



Minutes

UNITY PARTNERSHIP BOARD

27 June 2017

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

5.30 pm

Present: Councillors Dean and Jabbar

Emma Alexander
Helen Gerling

Business Services Director, Kier
Interim Director of Commercial and
Transformation, Oldham Metropolitan
Borough Council (OMBC)
Service Delivery Director, Unity
Constitutional Services Officer, OMBC
Revenues, Benefits and Customer
Services Service Delivery Manager,
Unity

Simon Miller
Fabiola Fuschi
Pam Siddall

1 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sykes and Stretton and Ray Ward.

2 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the Unity Partnership Board meeting held on 27th February 2017 be approved as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

3 Management Update Report (Standing Item)

Board Members were informed that Unity Partnership had celebrated 10 years since its establishment in 2007. The organisation was going through the redesign of its web-site. Amongst other achievements, Unity had been invited by the Careers Enterprise Company to be an Enterprise Advisory for the Oldham area.

Consideration was given to a progress report of the Unity Management Team on the performance of the services delivered by the partnership during Quarter 4 (i.e.: January, February and March) 2016/17. The Service Delivery Director presented the report and addressed the enquiries of the Board Members.

Highways

The Highways IT system had gone live in April which coincided with the Council's new financial year. An embedment period had followed to allow the service to



integrate new methods of working whilst ensuring KPIs continued to be met. The new system would allow efficient processing of service requests, data review and live system access.

The annual self-assessment, required by the Department for Transport, had been completed and the service had scored Band 3 rating for the Council's Highways and Engineering service as a whole. This meant the achievement of the highest rating which maximised the Incentive Funding received from the Government.

Property

Several professional achievements of the Unity's Property team were celebrated. A purchase order for the 2017/18 Work Plan had been issued on 29th March 2017 by the Council at the level of the 2016/17 Work Plan.

Issues with billing by British Gas continued to be addressed. This would lead to further savings for the Council.

Unity continued to work closely with the Council to progress the Strategic Property Programme to revise the overall provision of Property Services in order to achieve new income and savings. An agreement on benchmarking proposals had been achieved.

Revenues

A 0.1% Oldham's Council Tax in-year collection rate had been achieved compared to 2015/16. Additional resources had led to an increase of 2.7% in the collection performance of council tax reduction. Oldham's Business Rate collection rate position had also improved of 0.4% compared to 2015/16. However, due to several reasons, the introduction of Universal Credit was expected to have a detrimental impact on 2017/18 collection rate performance. In order to mitigate the risk that this new benefit process might have on collection rate performance, many service improvement projects, led by the Universal Credit Project Team, were in progress. Furthermore, the team was working on the cheque to Bankers' Automated Clearing Service (BACS) projects to allow Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefit overpayments to be refunded via BACS. This project and the introduction of two additional on-line self-services would be introduced by the end of June 2017.

Board Members noted that there was a discrepancy concerning the Business Rate collection figure described in the report. Reassurance was given that the figure in the report would be amended as it was not correct.

Board Members requested clarification with regards to the Review of the Council Tax Single Person Discount and asked for the review to take place on line.

Benefit Service and Access Oldham

KPI EB1 (i.e.: time taken to process Housing/Council Tax Benefits) had been achieved. Aspirational targets such as Accuracy in the assessment of Housing Benefits and Council Tax reduction, Customer Satisfaction and Percentage of customer seen within 30 minutes had also been achieved in Quarter 4.

Board Members sought and received clarification on the Audit rating and the Housing Benefit function.

Transactional Finance



The recovery service for the Council of overpaid Housing Benefits owed in respect of First Choice Homes Oldham tenancies continued to be effectively provided by Unity. The service had changed the way it issued its refunds that now are transferred via BACS.

Contact Centre

The Contact Centre had achieved the aspirational targets across all four KPIs in Quarter 4 of 2016/17. Although members of staff had been engaged with training on the new Highway system and a call logging exercise, performance levels had been maintained.

HR (Advisory and Payroll)

Unity had continued to work on the A1 Programme which was still in development at go live. Consequently, a number of issues had arisen that had caused significant pressure on the HR and Payroll Team. Progress had been made to stabilise the system.

Board Members asked and received clarification on the Audit rating and the Payroll function.

IT

The service continued to perform well with all KPIs being met. The IT strategy document was expected to be approved by Elected Members imminently. The strategy would allow the implementation of projects to improve the day to day interaction experience of Council Users and residents.

The Board Members sought and received clarification on the timeline for the implementation of the Technical Roadmap.

The Board was also informed that Unity had supported the Transformation Programme taking part in several projects such as the Highways and Waste IT system, A1 Programme, Resident First, Universal Credit, Records Centre Review and Print and Post Review.

The Board acknowledged the achievements of the Get Oldham Working Campaign.

KPI Performance

Board Members were informed of the KPI results across the 11 service areas managed by Unity. Members sought and received clarification on the Payroll outcomes for the last three months of 2016/17.

Business Development

The Board was informed that Unity would be present at annual conference and exhibition of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in Manchester in July and in the Main Sponsor slot at the Local Authority Summit in Salford in August. A Growth Investment plan was in progress and it would be presented to the Joint Venture Board in July.

The Board:

- 1. Noted the Management Update report.**



2. Requested to publicise locally the recognition of Unity as an Enterprise Advisory for the Oldham area by the Careers Enterprise Company.
3. Requested that residents access the Council Tax Single Person Discount Review on line. The relevant officers would develop a system to submit at the next briefing.
4. Requested to pass a note of thanks to all members of staff who worked at Access Oldham relocation and delivery.
5. Requested that a comprehensive improvement plan on the Payroll function be brought to a future meeting of the Board.
6. Separate discussion on the IT – timeline for the Technical Road Map.
7. Requested that an up to date version of the KPI be circulated to all Board Members.

4 Highway ICT System project - quarterly update

Consideration was given to a progress report of the Head of Highways and Engineering on the implementation of a new Highway System which had gone live on 8th March 2017, following a period of successful User Acceptance Testing and the completion of training for key users. A Lesson Learned Session had also been held with the project team in May 2017. The Board had received regular updates on the delivery of the new system at its previous meetings. A phase closure report was currently being prepared for the Project Board.

The Board noted the update on the Highway ICT System.

5 Housing Benefit Position - quarterly update

The Board gave consideration to a progress report of the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Service Delivery Manager on the performance against the “Right Time Indicator” concerning the time taken to process Housing and Council Tax benefit new claims and change events. It was reported that the aspirational target had been exceeded and Oldham had ranked first amongst the local authorities in Greater Manchester that had provided the information.

Board Members asked and received clarification on the reduction of backlog in the last quarter of 2016/17.

The Board noted the Housing Benefit Position quarterly update.

6 Contract Change Reports

The Board gave consideration to the following Contract Change reports (CCR) which were presented at its meeting:

- CCR 203 Additional Resource from 1st April 2016
- CCR 217 Transfer Recurring ICT Revenue Consequential into Core Price
- CCR 218 Amendments to the Services provided by the Partner to the Council
- CCR 220 Removal of 3% GASC Reduction Obligation
- CCR 228 Change to ICT KPI measure 2ICT5”

Board Members sought and received clarification on the Council Tax collection rate and how the change in the landscape had been reflected in setting the target for 2017/18.



The Board:

1. **Noted the Contract Change reports.**
2. **Requested that in future the Contract Change reports be presented at the briefing that preceded the Board's meeting.**
3. **Requested that CCR 203 be reconsidered at the briefing that preceded the next Board's meeting.**

7 AOB

There were no items of any other business.

8 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Board noted the date and time of the next meeting scheduled to be held on Tuesday 12th September 2017 at 5.30pm.

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.55 pm