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REVENUES AND BENEFITS HEALTH CHECK: PROGRESS AGAINST ACTION PLAN AS AT 31 MAY 2011

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
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	Discrepancies with conversion of Civica to Academy investigated. Credit accounts transferred and Debit accounts to be raised. Systems now balance following this action	Revenues Manager	31/03/11	Yes	
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	Benefits Manager	March 2011	No	June 2011
3.6.3	Responsibility for Statutory returns such as the NNDR2 should be made clearer	Medium	New post approved by Joint Shared Service Committee 06/11/10	Head of Revenues and Benefits	December 2010	Yes	
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	Benefits Manager	March 2011	No	June 2011
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	Benefits Manager	March 2011	No	Oct 2011
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.	Benefits Manager & Revenues Manager	April 2011	No	July 2011

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3.6.7	The benefits overpayments brought forward from the Civica system to the Academy system should be reconciled.	Medium	System reconciled November 2010	Recovery Team Leader	November 2010	Yes	
4.4.1	Ensure subsidy administration is the responsibility of a control section that provides quality checks and training	High	New post approved by Joint Shared Service Committee 06/11/10	Head of Revenues & Benefits	December 2010	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	No	September 2011
4.4.3	Provide officers with an overview of Benefits subsidy and the impact on subsidy loss when poor data is inputted into the system.	Medium	Training delivered as part of programme August 2010	Benefit Manager	August 2010	Yes	
4.4.4	Use checking and quality assurance throughout the year to identify recurring errors and amend procedures and processes accordingly.	High	Academy "QA" module being used	Benefit Manager	August 2010	Yes	
4.4.5	Run subsidy once a month and report to the Head of Service of likely annual subsidy loss or where subsidy gains could be obtained.	Medium	Practise commenced September 2010.	Head of Revenues & Benefits	September 2010	Yes	
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.	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	No	Aug 2011
5.3.2	Review cash reconciliations working practices and bring the control function under one officer's responsibility	Medium	New post approved by Joint Shared Service Committee 06/11/10	Head of Revenues & Benefits	December 2010	Yes	
5.3.3	Review the need for a dedicated support team or officer. This should	High	New post approved by Joint Shared Service Committee 06/11/10	Head of Revenues &	December 2010	Yes	

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	include a review of succession planning for key roles			Benefits			
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 201/12	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2012	No	
5.3.5	Implement daily, weekly and monthly performance measures of work throughput	Medium	Performance is now monitored regularly using data from Academy and Anite systems	Benefits Manager & Revenues Manager	May 2011	Yes	
5.3.6	Review levels of Council Tax and NNDR previous year's arrears as well as current year performance.	Medium	Agreed. Previous years' collection already reported as part of QRC4 return. Now incorporated as part of monthly report	Revenues Manager	May 2011	Yes	
5.3.7	Plan for single persons discount review over quarters 3 and 4	Low	Working in partnership with Herts CC	Revenues Manager	December 2011	No	
5.3.8	Commence recovery action for Council Tax and NNDR immediately – (Planned)	Medium	Recovery commenced August 2010. Full recovery programme for 2011/12 in place and being adhered to	Revenues Manager	August 2010	Yes	
5.3.9	Harmonise level of costs and recovery polices as soon as possible	Medium	Completed as part of first court action September 2010	Revenues Manager	September 2010	Yes	
5.3.10	Harmonise payment dates as soon as possible	Medium	Most date are harmonised apart from DD. Will review for 2012/13	Revenues Manager	April 2012	No	
5.3.11	Harmonise working practices and polices relating to disablement relief	Medium	Work underway – Inspector in process of reviewing cases	Revenues Manager	July 2011	No	
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	Revenues Manager	October 2011	No	
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	Revenues Manager	September 2011	No	
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	

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5.3.15	Review the structure for recovery and billing purposes and where responsibility for recovery is placed.	Low	Agreed – new Revenues Manager implemented temporary changes to be reviewed in quarter 2.	Revenues Manager	May 2011	Yes	
5.3.16	Review write-off policies and harmonise over the two authorities	Low	Review completed and revised procedure submitted to Joint Shared Service Committee 13 June 2011	Head of Revenues & Benefits	May 2011	Yes	
5.3.17	Train 6 of the 9 the recovery officers to attend a magistrate's court	Medium	Training completed 10/11/10	Revenues Manager	November 2010	Yes	
5.3.18	Ensure refunds are made, this is corrected immediately.	High	Completed August 2010	Revenues Manager	August 2010	Yes	
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	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	Sept 2011
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	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	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 2011
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	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	No	Aug 2011

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			Programme Board.				
5.3.24	Configure the systems so Watford CSC have access to Academy	Medium	Configuration completed and training of CSC completed May 2011	Revenues Manager	May 2011	Yes	
5.3.25	Consider additional resources to input information relating to benefit overpayment and issue invoices	High	Completed November 2010	Recovery Team Leader	November 2010	Yes	
5.3.26	Measure performance of benefit overpayment collection and set targets as soon as possible	High	Completed and reported to Joint Shared Service Committee as part of regular meeting	Revenues Manager	March 2011	Yes	
5.3.27	Provide training and interim support to other officers when the Revenues Manager leaves	High	Completed – Interim Manager in post. Now left as permanent appointment made	Head of Revenues & Benefits	August 2010	Yes	
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	In place. Benefits Manager & Team Leaders meet weekly to review individual performance	Benefits Manager	May 2011	Yes	
6.6.2	Decide upon the target for the “Right Time” indicator for the Benefits Service.	Medium	Completed and reported to Joint Shared Service Committee as part of regular meeting	Benefits Manager	March 2011	Yes	
6.6.3	Measure the actual workload within the Anite system and not just those items entered onto the Academy system.	High	Will form part of duties of Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	Sept 2011
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.	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	July 2011
6.6.5	Formalise the Complaints process within the service. Use regular reporting to manage the outstanding complaints	Medium	Complete. Complaints for both authorities now dealt with under individual authority procedures	Head of Revenues & Benefits	May 2011	Yes	
6.6.6	Undertake customer surveys to measure satisfaction with the	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC	Head of Revenues &	June 2011	No	

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	service			Benefits			
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	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	
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.	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	No	Aug 2011
6.7.2	Benchmark the service regularly with a benchmarking club	Medium	Agreed. Now part of "BenX Review Group"	Head of Revenues & Benefits	March 2011	Yes	
6.7.3	Based upon current resources create a benefits improvement plan on how the service will improve over the coming months	High	Incorporated into Service Plan for 2011/12	Head of Revenues & Benefits	March 2011	Yes	
7.1.1	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	High	Work now allocated on new claim / change split.	Benefit Manager	May 2011	Yes	
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	Benefit Manager	June 2011	No	
7.1.3	Empower the team leaders to allocate work and manage performance through their teams	High	In place	Benefit Manager	April 2011	Yes	
7.1.4	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	High	In place	Benefit Manager & Revenues Manager	March 2011	Yes	
7.1.5	Commence customer feedback surveys. Consider a target for	Medium	Repeat of 6.6.6 and 6.6.7 above	Head of Revenues &	June 2011	No	

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	customer satisfaction			Benefits			
7.1.6	Review all recent circulars with Benefit Manager, team leaders and the policy and development team immediately	Medium	In place – Policy Quality & Training Team staff now tasked with responsibility	Benefits Manager	Aug 2010	Yes	
7.1.7	Commence team meetings immediately. Use as a basis for two way communication and ideas for service improvement	High	In place	Benefits Manager & Revenues Manager	March 2011	Yes	
7.1.8	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	High	Academy “QA Module” now in use for both WBC and TRDC claims.	Benefits Manager	Aug 2010	Yes	
7.1.9	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	Medium	In place	Benefit Manager & Revenues Manager	March 2011	Yes	
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	Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader	April 2011	No	September 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	Agency Contractor is now permanent employee	Benefits Manager	April 2011	Yes	
7.1.12	Use the policy and development team to create training plans.	Medium	In place. Academy “QA” Module being used to determine training needs	Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader	March 2011	Yes	
7.1.13	Reconcile the benefits system to all other systems such as Council Tax	High	To be dealt with at the same time as 3.6.2	Benefits	March 2011	No	June

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And 3.6.4	and Finance		above	Manager			2011
7.1.14	Ensure there is a responsible officer for the system administration.	High	New post approved by Joint Shared Service Committee 06/11/10	Head of Revenues and Benefits	December 2010	Yes	
7.1.15	Review the call handling processes and either allocate officers to telephone duty or use the CSC resource better	Medium	CSC Watford now trained to handle frontline queries (Council Tax). Benefit Officer staff phones on rota basis	Head of Revenues and Benefits	May 2011	Yes	
8.1.1	Consider giving the partnership an identity	High	Closed – Decision made at inception of Shared Service that councils would keep their own identity	None			
8.1.2	Improve staff morale by provide training and demonstrate commitment to harmonising working practices	High	Team Development Days held in January & February 2011	Head of Revenues & Benefits	February 2011	Yes	
8.1.3	Consider professional training such as IRRV Technician	High	Agreed – Three staff currently studying	Head of Revenues & Benefits	September 2010	Yes	
8.1.4	Ensure scanners are maintained and serviced regularly	Medium	Completed – Scanner contract reviewed	Benefits Manager	November 2010	Yes	
8.1.5	Review the time taken by IT to respond when users are locked out of the network	High	Closed. No longer a significant issue	None			
8.1.6	Review the number and types of printers available to ensures they are adequate for the administration and printing requirements	High	Migration to Windows Platform will increase capacity (see 5.3.1)	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	No	August 2011
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	Policy Quality & Training Team Leader	April 2011	No	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	Benefit Manager	June 2011	No	

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8.1.9	Set up Watford income section users on the Three Rivers systems	Medium	Agreed. Scheduled for completion in June 2011	Income Team Leader	June 2011	No	
8.1.10	Review the IT issues list, prioritise and create a well managed project to remove all IT issues	Medium	Completed. Future issues now raised as part of regular scheduled meetings between Head of R & B and Head of ICT	Head of Revenues & Benefits	September 2010	Yes	
8.1.11	Harmonise HR policies as soon as possible	High	Corporate initiative underway	Head of HR	June 2011	No	
8.1.12	Review the web site and bring up to date, identify responsibility for maintenance of the site and web pages	Medium	Agreed. Responsibility assigned and tasks will be completed during 2011/12	Revenues Manager	March 2012	No	