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THREE RIVERS & WATFORD SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Date of meeting: 12 September 2011

PART A

AGENDA ITEM

7

Title: REVENUES & BENEFITS- PROGRESS REPORT

Report of: Head of Revenues & Benefits (Shared Services)

1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report gives an update on the Revenues & Benefits service

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That this report be noted.

2.2 That the restriction of telephone access on Wednesday afternoons continue

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

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Report approved by:

Tricia Taylor – Executive Director Resources – Watford Borough Council

David Gardner – Director of Corporate Resources & Governance – Three Rivers DC

3. DETAILED PROPOSAL

Introduction

- 3.1 At its meeting on 13 June 2011 (Minute JSS15/10 refers), the Committee approved the proposal by the Head of Revenues & Benefits to introduce changes to the working conditions and appoint SERCO to provide resilience support in order that the workload is reduced and improvements to the service realised
- 3.2 Members requested that a progress report be provided to the subsequent meetings of the Shared Services Committee.

Working Arrangements

Restricted Telephone & Face-to-Face Access

- 3.3 The initiative is working well. Staff are maintaining levels of work and using the time without phone calls to concentrate on completing and processing claims. It has also had the consequential benefit of enabling staff to focus on complex claims either with the assistance of a team leader or independently in the knowledge that they will not be interrupted.

There has been little or no adverse reaction from the public.

- 3.4 Cllrs Bedford and Wylie were given an update on this matter as requested at the JSSC on 19 July 2011 and it is recommended that the initiative continues.

SERCO Resource

- 3.5 SERCO commenced work on Watford and Three Rivers' cases on 25 July. Initial reports from SERCO of work completed was not as high as anticipated. To address this, a teleconference was held on 25 August between the Head of Revenues & Benefits together with the Benefits Manager and Revenues Manager and the Operations Manager at SERCO.

The latest output figures (up to week commencing 22 August 2011) are:

Benefits

W/C	Completed	Pended	Total
25/07/11	52	135	187
01/08/11	40	145	185
08/08/11	63	103	166
15/08/11	81	74	155
22/08/11	53	41	94

Revenues

W/C	Completed	Pended	Total
25/07/11	236	29	265
01/08/11	239	35	274
08/08/11	202	9	211
15/08/11	166	10	176
22/08/11	353	20	373

In a frank exchange, SERCO were advised that the level of performance was not as expected. Their performance is at the low end of the range. This was acknowledged by SERCO who advised that although some of the cases they were dealing with were complex, they had already addressed issues with individual staff and predicted an increase in output. Where time had been lost due to staff absence, this would be recovered at no extra cost to the Shared Service.

It was agreed that a further review would be held on 8 September and that regular contact would be maintained between the Operations Manager and the Revenues & Benefits Managers.

Academy System

Migration

- 3.6 Over the weekend of 27-29 August, we migrated the Three Rivers Academy system from the UNIX platform to a new Windows platform. This means that both authorities are now running on the same operating platform and will enable future enhancements and releases to be completed a lot easier. It will also enable the shared service to implement the additional modules.

It was an excellent team effort involving the Revenues Manager, Benefits Manager and Neville Jones, ICT Application Analyst who worked all hours of the Bank Holiday weekend to ensure that there was minimal disruption to staff.

Additional Modules

- 3.7 A PID has been prepared and submitted to both the Watford Corporate Improvement Steering Group (meeting on 6 September) and the ICT Steering Group (meeting on 8 September) for approval. An oral update will be provided to members on progress.

4. IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Policy

- 4.1.1 The recommendations in this report are within the policies of the Joint Committee, Three Rivers District Council and Watford Borough Council.

4.2 Financial

- 4.2.1 None specific

4.3 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.3.1 None specific to this report

4.4 Risk Management and Health & Safety

- 4.4.1 None specific

Appendices

None

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.