

THREE RIVERS & WATFORD SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Date of meeting: 2 JULY 2012

PART A

Title: REVENUES AND BENEFITS - UPDATE

Report of: Phil Adlard – Head of Revenues and Benefits

1. **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report gives an update on the progress being made to produce the capacity plan and other matters.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the report be noted.

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Report approved by:

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

3. DETAILED PROPOSAL

3.1 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Inspection Visit.

3.1.1 The Committee was advised at its meeting on 28 May 2012 (Minute JSS06/12 refers) of the content of the DWP Report following their visit to the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service in March 2012.

3.1.2 A formal response was sent to the DWP on 11 June 2012 together with a detailed Action Plan. At the time of writing this report (22 June 2012) we have received an acknowledgement that our response has been received.

3.2 Capacity Plan

3.2.1 A key element of the Action Plan is the preparation of a Capacity Plan. The Committee agreed at its last meeting that a progress report be presented to the next meeting of the Joint Committee concerning the service's capacity.

3.2.2 An outline plan has been prepared and data that will support its recommendations is being collected. The Plan covers:

3.2.3 **Background:**

The circumstances under which the councils' two teams were co-located and the basis on which staffing levels were determined.

Critically, the number of assessors was reduced from 20 to 18 on the assumption that mobile working, harmonised systems, self service, CSC support and smarter working could increase efficiency by adopting the principle of 'right first time'.

Supporting data will demonstrate how caseload has increased dramatically since the service came into being.

3.2.4 **Performance Indicators:**

PIs are poor. The plan will detail former Three Rivers' figures and set out the targets that should be achievable.

Data is now being collected in a form that will aid decisions to be made on capacity.

New Claims are being measured by 'case'. Early indications from data (not fully available to this meeting) are that the number of outstanding cases has not significantly reduced over the 1st Quarter of the 2012/13 financial year.

Changes in Circumstances are being measured by volume of work. Early indications are that this volume has reduced over the 1st Quarter of the 2012/13 financial year, mainly because we have employed SERCO to deal with excess workloads.

These two sets of data are now also analysed weekly by member of staff (and Serco in total). Early indications show significant variances in output between officers and a significant amount of time lost to absences.

3.2.5 **Benchmarking:**

The Plan will compare the service's performance with other authorities.

3.2.6 **Financial Data:**

The Plan will include budgets and detail expenditure on overtime and additional support from Serco.

3.2.7 **Conclusions and Recommendations:**

Taking into account the information collated (above), the Plan will draw conclusions on the productivity and capacity of the service and recommend how to achieve improved turnaround times. These recommendations will also take into account the changes facing the service in respect of universal credits.

3.2.8 **Reporting Timescale**

1st Quarter data supporting the recommendations will not be available until after this meeting, but the Plan will have been completed well before the Joint Committee's next meeting. In view of this, and the need to make rapid progress, the Committee is asked to consider how and when it receives the Capacity Plan.

3.3 **Revenues & Benefits "E-Services"**

3.3.1 Testing continues prior to the implementation of self-service options for landlords, council taxpayers, business ratepayers and benefit claimants.

3.3.2 Technical problems that had occurred before have now been corrected and there has been no repetition of these errors.

3.3.3 Due to the fluid nature of the project and the speed at which testing is being completed, a verbal report will be given to members on progress together with an indication of the anticipated go-live date.

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 There are no changes to the budget or the efficiency gains already agreed by the Joint Committee, Three Rivers District Council or Watford Borough Council as a result of this report.

4.3 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

4.3.1 There are no specific legal matters relating to this report.

4.4 **Risk Management and Health & Safety**

4.4.1 There are no risks associated with the decision members are being asked to take, i.e. to note the report.

4.5 **Equalities, Staffing, Accommodation, Community Safety, Sustainability & Environment, Communications & Website and Customer Services**

4.5.1 None specific.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.