



Minutes

UNITY PARTNERSHIP BOARD

8 January 2015

Members' Meeting Room - Civic Centre, Oldham, OL1 1NL

5.30 pm

Present: Councillors Dean, Jabbar, McCann, Shah and Stretton

Emma Alexander	
Craig Apsey	Mouchel
Fabiola Fuschi	Constitutional Services Officer
Helen Gerling	Chief Information Officer
Janet Horton	Mouchel
Simon Miller	Unity Partnership
John Sillitoe	Mouchel
Richard Warriner	Unity Partnership

1 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Sykes and Carolyn Wilkins. The Chair welcome Helen Gerling as the new Interim Director of Commercial and Transformation Services.

2 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the Unity Partnership Board meetings held on 5th November 2014 and on 9th December 2014 were agreed as a correct record.

The Chair agreed to discuss Item 6 – Review of Unity Partnership Strategy 2012-2017 as first item of today's agenda.

3 Review of Unity Partnership Strategy 2012-2017

The Board considered a report of the Executive Director Corporate and Commercial Services on the Unity Partnership Strategy and the Implementation Plan. The last strategy had been launched in 2011. Many objectives had been achieved. However, following the restructuring of the partnership and the implementation of the Deed of Variation, the two documents would need to be reviewed in order to reflect the current financial challenges.

Board members made the following observations:

- The relevance of budget reductions had increased since 2011.
- The new strategy would have to reflect the political priorities of the Council.
- To improve joint working between officers and partners.
- The strategy would need to be outward looking across private and public sector.



- To promote the joint venture's offer(e.g.: Highways) to other local authorities.

The Board:

- 1. Noted the report.**
- 2. Requested that the Unity Partnership strategy be revisited to reflect the Council's political priorities. The following points would need to be included in the strategy:**
 - **Increased relevance of financial savings**
 - **Working together**
 - **Outward looking**

4 Operations Board (Standing Item)

No matters arising.

5 Managing Director's Report and KPI Report (Standing Item)

The Board considered a report of the Unity Partnership Managing Director which provided a review of the services across the Partnership. The following points were highlighted during the meeting:

Highways

The service performed well against key performance indicators. The achievements of the joint venture had been mentioned at national events. This helped to raise Oldham's profile. Collaborative projects with other local authorities in Greater Manchester had commenced. These focused on procurement and asset management to reach greater efficiencies and to be able to plan better investments.

Board members queried whether this publicity would generate new business for Unity Partnership.

Property

The service had passed satisfactorily the external quality audit. A draft work plan for the new financial year had been completed. The Civic Centre Power Down had been carried out successfully last November. The Estates Team continued with the disposal of sites. NSL was moving to Henshaw House; this would bring further employment into the town centre.

Revenues

The service performed well against key performance indicators. E-invoicing had started being implemented and 18% of suppliers used it. The Direct Earnings Attachments had been rolled out by the Department of Work and Pension to recover overpayments of housing benefits. Potential savings had been identified by Account Payable in relation to duplication of payment to Council's suppliers. The implementation of the Single Person's Discount project had commenced. This would create opportunities for extra revenues. A "soft" letter had been issued to all Council Tax Reduction Claimants in order to recover Council Tax payments.

Board members made the following observations:

- It would be necessary to look at the causes of duplicate payments.



- Oldham had the higher Council Tax collection rate in Greater Manchester for Council Tax Reduction Scheme tax payers.
- Lesson learnt: The “soft” letter method could be applied to other collection arrangements.

Benefits

The key performance indicator referring to average days to process new claims and change in circumstances scored low against the target, as resources had been deployed to support the implementation of “My Account”. However, this had taken longer than expected. The backlog of work consequently had increased.

Board members queried what would need to be done to reach the target and the various measures being put in place were explained. Board members received reassurance on the fact that on line housing benefit claimants who did not meet the criteria would be signposted to other sources of support to manage their finances better.

HR Advisory and HR Transactional/Payroll

The service performed well against the key performance indicators. Quality Care workers had been TUPE transferred to Oldham Care and Support at Home. An error relating to under collection of pension contribution of Oldham Care and Support staff had been rectified. A Payroll audit had been carried out and a few areas for improvement had been identified.

Board Members queried the reason as why an Absence Focus Advisor would be needed. It was explained that a targeted intervention was necessary to address a specific area of the Council where the percentage of absenteeism was too high.

Contact Centre

A plan was in place to relocate the Contact Centre operations from Rochdale to Oldham Civic Centre.

KPI

15 new key performance indicators had been identified following the signing of the Deed of Variation.

Business Development

Members noted the detail in the report.

6 Unity Change Programme (Standing Item)

Board Members considered a report of the Interim Assistant Director for Commercial Services which informed of the progress made on the Diamond Change Programme, following the restructuring of the partnership. The following points were analysed:



- Efficient Services and Accelerated Transformation – additional savings (i.e.: “stretch” target) to the Unity financial plan for 2014/15 was discussed and the current position with respect to achievement against target was noted.
- Get Oldham Working – the apprenticeship programme would be extended to all Unity services.
- Realignment of the Commercial Terms for the Partnership and Change Control – none to consider in this meeting.
- ICT Commitments - the schedule of the current negotiations on ICT was noted.

The Board noted the report. The Chair requested a joint effort in order to achieve the extra savings (i.e.: “stretch” target) by the end of the current financial year.

7 Revised ICT Proposals

The Board considered a report prepared by Mouchel Operations Director on the possible options to progress the negotiations with Agilisys on the ICT issue.

Councillors Dean, McCann, Jabbar, and John Sillitoe declared a personal interest by virtue of their participation in the Joint Venture Board.

The Board:

- 1. Noted the report.**
- 2. Confirmed Option C as the preferred option and gave approval for Unity to progress in accordance with the proposed next steps as set out in the report.**
- 3. Requested an additional Unity Partnership Board meeting to be convened within four weeks.**

8 AOB

None.

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Unity Partnership Board will take place on 23rd March 2015. Furthermore, an additional meeting of the Unity Partnership Board will take place within four weeks from today’s date.

The meeting started at 5.35 pm and ended at 7.08 pm