

South Staffordshire Council

DIRECT SERVICES

SERVICE PLAN

2009/2010

Direct Services Portfolio Service Plan 2009/2010

regime . Phase 2 of the project will continue in 2009/10, with plans to take customer enquiries from Licensing, Housing Advice, Pest Control and Waste Management services. Phase 3 will see the Contact Centre expand to deal with telephone enquiries from customers of other service areas, including Leisure.

- 1.1.5 Commercial Development manages the Council's industrial and commercial holdings, and has responsibility for Hinksford Mobile Homes Park. Together these assets form the bulk of the Council's building property portfolio and provide the Council with an annual rental income of nearly £1 million.
- 1.1.5 Staff in Revenues and Benefits, Customer Services and Commercial Development have been consulted in the development of this service plan.

1.2 The Portfolio has the following aims and objectives:

1.2.1 The Revenues and Benefits service:

- To provide a high quality, customer focused service that pays the right benefits, discounts and reliefs to the right people at the right time.
- To collect Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits Overpayments effectively, maximising income to the Council and minimising the customer's level of debt as appropriate.
- To provide value for money for customers and taxpayers by focusing our services around customers needs.
- To ensure that the service we deliver meets the needs of customers and stakeholders by undertaking regular liaison and consultation.
- To reduce fraud and error in the system by increasing the number of customers who understand what is expected from them, and what they can expect from us.
- To have well-trained and knowledgeable staff, able to provide an efficient and professional service to the Council and its customers.

1.2.3 Customer Services:

- To provide consistent and excellent service to customers however they contact the Authority.
- To resolve as many queries as possible at first point of contact.
- To obtain feedback and comment from customers to assist in informing service improvements and development.
- To enable best use of resources by freeing up professional officers' time so that they can concentrate on more complex and specialist matters, rather than dealing with routine enquiries.

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1.2.4 Commercial Development:

- To provide a well-managed property portfolio that represents value for money, good service and encourages business start up and new job opportunities.
- To ensure the on-going investment value of the portfolio and to maximise revenue income to the Council.

1.3 Review of 2008/2009

1.3.1 The Revenues and Benefits Service:

- The key event this year was the inspection of the Benefits Service by the Audit Commission during week commencing 9th June 2008. The Inspectors scored the service against new "Key Lines of Enquiry", and made two judgments: "How well is the service performing?" and "What are the prospects for improvement?" The inspectors reported that the Benefits Service is poor, but has promising prospects for improvement.

The inspectors recognised that there had been significant improvement in the performance of the service, particularly in claims processing, but also noted areas where further improvement was required. The recommendations made by the inspectors covered work already identified by the service managers before the inspection took place, and relevant actions were included in the service plan for 2008/09. However, an additional, specific, detailed improvement plan has been prepared and has been approved by members. Progress against this plan will be monitored to ensure there is continual improvement against the Key Lines of Enquiry. A re-inspection of the Benefits service is planned for the third quarter of 2009/10.

A copy of the Benefits Improvement Plan is attached as **APPENDIX A** to this Service Plan.

- There has been continual improvement throughout 2008/09 in the time taken to process new claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit and changes in circumstances. The Council Tax collection rate has been sustained compared to 2007/08, but Business Rates collection has been less successful, due to the economic downturn. Proactive initiatives have helped the Fraud Team achieve a number of successful sanctions and prosecutions during the year.

The service has experienced a considerable increase in workload in recent months as a result of the current national economic situation. However, performance has not suffered and, in fact, continues to improve due to careful monitoring, prioritisation and management of the teams' work.

- There has been an emphasis on staff training and development this year, as part of the service strategy to build capacity and work more effectively.

Principal Officers and Team Leaders attended a series of workshops to learn how to use techniques such as "Lean" (making business processes more efficient) and "Kaizen" (making small improvements to enhance the

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whole). These have been put into practice and involve all the service staff in identifying things that cause problems for customers or the service, and in helping design solutions. All teams hold brief Communication Meetings each day – usually 5 or 10 minutes – where the previous day's performance is reviewed, daily targets agreed, and any ideas or concerns are raised. Several ideas arising from these meetings have been incorporated into this service plan. Whilst, at the outset, these meetings and the techniques used were met with some scepticism by staff, they have proved to be highly successful and staff now find them useful and informative.

We continue to support staff through technical training to assist their personal development and to build the knowledge base within the service. Time is set aside for each member of staff to use our online training tool, which helps keep knowledge of the law and best practice up to date. This is further enhanced by internal and external training courses, and a number of staff are studying for professional Revenues and Benefits qualifications. Analysing the results of quality checks, appeals and complaints identifies specific training needs.

- The service has been involved in three strands of the Local Strategic Partnerships:
 - Housing
 - Economic Vibrancy
 - Health and Well Being.

This has helped to strengthen the working partnerships with internal and external organisations to the advantage of our mutual customers, whilst raising the profile of the service and being a gateway to new opportunities.

- There were a number of important legislative changes during the year, requiring upgrades to the Pericles IT system and staff training to ensure a smooth and successful transition. All new schemes have been successfully implemented, and are outlined below:
 - Local Housing Allowance, a new scheme for tenants of private landlords, where the level of Housing Benefit is based on the size of the family unit rather than the actual rent paid;
 - Employment Support Allowance, which replaces Job Seekers Allowance and some incapacity benefits for people of working age;
 - The introduction of a Non-Domestic Rates charge in respect of empty business properties (note that this legislation is being temporarily repealed for the 2009/10 financial year).
- The Benefits Electronic Claims System (BECS) has been successfully implemented, and has improved the quality of claims received for Housing and Council Tax Benefit. This, in turn, has helped reduced the time taken to process claims. Following training provided by our staff, the system has been adopted by several of our partners, including South Staffordshire Housing Association, Social Services, Citizens' Advice and Age Concern.

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- The Housing Service, several Registered Social Landlords, Age Concern and the Pension Service have been trained to receive and verify Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims on our behalf. This will maximise the opportunities for working in partnership to reduce the burden on the customer when dealing with multiple agencies. It should also improve the quality of claims being submitted, leading to faster processing and payment.
- Mobile Working is now being piloted by the Service's Visiting Officers, prior to extending the facility to external service providers and other service areas.
- Replacement hardware to host the Council Tax, Business Rates, Benefits, Fraud and Cash Receipting systems software was successfully installed. This has improved the time taken to update the records, which in turn helps to improve the time taken to process the work.
- The project to move the administration, management and recovery of Housing Benefits overpayments under the umbrella of the Revenues and Benefits service has been completed.
- Payments of Housing Benefit and refunds of Council Tax and Business Rates are now being made by BACS, straight to customers' bank accounts. This is more secure and efficient than payment by cheque. The facility is currently being used by over 45% of Benefits customers, and we will continue to promote this method of payment to increase the take-up.

1.3.2 Customer Services:

- During the year work was undertaken to amalgamate the three sections of Customer Services (Contact Centre, Reception and Solutions) into one unified service. Changes were made to the way in which Reception is staffed which involves using staff at a more appropriate grading and giving them more training in how to deal with customer enquiries over a broad spectrum. This frees specialist Solutions staff to deal with more complex customer queries. Revenues and Benefits enquiries are dealt with in both Solutions and the Contact Centre and the next services to transfer to the Contact Centre will be Concessionary Travel and Electoral Registration services which are already dealt with in Solutions. This will give consistency across the service. Future services transferred will be delivered from both areas.
- Development continued on the Oracle LG45 CRM system, which went live for Revenues and Benefits services in October 2008 in the Contact Centre. Some work has been done to make amendments to service requests and to develop new ones for the services that are to transfer imminently. This work has had to be given priority as the development of the CRM has been frozen until April to enable a major upgrade to take place. The CRM will be rolled out into Solutions in March 2009.
- The Customer Services Manager has been working closely with other Customer Service Staff from the Staffordshire Connects partner authorities through the Customer First Group to develop ideas around joint working, making best use of technology, application of the new National Performance Indicators and accreditation of Contact Centres (as

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recommended in the Varney report). There has also been major discussion about the way forward for CRM and how the partnership will work together in the future.

- Customer Services staff have been working with Social Services staff and others to develop a referral system for vulnerable customers who may come into contact with one agency but need help from others. This is to work in conjunction with the Health net scheme and a pilot is commencing at the beginning of April.
- Customer Services staff suggested developing a Corporate Communications calendar to enable staff to keep track of the dates when large mailings will be circulated, so that they are aware of what type of calls they can expect. It will also mean they can make sure they have the right information to hand to answer queries at first point of contact. This has now been designed and implemented.
- A review of our performance indicators has been carried out to ensure that we are measuring and monitoring things that really matter to the customer and can improve our efficiency. These are incorporated into the service plan for this year.
- Customer Services have been working closely with other services to develop areas for transfer into Customer Services for initial contact with customers. These include Environmental Health (General and Commercial), Housing, Electoral Registration, Concessionary Travel, Civil Parking Enforcement, Licensing and Leisure services. Work will be continuing through the year.
- Customer Services and the Benefits service are working together on a pilot scheme to make follow-up appointments for Benefits claimants, rather than them just arrive and have to wait for long periods. This enables claimants to know in advance what they need to bring, they can be dealt with in one visit and the Benefits service can then fast track appropriate claims.

1.3.2 Commercial Development:

- 2008/09 saw a transformation in the world economic climate and whilst the full impact of the downturn has still to be felt, there is no doubt that the slowdown over the past 12 months or so has, and is still having, a marked effect on the local economy. In respect of the Council's industrial premises this has been reflected by a marked slowdown in letting of available property, and in the number of enquiries from potential tenants. Several businesses have failed during this period. As at 1st January 2009 the occupation rate stood at 89.9%, down from 95% at the same time in 2008.
- The Capital Works Project to remove asbestos containing materials from the units on three of the industrial estates at Hilton, Heathmill and Landywood, and from the garages and outbuildings at Hinksford Mobile Home Park, progressed and was completed satisfactorily in June 2008. Staffordshire County Council managed the work, which also included other refurbishment and improvement aspects, in close liaison with the Commercial Development Section.

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- Following a previous review of the viability of the Council's garages at Chapel Lane, Codsall (a block of seven garages in need of urgent remedial work) and the decision to demolish the garages, work was completed in September 2008 to clear the site
- Work has progressed on implementing a new estate management software system. The system has been installed and initial training undertaken.
- As a result of previous incidents of flooding at Hinksford Mobile Home Park from the adjoining Smestow Brook, and the effects of bank erosion at a number of locations, the Council agreed to undertake a detailed survey of the watercourse and draw up a plan of action. The survey was carried out in December 2008 and various options for remedial works have been offered for implementation in 2009.
- Implementation of a programme of electrical testing and certification to all the Council's industrial units and Hinksford Mobile Home Park was commenced and completed in March 2009. Any remedial work identified as required as a result of the inspections will be carried out in 2009/10.
- A review of the Commercial Development Service was progressed to assess its functions, including economic development, and the resources applied. A number of recommendations were formulated and are to be progressed.

1.4 Plans for 2009/2010 & 2010/2011 & 2011/2012

1.4.1 Revenues and Benefits 2009/10

- In November 2008 Anite, providers of the Pericles software system, sold their division known as Anite Public Sector to Northgate. Northgate have recently announced their decision to de-commission Pericles by February 2011. This means we will be forced to change our software system.

Northgate have presented a proposal to migrate the service onto their Revenues and Benefits software product formerly known as "iWorld", but now just known as "Northgate".

The service will explore the options available to the Council, which will include discussions with other Pericles users, neighbouring authorities and Capita, the only other supplier of Revenues and Benefits systems. All opportunities for joint working and procurement will be explored prior to a favoured option being put before members.

- A further inspection of the Benefits Service by the Audit Commission will take place during 2009/10. This will be a full inspection of the service, but the Inspectors will want to see progress made against the Improvement Plan, and evidence that those service improvements have, and will be, sustained. Maintenance of the usually high collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates is likely to become difficult over the short to medium term. The level of collection will be continually monitored

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throughout the year so that remedial action can be taken swiftly if necessary.

Staff will be as supportive as possible to customers experiencing financial difficulties, ensuring that they receive any discounts or other reductions they are entitled to. Customers will be signposted to external partners, such as Citizens' Advice Bureaux, when appropriate.

There has been a marked increase in the number of claims being received for Housing and Council Tax Benefit in recent months, which is likely to continue during 2009/2010. We will ensure that the service's resources are closely monitored to maximise efficiencies.

Historic evidence suggests that there is likely to be more error and fraud in the system during times of economic recession. We will continue to educate our customers and ensure that accurate levels of benefit are paid through proactive exercises. Successful fraud prosecution cases will be publicised as a deterrent and to re-emphasise the Council's commitment to fighting benefit fraud.

- The service will continue to provide support and awareness training to partner organisations and other service areas that are in contact with our mutual and potential customers. Work will be undertaken with our partners in the public and voluntary sector, and other service areas, to increase the accessibility of the service and thereby increase customer service provision. Regular liaison meetings and consultation will take place to ensure that all stakeholders contribute to the future development and improvement in the service, and to ensure that the service being provided meets the expectations of its users.

Customers will be regularly surveyed to establish; their reasons for contacting the service, that the service received was satisfactory, how they prefer to contact us and suggestions about what would make the service better for them.

- The Revenues and Benefits service will contribute towards the Local Area Agreement, in particular the aim of increasing Staffordshire people's quality of life, by improving the service it provides locally and increasing the economic prosperity, by specifically supporting the following:

NI 21 – dealing with local concerns about anti social behaviour and crime by working with the Community Safety Partnership for South Staffordshire and the Fraud Investigation Unit at the Department for Works and Pensions, ensuring that all cases identified as being potentially fraudulent are dealt with appropriately.

NI 152 – working age population on out of work benefits, to reduce those in receipt of benefits within the area by promoting Housing and Council Tax benefit as an in work benefit to support transition into paid work.

NI 156 – number of households living in temporary accommodation, supporting our colleagues in Housing by prioritising any cases identified as experiencing delays in the claims process, and considering the award of a Discretionary Housing Payment, if appropriate.

NI 172 – percentage of small businesses in an area showing growth, by ensuring that these businesses are encouraged to apply for any reductions

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to which they are entitled to minimise their Business Rate liability, and support the payment of the charge through mutually agreed payment plans where appropriate.

- There are a number of known legislative changes to be enacted in 2009/10 and the service will need to deal with these by updating the system software, reviewing procedures, training staff and publicising the changes to our customers and stakeholders. These include:
 - The introduction of a supplementary business rate under the Sustainable Communities Bill, which will be set at County level. but will be collected by Districts
 - The temporary suspension of the regulations requiring rates to be levied on empty business properties.
 - The roll out of the DWP's "In and Out of Work" programme which is designed to streamline procedures for people who move in and out of work, removing the barriers that are known to discourage the unemployed from accepting short-term or temporary jobs. The aim is to provide a single point of contact for customers, where information is gathered for all benefits and shared securely across the organisations. This approach will enable quicker simultaneous payments to customers giving them greater confidence to take up work, particularly offers of short-term employment. The initiative involves Job Centre Plus, HMRC and Local Authorities.
 - The introduction of a full disregard of child benefit and maintenance payments in Housing and Council Tax Benefits entitlement calculations. This will bring many more families into benefit.
- The service will review its data security procedures throughout the year to ensure that it fully complies with the requirements of the Code of Connection standard for the Government Connect Secure Extranet.
- In accordance with the Service Improvement Plan (Appendix A), the service will:
 - Continue to train and develop its staff
 - Manage performance at service and individual levels
 - Continue to review processes using "Lean" techniques
 - Publicise the service and undertake targeted campaigns to encourage the take-up of benefits
 - Benchmark service costs and performance against other authorities in order to deliver a value-for-money service
 - Develop and improve the recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit
 - Monitor and take action to reduce avoidable contact from customers
 - Investigate the feasibility of introducing Home Working to the service, alongside other methods of service delivery

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Outline Plans for 2010/2011 and 2011/2012

- Replacement of Revenues and Benefits software: See above.
- Welfare Reform Bill – preparation will continue on the requirements of the service to comply with the changes that are implemented as part of this Government initiative.
- The services will continue to develop partnership working with neighbouring authorities to provide support and enhance the capacity of the Revenues and Benefits Service.
- The Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 is creating a new, simplified statutory framework for tribunals, which will have an impact on the Appeals and Valuation Tribunals that are used by Revenues and Benefits by
 - i. unifying the existing law relating to enforcement by seizure and sale of goods, which will require a review of the way in which debts owing to the Council are collected by bailiffs, and
 - ii. changing the debt-management schemes, which include administration orders and enforcement orders, which will have an impact on the approach that is used in the recovery of debts.

1.4.2 Customer Services:

- The Service will monitor several new areas of performance in order to establish a baseline from which to improve in future years. These include:
 - Cost of service per contact: This will be calculated for both telephony and face-to-face contacts and assessed to establish where reductions can be made without compromising standards of service delivery.
 - Utilisation of staff: Staff utilisation rates will be collated and analysed to identify areas of under utilisation. This will enable decisions to be made regarding capacity to take on new work for services without requiring further staff transfer. This will also involve looking at handling and wrap up times for staff to identify process changes and training issues.
 - Customer feedback received: Feedback, both positive and negative will be collated, acted up on and monitored to improve customer service.
 - Quality of customer service delivery: All staff will be monitored on a monthly basis to verify the quality of service they provide to customers. This will be done against an agreed matrix and the information gathered will be used to support best practice and training requirements.

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Other operational projects include:

- Further development of the CRM system in conjunction with partners. The upgrade to version R12 will be completed in April 2009.
- Rollout of CRM across Customer Services into the Solutions area.
- Implementation of Phase 2, which will consist of the development and transfer of further services to Customer Services, in consultation with service managers.
- Development of Customer Services Standards.
- Continued integration of Solutions and Contact Centre into one unified Customer Services unit.
- Chartermark for unified Customer Services unit.
- Development of compliments and complaints strategy.
- Development of Customer Access Strategy.
- Development of Customer Care programme for induction of new employees.
- Continued involvement in National Benchmarking groups and exercises.
- Working with local diverse community groups to ensure that the needs of these groups are met. This will include more involvement with Locality working groups and the Parish/District liaison group.
- Explore joint working and shared service delivery with other agencies including partners, housing associations and the voluntary sector.
- Development of Phase 3 plans.
- In addition to formal Corporate Customer Service standards, develop and encourage a change in culture within the organisation to put the customer at the heart of what we do.
- Improve links with members.
- Expansion of accommodation
- Review of payments taken within Customer Services.
- Provision of some support services e.g. post-opening.

1.4.3 Commercial Development:

- Assess findings and options for action arising out of the Smestow Brook/Hinksford Mobile Home Park survey report and implement any required remedial work.
- Undertake Flood Risk Assessment at Hinksford Mobile Home Park.
- Complete electrical testing and remedial works across the Council's industrial estates and Hinksford Mobile Home Park.
- Re-assess visitor accessibility of Site Office at Hinksford.
- Progress the introduction of the estate management software and update of all necessary property and tenant information.
- Develop a comprehensive information pack for new tenants of the industrial units.
- Organise a "Best Kept Garden" competition for the residents of Hinksford Mobile Home Park.
- Undertake an options appraisal with regard to Wombourne Enterprise Park and the end of the long term leases to Ashtenne Ltd.
- Review and document management procedures and practices to further improve delivery and continuity of service.
- Contribute to the LSP on economic vibrancy issues, engaging as appropriate to improve employment opportunities within the district.
- Implement as required any actions from the Service Review.

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2.0 Performance Indicators

The following National and Local Performance Indicators are included within the Direct Services Portfolio:

<u>Benefits</u>	<u>Target 2009/2010</u>
NI 180 – Changes in Housing & Council Tax Benefit entitlement within the year	8569
NI 181 – Time taken to process Housing and Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	13 days
Local Indicators:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit Security: Number of fraud investigations 	287
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Benefit Security: Number of prosecutions and sanctions 	42
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of changes in benefit payments identified through actions by Fraud and Intervention staff 	30%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	20 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average processing time taken for all notified change events that require a new decision by the authority 	10 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy of processing: Percentage of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct on the basis of the information available for the decision, for a sample of cases checked post-decision 	99%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The annual amount of Housing Benefit overpayments (HB) recovered, as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayments outstanding 	20%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed of Processing: Percentage of new claims processed within 14 days of receipt of the full information necessary to process the claim 	95%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time taken to undertake a home visit following receipt of a request 	7 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average time taken to process applications for reconsideration 	10 days

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average time taken to process appeals 	6 weeks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of direct payments made to claimants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance 	80%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of payments to claimants being made by BACS 	80%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of subsidy payments received compared to benefit paid 	99%

<u>Revenues</u>	<u>Target 2009/2010</u>
Local Indicators:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of Council Tax Collected 	98.4%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of Business Rates Collected 	96%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing time (in days) for Revenue general enquiries 	10 Days
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of Council Tax payers paying by Direct Debit 	70%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of Business Rates payers paying by Direct Debit 	55%

<u>Customer Services</u>	<u>Target 2009/2010</u>
<p>NI 14 - Avoidable contact: The proportion of contacts within key service areas that are a poor use of customer and officer time</p> <p><i>This is a corporate indicator, which will be coordinated by Customer Services. Targets will be set when base line figures have been established after sampling exercise.</i></p>	To Be Advised
Local Indicators:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call abandonment rates % 	2% overall
	No single queue to exceed 3%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of calls answered within target times. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialist queues 	80% within 30 seconds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General queues 	90% within

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time taken for visitors to be seen. • Percentage of enquires resolved at first point of contact. <i>(% target will be reassessed as new services transfer into Customer Services)</i> 	<p>30 seconds</p> <p>90% visitors seen within 15 minutes</p> <p>80%</p>
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<u>Commercial Development</u>	<u>Target 2008/2009</u>
Local Indicators:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of Council industrial units that are vacant 	12%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of collectable Council industrial unit rents collected 	97%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of Return on industrial estates portfolio 	B of E Base Rate + 1%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of collectable ground rent collected in respect of Hinksford Mobile Homes Park 	98%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of return on Hinksford Mobile Homes Park 	B of E Base Rate + 1%

3.0 Equalities & Diversity

- 3.1 South Staffordshire Council considers Equality & Diversity to be an important consideration when providing services.

- 3.2 The Action Plan has been amended to display whether an Equality Impact Assessment is required for each action and when this Equality Impact Assessment, if required, will be carried out.

- 3.3 This Assessment will be reviewed by the Diversity Group.

4.0 Climate Change

- 4.1 South Staffordshire Council takes the issues of climate change and protection of the environment very seriously.

- 4.2 There are no actions identified specifically for this area, but actions to deliver corporate aims have been incorporated into the Action Plan.

- 4.3 This will be reviewed by the EMS Group.

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5.0 Section 17

- 5.1 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act, 1998, places a duty on a local authority to consider crime and disorder implications and to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on and to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.
- 5.2 The actions in this service plan have been developed with the Section 17 requirement given due regard and are not considered to have any adverse impact for the purposes of the Crime and Disorder Act.

The following resources are allocated to the services listed above to enable services delivery: -

6.0 Financial Resources

6.1 Revenue Budgets 2009/10

Set out below is a subjective analysis of the expenditure and income contained within this portfolio:

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DIRECT SERVICES PORTFOLIO	Expenditure			Income			Net Expenditure			Net Expenditure			
	2008/09		2009/10	2008/09		2009/10	2008/09		2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
SERVICE UNIT/SERVICE	Original £000's	Revised £000's	Estimate £000's	Original £000's	Revised £000's	Estimate £000's	Original £000's	Revised £000's	Estimate £000's	Project'n £000's	Project'n £000's	Project'n £000's	Project'n £000's
CUSTOMER SERVICES													
Solutions and Contact Centre	362	680	808	-263	-680	-808	99	0	0	0	0	0	0
	362	680	808	-263	-680	-808	99	0	0	0	0	0	0
BENEFITS SERVICES													
Council Tax and Housing Benefit Payments	19,810	21,168	20,319	-19,790	-21,143	-20,279	20	25	40	40	20	20	20
Rebate Administration	1,504	1,374	1,461	-635	-635	-677	869	739	784	713	731	741	755
Local Tax Collection	1,039	1,076	1,141	-339	-337	-336	700	739	805	829	852	874	897
	22,353	23,618	22,921	-20,764	-22,115	-21,292	1,589	1,503	1,629	1,582	1,603	1,635	1,672
GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY													
Land Charges	118	101	72	-130	-65	-47	-12	36	25	0	0	0	0
DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING CONTROL													
Building Control	451	412	428	-395	-390	-407	56	22	21	0	0	0	0
COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES													
Industrial Estates	722	753	693	-920	-906	-858	-198	-153	-165	-161	-157	-151	-145
Hinksford Mobile Home Park	214	213	229	-204	-204	-194	10	9	35	22	16	8	2
	936	966	922	-1,124	-1,110	-1,052	-188	-144	-130	-139	-141	-143	-143
DIRECT SERVICES TOTAL	24,220	25,777	25,171	-22,676	-24,360	-23,626	1,544	1,417	1,545	1,443	1,462	1,492	1,529

6.2 There are no other service area budgets managed by the Director of Revenue and Customer Services.

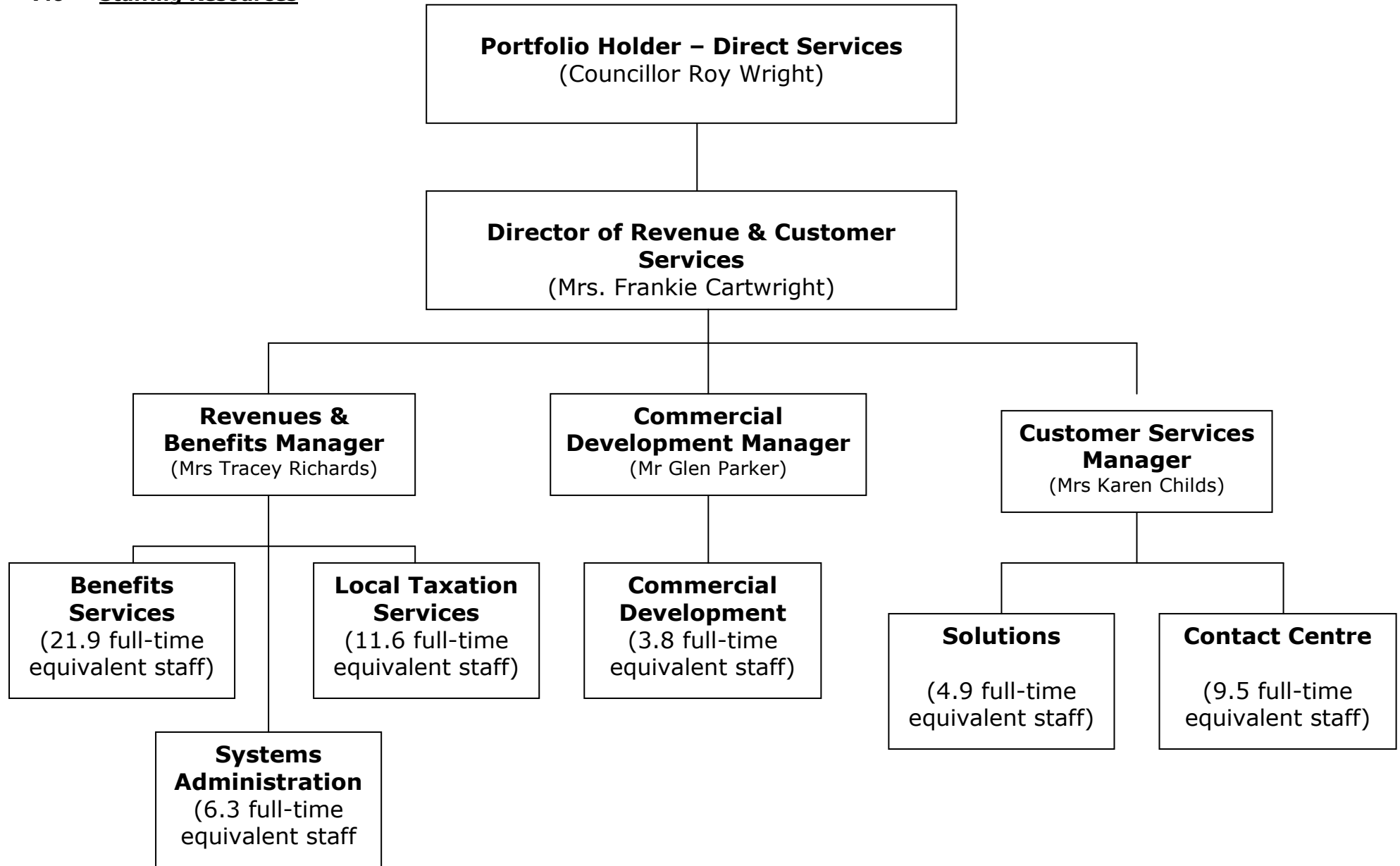
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6.3 Capital Budgets 2009/2010

CAPITAL PROGRAMME - SUMMARY OF CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLANS	Budget 2008/09	Revised Budget 2008/09	Budget 2009/10	Budget 2010/11	Budget 2011/12	Budget 2012/13	Budget 2013/14	Total
<u>Direct Services</u>								
Estate Improvements		165,260						165,260
CRM System		378,090						378,090
Benefits Electronic Claims System		32,300						32,300
Benefit Notification Letters via Formscape	6,000	6,000						6,000
Revenues & Benefits New Server		93,600						93,600
Electrical Inspection Remedial Work	113,000	113,000						113,000
Estate Management System	31,600	31,600						31,600
Hinksford Bank Protection Works			23,000					23,000
DIRECT SERVICES TOTAL	150,600	819,850	23,000	0	0	0	0	842,850

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7.0 Staffing Resources



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8.0 Action Planning

8.1 The following outlines the actions that are planned and assigned to the Direct Services Portfolio during 2008/2009. These include action from the LAA, the Environmental Management System, the Equality & Diversity Actions Plan, Service Review Action Plans, the Corporate Improvement Plan (CPA), actions arising from Service Challenge and other actions agreed as part of service plans for respective service areas:

Key:

Corp Aim = Corporate Aim
SA = Service Action
SC = Service Challenge
LAA = Local Area Agreement
E&D = Equality and Diversity
CC = Climate Change
PERF MEASURES = Performance Measures (PIs etc.)

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REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICES										
ACTION		CONTACT	RESOURCES		KEY DATES					
ACTION NAME	REF NO.	LEAD OFFICER	BUDGET £	CAP OR REV	START	END	CORP AIM	PERF. MEASURE	EIA REQ'D?	EIA DUE DATE
Identify and deliver appropriate training requirements for staff within service	SA	Elaine Fox	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/07/08	31/03/10	4 5	NI 181 Accuracy of processing	No	N/a
Undertake appropriate liaison and closer working with internal service areas, including Customer Services, Housing and Health	SA	Elaine Harper	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	3 4 5	Improved Customer Satisfaction Increased awareness of service	No	N/a
Ensure appropriate liaison and closer working with external organisations, including Age Concern, CAB, Pension Service, JCP and Social Services, and the introduction of multi agency referrals.	SA	Elaine Harper	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	3 4 5	Value for Money Improved Customer Service Number of partner referrals Increased take-up Increased accessibility of service	No	N/a
Review processes and procedures to ensure Lean working methods are adopted maximising use of IT systems to reduce bureaucracy, duplication of effort	SA	Tracey Richards	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/06/09	31/12/09	5	NI 180 & 181 Improvement in speed of processing and accuracy	No	n/a
Work with IT services to ensure that Government Connect is fully implemented	SA	Tracey Richards	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	30/04/09	5	Live GCSx connection	No	N/a
Review publicity of service, including letters issued, leaflets and forms to reduce avoidable contact	SA	Tracey Richards	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/05/09	30/09/09	5	Improved Customer Service Increased take-up	Yes	01/04/09
Benchmarking comparisons with other authorities analysing and identifying improvements in costs, procedures and processes	SA	Tracey Richards	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/06/09	31/10/09	5	Net cost of service	No	N/a

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Conduct customer surveys and consultation, analysing the results to ensure that the service is meeting their needs	SA	Tracey Richards	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	4 5	Improved Customer Satisfaction	Yes	01/04/09
Promote the take-up of benefits, encouraging new applicants and re-applicants following changes in the legislation e.g. Child Benefit and Maintenance disregards	SA	Caroline Deeming	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	5	Increased caseload	No	N/a
Use intelligent data to assist in proactive drives to identify fraud in the system	SA	Eric Labhart	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	5	HB Security P.I.s	No	N/a
Promote the discounts, exemptions and reliefs available within revenues	SA	Rosemary Arnold	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/06/09	31/10/09	5	Increased numbers of reductions granted. Collection rates for Council Tax and NNDR	No	n/a
Implementation of In and Out of Work Project in conjunction with DWP	SA	Elaine Harper	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/05/09	4 5	Project implemented successfully Speed of processing (NI 181) Improved Customer Satisfaction	Yes	01/04/08
Reduce avoidable contact with service	SA	Elaine Harper	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	5	Improved Customer Service NI14	No	N/a
Review printing requirements of service	SA	Nikki Banks	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/05/09	30/06/10	5	Value for Money Net cost of service	No	N/a
Introduction of career grading within service	SC	Tracey Richards	Service Challenge £16,573	Revenue	01/04/09	31/05/09	5	Changes agreed and implemented Increase in number of staff taking relevant qualifications	No	N/a
Maximise take-up of Discretionary Housing Payments	SC	Elaine Harper	Service Challenge £13,000	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	5	Award of DHPs maximised to utilise resources available. Prevention of homelessness	No	N/a
Undertake feasibility study into Home working	SA	Tracey Richards	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/07/09	30/09/09	5	Study presented to Senior officers and Members for consideration	Yes	01/04/09

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Contract printing and mailing of annual billing and benefit notification letters	SC	Tracey Richards	Service Challenge £6,000	Revenue	01/10/09	31/01/10	5	Value for Money Net cost of service	No	N/a
Re-inspection of the Benefit Service by the Audit Commission	SA	Tracey Richards	Existing Budget	Revenue	01/04/09	31/03/10	5	Audit Commission judgement scores: Performance and Prospects for Improvement	No	N/a

CUSTOMER SERVICES

ACTION		CONTACT	RESOURCES		KEY DATES					
ACTION NAME	REF NO.	LEAD OFFICER	BUDGET £	CAP OR REV	START	END	CORP AIM	PERF. MEASURE	EIA REQUIRED?	EIA DUE DATE
Rollout of CRM across Customer Services	SA	K. Childs	Project Budget	CAP	01/04/09	31/05/09	5	CRM live in all areas of Customer Services	No	
Implementation of Phase 2 plans	SA	K. Childs	Project Budget	CAP	01/04/09	30/09/09	5	Services transferred	Yes	Mar 09 onwards
Development of CRM system		K. Childs	Existing Resources		01/04/09	Ongoing		New features available	No	
Development of Corporate Customer Service Standards	CA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/05/09	31/10/09	5	Standards published and implemented	Yes	Oct 2009
Integration of Contact Centre and Solutions into unified Customer Services unit	SA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	31/03/10	5	Customer service staff working across all areas of Customer Services	No	
Chartermark for Contact Centre/Joint Customer Services operation	SA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	Ongoing	5	Preliminary assessment and plans in place. Chartermark achieved.	No	
Development of Compliments and Complaints Strategy	CA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	31/12/09	5	Strategy ratified	Yes	Dec 09

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Development of Customer Access Strategy	CA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	30/09/09	5	Strategy ratified	Yes	Sep 2009
Explore joint working and shared service delivery	SA	K.Childs	Existing Resources	Rev	01/04/09	Ongoing	5	Evaluation of options completed	Yes	31/12/09
Develop Customer Care Programme for induction	CA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	30/06/09	5	Programme in place	No	
Development of Phase 3 plans	CA	K.Childs	Project budget	CAP	01/07/09	01/11/09	5	Plans developed and in place	Yes	01/11/09
Involvement in National Benchmarking	SA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	Ongoing	5	Activity undertaken	No	
Work with Community groups	SA	K. Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	Ongoing	5	No. of groups liaised with and number of issues resolved.	Yes	Jul 2009 onwards
Improve links with members	SA	K.Childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	Ongoing	5	Links in place	No	
Expansion of Contact Centre accommodation	SA	K.Childs	Project Budget	CAP	01/04/09	30/09/09	5	Accommodation complete	No	
Review of payments and provision of support services	SA	K.childs	Existing Resources	REV	01/04/09	30/06/09	5	Review completed and recommendations made.	Yes	30/06/09
Develop Customer Service culture	CA	K. Childs	Existing resources	REV	01/04/09	Ongoing	5		No	

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COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT										
ACTION		CONTACT	RESOURCES		KEY DATES					
ACTION NAME	REF NO.	LEAD OFFICER	BUDGET £	CAP OR REV	START	END	CORP AIM	PERF. MEASURE	EIA REQUIRED?	EIA DUE DATE
Embankment works at Smestow Brook/ Hinksford Mobile Home Park	SC	Glen Parker	23,000	CAP	01/07/09	01/12/09	1, 2, 3, 5	1. Complete procurement process and appoint contractor.	No	
Flood Risk Assessment at Hinksford Mobile Home Park	SC	Glen Parker	12,000	REV	01/04/09	31/07/09	1, 2, 3, 5	1.Complete procurement process and appoint consultant. 2.Assess report and prepare consequential action plan.	No	
Electrical Improvement Works at Industrial Estates	SC	Glen Parker	113,000	CAP	01/04/09	31/03/10	2, 3, 5	1.Complete procurement process and appoint contractor. 2.Complete remedial works.	No	
Assess visitor accessibility of Site Office at Hinksford Mobile Home Park	SA	Glen Parker	Existing Resources	REV	01/05/09	31/03/10	2, 5	Completion of assessment findings and any necessary action plan.	Yes	31/03/10
Progress introduction of estate management software and update of all necessary data.	SA	Glen Parker	Existing Budget	REV	01/04/09	31/03/10	5	1. All necessary data recorded. 2. System made 'live'.	No	
Undertake options appraisal re. Wombourne Enterprise Park	SA	Glen Parker	Existing Budget	REV	01/01/10	31/03/10	5	Options Report completed for assessment.	No	
Review management and maintenance procedures across the estates	SA	Glen Parker	Existing Budget	REV	1/4/09	31/3/10	2, 3, 5	Complete review and establish action plan for any required improvements.	No	

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Develop a comprehensive information pack for new tenants of industrial units	SA	David Broadhead	Existing Budget	REV	01/05/09	31/10/09	2, 3, 5	Information pack completed	No	
Organise a "Best Kept Garden" competition for residents of Hinksford Park	SA	Sam Foster	Existing Budget	REV	01/04/09	31/08/09	3, 5	Competition successfully organised & concluded	No	
Implement Service Review recommendations	SA	Glen Parker	Service Challenge Bid	REV	1/4/09	31/3/10	5	1. Review concluded. 2. Action plan agreed and implemented.	No	

EMS – CORPORATE ACTION PLAN

ACTION		CONTACT	RESOURCES		KEY DATES					
ACTION NAME	REF NO.	LEAD OFFICER	BUDGET £	CAP OR REV	START	END	CORP AIM	PERF. MEASURE	EIA REQUIRED?	EIA DUE DATE
All members of staff within Service Unit will assist in reducing the Council's energy usage	CC		N/A	N/A	01/04/09	Ongoing	1,2,5	Energy usage reduced by 7%	No	
A member of staff from service unit/department will be nominated to manually switch off equipment at the end of the working day	CC		N/A	N/A	01/04/09	Ongoing	1,2,5	Equipment switched off daily	No	
75% of eligible Drivers (travelling over 2500 business miles per year) will take part in driver Improvement training programme	CC				01/04/09	Ongoing	1,2,5	Driver improvement programme completed	No	
We will ensure that 100% of paper waste from service unit is recycled.	CC		N/A	N/A	01/04/09	Ongoing	1,2,5	100% waste paper recycled	No	
When purchasing goods or services whole life costs will be taken into account and given equal consideration with other factors	CC		N/A	N/A	01/04/09	Ongoing	1,2,5		No	

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8.0 Risk Assessment

7.1 The following is an assessment of the risks associated with delivering the actions within the service plan:

Risk No	Description	Likelihood (L1)	Impact (I1)	Gross Risk (L1xI1)	Mitigation	Likelihood (L2)	Impact (I2)	Inherent Risk (L2)x(I2)	Responsible Officer	Corporate Aim	Opportunities Presented
RB1	Integrity of new employees	2	4	8	CRB check undertaken of all new personnel	1	3	3	T. Richards	5	
RB2	Risk of fraud, theft or misappropriation of funds by staff	2	3	6	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.	1	2	2	T. Richards	5	
RB3	Experienced staff leaving and difficulty in recruiting senior staff	3	5	15	Knowledge is shared across service, with written procedures developed covering all areas, and succession planning in place to ensure continuity of service. Introduction of career grading.	2	2	4	T. Richards	5	Build capacity of service to cope with temporary staff shortages or unforeseen peaks in workload
RB4	Unauthorised payments	4	4	16	Procedures followed to minimise risk to authority, with segregation of duties.	1	4	4	T. Richards	5	
RB5	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	4	12	Management contract and SLA with software suppliers, external providers and agreement with neighbouring authorities under disaster recovery plan	1	3	3	T. Richards	5	Contribute to shared services agenda

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Risk No	Description	Likelihood (L1)	Impact (I1)	Gross Risk (L1xI1)	Mitigation	Likelihood (L2)	Impact (I2)	Inherent Risk (L2)x(I2)	Responsible Officer	Corporate Aim	Opportunities Presented
RB6	Failure to collect direct debit payments on due date	3	4	12	Procedures in place to enable early notification to Accountancy and rearrangement of short-term finances	2	3	6	T. Richards	5	
RB7	Sufficient resources at times of peak customer demand	2	3	6	Flexible working within Revenues and Benefits service and reciprocal arrangements with Customer Services	1	3	3	T. Richards	5	Build capacity of service to cope with temporary staff shortages or unforeseen peaks in workload
RB8	Area unable to deliver service due to failure of an in-house service	3	3	9	External service deliverers identified	2	2	4	T. Richards	5	
RB9	Injury to member of visiting staff due to lone working	2	2	4	Adherence to Lone Worker and health & safety protocols with development of corporate "potentially violent persons" register	1	2	2	T. Richards	5	Demonstrate concern for welfare and that staff are valued
RB10	Third party (Bailiffs) collections incorrect, lost or stolen	2	3	6	Use of certificated and accredited collection agents, with indemnity against loss to the Council	1	3	3	T. Richards	5	
RB11	Failure or delay in identifying new properties to be entered in the Lists, leading to loss of income	3	2	6	Close liaison with other services and external partners. Regular inspections carried out.	2	2	4	T. Richards	5	Improved joint working and contribute to shared services agenda

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Risk No	Description	Likelihood (L1)	Impact (I1)	Gross Risk (L1xI1)	Mitigation	Likelihood (L2)	Impact (I2)	Inherent Risk (L2)x(I2)	Responsible Officer	Corporate Aim	Opportunities Presented
RB12	Incorrect parameters set at annual billing, leading to incorrect bill issue and re-billing	2	5	10	Prior to annual billing parameters independently checked and audited	1	5	5	T. Richards	5	Identify problems before external audit
CS13	Implementation of CRM is delayed due to technical issues with integration of back office systems	3	4	12	All integration work to be closely monitored. Business cases for future integrations to be closely scrutinized. Technical workarounds to be considered and developed	2	3	6	K. Childs	5	Contingency plans established to prevent failure of Contact Centre due to system problems
CS14	Resistance from services to transfer service and staff to Customer Services	4	4	16	Deal with services and managers individually and keep them involved in the service design for transfer. Keep staff informed of progress.	3	3	9	K. Childs	5	Assist in the improvement of service processes as part of integration with the Contact Centre
CS15	Proposed upgrade of CRM system will take longer than planned timescale	3	4	12	Agree tight timescales and monitoring of project through Partnership groups.	2	4	8	K. Childs	5	Better customer service
CS16	Lack of technical support for CRM system – key person dependency in IT	4	5	20	IT to fill new post and increase capacity to support system	2	5	10	K.Childs L.Brookes	5	Development of valuable Oracle database expertise
CD17	Insufficient staffing resources to effectively undertake actions identified.	4	4	16	Adequate staffing resources put in place in time to carry out Action Plan.	3	4	12	G. Parker	5	To provide a sufficiently robust staffing structure to adequately cover property management function.

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Risk No	Description	Likelihood (L1)	Impact (I1)	Gross Risk (L1xI1)	Mitigation	Likelihood (L2)	Impact (I2)	Inherent Risk (L2)x(I2)	Responsible Officer	Corporate Aim	Opportunities Presented
CD18	Insufficient financial resources to undertake planned actions.	2	3	6	Additional resources considered by Council to cover shortfall.	2	2	4	G. Parker	5	
CD19	Council's obligation to have fit for purpose assets compromised.	2	4	8	Appropriate procedures and practices put in place.	2	4	8	G. Parker	2, 5	To have fully compliant buildings and assets.
CD20	Lack of maintenance of Industrial estates and Hinksford MHP.	2	3	6	Adequate staffing resources put in place to carry out intended maintenance programme.	2	3	6	G. Parker	2, 5	To implement a substantive planned and reactive maintenance programme to sustain and improve the Council's assets.