

## THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL AND WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Three Rivers and Watford Shared Services Joint Committee** held in the Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Watford, on 21 November 2011 7.30 pm to 9.15 pm

Present: Councillors A Wylie (Chair), B White (Vice-Chair), M Bedford, D Sansom (substitute for R Sangster), A Khan and I Sharpe (substitute for G Derbyshire)

Officers:	David Gardner	Director of Corporate Resources and Governance
	Tricia Taylor	Executive Director Resources
	Avni Patel	Head of ICT
	Phil Adlard	Head of Revenues and Benefits
	Elwyn Wilson	Democratic Services Manager
	Alan Power	Head of Financial Services
	Terry Baldwin	Head of Human Resources

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ralph Sangster and George Derbyshire.

Also in attendance:- Councillors N Bell, S Johnson and A Mortimer.

### JSS32/11 **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR**

RESOLVED:-

- (1) that Councillor Andy Wylie be appointed Chairman of the Joint Committee until November 2012; and
- (2) that Councillor Brian White be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee until November 2012.

### JSS33/11 **DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

None.

### JSS34/11 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Shared Services Committee held on 12 September 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### JSS35/11 **NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

This report considered the Service Plans and budgets for shared services in the medium term.

The Heads of Service of Finance, Human Resources, ICT and Revenue and Benefits introduced their Service Plans and answered Members' questions.

### **Human Resources**

The Committee agreed with the proposal by the Head of Human Resources to delay making savings until 2013 because he was in negotiation with a District Council to provide a Human Resources Service. If these negotiations did not provide the income required, savings would be found through a review of other aspects of the HR service.

### **Revenues and Benefits**

The Head of Revenues and Benefits submitted additional information concerning action to be taken to reduce the backlog of housing claims received. The Committee noted the difficulties with the government changing legislation, the complexity of claims and the need to clear the backlog to get to a normal situation before further changes were made.

### **ICT**

The Head of ICT in reply to questions by a Member stated that the budget for next year in respect of staffing was indicating an overspend of £40,000 but that would be dependent on the ICT Service option implemented and may be covered by savings made by the different service delivery discussed at Minute JSS37/11 below. The new service delivery option was scheduled to be implemented in October 2012.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) that the service plans for Finance, Human Resources ICT and Revenue & Benefits be approved subject to the following amendments
  - The Head of Human Resources explore an opportunity to provide another District Council an HR service via a Delegated Responsibility Model.
  - Any Balance of the required savings not achieved by the above be delayed until 2013 and delivered through a review of the Organisational Development /Learning and Development Section.
  - That in respect of Revenue and Benefits, savings of £60,000 be postponed for one year and the Head of Revenues and Benefits re-engineer the document imaging service to carry out 'triage' of benefit claims and changes in circumstances (as now carried out by CSC staff). Delete the vacant Document Processing Support post and

replace with a Benefits Officer in the short term to assist with the introduction of the triage. The arrangement to last until March 2013.

- Once the backlog of Housing and Council Tax Benefits claims had been cleared officers provide information on the staffing requirements of the section to deal with the on-going claims received.

- (2) that the proposals to clear the backlog of benefit claims and an additional budget of £25,000 be approved;
- (3) that the Committee notes the budget forecast for the Joint Committee in respect of the next three financial years as changed by any amendments made under recommendations (1) and (2) above); and
- (4) that the Committee submits to each Council its funding requirements.

### JSS37/11 **ICT OPTIONS APPRAISAL UPDATE**

This report considered the report of Actica Ltd on the options for future of ICT service provision.

Keith Thomas from Actica Ltd the author of the report was in attendance, explained his report and answered Members' questions.

In reply to questions the Committee was informed:

- (1) That a decision on which a service model to implement would be taken in the first half of next year.
- (2) The next steps would be to draw up a requirement specification, allow SERCO to conduct a full business case based on this specification and Soft Test the market with suppliers on the Buying Solutions portal .
- (3) Staff consultation had been undertaken on the process so far on an informal basis.

The Head of ICT would be meeting staff the following day to discuss the report before the Committee.

- (4) The report from Actica did not mean to give the impression that the use of SERCO through the Herts CC Framework Agreement was a done deal. More detail would be required from SERCO.
- (5) The current performance of SERCO needed to be checked through feedback from Herts CC and Enfield Borough Council.
- (6) The Soft Test would be to ensure that value for money was being obtained through SERCO and also that the Councils would be in a position to take the matter forward if SERCO would not be able to meet the requirements of the specification.

(7) In respect of the scoring of the options and those that can be delivered the Committee noted that:

Option 5 would take too long to implement.

Option 4(b) could not be implemented for the cost indicated.

All other options could be implemented.

The Head of ICT circulated to Members a copy of a letter received from Unison concerning this matter.

RESOLVED –

that Joint Committee notes the contents of the report and agrees to take forward the detailed business case with Serco and conduct a soft market test with OGCBuyingSolutions suppliers in tandem once the requirements specification for both councils have been written.

**JSS38/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Joint Committee would be held on Monday 23 January 2012 at Watford Town Hall.

**CHAIRMAN**