

Cabinet –

Strategic Transformation: Revenues and Benefits Service Review – Recommendations of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Service: Corporate Services – Finance and Strategic Transformation

Wards: All

Summary of report

In the context of continuing service challenges being experienced by the revenues and benefits (R&B) service it was decided that, within the strategic transformation programme, a review of the R&B service would be undertaken to determine the most appropriate way forward to secure sustainable improvements.

At its meeting on 12 July, cabinet received a report on the options for R&B with recommendations from scrutiny that cabinet give scrutiny authority to investigate the details of the service re-configuration arising from the preferred option model. Cabinet welcomed the interest of scrutiny's revenues and benefits working group and requested that they continue to consider the details of the service reconfiguration arising from adoption of the "mixed economy" option and have input to the detailed action plan, definitions and investment business case associated with this work to ensure that the service delivers value for money and continuously improves.

The revenues and benefits working group met again on 9 August to discuss how the service would move forward. Following discussions with officers relating to the monies linked to the department for works and pensions (DWP) grant, members recommended that the executive ensure that the full £400k be made available for service transformation, regardless of the DWP grant funding position. This recommendation was subsequently endorsed by the corporate scrutiny and performance panel at its meeting on 31 August 2006.

Recommendations

- That the corporate scrutiny and performance panel request that the executive ensures the full £400,000 pump priming for the revenues and benefits service transformation is made available; with the use of prudential borrowing as appropriate.

Resource and legal implications

The DWP have confirmed that grant funding remains available but is dependent upon the introduction of the electronic data management system (EDMS) by 31/03/06. The benefits improvement plan is on the councils project register and is subject to full tight project control any deviation from the timeline and budget will be monitored and corrective action plans initiated as part of the council's project strategy.

Performance and risk management issues

None further to previous reports

Consultation and citizen impact

Further to previous reports; the revenues and benefits working met on 9 August 2006, to consider the action plan and details around how to move the service forward.

Vision 2008

The R&B service directly contributes to four of the 10 priorities in the Council's Vision 2008 as follows:

- Make Walsall a healthy and caring place – welfare benefits take-up reduces health inequality
- Make it easier to access local services – revenues and benefits service, advice and signposting delivered via First Stop Shop, visiting teams and welfare rights staff
- Strengthen the local economy – increased benefits take up reduces poverty and business rates growth generates local economic activity
- Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority – revenues collection and benefits administration are key Best Value Performance Indicators that contribute to CPA rating and customer satisfaction.

Background papers:

“Strategic Transformation: Revenues and Benefits Service Review” report to cabinet 12 July 2006

Minutes of the Revenues and Benefits Working Group, 10 July & 9 August 2006

Minutes of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel, 31 August 2006.

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Signed:

Councillor A. Griffiths
Chair of Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Date: XXXX