

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL AND WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

At a meeting of the **Three Rivers and Watford Shared Services Joint Committee** held in the Three Rivers District Council, on 18 March 2013 7.30 pm to 9.57 pm

Present: Councillors B White (Chair), M Watkin (Vice-Chair), A Khan, R Sangster and P Taylor (substituting for G Derbyshire)

Officers:	David Gardner	Director of Corporate Resources and Governance
	Phil Adlard	Head of Revenues and Benefits
	Terry Baldwin	Head of HR
	Avni Patel	Head of ICT
	Chris Fagan	Committee Manager

Apology

Apology for absence: - Councillor Sarah Nelmes

JSS42/12 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

None received.

JSS43/12 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Joint Shared Services Committee held on 14 January 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

JSS44/12 MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

The Joint Committee received performance information on the 3rd Quarter of 2012/13. The Heads of Service responded to questions from Members on performance measures relating to their Services.

RESOLVED –

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

JSS45/12 ICT TRANSITION UPDATE

The Head of ICT Services reported orally on the progress of the transition phase of the contract with Capita, including consultations with UNISON and the Local Liaison Committee. Members had been sent a briefing on these matters. An appointment had been made to one of the two Client Manager posts and interviews for the other post would be held during March.

In response to questions she confirmed that a programme for dealing with security issues identified during the annual IT Health Check (ITHC) in June 2012 and reported to the Audit Committees of both Councils had been agreed with Capita. They would be implemented within four categories during the transition and transformation periods. Further ITHCs would be carried out annually with the next one scheduled for June 2013. This was a requirement of the Government's Code of Correction (CoCo) for access to the secure government extranet which allowed councils to transfer data securely. The Government had published guidelines for the completion of returns. The External Auditors had confirmed that the current arrangements for verification of system security were satisfactory, pending new measures to be introduced under the new contract.

The Head of Human Resources confirmed that the Councils' responsibilities towards existing staff under TUPE were on course for completion by the date of commencement of the contract with Capita.

RESOLVED –

that the information provided on the progress of the work be noted.

JSS46/12 **REVENUES AND BENEFITS UPDATE**

The Head of Revenues and Benefits reported on a proposal for purchasing a newer version of the Capita Revenues and Benefits software in place of the ageing existing software, on performance in Benefits and in Revenues up to 28 February 2013.

Members noted that the new Capita "Efficiency Version" software was being offered to both Councils at a total price of £72,500, inclusive of ongoing support whereas changes to the existing system necessitated by legislation would cost £17,500 for Council Tax, that similar charges were likely to apply in respect of other future changes and that support for the existing software might be withdrawn in time. The Head of Revenues and Benefits stated that funding for the purchase of the Efficiency Version could be obtained from the Government's 'new burdens' funding for Council Tax reductions to be made available in 2013/14 and 2014/15 if the Joint Committee so wished.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that the speed of processing of Benefits claims up to 28 February 2013 was as follows:

New Claims (Target 22 days)		Changes (Target 8 days)	
Watford	22.83 days	Watford	29.09 days
Three Rivers	23.81 days	Three Rivers	28.0 days.

In response to questions the Head of Revenues and Benefits advised that:

- The purchase price for the Efficiency Version did not include the annual maintenance charge.

- The annual savings calculation was based on reductions in numbers of key strokes required by newer software and consequent reductions in staff time per task, average salaries per employee and reductions in the costs of temporarily out-sourced work due to enhanced performance by in-house staff.
- It was not possible at this time to say when the Serco contract could be terminated, as time would be needed to install the new software and train staff.

RESOLVED –

1. that the contents of the report be noted.
2. that the two Councils be asked to make the funding available to purchase the Efficiency Version of Capita Revenues and Benefits Software (paragraph 3.1.refers)

JSS47/12 **FUTURE OF THE SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE**

The Joint Committee received a report which provided feedback from the two Councils on proposals for the future of the Committee.

Members noted the decisions of the two Councils on the report put to them. The Three Rivers representatives stated that their Council's decision was intended to permit their Council's Resources Policy and Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee to have the opportunity to examine the proposals with their effects in detail and to express a view on them before they were put to both Councils for adoption.

Members recognised the issue of ensuring democratic accountability for any form of service governance and that this applied to any form of out-sourced service provision, particularly for an authority which received but did not manage the service. They wished to ensure that an alternative arrangement would be viable and requested that the report contain case studies involving district/borough authorities for any option recommended. The Chairman commented that the Joint Committee had demonstrated that joint working had been achieved. It was acknowledged that whatever model was adopted needed to provide for three essential elements, namely Democratic control; value for money and service quality.

The Director of Corporate Resources and Governance sought the Committee's view on the options Members wished the report to cover. Members responded that they wished the report to include any alternative ways forward which the officers considered viable and to cover the legal aspects and provide an exit route from the current arrangement.

RESOLVED –

that the Director of Corporate Resources and Governance, following consultation with senior managers, prepare a report for the Joint Committee meeting on 3 June 2013 on the advantages and disadvantages of a lead authority model for service management, together with other options which are considered viable. The report shall include legal aspects and appropriate case studies to inform the review of shared services by both Councils and consideration of proposed changes. The report shall be forwarded to the Resources Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Committee of Three Rivers District Council on 13 June and 24 June 2013 for comment and approval.

JSS48/12 RECRUITMENT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

The Head of Human Resources reported on the progress of recruitment to both posts.

The Chairman reported that this was the final meeting attended by the Head of Human Resources prior to taking up an appointment at another authority.

RESOLVED –

1. that the action taken in respect of recruitment to both posts be noted.
2. that the thanks and appreciation of the Joint Committee be expressed to Terry Baldwin for his valuable contribution to the development of the Human Resources Service and to the work of the Committee during his employment, with best wishes for the future.

CHAIRMAN