

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

FROM: HEAD OF REVENUES

REPORT NUMBER E206

**TO: Overview and Scrutiny (Stewardship)
Committee**

DATE OF MEETING 22 November 2005

**BENEFITS SERVICE – QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AND SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS
1 JULY – 30 SEPTEMBER 2005**

1. **SUMMARY**

Several strategic projects, necessary to improve the Benefits Service will come to fruition during the next six months.

- The implementation of Document Image Processing/Workflow Technology
- Business Process Re-engineering to dramatically improve the claims process
- Reorganisation of the office structure, to improve customer service
- Increasing the skill range of staff, to support better customer service, and increase capacity
- Embedding the use of online forms into the office culture in order to become more efficient, avoid repeat work and become more cost effective.

The report updates the Committee on those projects. Monthly performance information is attached as Appendix 1. An updated version of “Delivering the Vision” is attached as Appendix 2. Comment on both is made within the main body of the report

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 That the performance of the Benefit Service and the developments in progress during the period 1 July – 30 September be noted.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4. **KEY INFORMATION**

4.1 **Document Image Processing/Workflow:** Work started in July and **rapid progress is being made.** The software has been installed, initial training for supervisors has been completed, two scanning stations have been installed and PC's upgraded where necessary. The main focus is now on creating the various document types and defining the workflows required. **The project will go live in mid-January 2006.** The work is linked to the Business Process Re-engineering project running within the Division which is also scheduled for completion in January.

4.2 **Business Process Re-engineering(CAST Project – Revenues Pilot):** Although not strictly within the remit of this report, as this project did not commence until October, it is felt important to keep the Committee up to date on what is a crucial piece of work in improving the claims process.

4.3 **A BPR Team has been created,** comprising of a core of 3 officers from within the division directly involved with the claims process, and 1 independent officer, whose role is to be a critical friend for this project, and subsequently the medium for the transfer of BPR expertise gained within this project, to processes elsewhere in the authority. **BPR skills will also have been gained by the 3 Revenue Officers** within the team when that breakaway occurs. **Their role will then continue within the Division**

reviewing other processes to extract more efficiency from the office reorganisation and refining the DIP/Workflow process developed by January 2006.

- 4.4 The current focus of work is to ensure that the metrics and service volumes, related to claims processing, are readily available and that a clear baseline has been defined. This is to assess the impact of BPR and DIP/Workflow, so that each project can be evaluated and the service gain, efficiencies and cost saving obtained as a result clearly identified.
- 4.5 Consultants will be working alongside the team and start work on 21 November. **Additional hours are being worked by processing staff and other staff across the Division to fill the gap left by staff working on the BPR project.** Staff from a neighbouring authority are also on standby if greater capacity is required to maintain an adequate level of service.
- 4.6 **Reorganisation of the Revenues Office:** The physical changes to bring the three key functional areas of work in order to create a better focus from a service users perspective, were completed in July. Those changes are again linked to BPR work and as with DIP will feature in the process.
- 4.7 **Staff Skills: The presence of a dedicated Training Officer has enabled progress on two fronts.**
- **New staff joining the Division** as the result of a succession of staff changes **have been trained in a much shorter time period than previously.** This has minimised the impact of the short-term shortfall in processing capacity.
 - **Alongside that, existing staff have sat in on specific modules, to expand their own skills** to encompass specific types or aspects of claims processing and enquiry handling. Multiskilling in this way increases the ability and range of staff able to make decisions and process work as appropriate at the point of contact. It also provides greater resilience to peaks of work and staff absence. **Quality assurance staff are now able to process some types of claim, Revenues assistants are able to handle a greater range of enquiries. One member of staff is competent in both Benefits and Council Tax processing and able to make end to end account adjustments.**
- 4.8 **An online benefit claim form is now operational on the Council's website alongside a Benefits calculator.** Consequently it is now possible to not only take a view on potential entitlement at any time of the day, but also having done that to submit a claim immediately.
- Sudbury Advice Centre also have access as indeed has any external organisation. Training is scheduled for SAC staff in December to make them confident in the use of the technology. Both facilities are also available in the three interview rooms at Corks Lane.
- Completing work at the outset of a claim, fully capturing the information required to process claims is fundamental to achieving the 14 day turnaround target set for 2007. Because of this both, that principle and the online technology that supports it feature heavily in the BPR project.**
- 4.9 **Performance: In general terms performance overall has deteriorated slightly in the 2nd quarter. New claim turn round has slipped from 27 to 28 days, processing changes in circumstances has also slipped a day from 10 to 11, and the percentage of new claims processed within 14 days of receiving full information has dropped to 84%. This is a concern, but is attributable to a number of staff changes in succession, and the resulting dip in capacity as new staff are trained and adapt to their roles.** This alongside competing work to the strategic projects to improve the service has stretched resources. **New staff reached the first phase of competency during October. Consequently the impact of that will flow through in the third and fourth quarters.**
- 4.10 Increasing the number of cheque production runs for private tenant rent allowances during August and September has however proved effective. **The percentage of rent allowances paid on time are now above 83% although there is still some fluctuation.** The position at the end of the third quarter will give a better picture of the impact of the change.

- 4.11 Those issues are in effect the headlines in terms of performance but clearly do not cover every issue. Committee Members are invited to scrutinise the various outputs and raise any issue for comment or register any concerns.
- 4.12 **“Delivering the Vision” is attached as Appendix 2** showing the progress made to date. It has been necessary to make some adjustments to reflect an evolving situation, but **progress is being made and there are no immediate concerns**. Members are invited to scrutinise that document and raise any issue or make comments as felt appropriate.

5. **APPENDICES**

- (a) Benefits Service – Performance Outlines 1 July – 30 September 2005
- (b) “Delivering the Vision” – Benefits Service Improvement Plan

6. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO**

None.

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APPENDIX 1 Benefits quarterly report Overview Scrutiny Committee (Stewardship) 22/11/2005

BENEFITS PERFORMANCE 2005-2006														
	2004/05	2005/06 target	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
Process Performance														
Days to process (Current month)			27	27	26	29	25	30						
Days to process (Year to date)	30	25	27	27	27	27	27	27						
Change of circumstances(Current month)			11	9	11	11	9	13						
Change of circumstances(Year to date)	6	9	11	11	11	10	10	10						
% within 14 days (Current month)			70%	79%	88%	88%	92%	70%						
% within 14 days (Year to date)	86%	90%	70%	74%	78%	81%	83%	84%						
New RA claims on time(Current month)			66%	71%	73%	86%	83%							
New RA claims on time(Year to date)	72%	90%	66%	69%	70%	69%	69%							
Benefit Overpayments Outstanding														
			£169,152.80	£151,618.37	£150,736.99	£154,796.94	£160,042.54	£176,544.18						
Local Authority Error Overpayments														
LA error - Rent rebates	£ 8,736		£82.00	£516.00	£1,488.00	£2,526.00	£3,600.00	£4,778.00						
LA error - Rent allowances	£ 6,999		£1,159.00	£2,264.00	£1,993.00	£2,761.00	£3,386.00	£4,643.00						
LA error - CTB	£ 8,848		£460.00	£1,640.00	£2,562.00	£3,569.00	£4,712.00	£6,283.00						
Total	£ 24,583		£1,701.00	£4,420.00	£6,043.00	£8,856.00	£11,698.00	£15,704.00						
Outstanding Work Items														
			335	318	364	265	308	330						
Discretionary Housing Payments														
Committed balance(£'s)	£13,705.00		£5,020.00	£9,803.00	£12,635.00	£11,115.00	£15,404.00	£16,330.00						
Un-committed balance(£'s)	£10,301.00		£18,986.00	£14,203.00	£11,371.00	£12,891.00	£8,602.00	£8,130.00						
Benefit Customers Seen At HQ														
			315	276	277	337	283	287						
Benefit Takeup														
Magic 400 (Benefit takeup)-Completed cases						117	117	117						
New claims as a result						44	44	44						
Total Paid						£30,642.00	£30,642.00	£30,642.00						
Complaints														
Well founded			0	0	0	0	0	0						
Ongoing			0	0	0	0	0	0						
Dismissed			0	0	0	1	0	0						
Appeals														
			0	0	0	0	0	0						
Investigations & Sanctions														
Investigations in progress			36	44	32	26	19	22						
Cautions issued					8	9	11	13						
Laid before the Court					10	10	10	10						
Guilty pleas					8	10	10	10						
Admin Penalties					0	0	0	0						
Reward total					£37,600.00	£42,800.00	£43,200.00	£47,600.00						
Postal interventions		1490	0	0	419	0	200	193						
Intervention visits		990	117	96	146	106	30	103						

Software problem - data to be re-compiled

APPENDIX 2 - Benefits quarterly performance report Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Stewardship) 22/11/2005.

Babergh D.C. Revenues Division “Delivering the Vision”- Building a better Benefits Service (Version 1.2 – 22/11/2005)

Items in bold represent milestones used to measure progress.

Date	Event/Action	Status/Anticipated completion date	Outcome /Current position	Performance
May 2004	O & S Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement of “Vision” • Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 	Complete	-	-
June 2004	CPA-Benefits Self Assessment	Complete	Current service: Fair towards Good Capacity to improve:Good	Highest rating in Suffolk
6 th July 2004	O & S Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Delivering the Vision”- Progress • Overpayments Policy • Home Visit Policy • BFI Report 2002 – Update • Current performance 	Complete	-	-
July 2004	CAST project (Previously evaluation of service development opportunity offered by Suffolk CC & Mid Suffolk DC)	Live project	At outline Business Case stage. Business process re-engineering emerging as a necessary prerequisite for subsequent work.	BPR Pilot underway November 2005
July 2004	Meeting with Suffolk Coastal – Possible joint working.	Complete	Respective positions known. No further work, if necessary until CAST project outcomes clear.	-
July 2004	Meeting with Anglia Revenues Partnership	Complete	Respective positions known. No further work, if necessary until CAST project outcomes clear.	-
July 2004	Training & Improvement Officer Bid for DWP funding	Complete	Joint bid(With Mid Suffolk) submitted November 2004.£53K funding awarded January 2005	Officer in post from May 2005.
September 2004	Revenue Division reorganisation	Live project-31/3/06	Physical reorganisation complete July 2005. Training Officer to roll out regular schedule of training from September 2005. On hold until January 2006 whilst BPR work undertaken.	-
27 th September 2004	O & S Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Delivering the Vision” –Progress • Revised Prosecution Policy • Cost of Benefits Service • Current Performance 	Complete	Slippage on cost of service information. Finally provided in May 2005. Policy approved.	-

30 th September 2004	DWP Quarterly Return Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVPI 78C – 82% • 14 Days – 85% 	Complete	-	Targets achieved <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 78C – 88% • 14 days – 91%
1 st February 2005	O & S Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Performance 	Complete	No Comments	On Target
February 2005	Introduction of online claim form following visit to Chiltern DC	Live project- 15/08/05	Initially slippage because of conflict between established and developing software issues. Resolved following direction from O & S to EGSG. Form ready for launch 15/08/05. Further work still to be completed regarding form handling, evidence collation and signatures. Some initial teething troubles around installation on XP workstations. Resolved and installed in all interview rooms October 2005. Confidence training for Sudbury Advice Centre staff scheduled for December 2005.	Some use online.
31 st March 2005	DWP – Quarterly return	Complete	2004/05 Yearly outturn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Claims-30 days • Cof C-6 days • Accuracy-100% • 14 Days-86% • RA's on time- 69% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Claims-26 days(TQ) • Cof C-7 days(2Q) • Accuracy-100%(TQ) • 14 Days-85%(3Q) • RA's on time- 63%(4Q)
April 2005	Finalise VICTER interface to the Rent Service.(Enables online exchange of information)	Live project/01/09/05	Authentication routines not secure. No progress	-
17 th May 2005	O & S Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Performance 	Complete	No comments of Performance. Issue of online claim resolved. Basic service costs provided (Carry over from September 2004)	-
18 th May 2005	<i>"Getting it Right first Time"</i> Business Strategy.	Live project-31/3/06	Launched at Divisional Meeting 18 th May for incorporation into staff/team targets.	Telephone reminders being used a day 0 and day 14 to keep a focus on information needed to determine a claim.
May 2005	Introduce SPRINT(Business Process Re-engineering methodology) in the Revenues	Complete	Slight initial delay because of Officer/Course availability.	Work merged into BPR pilot.

	Division.		Completed training 6/7 July. First process to be reviewed – New Claims.	
May 2005	Simplify Benefit notifications by including supplemental information.	Live project – Nov 05	On hold as IBS updating and improving the production of notifications. Software release date November 2005.	
June 2005	Revenues Division – Final workshop with Member Working Group	Live project	On hold in order to create capacity for CAST work. To be rescheduled as soon as practicable.	Cancelled- Work now superceded by BPR project.
30 th June 2005	DWP Quarterly return	Complete	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Claims-27 days • C of C-10 days • Accuracy-99.2% • 14 Days-78%
July 2005	Increase use of Sudbury Advice Centre to improve service in the west of the district.	Live project - ongoing	Linked to use of online claim form. On partial hold until form launched. Training now scheduled for December 2005.	
July 2005	Introduction of DIP/Workflow technology in the Revenues Division.	Live project 31/3/06	Software ordered from IBS. Project on target and scheduled for completion January 2006.	
August 2005	Move to paying Rent Allowances twice weekly.	Complete		Rent allowances paid on time increased from 58% to 68% 2 nd Quarter.
16 th August 2005	O & S Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current Performance ▪ “Delivering the Vision” –Approval for revised plan. 	Complete	“Delivering the Vision 1.1” approved. No comments on performance.	
August 2005	Review of New Claims process	Live project-31/10/05	Original project superceded by BPR project.(Pilot) BPR project underway and scheduled for completion January 2006.	
August 2005	5 Day guarantee for new claims(Complete on receipt)	Live project 31/08/05	New claims now streamed to designated officers. Training of new staff creating temporary pressure on that arrangement. Risk on publicity aspect at the moment. New staff coming online from October/November. Full productivity from December.	Performance on new claims generally has dipped slightly in the third quarter.
14 th November	DWP Quarterly Return	Progress check.	Software issue has delayed return.	“Good” rating should be

2005*	National Performance Standards compliance assessment Performance measures only) Target: " Good" rating		DWP have extended deadline to 25 th November because of this.	achieved
22 nd November 2005	O & S Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current Performance ▪ " Delivering the Vision" review 			
31st December 2005	DWP Quarterly Return	Performance milestone		
31 st December 2005	National Performance Standards (BDC intermediate assessment)	Progress check		
31st March 2006	DWP Quarterly Return Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Claims-25 days • Cof C- 9 days • Accuracy-100% • 14 days-90% Full National Performance Standards compliance assessment. Target: "Excellent" rating	Performance milestone		
January 2007	Local Housing allowance	Potential strategic issue.		
31 st March 2008	Targets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Claims-14 days • Cof C- 6 days • Accuracy-100% • 14 days-100% • RA's on time 95% 			

Version 1.1 – Document Owner: Benefits Manager – 160805

Version 1.2 – Updated – Head of Revenues – 221105

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