

WATFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL & THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Action Plan – Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

(Completed items in ***Bold Italics***)

Recommendation			Management Response		Implementation	
Report para number	Description	Risk priority	Agreed	Comments/Action	By whom	Date
3.6.1	The authority should liaise with their external auditors regarding the £4,000 discrepancy between Civica, Academy and the finance system, to establish their thoughts on this amount and whether it is material.	High	Yes	External auditors are scheduled to visit w/c 6 September, To raise issue of whether situation is “material” then.	Revenues Manager	October 2010
3.6.2	Ongoing processes should be set up to ensure daily reconciliation of payments between Cedar and Academy is maintained and not just reconcile to the posting file.	High	Yes	Situation currently under review and part of discussions between R & B and Finance	Benefits Manager	Nov 2010
3.6.3	Responsibility for Statutory returns such as the NNDR2 should be made clearer	Medium	Yes	Intention to include statutory returns as duties to be performed by “Systems / Control” post	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Dec 2010

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3.6.4 and 7.1.13	Reconciliation of the Benefits system to all financial systems should be commenced immediately. Processes and procedures must be agreed with Finance.	High	Yes	To be dealt with at the same time as 3.6.2 above	Benefits Manager	Nov 2010
3.6.5	A review of cheque handling and control within the benefits service should be undertaken. This should include the automatic interface of cheque payments.	Medium	Yes	Will be resolved when TRDC Academy migrates to Windows platform	Benefits Manager	Dec 2010
3.6.6	Clarification of the procedure for emergency payments for the service as a whole is needed. A review and documentation of the reconciliation procedure for both Watford and Three Rivers payments should occur.	Medium	Yes	Existing controls are in place but formalised procedure to be drafted.	Benefits Manager	Nov 2010
3.6.7	The benefits overpayments brought forward from the Civica system to the Academy system should be reconciled.	Medium	Yes	Currently being dealt with by Benefits Manager	Benefits Manager	Dec 2010

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4.4.1	Ensure subsidy administration is the responsibility of a control section that provides quality checks and training	High	Yes	Item already raised at Joint Shared Services Committee 13/09/10	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Dec 2010
4.4.2	Provide officers with clear procedures for the inputting of data into the Academy system.	High	Yes	"ACS" Procedure Manual already purchased. To be brought up to date and circulated to staff. 230910 – Will be ongoing process to be completed within 6 months	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	April 2011
4.4.3	<i>Provide officers with an overview of Benefits subsidy and the impact on subsidy loss when poor data is inputted into the system.</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Officers have been provided with overview as part of ongoing training programme</i>	<i>Benefits Manager</i>	<i>Aug 2010</i>
4.4.4	<i>Use checking and quality assurance throughout the year to identify recurring errors and amend procedures and processes accordingly.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Academy "QA Module" now in use for both WBC and TRDC claims.</i>	<i>Benefits Manager</i>	<i>Aug 2010</i>

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4.4.5	<i>Run subsidy once a month and report to the Head of Service of likely annual subsidy loss or where subsidy gains could be obtained.</i>	Medium	Yes	Practise has been commenced but will be incorporated into duties of "Systems / Control" post subject to approval 13/09/10	Benefits Manager	Sept 2010
5.3.1 And 6.7.1	Move the Academy systems on to one server as soon as possible	High	Yes	Project underway to migrate to one server. ICT resources secured	Benefits Manager / ICT	Dec 2010
5.3.2	Review cash reconciliations working practices and bring the control function under one officers responsibility	Medium	Yes	Item already raised at Joint Shared Services Committee 13/09/10 – to be one of tasks undertaken by new post	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Dec 2010
5.3.3	Review the need for a dedicated support team or officer. This should include a review of succession planning for key roles	High	Yes	Item already raised at Joint Shared Services Committee 13/09/10 – to be one of tasks undertaken by new post	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Dec 2010
5.3.4	Review the current structure	Medium	No	Solution lies in formulating procedures, improving communications and training	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011

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5.3.5	Implement daily, weekly and monthly performance measures of work throughput	Medium	Yes	Underway – will be supported by 5.3.20 & 8.1.7 To be embedded by November 2010	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Nov 2010
5.3.6	<i>Review levels of Council Tax and NNDR previous year's arrears as well as current year performance.</i>	Medium	Yes	<i>Underway. Summons run 06/09/10 has included previous years arrears</i>	<i>Revenues Manager</i>	<i>Sept 2010</i>
5.3.7	Plan for single persons discount review over quarters 3 and 4	Low	Yes	Will implement in 2011/12	Revenues Manager	June 2011
5.3.8	<i>Commence recovery action for Council Tax and NNDR immediately – (Planned)</i>	Medium	Yes	<i>Now underway</i>	<i>Revenues Manager</i>	<i>06/09/10</i>
5.3.9	<i>Harmonise level of costs and recovery polices as soon as possible</i>	Medium	Yes	<i>Costs equalised in first issue of Summonses w/c 06/09/10</i>	<i>Revenues Manager</i>	<i>06/09/10</i>
5.3.10	Harmonise payment dates as soon as possible	Medium	Yes	Will review as part of harmonisation of processes	Revenues Manager	Nov 2010
5.3.11	Harmonise working practices and polices relating to disablement relief	Medium	Yes	Will review as part of harmonisation of processes	Revenues Manager	Nov 2010

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5.3.12	Consider reviewing bailiff performance and selecting the highest performing company	Medium	Yes	Currently operate with four bailiffs (two each). To review and only operate with two with a possible third being a "local" bailiff	Revenues Manager	Nov 2010
5.3.13	Either write off debts or reinstate committal proceedings unless it is uneconomic to collect the debt	Low	Yes	Issue to be covered at same time as 5.3.16	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Nov 2010
5.3.14	Harmonise recovery policies relating to bankruptcies.	Low	Yes	Will review as part of harmonisation of processes	Revenues Manager	Nov 2010
5.3.15	Review the structure for recovery and billing purposes and where responsibility for recovery is placed.	Low	Yes	Will review as part of harmonisation of processes	Revenues Manager	Nov 2010
5.3.16	Review write-off policies and harmonise over the two authorities	Low	Yes	Will review as part of harmonisation of processes	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Nov 2010
5.3.17	Train 6 of the 9 the recovery officers to attend a magistrate's court	Medium	In part	Will review as part of harmonisation of processes	Revenues Manager	Nov 2010
5.3.18	Ensure refunds are made, this is corrected immediately.	High	Yes	Complete – refunds are issued where required	Revenues Manager	Aug 2010

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5.3.19	Notepads from the old Civica system have not been converted into the Academy system Either bring the information into the Academy system or import them into the Anite system using functionality within Anite	Medium	Yes	Will investigate loading to DIP	Revenues Manager	Dec 2010
5.3.20 And 8.1.7	Review the use of Anite to bring efficiencies to the service	High	Yes	Current Interim Revenues Manager to make use of contacts at other authorities	Revenues Manager	Nov 2010
5.3.21	Obtain an independent review of Academy or liaise with other authorities as to functionality available.	High	In part	Will consider once migration to one server has been completed. We have the option to have "health checks" and will take this up.	Benefits Manager	Jan 2011
5.3.22	Review the clerical/administrative support required within the structure	Medium	Yes	Will review as part of harmonisation of processes	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Nov 2010

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5.3.23	Review printing of demand notices when Academy has been migrated to one system	Medium	Yes	Project underway to migrate to one server. ICT resources secured	Revenues Manager	Dec 2010
5.3.24	Configure the systems so Watford CSC have access to Academy	Medium	Yes	Project underway to migrate to one server. ICT resources secured	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Dec 2010
5.3.25	<i>Consider additional resources to input information relating to benefit overpayment and issue invoices</i>	High	Yes	Completed	Recovery Team Leader	Sept 2010
5.3.26	Measure performance of benefit overpayment collection and set targets as soon as possible	High	Yes	Performance measurement of benefit overpayments is currently patchy and we are potentially losing out on income	Revenues Manager	Oct 2010
5.3.27	<i>Provide training and interim support to other officers when the Revenues Manager leaves</i>	High	Yes	Interim Revenues Manager in place and currently working with Team Leaders	Revenues Manager	Set 2010

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6.6.1	Review benefit working practices to actively manage the workload and prepare an improvement plan to include targets based upon resources available and workload anticipated.	High	Yes	Underway. Benefit Manager has been meeting with all staff to set baseline performance.	Benefits Manager	Nov 2010
6.6.2	Decide upon the target for the "Right Time" indicator for the Benefits Service.	Medium	Yes	Target was set as part of Service Plan. To be reviewed	Benefits Manager	Oct 2010
6.6.3	Measure the actual workload within the Anite system and not just those items entered onto the Academy system.	High	Yes	Review of use of Anite to be undertaken to improve quality of information provided by reports	Revenues Manager	Oct 2010
6.6.4	Provide Customer Care training for all officers.	Medium	Yes	Training to be sourced. Deliver as part of staff meeting	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Dec 2010
6.6.5	Formalise the Complaints process within the service. Use regular reporting to manage the outstanding complaints	Medium	Yes	Clarity to be sought on dealing with complaints through multi channels / sources	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Oct 2010

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6.6.6	Undertake customer surveys to measure satisfaction with the service	Medium	Yes	To work in collaboration with both CSC	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011
6.6.7	Develop a measurement process of the target for customer care within the whole service.	Medium	Yes	To work in collaboration with both CSC	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011
6.7.1 And 5.3.1	Review the project to migrate the Academy system and move the system on to one server as soon as possible	High	Yes	The project is now underway. ICT have devoted a resource to assist.	Benefits Manager / ICT	Dec 2010
6.7.2	Benchmark the service regularly with a benchmarking club	Medium	Yes	Informal approaches have already been made to the "BenX" group of which the HoS has used in the past	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Oct 2010
6.7.3	<i>Based upon current resources create a benefits improvement plan on how the service will improve over the coming months</i>	High	Yes	<i>This plan will provide foundation of plan</i>	<i>Head of Revenues & Benefits</i>	<i>Sept 2010</i>

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7.1.1	<i>Remove surname splits and have work allocated by team leaders on a daily and priority basis to officers. Ensure that new claims received are a priority followed by changes in circumstance that will create an overpayment</i>	High	No	<i>Has been considered but alternative approach of dividing benefits into “new” and “changes” to be explored.</i>	Benefits Manager	Sept 2010
7.1.2	Fast track new (clean) claims – consider a fast track service for customers at the CSC	Medium	Yes	To work in collaboration with both CSC	Benefits Manager	Dec 2010
7.1.3	Empower the team leaders to allocate work and manage performance through their teams	High	Yes	Is being implemented currently	Benefits Manager	Oct 2010
7.1.4	<i>Implement a performance framework that involves all officers. Notify all concerned of performance on a daily basis by email, intranet, whiteboards or one to ones</i>	High	Yes	<i>In place</i>	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Sept 2010

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7.1.5	Commence customer feedback surveys. Consider a target for customer satisfaction	Medium	Yes	To work in collaboration with both CSC	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011
7.1.6	<i>Review all recent circulars with Benefit Manager, team leaders and the policy and development team immediately</i>	Medium	Yes	<i>In place – Policy Quality & Training Team staff now tasked with responsibility</i>	<i>Benefits Manager</i>	<i>Aug 2010</i>
7.1.7	<i>Commence team meetings immediately. Use as a basis for two way communication and ideas for service improvement</i>	High	Yes	<i>Communications Structure now in place</i>	<i>Head of Revenues & Benefits</i>	<i>Aug 2010</i>
7.1.8	<i>Use quality checking to create training needs for the service and for individual officers. Weight types of errors based upon financial and non financial impact</i>	High	Yes	<i>Academy “QA Module” now in use for both WBC and TRDC claims.</i>	<i>Benefits Manager</i>	<i>Aug 2010</i>

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7.1.9	<i>Within the performance framework build in individual performance levels. Agree with officers an average for performance over a period and review at one to ones or whenever appropriate</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>In place</i>	<i>Benefits Manager</i>	<i>Aug 2010</i>
7.1.10	Release the written procedures, review with staff working groups to ensure they are adopted.	High	Yes	ACS Manual has been purchased. Staff to be consulted on procedures	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	April 2011
7.1.11	Work with the agency contractor currently undertaking appeals to share knowledge amongst key officers such as team leaders or the policy team	High	Yes	Existing vacancy of Assessment Officer to be used to provide permanent resource of Appeals Officer.	Benefits Manager	Nov 2011
7.1.12	Use the policy and development team to create training plans.	Medium	Yes	In place. To use outcome of appraisals.	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Nov 2011

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7.1.13 And 3.6.4	Reconcile the benefits system to all other systems such as Council Tax and Finance	High	Yes	Item already raised at Joint Shared Services Committee 13/09/10 – to be one of tasks undertaken by new post	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Dec 2010
7.1.14	Ensure there is a responsible officer for the system administration.	High		Item already raised at Joint Shared Services Committee 13/09/10 – to be one of tasks undertaken by new post	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Dec 2010
7.1.15	Review the call handling processes and either allocate officers to telephone duty or uses the CSC resource better	Medium	Yes	To work in collaboration with both CSC	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011
8.1.1	<i>Consider giving the partnership an identity</i>	High	No	<i>Has been considered previously but not thought of as high priority. Will be guided by members</i>	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Sept 2010
8.1.2	Improve staff morale by provide training and demonstrate commitment to harmonising working practices	High	Yes	Staff event to be organised	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Nov 2010
8.1.3	<i>Consider professional training such as IRRV Technician</i>	High	Yes	<i>In place. Benefit Manager has received bursary of £1000 towards studies.</i>	Head of Revenues & Benefits	Sept 2010

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8.1.4	Ensure scanners are maintained and serviced regularly	Medium	Yes	Maintenance contract under review	Benefits Manager	Nov 2010
8.1.5	<i>Review the time taken by IT to respond when users are locked out of the network</i>	High	No	<i>To be discussed by HoS and Head of ICT- historic issue.</i>	<i>Head of Revenues & Benefits</i>	<i>Sept 2010</i>
8.1.6	Review the number and types of printers available to ensures they are adequate for the administration and printing requirements	High	Yes	Migration to Windows Platform should increase resource available	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Dec 2010
8.1.7 And 5.3.20	Immediately review the use of the Anite system	High	Yes	Agreed under 6.6.3 above	Revenues Manager	Oct 2010
8.1.8	Provide a PC which can access all systems in the private interview room.	Medium	Yes	Benefit Manager to resolve	Benefits Manager	Dec 2010
8.1.9	Set up Watford income section users on the Three Rivers systems	Medium	Yes	Situation to be investigate further	Revenues Manager	Dec 2010

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8.1.10	<i>Review the IT issues list, prioritise and create a well managed project to remove all IT issues</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>HoS & Head of ICT now have regular meetings to discuss progress</i>	<i>Head of Revenues & Benefits</i>	<i>Sept 2010</i>
8.1.11	Harmonise HR policies as soon as possible	High	Yes	Corporate Initiative underway	HR	April 2011
8.1.12	Review the web site and bring up to date, identify responsibility for maintenance of the site and web pages	Medium	Yes	"Webmasters" to be tasked with responsibility	Revenues Manager & Benefits Manager	Dec 2010