

DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR JOINT COMMITTEE FOR REVENUES AND
BENEFITS

Composition: Two members of Cabinet of Lancaster City Council (to be appointed by the Cabinet) and two Members of Cabinet of Preston City Council, with the remaining members of each Cabinet able to act as substitute members

The Joint Committee will be responsible for –

1. The delivery of those delegated functions relating to Revenues and Benefits set out below that Lancaster City Council and Preston City Council have agreed to be delivered through the Joint Committee within the budget and to the agreed standards;
2. Ensuring that Lancaster City Council and Preston City Council remain fully informed and engaged.

FUNCTIONS DELEGATED TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE

1. The following functions are delegated to the Joint Committee to be carried out on behalf of the Councils subject to the terms of the Shared Service Agreement between the Councils:
 - 1.1 Maintenance of databases in administering Revenues and Benefits
 - 1.2 Billing, collection and recovery of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates
 - 1.3 Administration, assessment and payment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit
 - 1.4 Securing the gateway to Benefits and the identification of fraud and error, including investigation and determination of sanctions save for prosecutions
 - 1.5 Recovery of arrears of repayment of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit overpayment
 - 1.6 Compilations of returns to central Government relating to Revenues and Benefits (to be signed off by s151 officer)
 - 1.7 Provision of administration and support services relating to Revenues and Benefits when appropriate
 - 1.8 Approval of discretionary Housing Payments
 - 1.9 Approval of applications for mandatory relief, discretionary relief for Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax, including hardship and partial occupation
 - 1.10 Recommendation and administration of any write-offs of bad debts within the scope of the write-off policies established by each Council
 - 1.11 Preparation of benefit subsidy claims
 - 1.12 Any additional functions that may be conducive to carrying out the shared service for Revenues and Benefits
 - 1.13 Responding to all requests for information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in respect of the functions delegated to the Joint Committee (whether such requests are addressed to the Joint Committee or any Partner Council)

2. The functions delegated to the Joint Committee shall be exercised subject to any proposed expenditure being contained in the annual Revenues and Benefits budget approved by the Councils and any proposed activities being within the Business Plan approved by the Councils provided that it complies with the relevant financial procedure rules of the Joint Committee

FUNCTIONS TO BE RETAINED BY EACH COUNCIL

The following functions and matters shall be reserved to and decided by each Council from time to time; all decisions and policies on such matters shall be notified to the Joint Committee as necessary as soon as reasonably practicable after any such decision is made and the Joint Committee shall give effect to all such policies and decisions of the Councils in the exercise of the functions delegated to it:

- 1.1 Approving and setting of Council Tax
- 1.2 Calculation of Council Tax Base
- 1.3 Collection fund accounting
- 1.4 Approval of benefit subsidy claims
- 1.5 Determination of policy for second and empty homes
- 1.6 Determination of policy for write off of bad debts and approval of any write-offs within the scope of that policy
- 1.7 Setting the level of and the receipt of enforcement fees
- 1.8 Approval of discretionary relief policies in relation to Non-Domestic Rates and Council Tax
- 1.9 Agreement of rating assessments for Council owned properties
- 1.10 Authorisation and prosecution of benefit fraud cases