

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the De Montfort Suite, Hinckley Hub, Hinckley - The public are encouraged to attend remotely. on THURSDAY, 24 JUNE 2021

Present: Councillor

Councillors R Ashman (North West Leicestershire), R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire), D Bill (Hinckley and Bosworth), P Dann (Harborough) and K Lynch (Hinckley & Bosworth)

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

In attendance:

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor K Lynch, seconded by Councillor R Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT

Councillor D Bill be appointed as Chairman for the 2021/22 civic year.

2. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

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

RESOLVED THAT

Councillor P Dann be appointed as Deputy Chairman for the 2021/22 civic year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Hallam.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2021 be confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.

6. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO MARCH 2021

Julie Kenny, Monitoring Officer, presented the report of the Section 151 Officer, which informed the Joint Committee of the financial performance of the Partnership for the year to March 2021.

In response to questions from Members, it was clarified that the new burdens funding suggested for allocation to the Partnership referred to grants from central government to the partner authorities due to additional duties relating to the allocation of grants brought

Chairman's initials

about in response to COVID-19. It was also clarified that the proposal to set aside £25,000 as a reserve for a Review of Automation was based on indicative figures received from the current software providers.

Following a suggestion that the £40,000 reserve for agency costs was unsustainable it was explained by the Head of Partnership that this had largely been as consequence of a large number of staff being redeployed from recovery and enforcement into business grants whilst some services were forced to cease. Therefore, a large backlog in these areas alongside a general increase in service demand had led to the need for additional staffing.

It was agreed that it would be beneficial to review the allocated budgets for the Partnership due to a common occurrence of and underspend leading to a reduction in contributions from the partner authorities in the following year.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT

The Joint Committee:

- 1) The draft financial performance of the Partnership for the year to 31 March 2021 be noted.
- 2) The suggested use of savings of £144,438 at paragraph 4.3 be noted.

7. YEAR END PERFORMANCE REPORT

Sally O'Hanlon, Head of Partnership, presented the report which updated members of the performance of the Partnership up to March 2021.

Members considered it impressive that performance targets had only been slightly missed during the year considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to questions on collection rates it was clarified that individuals had not received as much payment support for council tax as businesses had for business rates. Collection of business rates was highlighted as one of the previously mentioned areas requiring additional staffing as the business rates holiday would be phased out over the year.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT

The report be noted.

8. PERFORMANCE UPDATE

Sally O'Hanlon, Head of Partnership, presented the report which updated Members on the performance of the Partnership to May 2021. It was highlighted that the Partnership had recently celebrated its 10th anniversary and Members expressed their thanks to the partnership for their work and partciurly for the last year due to the impact of COVID-19.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that future enlargement of the Partnership remained a priority following the recovery from the impacts on workloads and backlogs caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

Chairman's initials

RESOLVED THAT

The report be noted.

9. UPDATE ON GRANTS

Sally O'Hanlon, Head of Partnership, provided a verbal update on the payment of grants to individuals and businesses in response to the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Having being involved in the payment of various grants since March 2020, the Partnership had now paid out £31.8 million in grants for Hinckley, £31.4 million for Harborough, and £29.4 million for North West Leicestershire, with a combined total of £92.6 million. It was noted that this was just on mandatory grants with the partner authorities retaining responsibility for payment of discretionary grant schemes.

The Head of Partnership also outlined several control measures used to mitigate against the risk of fraud when making payments whilst still working to ensure payments as soon as possible. These control measures had ensured fraud had been quite low and it was explained a full report would be brought to the Joint Committee at a later date. It was also highlighted that at one point the Partnership had been making payments for approximately 10 schemes at once.

In response to a question it was clarified that grant payments would become taxable by HMRC as they were intended as a substitute for lost income and would therefore be treated as income.

Members of the Joint Committee expressed thanks to the Head of Partnership and the wider team across the Partnership and partner authorities for their work in response to COVID-19.

10. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2021/2022

Consideration was given to the proposed schedule of meetings for the 2021/22 civic year and by affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT

The proposed schedule of meetings for 2021/22 be agreed.

11. FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the Joint Committee's Forward Plan. The Monitoring Officer explained that the internal audit plan and the high-level scope of the audit for the Partnership had not been available in time for the meeting and needed to be agreed by the summer, it was agreed that these would be circulated outside of the meeting before bringing a formal report to the next meeting.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT

The Joint Committee's Forward Plan be noted.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.15 pm

Chairman's initials

