

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

Minutes of a meeting held in
the Gordon Room, Town Hall, Worthing
at 10.00am on Friday 11 December 2015

Present:

Councillors: Daniel Humphreys (Chairman), Worthing Borough Council
Mark Nolan, 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
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
Paul Tonking, Head of Worthing Revenues and Benefits Service
Carol Stephenson, Partnership & Business Support 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

CJC/017/15-16 Declarations of Interest

None.

CJC/018/15-16 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 September 2015 be agreed and signed by the Chairman

CJC/019/15-16 Urgent Items

None.

CJC/020/15-16 Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2016/17

The Committee received a report from the Head of Finance, CenSus, setting out the draft revenue and capital budgets for both the Revenues and Benefits service and ICT service for 2016/17.

Members noted an overall increase to the previous year's budget of £127K. Officers advised that this was due, in part, to the removal of the SERPS National Insurance discount.

The Committee was informed that the budget also included a new post to specialise in the Business Rate Retention scheme in order to maximise income and oversee appeals. This was being financed from the savings realised from outsourcing printing and postage output via the County Council contract.

Resolved:

That the Census Joint Committee approved the revenue and capital budgets for both the Revenues and Benefits Service and the ICT Service.

CJC/021/15-16 Revenues and Benefits Performance Update

A report was presented by the Head of Revenues and Benefits, Census, which set out the performance and activity of CenSus Revenues and Benefits since the September Committee meeting.

The Committee noted the performance targets for the quarter.

Officers advised that that staff turnover remained high and despite recent recruitment exercises, 7 vacancies remained in Revenues and 3 in Benefits. Officers had recorded feedback that indicated staff departures were not as a consequence of the salary paid. However, Census was experiencing increasing difficulties in attracting applicants who were suitable for vacant posts, with indications that starting salary was an issue. Offering a starting salary at an additional scale point or two above the base start point, "dependant on experience", was considered as a possible solution.

Members questioned who was responsible for advising on recruitment and suggested that if salaries were the barrier, they needed to be increased. Officers advised that they were working with the Human Resources and Communications teams in Mid Sussex to review the process and the content of job advertisements.

It was noted that all 3 authorities had received a 'Qualification' in the auditor's letter following the subsidy audit. One-off errors aside, the errors identified concerned "income" and in Mid Sussex' case, misclassification of overpayments. The Committee noted that Officers were analysing the errors identified.

Resolved:

That the CenSus Joint Committee noted the performance and activity of the Service.

CJC/022/15-16 ICT Service Performance Update 2015/16

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

The Committee noted that :-

- Census ICT Service Delivery had continued to strike a balance between service & project delivery, maintaining a historic low of outstanding calls together with an SLA performance above the required 85% on all 3 sites;
- Work was progressing at Adur and Worthing on implementing a Digital focussed strategy with a defined technology set – CenSus was currently involved in supporting an externally sourced consultancy to quantify / validate the opportunities & benefits associated with moving to Infrastructure as a Strategy (IaaS) & to develop a realistic schedule for developing such a strategy;
- Work was also progressing to transform the approach to ICT related security matters (PSN; Server patching; proactive system monitoring) from a project to a ‘business as usual’ activity; currently Server patching status was over 90% up to date. An upgrade of out of support Microsoft 2003 server operating systems was complete with the exception of a single server in Worthing that would be completed by the end of November;
- ICT Disaster Recovery – the software product (Veeam) for rapid back-ups & cross site storage had been implemented across the partnership sites & its effectiveness validated in a live incident situation;
- The G/On remote access device had been steadily deployed across the Partnership as & when requested by the Business areas;
- Ongoing Change Management processes had significantly improved governance & disciplines to minimise uncontrolled activities & minimise risk, ultimately reducing the number of incidents across all sites. In Q1 2016, these manual processes would be automated as part of the new Service Desk tool implementation;
- The restructuring of CenSus ICT had progressed on schedule to the defined process & was moving from the formal 30 day consultation period through to implementation of the structural changes. Full implementation was scheduled for the 1st week of January 2016;
- There had been no cross Partnership P1 Level service interruption events of note during the quarter.

Resolved,

The Census Joint Committee:-

- a. noted the operational performance of the CenSus ICT service;
- b. noted the current status of the CenSus & site specific ICT project progress;
- c. noted the proposed Project Portfolio for 2016/17;
- d. noted progress to date on ICT process development & restructuring of the team; and,
- e. noted the status of major ICT incident occurrence within the last quarter.

CJC/023/15-16 A review of the current partnership arrangement for the delivery of the Adur Revenues and Benefits Service

A report was presented by the Head of Worthing Revenues and Benefits Service, which informed the Committee that on 8th October 2015, Adur and Worthing Members had agreed to review the current partnership arrangements for the delivery of the Adur Revenues and Benefits Service.

The Committee noted that the partnership had been successful in stabilising the Adur Revenues and Benefits Service during the time that it had been in existence, but now Adur and Worthing Members felt it was appropriate that they consider alternative ways of working to consolidate the service for both Adur and Worthing residents.

Adur and Worthing Councils had already embarked on a project locally and it was hoped that following the meeting, further more in depth work could be undertaken, in conjunction with colleagues from both Horsham and Mid Sussex Councils, to allow due consideration of all of the issues and allow a further report to be submitted to Adur and Worthing Members in February 2016.

The Director for Customer Service at Adur and Worthing Councils thanked the Head of Revenues and Benefits (Census) for the work undertaken by his team and advised that an options appraisal would be brought to the Census Joint Committee in March 2016.

Resolved,

That the Census Joint Committee:-

- i) noted the contents of the report to the Joint Strategic Committee at Adur and Worthing Councils and subsequent minutes;
- ii) noted that a further report would be presented in March 2016, advising of the outcome of the exploratory work and Adur's intention as to whether it wished to remain within the current partnership agreement for the delivery of the Adur Revenues & Benefits Service;

- iii) noted that arrangements were already in place for any one or more of the existing partners to serve notice on or after 1st April 2016 if they wish to withdraw from the existing partnership arrangement for the delivery of the Adur Revenues & Benefits Service.

CJC/024/15-16 Joint Committee Work Programme 2015/16

The Director for Digital & Resources at Adur and Worthing Councils outlined the proposed work items for the remaining meetings in 2015/16.

The Committee was also advised that an additional item entitled 'Infrastructure as a Service Strategy' would be brought to the Committee meeting in March 2016.

Resolved,

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

CJC/025/15-16 Next Meeting

Resolved,

That the CenSus Joint Committee noted that the next meeting was scheduled to take place at 10.00am on 18th March 2016 in the Queen Elizabeth II Room, Shoreham Centre, Shoreham-by-Sea.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 10.28am, having commenced at 10.00am.

Chairman