

MINUTES OF BLACKPOOL AND FYLDE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING - 8TH FEBRUARY 2010

Present:

Councillor Small (In the Chair)

Councillors: Pounder and Williams

In attendance:

Blackpool : Marie McRoberts, Head of Shared Service and Pauline Higson, Democratic Services Snr Adviser

Fylde: Tracy Scholes, Director of Governance and Partnerships, Phillip Woodward, Chief Executive and Adrian Robinson, Assistant Director Head of Revenues and Benefits at Preston City Council and Client Officer for Fylde Borough Council.

Apologies:

Councillor Ian Fowler
Julian Kearsley

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1ST OCTOBER 2009

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st October 2009, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. BENEFITS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

Marie McRoberts, Head of Shared Service had provided a report to Members with the agenda, on the Customer Satisfaction Survey carried out in September/October 2009 and she expounded on its content in the meeting.

Members were informed that there had been a good response rate to the survey which showed an increase in the overall satisfaction with the service in both authorities. The survey showed that there continued to be room for improvement in the clarity of forms and letters and Ms McRoberts reported that the new system offered additional scope in that respect.

Ms McRoberts indicated that legislation required a survey to be carried out every three years however it was intended to carry out a smaller scale survey of the shared service annually.

Resolved: To note the report outlining that satisfaction levels have improved across all areas and are significantly better in relation to speed of service and overall satisfaction

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with the service, and that staff be commended on reaching 91% satisfaction in staff service.

4. REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Marie McRoberts provided a Revenues and Benefits Service Performance Report outlining the performance position as at 31st December 2009 in respect of Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates, and speed of processing claims and changes for Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

She highlighted the impact that the recession had had on collection rates and the high level of claims and change of circumstances, indicating that the impact had been well managed. The percentage of the 'Proportion of Council Tax Collected' was slightly down against the figures for the previous year. Members were informed of arrangements in place to deal with non-payment depending upon circumstances.

Resolved: To note the Revenues and Benefits Service Performance Report.

5. REPLACEMENT OF IT SYSTEMS FOR REVENUES AND BENEFITS

Members considered the latest position with regard to the selection and procurement of a replacement platform for administration of Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) collection, and benefits payment and recovery for the future, as outlined in a report to the Committee and circulated with the agenda.

Marie McRoberts further informed Members that there had been three responses to the invitation to tender and the evaluation run jointly with Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, had been robust and lengthy and Capita had been awarded the contract. The final contract with Capita for a seven year term was due to be signed within days and would be implemented almost immediately, going live before November at the latest.

Resolved: To note progress made on the replacement of the IT systems for Revenues and Benefits.

6. DELEGATED POWERS PREVIOUSLY HELD BY THE HEAD OF FINANCE

Adrian Robinson, Client officer, Fylde Borough Council presented a report seeking approval for the delegation to the Head of Shared Service to authorise write-offs up to a prescribed limit in relation to benefit overpayments.

Members were referred to the administrative functions considered at the previous meeting when the decision making power for tasks detailed at Appendix A to the agenda for this meeting, were delegated to the Head of Shared Service. Mr Robinson informed Members that the earlier report had omitted to include reference to write-off of benefit and overpayment where appropriate. For write-offs, a regular and effective review of outstanding debts by the shared service team would enable both Councils to achieve prompt collection of all debts in line with audit recommendations.

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Resolved: To delegate to the Head of Shared Service, the decision making power in relation to the additional function omitted from the original report as follows:

The write-off of debts up to £5,000 (Housing Benefits), including cumulative debts for individual debtors.

7. CONSTITUTION

Resolved: To defer consideration of the Rules of Procedure for the Joint Committee to enable liaison between officers of the two Councils to ensure consistency in the arrangements.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that arrangements be made for the next meeting to take place early in October at the Town Hall, St Annes.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 4:18 pm)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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