

MINUTES

**Date: Thursday 19 July 2012**

**Time: 6.00 p.m.**

**Place: Shimkent Room, Daneshill House, STEVENAGE**

- Present:** Stevenage Borough Councillors: Mrs J Lloyd.  
East Herts Councillors: G McAndrew and M Tindale
- In Attendance:** Scott Crudginton (Strategic Director (Resources) SBC), Alan Madin (Director of Internal Services (East Herts Council)) and Su Tarran (Head of Revenues and Benefits)
- Start/End Time:** Start Time: 6.00 p.m.  
End Time: 7.10 p.m.

**1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR (EAST HERTS) AND VICE CHAIR (SBC)**

Nominations were requested for the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee for the 2012 / 2013 Municipal Year.

It was duly proposed and seconded that Councillor M Tindale be appointed as Chair for the 2012 / 2013 Municipal Year.

There being no other nominations a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor M Tindale be appointed as Chair of the Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee for the 2012 / 2013 Municipal Year.

It was duly proposed and seconded that Councillor Mrs J Lloyd be appointed as Vice Chair for the 2012 / 2013 Municipal Year.

There being no other nominations a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Mrs J Lloyd be appointed as Vice Chair of the Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee for the Municipal Year 2012 / 2013.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Batson MBE DL, L Haysey, P Moore and A Webb.

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Terms of Reference be noted.

### **4. MINUTES – 24 JANUARY 2012**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of held on 24 January 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **5. QUARTERLY UPDATE**

This report had not been circulated to Members 5 clear days before the meeting, nor had it been available for public inspection for this time. The Chair determined however that given the reason for urgency set out in the report it be considered on this occasion.

The Committee received a report detailing the current position in the following areas:

1. Implementation
2. Performance Reporting
3. Budget Monitoring
4. Future Challenges

In reply to a question concerning the rebranding of communications the Committee was advised that there had been no comments from Stevenage residents.

The Committee was advised that in addition to the increase in workload attributable to the introduction of ATLAS by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) the benefits team was seeing an increase in workload due to the number of duplicate notices and errors sent by the DWP.

A number of graphs and tables, which highlighted the workflow and increasing number of cases dealt with by the service, were distributed at the meeting about which Members asked a number of detailed questions which were answered by the Officers.

Following discussion of the issues, which included the need to recruit fully trained staff, the ability to 'deskill' tasks, the risk of losing staff to London Boroughs and the likely impact of Universal Credits, the Committee agreed to receive an amended proposal to provide funding in addition to that requested in the report to deal with the increased workload.

In reply to a question it was confirmed that the additional funding would be used either to provide third party staff (agency workers) or utilise off-site third party processing.

In reply to a further question it was confirmed that should the second option be followed there would be no customer facing impact on residents.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. that the report be noted.
2. that the proposal to provide an additional £240,000 (£120,000 from each Council) to deal with the increased workload be supported.

*Reason: The initial bid for £80,000 was to provide support for a 10-week period however it was the view of the Officers that the workload situation would not moderate for the remainder of the year. Providing additional funding at this stage would allow the service to make longer term plans and secure efficiencies in the provision of temporary staff.*

## **6. OUTTURN 2011 - 2012**

This report had not been circulated to Members 5 clear days before the meeting, nor had it been available for public inspection for this time. The Chair determined however that given the reason for urgency set out in the report it be considered on this occasion.

The Committee received a report which detailed the outturn position for the shared service for the period January to March 2012.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

## **7. URGENT PART I BUSINESS**

NONE

## **8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC – *Not required***

## **PART II**

## **9. URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

NONE