

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Atkins Building, Lower Bond Street, Hinckley on THURSDAY, 27 JUNE 2019

Present: Councillors R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire), D Bill (Hinckley and Bosworth), P Dann (Harborough) and J Hallam (Harborough)

Officers: 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)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

Nominations were sought for the Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

It was moved by Councillor P Dann that Councillor R D Bayliss be appointed as Chairman.

The motion was seconded by Councillor D Bill.

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor R D Bayliss be appointed Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Nominations were sought for the Deputy Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

It was moved by Councillor P Dann that Councillor D Bill MBE be appointed as Chairman.

The motion was seconded by Councillor J Hallam.

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor D Bill MBE be appointed Deputy Chairman for the ensuing municipal year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors R Ashman & K Lynch.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2019.

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on the 25 April 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Chairman's initials

6. INTRODUCTION TO THE PARTNERSHIP

Mrs S O'Hanlon gave a presentation to Members on the service and its delivery (Copy of the slides retained with the official minutes).

She outlined to Members:

- The history and background to the service (including the areas that were covered) and the Partnership.
- The objectives and results of the Partnership.
- Governance of the Partnership and the role of the Joint Committee.
- Projects that were being undertaken.
- Service Plan for 2019-20

Councillor P Dann thanked officers for the presentation and asked if a detailed synopsis could be provided with the slides as it would be a useful learning tool.

In response to a question from Councillor D Bill, Mrs S O'Hanlon advised Members that Universal Credit had been rolled out at different times across all three partner authorities, however it still had not been rolled out to everyone yet in accordance with the DWP's delivery programme

Members welcomed the content of the presentation and the progress and the success of the Partnership so far.

7. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO MARCH 2019

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He advised then that there were a couple of issues to be considered within the recommendations, which included increasing the transfer to the ICT earmarked reserve by £35k to cover ICT costs expected in future years and redistribution of year-end savings as detailed at option B in table 4. He informed Members that at the year end the partnership had a net underspend of £309,124. This included an underspend in salaries of £171,000, in FERIS of £46,000 due to posts being filled part-time rather than full-time (FERIS funding was ring fenced), in training of £11,000 and in postage savings of £32,000. This was due to lower than expected annual billing costs. He explained the tables set out in paragraph 3.7 outlined the budgeted, actual and proposed positions and that table 4 provided the two options dependent on the decision that the committee made in relation to increasing the ICT earmarked reserve.

He advised Members that a revised budget would come back to the next meeting and that by the end of year earmarked reserved balance would be back down to £50,000k

Councillor R D Bayliss felt that option b as detailed in the report would be the soundest option.

In response to questions from Councillor P Dann:

Mr A Wilson advised that it had been hoped to recruit to the vacant posts in year however, staff with the required skills set had not come forward and when the partnership had, approached agencies but again there appeared to be a shortage.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that the partnership had managed and that it had looked at the posts and assessed whether they were required. However, there were some posts that required a specialised skill and therefore the job descriptions had been looked at and re-evaluated to a higher salary. In relation to postage savings she advised that many landlords now used on-line billing and that, following changes to matching rules, bills to the same address could now go out together rather than separately.

Chairman's initials

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

RESOLVED THAT:

- a) The financial performance of the Partnership be noted,
- b) The preferred option of increasing the transfer to the ICT earmarked reserve by £35,000 to £135,000 to cover ICT costs expected in future year be approved, and
- c) The level redistribution of year-end savings back to partner bodies as note in table 4 below (Option B) be approved.

8. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY REPORT MARCH 2019

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised that some Members had already seen the report at the last meeting, which enabled the previous Members to see the outturn for the year. She outlined the areas covered by the report and informed Members that all three authorities had met or exceeded their key processing targets for Council Tax and Housing Benefits, adding that it was also the case with business rates. She was pleased to advise the Committee that in relation to the Council Tax figures, the partnership was the only one in Leicestershire that had not seen a decrease in their collection rates and that all three authorities had met their respective targets to be below the threshold for LA error. She stated that the sickness was monitored and then managed through the respective authorities.

Members congratulated officers on the performance results.

In response to a question from Councillor R D Bayliss, Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that the same process was followed by all three authorities in relation to collection of the business rates, however due to the different demographic of the three areas there were different challenges due to different types of businesses located in the area, especially if a company went into administration.

Mrs S O'Hanlon also advised the Members that the staff within the revenues teams were very passionate and ensured that they did all that they could to collect the money in.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Summary Report March 2019 be noted.

9. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2019/2020

Mrs C Hammond presented the report to Members. She advised Members that the date of the November meeting should read Thursday, 21 November 2019 not the 11th as stated in the report. She advised that should Members wish to continue to hold the meetings in rotation at the three partner authorities then the September meeting would be held at Harborough District Council.

By affirmation of the meeting.

RESOLVED THAT:

The schedule of meetings for 2019/2020 be approved with the November meeting amended to the 21st.

Chairman's initials

10. FORWARD PLAN

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

RESOLVED THAT:

The Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting commenced at 3.00 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 3.32 pm