



# Minutes

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## UNITY PARTNERSHIP BOARD

12 September 2017

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

5.30 pm

**Present:** Councillors Dean, McCann and Ur-Rehman

Lori Hughes  
Ian Meredith  
Simon Miller  
Tony Muir  
Pam Siddall

Constitutional Services  
Kier  
Unity Partnership  
Kier  
Revenue and Benefits Service  
Delivery Manager - Unity Partnership

### 1 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Stretton, Councillor Jabbar, Councillor Sykes and Emma Alexander.

The Board were informed that Emma Alexander had left Kier.

The Board asked that a letter of thanks be written to Emma Alexander on their behalf.

### 2 Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the Unity Partnership Board meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017 were approved as a correct record.

There were no matters arising.

### 3 Management Update Report (Standing Item)

Consideration was given to a progress report of the Unity Management Team on the performance of the services delivered by the Partnership. An outstanding contractual obligation had been delivered related to unit pricing and discussions were ongoing for agreement on the final outcome.

The Service Delivery Director presented the report and addressed the enquiries from the Board Members.

Highways



The Board were informed of changes in staffing which had led to prioritisation of delivery of capital projects. The service continued to deliver through its KPIs and development of its relationship with the Council. There were regular operational based meetings and included work on the strategic project delivery and reactive sides of the Lead Local Flood Authority's (LLFA's) duties and general highways drainage management.

### Property

The Board were informed that the service was operating against the 2017/18 work programme. Good feedback continued to be received from users and savings had been identified by the Energy Team. The school capital programme was being progressed. A number of projects related to mechanical and electrical systems within the Civic Centre were being carried out that would lead to improved conditions for members, staff and the public as well as energy efficiency savings.

Issues had been identified on the volume of work required by the Council. The long term intention remained to revise the overall provision of Property Services to provide a more strategic property offer to the Council.

Board members sought and received clarification on the property programme going forward and the development of the strategy.

### Revenues

Revenue Services had been working with the Council for the introduction of new technology which allowed customer credits to be refunded by BACS. The service was now live and aligned with the Council's aim on the reduction of cheques. The service continued to work closely on the Resident First Programme that would allow transactions with the council tax service online. The introduction of the Universal Credit was expected to have a detrimental impact on 2017-18 collection performance. The service was working with the DWP in supporting customers and the job centre. Work was ongoing to understand if anything could be done to help mitigate the risk.

### Benefit Service and Access Oldham

The service had supported customers and the Job Centre to ensure that the residents of Oldham were not unduly affected by the change. Online digital support was provided within Access Oldham and it had been agreed that the Job Centre could signpost 'overspill' customers due to the increased volume of support requests. Staff were actively identifying claims that no longer met the criteria for claiming Housing Benefit and directing them to apply for Universal Credit. As part of the Resident First Programme the service was extending its online functionality with the introduction of Benefit e-notification letters.

Board members asked about the impact on the system and were advised that the DWP recognised the effect and provided funding which assisted in extra help for the do-it-online team assistance with claims and working with the job centre. Notifications had been sent out and work was going well. Unity also provided personal budgeting support. Board members thanked staff for their assistance on addressing the changes.

### Transactional Finance

A recovery service continued to be provided of overpaid Housing Benefit owed in respect of First Choice Homes (FCHO) tenancies.

### Contact Centre

The aspirational target across all four KPIs had been achieved in Quarter 1 of 2017/18. The number of staff had been increased who had been trained to handle election enquiries to help cope with additional enquiries. A number of services had also been added to the Council's self-serve product. "My Account" and the Contact Centre played a key role to transactions online. The service was expected to trial a new form of fly-tipping report that would be integrated onto FLARE. Work was also ongoing to absorb lower complexity calls from the in-year school transfer team.

### HR

The Agresso implementation had not delivered the reports required to support monthly payroll reconciliation of third party payments. Unity continued to work with both the Council and A1 programme, however, challenges continued to be the stabilisation of the A1 system, the transition of work activities and continued impact of the service delivery. System issues had been reduced however issues of compliance remained a problem.

### IT

The service continued to perform well with all KPI's met and customer satisfaction levels remaining high. The IT Strategy had been approved and a number of technical transformation projects had been initiated. A number of significant upgrades to both infrastructure and core services for the Council had been undertaken and were ongoing included Windows 10. The Board were informed that Unity had also be asked to support central library.

Current activity in supporting transformation was outlined and future transformation activity. An update was also provided on the transformation days available to the Council and those allocated to date.

Support for Get Oldham Working was outlined and included adding to the team of apprenticeships and staff volunteering. Three services had experienced difficulties in the recruitment of staff. The ethos of apprenticeships had been very successful.

The Board noted the KPI Performance from May to July 2017. Reporting issues were being reviewed with a focus on service delivery.

The Board were informed that Unity had exhibited at the recent CIPFA conference and had received 10 expressions of interest which were being followed up. Future exhibitions were planned.

**The Board** noted the Management Report Update

#### **4 Housing Benefit Position - quarterly update**

The Board gave consideration to an update on the performance against “Right Time Indicator” (RTI) on the combined average number of days taken to process new claims and changes in circumstances. The monthly performance achieved was above the project targets. If the trend of out-performing the projections continued as expected, the annual target would be achieved.

The Board were informed of the challenges presented with the disruption caused during the building works and relocation of Access Oldham. The backlog had been cleared and it was noted the performance was outperforming projections.

The Board were informed that this report had been requested for a period of time and it was requested that this report be the final closing report. The Board members agreed.

#### **The Board:**

1. Noted the Housing Benefit Position quarterly update.
2. Agreed that further separate quarterly updated on the Housing Benefits position were not required.

#### **5 AOB**

There were no items of any other business.

#### **6 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The Board noted the date and time of the next meeting scheduled to be held on Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2017 at 5.30 p.m. It was requested by the Service Delivery Director that the date of the next meeting be changed due to his unavailability.

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 6.32 pm