

THREE RIVERS & WATFORD SHARED SERVICES JOINT COMMITTEE

Date of meeting: 13 June 2011

PART A

AGENDA ITEM

5

Title: REVENUES & BENEFITS- PROGRESS REPORT

Report of: Director of Corporate Resources & Governance – Three Rivers D.C.

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 Committee endorses the action taken in appointing Serco

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

Phil Adlard – Head of Revenues & Benefits

telephone number: 01923 278023

email: phil.adlard@watford.gov.uk

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 10 September 2010 (Minute JSS15/10 refers), the Committee noted the contents of the Revenues and Benefits Action Plan resulting from the review carried out by ISCAS Ltd in July and August 2010.
- 3.2 Since then members have received updates. The latest position is attached at Appendix 1. Completed actions have been shaded. In summary, of the 73 recommendations, 41 have been implemented, 3 are no longer valid, and 29 are still being implemented.
- 3.3 The remainder of this report details the actions now being taken to complete the Plan and other actions to improve performance. The objective is to achieve a target date of December 2011 when it will be possible to say that the implementation of the shared service has been completed, the backlogs created during the implementation cleared, and the resources allocated to the service are capable of achieving the on-going targets set for it.

Generally

Current Workloads

- 3.4 The service is currently receiving 100 claims for benefit, and between 400-500 items of correspondence for Council Tax, each week. Activities such as Annual Billing and the issue of council tax reminders (4,374 for Watford in May and 3,397 for Three Rivers) generate further correspondence. There are currently over 400 benefit claims outstanding and 3,000 items of correspondence outstanding.
- 3.5 The outcome of this set of circumstances is that the Revenues & Benefits Shared Service is in a state where it has been staffed to work to a process that has not been fully completed yet with the result that this is adding to the workload and increasing the backlog. A situation that, at the last meeting of the Shared Service Committee, members were keen to avoid.

ICT

- 3.6 The principle supporting the original staffing levels was that the two councils' Academy system would be on the same platform. This will enable:-
- the introduction of "e-services" that will enable customers to self-serve, receive electronic communications etc, and,
 - more front-line queries to be dealt with by both Customer Service Centres at Three Rivers and Watford.

These opportunities have not yet been realised.

- 3.7 The service is currently suffering periods of downtime due to periodic issues in relation to the IT service. This however, is being monitored by the Head of Revenues & Benefits in collaboration with the Head of IT.
- 3.8 Moving the Three Rivers Academy system from its current Unix platform to Windows, so that it is aligned with Watford, is key to the service making progress. The project is being managed by the Head of Revenues & Benefits and is currently on track to be delivered in August 2011.

Customer Services & Customer Care

- 3.9 The revenues and benefits services offered by the councils' customer services centres can be harmonised once a uniform system is in operation. This should create greater capacity in the back office. CSC staff at Watford are being trained to be able to deal with more queries.
- 3.10 In the meantime, there is a pressure on both Revenues & Benefits in terms of calls received. In addition, there is a requirement for a Benefits Officer to be present at both Three Rivers House and South Oxhey to offer a Benefits Surgery. To alleviate this pressure, we having been working closely with the staff and they have suggested, and this is supported by management, that to make more time available for processing Revenues & Benefits work, the service proposes the following short-term solution:
1. No phone calls are accepted on a Wednesday after 12.00 noon.
 2. The South Oxhey office is not staffed on Wednesday (drop in facilities will still be provided).
 3. Staff hours of work will be amended where appropriate on Wednesday so that staff will work from 11.00 to 19.00 to maximise the time available without calls.

Reconciliations

- 3.11 A considerable amount of effort is being exerted in closing the 2010/11 accounts. This has, to some extent, impinged on the 'day to day' activities. However, there has been good co-operation between the revenues and benefits team and the finance team. Regular progress meetings have been held, attended by the Section 151 officers. Processes have now been put in place to ensure, that in future, regular reconciliations will take place during the financial year, thus avoiding a rush at the end of the year to complete the final accounts.

Benefits

Backlog and Customer Expectation

- 3.12 The website has been updated with the latest figures showing how old the outstanding claims are. This measure can be significantly improved by concentrating on the oldest few, and this is being done. However, the measure can be misleading. The figure does not show how long it is taking to process claims, merely how long it would take to process the outstanding claims if they were all processed today. The current figures (as at 23/05/2011)are:-

	Outstanding Cases	Average Period Outstanding
	No.	Days
Three Rivers	142	42.00
Watford	285	31.11

The trend is that the number of cases outstanding is reducing although we still have a greater number of claims outstanding when compared to the summer of 2010 when there was a greater reliance on temporary agency staff.

Despite the caseloads for both authorities remaining fairly stable over the past twelve months, the volume of new claims is high.

Three Rivers caseload at 10 May 2011 stood at 5,351 compared to 5,530 in April 2010 (a drop of 179 or 3%).

Watford caseload at 10 May 2011 stood at 7,229 compared to 7,100 in April 2010 (an increase of 129 or 1.8%)

However as the following table shows we still receive 400-500 claim forms in each month which will be a combination of new claims, repeat claims, changes of address.

New Claims	Three Rivers	Watford
February	161	254
March	202	362
April	158	268

3.13 The Service Plan includes the following Performance Indicators:-

NI 181 Time taken to process new claims and change events

RB3 Days taken to process new claims

RB4 Speed of processing changes

The last two measures disaggregate NI181. These comprise the 'single housing benefit extract' (SHBE) return to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and have to be done. The targets for 2010/2011 and latest results (quarter 4 Jan-Mar 2011) as provided by the SHBE are:-

	Three Rivers		Watford	
	Target (days)	Qtr 4 (days)	Target (days)	Qtr 4 (days)
NI 181		14.79		27.89
RB3	20	35.71	40	36.56
RB4	10	12.35	20	24.31

This measure more accurately reflects the 'customer experience', i.e. how long it takes to receive benefit.

We have set the following, challenging end of year targets for 2011/12 as outlined in the Service Plan agreed by members at Committee 7 March 2011:

	Three Rivers	Watford
NI181	25	27
RB3	25	27
RB4	15	20

3.14 All of the above measures are made worse where a claimant has not provided all of the information required to process their claim. It should be noted that the lapsed time returned to the DWP starts on the first contact. The council cannot simply reject the claim if full information is not supplied in order to produce a better PI result. Of the claims shown in 3.12 above, 61 TRDC claims and 76 WBC

claims are “pending”, awaiting information from the claimant.

- 3.15 Clearly, though, it is better from both the customer and the council’s standpoint if all of the information required to process a claim is made available at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.16 Customers should be told how long they can expect to wait for their benefit to be paid. The difficulty for officers is that, when not providing full information, the customer can be responsible for the delay. Officers are of the view, however, that we should promise customers *“to process claims within 28 days of receiving full information”*.
- 3.17 The Action Plan includes consideration of ‘fast tracking’ claims:-
- This might be done for personal callers who arrive with all of the required information
 - By mobile working (e.g. as at Aylesbury Vale) where staff fill in a claim form over the telephone and a personal visit is arranged to scan the necessary data which we anticipate being able to introduce by the end of the current year.
 - Or by better use of the scanning team who are in a good position to determine, on receipt of a claim, whether all of the information has been attached.
- 3.18 To improve the DWP indicators *“we will assess whether we have complete information within one week of receiving a claim and inform the claimant within that time of any information that is missing”*.

Claims that are received by post and via the DWP may require a letter to be sent seeking the outstanding information. Personal callers making a claim at the CSCs and surgeries can be sent away with a note of what is still required.

Staffing & Capacity

- 3.19 At the inception of the Revenues & Benefits Shared Service based at Watford an establishment was agreed and put into place. In addition, at that stage, there was a reliance on Agency Staff to assist with the backlog that arose through a combination of increased caseload and the introduction of a new processing system for Watford.
- 3.20 The Agency Staff continued in place until April 2011 by which stage, two of the assessment officer vacant posts had been filled and a third by a dedicated Appeals Officer.
- 3.21 At that stage, having conducted a comparison of staffing levels against other similar sized authorities, members were advised that it was expected that with existing levels of staff, workload could be managed and backlogs reduced.
- 3.22 Members had already considered the option of using an off-site resource provided by Meritec but this was not progressed as the Agency providing the temporary resource at that time came back with competitive, reduced rates which made business sense for us to remain with them.
- 3.23 However, in the course of the last two months, it has been identified that although the staffing levels are appropriate in a “clean running” situation, they are inadequate in the current operation.
- 3.24 With the current position with regard to the Welfare Reform Bill and the role that

Local Authorities will have in delivering Universal Credits slowly becoming clearer, it is apparent that we need to have a more flexible solution when additional resources are needed. The solution offered by Serco does not tie us into a lengthy contract and we only pay when there is a need for the use of their services.

Revenues

- 3.25 A recovery programme including court dates is now in place. Whilst this is achieving its aim on one front in the form of increased collection rates, it is an inevitable consequence that the issue of reminder and final notices generate a high volume of correspondence in response.

Targets are:-

Council Tax		TRDC %	Watford %
Council Tax Base (to be collected eventually)		99.5	97.5
In Year Collection:	2010/11	98.8	97.3
	2011/12	98.9	97.5
	2012/13	99.1	97.9
 NNDR		TRDC %	Watford %
In Year Collection (all years)		99.8	99.8

The service plan breaks the in-year figure down into quarterly targets. PIs on the shared services website breaks this down into monthly targets and actuals.

The current collection rates as at 31 May 2011 (and the monthly targets) are:

Council Tax	May 2011	Target	May 2010
WBC	19.7	16.6	17.8
TRDC	20.1	16.6	20.0
Business Rate			
WBC	23.5	21.0	17.2
TRDC	25.5	21.0	27.8

- 3.26 The new accounts receivable system allows reminders to be issued for outstanding debts including commercial arrears. The monthly PI report records progress in debt recovery.
- 3.27 There are different write-off regimes at each council. It would help efficiency if harmonisation were possible and proposals are being considered for member approval. Write-offs requiring member approval will be produced shortly.
- 3.28 The implementation of the new Income Management System will afford the shared service greater control over income reconciliation with the role being brought into Revenues & Benefits and will also open up more payment channels with both CSC areas now able to accept payments over the phone at first point of contact.

The Way Forward

- 3.29 To address the backlogs, agreement is being sought to engage the services of a private company. We have been in discussion with three providers; Serco, Liberata and Capita. Capita were unable to offer help until July at the earliest so the dialogue went no further. The proposals submitted by Serco and Liberata are attached in Appendix 2 and 3 for information
- 3.30 The recommendation is that we engage Serco. This solution differs from a regular use of Agency contractor as the arrangement is on a resilience basis, i.e. we only use them when there is a demand and we are not tied into a long-term contract. In addition by basing their costs on a daily rate there is more certainty of what our costs will be.
- 3.31 The use of such an organisation will allow us to deal with peaks in workload and prevent associated backlogs but at a lower cost that we would incur if we were to use a traditional agency arrangement.
- 3.32 The company predicts a minimum average daily performance of 10 to 14 new claims a range of 13 – 40 changes in circumstances for Benefits and 25 – 50 items of Council Tax work per day.

All work is supported by the company's own QA framework with errors corrected at their own expense.

- 3.33 Based on the predicted output above, to clear every new claim we have would take between 42 and 30 "man" days at a cost of £5,880 to £4,270. However, we need to factor in that our own staff will also be reducing the workload and in May made 650 decisions against approx 400-500 claim forms.

Added to this would be the change in circumstances that also need to be processed. Due to the fact that changes are not identified as such when received in the service it is difficult to quantify although there are 180 claimant letters awaiting action received during March 2011 and 224 received during April 2011. These relate to a variety of changes and would take 13 – 20 "man" days costing £1,885 to £2,800.

With regard to Council Tax work outstanding. There are currently in the region of 3,500 items outstanding. To clear all of this would take 115 days at a cost of £14,950.

We do not propose to pass this much work to Serco. Using resources released following two vacancies arising, staff have been working overtime over the weekends of 3 and 10 June to reduce the workload.

There are approximately 390 "moves" outstanding that were received in April which would cost £1,690.

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 The indicative cost quoted the resilience service provided by Serco is £140 per day for benefits staff and £130 per day for revenues staff. This is assuming a 7.30 hour day. As a comparator, agency benefit assessment staff are currently charged at approx £23 per hour (equivalent to £172 per day) and the previous

contact with Meritec to provide an offsite solution was quoted at £22 per hour (£165 per day)

As stated earlier, the arrangement is a “pay as you go” so costs will be reduced. In addition, the faster turnaround of new claims and changes will result in the potential for a reduced subsidy loss through fewer overpayments being classified as “local authority error” due to delay.

For Council Tax, the more prompt and accurate the billing activity, the easier recovery of council tax will be.

4.2.2 The result of this plan will be that we can identify a point (December 2011) by which we will have introduced the applications that will enable self-service, third party access to resolve queries and mobile working, all of which were identified as being necessary to generate savings identified in the Cost Reduction Exercise discussed at the Joint Shared Service Committee in November 2010.

4.3 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.3.1 None specific to this report.

4.4 Risk Management and Health & Safety

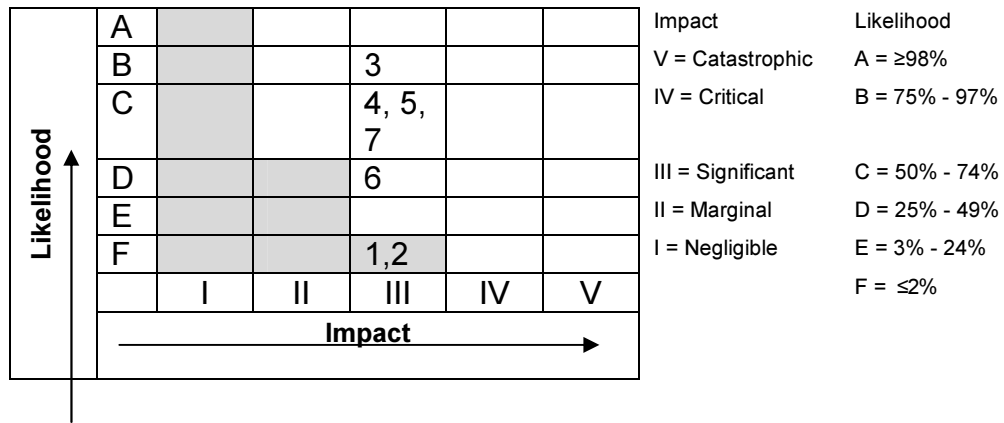
4.4.1 The following table gives the risks if the recommendation is agreed, together with a scored assessment of their impact and likelihood.

	Description of Risk	Impact	Likelihood
1	The level of performance promised by Serco is not delivered	III	F
2	The quality of work produced by Serco is below existing standards	III	F

4.4.2 The following table gives the risks that would exist if the recommendation is rejected, together with a scored assessment of their impact and likelihood:

	Description of Risk	Impact	Likelihood
3	The service will be unable to deal with increases in demand	III	B
4	Increased workload will lead to increase in stress-related absences	III	C
5	Level of complaints due to delays will increase	III	C
6	Continued progress of the implementation of shared services, will be compromised due to management time taken up by “fire-fighting”	III	D
7	Risk of intervention by Audit Commission Inspection Teams due to poor levels of performance	III	C

4.4.4 The above risks are plotted on the matrix below depending on the scored assessments of impact and likelihood. Risks are tolerated where the combination of impact and likelihood are plotted in the shaded area of the matrix. The remaining risks require either monitoring or managing, in which case a treatment plan is prepared.



Appendices

- 1 Current progress against Action Plan as at 31 May 2011
- 2 Proposal submitted by Serco for Resilience Processing
- 3 Proposal submitted by Liberata for Resilience Processing
- 4 Action Timeline

Background Papers

No papers were used in the preparation of this report.

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	Medium	Existing controls are in place but formalised procedure to be drafted.	Benefits Manager & Revenues Manager	April 2011	No	July 2011

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
	payments should occur.						
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	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
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	New post approved by Joint Shared Service Committee 06/11/10	Head of Revenues & Benefits	December 2010	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 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	

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	
5.3.15	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 2012
5.3.22	Review the clerical/administrative support required within the	Medium	Much work had been undertaken in forming existing structure prior to	Head of Revenues &	April 2012	No	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
	structure		implementation of Shared Service. No further action in short-term Not a priority action – will review by end of 2011/12	Benefits			
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.	Head of Revenues & Benefits	April 2011	No	Aug 2011
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

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
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 service	Medium	Agreed to work in collaboration with both CSC	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	
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	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
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 customer satisfaction	Medium	Repeat of 6.6.6 and 6.6.7 above	Head of Revenues & Benefits	June 2011	No	
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	High	“ACS” Procedure Manual has already been purchased and will be updated on	Policy, Training &	April 2011	No	September 2011

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
	ensure they are adopted.		an ongoing process. New post of Policy, Training & Quality Team Leader will be responsible	Quality Team Leader			
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 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	Benefits Manager	March 2011	No	June 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	

Ref No.	Recommendation	Risk Priority	Action to Date	Responsibility	Deadline	Resolved	Revised deadline
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 201
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	
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	