



WORKING TOGETHER



Minutes of Shared Services Joint Committee

Meeting date Tuesday, 16 November 2021

Members present: Councillors Paul Foster (Chair), Alistair Bradley (Vice-Chair), Sam Chapman, Alan Cullens, Margaret France, David Shaw, Margaret Smith, Matthew Tomlinson, Karen Walton and Peter Wilson

Officers: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Chris Sinnott (Deputy Chief Executive), Victoria Willett (Shared Service Lead – Transformation and Partnerships), Alison Wilding (Service Lead - Customer Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Other Members: Councillors Damian Bretherton (South Ribble Borough Council), Aniela Bylinski Gelder (South Ribble Borough Council) and Phil Smith (South Ribble Borough Council)

18.31 Apologies for absence

None.

18.32 Declarations of Any Interests

There were none.

18.33 Shared Customer Services and Revenues & Benefits Review

The committee received a report of the Director of Customer and Digital which outlined the findings of a recent service review and set out proposals for a restructure and development plan for shared Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits department across Chorley and South Ribble Borough Councils.

Members were advised that the report included additional information and proposals to address the requests made at the adjourned meeting, such as current performance, resourcing and capacity.

Commitment to a review of the service in 12 months was provided and 6 fixed-term apprenticeship posts, in addition to the permanent posts already proposed, would be created to provide capacity during the transition to a shared single operating model.

The committee felt that the updated report addressed many of their concerns but there remained some concern over the time taken to process housing benefits claims at South Ribble.

In response, it was acknowledged that a single shared operating model would enable greater cross-learning, resilience and the implementation of technology to expedite the processing of claims.

Members of the Conservative group at South Ribble expressed their regret at being unable to support the proposals.

Whilst reiterating that the South Ribble Conservative group remained supportive of shared services as whole, it was felt that the services already shared needed more time to fully embed and to allow members and officers to fully assess the impact before extending the arrangements further.

Concerns over staff satisfaction were also raised and the Chief Executive advised that it was inevitable for some employees to be dissatisfied during periods of change but that work to support staff and ensure their engagement was a high priority.

Some members of the committee felt there was no evidence to support claims of low staff morale and that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively impacted the first phase of shared services.

It was suggested that members of the Conservative and Labour Groups at South Ribble meet to discuss any concerns regarding current and future shared services and that a Member Briefing on the subject could be beneficial.

Resolved: (For: 8 Against: 2)

That the Shared Services Joint Committee endorse the following for consultation with staff and Unison prior to final proposals being presented for Executive Decision and the councils' Cabinet meetings in January 2022.

- a) the proposed shared Customer Services restructure including ERVS requests;
- b) the development of the shared service as set out in the service development plan; and
- c) principles for:
 - i. Flexible and multi-channel working
 - ii. Making best use of technology and automation
 - iii. Waste services

Chair

Date