

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Hinckley Hub, Rugby Road, Hinckley on THURSDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor P Dann (Harborough District Council) (Chairman)

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

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

**10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies received

**11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no interests declared.

**12. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**13. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO JUNE 2022**

Mr Wilson presented the report and noted to members that by the end of the first quarter there was an underspend due to vacant posts. He drew members attention to the fact that the partnership was still awaiting the final agreement on the pay offer, which once agreed to add £155k of pressure to the budget. He added that it had not been included as a budget change as there were currently underspends expected for the year end on the overall salary budget due to vacancies. Once the final offer was agreed, the budgets would be recalibrated to take it into account.

In response to a question from Councillor Dann, Mr Wilson advised that, in relation to the final agreement on the pay offer, he was not optimistic that a government offer would come forward and that all other savings at the end of the first quarter, they would need to be added in before a firmer view on the pressure of the pay award could be taken.

In response to questions from Councillors, Mr Wilson outlined that due to timing differences with invoicing, there was an underspend for the quarter.

It was highlighted that no pay offer had been accepted yet, but it was felt that the committee needed to be aware of the possible pressure to the budget.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED THAT:

Chairman's initials

The financial performance of the Partnership be noted.

#### **14. PERFORMANCE REPORT JULY 2022**

Mrs O'Hanlon presented the report to members, noting that the processing of benefit claims was on target, but there were some pressures around collections of Council Tax and Business Rates however, compared to the previous year the targets were in a good place, but were still not back to pre-Covid levels. Members were advised that the team were experiencing an increase in the length of time it took to deal with some complex cases due to cost of living pressures. In terms of business rates, it was noted that there a number of large assessments coming in for NWL, but collections could not be made straight away and that there was an increase in contact from business in relation to their payments. Mrs O'Hanlon advised the committee that there were still several vacant post that they could not recruit to and due to the technical knowledge required to fill some of the vacancies it was difficult to fill those roles. It was highlighted that the team continued to make the CARF payments and that the payments for energy repayments would close on the 30<sup>th</sup> September.

In response to a question from Councillor Hallam, Mrs O'Hanlon advised that agency staff were being used and that they were seeing more staff going to work for agencies due to the higher hourly pay rate.

In response to questions about the energy rebate, Mrs O'Hanlon advised that there was an 84% take up, but there was still a significant amount that were still uncashed. It was noted that there were a number of reasons as to why the council tax accounts could not be credited automatically and that it was proposed to work with the three partner authorities to encourage take up, such as customer service teams, asking if residents have claimed when they have contact with them.

It was noted that any money not claimed from the rebate could not be transferred to the give to rented properties above a category D.

By affirmation of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

#### **15. FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the Joint Committee's forward plan.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Joint Committee's forward plan be noted.

#### **16. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Members noted the dates and venues of the future meetings.

#### **17. 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

Chairman's initials

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.

## **18. FUTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP**

Mrs O'Hanlon provided members with an update on the work that was being carried out in relation to the future of the Partnership and it was noted that a regular item would be added to the work plan on the work for future meetings.

Members of the committee fully supported the work that was being carried out and welcomed the regular update reports.

The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.00 pm

Chairman's initials