2m	£1.2m	£1.2m	£1.2m	£1.2m			
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments Recovered	5%	8%	12%	15%	18%	20%	23%	25%	27%	29%	31%	33%	33%	34%	
2016/17 profiled target	4%	4%	11%	16%	19%	20%	23%	24%	26%	29%	31%	34%			
FRAUD	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
CTLS Sanctions gained	2	3	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	15	6	
This years profiled target	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0			

DWP Housing Benefit Subsidy impact – ‘Local Authority Error/ Time Delay’

HBBC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Lower Threshold	£7,224	£14,019	£20,492	£27,613	£36,622	£43,890	£50,311	£57,110	£64,031	£70,768	£77,031	£83,237
Upper Threshold	£8,127	£15,772	£23,053	£31,065	£41,199	£49,376	£56,600	£64,249	£72,035	£79,615	£86,660	£93,641
Actual	£9,894	£12,412	£14,606	£17,514	£24,570	£25,567	£28,051	£34,647	£39,673	£43,867	£51,584	£58,754
Lower Tolerance	-£2,670	£1,608	£5,885	£10,099	£12,052	£18,323	£22,260	£22,463	£24,359	£26,901	£25,447	£24,483
Upper Tolerance	-£1,767	£3,360	£8,447	£13,551	£16,629	£23,810	£28,549	£29,602	£32,363	£35,747	£35,076	£34,888
HDC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Lower Threshold	£4,102	£7,977	£13,028	£17,016	£21,143	£27,353	£31,231	£34,997	£39,440	£43,356	£47,294	£51,754
Upper Threshold	£4,615	£8,974	£14,656	£19,143	£23,786	£30,772	£35,135	£39,371	£44,370	£48,775	£53,206	£58,223
Actual	£6,737	£12,393	£17,218	£22,357	£29,014	£29,123	£29,248	£34,422	£34,586	£35,297	£35,023	£35,410
Lower Tolerance	-£2,635	-£4,416	-£4,190	-£5,341	-£7,871	-£1,770	£1,984	£575	£4,854	£8,059	£12,271	£16,344
Upper Tolerance	-£2,122	-£3,419	-£2,562	-£3,214	-£5,228	£1,649	£5,888	£4,950	£9,784	£13,478	£18,183	£22,813
NWLDC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Lower Threshold	£7,176	£14,045	£20,802	£28,301	£34,966	£45,914	£52,517	£59,037	£64,745	£71,091	£78,262	£84,006
Upper threshold	£8,073	£15,801	£23,402	£31,839	£39,337	£51,653	£59,082	£66,417	£72,838	£79,977	£88,045	£94,507
Actual	£10,389	£12,008	£16,904	£18,526	£19,561	£22,347	£23,682	£26,272	£31,013	£32,437	£38,241	£42,729
Lower Tolerance	-£3,214	£2,037	£3,898	£9,775	£15,406	£23,566	£28,836	£32,765	£33,732	£38,654	£40,021	£41,277
Upper Tolerance	-£2,316	£3,793	£6,498	£13,313	£19,776	£29,305	£35,400	£40,145	£41,826	£47,540	£49,804	£51,778

Sickness

Sickness for March is given below:

HBBC	Annual Target 8 days		
	Month		
	March		Cumulative
Long Term	0		145
Short Term	7		226
Days lost	7		371.00
FTE Average	0.21 Days		11.31 Days
Profiled Target Average	0.67 Days		8:00 Days
HDC	Annual Target 7.6 days		
	Month		
	March		Cumulative
Long Term	15		163.5
Short Term	3		93.5
Days lost	18		257.00
FTE Average	0.86 Days		12.31 Days
Profiled Target Average	0.63 Days		7.6 Days
NWLDC	Annual Target 7.4 days		
	Month		
	March		Cumulative
Long Term	0		78
Short Term	7.5		62.65
Days lost	7.5		140.65
FTE Average	0.33 Days		6.29 Days
Profiled Target Average	0.62 Days		7.39 Days

Benefits Operational Team

(Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Fraud)

Processing

All three authorities met target for processing new claims and change events.

LA error and subsidy

All three authorities are below the lower threshold.

Changes on the horizon

Right Benefit Initiative (formerly FERIS)

There will be no requirement to submit a bid for funding local authorities will need to opt into the initiative by 21 April and by doing so it will be confirming that the funding will be used to enable resources (staffing) to be put in place to review earnings cases identified by right time initiative referrals. For those LA's opting in it is anticipated that funding will be received late April 2017 and indicative funding levels are as follows:

NWLDC	£17,403
HDC	£9,335
HBBC	£13,897

Wider Use or Real Time Information Project (WURTI)

Failure to declare earnings and employment continues to be the main cause of fraud and claimant error overpayments of Housing Benefit (HB). The Real Time Information Service will enable us to view earnings and pensions data on desktops to use as evidence when assessing entitlement to HB. The project is being rolled out across the Country and the partnership will be going live in July.

Revenues Operational Team

(Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and Housing Benefit Overpayments)

Performance Update from Sue Williams-Lee – Revenues Operational Manager

Council Tax and NNDR

We have achieved excellent in year collection results for both Council Tax and NNDR. These results are the highest we have achieved since the Partnership was formed in 2011. All targets were exceeded except HDC's for Council Tax. However, HDC's collection has still improved compared to the 2015/16 results. It was only marginally below the target and is remains the highest of the three Partners. HDC's NNDR result was on a par with last year's outstanding outturn, where HDC came joint third in the Country for NNDR collection.

NNDR previous years arrears targets were all met. The outstanding arrears for all three councils are very low. HBBC's arrears are overstated by approximately £141,000 as the over £10,000 Write Offs, scheduled to go the Executive meeting for approval in March 2017, could not be actioned on the system as the meeting was cancelled and approval had not been given.



We made significant progress in collecting Council Tax arrears. This was partly due to the introduction of the 2016/17 'RISC' strategy and the automation of cases to the Enforcement Agents after each Court hearing. By improving these 'in year' collection processes we created capacity for the team to concentrate on older debts. In 2017/18 we plan to reshape the team to create additional capacity at the senior level. This will allow officers to develop new post Liability Order procedures for actions such as Committal, Charging Orders and Bankruptcy for the older/larger debts.

Housing Benefit Overpayments

The new housing benefit overpayment recovery process was implemented at the end of January 2017. The process for deducting payments from DWP benefits, which was subject to technical issues, has also now been implemented. Currently we have three experts working on these more complicated processes. In the coming months, this knowledge will be shared with the rest of the team to ensure that everyone becomes fully generic. As a result of these developments, we expect to see further improvements in overpayment collection in 2017/18.

System Issues affecting both revenues and benefits

Since the 17th January 2017 we have been maintaining a systems issues log detailing occasions where users have been unable to work because the system has either frozen or crashed. To date there have been 117 reported incidents which, until resolved, will continue to have a detrimental effect on our ability to meet the needs of our customers and partners.

Projects Update

Council Tax Arrangement Manager

The above product is being tested covering both elements; via the website and secondly where payment plans set up by officers using the main software application. As for the website council tax payers will have to register for online access first before they can set up payment arrangements. The key ingredient is that they must supply employer and gross earnings information without this the application will not proceed.

The deadline for testing is expected to be completed by early May 2017. Following this training guidance will be provided to both partnership and customer service staff. It is envisaged that this will be live from early June 2017.

Council Tax Change of Address (Website)

Phase 1 will purely focus on capturing information for a 'simple' change of address. This product is currently being tested and is expected to be completed by end of May 2017. It is envisaged this will be made available for use by end of June 2017.



Revenue and Benefit Service

Schedule of Meetings 2017/18

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 For the Joint Committee to agree the schedule of meetings for the forthcoming year.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the final schedule of meetings along with times and venues be approved.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Each year the Committee is asked to approve the schedule of meetings for the forthcoming year. The Schedule of Meetings for 2017/18 is attached at appendix 1 to the report.

4. MAIN FEATURES OF THE SCHEDULE

4.1 The Joint Committee is to meet 4 times during the civic year and the dates of the meetings have been proposed in order for the committee to consider the quarterly performance reports at the appropriate time during the year.

4.2 The Constitution of the Joint Committee states that the committee must also hold an Annual Meeting of the Committee in June of each year.

4.3 Currently all meetings are held on Thursdays at 4.30pm and are held in rotation around each of the Partnership authorities.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS – THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP
JOINT COMMITTEE REVENUES AND BENEFITS

2017/2018

Thursday, 7 September 2017	4.30pm, Atkins Building, Hinckley
Thursday, 30 November 2017	4.30pm, The Symington Building, Harborough
Thursday, 25 January 2018	4.30pm, Council Offices, North West Leicestershire
Thursday, 26 April 2018	4.30pm, Atkins Building, Hinckley

2018/2019

Annual Meeting	Thursday, 28 June 2018	4.30pm, The Symington Building, Harborough
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LEICESTERSHIRE REVENUES & BENEFITS FORWARD PLAN

1st September 2016 to 1st Sept 2017

What is the Forward Plan?

The forward plan for the partnership does not follow the normal regulatory requirements with regard to decision making.

This plan is to provide information to members and officers of what is coming up. Any decisions/authorisations that are to be made, by which committee/board, the date, and the responsible officer.

SUBJECT	EXPECTED DECISION	EXPECTED DATE OF DECISION	CONSULTATIONS	DOCS AVAILABLE	Decision Taken By	Contact Officer
FERIS update	To note the report	06.07.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Storme Coop
RBV update	To note the report	06.07.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Storme Coop
Universal Credit – Update	To note the report	06.07.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Storme Coop
Joint Committee meeting dates	To agree the schedule of meetings for the coming year	06.07.2017	Democratic Service teams at each LA	Report	Joint Committee	C Hammond
Year end performance report	To note the report	06.07.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Sally O'Hanlon
Financial Performance 16//17 outturn	To note the report	06.07.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Sally O'Hanlon
RBI	To note the report	06.07.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Storme Coop
Council Tax Recruitment	To approve the recommendation	06.07.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Sue Williams-Lee
Financial Performance July 17	To note the report	07.09.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Ashley Wilson
Performance Report	To note the report	07.09.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Ashley Wilson
Forward Plan	To note the report	07.09.2017	Management Board	Report	Joint Committee	Sally O'Hanlon

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