

MINUTES of the meeting of the **ORBIS** Public Law Joint Committee held at 2.00 pm on 15 April 2019 at Room 154, BHCC, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 3BQ.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its next meeting.

Elected Members:

- * Councillor Andrew Wealls (Chair) Substituting for Council Les Hamilton
- * Councillor David Elkin
- * Councillor Bob Lanzer
- * Councillor Charlotte Morley

In attendance

Philip Baker, Assistant Chief Executive (East Sussex County Council) & Interim Head of Orbis Public Law (OPL)
Elizabeth Culbert, Head of Legal Services (Brighton & Hove City Council) (Substituting for Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis)
Tony Kershaw, Director of Law & Assurance (West Sussex County Council)
Geoff Wild, Interim Director of Law and Governance (Surrey County Council)
Andrea Kilby, Orbis Public Law Business Development Manager
Louise Lawson, Principal Accountant Orbis Finance
Emma Nash, Orbis Public Law Project Manager

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE [Item 1]

Apologies were received from Councillor Leslie Hamilton (Brighton & Hove City Council) and Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis.

16 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING [Item 2]

The minutes of the ORBIS Public Law Joint Committee meeting held on 2 July 2018 were agreed as a true record of that meeting.

17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

18 INTEGRATION UPDATE [Item 4]

The Committee considered a report on the work done to integrate the ORBIS Public Law partnership, introduced by Philip Baker.

Key points raised during the meeting:

The Committee were informed that the OPL Interim Leadership Team had been working undertaken significant work last year on starting to design single teams. The approach which is set out in the paper details a time recorded audit had been undertaken to achieve base data. Workshops, meetings and input from ORBIS Human Resources had also taken place. It was noted that more work towards cost efficiency was required. Next steps are to appoint a full time Head of OPL. However, due to Surrey County Council (SCC) reviewing participation in OPL, the appointment has been paused while OPL await the outcome of this.

The integration of insurance claims has moved forward with the handling of claims for BHCC and SCC moving from Orbis to OPL, where East and West Sussex County Councils are already covered. The management of staff at partner's offices has been a useful test prior to other cross partner team forming.

The first OPL Advocate has been appointed and started carrying out advocacy for all partners. Two further posts are to be recruited, however it remains a challenge. It was noted that in-house advocacy resulted in savings over instructing external advocates.

OPL has jointly procured a new legal services framework which covers the provision of external legal services advice, representation and casework.

It was noted that the performance data for the monitoring activity pilot recorded data time spent on a file, but not the efficiency.

Performance data for quarter 3 was noted.

Following questions from the Committee on the presentation it was noted that savings have been made by using in-house advocacy with added resilience across partners. Staffing levels were also discussed with confirmation that the number of blank open files on the charts represented those not completed.

Resolved: That the Committee dually noted the report and endorsed the continued approach.

19 IT ENABLING PROJECTS UPDATE [Item 5]

The Committee considered the report on the implementation of projects which will provide the process and systems to enable savings relating to operation of a single service, introduced by Andrea Kilby.

Key points raised during the meeting:

The Committee were informed that the Digital Court project has been providing electronic bundles to the family court instead of hard copy lever arch files. To enable this, a 'cloud' based software solution has been procured. The project is now fully implemented across Surrey and Sussex family courts. Tier 1 magistrate implementation is planned for spring 2019.

The implementation has proved to be efficient, with considerable savings predicted to be in the order of £90,000 annually. Along with the costs, the time savings are estimated to be 13,000 hours. It was noted that tablets are provided in court for use by all parties involved and support has been shown by judges to enable the change. Benefits include better security resulting from less emails and no paper copies being posted, positive impact on reputation, reduction on paper and couriers.

The Committee noted the success of the project and felt the idea had potential to be rolled out across the UK as it had been such a great success.

The Committee were updated on the data base rationalisation project. The project aims to create a single instance of the case management system, Civica Prescient Plus, whereby data may be shared by OPL partners. It was noted that the projected savings were £68, 572 over 5 years. Increased speed and efficiency were benefits of the streamlining.

The Committee were informed following questions, that other authorities, including Lancashire are looking into the savings. OPL are happy to trial different ways of working and are accepting of change.

RESOLVED: That the Committee dually noted the benefits already realised and the future benefits these key projects will bring for all OPL partners.

20 FINANCE UPDATE [Item 6]

Louise Lawson introduced the update and informed the Committee that following a two-year shadow operational budget, it is recommended that the operating budget becomes a joint operating budget from 1 April 2019. It was noted the operating budget is £9.9m.

The Committee were informed following questions that one rate would be used; the drive to budget was across all partners; and that Surrey County Council have paused further integration whilst a review is undertaken.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- 1) approved the introduction of a joint operating budget from 1 April 2019;
- 2) recommended the draft 2019/20 operating budget; and
- 3) agreed the basis for calculating the contributions to the joint operating budget.

21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS [Item 7]

None.

Meeting ended at: 3.10 pm

Chairman