

# SHARED REVENUES PARTNERSHIP JOINT COMMITTEE

## MINUTES

WEDNESDAY 17TH JUNE 2015

ORWELL ROOM, GRAFTON HOUSE

4.00 PM

**Present:** Councillors S Meudec (Vice-Chair), B Rudkin, Nick Gowrley, D Haley (Chair), S Barrett and Alan Ferguson

1. **Election of Chair**

**Resolved:**

**that Councillor D Haley be elected as Chair for the 2015/16 municipal year.**

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chair**

**Resolved:**

**that Councillor S Meudec be appointed as Vice-Chair for the municipal year 2015/16.**

3. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence. The Chair confirmed that substitutes for both Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils would be appointed at their next Council meetings.

4. **Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 March 2015**

**Resolved:**

**that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2015 be signed as a true record.**

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

The dates and times of the meetings were confirmed. The meeting on Wednesday 9 September 2015 would be held in Room 4C.

**6. To Confirm or Vary the Order of Business**

**Resolved:**

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

**7. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**8. SRP/15/01 Head of Shared Service Partnership report**

8.1 The Head of Shared Service made reference to the annual performance figures which had been submitted to the Department of Work and Pensions. These would now be published and it was acknowledged that since March 2015 the processing times had reduced even further.

8.2 Funding had been provided to Local Authorities for the Real Time Information (RTI) data matching initiative for 2014/15 and the amount of overpayments identified were detailed. Due to the success of the project, further funding would be provided by Central Government to allow the exercise to continue during 2015/16.

8.3 90% of new claims for April 2015/May 2015 had been made using the on-line system and residents would continue to be supported when making claims for all benefits.

8.4 As the Fraud Team had now transferred to the Single Fraud Investigation Team at the Department of Work and Pensions, the local authority fraud team had been removed from the Risk Based Verification (RBV) Policy.

8.5 The Operations Manager, Business Support reported the key achievements led by the section one of which had led to a total baseline saving estimated to be in excess of £110,000 per annum. Under Transformation, work continued (in collaboration with representatives from all partner Customer Services and Housing Teams) to improve customer relations, work smarter and contribute to further financial savings.

8.6 The Finance & Procurement Operations Manager confirmed that the SRP Final Position 2014/15 carried forward would be £503,893, which was within the agreed 10% parameter of the total expenditure. This underspend would be carried forward to 2015/16 to fund any potential changes or uncertainties.

- 8.7 It was confirmed that two apprentices had been employed in the service and if the Committee were aware of any other key activities which could be included in the Business Plan for 2015/16 please inform the Head of Service.
- 8.8 The Chair recognised that the Shared Revenues Partnership was committed to help all staff achieve qualifications and he thanked the staff for all their work undertaken in supporting the service.
- 8.9 In response to a question, the Operations Manager, Business Support confirmed that mechanisms were in place to recover overpayments related to Housing Benefits, identified by the Real Time Information (RTI). A summary of all overpayments would be prepared for the next meeting to illustrate the proportionality between overpayments notified by customers compared to those notified by the Real Time Information initiative.

**Resolved:**

- 1. that the Shared Revenues Partnership financial outturn for 2014/15 and the financial treatment of the favourable variance, (which allowed the SRP to continue to have a reserve to fund future changes expected, future developments in the service and running costs to maintain the current level of service), be approved and noted.**
- 2. that the financial position of the SRP in 2015/16 in relation to partner contributions, taking into account the prospects for ongoing and future costs, be reviewed further.**
- 3. that the levels for risk based verification remain the same for 2015/16, be noted.**
- 4. that the 2015/16 Business Plan and associated Risk Register, be approved.**

**9. SRP/15/02 Revenues Update**

- 9.1 The Shared Revenues Services, Operations Manager reported that the collection of Council Tax had improved on previous years for all three Councils. Changes to the recovery scheme had regulated costs and when enforcement notices were issued had resulted in around 60% of the cases, passed to the enforcement agents, being paid at compliance stage.
- 9.2 The review of Council Tax accounts in receipt of single person's discount had now come to a conclusion and the numbers with discount removed and the value of that debt were detailed at section 2.16 of report Ref No: SRP/15/02.
- 9.3 The position of non-domestic rates collection for Ipswich Borough Council and Mid Suffolk District Council had increased and a reduction for Babergh District Council had been due to a case which was in dispute with the Valuation Office Agency. Comparisons with other Suffolk and Norfolk authorities that had

provided their figures were available at section 3.4 to report Ref No: SRP/15/02.

**Resolved:**

**that the report be noted.**

#### **10. SRP/15/03 Welfare Reform Update**

- 10.1 The Head of Shared Service had included in the report the number of cases affected by the removal of the Spare Room Subsidy since the start of its implementation, which had been requested by Councillor M Cook at the last meeting. Both Babergh District Council and Ipswich Borough Council had spent more on Discretionary Housing Payments than had been provided by Central Government during 2014/15 and the funding received for 2015/16 had been further reduced.
- 10.2 The Discretionary Housing Payment guidance was currently being revised to ensure that it was not open to challenge in light of a recent judicial review.
- 10.3 The date for the roll-out of Universal Credit for Mid Suffolk and Babergh District Councils would be 28 September 2015 and it was expected that they would have 193 and 161 cases respectively but no details were available yet for Ipswich Borough Council. Work would continue with the Housing Departments, other authorities and the Department of Work & Pensions and further landlord forums would be organised during July 2015.
- 10.4 An amendment was made to section 7.2 of report Ref No: SRP/15/03 – Lowering the benefit cap – the second bullet point to read:
- A cap at £23,000 is equivalent to gross family earnings of up to £29,000.

**Resolved:**

**that the report be noted.**

#### **11. SRP/15/04 Forward Plan**

**Resolved:**

**that the Forward Plan, be noted.**

#### **12. 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).

13. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 March 2015

14. SRP/15/05 Revenues Update NFP

The meeting closed at 5.00 pm

**Chair**