

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, North West Leicestershire District Council Offices, Coalville on THURSDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2022

Present: Councillor P Dann (Harborough District Council) (Chairman)

Councillors R Ashman (North West Leicestershire), R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire), D Bill (Hinckley and Bosworth), J Hallam (Harborough) and K Lynch (Hinckley & Bosworth)

Officers: Mrs S O'Hanlon (Leicestershire Partnership - Revenues & Benefits), Mr A Wilson (HBBC), Mrs J Kenny (HBBC), Mr A Barton (NWLDC), Mr C Mason (HDC), Mrs C Hammond and Ms R Haynes

In attendance:

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies received.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

21. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022.

It was agreed by affirmation of the meeting that the minutes were a correct record and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO SEPTEMBER 2022

Mr A Wilson presented the report and noted that there had been a small underspend, however due to the recent pay rise there had been an overspend on salaries, which officers were unable to predict as the pay rise had not been known about when the budget was set. It was acknowledged that the impact would increase financial pressures however that it would be reflected in next year's budget.

The possibility of drawing on a small general fund which had been put aside previously was discussed, with suggestions that this could be topped back up, if possible, at a later date. However, it was agreed that it would be necessary to observe how finances unfolded before a decision was reached.

RESOLVED THAT:

The financial performance of the Partnership be noted.

23. PERFORMANCE REPORT SEPTEMBER 2022

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to members, outlining the loss of experienced staff at Hinckley and Bosworth and noting the impact that this had had on performance.

It was highlighted that Council tax and Business Rates had been continuing to recover.

Chairman's initials

The Cost of Living crisis was discussed, and it was noted that the Partnership had been working with other authorities in order to raise awareness in terms of making officers more informed with regards to potential discounts and exemptions. More vulnerable tenants and council tax payers were being considered in terms of what help could be extended to them.

The changes since the end of September were reviewed, and it was noted that the Energy Rebate scheme had since closed and that no monies had been returned to the government. The Covid Additional Relief Fund had also been paid out to Business Rates payers.

A potential fund to help people with alternative energy was also discussed. A member raised concerns around how to verify who would be eligible for this fund, using the example of kerosene oil and was advised that officers were expecting a webinar to explore this. It was also noted that a working group would be set up and that there may be a gov.uk form however there were still questions around how eligibility would be verified.

A member enquired whether, due to economy growth slowing down, would we have an indication of the number of new properties becoming liable for council tax. Officers directed members to the report, where it the number of banded council tax dwellings was highlighted.

A discussion was held around the controversial issue of the amount of new dwellings being built and whether this would see a downturn now that the cost of living crisis has impacted on the number of mortgages being taken out.

A member asked for clarification on the amount of vacant job roles and officers advised whilst it had been difficult to cope, temporary staff had been set in place to alleviate this somewhat. It was noted that staffing issues had been a problem across the board.

A member thanked officers for rolling out all of the packages of governmental financial help so quickly and efficiently and within a small amount of time.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Report of September 2022 be noted.

24. FORWARD PLAN

Consideration was given to the Joint Committee's forward plan.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Joint Committee's forward plan be noted.

25. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members discussed the dates and venues of the future meetings.

RESOLVED THAT:

The dates and venues of the future meetings be noted.

26. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Reason for decision: To enable the consideration of exempt information.

27. FUTURE OF THE PARTNERSHIP

The possibility of other authorities joining with the Partnership was discussed, which could potentially lead to a reduction in ICT expenditure.

A member asked whether it could be considered to function in a more hybrid fashion moving forward. Mrs J Kenny advised that there was still no provision in the existing legislation to allow members to attend and vote at meetings remotely and it was a statutory requirement for members to meet in person in order to be permitted to vote. It was noted that members could attend remotely, comment on reports, but would not be allowed to vote on any decision.

Members were keen to pursue the model of hybrid meetings as this would also be in keeping with the zero carbon targets.

RESOLVED THAT:

The future of the Partnership joining with another authority be explored.

The meeting commenced at 3.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 4.10 pm