

**CenSus Joint Committee
(Central Sussex Partnership)**

Minutes of a meeting held in
the Gordon Room, Town Hall, Worthing
at 10.00am on Friday 25 September 2015

Present:

Councillors: Daniel Humphreys (Chairman), Worthing Borough Council
Jim Funnell, Adur District Council
Brian Donnelly, Horsham District Council
Jonathan Ash-Edwards, Mid Sussex District Council

Apologies:

Councillors: Neil Parkin, Adur District Council
Mark Nolan, Worthing Borough Council
Gordon Lindsay, Horsham District Council
Gary Marsh, Mid Sussex District Council

Also Present:

Jane Eckford, Director for Customer Services, Adur and Worthing Councils
Paul Brewer, Director for Digital & Resources, Adur and Worthing Councils
Dave Briggs, Head of Design & Digital, Adur and Worthing Councils
Carol Stephenson, CenSus Programme Manager, Adur and Worthing Councils
Neil Terry, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Adur and Worthing Councils
Andrew Mathias, Senior Solicitor, Adur and Worthing Councils
Katharine Eberhart, Director of Corporate Resources, Horsham District Council
Tim Delany, Head of CenSus Revenues and Benefits, Mid Sussex District Council
Peter Stuart, Head of Finance: CenSus CFO, Mid Sussex District Council
John Ross, Head of CenSus ICT, Horsham District Council
Tom Clark, Solicitor to the Council, Mid Sussex District Council

CJC/009/15-16 Declarations of Interest

None.

CJC/010/15-16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 June 2015
be agreed and signed by the Chairman

CJC/011/15-16 Urgent Items

None.

CJC/012/15-16 CenSus Annual Return 2014/15

The Committee received a report from the Head of Finance, CenSus, setting out the result of the audit, by PKF Littlejohn, of the Annual Return agreed at the last meeting.

The Committee were informed that the auditor had queried the extent to which the Joint Committee had considered its own internal control and risk assessment when undertaking its business. The CFO for Census had been in dialogue with the auditor regarding their expectations and understood that the auditor would like to see evidence of those considerations at the Joint Committee rather than within the constituent authorities.

As a result, the return this year has an 'except for' statement within the Audit Result, which was similar to a qualification and was a repeat of the situation which occurred last year. However, Members noted that this would be the last year for any such audit as the audit thresholds had changed and were reassured therefore that the situation would not be repeated.

Resolved:

That the Census Joint Committee noted the outcome of the audit of the Annual Return.

CJC/013/15-16 CenSus Joint Committee Quarterly ICT Service Update

A report was presented by the Head of CenSus ICT, which considered the CenSus ICT service performance as at the end of August 2015 and the budget position at the end of July 2015.

The Head of CenSus ICT verbally updated the Committee on a number of issues including:-

- All Census sites had now migrated over to the WSCC / Capita hosted Wide Area Network (WAN);
- PSN accreditation had been retained at all sites in June 2015 and work was progressing transforming the approach to ICT related security matters from a Project to a Business as Usual activity;
- ICT Disaster Recovery was in place across all sites with the Veeam software product enabling rapid back-ups and cross site storage. This enabled restore in 2 hours rather than 14 hours historically;
- G/On remote access had been steadily deployed across the Partnership as and when requested by Business areas;
- Improved governance processes (particularly Change Management) had imposed necessary governance and disciplines to minimise uncontrolled activities & minimise risk;
- The Head of ICT had been working on the restructure of Census ICT to introduce clearer definitions of management responsibility and accountability;

resolve variances in role profiles & associated employee terms & conditions and create better opportunities for cross fertilisation of skill sets between sites. The plan was due to be submitted to the HDC Personal Committee in late September 2015;

- There had been no cross Partnership P1 Level service interruption events of note during the quarter.

A Member asked whether project timescales had been met and the Head of Census ICT replied that the WAN Project wasn't completed to schedule, although lessons had been learned in regards to dealing with contracts of that size. The Member responded that they would like to see timescales for projects included in future reports.

Members sought clarification regarding contract management, in particular, what happened when things went wrong? Officers advised that service credits / costs were claimed when contracts were not fulfilled.

Resolved:

That the CenSus Joint Committee noted:-

- I. the operational performance of the CenSus ICT service;
- II. the current status of the CenSus ICT project progress;
- III. the current status of the ICT non CenSus projects (site specific projects);
- IV. progress to date on ICT process development & restructuring of the team;
- V. the status of major ICT incident occurrence within the last quarter.

CJC/014/15-16 CenSus Revenues and Benefits

A report was presented by the Head of CenSus Revenues and Benefits, which outlined the performance and activity of CenSus Revenues and Benefits since the last update report in June 2015. The report also set out a rationale for making a change to Benefits targets in year.

The Committee:-

- noted the performance targets for the quarter;
- were asked to consider revising the 15/16 benefit targets in view of slightly changed priorities and to reflect the reality of CTS claims performance. It was suggested that a target of 20 days for processing new claims to Council Tax Support would be appropriate;
- noted that staff turnover had been particularly high with 9 staff departing in the financial year. Census was training 8 replacement staff but were having to backfill these posts with Agency staff, resulting in considerable overspend on the staffing budget;
- noted that Revenues telephones had switched to operating via the Mid Sussex switchboard from the 28 August;
- noted that all Connect modules had been installed and would be tested internally once issues around fire-walls had been resolved. All other modules were in place and being tested extensively;

- noted that three Fraud Investigators transferred to the DWP on the 1st September and that Census had retained a fraud support officer;
- was asked to consider a proposal to implement a Risk Based Verification Policy to verify Housing Benefit claims. It was proposed to implement this approach for Adur, Horsham and Mid Sussex from the 1 November 2015.

Members welcomed the report but expressed concern regarding staff turnover and the associated impact upon experience and ability within the team.

Resolved,

That the CenSus Joint Committee:-

- i) noted the performance and activity of the service;
- ii) approved changes to in year Benefits targets;
- iii) approved the introduction of a Risk Based Verification Policy;
- iv) approved the Chairman signing the Risk Based Policy for each Authority.

CJC/015/15-16 Joint Committee Work Programme 2015/16

The Partnership and Business Support Manager outlined the proposed work programme for 2015/16.

The Director for Digital & Resources at Adur and Worthing Councils advised the Committee that the function of Business Support would be moving to the Directorate for Customer Services. Both he and the Committee thanked Carol, Stephenson, the Partnership and Business Support Manager, for her support to the Partnership.

Resolved,

That the Census Joint Committee agreed the Work Programme for 2015/16.

CJC/016/15-16 Next Meeting

Resolved,

That the CenSus Joint Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place at 10.00am on 11th December 2015 in the Gordon Room, Town Hall, Worthing.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 10.35am, having commenced at 10.00am.

Chairman