

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND STEVENAGE
BOROUGH COUNCIL JOINT REVENUES
AND BENEFITS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE
SHIMKENT ROOM, DANESHILL HOUSE,
STEVENAGE, SG1 1HN ON WEDNESDAY
15 JUNE 2016, AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor G Williamson (Chairman)
Councillors Batson, E Buckmaster and
Mrs J Lloyd (Vice-Chairman).

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Su Tarran - Head of Revenues
and Benefits
Shared Service

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

Nominations were requested for the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of the East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

It was duly proposed and seconded that Councillor G Williamson be appointed as Chair for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

There being no other nominations a vote was taken and it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor G Williamson be appointed as Chair of the East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee for the 2016/17 Municipal Year.

It was duly proposed and seconded that Councillor Mrs J Lloyd be appointed as Vice Chair for the 2016/17 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 East Herts Council and Stevenage

Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee for the Municipal Year 2016/17.

Councillor G Williamson in the Chair.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors L Haysey, J Thomas and R Raynor.

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES – 29 JUNE 2015

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the East Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council Joint Revenues and Benefits Committee held on 29 June 2015 are approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 ANNUAL UPDATE

The Committee received a report detailing the current position in the following areas: Performance Reporting, Other Challenges, Budget Outturn and Amendments to Terms of Reference.

Regarding performance of the Housing Benefit Team the Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service (HoRBSS) reported to the Committee that the best results in around 6 years had been achieved by the Team.

The Committee explored the possibility of investing resources into the recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit. The Assistant Director (Finance) committed to investigating whether this would be a financially viable option.

Regarding Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) applications the HoRBSS stated that the introduction of the lower cap for total benefit income in the 2016/17 would be likely to increase further pressure on the DHP

grant received from the Department of Work and Pensions. A Member wished to express their concern on the potential adverse effects this could have on claimants.

Regarding Housing Benefit caseload the HoRBSS indicated that the caseload was very variable and subject to frequent changes due to reasons such as Zero Hour Contracts.

The Chairman congratulated officers working on the Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) on their performance of achieving a high level of success which meant that FERIS received a further bonus of £24,756.

Regarding Housing Benefit, the HoRBSS agreed to research how many Universal Credit (UC) claimants might have had existing Housing Benefit overpayments at the point they transferred to UC.

With regards to the New Document Management System the HoRBSS informed Members that the system is expected to be live by September 2016.

Members wished to praise officers for their work in achieving the positive results covered in the report.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Executive(s) where appropriate be requested to approve the revised terms of reference for the Committee as follows:
 - a. Quorum to be three Members (at least one from each constituent Authority)
 - b. To compare the year's performance against the annual Service Plan for the Share Revenues and Benefits Service.
 - c. To compare the year's performance against the approved budget of the Shared Service.

- d. To give initial consideration to future development of the Shared Service and any changes in legislation that may affect service delivery and make recommendations thereon to the Executive or officers.
- e. Where it is considered appropriate, report to the Executives of the Constituent Councils.

Reasons for Decision: as contained in the Report.

Alternative Options Considered: as contained in the Report.

2. That the report be noted.

5 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

None.

6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Not required.

7 URGENT PART 2 BUSINESS

None.

The meeting closed at 6.40 pm

Chairman
Date