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THREE RIVERS & WATFORD
SHARED SERVICES
JOINT COMMITTEE



AGENDA

Date: 23 January 2012

Time: 7.30 pm

Place: Town Hall, Watford

Members of the Committee:-

Councillors:-	A Wylie (Chair)	G Derbyshire
	B White (Vice-Chair)	A Khan
	M Bedford	R Sangster

The Joint Committee welcomes contributions from members of the public to its discussion on Part A agenda items. Contributions will be limited to one person speaking for and one against each item for not more than three minutes. Details of the procedure and the list for registering the wish to speak will be available for a short period before the meeting

Item

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Part A - Open to the Public

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE / SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

2 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

To receive any disclosures of interest.

3 MINUTES

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the Joint Shared Services Committee held on 21 November 2011.

4 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

To announce items of other business notified to the Secretary of the Joint Committee, together with the special circumstances which justify their consideration as a matter of urgency. The Chairman to rule on the admission of such items. (Note: If other confidential business is approved under this item, it will also be necessary to specify the class of exempt or confidential information in the additional item(s)).

5 ICT UPDATE

1 - 6

This report gives an update on the infrastructure project and progress on the options for future ICT service provision.

6 REVENUES AND BENEFITS UPDATE

7 - 16

This report gives an update on the revenues and benefits service.

7 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chairman to move:-

“that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item(s) of business as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if the press or public were present during consideration of the item(s) there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined under the respective paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.”

If approved the Chairman will ask the press and public to leave the meeting at this point.

Part B - Closed to the Public

8 OTHER BUSINESS

If approved under Item 4.

Members are reminded that meetings of the Joint Committee shall end no later than 10.30pm unless otherwise agreed by the Joint Committee.

For more information concerning this agenda please contact the Secretary to the Joint Committee, Elwyn Wilson, Democratic Services Manager, Three Rivers District Council, Northway, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 1RL. Telephone: 01923 727248.

E-mail: elwyn.wilson@threerivers.gov.uk

Agenda Item 5

THREE RIVERS & WATFORD SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting – 23 January 2012

PART A

AGENDA ITEM

5

Title: ICT - UPDATE
Report of: Avni Patel – Head of ICT

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 This report gives an update on the infrastructure project and progress on the options for future ICT service provision.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the contents of the report are noted.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

Avni Patel – Head of ICT

telephone number: 01923 278457

email: avni.patel@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by:

David Gardner, Director of Corporate Resources & Governance – Three Rivers D.C.

Tricia Taylor, Executive Director, Resources – Watford B.C.

- Old virtual servers decommissioned and redesigned for use with other systems.
- Additional work undertaken to extend the virtual server farm to incorporate Revenues and Benefits e-services requirements.

3.1.3 **Work Stream 3 (WBC and TRDC)** - Redesign and configuration of backup solution.

This work stream was originally identified as part of the replacement of the SAN project, as well as being highlighted as an issue within the outcomes of the Actica Infrastructure review.

There were limitations with backups on both sites relating to a lack of storage and an absence of documented site knowledge.

- A review of all business applications was completed which fed into the re-design.
- Completion of audit of current backups and discovery of existing server data requiring backup.
- New server hardware and upgraded tape system deployed.
- Redesign of new backup strategy complete as follows:
 - Ensure that primary systems are fully backed up as if in a DR situation and re-design all remaining system backups
 - Utilise the SAN to replicate backed up information between WBC and TRDC to provide resilience.
 - The next part of the infrastructure improvement work is to perform a DR test using these backups to ensure that the data backed up allows key systems to be recovered. This would be done in conjunction with our DR suppliers.

3.1.4 **Work Stream 4 (TRDC)** - Replacement SAN - Hardware design and procurement

This is an extension to the recent investment made on replacing the WBC SAN. Replacement of the existing TRDC SAN is required in order to increase the limited storage within the TRDC network.

This is required to meet business related projects such as back scanning of Tree Preservation Orders as well as supporting the requirements for backing up all data across TRDC.

- SAN solution design and estimation of sizing complete.
- Order placed and installation planned in mid-late February due to supplier availability.

3.1.5 **Work Stream 5 (WBC and TRDC)** - IT health check outcomes (ITHC) related to the Government Code of Connection

ITHC outcomes for both TRDC and WBC have been identified by a third party. This health check is part of the assessment requirement for both

authorities meeting the government code of connection (CoCo) statutory compliance.

- Project plan developed for implementing ITHC recommendations
- 22 patches had been applied across both networks as at week ending 6th January 2012

3.1.6 **Work Stream 6 (WBC)** - Thin client improvement.

Since the inception of thin client at WBC several years ago, the demand on this system has increased.

As well as the majority of WBC staff, there are now an additional number of users due to shared services. Changes in numbers and types of applications combined with the age of the servers has meant that the increased load on the servers has negatively impacted on the performance of the servers and the thin client experience overall.

The re-configuration of the virtual environment in work stream 2, will result in additional capacity to create more thin client servers, therefore spreading the overall load between the servers and increasing performance.

This is a short term solution, requiring a smaller investment and reduced resources to implement. A Thin Client refresh will be revisited once the future of the ICT Shared Service and its assets is clear.

- Load balancing hardware has been implemented to ensure that the load of users on each server is equal and unnecessary strain is not experienced on any individual servers.
- Performance enhancements have been made to the individual servers including installing more memory in order to optimise their usage.
- Profile server has been replaced and has resulted in decreased logging in times for staff
- Issues with the domain architecture were identified and resolved which also contributed to increased speed of logging into the network for thin client users.

However further work has been required as a result of the domain architecture issues. This includes a move of the main file server for WBC from the old domain into the new one which will be a significant task to perform without downtime. As a result, a new server has been built and is ready for transfer of data in the next programme of infrastructure improvements.

3.1.7 **Work Stream 7 (WBC and TRDC)** - Priority hardware replacement and/or remedial work.

The Actica Infrastructure review highlighted that approximately 30% of the servers across WBC and TRDC were experiencing issues affecting performance.

Some of these have been identified as more urgent than others and it is proposed that the business critical systems are remedied at this stage where possible, with the remaining servers remedied over Q4 of 11/12 and 12/13.

- TRDC Spam server replaced
- TRDC Proxy server replaced
- Remote access server virtualised
- Academy Live server processor increased from 1 to 4 to improve performance
- Proactive system (TRDC CRM), Express (TRDC Elections), M3 (TRDC Env Health) systems moved to virtual servers.

3.1.8 In conjunction with this programme, additional project work that was already committed to and essential changes have been carried out. These include:

- Income Management LIVE at WBC & TRDC – Completed
- Academy migration (R&B) from Unix to Windows - Completed
- EROS (WBC Elections system) Upgrade – Completed
- DTF Updates (Statutory change WBC & TRDC) – Completed
- Academy (R&B for WBC & TRDC) – Upgrade to 59.16 – Completed
- Academy (R&B for WBC & TRDC) – Upgrade to 60 & Ingres upgrade – Completed
- Victor (R&B) issue resolution for WBC & new installation TRDC – Completed
- PARIS (R&B – TRDC) – Installed – currently being tested by R&B
- Academy & Anite Integration (R&B) – Installed – client roll out being scheduled
- Uniform upgrades (TRDC & WBC) – In planning stages
- Revenues and Benefits e-services – in progress

3.1.9 The final highlight report (project close report) is due in the week commencing 17th January 2011, this will be sent to Joint Management Team along with a supporting document detailing the next steps and programme of infrastructure improvement work.

3.2 ICT Service Provision

Work has now been completed on the options appraisal of the alternative service delivery models for the ICT Shared Service. As members will recall a paper was presented to the Shared Services Joint Committee on 21st November which set out the preferred options for the future ICT service. A detailed plan of work has been developed that outlines activities leading up to and including the SERCO due diligence as well as the soft market testing.

In line with the work to produce the specification, in late December, a session with ICT staff was held in conjunction with Actica to explain what

the specification will look like and contain as well as giving them the opportunity to detail the work each job group does on behalf of the ICT Shared Service.

Regular updates are also published in staff magazines and members bulletins at both councils to keep the wider council staff and members informed of progress in this area.

Actica Consulting are currently developing the ICT requirements specification and Keith Thomas will give a verbal update on where we are with this work.

4.0 **Financial**

4.1 None specific to this report.

4.0 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

5.1 None specific.

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 At its meeting on 21 November 2011, the Committee agreed that £25,000 be allocated to engage SERCO to assist with the reduction of the volume of Benefits work outstanding. This report highlights progress so far.

3.2 The results to date:-

- (1) 3,156 documents were allocated to SERCO on 29 November 2011. At the close of business on 23 December 2011, 373 remained outstanding.
- (2) As this report was written (9 January 2012) no invoices had been received but our records of the time spent by SERCO shows that we would expect invoices totally £8,840
- (3) In light of the progress made in the first four weeks, a final 2900 documents were transferred to SERCO.
- (4) We continue to monitor the position on a daily basis and ensure that any time lost is made up.
- (5) At the same time, Shared Service staff continued to process "current" work including New Claims
- (6) As at 9 January 2012, there were 239 Watford New Claims outstanding (127 of which were awaiting further information from claimants) and 121 Three Rivers' New Claims (64 in pending). A verbal update will be given to members on 23 January 2012.
- (7) This represents a drop of 113 and 52 respectively from the 21 November 2011 meeting.
- (8) In addition to New Claims, there are 1643 items being dealt with by the Shared Service staff although a large number of these relate to future changes (i.e. effective April 2012)

3.3 The findings from the results of the first four weeks of activity using SERCO shows:

- (1) Whilst in a "steady state", the Shared Service is managing the volume of incoming work which indicates that it is staffed appropriately.
- (2) We have shown that by closely monitoring the output of work from SERCO that they are able to deal with the work given satisfactorily.
- (3) Although we are able to deal with the "normal" flow of work, periods of heightened activity, for instance at year end, will place an

3.9 The results for Three Rivers as at 10 January 2012 are:

- (1) Cases identified - 1482
- (2) Forms issued - 1482
- (3) Discounts approved - 764
- (4) Discounts removed – 94
- (5) Additional income generated (based on Band D) - £4,803
- (6) Cost incurred – £282
- (7) Reminders Issued – 559
- (8) Cases referred for further action by the authority - 65

3.10 The exercise has also enabled the two authorities to improve the quality of its data and award appropriate discount disregards to qualifying cases, for example in relation to students, apprentices etc

3.11 Finally collection rates remain strong in light of the current climate with the collection rates at the end of December 2011 being as follows:

Council Tax

Watford – 82.1% (80.4% December 2010)

Three Rivers – 88.1% (87.7%)

Business Rate

Watford – 88.6% (87.2%)

Three Rivers – 89.2% (87.3%)

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 None specific to this report.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 None specific.

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS HEALTH CHECK: PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN AS AT 3 JANUARY 2012

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
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	23/05/11 – Concentration on reconciling closing account as at 31/03/11. Existing controls will be in place for 2011/12 03/01/12 – Process has been devised to enable regular reconciliation and support measures currently in place. Final meeting scheduled for 06/01/12 to agree implementation and operation	Benefits Manager	March 2011	In part	January 2012
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	To be dealt with at the same time as 3.6.2 above 03/01/12 – Process has been devised to enable regular reconciliation and support measures currently in place. Final meeting scheduled for 06/01/12 to agree implementation and operation	Benefits Manager	March 2011	In part	January 2012
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	Interface will require involvement of both Academy & COA. Existing controls in place are adequate and recommendation not a high priority 03/01/12 – The current system of journal entries is considered adequate	Benefits Manager	March 2011	Yes	
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	Existing controls are in place but formalised procedure to be drafted. 03/01/12 – Resolved. HB payments are run twice weekly and able to run ad-hoc payments via the system avoiding any reconciliation issues	Benefits Manager & Revenues Manager	April 2011	Yes	
4.4.2	Provide officers with clear procedures for the inputting of data into the Academy system.	High	“ACS” Procedure Manual has already been purchased and will be updated on an ongoing process. New post of Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader will be responsible	Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader	April 2011	Yes	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
			03/01/12 – Procedure Maps have been sent to ACS so that this resource may be used				
5.3.1 And 6.7.1	Move the Academy systems on to one server as soon as possible	High	Originally delayed to bring releases up to date. Project commenced May 2011 reporting progress to Programme Board. 03/01/02 – Completed by 29 August 2011	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	
5.3.4	Review the current structure	Medium	Much work had been undertaken in forming existing structure prior to implementation of Shared Service. No further action in short-term Not a priority action – will review by end of 2011/12	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2012	No	
5.3.7	Plan for single persons discount review over quarters 3 and 4	Low	Working in partnership with Herts CC 03/01/02 – Review commenced in December 2011	Revenues Manager	December 2011	Yes	
5.3.10	Harmonise payment dates as soon as possible	Medium	Most date are harmonised apart from DD. Will review for 2012/13 03/01/02 – Review carried out September 2011 and no business case to amend payment dates	Revenues Manager	April 2012	Yes	
5.3.11	Harmonise working practices and polices relating to disablement relief	Medium	Work underway – Inspector in process of reviewing cases 03/01/12 – Cases identified and action underway to resolve discrepancies	Revenues Manager	July 2011	In part	January 2012
5.3.12	Consider reviewing bailiff performance and selecting the highest performing company	Medium	Agreed – will monitor performance of existing bailiffs in first half of 2011/12 03/01/02 – Review is continuing but not a high priority. Revised deadline set for December 2012	Revenues Manager	October 2011	No	December 2012
5.3.13	Either write off debts or reinstate committal proceedings unless it is uneconomic to collect the debt	Low	Agreed – two staff have been tasked to identify cases for write-off 03/01/02 – Harmonised write-off policy agreed and debts not being written off in accordance with policy	Revenues Manager	September 2011	Yes	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
5.3.14	Harmonise recovery policies relating to bankruptcies.	Low	Agreed – not high priority. Will be resolved during 2011/12	Revenues Manager	March 2012	No	
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	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader 03/01/12 – As we have moved further away from the migration from previous systems to Academy, there is no longer a business case for converting notepads. Access is available and for the volume of cases affected deemed sufficient. – Closed	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	Yes	
5.3.20 And 8.1.7	Review the use of Anite to bring efficiencies to the service	High	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader 03/01/12 – This has been subject of a number of discussions with Northgate the system providers. Progress is slow but we are continuing to explore how best to use the system	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	Feb 2012 (from Sept 2011)
5.3.21	Obtain an independent review of Academy or liaise with other authorities as to functionality available.	High	Will consider once migration to one server has been completed. We have the option to have “health checks” and will take this up. In meantime will make use of existing expertise across both councils in shared service.	Head of Revenues & Benefits	August 2011	No	March 2012
5.3.22	Review the clerical/administrative support required within the structure	Medium	Much work had been undertaken in forming existing structure prior to implementation of Shared Service. No further action in short-term Not a priority action – will review by end of 2011/12	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2012	No	
5.3.23	Review printing of demand notices when Academy has been migrated to one system	Medium	Migration originally delayed to bring releases up to date. Project commenced May 2011 reporting progress to Programme Board. 03/01/02 – Migration completed 29/0811	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	
6.6.3	Measure the actual workload within	High	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality &	Policy Quality	April 2011	Yes	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
	the Anite system and not just those items entered onto the Academy system.		Training Team Leader 03/01/02 - Regular monitoring now underway using reports from both Academy and Anite	& Training Team Leader			
6.6.4	Provide Customer Care training for all officers.	Medium	Will be delivered following introduction of new working practices with CSC taking more front-line queries. 03/01/12 – recent attention has been on clearing cases and any issues have been dealt with on a case by case basis. There is an acknowledgment that refresher training is required and this will be arranged for May 2012	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	May 2012 (from July 2011)
6.6.6	Undertake customer surveys to measure satisfaction with the service	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC 03/01/12 – This has not been a high priority to date with focus on clearing work)	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	June 2012 (from June 2011)
6.6.7	Develop a measurement process of the target for customer care within the whole service.	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC 03/01/12 – This has not been a high priority to date with focus on clearing work)	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	June 2012 (from 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	Originally delayed to bring releases up to date. Project commenced May 2011 reporting progress to Programme Board. 03/01/02 – Completed by 29/08/11	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	Aug 2011
7.1.2	Fast track new (clean) claims – consider a fast track service for customers at the CSC	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC 03/01/02 – Triage system now in place to identify clean claims and prioritise	Benefit Manager	June 2011	Yes	
7.1.5	Commence customer feedback surveys. Consider a target for customer satisfaction	Medium	Repeat of 6.6.6 and 6.6.7 above 03/01/12 – This has not been a high priority to date with focus on clearing work)	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	June 2012 (from June 2011)

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
7.1.10	Release the written procedures, review with staff working groups to ensure they are adopted.	High	“ACS” Procedure Manual has already been purchased and will be updated on an ongoing process. New post of Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader will be responsible 03/01/12 – Procedure Maps have been sent to ACS so that this resource may be used	Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader	April 2011	Yes	
7.1.13 And 3.6.4	Reconcile the benefits system to all other systems such as Council Tax and Finance	High	To be dealt with at the same time as 3.6.2 above 03/01/02 – Now resolved. Measures now in place to enable daily reconciliation	Benefits Manager	March 2011	Yes	
8.1.6	Review the number and types of printers available to ensure they are adequate for the administration and printing requirements	High	Migration to Windows Platform will increase capacity (see 5.3.1) 03/01/02 – Multi-tray printer now in place to enhance printing ability	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	Yes	
8.1.7 And 5.3.20	Immediately review the use of the Anite system	High	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader 03/01/12 – This has been subject of a number of discussions with Northgate the system providers. Progress is slow but we are continuing to explore how best to use the system	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	Feb 2012 (from Sept 2011)
8.1.8	Provide a PC which can access all systems in the private interview room.	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with CSC 03/01/02 – No longer a priority so deferred to March 2012	Benefit Manager	June 2011	No	March 2012
8.1.9	Set up Watford income section users on the Three Rivers systems	Medium	Agreed. Scheduled for completion in June 2011 03/01/02 – Completed with introduction of Income Management System	Income Team Leader	June 2011	Yes	
8.1.11	Harmonise HR policies as soon as possible	High	Corporate initiative underway 03/01/02 – Corporate exercise completed	Head of HR	June 2011	Yes	
8.1.12	Review the web site and bring up to	Medium	Agreed. Responsibility assigned and	Revenues	March 2012	No	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
	date, identify responsibility for maintenance of the site and web pages		tasks will be completed during 2011/12	Manager			