

SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

MINUTES

WEDNESDAY 9TH SEPTEMBER 2015

ROOM 4C, GRAFTON HOUSE

4.00 PM

Present: Councillors S Meudec, B Rudkin, S Barrett, Alan Ferguson and Nick Gowrley

15. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Haley. In the absence of the Councillor D Haley, Councillor S Meudec took the Chair.

16. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 June 2015

Resolved:

that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2015 be signed as a true record.

17. Dates and Times of Meetings - all held at 4.00pm

The dates and times of the meetings were confirmed.

18. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business

Resolved:

that the Order of Business be confirmed as printed on the agenda.

19. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

20. SRP/15/06 Head of Shared Service Partnership report

20.1 The Head of Shared Service updated the Committee that although there had been a slight increase in processing times during July 2015 this had been

rectified during August and the current levels for the processing of new claims stood at Babergh District Council - 22, Ipswich Borough Council -18 and Mid Suffolk District Council - 22 days. The cumulative new claims and changes figures were detailed in Appendix 1b to report Ref No: SRP/15/06. The reduced processing time for Ipswich Borough Council reflected the availability of the Customer Service Centre location in the Town Centre where residents could to complete their forms on-line. The caseload had reduced however; the workload had increased due to the amount of reassessment of entitlement as a result of the change of circumstance of benefit claimants.

- 20.2 Discussion took place around the public locations where claimants could complete on-line forms, the list of evidence required by on-line completion and the 'timing out' of the on-line form filling sessions. It was confirmed that library staff were being advised how to help customers fill out the on-line forms. It was suggested that a survey question be added about where the on-line form was being filled out.
- 20.3 The Committee requested that the appendices be cross referenced in respect of page numbers in future reports, that a table be produced showing the overall totals and that claims be listed showing the amount of days taken to be processed. It was confirmed that the collection targets detailed were set national average comparators.
- 20.4 In respect of the purchase of a product which would save on line benefit claim details having to be rekeyed, a product was now being considered which had been identified as fit for purpose.
- 20.5 In respect of the Real Time Information (RTI) – Bulk Data Matching Initiative, more comprehensive statistics would be available by the November meeting.
- 20.6 Under Transformation, changes to forms and documents were being made in an effort to reduce the amount of phone call queries and the workshops had identified other initiatives which would be considered further. These included Text reminders, sending arrangement details with a summons and the promotion of viewing accounts on-line. The Committee requested regular updates on the refining of the processes and procedures.
- 20.7 The SRP Operations Manager confirmed that the August collection for Council Tax and NNDR figures would be circulated to the Committee as since the report had been printed, the situation had changed considerably. A review of all properties currently classed as 'long term empty', the outcome of which would be used to calculate the 'New Homes Bonus', would be updated by 1 October 2015.
- 20.8 The Operations Manager, Finance and Procurement explained that the main underspends of the Operational Account (Revenue) were currently for employees and for supplies and services. The Head of Shared Service confirmed that the budget for the next year would be zero based.

Resolved:

that the report be noted.

21. SRP/15/07 Welfare Reform Update

- 21.1 The Head of Shared Service updated on the removal of the spare room subsidy brought in on 1 April 2013. The amount of cases affected by the size criteria was detailed and she explained that the biggest challenge was to accommodate the customers affected as the number of smaller properties were not available.
- 21.2 A revised Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Policy was attached at Appendix 2 to report Ref No: SRP/15/07, in response to a recent successful legal challenge at another authority. It was acknowledged that the DHP funding from Central Government had been reduced by 20% each year and it was confirmed that the funding available for 2016/17 would be known by the new year.
- 21.3 The dates when Universal Credit would be 'going live' for the three authorities were detailed, further criteria had been provided which claimants would need to fulfil and the DWP had also provided an indication of the expected number of expected claimants and staff training material.

Resolved:

- 1. that the report be noted.**
- 2. that the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy, attached at Appendix 2 to report Ref No: SRP/15/07, be agreed.**

22. SRP/15/08 Forward Plan

Resolved:

that the report be noted.

23. Exclusion of Public

Resolved:

that the public (including the Press) be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items under Regulation 21 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulation 2000 as it is likely that if members of the public were present during these items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information falling within paragraphs 1, 4 & 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

24. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 June 2015

25. SRP/15/09 Revenues Update

The meeting closed at 5.10 pm

Chair