

Ridgeway Shared Services Partnership

NOTICE OF MEETING

MEETING	Ridgeway Shared Service Partnership Strategic Board
DATE/ TIME	Monday 10 May 2010 9am
PLACE	CONFERENCE ROOM 1, THE ABBEY HOUSE, ABINGDON
CONTACT OFFICER	Name: Steve Culliford Telephone: 01235 540307 E-mail: steve.culliford@whitehorsedc.gov.uk Websites: www.southoxon.gov.uk and www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

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Membership

<i>Councillor</i>	<i>Representing</i>
Mrs E A Ducker	South Oxfordshire District Council
Mr I R Mann	South Oxfordshire District Council
Mrs M De Vere	Vale of White Horse District Council
Mr J Patterson	Vale of White Horse District Council



MARGARET REED
Head of Legal and Democratic Services
South Oxfordshire District Council and Vale of White Horse District Council

28 April 2010

AGENDA

Open to the Public including the Press

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence.

2. **Minutes**

(Pages 3 - 6)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Ridgeway Shared Services Partnership Strategic Board meeting held on 1 March 2010.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of interest.

4. **Urgent Business**

To receive notification of any matters which the Chair(man) determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent.

5. **Minutes of the Operations Board**

To receive and note the outcome of any issues arising at the Ridgeway Shared Services Partnership Operations Board.

6. **Performance Monitoring**

(Pages 7 - 14)

7. **Dates of Forthcoming Meetings**

To note that next meeting of the Strategic Board will be held on **Monday 2 August 2010 at 8.30am**. This will be the first meeting at which the chairmanship and administration of the board transfers to South Oxfordshire District Council. Therefore, the meeting will be at that council's offices in Crowmarsh.



Minutes of a meeting of the **Ridgeway Shared Service Partnership Strategic Board**

held at the Abbey House, Abingdon
on Monday 1 March 2010 at 9am

Open to the Public, including the Press

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillors Mary de Vere (Chair), Rodney Mann (Vice-Chairman), and Jerry Patterson

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Bishop, Steve Culliford, Paul Howden, and William Jacobs

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Nil

8. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was recorded from Councillor Ann Ducker.

9. Minutes

The minutes from the Strategic Board's meeting held on 2 November 2009 were adopted as a correct record.

10. Declarations of interest

None

11. Urgent business

None

12. Minutes of the Operations Board

The minutes of the Operations Board meetings held on 23 November 2009, 18 January and 15 February 2010 were noted.

Compared to other benchmark local authorities, both South Oxfordshire and the Vale's performance on accuracy of administering benefits claims was still poor. Inaccuracies had led to overpayments. In addition, the speed of administering claimants' changed circumstances was also considered poor. Capita had previously said it could not report on performance of this element. However, it was suggested that the council should set a target for Capita to achieve.

The Audit Commission had criticised both councils on benefits' performance. An action plan to reduce the problems identified by the Audit Commission had been drafted and was appended to the agenda in response to the auditor's report (see minute 13 below).

The board members were disappointed with Capita's continued poor benefits performance in these areas. Members agreed to question Capita about these problems when its representatives were invited into the meeting. It was considered that Capita should be reminded of its contractual obligations to achieve top quartile performance.

With regard to the cash receipting system at South Oxfordshire, the board noted that the unresolved issues would be overcome soon and new procedure manuals implemented by the end of March.

13. Certification of 2008/09 grant claims

The board considered the Audit Commission's reports on the certification of 2008/09 claims and returns by the two councils. The reports stated that neither council had adequate controls in place for the administration housing and council tax benefits, which given the public sums involved (over £20M for each council) was a serious conclusion. Contractual claims would be made to Capita for the councils' resulting loss of government subsidy. It was noted that Capita was still disputing a similar claim for loss of subsidy at the Vale in 2007/08.

Agreed action plans had been prepared in response to the audit reports and these would be implemented with Capita.

The board was disappointed with the audit reports and agreed to raise this with Capita later in the meeting.

14. Performance monitoring

Capita representatives Sue King and Darren Keen were invited into the meeting to report on performance. They highlighted that Council Tax collection rates were high, similar to last year, as was collection of national non-domestic rates.

Turning to benefits, Capita reported that the number of claims had increased in recent months. The speed of administering the claims was now 21 days for the Vale and 23 for South Oxfordshire. This was an improving trend on the year-to-date performance of 25 days for each council.

Changes to a benefits claimant's circumstances (known as changed events) currently took 22 days to administer for the Vale and 26 days for South Oxfordshire. The board members considered that this performance was poor and called for much better performance, suggesting a target of 7 or 8 days was set. Whilst Capita's representatives agreed that the

time taken to process these changes was too long, they did not believe a target of 7 or 8 days was possible without additional cost to the councils. The board members pointed out that the contract with Capita required top quartile performance. The councils expected this level of performance for the current contract consideration. The board considered that a target of 7 or 8 days should be achievable as it had been achieved by Capita previously under this contract and by Capita for other councils too. Capita reported that it would be difficult to set a target at this stage and asked for this to be agreed once data had been received in April. The board disagreed, believing that the two councils must be able to start their new financial years in April knowing what their targets were. The board asked that a lower target was agreed between the councils' client officer and Capita before the end of March. Continuing at the current level of performance was likely to result in both councils being penalised, with likely financial claims to Capita. The board members asked that the target and the payment and performance mechanism were discussed at the next meeting.

The accuracy of processing benefits claims was discussed also. The figures for January had been unacceptably low. Capita's manager apologised for this and was investigating the causes. He agreed to report his findings and resulting actions back to the board. The board noted that February's performance had improved but not to the target level. The board was again disappointed with this performance and reminded Capita of the importance to the contract of improving the accuracy of processing benefits claims. Capita was asked why performance differed between councils across the country. In response, Capita believed that each council had differing demands in checking benefits applications and there was a question over the interpretation of the term "accuracy". The board members advised Capita that the Audit Commission's definition of accuracy was the only definition it should concentrate on. The client officer and Capita were asked to discuss this to fully understand of how the councils' performance should be measured.

Capita was also requested to be more open with its benefits' data. It was noted that Capita's manager monitored performance on a monthly basis. The board suggested that monitoring should be increased to weekly, until performance had improved to target levels. Capita's representatives agreed to introduce weekly monitoring and to find the causes of under-performance. Board members asked for weekly monitoring data on the accurate processing of benefits claims.

Turning to exchequer services, the board noted that performance against the indicator for the payment of invoices within 30 days was still not at target levels. This was to be the subject of a report to the Vale's Scrutiny Committee in March.

RESOLVED

- (a) that by the end of March 2010 the councils' client officer and Capita be requested to agree a target and payment performance mechanism for changes to a benefit claimant's circumstances and these matters be discussed at the next board meeting;*
- (b) that the councils' client officer and Capita be requested to discuss the Audit Commission's definition of accuracy and use this as the performance measure; and*
- (c) that weekly monitoring data on the accurate processing of benefits claims be sent to board members.*

15. Dates of forthcoming meetings

The board agreed to move the date of its next formal meeting to Monday 10 May 2010. This would be held at 9am in the Abbey House, Abingdon.

The meeting rose at 11.21 am

Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) & South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) Financial Services Contract March 2010 Summary

Highlights
<p>2009/10 council tax in-year collection rate of 98.63% for VWHDC is 0.19% higher than last year and SODC's collection of 98.51% is 0.18% higher than last year. These are best recorded in-year collection rates.</p> <p>2009/10 NNDR in-year collection rate for VWHDC is 0.37% higher than last year and SODC is 0.43% higher than last year.</p> <p>Accounts Receivable – All 811 invoices were created within the 5 working day target.</p>
General Comments
<p>Council tax annual bills and Benefit end of year up-rating letters have understandably impacted on service performance for March. Correspondence received significantly increased and the Contact Centre handled approximately 20,000 Revenues and Benefit calls during March alone.</p>
Council Tax
<p>Percentage of council tax collected – Final in-year collection is 98.63% for VWHDC and 98.51% for SODC, against an end of year target of 98.60% for both councils. These are best recorded in-year collection rates.</p> <p>The in-year collection for VWHDC is 0.19% higher than last year (98.44%), whilst SODC is 0.18% higher (98.33%).</p> <p>The collection rates for 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 currently stand at 99.46% and 99.30% respectively for VWHDC and 99.21% and 99.12% respectively for SODC.</p> <p>Direct debit take-up for March 2010 is 76.56% compared to 74.75% last month for VWHDC and 74.03% compared to 73.08% last month for SODC.</p> <p>VWHDC outstanding correspondence currently stands at 305 items (equates to approximately 2 days worth of incoming post) compared to 179 last month. SODC outstanding correspondence figure currently stands at 531 (which equates to approximately 3.2 days worth of incoming post) compared to 223 last month. The sharp increase from that of last month is due to the impact of the 2010/11 annual bills being dispatched. All correspondence and refund requests for both authorities are within target.</p> <p>There were no issues to report following the final March 2009/10 recovery run for either council.</p> <p>Equita (bailiffs) collected £49,345.38 and £96,045.82 during March for VWHDC and SODC respectively. Their year-to-date collection figure is £477,258.91 and £692,294.64.</p>

One 'flooded' case in VWHDC remains empty.

Business Rates

Percentage of business rates collected – Final in-year collection, excluding debit deferred by the Government's new NNDR deferral scheme, is **98.94%** for VWHDC and **98.87%** for SODC, against a year end target of **98.60%**.

Again, excluding deferred debit, VWHDC is **0.37%** ahead of last year (**98.57%**) and SODC is **0.43%** ahead (**98.44%**).

Collection including deferred debit would be **98.60%** for VWHDC and **98.34%** for SODC (see comparison table below).

NNDR Collection Nov 2009	In-Year collection including deferred debit	In-year collection excluding deferred debit	Difference
VWHDC	98.60%	98.94%	0.34%
SODC	98.34%	98.87%	0.53%

There were no issues to report following the March 2009/10 recovery run for either council.

Benefits

New claims – Monthly performance is **19.74** days for VWHDC and **19.91** days for SODC. Both are within the 20.5 day target.

The year-to-date performance for New Claims for VWHDC and SODC is **24.20** days and **24.75** days respectively. The SODC figure is not the final position as there is still 2 months worth of data to cleanse. The initial year end target was 20.5 days and the recovery target was 24 days.

Change Events (changes of circumstances) - Monthly performance is **15.03** days for VWHDC and **17.97** days for SODC.

The year-to-date performance for Change Events for VWHDC and SODC is **14.73** days and **15.20** days respectively.

The Change event data is being reviewed for the entire year as the SHBE extract has given contradictory figures for March.

Right Benefit Indicator (NI 180) –The latest performance data is still derived from the SHBE and shows **10,137** changes for VWHDC and **11,853** changes for SODC. This indicator has been abolished by the DWP from 1 April 2010

Right Time Indicator (NI 181) - This indicator is a combination of processing times for new claims and change events.

Monthly performance is **16.43** days for VWHDC and **18.62** days for SODC.

The year-to-date performance for N181 for VWHDC and SODC is **16.38** days and **17.00** days, respectively. However, SODC figures are provisional as data cleansing continues.

Outstanding Work Profile

VWHDC outstanding workload currently stands at **909** items (equates to approximately **8** days worth of incoming post) compared to **307** last month. SODC outstanding workload currently stands at **725** (which equates to approximately **6** days worth of incoming post) compared to **411** last month.

Overpayments

SODC

Year	Total Outstanding	No of Individual Customers	On Arrangement	No of Individual Customers
1995	£4,258.97	1	£0.00	0
1996	£1,335.27	1	£0.00	0
1997	£2,731.53	4	£0.00	0
1998	£17,308.96	7	£0.00	0
1999	£12,785.16	6	£2,133.00	1
2000	£6,884.27	8	£345.83	2
2001	£38,447.11	28	£10,590.77	3
2002	£32,827.22	27	£12,774.58	6
2003	£32,364.60	34	£13,652.66	7
2004	£89,617.02	63	£42,540.82	27
2005	£112,359.24	103	£42,430.31	28
2006	£214,327.99	226	£74,449.44	42
2007	£217,365.18	251	£93,854.99	76
2008	£280,427.05	329	£115,590.11	150
2009	£540,916.38	655	£296,682.75	378
	£1,603,955.95	1,743	£705,045.26	720

44.0% (41.6% prev)

41.3% (40.8% prev)

As at 31 March 2010 the debt from years prior to 2009 has reduced by **£276,607** Whilst in 2009 we have recovered **63.2%** of all debts raised during the year amounting to **£928,658**.

VOWH

Year	Total Outstanding	No of Individual Customers	On Arrangement	No of Individual Customers
1996	£20,970.00	1	£20,970.00	1
1998	£17,355.00	2	£0.00	0
1999	£3,437.51	1	£3,437.51	1
2000	£7,861.12	7	£3,713.00	3
2001	£18,454.45	8	£13,985.73	3
2002	£9,778.71	8	£1,879.36	4
2003	£37,588.16	27	£9,025.31	7
2004	£41,934.25	62	£16,961.08	15
2005	£89,285.13	55	£46,923.90	19
2006	£153,436.15	153	£52,691.95	37
2007	£158,209.95	230	£51,869.15	89

2008	£263,242.66	311	£127,881.97	170
2009	£440,751.64	610	£269,439.29	353
	£1,262,304.73	1475	£618,778.25	702
			49.0% (47.7% prev)	47.6% (47.1% prev)

As at 31 March 2010 the debt from years prior to 2009 has reduced by **£242,728**. Whilst in 2009 we have recovered **60.5%** of all debts raised during the year amounting to **£677,403**.

Accuracy – An implementation date is being awaited for the Academy Quality Module and a full time Quality Officer started on 1 April 2010.

March in-month financial accuracy based on council statutory checks was **80.65%** for VWHDC and **84.76%** for SODC.

Cumulative year end performance (based on council statutory checks) is **81.71%** for VWHDC and **81.20%** for SODC.

An overarching improvement plan has been formulated to improve accuracy and will be reviewed weekly.

Exchequer Services

Payment of invoices within 30 days – Provisional monthly performance for VWHDC is **97.82%** and **97.13%** for SODC. The provisional year-to-date figures (Inc disputed items to be identified by the service teams) are **94.46%** for VWHDC and **96.02%** for SODC.

Capita target (100% of invoices paid within 5 working days of receipt of correctly authorised payment) - Monthly performance was **100%** for both councils.

Accounts Receivable

Invoices created within 5 working days - Monthly performance was **100%** for VWHDC and **100%** for SODC, with Capita creating **750** and **661** invoices respectively during March within the 5 working day target.

Financial Management System (FMS)

99% system availability during supported hours – System availability was at **100%** during March for SODC and **100%** for VWHDC.

Payroll was processed on time for both councils.

Purchase Order Usage

March usage for VWHDC was **27.94%**

March usage for SODC was **34.58%**

The target for both of the above is in excess of 90%

Cash Office (South Oxfordshire only)

Ongoing issues with the new Civica system are being addressed by the Council

Contact Centre

Revenues and Benefits calls - the Coventry contact centre took **8,930** and **10,810** calls for VWHDC and SODC respectively. SLA (% of calls answered within 20 seconds) was **85%** and **85%**. The longest wait times were **948** and **714** seconds and abandoned calls numbered **65** and **59** respectively. Payments totalling **£83,891.41** were collected from SODC council taxpayers.

SODC switchboard – **6,461** calls were answered with a further **292** abandoned. **86.6%** of calls were answered within 20 seconds, whilst **92.6%** were answered within 50 seconds. The longest wait time was **462** seconds.

Assisted Travel – **253** and **324** calls were answered for VWHDC and SODC respectively with **3** and **9** calls being abandoned for either council. **94%** and **93%** of calls were answered within 20 seconds. A total of **177** and **230** new applications were received for the scheme with a further **15** and **14** pending further information.

2009/10 RRSP Performance comparisons		Mar-10	2008/09 Year-end Performance	MARCH 2008/09 In-month Performance	MARCH 2009/10 In-month Performance	MARCH 2009/10 Cumulative Performance	MARCH 2009/10 Cumulative Target	2009/10 Year-End Target
BVPI 8 (%) Payment of invoices within 30 days	VWHDC		92.39%	96.41%	97.82%	94.46%	99.00%	99.00%
	SODC		94.25%	95.22%	97.13%	96.02%	99.00%	99.00%
BVPI 9 (%) Council Tax Collection	VWHDC		98.44%	0.74%	0.82%	98.63%	98.60%	98.60%
	SODC		98.33%	0.77%	0.93%	98.51%	98.60%	98.60%
BVPI 10 (%) NNDR Collection	VWHDC		98.57%	0.95%	0.37%	98.94%	99.40%	99.40%
	SODC		98.44%	0.65%	1.28%	98.87%	99.40%	99.40%
BVPI 78a (Days) Benefit New Claims Processing	VWHDC		31.23	41.29	19.74	24.20	20.50	20.50
	SODC		34.38	43.72	19.91	24.75	20.50	20.50
NI 180 Benefit Change Events	VWHDC		10,956	New Indicator	not yet known	10,137	n/a	n/a
	SODC		11,103	New Indicator	not yet known	11,853	n/a	n/a
NI 181 (Days) Benefit New Claims & Changes Processing	VWHDC		New Indicator	New Indicator	16.43	16.38	24	24
	SODC		New Indicator	New Indicator	18.62	17.00	24	24

as @ 31/03/2010



	VWHDC	SODC
NNDR Hereditaments	3,697 (3,697)	4,036 (4,035)
Council tax dwellings	50,527 (50,450)	56,248 (56,210)
Benefits caseload	6,108 (6,178)	6,494 (6,561)

figs. in brackets are last month's comparison

Benefits Accuracy Action Plan - March 2010

Log no	Task	Completion date	Action to date	Follow-up action required	Owner(s)	RAG status
1	Complete the agreed recommendations to address the shortcomings highlighted in the Audit Commission's Certification of Annual Claims and Returns - Annual Report (relating to the benefits subsidy grant audit).	31 May 2010	i. An action plan has been agreed for each council and reported to the Ridgeway Shared Services Board (RSSP) and respective Audit and Corporate Governance Committees. Actions will be monitored. ii All recommendations (apart from one) have been actioned. The remaining action relating to checking coding for the 2009/10 subsidy claims is currently being undertaken.	Confirmation from Capita that the coding checks have been completed on the 2009/10 claims before they are passed to the Audit Commission	Darren Keen/Paul Howden	☹
2	Capita to provide an improvement plan to address quality issues in its claims processing administration (predominantly at Havant)	Ongoing	i Weekly conference calls are taking place to discuss issues which have arisen during the previous week. ii Full time quality officer appointed at Havant to work on South/Vale contract. QO started 1 April. 2 main issues identified and remedial training given. Performance Improvement Plans implemented for 2 staff.		Darren Keen/Sue King	☹
3	Revised targets for accuracy as well as new targets to try and reduce administrative delays to be agreed and incorporated into payment and performance mechanism.	30 April 2010	Proposed new targets include: 90.5 per cent for accuracy; 19 days for new claims; 9.5 days for changes in circumstances; 12/13 days for NI181(change events). Note - P&P mech may take longer to sign off.	NI181 data yet to be produced by DWP. Once received this will help in setting a reasonable target. SB/WJ/PH to meet on 27 April to discuss P&P mech implications and will then feedback to Capita.	Darren Keen/Paul Howden/Sue King/William Jacobs	☹
4	Additional benefit administrative subsidy received from DWP to help with ongoing effects of economic downturn to be passported to Capita. Additional subsidy is £55,966 for Vale and £49,848 for South	30 April 2010	Proposal received from DK (Capita) on 9 April.	PH to complete CCN.	Darren Keen/Paul Howden	☹
5	Capita to implement Academy Quality Assurance software on Vale/South contract.	30 June 2010	Capita undertaking a feasibility study and waiting for details on timescales. Capita to implement software.	Update required from Capita in due course. Capita awaiting implementation timetable from Academy.	Darren Keen	☹
6	DWP's Performance Development Team (PDT) to provide free consultancy to help improve performance.	TBC	Initial meeting held with Alan Sullivan (PDT) on 12 March 2010. Initial 1 day visit to Havant now arranged for 30 April.	PH to ask PDT re future reporting timescales.	Darren Keen/Paul Howden	☹
7	Benchmarking with other authorities will be stepped up to encourage better performance and help identify and apply best practice.	Ongoing	Initial 2010/11 MKOB (plus others) meeting to take place at WODC on 23 April. National Capita/Client forum to take place in Coventry on 13 May.		Paul Howden	☹
8	RSSP Board will monitor accuracy on a weekly basis until improvements are apparent.	Ongoing	Weekly statistics now being received (26 March)		Darren Keen	☺

Benefits Accuracy Action Plan - March 2010

Log no	Task	Completion date	Action to date	Follow-up action required	Owner(s)	RAG status
9	Capita/councils will work closely with the Audit Commission to ensure the 2009/10 subsidy claim is signed off without qualification.	31/5/2010 unaudited claim 30/11/2010 audited claim	Initial meeting held with Kevin Stewart (AC) on 24 February during which 2009/10 process was explained. Meeting between MKOB authorities and AC to discuss 2009/10 process took place on 15 April.	Meetings as and when required before and during grant claim audit.	Darren Keen/Paul Howden	
10	Capita's Local Government Services Managing Director and the Chief Executive continue to closely monitor the situation.	Ongoing	Regular meetings have taken place - the next one being held on 19 April. Meeting cancelled due to volcano issue.	Rearrange cancelled meeting.	Mark Chapman/David Buckle/Steve Bishop	

Capita and the councils commit to completing the actions in this Benefits Improvement Plan, to achieve demonstrable improvement to benefit accuracy within 3 months (by mid June 2010) as well as continuous improvement throughout 2010/11.

Signed on behalf of Capita

Signed on behalf of SODC & Vale



Sue King



Steve Bishop

Date : 6 April 2010

Date : 6 April 2010

