



# Minutes

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## UNITY PARTNERSHIP BOARD

22 March 2016

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

5.30 pm

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

Emma Alexander	Managing Director, Unity Partnership
Craig Apsey	Managing Director, Kier
Fabiola Fuschi	Constitutional Services Officer
Helen Gerling	Interim Director Commercial and Transformation Services, OMBC
Janet Horton	Local Public Services Director, Kier

### 1 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Chadderton, Councillor Sykes, Simon Miller, John Sillitoe, Carolyn Wilkins and Dale Wood.

### 2 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the Unity Partnership Board meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were agreed as correct record.

### 3 Managing Director's Report and KPI Report (Standing Item)

Consideration was given to a report of the Unity Partnership Managing Director which informed of the progress made on the various work streams of the joint venture. The report also outlined the performance of the service areas, measured against the key indicators, for the quarter August to September 2015 and the months of December 2015 and January 2016.

The Managing Director highlighted the following points:

Highways – positive comments had been received from residents on the work that Unity and the Council had carried out on flood and drainage management over the winter months. The new Highways ICT system was reaching its implementation stage, as detailed in the report on Item 4 of this agenda.

Highways had been nominated for the Municipal Journal Awards 2016; the results would be published in April.

Property – 2016/17 work plan budget had been agreed. However, the work package remained to be finalised. Considering the stringent timescale, the previous budget



would continue to be used in the new financial year until an agreement was reached. The resources issue, caused by vacant posts waiting to be filled, had been resolved.

Revenues – the work to maximise the Council Tax collection rate was on target. At the end of January 2016, the collection rate had increased by 1.3%, compared to the same time last year; this equated to an increase in cash collection of £2.6M. The Council Tax levels would increase in 2016/17. Letters had been sent to residents to inform of the new charges. Resources were in place to respond to residents' queries.

The Board commended the work and the commitment of the Revenue Team resulting in a significant revenues increment. The Board also acknowledged the work of the Welfare Rights Team that had contributed to the increase of the collection rate. It was suggested that part of the additional income could be used to deploy further resources to the Welfare Rights Team.

Members sought and receive clarifications on service improvement and efficiencies – it was explained that a review of the properties that were exempted from Council Tax would take place to identify further opportunities to increase revenues. However, possible options would need to be submitted to Council for approval.

Benefits – as agreed at the last meeting of the Unity Partnership Board, the key performance indicator EB1 (I.E.: average time taken to assess new claims and changes in circumstances) would become, in 2016/17, a yearly outturn rather than quarterly; this would provide a better representation of related activities and processes.

A new IT system was being implemented. The ambition was for Oldham to be a best practice local authority in processing benefits claims. The Board was in agreement to support this plan with additional resources, if necessary.

Customer Service – as mentioned above, the focus was to ensure that enough resources were deployed to answer residents' queries concerning Council Tax raise in 2016/17.

HR (Advisory and Payroll) – the team had been awarded with Team of the Year Top Awards 2015. Work was being carried out on payroll improvement plans, including pension processes and payroll system for schools. Funding was being awarded to carry out a financial system review. The service continued to focus on the new integrated A1 programme that would go live in October 2016.

Members sought and received clarifications on the significance of the risks associated with the challenges faced by the Pension Team. These related to calculating pension entitlements and auto-enrolment.

ICT – the telephone virtualisation process had been implemented. This was very challenging, but it was now completed. The annual PSN (Public Services Network) accreditation had been achieved. The transformation plan taking over from Agilisys had been completed successfully.



Diamond Change Programme – all commitments relating to the programme had been fulfilled. This had been a collective achievement between the Council and Unity. The results would be celebrated via a joint communication plan.

The Board thanked Helen Gerling and Simon Miller for their dedication and commitment to the Diamond Change Programme.

Members sought and received clarifications on BACs (Bankers' Automated Clearing Services) as a safe method of payments for suppliers, residents and landlords.

Get Oldham Working – targets had been achieved. The Board commented that the results on apprenticeships and staff volunteering were an outstanding achievement and requested that the Council worked with Unity on a joint and coherent communication plan.

Key Performance Indicators – it was noted that four indicators were below the threshold; these were ICT, HR Payroll, Benefit Service and EB1.

Business Development – a shareholders workshop had taken place in January to set the strategic objectives for the year. It had been agreed to focus on key opportunities in the North West region as well as other markets.

**The Board:**

- 1. Noted the Managing Director's report and KPI report.**
- 2. Requested that a joint and coherent communication plan be devised to celebrate the completion of the Diamond Change Programme and related Get Oldham Working achievements.**

**4 Highways ICT System Report**

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Highways and Engineering on the Highways ICT system. The report had been requested at the last meeting of the Unity Partnership and it would be presented on a quarterly basis to provide an update on the implementation of the new system.

**The Board:**

- 1. Noted the content of the ICT System report.**
- 2. Requested a quarterly update to be presented to the Unity Partnership Board.**

**5 Unity Change Programme including Change Control Notice 2015/16 (Standing Item)**

The Board considered a report of the Interim Director of Commercial and Transformation Services which informed on the progress made on specific work streams, following the restructure of the Unity Partnership and Joint Venture Board in May 2013.

The legal elements concluding the Diamond Change Programme and confirming recurrent and sustainable savings for £4.319M had been agreed by the Council and Unity Partnership. Highways Services had been removed from the verification period



following the results of the key performance indicators. The parties had also agreed the Change Control Requests outlined in the report.

It was noted that this was the last report with regards to the Diamond Change Programme and the contractual restructure. However, any other contractual changes that would affect service provision to the Council would be brought to the Unity Partnership Board.

**The Board:**

- 1. Noted the content of the report.**
- 2. Endorsed the Deed of Variation with respect to conclusion of Diamond, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.**
- 3. Endorsed CCR 200: Amendments of Highways Service KPIs, as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report.**
- 4. Noted the Change Control Requests that were outlined in the report.**

Following the announcement of the retirement of Craig Apsey, Keir Business Services Managing Director, the Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked Craig for his contribution to the work of the Unity Partnership and wished him well for his future.

**6 AOB**

There were no items for consideration.

**7 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Unity Partnership Board to be held on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2016 at 5.30pm.

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.25 pm