REPORT OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF
THE STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP - JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 12 OCTOBER, 6.00 PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
NORTHMEAD HOUSE, CREEKMOOR, POOLE

Present:

Christchurch District Council
Councillors Janet Abbott, Lesley Dedman, Frederick Neale

East Dorset District Council
Councillors Shane Bartlett, Peter Oggelsby, George Russell

North Dorset District Council
Councillors David Milsted, Esme Butler, Jane Somper

Poole Borough Council
Councillor David Newell

Apologies: None

Officers: Paul Hudson, Partnership Manager (SVPP)
          Ian Milner, Strategic Director (EDDC)
          Julie-Ann Wyatt, Business & Change Manager (SVPP)
          Lisa Cotton, Customer Access Manager (BOP)
          Sandra Deary, Committee Services Officer (NDDC)

14. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

   Resolved

   That Councillor Milsted be appointed Chairman of the Stour Valley & Poole
   Partnership Scrutiny Panel for 2016/17.

15. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

   Resolved

   That Councillor Russell be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Stour Valley & Poole
   Partnership Scrutiny Panel for 2016/17.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

   No declarations of interest were made by Members.

17. URGENT BUSINESS

   There were no items of Urgent Business.

18. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE STOUR VALLEY AND POOLE PARTNERSHIP

   The Chairman advised that any changes to the Terms of Reference would need to be
   agreed by full Council of each authority. It was agreed that the Terms of References
   should remain the same as the change in venue should ensure that a Member from
   each authority was able to attend future meetings.
19. **Budget 2016/17**

The Partnership Manager tabled a summary of the budget. He advised that the table, as at August, showed that there would be an underspent of 3% by the year end. He advised that this was unlikely to be the case and the Partnership remained on target to meet the budget for the financial year.

As requested by the Scrutiny Panel this report was presented to Members for review and comment. There had not been a variance of more than 5%, therefore no trigger point had been reached to bring a report to the Scrutiny Panel.

In relation to additional funding for Fraud and Error, Cllr Somper asked how many high risk cases had been looked at. The Partnership Manager advised that this was in the region of 1800 for the year.

**Resolved**

To note the contents of the report.

20. **PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

The Business & Change Manager gave an update on performance as follows:

As at the end of Q2, new claims processing days averaged at 20 days and change of circumstances averaged at 9 days. She reminded members that the target for processing new claims was 19 days and for processing change of circumstances was 10 days.

The Chairman said that this was good news which had been achieved through the hard work of officers.

The Business & Change Manager added that the performance for the Council Tax and Business Rates were on target to achieve a 98% collection rate.

She explained that the enforcement team was now an in-house service. This was unusual in Local Government.

Cllr Bartlett asked why the enforcement team was in-house. The Partnership Manager advised that the Government had changed regulations and introduced set fees. In order to establish an Enforcement Service in time for the new regulations, and to mitigate potential redundancy costs, it had been agreed to bring the enforcement service in house. The service had been set up to cover its own costs, with any surplus being returned to the sovereign Councils. He added that it had always been the aim of the Partnership to have an in-house enforcement service.

Cllr Russell enquired who made the decision to write off debt. The Partnership Manager advised that Officers process Write Offs in accordance with the Collaboration Agreement and Scheme of Delegation for each Sovereign Council.

The Business & Change Manager highlighted that the Customer Contact Team had achieved all targets except for the percentage of calls answered within 1 minute.

The Chairman felt that this was an encouraging report.
Cllr Bartlett felt that it was important to retain a face-to-face service as not all customers were able to access the internet. The Customer Access Manager advised that a face-to-face service would be available. Customers would be assisted to go online by officers if necessary. She added that the EDDC & Christchurch service would remain the same. However, discussions were taking place with NDDC in respect of future face-to-face delivery.

The Business & Change Manager advised that performance had now been removed of the risk register as it had stabilised. However, a new risk had been added at No. 9. The risk register would be brought to committee quarterly with the performance update.

Resolved

To note the report.

21. FORWARD PLAN

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Panel should take place on 7 December.

12. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the business specified in Item 23 because it is likely that, if members of the press and public were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing that information.

23. BUSINESS CASE REVIEW AND FEASIBILITY STUDY UPDATE

The Partnership Manager presented the Feasibility Study for joint working in Revenues and benefits.

Following discussions it was agreed that the Feasibility Study should be taken forward to a business case for both options set out in the report with the following points to be noted by the Joint Committee:

- From carrying out a full review of the Feasibility Study it demonstrated that there were merits in producing a Business Case for SVPP & Bournemouth and Dorset wide.
- That local “face-to-face” non-appointment access for residents, especially in rural areas, was seen to be very important for customers and should be considered alongside any channel shift strategies.
- That performance should be maintained.
- That the ICT systems should be aligned to minimize risk to service delivery.
- That the potential size of the new partnership should allow for contracts to be re-negotiated.
- That the Business Case take account of any changes to Local Government in Dorset.
- That it be noted that the Revenues and Benefits Service can operate successfully in Partnership as is demonstrated successfully by the SVPP.
24. **DATE, TIME AND VENUE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

   Wednesday 7 December 2016, Northmead House, Creekmoor, Poole.

   The meeting ended at 7:55 pm

   **CHAIRMAN**