

DRAFT MINUTES
JOINT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

22 JUNE 2011

6:30pm – 7:08pm

Present:

Committee Members

Cllr A J Ketteridge (Chairman)
Cllr S Carter
Cllr J Cheetham
Cllr E Johnson

Officers

Malcolm Morley (Chief Executive – HDC)
John Mitchell (Chief Executive – UDC)
Simon Freeman (Head: Finance – HDC)
Adrian Webb (Director: Corporate Services - UDC)

Also Present:

Cllr P Wilcock

Apologies:

Cllr R Chambers
Cllr A Johnson

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

21. STATEMENTS BY STAFF

Hayley Bennett, Benefits Assessments Officer at Uttlesford District Council, made a statement on behalf of the majority of Benefits and Revenues Teams at UDC (Attached as Appendix A).

22. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Joint Partnership Committee meeting held on 23 March 2011 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

23. MATTERS ARISING

Minute no. JPC 18: In response to a question by Cllr Mrs Jackie Cheetham, Nigel Delbarre, Manager of Human Resources at Harlow DC, explained that the timetable was linked to the withdrawal of the Local Authority Two Tier Code with effect from 23 March 2011 and that there had been no change to the TUPE legislation.

24. **CONSIDERATION OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICES
BUSINESS CASE BY STERIA LTD**

Steve Knights, Managing Director of Steria Ltd presented the above-mentioned report to the Committee.

RESOLVED: that it be recommended to each Council's Cabinet that Phase Two of the project starts immediately. Contingent upon both Councils resolving to continue with Phase Two of the project, delegated authority is given to the Chief Executives of both Councils, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee, to take all necessary decisions to complete the procurement process for ICT, to appoint the staff to the proposed staffing structure and to deliver Phase Two of the project

25. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

STATEMENT BY HAYLEY BENNETT, BENEFITS ASSESSMENT OFFICER AT UDC

Hello, my name is Hayley Bennett and I am a benefits assessment officer for UDC. I am making this statement on behalf of the majority of the benefits and revenues teams at UDC.

As we are all aware Councils across the country have to make drastic savings across all departments at present and one way to help achieve these savings is to enter into partnerships with other councils.

The Revenues and Benefits teams at UDC have been involved in talks with the senior management and we have had a presence at most meetings thus far and hope that you recognise our support and commitment to making this the best partnership for our customers, councils and staff alike.

We understand that as a small authority in the current financial climate these savings must be made and the business case we were shown on Wednesday has identified nearly £190,000 per annum savings for Uttlesford. At a meeting held by Adrian Webb and John Mitchell with staff on Monday 13th June we were advised that the majority of the savings realised from this partnership were to be made from a shared IT system.

Staff have also been assured by our management team in all of the discussions that home working, which is already implemented in Uttlesford but not at Harlow, will be added into the costings and provision will be made for this.

Taking the above two assurances into consideration staff at UDC would like to make a proposal which may indeed create further savings and less disruption to our customers in the Uttlesford area. Under our proposal we would embrace the sharing of an IT system which would release the savings in the IT plan for both councils.

We propose that as there is already to be a presence of approximately 6 people to remain in the Saffron Walden offices, with a combination of home working, desk sharing and going into the Harlow offices periodically on a rota basis, the staff already working from the Saffron Walden offices would be able to remain.

This would mean less disruption to service standards, the skilled staff here would remain accessible to the customers and local public. This proposal would reduce the great concerns of the staff at Harlow and UDC in regards our customer service and collection rates, and would boost morale at these very uncertain times. Secondly this proposal could create potential, further savings, as there would be a reduced or potentially no need for disbursement allowances with car mileage and parking, and the revenue to be gained from the office space in Saffron Walden will still be achievable.

The business plan details a saving of around £39k per annum from the current office space in Saffron Walden, however we have at present 2 offices and a smaller office at our counter. If we were, under our proposal, to only occupy the larger of the 2 offices with desk sharing and home working combined, the smaller office can still be utilised for further revenue.

As there were already plans for a presence to remain at Saffron Walden offices a space must have been retained for this, so dependent upon the size of that space we may be able to use that for our proposal of staying in Saffron Walden and so the savings for utilising our current space can still be realised.

We are aware of other councils similar to ours such as Stevenage and East Herts who have recently entered into a partnership for Revs and Bens and already have a shared management board. Many of their staff working in the shared service will be taking up home working, flexible working and remote working opportunities with the Secure IT systems enabling their officers to take calls and help customers whether working at home or in Hertford. We believe our proposal can achieve this also.

Our main concerns are our customers and our service delivery. Many of us work and live in Uttlesford and we believe that this partnership does have the best interest of the community at heart; we only ask that you consider our proposal and look at the details we have outlined in regards, staff, costs and customer services. Our proposal we feel is supportive of the partnership and the dedicated and loyal staff, and could benefit all parties involved.

Thank you for your time.