

13 March 2012

Dear Councillor

JOINT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Joint Partnership Committee will be held at the Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden on Wednesday 21 March at 6.30pm.

Yours faithfully

JOHN MITCHELL

Chief Executive

**A G E N D A
PART 1**

1. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest.
2. Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2011 (attached at pages 2-4).
3. Matters arising.
4. Interim partnership review.
5. Local government finance review (to follow).
6. Any other urgent items.

To: Councillors R P Chambers, J Cheetham and A J Ketteridge (Uttlesford Members); and Councillors S Carter, A Johnson and E Johnson (Harlow Members).

Lead Officer: John Mitchell
Democratic Services Officer: Rebecca Dobson (01799 510433)

DRAFT MINUTES

JOINT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

21 SEPTEMBER 2011

6:30pm – 6.55pm

Present:

Committee Members

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

Officers

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

Also Present:

Cllr P Wilcock

Steve Knights (Business Consultant – Steria)

Apologies:

Cllr A Johnson

26. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs Chambers and E Johnson declared their respective interests as members of Essex County Council and Essex Fire Authority.

27. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Joint Partnership Committee meeting held on 22 June 2011 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. **ROTATION OF CHAIRMAN**

It was noted that the terms of reference provided that chairmanship of the committee would rotate between the two authorities, and would pass to Harlow District Council's Leader from today's date. However, in the absence of Cllr A Johnson, members agreed that Cllr Ketteridge should chair this meeting.

29. **RESPONSE TO UDC STATEMENT**

Adrian Webb presented a report prepared by Steria Ltd on the review of the statement presented by UDC staff at the meeting of 22 June 2011. He said the main conclusion was that whilst the proposal put by staff ('proposal 2') could work if Members felt it was the best way forward, there would be reduced savings. The report also concluded that whilst the current performance would be likely to be maintained by proposal 2, it would be unlikely that any improvements could be anticipated; and that the proposal introduced an increased risk to achieving potential efficiencies.

Cllr Wilcock asked whether the report took into account the potential costs of disruption following changes to existing working arrangements, as the fewer changes, the greater savings.

Steve Knights said the report took into account the costs of transition, and that the return on investment under the second proposal would be lower than under the original proposal.

Cllr Wilcock asked about the implications of proposal 2 for further authorities joining the partnership.

Steve Knights said opportunities for partnership expansion under proposal 2 would be very much reduced, as another partner would be less likely to accept a geographically based structure. Under that scenario, the opportunity to reduce costs would be limited because the original partners would have already been through the procurement process.

Cllr Ketteridge said this was a comprehensive report, which had been helpful in considering the alternative proposal, and he thanked officers and the consultant.

RESOLVED: that the original proposal regarding structuring of the Revenues and Benefits Partnership between Uttlesford and Harlow District Councils should proceed.

30. **LOCALISING SUPPORT FOR COUNCIL TAX**

Simon Freeman presented a report on consultation on localising support for Council Tax. He said both Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils would respond to the consultation separately and that further information would be brought back the Committee once the results of the consultation became available. He said that both authorities needed to consider their 2013/14 budgets taking into account the impact of the proposals.

Members made the following points: concern was expressed that government expected local authorities to deal with cuts whilst picking up any shortfall, whilst it was not apparent that there was to be any contingency plan; it was important for both authorities to be aware of what each was putting forward and to plan for a worst-case scenario as this was the prudent approach; the viability of a common scheme across Essex had been considered at a meeting of Essex Leaders recently, and it was apparent this course would be extremely complicated if authorities worked towards different criteria; the change to universal credit would involve much administration of that benefit being dealt with online, but care should be taken to continue to offer support to people who were not computer-literate.

RESOLVED: to note the report.

31. **PARTNERSHIP MANAGER**

Simon Freeman said recruitment of a Partnership Manager was now needed as soon as possible. A job description had been prepared and officers from both authorities would meet at the conclusion of this meeting in order to determine the recruitment process.

32. **ICT**

Adrian Webb said three tenders for the ICT contract had been received. The initial evaluation would take place the following day, followed by a series of demonstrations and site visits.

33. **IDENTITY**

Malcolm Morley said the identity of the partnership should make it clear what the partnership did, whilst not constraining future expansion, and suggested it should be referred to as 'The Revenues and Benefits Partnership'.

RESOLVED: the partnership should be named 'The Revenues and Benefits Partnership'.

34. **TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS**

RESOLVED: to adopt the timetable of future meetings as circulated.

The meeting ended at 6.55pm.