

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the The Partridge Suite, Atkins Building, Lower Bond Street, Hinckley on WEDNESDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2018

Present: Councillor R Hadkiss (Harborough) (Chairman)

Councillors R Allen (Hinckley and Bosworth), R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire) and J Hallam (Harborough)

Officers: Mr S Coop (Leicestershire Partnership - Revenues and Benefits), Mrs C Hammond, Ms B Jolly (HDC), Mrs J Kenny (HBBC), Mrs S O'Hanlon (Leicestershire Partnership - Revenues & Benefits), Mr T Shardlow (NWLDC) and Mr A Wilson (HBBC)

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors C Ladkin and T J Pendleton.

12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

13. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on the 28 June 2018.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

14. REDUCING FRAUD AND ERROR IN HOUSING BENEFITS

Mr S Coop presented the report to Members. He advised Members that annually, over £1.5b was overpaid in Housing Benefit and that the DWP had highlighted that HB cases with self-employed earnings were a source of significant fraud and error. Therefore they had launched an initiative whereby Local Authorities were asked to carry out a review of self-employed cases where entitlement had remained unchanged for at least 12 months. He stated that the review would identify any cases where a change had taken place which meant that entitlement could be removed, reduced or increased. He highlighted that the DWP would support the work by providing appropriate funding and that the reviews needed to be completed by the end of the financial year.

Mr S Coop informed Members that as part of the FERIS initiative, the partnership had previously reviewed its self-employed caseload and as such only 56 cases in total required a review, and they were completed by the end of September.

Councillor R Hadkiss stated that it was a good piece of work and that it was good to see the Partnership was ahead of the game.

RESOLVED THAT:

The content of the report be noted.

Chairman's initials

15. UNIVERSAL CREDIT - UPDATE

Mr S Coop presented the report to Members. He reminded the Members of the background to the concept of UC and that it had recently been announced that the rollout of UC would be significantly delayed to allow testing to take place and it would not be until the summer of 2019 that a very gradual rollout would start. He informed Members on the how the changes would affect the claimant and that once signed up to Universal Credit they would not be able to change their minds. He outlined transitional protection and the requirement to claim. He advised that one of the biggest challenges would be the engagement of those who had not any previous contact with the DWP and that the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions had announced there would be a new partnership between the DWP and Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver support to claimants from April 2019.

In response to questions from Councillor J Hallam, Mr S Coop advised the Members that those in receipt of tax credit with a capital of £16k would have that capital ignored for a period of 12 months.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that the Members that that the reduction in work for the Partnership that had been expected did not appear to be happening, in fact once the migration starts it may actually increase.

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

16. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO SEPTEMBER 2018

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He advised the Members that the table at 3.2 set out the original agreed budget and that revised budget following the agreement to reduce the levels of contribution by using the reserves of £44,496 and that there would be an underspend £19,344. He informed Members that should the salary saving continued at the same rate there would be a year-end saving in the region of £141,000. He drew Members attention to the table at 3.7 that outlined the amended level of contributions from each partner based on caseload for 2019/20. He advised the contributions were last reviewed four years ago.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The financial performance of the Partnership be noted, and
- b) The changes to be contribution percentages for 2019/20 be agreed.

17. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY REPORT SEPTEMBER 2018

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised that in relation to Benefits all three authorities were meeting their targets and were all below the lower threshold for LA subsidy. In relation to Revenues she informed the Committee that NWL were slightly ahead of target on Council Tax and all other targets were being met. She highlighted that there would be a report going to the April meeting in relation to Enforcement, work was being carried out on the Council Tax Base reports and visits had been carried out to review long term empty properties and second homes.

Councillor R Hadkiss was pleased to see that everything was on target.

Chairman's initials

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Summary Report September 2018 be noted.

18. FORWARD PLAN

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the forward plan to Members and advised that there would be the item relating to high level enforcement to add on to the April meeting.

RESOLVED THAT:

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

19. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates and venues of the future meetings.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.05 pm