

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Remote Meeting on THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2021

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

Councillors D Bill (Hinckley and Bosworth), P Dann (Harborough) and K Lynch (Hinckley & Bosworth)

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

In attendance:

41. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Ashman and J Hallam.

42. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

43. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020.

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

RESOLVED THAT

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 be agreed.

44. SERVICE PLAN 2021/22

Mrs Sally O'Hanlon presented the report which set out the Service Plan of the Partnership for 2021/22. It was noted that a new service in the plan for 2021/22 was the administration of various grants to those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas Test and Trace isolation support payments were not included as they were currently expected to end on 31 March 2021.

In response to questions from Members, it was clarified that there were currently seven grant schemes to support businesses in operation, and references within the report to these being closed referred to the businesses in question being closed for trade rather than the schemes themselves being closed.

It was moved by Councillor D Bill seconded by Councillor P Dann and

RESOLVED THAT

The report be received.

45. BUDGET SETTING REPORT

Mr Ashley Wilson presented the report, which set out the proposed budget of the Partnership for 2021/22.

Chairman's initials

It was explained that there was a small reduction in overall funding compared to the previous year, however the expected contributions from the three authorities would still rise slightly due to less funding being sourced from earmarked reserves. It was also noted that after the end of the financial year officers would return to Members with any significant savings that had been made throughout the year and could be used to reduce contributions from the three authorities.

It was moved by Councillor D Bill, seconded by Councillor K Lynch and

RESOLVED THAT

The 2021/22 budget proposals for the Partnership are approved for agreement.

46. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mr Ashley Wilson presented the report, which set out the financial performance of the Partnership for the period April to December 2020.

It was noted the unique circumstances of the previous year had led to some the expected year end savings of £52,000, although those relating to staff vacancies less so. The Head of Partnership confirmed that officers were looking into making longer term savings in relation to car usage allowances through more remote visits. It was also confirmed that enforcement work was currently still being carried out by remote means although court hearings were unable to proceed.

It was moved by Councillor K Lynch, seconded by Councillor D Bill and

RESOLVED THAT

The financial performance of the Partnership be noted the recommendation on invoicing at paragraph 3.5 be agreed.

47. PERFORMANCE REPORT

Mrs Sally O'Hanlon, Head of Partnership, presented the report.

It was noted that although collection rates for Council Tax had slightly fallen in all three authorities in comparison to the same point the previous year, given the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic this was still considered a good position for all three authorities. It was also explained that several court dates had been postponed because of the latest lockdown.

In respect of Business Rates, there were between 3 and 9% falls in collection at the three authorities compared to the previous year, and resources were being deployed to this area as required. Members were reminded that although business still needed to be supported through the COVID-19 pandemic some industries such as leisure and hospitality had already benefitted from a business rates holiday and some of the debt to be collected was from previous years.

Resources from across the Partnership had also been redeployed into supporting the payment of various grant schemes relating to the pandemic. Preparation was also underway for the sending out of bills for the new financial year.

In response to Members, the Head of Partnership gave assurances that everything possible would be done in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates collection. Although in respect of Council Tax it was again highlighted that the lack of court hearings was an

impediment to improving collections and for the Business Rates there were many businesses still suffering hardship as a result of the pandemic.

It was moved by Councillor R Bayliss, seconded by Councillor P Dann and

RESOLVED THAT

The report be received and noted.

48. FORWARD PLAN

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT

The Joint Committee's Forward Plan be noted.

49. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

In response a question, it was clarified that the intention was still to hold the proposed April meeting whilst in the purdah period for elections scheduled for 6 May 2021, unless there was a subsequent issue with Member availability.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT

The following future meeting dates be noted:

Thursday, 22 April 2021 – 4.30pm

Thursday, 24 June 2021 – 4.30pm

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.59 pm