

**SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2014**

4.30 P.M.

A G E N D A

PART A (OPEN TO PRESS AND PUBLIC)

1. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 2)

To confirm the minutes of a meeting of this Joint Committee held on 10 December 2013.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members.

3. **Shared Service (Unaudited) Annual Statement of Accounts 2013/14** (Pages 3 - 16)

Report enclosed.

4. **Shared Service - Annual Governance Statement** (Pages 17 - 26)

Report enclosed.

5. **Date of Next Meeting**

To be discussed.

6. **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

To consider passing the following resolution:

“That the public be excluded from this meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business on the grounds that there is likely to be a disclosure of exempt information which is described in the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 which is specified against the heading(s) to each item, and that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.”

PART B (PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL)

7. **Business Plan 2014 - 2017 Shared Revenues and Benefits Service (Paragraphs 1 and 3)** (Pages 27 - 52)

Report enclosed.

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee 10 December 2013

Present:

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| Councillor Rankin | - Leader of the City Council (PCC) |
| Councillor Rawlinson | - Cabinet Member for Resources (PCC) |
| Councillor Blamire | - Leader of Lancaster City Council |
| Councillor Bryning | - Portfolio Holder for Finance, Revenues and Benefits at Lancaster City Council |

Also in attendance: Councillor

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| Mr B Hayes | - Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, Preston City Council |
| Ms N Muschamp | - Chief Officer (Resources) and Section 151 Officer, Lancaster City Council |
| Mr A Robinson | - Assistant Director (Head of Revenues & Benefits) |
| Mr S Cox | - Principal Accountant |

SRB25 Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 30 May 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

SRB26 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

SRB27 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved: That the public be excluded from this meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that there is likely to be a disclosure of exempt information which is described in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee

SRB28 Shared Service Budget 2014/15 - Revenues and Benefits (Paragraph 3)

Members of the Committee considered the exempt report submitted by the Assistant Director (Head of Revenues and Benefits).

The officers present responded to questions from Members.

Resolved:

- (1) That the latest budget monitoring and the revised budget for 2013/14 for the Shared Service, as set out in Appendix A of the exempt report, be noted.
- (2) That the Shared Service budget savings of £208K in 2014/15 and £423K for 2015/16 be approved.
- (3) That the budget for 2014/15 for the Shared Service as detailed in Appendix B of the exempt report, be approved for submission to each individual Council as part of the budget process.
- (4) That determination of the cost sharing ratio for contributions to and from the overall shared service budget be delegated to the S151 Officer of each Council (by agreement).

Report to Joint Committee Meeting to be held on 18th September 2014	Electoral Ward Affected All
Report submitted by : Section 151 Officer Preston City Council	
SHARED SERVICE (UNAUDITED) ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2013/14	

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Host Authorities Section 151 Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Shared Services Statement of Accounts which provide a true and fair view of the financial position of the Shared Service at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2014.
- 1.2 This Partnership prepared its statutory Annual Accounts and supporting financial statements in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in United Kingdom 2013/14 (The Code).

2. Decision Required

- 2.1 To approve the unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 as set out in **Appendix A**.

3. Information

- 3.1 The accounts have been prepared by Preston City Council as the Host Authority
- 3.2 These accounts will be summarised as part of the 2013/14 main Statutory Accounts of both Councils. The Accounts and Audit Regulations require the Partnerships responsible financial officers (Section 151 Officers) to certify that the Statement of Accounts “present a true and fair view of the financial position” for the 2013/14 financial year. The Joint Committee Chair is also required to sign off the accounts. A paper copy to sign will be available at the meeting.
- 3.3 The Accounts represent all of the income and expenditure occurred by the Shared Service between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014. The expenditure as pre agreed by the Joint Committee is split 50/50 between Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council.
- 3.4 The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement states that the Shared Service income and expenditure net off to zero.

4. External Audit

- 4.1 The Shared Service statement of accounts does not require auditing as the costs are subsumed within each Partner Authorities main statement of accounts which are subject to external audit.
- 4.2 The accounts as presented by this report are unaudited.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The deadline for the internal production for the Partnerships unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 has been achieved.

6. Impact Statement

- 6.1 The annual Statement of Accounts are a statutory requirement and must comply fully with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in United Kingdom 2013/14 (The Code).

Background Documents:

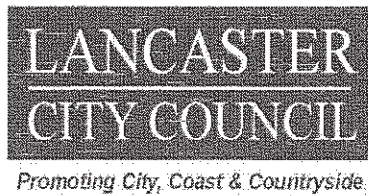
Background documents open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Ext
Statement of Accounts 2013/14	16 th June 2013	Preston City Council, Section 151 Officer

Contact for further information:

Stephen Cox	01772 906053	Principal Accountant
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APPENDIX A



**REVENUES & BENEFITS SHARED
SERVICE**

**STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS
2013/14**

**LANCASTER CITY COUNCIL
PRESTON CITY COUNCIL**

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Explanatory Foreword

1. Explanation of the Financial Statements

The Shared Service Statement of Accounts shows the overall financial position of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service run by the Joint Committee on behalf of Preston and Lancaster City Councils at the 31st March 2014. This foreword provides a summary of the key matters reported in the Accounts. The Accounts comprise of the following statements that have been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2013/14 (the Code):

- **Statement of Responsibilities:** sets out the respective responsibilities of the Council and the Section 151 Officers for the accounts.
- **Statement of Accounting Policies:** explains the basis for recognition, measurement and disclosure of transactions and other events in the accounts.
- **Movement in Reserves Statement:** a reconciliation statement that summarises the differences between the outturn on the Income and Expenditure Account and the General Fund Balance.
- **Income and Expenditure Statement:** brings together expenditure and income relating to all the Partnership's functions.
- **Balance Sheet:** sets out the financial position of the Shared Service at 31st March 2014.
- **Cash Flow Statement:** summarises the inflows and outflows of cash arising from transactions with third parties.

Each of the statements is inextricably linked and whilst individually important must be seen collectively to ensure they are looked at in context. Set out below is some interpretation of the accounts and information about the financial position of the Shared Service.

2. Introduction

The purpose of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service is to provide for the efficient and effective collection of Local Taxation and the administration of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support for both Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council under a Joint Committee.

The service commenced on the 1st July 2011 and is based in both Preston and Lancaster with Preston City Council being the host Council.

The Revenues and Benefits service plays a very important part in the delivery of front line services and the collection of local taxes. It is very much part of the front line customer service provision and yet has strong links throughout each Council to key support functions such as finance, legal services, ICT and others. External partnership working with the Department for Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as external verification and auditing, make these services regulatory in nature.

3. Accounting for the Partnership

All transactions of the Partnership are accounted for within the accounts of one of the partner authorities. The information within these statements has been extracted from the partners financial records.

4. Revenue Budget

The outturn for the 2013/14 financial year and comparison to budget are set out below:

	Latest Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Variance £'000
Service Expenditure			
Management	133	134	1
Business Rates	317	322	5
Council Tax	915	883	(32)
Operations	500	480	(20)
Housing Benefits	2,440	2,364	(76)
Service Expenditure Total	4,305	4,183	(122)
Income			
Fylde Borough Council	92	91	(1)
Preston City Council	2,081	2,046	(35)
Lancaster City Council	2,107	2,046	(61)
Income Total	4,280	4,183	(97)
Total	25	-	(25)

Elements of the Shared Service budget for 2013/14 were adjusted during the year for Grant income and expenditure. The Preston City Council income budget was kept constant as it nets out within Preston City Councils accounts as an internal recharge, as a result it is £26k lower than the Lancaster budget.

Both Councils have agreed that direct costs associated with the service should be shared equally (after the adjustment for Fylde income) between the two authorities during 2013/14. Where variances arise between budget and outturn, these would also be shared equally.

The Shared Service has an underspend against the budgeted expenditure of £122k. This underspend was mainly due to:

Variance £'000		
(126)	(F)	underspend on employee costs
(5)	(F)	underspend on training costs
(5)	(F)	underspend on employee insurances
6	(A)	overspend on telephones
6	(A)	overspend on direct ICT charges
5	(A)	overspend on professional fees
(3)	(F)	other
<u>(122)</u>	<u>(A)</u>	

The major variance is the underspend of £126k on employee costs. This is due to employees leaving during the year and the vacant post not being filled in order to smooth the transition to the 2014/15 budget savings.

Expenditure by Council	£'000
Preston City Council	4,088
Lancaster City Council	95
	<u>4,183</u>

Preston City Councils expenditure is significantly higher than Lancaster City Councils because as the Host Council it employs all the Revenues and Benefits staff.

Central overheads are absorbed by the councils that incur them and are not recharged into the Shared Service.

5. Capital Expenditure

The Shared Service does not own any assets and did not incur any capital expenditure during 2013/14.

6. Retirement Benefits

All employees employed in the provision of the Shared Service are employees of Preston City Council and as such are part of the Local Government Pensions Scheme (LGPS), which is a defined benefit scheme. More detail is provided in the Statements of Accounting Policies and in the notes to the Core Financial Statements of Preston City Council.

7. Further Information

Further information about the accounts is available from:

B. P. Hayes, CPFA
Section 151 Officer
Preston City Council

Statement of Responsibilities for the Statement of Accounts

The Partnership's Responsibilities

The Partnership is required:

- To make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. For Preston City Council the officer is the Deputy Chief Executive. For Lancaster City Council the officer is the Head of Resources;
- To manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets

The Chief Financial Officer's Responsibilities.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Resources are responsible for the preparation of the Councils Statement of Accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy)/LASAAC (Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee) Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing this Statement of Accounts, the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Resources has:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent;
- complied with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (the Code);
- kept proper accounting records which were up to date; and,
- taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Chief Financial Officer's Certification

I certify that the Statement of Accounts presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Partnership at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31 March 2014.

Signed

Chair of the Joint Committee

B. P. Hayes, CPFA
Section 151 Officer
Preston City Council
Host Council

N. Muschamp
Section 151 Officer
Lancaster City Council

Date

Statement of Accounting Policies

1. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Council's transactions for the 2013/14 financial year and its position at 31 March 2014. These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2013/14 (the Code) and the Service Reporting Code of Practice 2013/14 (SeRCOP), supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under section 12 of the 2003 Act.

This note explains the basis of the figures included in the accounts.

2. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

The financial statements have been prepared on an accruals basis for all transactions and balances. Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Council can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Council.
- Expenses in relation to services received (including services provided by employees) are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Where revenue and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.

3. Retirement Benefits

Employees of the Shared Service are employed by Preston City Council and contribute at the Preston City Council rate into the Local Government Pensions Scheme administered by Lancashire County Council. The scheme provides defined benefits to members, earned as employees work for the Council. Retirement benefits are determined independently of scheme investments and the Council must contribute to any deficit where assets are insufficient to meet retirement benefits.

The Local Government Scheme is accounted for as a defined benefits scheme:

- The liabilities of the scheme attributable to the Council are included on Preston City Councils balance sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc and projections of projected earnings for current employees. Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a real discount rate of 4.4% determined by reference to market yields at the balance sheet date based on high quality corporate bonds.
- The assets of the pension fund attributable to the Council are included in Preston City Councils Balance Sheet at their fair value.

It is impossible to determine the Shared Service's share of assets and liabilities of the Local Government Pensions Scheme as distinct from those of Preston City Council's. Additionally, the Shared Service is not responsible for a major service and the public expenditure consequences of the Shared Service's operations are relatively insubstantial. The Shared Service is therefore exempt from accounting for a defined benefit scheme and the Notes to the Core Financial Statements have been prepared using the principle that would be applied to defined contribution schemes i.e. recognising the contributions payable for the year and not accruing any underlying pension asset/liability.

4. Events after the Balance Sheet Date

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue which may have a bearing upon the financial results of the past year. Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

5. Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Council a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential, and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation. Provisions are a charge to the Net Cost of Services in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

The Shared Service currently has no provisions.

6. Reserves

Reserves are classified as either 'usable' (identified and maintained for specific future purposes and contingencies) or 'unusable' (kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, financial instruments, retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Council).

The Shared Service currently has no reserves.

7. Value Added Tax

Income and expenditure excludes any amounts related to VAT, as all VAT collected is payable to HM Revenue & Customs and all VAT paid is recoverable from them.

The Shared Service relies on the VAT registrations of the two partner Councils and submits its claims via these. In addition to this Preston City Council has HMRC approval to account for VAT in respect of the Shared Service under the VAT registration of Preston City Council.

8. Government Grants and Contributions

Government grants and third party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Council when there is reasonable assurance that the Council will comply with the conditions attached to the payments, and the grants or contributions will be received.

9. Central Support Service Overheads

Central overheads are absorbed by the councils that incur them and are not recharged into the Shared Service.

10. Financial Liabilities

Creditors are the Shared Service's only financial liabilities. These are disclosed on the Balance Sheet at amortised cost.

11. Financial Assets

Debtors are the only financial assets and are included in the balance sheet at cost.

Core Financial Statements

Movement in Reserves Statement

The Statement of Movement on the General Fund Balance is a requirement under CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in Great Britain. However, the purpose of this Statement is to reconcile the surplus or deficit on the Income and Expenditure Account with the statutory requirements for raising council tax and the resultant movement in the General Fund Balance.

As the Shared Service does not have a General Fund Balance and does not raise council tax, this statement does not apply.

Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement

The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with regulations; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in the Movement in Reserves Statement.

The statement summarises the resources that have been generated and consumed in providing and managing the Shared Service. It includes all day to day expenses and related income on an accruals basis.

Balance Sheet

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Shared Service. The net assets (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Council. All reserves are usable reserves.

Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Council during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Council generates and uses cash and cash equivalents.

Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Statement

	Note	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000
Service Expenditure			
Management		130	134
Business Rates		297	322
Council Tax		1,019	883
Operations		520	480
Housing Benefits		2,340	2,364
Net Operating Expenditure		<u>4,306</u>	<u>4,183</u>
Service Income			
Fylde Borough Council		91	91
Lancaster City Council		2,087	2,046
Preston City Council		2,079	2,046
Total Sources of Finance	1	<u>4,257</u>	<u>4,183</u>
Surplus/Deficit for the year	1	<u>(49)</u>	<u>-</u>

The £49k deficit for the 2012/13 represents the Housing Benefits Transitional Grant. Preston City Councils Grant was £22k and Lancaster City Councils was £27k.

Balance Sheet

	Note	As at 31st March 2013- £'000	As at 31st March 2014 £'000
Debtors		44	140
Cash		142	63
Total Current Assets		<u>186</u>	<u>203</u>
Creditors	2	186	203
Total Current Liabilities		<u>186</u>	<u>203</u>
Net Assets		<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>

Cash Flow

	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000
Surplus/deficit for the year	<u>-49</u>	<u>-</u>
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	21	-96
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	19	17
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities	<u>40</u>	<u>-79</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash	<u>-9</u>	<u>-79</u>

Notes to the Core Statements**1. Income from Constituent Authorities**

The costs of Shared Services are split equally between the Preston and Lancaster City Councils.

Support service charges from the two Council's and the IAS 19 pension adjustments are absorbed in each Council's own accounts.

Central overheads are absorbed by the Council's that incur them and are not recharged into the Shared Service.

2. Creditors

At the year-end £1,064 is owing to sundry creditors and a further £202,287 is accrued for transactions that relate to 2013/14.

3. Officer Remuneration

One Senior Officer received remuneration, excluding employer's pension contribution, of £65,000 - £69,999.

Post Title	Salary (Including fees & Allowances) £'000	Pension contributions £'000	Total Remuneration including pension contributions 2013/14 £'000
Assistant Director Head of Revenues & Benefits.	65	12	77

4. Related party Transactions

The Shared Service has the following related parties:

Preston and Lancaster City Councils	- Partner Authorities
Central Government	- Provider of Grant Funding
Fylde Borough Council	- Benefits Fraud and Revenue Advice

5. Ultimate Controlling Partner

None of the partners has ultimate control of the Partnership.

6. External Audit Fees

There are no external audit fees as the Shared Service statement of accounts does not require external auditing. The income and expenditure are subsumed within each Partner Authorities main statement of accounts which are subject to external audit.

7. Leases

The Partnership has not entered into any leasing arrangements.

8. Date Accounts Authorised for Issue

The Statement of Accounts includes any necessary disclosures in respect of events after the balance sheet date up to the 30th June 2014.

Glossary

Accruals

The concept is that income is recorded when it is earned rather than when it is received and expenses are recorded when goods or services are received rather than when the payment is made.

Budget

A statement of the Council's spending plans for revenue and capital expenditure over a specified period of time.

Creditors

Amounts owed by the Council for work done, services rendered or goods received for which payment has not been made by the balance sheet date.

Current Assets

Current assets are items that are reasonably expected to be readily converted into cash.

Current Liabilities

Amounts which will become payable or could be called in within 12 months of the reporting period.

Debtors

Amounts owed to the Council for work carried out, services rendered or goods provided by the Council for which income has not been received by the Balance Sheet date.

Financial Year

The Council's and Shared Services financial year runs from the 1st April to 31st March.

Going Concern

The concept that the Council will remain in operational existence for the foreseeable future, in particular that the revenue accounts and Balance Sheet assume no intention to curtail significantly the scale of operations.

Government Grants

Assistance by Government and inter-Government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, in the form of cash or transfers of assets to an Council in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the Council.

Materiality

The concept that any omission from or inaccuracy in the statement of accounts should not be so large as to affect the understanding of those statements by the reader.

Reserves

Amounts set aside in one year's accounts which can be spent in later years. Reserves are often earmarked for specific purposes, including the financing of future capital expenditure, replacement or renewals and the funding of future defined council initiatives.

Revenue Expenditure

This is money spent on the day-to-day running costs of providing services. It is usually of a constantly recurring nature and produces no permanent asset.

Report to Joint Committee Meeting to be held on 18 th September 2014	Electoral Ward Affected ALL
Report submitted by: Governance Director of Preston City Council	
Shared Service - Annual Governance Statement <i>Appendix A</i> refers	

1. Summary

1.1 This report informs Members on the content of the Annual Governance Statement for 2013/14. The Annual Governance Statement is set out in **Appendix A**.

2. Decision Required

2.1 Joint Committee Members are asked to approve the Annual Governance Statement as set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

3. Information

3.1 The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, paragraph 4 (b) requires the relevant body or committee to approve an annual governance statement, prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to internal control. This statement should then accompany the annual statement of accounts.

3.2 The Regulations provide that the Annual Governance Statement must be approved at a meeting of the authority or delegated committee.

3.3 The Framework Guidance states that the Governance Statement should cover all the significant corporate systems, processes and controls, spanning the whole range of the authority's activities, including in particular those designed to ensure that:

- The authority's policies are implemented in practice
- High quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively
- The authority's values and ethical standards are met
- Laws and regulations are complied with
- Required processes are adhered to
- Financial statements and other published performance indicators are accurate and reliable
- Human, financial, environmental and other resources are managed efficiently and effectively

- 3.4 In reviewing the internal controls and subsequently approving the Annual Governance Statement for 2013/14, Joint Committee Members will require assurances on the effectiveness of the governance framework and how this addresses the key risks faced by the partner authorities.
- 3.5 In order to provide that assurance, the Annual Governance Statement has been produced in accordance with the guidance and best practice contained within the Framework Guidance contained in the CIPFA/SOLACE publication "Delivering Good governance in Local Government" and is set out at **Appendix A** to this report.
- 3.6 A summary table documenting recent audit work undertaken in relation to the Shared Service is provided in **Appendix B** as further assurance.

4. Implications

- 4.1 The Regulations provide that the Annual Governance Statement accompanies the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- 4.2 All financial implications are reflected in the Annual Statement of Accounts that accompanies this report.

5. Impact Statement

- 5.1 Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and ultimately good outcomes for citizens and service users. It enables the authority to pursue its vision effectively as well as underpinning that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk. The Governance Statement provides the citizens and service users with the evidence of the effectiveness of the Shared Service/Partnership governance arrangements.

Background Documents:

Background documents open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Ext
"Delivering Good Governance in Local Government - Framework" – CIPFA/SOLACE	2007	Governance

Contact for further information:

Angela Harrison	01772 906197	Governance Director
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**REVENUES & BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE
ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
2013/14**

1. Scope of Responsibility

1.1 The role of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Joint Committee ("the Joint Committee") (under S101(5) and S102 of the Local Government Act 1972 and S20 of the Local Government Act 2000 and all other enabling powers) is to discharge the functions delegated to it by the Executives of Preston City and Lancaster City Councils as specified in the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Agreement ("the Agreement"). The terms of reference of the Joint Committee require that the functions duly delegated to it are delivered within budget and to agreed standards. To this end the Joint Committee requires robust reporting and performance management arrangements that meet the requirements of all partner authorities. The terms of reference of the Joint Committee require that:

- those delegated functions relating to Revenues and Benefits that Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council have agreed to be delivered through the Joint Committee are delivered within budget and to the agreed standards;
- Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council remain fully informed and engaged.

1.2 The CIPFA/SOLACE Code of Corporate Governance ("the Code") is designed for local authorities and other public bodies which engage directly with the community. The Joint Committee's lines of communication and accountability are different, but the principles of the Code apply. To this extent, the Joint Committee is responsible, jointly with the partner authorities, for ensuring that there are sound systems of internal control in place to facilitate the effective exercise of their functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risks and for maintaining high standards of corporate governance.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Joint Committee is directed and controlled, and thereby provides quality, cost effective services to each partner authority.

2.2 The Joint Committee is not a free standing body in its own right, therefore, appropriate arrangements for the good governance of its affairs must be made. It also draws upon the established good governance practice of Preston City and Lancaster City Councils.

3. The Governance Environment

3.1 As employees of Preston City Council, officers within the partnership are subject to the governance processes that are in operation at Preston City Council.

- 3.2 Reference should be made to the respective financial statements of each partner authority for full details of their corporate governance arrangements.
- 3.3 The following paragraphs describe the key elements of the systems and processes, including performance management arrangements that comprise the system of governance that is specific to the Joint Committee.

4. The Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Agreement

- 4.1 The Agreement sets out the basis for the Shared Service and its operation, setting out the services to be provided and the quality requirements relating to these.
- 4.2 The Agreement provides that the Joint Committee be made up of two members of the Executive from each partner authority. The Joint Committee meets at least two times in a municipal year and holds its annual general meeting every year before 31 July.
- 4.3 Advice is given to the Joint Committee by S151 Officers of both Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council as required. Head of Member Services at Preston City Council is the Secretary to the Joint Committee.
- 4.4 The Head of Shared Service provides performance monitoring reports to the Joint Committee at each of its meetings. Further, the Head of Shared Service and the Section 151 Officer of Preston City Council present reports at each annual meeting of the Joint Committee providing details of the following matters:
 - A statement showing progress in achieving the objectives in the business plan;
 - A summary revenue account and statement of capital spending including the distribution or use of any revenue surpluses and the financing of any capital expenditure; and
 - In the event of a deficit, a statement of the corrective action taken or to be taken;
 - As and when required by the Chief Executive or the Section 151 Officer of each Council the Joint Committee shall produce such other reports as may reasonably be required.
- 4.5 A key requirement of the partnership is that it meets the key reporting timetables for each Council so as to fit with all internal, external and statutory requirements.

5. Business Improvement Planning

- 5.1 The Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Agreement is supplemented by a Shared Service Business Plan ("SSBP") which sets out the specific projects and performance targets which need to be delivered in the forthcoming year.
- 5.2 In addition to the regular Joint Committee meetings the Head of the Shared Service reports monthly to the Section 151 Officer of each Council.

6. Risk Management

6.1 The risks associated with the successful delivery of the Shared Service are recorded in a Risk Log within the SSBP. The key risks facing the Shared Service at this stage of its development are considered to be:

- ICT and systems
- Loss of control or direction by any Council with regard to service delivery
- Lack of ownership by partnership Councils and different levels of commitment to Shared Service agenda
- Potential conflict between Revenues & Benefits strategy and the individual customer service of each partner
- The implications arising out of the government agenda for welfare reform.

6.2 The SSBP contains a range of actions aimed at mitigating these risks.

6.3 The Risk Register has been reviewed as part of the process for producing the SSBP for 2014/15.

7. Workforce Planning

7.1 One of the key actions in setting up the shared service in 2011 was the implementation of a Workforce Strategy which:

- Led to staff consultation, and set out a core purpose and values / guiding principles for the partnership, in line with those of each Council, and
- identified and addressed any staff development needs.

7.2 Workforce planning has helped to deliver quality and cost effective services and the majority of shared service improvements have been achieved because the right people with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours are deployed in the right positions throughout the structure. This philosophy continues to date.

7.3 At time of change, consultation with frontline staff takes place and they are fully involved and understand their role in the process, providing re-assurance and commitment.

7.4 Longer term workforce planning provides the opportunity to link training and development needs with future skills needs and devise strategies to meet these needs. eg. Universal Credit

8. Scrutiny & Audit

8.1 Accounts relating to the Shared Service are subject to audit and open to inspection by the Joint Committee and parties. A key role of the Joint Committee is to ensure that effective external audit arrangements are in place and that each Council is able to carry out meaningful scrutiny of its performance.

8.2 Internal audit for the Shared Service is provided by the Lancaster City Council Internal Audit service, reporting separately to each Council's Audit Committees. The internal audit service is delivered by an in-house team operating to professional standards set out in the 'CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government 2006.

8.3 For the 2013/14 financial year, the results of audit work have enabled the Internal Audit Manager to provide a positive assurance statement regarding the systems, policies and procedures operated by the Shared Service, without any significant control issues or failures having been identified.

8.4 The two Councils work to different assurance scales:

Preston: Full; Substantial; Reasonable; Limited; Minimal
Lancaster: Maximum; Substantial; Limited; Minimal

9. Review of Effectiveness

9.1 The Joint Committee has a responsibility to review the effectiveness of its governance arrangements and to demonstrate continuous improvement. This is informed by the work of members and the partnership's senior management, together with support services, further supported by the internal audit service and by any work of external audit.

9.2 At future annual meetings the Business Plan will contain performance data to show performance against agreed targets and draft financial statements. Any service issues will be outlined for members' consideration.

10. Enhancing our Governance Arrangements

10.1 Emphasis is on embedding the governance and performance management arrangements as set out above.

10.2 Officers seek continuous improvement and review lessons learned from previous financial years.

Signatures:

Chair of the Shared Services Joint Committee _____

Vice chair of the Shared Services Joint Committee _____

S151 Officers of the partner local authorities _____

Secretary of the Shared Services Joint Committee _____

September 2014

APPENDIX B

**Revenues & Benefits Shared Service
Internal Audit Reports Issued 2013/14:**

Note: The two Councils work to different assurance scales:

Preston: Full; Substantial; Reasonable; Limited; Minimal
Lancaster: Maximum; Substantial; Limited; Minimal

Job No	JOB_TITLE	Report Date	Assurance Opinion	Assurance Opinion Text
12/0866	Council Tax 2012/13 – Lancaster	19/03/2013	Maximum	Evaluation of systems and procedures found that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure segregation of duties, with good levels of supervision and internal check taking place. Arrangements for awarding exemptions and discounts are robust, and effective procedures are in place to maximise income through appropriate arrangements to pay.
12/0867	Council Tax 2012/13 - Preston	19/03/2013	Substantial	Effective procedures are in place to maximise income through appropriate arrangements to pay and arrangements for awarding discounts and exemptions are robust. Arrangements have been strengthened to ensure that the risk of error and fraud going undetected is effectively managed through appropriate separation of duties and internal checks. The review also identified a number of areas where there are opportunities to provide a consistent approach within the shared service.
13/0900	NDR Retention - Preston	11/11/2013	Substantial	A reasonable approach has been taken to estimating potential changes in revenue due to appeals, therefore minimising the risk of a significant effect on cash flow, and ensuring that rate retention is appropriate. Good arrangements have also been made to ensure that adjustments to be made due to appeals are properly taken into account in NDR income monitoring.

Job No	JOB_TITLE	Report Date	Assurance Opinion	Assurance Opinion-Text
13/0901	NDR Retention - Lancaster	11/11/2013	Substantial	A reasonable approach has been taken to estimating potential changes in revenue due to appeals, therefore minimising the risk of a significant impact on cash flow, and ensuring that rate retention is appropriate. Good arrangements have also been made to ensure that adjustments to be made due to appeals are properly taken into account in NDR income monitoring.
13/0902	Housing Benefit (Welfare Reforms) - Lancaster	12/12/2013	Maximum	Maximum assurance is provided on the basis that the council has effectively implemented the Welfare Reforms and testing found assessments to be correct and in accordance with Housing Benefit Regulations. Action is being taken to further raise standards by implementing matters of best practice highlighted through the review concerning data sharing protocols and awarding Discretionary Housing Payments.
13/0905	Housing Benefit (Welfare Reforms) - Preston	02/01/2014	Full	Full assurance has been provided as the council has effectively implemented the Welfare Reforms and testing performed on individual cases established that assessments made are correct and in accordance with Housing Benefit regulations. Discretionary Housing Payments are appropriate and in line with council policy and regulations. Arrangements are to be strengthened in terms of data security with the development of data sharing protocols.

Job No	JOB TITLE	Report Date	Assurance Opinion	Assurance Opinion Text
13/0906	Revenues and Benefits - Operational Support and Performance (Lancaster)	07/04/2014	Substantial	<p>Evaluation of systems and procedures in place have established that arrangements made to support the Revenues and Benefits operation are effective. Employees are well trained and quality assurance mechanisms are appropriate. Freedom of Information requests are dealt with in accordance with council policy and complaints handling procedures are well controlled. Good change control arrangements are in place in relation to system upgrades and system back-up arrangements are robust. The printing and posting project was well managed and good contractual arrangements are in place with the supplier. Assurance provided therefore is substantial.</p>
13/0907	Revenues and Benefits - Operational Support and Performance (Preston)	27/03/2014	Substantial	<p>Evaluation of systems and procedures in place have established that arrangements made to support the Revenues and Benefits operation are effective. Employees are well trained and quality assurance mechanisms are appropriate. Freedom of Information requests are dealt with in accordance with council policy and complaints handling procedures are well controlled. Good change control arrangements are in place in relation to system upgrades and system back-up arrangements are robust. The printing and posting project was well managed and good contractual arrangements are in place with the supplier. Assurance provided therefore is substantial.</p>

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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