

# BRIEFING NOTE

**TO:** Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel  
**DATE:** 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007

**RE: Welfare Rights Service**

## Purpose

To inform Members and Council on the progress made with the investigations into the creation of a Trust for the Welfare Rights Service.

## Service Area

Revenues and Benefits are split into 3 operational strands. Each puts money back in to residents pockets by granting benefits, discounts and exemptions

- Welfare Rights Identified an estimated additional £6m last year
- Revenues Granted £13.5m this year
- Benefits Granted £90m this year

The challenge for the authority is to ensure the service provision can continue, thrive and grow in line with planned and agreed mutual outcomes

## Back Ground

- The following motion was passed at council 6 November 2006

‘This Council therefore tasks the scrutiny process to review options to establish whether this (Welfare Rights Service as an independent trust) would be beneficial to this Council and to the citizens of Walsall and if so that all endeavours are undertaken to effect this change of status to be in place by April 2007

- Scrutiny considered this motion on 14 December 2006
- Agreed process to investigate the proposal and reporting mechanism
- Delivered an update at Full Council 15 January
- Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) commissioned to undertake a strategic review and consider the options in January 2007
- IRRV met with key stakeholders, including elected members and staff and managers from the service
- Interim findings were presented back to Scrutiny 12 April
- Final report received 31 May 2007
- Opportunity for final Scrutiny comment in August
- 30 August Scrutiny instructed Revenues and Benefits to produce a charitable trust business case

## Update on Business Case

The Welfare Rights Service has compiled a draft business case on the principles that have been discussed throughout the Scrutiny Panel deliberations and is 75% complete.

The financial costings and projections related to any potential Trust are being collated and analysed.

Contact has been made with the Head of Personnel and a meeting has been setup to discuss and consider the legal requirements and support needed.

Meetings are being arranged with Councillor Longhi to present the initial findings.

It is hoped that the business case will be completed by 31 November 2007

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