

Portfolio Plan

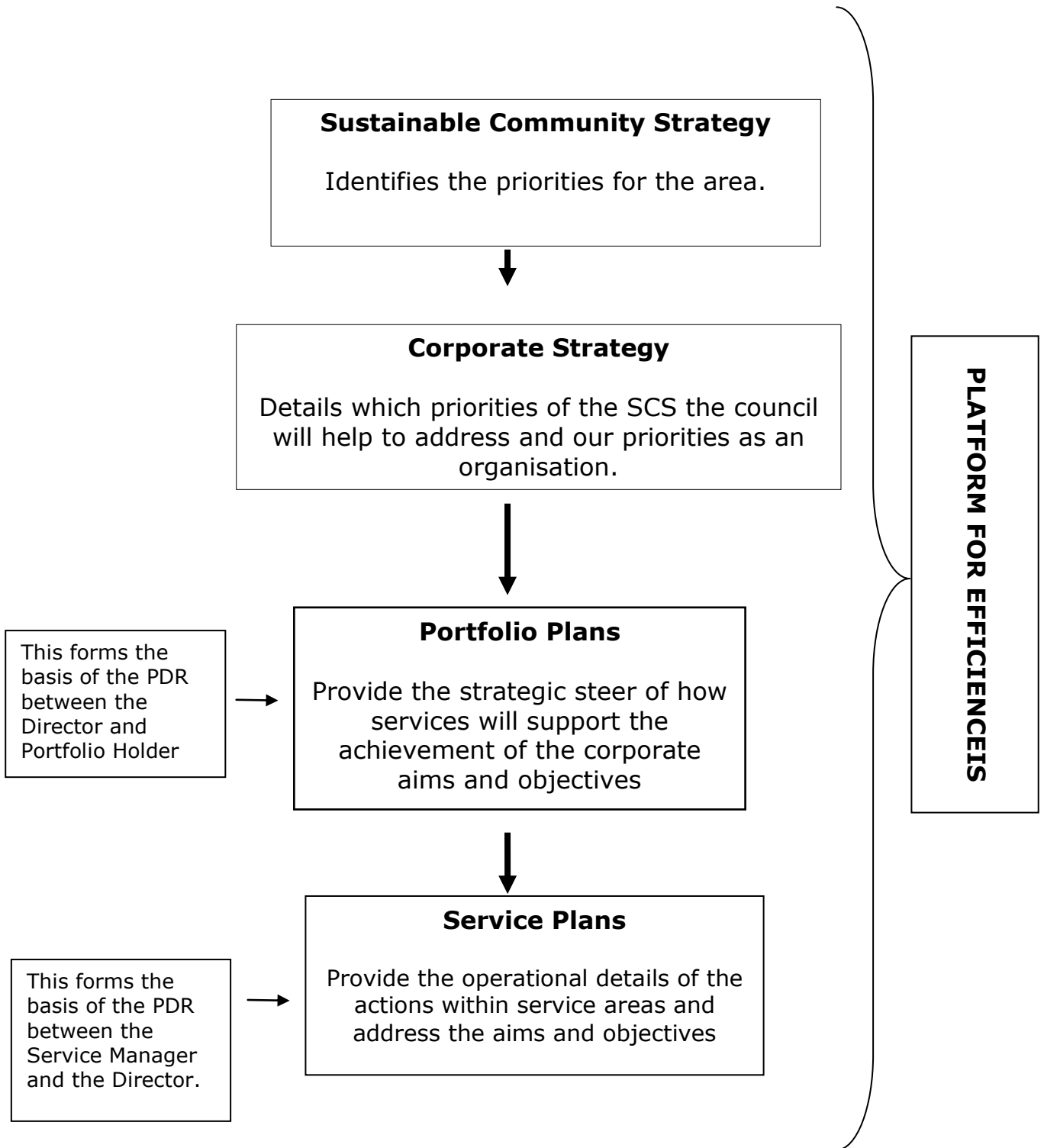
# Direct Services

April 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 - March 31<sup>st</sup> 2012



## BACKGROUND:

This plan forms an important part of the golden thread (the link between the Sustainable Community Strategy priorities right through to the actions within individual service plans).



## **Make-Up of Portfolio:**

Direct Services provides a range of front line transactional services to the residents of South Staffordshire that include:

- Housing Services (Operations):
  - Investigation and determination of applications for assistance under the homeless person's legislation
  - Provision of good quality housing advice across the district
  - Management of the Council's Housing register and nomination functions
- Housing and Council Tax Benefits:
  - An important part of welfare provision designed to enable people on lower incomes access to a decent home. It also plays a key part in enabling people to make the transition from welfare into work
- Local Taxation:
  - A statutory service responsible for the administration, billing, collection and recovery of Council Tax, National Non Domestic Rates and the recovery of overpayments of Housing Benefits
- Customer Services:
  - The Council's customer-facing service, comprising Solutions and the telephone Contact Centre
- Commercial Development:
  - manages the Council's industrial and commercial holdings, and has responsibility for Hinksford Mobile Homes Park

Land Charges (carried out by the Head of Democratic Services) and Building Control also fall within the portfolio. However, the details of these services and the relevant plans for 2010/11 are not included in this document.

## **Focus of the portfolio:**

All service areas within the portfolio are expected to deliver high quality, efficient and effective customer-focused services, which comply with all relevant statutory requirements and provide value for money to local taxpayers.

We will do this by ensuring that:

- Our processes and procedures are designed with the customer in mind
- Administrative and technological procedures are continuously updated and reviewed to improve the efficiency of our service
- Our computer systems are developed and used effectively.

In 2011/12, and over the next 2 - 5 years, Direct Services will be focused on the delivery of welfare and housing services and advice to customers affected

by the economic downturn and the changes to welfare provision enacted in the Welfare Reform Bill. We will be embarking on the process of transferring the responsibility for Housing Benefit provision to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and, at the same time, we will be implementing planned legislative changes to the benefits system, which will impact on all housing benefit recipients.

Our second area of focus will be in realising efficiency savings and generating additional income for the council by delivering services on behalf of partner authorities (notably the County Council), for which we will be paid. We will also be working on proposals for the expansion of Hinksford Mobile Home Park and on negotiating new leases for the council's industrial units.

## **Priorities for 2011-12**

### **Politics:**

- Hold weekly update meetings with the Deputy Leader for Direct Services.
- Contribute to the Leaders reports with information on service activity within the Portfolio.
- Submit reports and conduct briefings where necessary to inform Members of emerging issues - of particular importance in 2011-12 will be changes arising from the Welfare Reform Bill and the Localism Bill.
- Attend Council and Scrutiny Panels and answer questions as required.

### **Pounds:**

- To provide value for money for customers and taxpayers by focusing our services around customers needs.
- To maximise the opportunities for partnership working and shared services.
- To build and use resources intelligently, positioning our services to deal effectively with future changes in the administration of national welfare benefits.
- To ensure the on-going investment value of the Council's commercial property portfolio and to maximise revenue income to the Council.
- To reduce fraud and error in our systems by increasing the number of customers who understand what is expected from them, and what they can expect from us

### **People:**

- To have well-trained and knowledgeable staff, able to provide an efficient and professional service to the Council and its customers.
- To ensure that the service we deliver meets the needs of customers and stakeholders by undertaking regular liaison and consultation.

- To embed continuous improvement in the service to our customers.
- To obtain feedback and comment from customers to assist in informing service improvements and development.
- To develop a strategy across the Portfolio to support vulnerable residents adversely affected by the recession and the changes to welfare support.

## **Consultation:**

We expect to consult with a number of organisations and partners throughout the year, particularly in respect of new strategies and policies developed as a result of legislative change:

- Review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy. Consultation to be undertaken with stakeholders, partners and the wider public. Events to be carried out in each of the 5 localities to help determine future priorities for the service
- Review of the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households. To be carried out with service users and the accommodation provider to determine where and what type of accommodation should be provided
- Review of the Discretionary Housing Payments policy - necessitated by the Government's Welfare Reform programme and the reduction in the rates of Local Housing Allowance for tenants of privately-rented accommodation. Consultation to take place with CAB, Shelter and private landlords
- Customer Focus Strategy. Consultation planned with service users.

## **Planned Efficiencies.**

- Staff reductions in Revenues and Benefits, Customer Services and Commercial Development teams
- Develop use of computer systems to further streamline work processes - in particular, the Capita Revenues & Benefits system and the Oracle LG45 system
- Develop customer self-service options

## Applicable Portfolio Measures for 2011-12:

### Housing Services (Operational)

Target Description	Actual Target
LI200 - % of customers satisfied with the overall service they receive	85%
LI270 – Average length of stay for families with children in bed and breakfast	21 days
LI 271 Average length of stay for 16 – 17 year olds in bed and breakfast	2 days
NEW Length of time taken to complete a homelessness investigation	30 working days
NEW Length of time taken to issue a homelessness decision	5 working days
NEW length of time taken to process an application for housing	10 working days

### Benefits

Target Description	Actual Target
<b>NI 181</b> – Time taken to process Housing and Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	10 working days
<b>Local Indicators:</b>	
<b>DS/HB1</b> - Housing Benefit Security: Number of fraud investigations	350
<b>DS/HB2</b> - Housing Benefit Security: Number of prosecutions and sanctions	50
<b>DS/HB3</b> - The average processing time taken for all new Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims submitted, for which the date of decision is within the financial year being reported.	15 days
<b>DS/HB4</b> - The average processing time taken for all notified change events that require a new decision by the authority	8 days
<b>DS/HB7</b> – Speed of Processing: Percentage of new claims processed within 14 days of receipt of the full information necessary to process the claim	96%

## Revenues

Target Description	Actual Target
<b>DS/LT1</b> - Percentage of Council Tax Collected	98.5%
<b>DS/LT2</b> - Percentage of Business Rates Collected	98.5%
<b>DS/LT3</b> - Processing time (in days) for Revenue general enquiries	10 Days
<b>DS/LT4</b> - Percentage of Council Tax payers paying by Direct Debit	70%
<b>DS/LT5</b> - Percentage of Business Rates payers paying by Direct Debit	
<b>DS/HB6 (a-c)</b> - The annual amount of Housing Benefit overpayments (HB) recovered:	55%
o <b>(a)</b> As a % of the amount raised 2011/12	20%
o <b>(b)</b> As a % of the debt outstanding 2010/11	40%
o <b>(c)</b> As a % of the debt outstanding pre 2010/11	30%

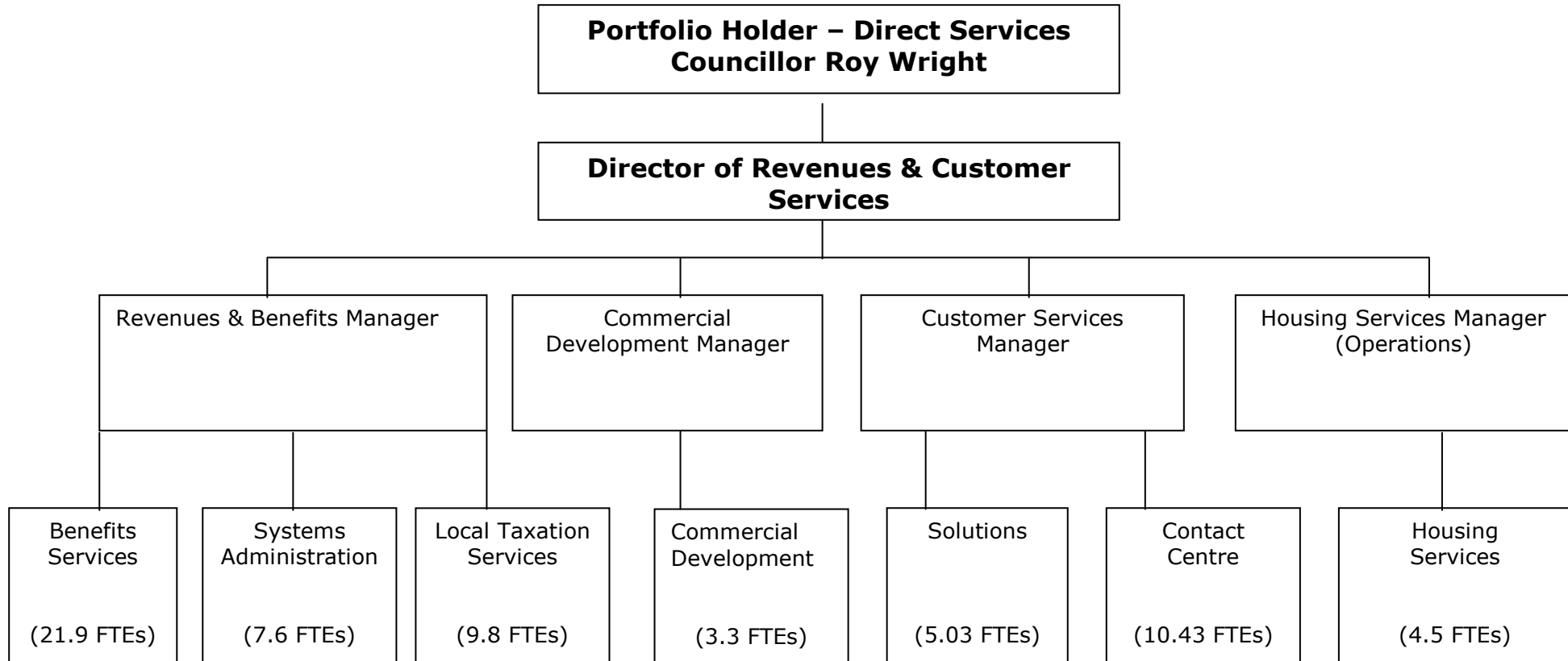
## Customer Services

Target Description	Actual Target
<b>CS1</b> - Abandoned call rate	not to exceed 5%
<b>CS2</b> - Queries resolved at 1 <sup>st</sup> point of contact	80%
<b>CS3</b> - Telephone calls to be answered within 30 seconds	80%
<b>CS4</b> - Visitors to be seen by Solutions staff within 15 minutes.	80%
Reduce avoidable contact	Reduce by 5%

## Commercial Development

Target Description	Actual Target
<b>DS/CD1</b> - % of Council industrial units that are vacant	18%
<b>DS/CD2</b> - % of collectable Council industrial unit rents collected	97%
<b>DS/CD3</b> - Rate of Return on industrial estates portfolio	B of E Base Rate + 1%
<b>DS/CD4</b> - % of collectable ground rent collected in respect of Hinksford Mobile Homes Park	98%
<b>DS/CD5</b> - Rate of return on Hinksford Mobile Homes Park	B of E Base Rate + 1%

**Organisational Structure:**



## High Level Portfolio Action Plan:

Outcome	Additional Action Required	Lead	Resources	Timescales	Monitoring Mechanism	Corporate Priority
Welfare Reform changes successfully introduced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce action plan and strategy to ensure that preparations are in place for legislative changes proposed</li> </ul>	FC/TR/PM		April 2011		5
The needs of homeless and potentially homeless households are addressed, and homelessness is prevented where possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Homelessness strategy</li> <li>Work closely with Benefits service to develop cohesive Discretionary Housing Payments strategy</li> </ul>	PM PM/TR		Dec 2011 April 2011		2 and 3
Ensure that the most vulnerable households have to access affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Choice-Based Lettings policy</li> <li>Develop action plans with partner organisations to deal with potential increase in demand for housing and debt advice following changes</li> </ul>	PM PM		March 2012 June 2011		2 and 3

	to Housing Benefits rules					
Improve Industrial Unit Lettings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop options to attract more start-up businesses</li> <li>• Review lettings policy</li> </ul>	FC		May 2011		2 and 3
Settle future of Wombourne Enterprise Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete negotiations with current tenants</li> <li>• Prepare project plan if Units return to council control</li> </ul>	FC		31/03/11		2 and 3
Smestow Brook Revetment Works completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appoint contractor and monitor completion of project</li> </ul>	FC/ Pat Davies		June 2011		1
Develop front-line service delivery with partner organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Adult and Social Services, Police and PCT to negotiate delivery agreements</li> </ul>	KC		Sept 2011		4
Life Events/Tell Us Once service implemented for South Staffs residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completion of project with DWP and Staffs Connects partnership</li> </ul>	KC		July 2011		2
Customer Focus Strategy introduced in South Staffs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation on draft strategy</li> <li>• Develop training and action plan to</li> </ul>	FC/KC		June 2011		5

	roll out to staff					
Review Portfolio services organisation and operation following VR exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultation with staff</li> <li>• Action plan to implement required changes</li> </ul>	FC		April 2011		5
Further analysis on the identified locality hot spots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Localities 3 and 4 have been identified as hotspots with over 50% of clients seeking advise of housing and homelessness issues between 01/04/10 – 30/11/10 from these areas</li> <li>• Further analysis of clients issues will help inform the review of the Councils Homelessness Strategy</li> </ul>	FC/TR/KC/PM				4

## Risk Update:

### Code & Title D1CD Commercial Development

Code	Title	Description	Risk Score	Current Risk Matrix	Internal Controls	Opportunities Presented	Corporate Aim	Managed By
D1CD01	Insufficient staffing resource	Insufficient staffing resources to effectively undertake actions identified.	8	<p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Adequate staffing resources put in place in time to carry out Action Plan.	To provide a sufficiently robust staffing structure to adequately cover property management function.	5	Glen Parker
D1CD02	Insufficient financial resources to undertake planned actions.	Insufficient financial resources to undertake planned actions.	4	<p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Additional resources considered by Council to cover shortfall.	Not Applicable.	5	Glen Parker
D1CD03	Council's obligation to have fit for purpose assets compromised	Council's obligation to have fit for purpose assets compromised	8	<p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Appropriate procedures and practices put in place.	To have fully compliant buildings and assets.	2, 5	Glen Parker
D1CD04	Lack of maintenance of Industrial estates and Hinksford MHP.	Lack of maintenance of Industrial estates and Hinksford MHP.	6	<p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Adequate staffing resources put in place to carry out intended maintenance programme.	To implement a substantive planned and reactive maintenance programme to sustain and improve the Council's assets.	2, 5	Glen Parker

Code	Title	Description	Risk Score	Current Risk Matrix	Internal Controls	Opportunities Presented	Corporate Aim	Managed By
DICD05	Reduced Rental Income from Industrial Estates	Reduced Rental Income from Industrial Estates	15		Marketing of Units to be maximised within available budgets. Flexible lease terms and rent free periods offered to attract new tenants	Not Applicable.	2	Glen Parker

**Code & Title** DICU Customer Services

Code	Title	Description	Risk Score	Current Risk Matrix	Internal Controls	Opportunities Presented	Corporate Aim	Managed By
DICU01	Implementation of CRM is delayed	Implementation of CRM is delayed due to technical issues with integration of back office systems	6		All integration work to be closely monitored. Business cases for future integrations to be closely scrutinized. Technical workarounds to be considered and developed	Contingency plans established to prevent failure of Contact Centre due to system problems	5	Karen Childs
DICU02	Resistance from services to transfer service and staff to Customer Services	Resistance from services to transfer service and staff to Customer Services	9		Deal with services and managers individually and keep them involved in the service design for transfer. Keep staff informed of progress.	Assist in the improvement of service processes as part of integration with the Contact Centre	5	Karen Childs
DICU03	Lack of technical support for CRM system	Lack of technical support for CRM system – key person dependency in IT	8		New post in IT has been filled and capacity to support system has been increased	Development of valuable Oracle database expertise	5	Leigh Brookes; Karen Childs

**Code & Title** DIHO Housing Operations

Code	Title	Description	Risk Score	Current Risk Matrix	Internal Controls	Opportunities Presented	Corporate Aim	Managed By
DIHO01	Increase in Demand impairs ability to re-house homeless	An unexpected increase in demand may impair the capacity to re-house homeless households	6		Good partnership arrangements with RSLs and the nature of the district Homelessness Prevention toolkit in place.	Frequent communication and working together increases the strength of a partnership between the council and SSHA.	2	Pat Main
DIHO05	Policies and Procedures no longer comply with legal requirements and good practice.	Policies and Procedures no longer comply with legal requirements and good practice.	4		All policies and procedures are under constant review as improvements to the service are implemented.	Council is seen as a promoter of good practice	5	Pat Main
DIHO07	Lack of choices for homeless	Lack of alternate choice of homes for homeless or potentially homeless households.	4		Nomination SLA with RSLs reviewed annually. Links being developed with private sector landlords. Development of choice based lettings with all partner RSLs implementation of rent deposit guarantee scheme. Implementation of property accreditation scheme.	Positive relationships are maintained with other RSLs across the district. Public confidence in the private rented sector. Improved confidence in the private rented sector. Empowerment of clients to make informed decisions about their housing options.	2	Pat Main
DIHO09	Vulnerable person may not receive appropriate support	Vulnerable person may not receive support in times of desperate need.	8		Review of emergency out-of-hours service for homelessness support and advice. Independent support service commissioned in partnership with SSHA.	This should result in improved provision and support.	2	Pat Main

Code	Title	Description	Risk Score	Current Risk Matrix	Internal Controls	Opportunities Presented	Corporate Aim	Managed By
DIHO10	Homeless people at risk of poor health	Homeless people are at increased risk of poor health and fitness due to personal circumstances.	4	<p>Likelihood</p> <p>Impact</p>	Improved links with the council's health and wellbeing team to provide relevant timely information on health factors.	People in temporary accommodation are supported to remain as fit and healthy as possible.	2	Pat Main

**Code & Title** DIRB Revenues and Benefits

Code	Title	Description	Risk Score	Current Risk Matrix	Internal Controls	Opportunities Presented	Corporate Aim	Managed By
DIRB01	Integrity of new employees	Integrity of new employees	3		CRB check undertaken of all new personnel	Not Applicable.	5	Tracey Richards
DIRB02	Risk of fraud, theft or misappropriation of funds by staff	Risk of fraud, theft or misappropriation of funds by staff	2		System security levels restrict access to accounts. Random % account checking in place and quality assurance procedures in place. Close monitoring of system controls & exception reports. Separation of duties.	Not Applicable.	5	Tracey Richards
DIRB05	High reliance on IT systems an	High reliance on IT systems and external providers to deliver services which could lead to a loss of service if provision is not maintained	3		Management contract and SLA with software suppliers, external providers and agreement with neighbouring authorities under disaster recovery plan	Contribute to shared services agenda	5	Tracey Richards
DIRB06	Failure to collect direct debit payments on due date	Failure to collect direct debit payments on due date	6		Procedures in place to enable early notification to Accountancy and rearrangement of short-term finances	Not Applicable.	5	Tracey Richards

Code	Title	Description	Risk Score	Current Risk Matrix	Internal Controls	Opportunities Presented	Corporate Aim	Managed By
DIRB07	Sufficient resources at times of peak customer demand	Sufficient resources at times of peak customer demand	3		Flexible working within Revenues and Benefits service and reciprocal arrangements with Customer Services	Build capacity of service to cope with temporary staff shortages or unforeseen peaks in workload	5	Tracey Richards
DIRB08	Area unable to deliver service due to failure of an in-house service	Area unable to deliver service due to failure of an in-house service	4		External service deliverers identified	Not Applicable.	5	Tracey Richards
DIRB09	Injury to member of visiting staff due to lone working	Injury to member of visiting staff due to lone working	2		Adherence to Lone Worker and health & safety protocols with development of corporate "potentially violent persons" register	Demonstrate concern for welfare and that staff are valued	5	Tracey Richards
DIRB10	Third party (Bailiffs) collections incorrect, lost or stolen	Third party (Bailiffs) collections incorrect, lost or stolen	3		Use of certificated and accredited collection agents, with indemnity against loss to the Council.	Not Applicable.	5	Tracey Richards
DIRB11	Failure or delay in identifying new properties to be entered in the Lists, leading to loss of income	Failure or delay in identifying new properties to be entered in the Lists, leading to loss of income	6		Close liaison with other services and external partners. Regular inspections carried out.	Improved joint working and contribute to shared services agenda	5	Tracey Richards