

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL AND WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Three Rivers and Watford Shared Services Joint Committee** held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers District Council, on 3 June 2013 7.30 pm to 9.01 pm

Present: Councillors B White (Chair), N Bell, I Sharpe (In place of G Derbyshire), S Nelmes and D Sansom

Officers: David Gardner - Director of Corporate Resources and Governance
Phil Adlard - Head of Revenues and Benefits
Bernard Clarke - Head of Strategic Finance
Allan Caton - ICT Client Manager
Paul Morgan - ICT Client Manager
Cathy Watson - Head of Human Resources
Elwyn Wilson - Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors George Derbyshire and Mark Watkin.

JSS1/13 **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

None received.

JSS2/13 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Shared Services Committee held on 18 March 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

JSS3/13 **RECRUITMENT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES**

The Director of Corporate Resources and Finance informed Members that Cathy Watson who had been employed by Watford Borough Council for the last five years had been appointed Head of Human Resources and Joanne Wagstaffe (at present Director of Finance with Wyre Borough Council) had been appointed Director of Finance (Shared Section 151 Officer).

Arrangements were in place for a smooth handover to the new Director of Finance.

The Chairman welcomed Cathy Watson to the meeting.

RESOLVED –

that the appointment of Cathy Watson as Head of Human Resources and Joanne Wagstaffe as Director of Finance (Shared 151 Officer) be noted.

JSS4/13 **MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE**

This report gave performance information for the 4th Quarter of 2012/13.

Officers highlighted the following areas:

Human Resources

The Committee noted that in respect of sickness absence Watford was 8.63 days per employee but that would reduce when services had been outsourced. There had also been a reduction in sickness rates in Revenues and Benefits. The figure of 5.9 for Three Rivers was one of the best in Hertfordshire.

ICT

The Committee noted that ICT had been transferred to Capita on 20 May 2013. All permanent staff had been the subject of TUPE. At present ICT was working through the priority list of projects.

Revenue and Benefits

The Committee noted the improving position concerning the time taken to process Benefit applications although there had been a reduction in performance since May. In respect of Revenues 3,000 reminder letters had been sent to Watford residents and 1,900 in respect of Three Rivers residents. In reply to a question from the Chairman, the Head of Revenues and Benefits stated that the Atlas IT system provided greater notification from the Department of Works and Pensions to changes in Benefits and therefore more accuracy when allocating Benefits. In reply to a request from Councillor David Sansom the Head of Revenue and Benefits undertook to provide information on the background to the Performance Indicators.

Finance

The Committee noted that the Performance Indicators for Finance were satisfactory and in respect of Treasury Management issues also noted that Watford Borough used the Co-operative Bank.

RESOLVED –

that the performance reports for the fourth quarter of 2012/13 be noted.

JSS5/13 **ICT TRANSITION UPDATE**

This report provided an update on the ICT Service Provision.

Members noted that due to the transfer to Capita a new Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan would be implemented from September as physical equipment would now be based in Wiltshire.

RESOLVED –

- (1) that the information provided on the progress of work be noted; and
- (2) that a report be submitted to the meeting of the Committee in September on the revised Disaster Recovery Procedure following the transfer to Capita.

JSS6/13 REVENUES AND BENEFITS UPDATE

This report gave an update on the Revenues and Benefits service.

Members noted the documentation relating to Soft Market testing in respect of Revenue and Benefits. However the Committee was of the opinion that such testing should not divert resources from the main priority of officers improving the Benefits Service.

RESOLVED –

- (1) that the contents of the report are noted; and
- (2) that the Committee approves the documentation in support of a soft market testing but that soft market testing should not impinge on the priority of improving the performance of the Benefits Section.

JSS7/13 FUTURE OF THE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

This report allowed the Joint Committee to consider its successes and the lessons learned in order for it to inform the changes proposed by the two councils.

It also considered the advantages and disadvantages of moving to a lead authority model.

The Committee noted the risks associated with being a lead authority if the situation changed, for example greater volume of Benefit Claims than resources available for or costed.

The Director of Corporate Resources and Governance stated these aspects would be covered by the Service Level Agreement.

The Committee agreed with the proposals to abolish the Joint Shared Services Committee but not before 1 April 2014.

RESOLVED –

- (1) that the Joint Committee notes its successes and lessons learned, as set out in the report, and that they be conveyed to the councils to inform any proposed changes; and

- (2) that the Joint Committee notes the two councils' proposals to abolish the Committee and to move to a lead authority model, and that the advantages and disadvantages, as set out in the report, be conveyed to the councils to inform any proposed changes, any changes to be implemented from 1 April 2014.

JSS8/13 DRAFT STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR 2012/13

This report allowed the Committee to consider the Draft Statement of Accounts for 2012/13.

Amendments to the Draft Statement were circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED –

- (1) that the Committee confirms that it is satisfied that the accounting policies adopted are the most appropriate; and
- (2) that the following amendments to the draft Statement of Accounts be noted:
-

- Page 56 – amend to read:

...economic climate. The Joint Committee approved increased budgets during the year and the two councils independently received government grants to meet additional burdens placed on the revenues and benefits service. In ICT the ...

- Page 61 – amend to read:

NOTES TO THE CORE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

2. Amounts Reported for Resource Allocation Decisions

The analysis of income and expenditure by service on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement is that specified by the Best Value Accounting Code of Practice. However decisions about resource allocation are taken by the Joint Committee on the basis of budget reports analysed across services, as below:

| 2011/12 £000s | SERVICE AREA | 2012/13 £000S |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1,470 | Information Technology | 1,436 |
| 1,533 | Finance | 1,420 |
| 695 | Human Resources | 719 |
| 2,966 | Revenues and Benefits | 3,161 |
| 6,664 | Net Shared Services | 6,736 |
| | | |
| | FUNDING | |
| (2,597) | Three Rivers District Council Contribution | (2,623) |
| (4,067) | Watford Borough Council Contribution | (4,113) |
| (6,664) | Total Funding | (6,736) |
| | | |
| 0 | Net Expenditure Less Funding | 0 |
| 0 | Surplus/Deficit Shared Services | 0 |
| | | |

**Reconciliation of Service Income and Expenditure to Cost of Services
in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement**

As the shared service accounts do not include any adjustments under Statute, the figures presented to the Joint Committee agree to those shown on the face of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account, so no reconciliation of the figures is required.

JSS9/13 **HEAD OF STRATEGIC FINANCE (WATFORD) / DIRECTOR OF
CORPORATE RESOURCES AND GOVERNANCE (THREE RIVERS)**

The Joint Committee thanked Bernard Clarke and David Gardner for their hard work in respect of Shared Services, in view of their pending retirements.

CHAIRMAN