

Committee: SHARED REVENUE AND BENEFITS SERVICE JOINT COMMITTEE

Date: THURSDAY, 6 JULY 2023

Venue: BOARD ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, TOWN HALL, LANCASTER ROAD,
PRESTON PR1 2RL

Time: 11.00 A.M.

A G E N D A

PART A (OPEN TO PRESS AND PUBLIC)

1. **Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair**

Nominations are invited for a Chair and Vice-Chair of this Joint Committee for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

2. **Chair's Announcements**

- Fire Procedures / Mobile Phones / Rest Rooms
- "Members of the Public, committee members and officers are reminded that under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, the press and Public may film, audio record, photograph and use social media whilst the meeting is in progress, for Part A items only, and as long as no disruption is caused to the meeting. Anyone filming is asked to focus their attention on elected members rather than other visitors". (To be read out if visitors present).

3. **Notification of Substitute Members (if any)**

4. **Declarations of Interests**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members

5. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 6)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Joint Committee held on 12 December 2022.

6. **Annual Governance Statement** (Pages 7 - 17)

Report enclosed.

7. **Date of Next Meeting**

To be determined later.

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

Resolved - That the public be excluded from this meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there is likely to be disclosure of exempt

information which is described in Paragraph 3 of 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.

PART B (NOT OPEN TO PRESS AND PUBLIC)

9. **Shared Service (Unaudited) Annual Statement of Accounts 2022/23 (Paragraph 3)**
(Pages 18 - 32)

Report enclosed.

10. **Shared Service - Business Plan 2023 - 2025 (Paragraph 3)** (Pages 33 - 78)

Report enclosed.

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee 12 December 2022

Present:

Councillor Rawlinson	– Cabinet Member for Resources and Deputy Leader, Preston City Council
Councillor C Jackson	– Leader, Lancaster City Council
Councillor A Whitehead	– Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Lancaster City Council

Also in attendance:

Ms S Threlfall	– Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Community and Wellbeing, Preston City Council
Ms J Wilding	– Director of Resources and S151 Officer, Preston City Council
Ms E Dowling	– Deputy S151 Officer, Lancaster City Council
Mr A Robinson	– Director of Environment and Property, Preston City Council
Mrs D Chambers	– Head of Democratic Services, Lancaster City Council
Mr A Taylor	– Interim Head of Shared Services, Preston City Council
Mrs C Lancaster	– Interim Revenues Manager, Preston City Council
Mrs H Johnston	– Benefits Manager, Preston City Council

Apologies: Councillor M Brown, Leader, Preston City Council

SRB10 Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Head of Democratic Services, Lancaster City Council, invited nomination for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Services Joint Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

Resolved – (i) That Councillor Whitehead be appointed as Chair of the Joint Committee for 2022/23; and
(ii) that Councillor Rawlinson be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee for 2022/23.

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee

SRB11 Chair's Announcements

The Chair of the Joint Committee advised that whilst the four substantive items on the agenda were not available at the time the agenda was published, items 6 through to 11 refer, she agreed to accept them as urgent items as they contained financial information that needed to be considered as part of the budget process for each Council before February 2023, with the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for July 2023.

SRB12 Notification of Substitute Members (if any)

There were none.

SRB13 Declarations of Interests

There were none.

SRB14 Minutes

Resolved - That the minute of the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 26 July 2021 be noted and signed as a correct record.

SRB15 Shared Service: Annual Governance Statement 2021/22

The Director of Resources (Preston City Council) submitted a report requesting that the Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee considers and approves the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22. The Annual Governance Statement was set out in the appendix A to the report.

Resolved – That the Joint Committee approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2021/22, as set out in the appendix to the report, subject to additional comments to be made by the S151 Officer, Preston City Council, and that the Statement will be signed off after the changes have been made and circulated.

SRB16 Date of Next Meeting

On a date in July 2023, to be confirmed later.

SRB17 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved – That the public be excluded from this meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there is likely to be disclosure of exempt information which is described in Paragraph 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that in all the circumstances of

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee

the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

SRB18 Shared Service (Unaudited) Annual Statement of Accounts 2021/22 (Paragraph 3)

The Director of Resources (Preston City Council) submitted a report advising that the Host Authority's Section 151 Officer was responsible for the preparation of the Revenues and Benefits 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 2022.

The host authority (Preston City Council) had prepared the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Unaudited Statement of Accounts 2021/22 in accordance with applicable laws and regulations, and in line with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code) 2021/22.

Resolved – That the Joint Committee approved the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2021/22, as set out in the Appendix A to the report.

SRB19 Shared Service: Business Plan 2022-24 (Paragraph 3)

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Community and Wellbeing submitted a report confirming that Lancaster City Council and Preston City Council had entered into a formal shared service arrangement for a further 10 years, with effect from 1 July 2021, and would continue to provide a Revenues and Benefits service across both City Council areas.

In line with the agreement, the report introduced a refreshed Business Plan for 2021/23, incorporating the key performance indicators for the service, together with ongoing projects and future challenges.

The Business Plan also contained a financial appraisal of the 2021/22 outturn position, and the budget requirement for 2022/23, to be approved.

Resolved – That the Joint Committee considered and approved the Business Plan for 2022 – 2024, as set out in in Appendix 1 to the report.

SRB20 Shared Service: Budget 2023/24 - (Revenues & Benefits) (Paragraph 3)

The Director of Resources (Preston City Council) submitted a report on the Shared Service Agreement between Lancaster City Council and Preston City Council, which required that the Joint Committee approve the annual

Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee

revenue, capital and staff budgets in respect of the Revenues and Benefits functions.

The Joint Committee would then inform the two Councils of the amounts of their proposed contributions to the Joint Committee's budget.

Resolved – That the Joint Committee:

(i) Noted the latest budget monitoring for the Shared Service, as detailed in Appendix A to the report;

(ii) approved the budget for 2023/24 for the Shared Service, as detailed in Appendix B to the report; and

(iii) delegated to the S151 Officers of each Council (by agreement), to determine the cost sharing ratio for contributions to and from the overall Shared Service budget.

Report to: Shared Revenues & Benefits Service - Joint Committee	Electoral Ward Affected ALL
Meeting to be held on 6th July 2023	
Report submitted by: Director of Resources (Preston City Council)	
Report Title: SHARED SERVICE – ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022/23 Shared Revenues and Benefits Service ('Appendix A' refers)	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report requests that the Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee considers and approves the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23. The Annual Governance Statement is set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

2. Decision Required

- 2.1 The Joint Committee is requested to:

- (i) Approve the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23, as set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

3. Information

- 3.1 The Shared Revenue and Benefits Service Joint Committee ("Joint Committee") serving both Councils (Lancaster and Preston), operates under a Local Code of Governance via the host authority (Preston), which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework – Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework "the Framework".

- 3.2 In line with good practice and CIPFA principles in relation to the effectiveness of internal control at each authority, it is considered appropriate for the Joint Committee to approve an Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23, to accompany the (unaudited) Annual Statement of Accounts 2022/23.

- 3.3 The Framework offers guidance that a Governance Statement should cover all the significant corporate systems, processes and controls, spanning the whole range of the authorities activities, including in particular those designed to ensure that:

- The Partner Authorities have maintained an adequate system of internal control
- Measures are in place to prevent and detect fraud and corruption
- The authorities policies are implemented in practice
- High quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively
- The authorities 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 2022/23, the Joint Committee 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 for 2022/23 has been produced taking into account the guidance and best practice contained within the Framework and is set out in **Appendix A** to this report.

3.6 A summary table documenting recent housing benefit subsidy audits and internal audit work undertaken in relation to the Shared Service is provided in **Appendix B** as further assurance.

3.7 An extract of the Risk Log is provided in **Appendix C** as further assurance, detailing mitigation in relation to the main risks that would have a significant impact for the Shared Service.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial planning and management is a key component of effective corporate governance. All financial implications are reflected in the (Unaudited) Annual Statement of Accounts 2022/23, also on the agenda for consideration by the Joint Committee.

4.2 Ensuring staff are adequately trained and professionally competent is key to meeting the core needs of the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance.

4.3 Risk is intrinsic to the system of internal audit and governance and mitigation of those risks are covered within the Business Plan 2023-25

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 Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 provides the citizens and service users with evidence of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements for the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service.

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)	2016	Jackie Wilding Director of Resources Tel: 01772 906994
Shared Service Business Plan 2023/25	2023	Andrew Taylor Assistant Director (Head of Revenues and Benefits) Tel: 01772 906013

Contact for further information:

Jackie Wilding Director of Resources Preston City Council	01772 906994	J.Wilding@preston.gov.uk
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**REVENUES & BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE
ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
2022/23**

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

To this end the Joint Committee requires robust reporting and performance management arrangements in place that meet the requirements of each partner authority.

1.2 The “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework” 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 Framework 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. These include 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 outlines the systems, processes, culture and values by which the Joint Committee is directed and controlled, to ensure a quality, cost effective service is delivered to each partner authority.

2.2 The Joint Committee is not a free standing body in its own right. Appropriate arrangements for the good governance of its affairs must therefore be made, drawing upon the established good governance practices at both 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, processes, and performance management arrangements which are in place and which constitute the system of governance which 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. It sets out the standard and quality of services to be provided.
- 4.2 The Agreement provides that the Joint Committee be made up of two Executive Members 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 provided to the Joint Committee by the S151 Officers at both Lancaster City Council and Preston City Council. The Director of Resources at Preston City Council is considered the Secretary to the Joint Committee.
- 4.4 The Head of Shared Service provides performance monitoring reports to the Joint Committee upon request. Furthermore, the Head of Shared Service and the Section 151 Officer at Preston City Council present reports at each annual meeting of the Joint Committee providing the following details;
 - A statement showing key service objectives in the new business plan;
 - A summary of the revenue account and a statement of capital spending. This includes 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 partner authority 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 to ensure that it complies 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 periodically to the Section 151 Officer of each partner authority.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1 The risks associated with the 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;
 - ICT and associated systems - Maintenance and connectivity issues, causing disruption to IT systems
 - Reduction in quality of service and/or performance
 - Welfare Reform - Transfer of responsibility to DWP for housing costs, changing regulations:
- 6.2 The Risk Register has been reviewed as part of the process of compiling the SSBP and the Plan contains a range of actions aimed at mitigating these risks. An extract from the Risk Register is provided at **Appendix C**.

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 following staff consultation, which
- set out the core purpose, values and guiding principles for the partnership, in line with those of each partner authority, and
 - identified and addressed any staff development needs.
- 7.2 Workforce planning has helped to deliver quality and cost effective services. The majority of the 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 times of change, consultation takes place with frontline staff. They are fully involved and understand their role in the process, which provides re-assurance and commitment.
- 7.4 Long term workforce planning provides the opportunity to link training and development needs with future skill requirements. Strategies can then be devised to meet these needs. e.g. Universal Credit

8. Scrutiny & Audit

- 8.1 Accounts relating to the Shared Service are open to inspection by the Joint Committee and each partner authority. 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 a meaningful scrutiny of its performance.
- 8.2 The internal audit service is delivered by an in-house team operating to professional standards as set out in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal audit for the Shared Service was previously predominantly provided by the Lancaster City Council Internal Audit service, assisted by the Preston team when required, but it has been agreed to share the workload over the next 12 months. Where appropriate, reports are issued separately to the Audit Committee of each partner authority.
- 8.3 The two Councils work to different assurance scales:
- Preston: Full; Substantial; Reasonable; Limited; Minimal
 - Lancaster (MIAA) High; Substantial; Moderate; Limited; No

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 Team. Additional assurance is provided by support services, the internal audit service and by any work of external audit.
- 9.2 The Business Plan contains performance data to show performance against agreed targets together with draft financial statements. Any service issues will be outlined for Members' consideration.
- 9.3 Officers strive for continuous improvement and review lessons learned from previous financial years.

Signatures

Chair of the Shared Services Joint Committee: _____

S151 Officers of the Partner local authorities: _____ (Lancaster)

_____ (Preston)

6th July 2023

**Revenues & Benefits Shared Service
Subsidy Assurance & Internal Audit Reports Issued 2022/23 and additional evidence:**

Note: The two Councils work to different assurance scales:

DWP Subsidy: Lancaster “Certified” in relation to approved subsidy claim.

Internal Audit: Preston: Full; Substantial; Reasonable; Limited; Minimal
Lancaster (MIAA): High; Substantial; Moderate; Limited; No

Job No	JOB_TITLE	Report Date	Assurance Opinion	Assurance Opinion Text
DWP - BENEFITS:				
2021/22	DWP Subsidy Audit (Lancaster) KPMG Auditors	31/10/22	Certified	Following receipt of the 2021/22 claim: DWP confirmed that there were no financial implications resulting from a minor issue identified, and the HB Subsidy Claim was certified with no qualification. (£24m subsidy payment).
2021/22	(Preston) Grant Thornton Auditors		Ongoing	Due to several delays with the DWP subsidy audit the claim is ongoing.

Internal Audit Work:

For the 2022/23 financial year several Audits were completed.

Job No	JOB_TITLE	Report Date	Assurance Opinion	Assurance Opinion Text
	Business Support Grants (Lancaster)	July 2022	Substantial	There is a good system of internal control designed to meet the system objectives, and that controls are generally being applied consistently.
	Revenues and Benefits – On-line claim form (Preston)	28/03/23	Substantial	A Substantial assurance rating has therefore been placed on the control environment and the extent to which risks are mitigated regarding the management and

Job No	JOB_TITLE	Report Date	Assurance Opinion	Assurance Opinion Text
	Review of Revenues and Benefits Application (Salford Technical Audit)	23/01/23	Substantial	<p>operation of the on-line claim form.</p> <p>Based on the review of the management of the Revenue & Benefits System, we have concluded that, generally, there are robust measures in place to manage the associated key risks.</p>
	Council Tax Review 2021/22 (Lancaster)	September 2022	Moderate	<p>There is an adequate system of internal control, however, in some areas weaknesses in design and/or inconsistent application of controls puts the achievement of some aspects of the system objectives at risk.</p>

REVENUES & BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE RISK LOG

	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
1.	ICT & Systems	Low	Critical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance contracts in place with demanding service levels. • Installation Procurement of improved new connection between the two Councils • Business continuity plans developed and tested. Resources utilised for home working arrangements. • PRINCE2 accredited ICT project managers. • Regular updates and de-briefs between project leaders, the project manager and heads of service. • Dedicated Account Managers for high profile systems. • Procured Capita Remote Support for Academy Systems. • Disaster Recovery testing frequently carried out
2.	Reduction in quality of service and/or performance	Low	Significant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously review staff structure ensuring it remains fit for purpose. • Contingency plans in place to enable input of additional resources from either site to minimise risk during early stages. • Set realistic performance targets. • Overview by Joint Committee and S151 Officers.
3.	Welfare Reform	Medium	Significant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Credit (i.e., transferring responsibility for paying housing costs from the LA to DWP) when forecasting staffing numbers required to perform the residual tasks associated with UC. • Shortfall in income through the introduction of Localised Council Tax Support Scheme and not being able to collect from customers who have previously not paid Council Tax. Pressure on Revenues teams to maintain collection rates. • Lack of information on changes to the benefits systems from DWP and DLUHC poses a risk for Council's that they will not forecast income/ expenditure/resources accurately (in addition to grant cuts).

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

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