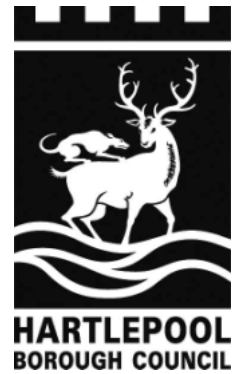


# **SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE AGENDA**



**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2011**

**at 10.00 am**

**in the Council Chamber,  
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

**MEMBERS: SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE:**

Councillors C Akers-Belcher, S Akers-Belcher, Cook, Cranney, Flintoff, Griffin, James, London, A Marshall, McKenna, Preece, Richardson, Shaw, Simmons, Thomas and Wells.

Resident Representatives: Evelyn Leck, Linda Shields and Angie Wilcox

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. TO RECEIVE ANY DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS**
- 3. MINUTES**  
No items.
- 4. RESPONSES FROM THE COUNCIL, THE EXECUTIVE OR COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL TO REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COORDINATING COMMITTEE**  
No items.
- 5. CONSIDERATION OF REQUEST FOR SCRUTINY REVIEWS FROM COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE MEMBERS AND NON EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**  
No items.
- 6. FORWARD PLAN**  
No items.

**7. CONSIDERATION OF PROGRESS REPORTS / BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS**

No Items.

**8. CONSIDERATION OF FINANCIAL MONITORING/CORPORATE REPORTS**

No Items.

**9. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**Cabinet Referral - Business Transformation Programme II – Proposals for the Revenues and Benefits Service**

9.1 Evidence from the Portfolio Holder for Performance:-

- (a) Covering Report – *Scrutiny Manager*; and
- (b) Verbal evidence from the Portfolio Holder for Performance.

9.2 Cabinet Referral – Business Transformation Programme II - Proposals for the Revenues and Benefits Service – Covering Report – *Scrutiny Manager*

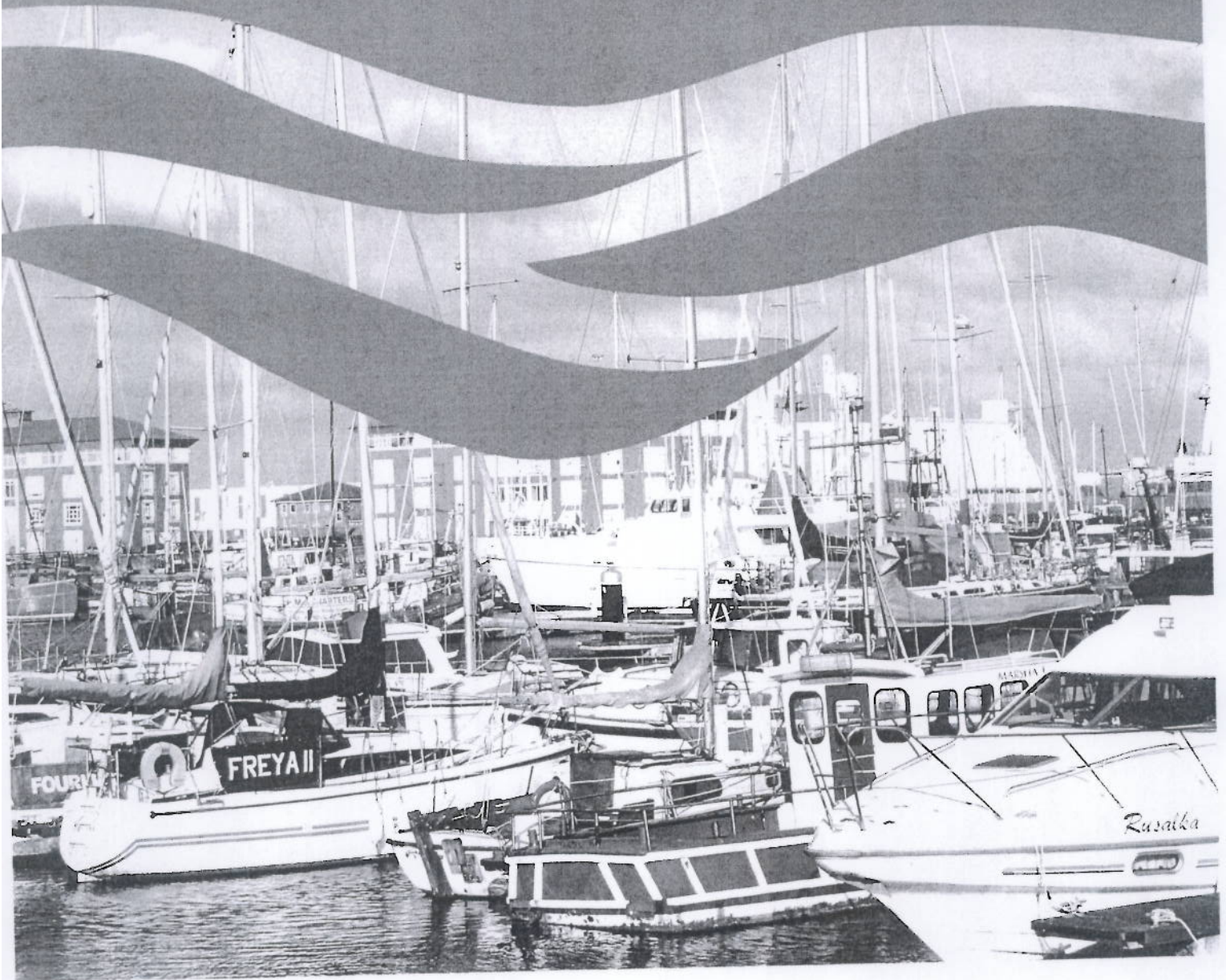
**10. CALL-IN REQUESTS**

**11. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS ARE URGENT**

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- i) **Date of Next Meeting: -**  
**Friday 25 March 2011, commencing at 9.00 a.m. in The Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Hartlepool.**

# Hartlepool Borough Council Benefits Team of the Year Submission 2006

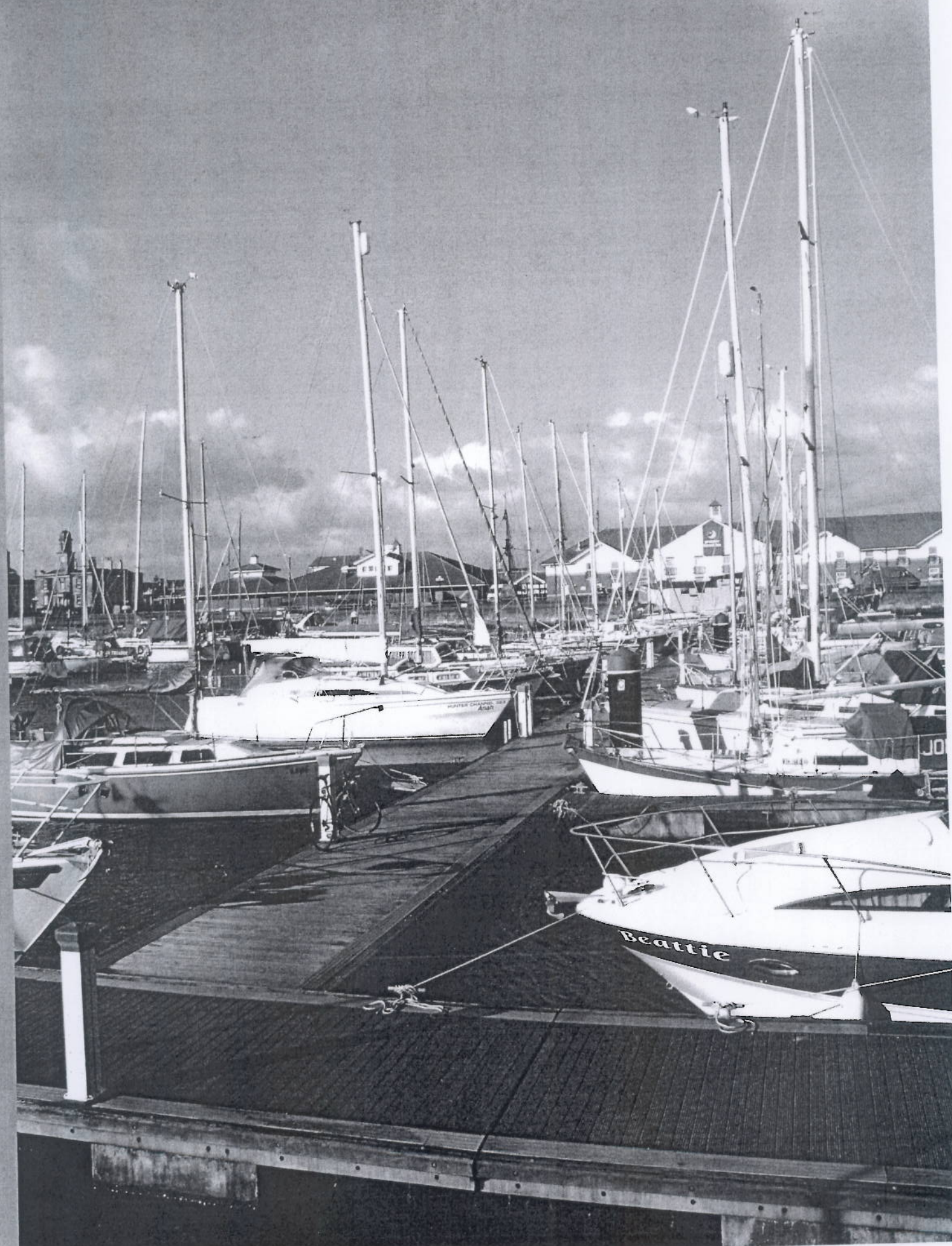


INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



HARTLEPOOL  
BOROUGH COUNCIL







# 1 Summary of submission: Benefits Team of the Year

Hartlepool Borough Council is situated on the North East Coast, it has a population of just over 90,000 and covers an area of 94 square kilometres, and it is the second smallest unitary authority in England.

There are some significant areas of deprivation within the town and it is ranked 18th out of 354 authorities in England. Housing and Council Tax Benefit remain important contributions to the budget of many households in the town. Prevention of benefit fraud together with quick and accurate payment of benefits to all those who are entitled to them contributes to the central government agenda of "promoting the economic, social and environmental well being of communities."

A Best Value review resulted in the creation of separate Revenues and Benefits teams, each headed by functional managers. There was still significant scope for improvement in performance at that time. The internal changes, together with legislative changes resulted in a further dip in performance. The lowest point was in September 2003 when new claims were taking 66 days to process and changes in circumstances were taking 14 days. At this point further changes in management were made and an analysis of the reasons for the delays was undertaken.

There were two major problems identified in the processing of benefit claims, the first was the problem of customers not providing all the required evidence at the time of making a claim. The second was identified during the consultation meetings with local advice agencies during the development of an anti – poverty strategy. At these meetings it was identified that some customers felt "uncomfortable" with the formality of visiting the Civic Centre for advice.

In order to address these issues and raise the standard of service to our customers a number of initiatives were introduced. These include wireless benefit assessment in the customers home, visiting the customers at home to obtain evidence using digital cameras and setting up a benefit liaison team to work closely with landlords and groups representing our claimants particularly the vulnerable and difficult to reach groups.

The wireless benefits initiative has significantly improved the processing times for new benefit claims and for changes of address activity. In April 2006 the average time to process a wireless claim was 2.5 days. Following publicity both claimants and landlords are actively embracing this new service, recognising the improvements in administration that it provides.

Experienced benefits officers can now visit customers in their own homes, at a benefits surgery or at the landlord's office to complete a claim. Elderly and disabled customers or those with caring responsibilities tend to prefer a home visit whilst a number of people who may have challenging behaviours prefer to be somewhere neutral but with the support of a community worker or friend.

An application form in the form of a script is completed on a tablet. The information is transferred in real time to the back office systems to enable the back office staff to have immediate access to the record. Evidence required to support the claim is gathered at the time of the visit using a digital camera. At the end of the visit a trial calculation can be requested to give the customer details of their entitlement. Notification letters are produced in the back office overnight and issued the next working day.



There are plans for further innovative development of the application of wireless working. There will be a rollout programme which will be linked to the corporate efficiency savings. A number of existing officers have been re-trained to use the wireless technology and now undertake assessment of interventions in the customers home. This process will be used to ensure that further staff are retrained to enable them to undertake changes in circumstances in the near future. Wireless scripts are currently being used for new claims, changes of address and interventions visits. A further script is being developed which will ensure all changes of circumstances can be loaded wirelessly.

A dedicated team has been set up with responsibility for liaison with landlords, promoting the take up of benefit and targeting vulnerable groups who may otherwise have difficulty in accessing the benefits service. Landlords now have a named individual and a dedicated telephone number for any queries which they have. Feedback through correspondence or via the landlord forums is excellent.

The Benefits Liaison team have been innovative in their use of technology to identify potential claimants. Mosaic software, which is a digital database which profiles every postcode in the country, has been deployed in order to identify discrete parts of the Borough where there may be the potential for increased benefit take up. Target properties have been issued with a personalised letter notifying them of a local surgery or of the mobile visiting service and encouraging them to apply for support.

The Benefit Liaison team regularly organise benefits exhibitions in the town centre, often working in partnership with other agencies and service providers, they will also attend community events to publicise the service. The team have undertaken joint working initiatives with the Pension Service, residents associations and local religious groups in order to reach a wider audience.

The Benefits Team is committed to social inclusion for all members of the community and is working as part of the Borough's Financial Inclusion Partnership on developing Credit Unions, maximising DHP's, encouraging benefit take up and reviewing overpayment recovery arrangements.

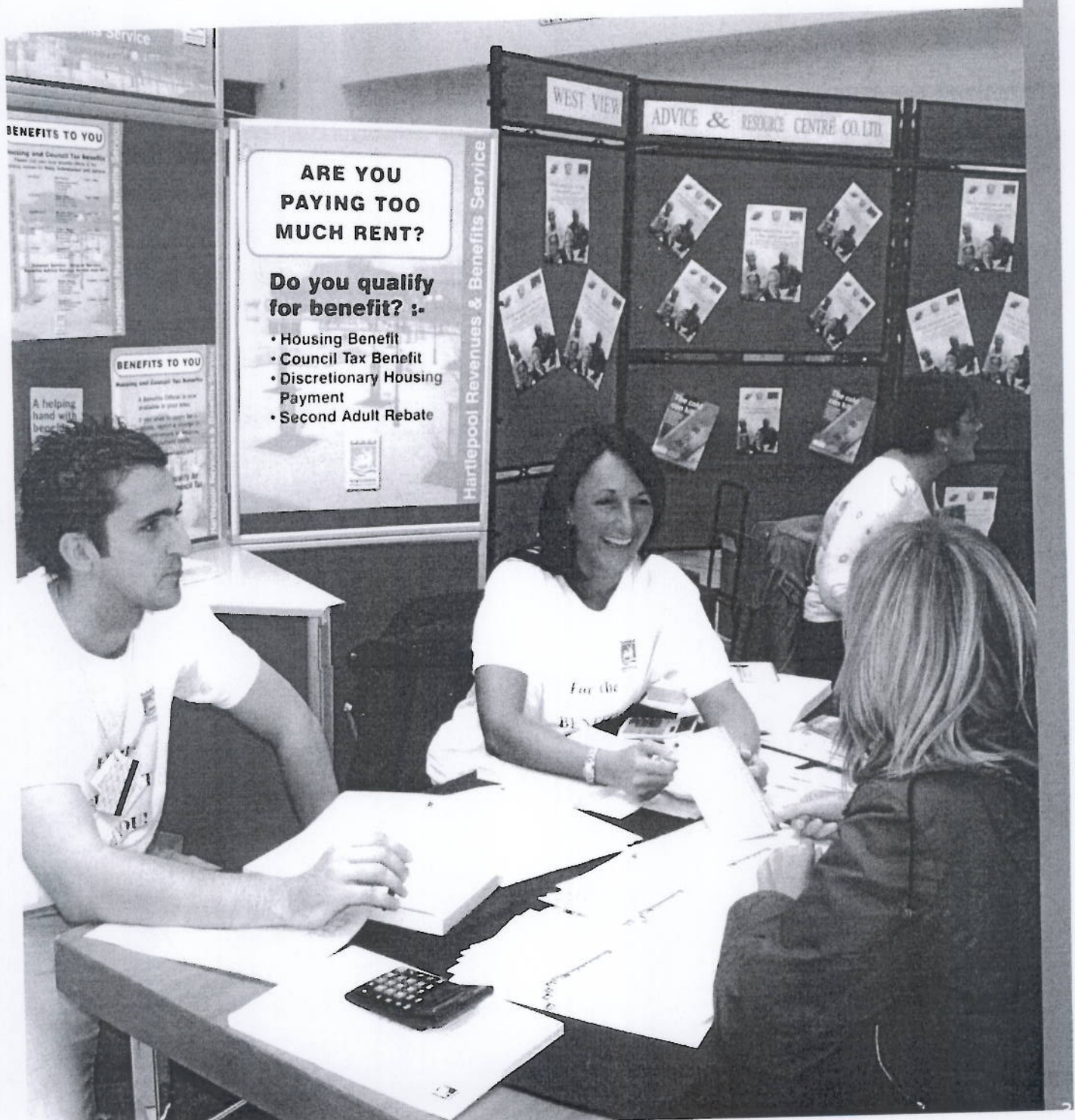


## 2 Our Public Awards

The Benefits Team was awarded a Charter Mark award for excellence in customer service in 2006. Hartlepool is one of only a limited number of councils to have attained the new Charter Mark standard for the Benefits service.

The Chief Executives Department, which includes the Benefits Team, has held the Investors in People award for improving the organisations performance through its people since 2000. This award has been retained during reviews in 2002 and 2005.

In 2005 –6 Hartlepool Borough Council was assessed as a "4 star – improving well" Authority under the Governments new, more challenging Comprehensive Performance Assessment Scheme. This is the fourth consecutive year that the Council has achieved the highest rating under this scheme.





### 3 Current Performance

A comprehensive performance management framework is in place that ensures that performance is regularly reviewed and problems quickly addressed to ensure a consistently high quality service is delivered to our customers.

Staff are given regular feedback on their performance and understand the teams objectives and the importance of achieving high levels of performance both from a performance management perspective and in order to be responsive to the needs of our customers.

Hartlepool is in within the top quartile for performance in relation to benefits processing. The current performance is summarised below:

	Quarter Ending			
	June 05	September 05	December 05	March 06
Process new benefit claims within 36 days	23	23.55	20.63	27.26
Process changes in circumstances within 9 days	8	10.65	9.6	3.69
Accuracy	98%	97%	100%	100%

In addition to the national targets the Benefits Team has set itself some challenging local targets that are monitored each month and published locally to make them easily accessible to the claimants and other stakeholders (appendix 3). The results for last year are shown below:

	Quarter Ending			
	June 05	September 05	December 05	March 06
Respond to correspondence within 10 working days	85%	85%	87%	92%
Respond to RedR's (urgent post) within 10 working days	85%	97%	100%	97%
Telephone calls to be answered by a named member of staff within 3 rings	95%	97%	100%	97%
Process DHP's with 10 working days of receiving all information	95%	98%	85%	85%
Ensure customers wait no longer than an average of 8 minutes for an interview	6 mins	4 mins	5 mins	5 mins
Process requests for reconsiderations within 10 working days of receiving full information	70%	55%	85%	94%



Benefits and Revenues produce an annual performance report "Working Hard for You" (appendix 4) which details performance and service features, it is available to customers at any of the Councils main enquiry points.





## 4 Management Arrangements

The Benefits Team is based within the Finance Division of the Chief Executives Department. The Division is headed by the Chief Financial Officer and is made up of two service areas, Corporate Finance and Financial Services, the Benefits Team together with Revenues forms part of Financial Services.

The Chief Executives Service Plan sets out the departments overarching objectives and reflects the key themes contained in the Councils Community Plan. It co-ordinates the activities of different branches of the finance division and sets out the main divisional themes for the forthcoming year. The Plan also highlights the Benefit Teams commitment to year on year improvement by detailing a three year improvement target. **(Appendix 5)**

A comprehensive performance management framework is in place, which includes a number of challenging local performance indicators in addition to the national DWP performance standards targets. These are reflected in the Customer Service Standards, which are published and made available to claimants and other stakeholders.

The Benefits Team reports on progress against performance indicators and local performance targets on a monthly basis to the Divisional Management Team and on a quarterly basis to the Finance and Performance Management portfolio holder. The staff within Benefits are given feedback on their performance on a weekly basis at team briefings. Quality control checking of processing work is undertaken following risk based principles and staff receive feedback and further training as appropriate. A copy of the Benefits Service Plan is attached **(Appendix 9)**.

Within Benefits there is a Benefits Manager who leads on strategic issues and a Senior Benefits Officer who is responsible for operational issues. These two officers have regular meetings to ensure consistency in their approach.

There are several teams within the Benefits section, New Claims / Mobile Workers, Interventions, Public Enquiry and Changes in Circumstances who each have a team leader who is responsible for staff supervision and work allocation, monitoring and management on a day to day basis. In addition to the assessment teams there is a separate Overpayment team, Fraud team, Interventions Visiting team and Support Services team.

Formal monthly Revenues and Benefits management team meetings take place with the ACFO. In addition, weekly team leader meetings take place with the Benefits Manager and Senior Benefits Officer and in turn each team leader has a weekly briefing with their team.

The Benefit Team's organisation structure is attached. **(Appendix 6)**



## 5 Main Qualities of the Benefits Team

The staff within the Benefits Team are knowledgeable, professionals who are committed to providing a high quality service to claimants. They embrace the performance management culture and are fully appreciative of the service aims and objectives. They are primarily customer focused however they are also performance driven and understand the need to balance customer satisfaction with the requirement to meet performance indicators. This is exemplified in the Council's score in the 2005 CPA assessment of 4 for the benefits service. The Benefit team's self-assessment indicates it will maintain its CPA score of 4 for 2006.

The team have embraced change, volunteering to pilot new work programmes and initiatives and have worked hard to ensure that new initiatives such as mobile working, community engagement and partnership development are a success. Staff have demonstrated a willingness to develop service delivery channels, to be flexible, innovative and creative. They have enjoyed taking the service out into the community and there have often been more volunteers for a community event than the number required.

In addition to volunteering for new initiatives staff within the Benefits Team will test the technology and expand the boundaries of what they are able to complete. The staff working on new claims scripts found, through testing the scripts, that they could also complete changes of address before the changes in circumstances script had been completed. They used their initiative to do this in order to provide the best possible service to the customers.

All staff within the team are encouraged to contribute to the development of the service and policies related to the provision of the service. A recent example is the Homeworking and Compressed Hours Pilot Policy (appendix 2) which staff contributed to. There is a staff suggestion scheme where staff can make suggestions on improvements to working practices or procedures. A bottle of wine is given to any member of staff whose suggestion is accepted and implemented. A number of excellent suggestions have been implemented and made a substantial impact on service delivery.





A significant number of staff have retained their knowledge of the council tax system and continue to be multi-functional. They are able to amend council tax accounts and award discounts and exemptions whilst assessing a benefit claim, which provides an excellent integrated service to the customer and reduces delays in processing times.

Staff within the team are keen to undertake training courses which will help them in their work and help their personal development. A number of staff have undertaken courses within their own time as they feel they will help them to provide a better service. The ECDL computing course has been particularly popular, as the programmes have been made available for staff to use during their lunch breaks.

The team are keen to share their experiences and to help other Authorities who are considering implementing wireless solutions. Staff are happy to be involved in presentations and to answer questions on a one to one basis. A number of Authorities have taken advantage of this and the feedback has been excellent.

All staff within the team were involved in the preparation for the Charter Mark submission. They were involved in a number of different ways including focus groups, there was always an excellent response to requests for volunteers as the team were enthusiastic and wanted to secure recognition for the high standard of service which they are proud to provide.

When staff are assessing a claim for benefit they try to look at all the customers needs and not just their housing and council tax benefit entitlement. On a number of occasions the visiting officers have been able to contact social services and other agencies to obtain extra help for the customers and improve their standard of living.



## 6 Training Initiatives / Programmes Undertaken in the Last Year

The staff within the Benefits Team regularly receive training on legislative matters and computer systems. In addition to this departmental training there is a corporate training programme that all staff can access. All staff within the Benefits Team are encouraged to use the courses available in order to progress their personal development.

At the beginning of each year each member of staff discusses their training requirements with their team leader and these details are forwarded to the training co-ordinator and are included within the Annual Training Plan. Some training courses are compulsory but most are optional, the staff within the section are always keen to participate in training both for their current posts and for their personal development.

Corporately the Authority is promoting a Corporate Change Programme and all managers of team leader level and above are being invited to go on a series of courses as part of this programme.

The Benefits Team has registered to use the Euclidian on line training programme and a number of new staff and existing staff who have been promoted have used this system. These staff have also attended external training courses in benefit assessment provided as part of Hartlepool's strategic partnership with an external provider.

A number of training courses have been organised specifically to deal with the challenges faced by mobile workers, particularly in relation to staff safety when travelling or interviewing in the customers home.

All members of the team also have money advice and welfare benefits knowledge and this is regularly updated. Staff are keen to maximise the customers income and they also work closely with the Recovery and Money Advice Officer where customers are having particular financial difficulties.

The Authority recognises the importance of counter fraud initiatives and has developed a fraud awareness programme which has been ongoing for several years. A copy of the Counter Fraud Activity Programme is attached (**Appendix 10**).

The 2005/6 and 2006/7 training records are attached. (**Appendix 7**)

## 7 Innovative Administrative and Service Delivery Initiatives

- Mobile Working – assessing benefit entitlement in the customer's home, this has significantly reduced processing times. The average time to complete an electronic claim in April 06 was 2.5 days.
- Interventions Processed in the Customers Home – claims can be completed electronically in the customers home and an indication of any revised benefit entitlement given during the interview
- Changes in Circumstances to be Assessed Wirelessly – a new script is in development which will ensure that all changes in circumstance can in future be dealt with in the customers home
- Benefit Liaison Team – undertaken a number of initiatives to engage with vulnerable and difficult to reach groups. A copy of their Activity Programme is attached (**appendix 8**). This team also offer a dedicated landlord service to minimise interruptions to back office processing staff.
- Use of Mosaic software - socio-economic profiles of the local community are obtained allowing more focused targeting of take up initiatives
- Financial Inclusion Partnership – development of Anti Poverty Strategy to maximise benefit take-up, promotion of discretionary housing payments, financial consolidation for debts to the Authority and close working with other agencies
- Home Working and Compressed Hours Policy – these initiatives have been introduced to improve the work life balance of the staff in the benefits section.
- Partnership Working – both the fraud team and the assessment teams have worked closely with the DWP and Pension Service on joint initiatives
- Anti-Poverty Policy – including Welfare Benefits Guidance, One Stop Shop, Information Programme (**appendix 1**)
- Benefits Take Up Initiatives – exhibitions have taken place in the town centre and various venues throughout the town which have resulted in significant payments to customers who attended
- Benefits Surgeries – surgeries are provided each day of the week at different venues. They are responsive to local need and demand and the time and location is regularly reviewed to ensure the best possible service.
- On-line Calculator – an online calculator has been added to the Authority's web site to enable potential claimants to undertake an assessment which will indicate if they may be entitled to claim benefit.



## 8 Main Features of the Submission

The Benefits Team at Hartlepool is top quartile on service delivery issues and is providing excellent, customer focussed service, as demonstrated by attaining Chartermark in 2006, through the innovative use of IT and a programme of community engagement.

Furthermore, in the 2005 CPA assessment the Benefits Team was assessed as excellent and is expected to retain this assessment in 2006.

The use of wireless technology, the introduction of flexible working and home working for staff has led to service delivery being reshaped, a better home/work balance for staff and improved accessibility to financial support in particular for the vulnerable and difficult to reach individuals.

Through the Benefits Community Engagement Framework the service has contributed to the development of the Financial Inclusion arrangements within the Borough. Overall the Benefits Team can demonstrate it has been successful in "promoting the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community" and is contributing to the Council's corporate objectives.



## **APPENDICES**

- 1 Revenues and Benefits Anti – Poverty Policy**
- 2 Homeworking & Compressed Hours Pilot Policy**
- 3 2005/6 Revenues and Benefits Performance**
- 4 Revenues and Benefits Annual Performance Report**
- 5 Chief Executives Service Plan**
- 6 Benefits Organisational Structure**
- 7 Benefits Training Summary**
- 8 Benefits Liaison Activity Programme**
- 9 Benefits Service Plan**
- 10 Counter Fraud Activity Programme**





# Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2007

## Hartlepool Council

### Introduction

1.1 This assessment has been undertaken as part of the 2007 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) programme and does not represent a full inspection of Hartlepool Council's Benefits service. This report has been produced pursuant to powers contained in sections 10 and 11 of the Local Government Act 1999.

1.2 We gathered information for this assessment from a range of sources including:

- the self-assessment and evidence provided by the council
- Best Value Performance Indicators and performance measures
- discussions with senior officers in the council
- BFI's CPA 2006 report.

### Overall Performance

1.3 In 2006 we reported that the council met 10 of the 12 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 10 of the 13 performance measures scored by the Department. In 2006 the council met 64 of the 65 enablers, this year the council again met 64. This resulted in the scores reflected below:

Performance Standards score	Excellent
Audit Commission score	4

1.4 Hartlepool Council provided a full self-assessment against 2006 HB/CTB Performance Standards. The evidence provided by the council supported its self-assessment.

1.5 Figure 1.1 compares the scores for the individual Performance Standards theme scores for CPA 2006 and CPA 2007 to highlight any changes in reported performance.

Figure 1.1: Performance Standards theme scores

Theme	2006	2007	Change
Claims administration	4	4	=
Security	4	4	=
User focus	2	3	↑
Resource management	4	4	=

<b>Overall score</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>=</b>
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Source: BFI analysis

**1.6** As a result of improved appeals performance the overall user focus score has increased this year from meeting minimum requirements to Good. The council told us that it has an established comprehensive performance management framework that ensures performance is regularly reviewed and problems are addressed quickly. Managing performance in this way has enabled the council to achieve an excellent performance overall.

## Findings

### Claims administration

**1.7** Hartlepool Council's performance measure data for Claims administration is shown in Figure 1.2.

<b>Figure 1.2: Claims administration performance measures 2006/07</b>						
<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr 4</b>	<b>Full year</b>	<b>Score</b>
<b>PM 1: Average time for processing new claims (days)</b>	25	23	28	29	26	4
<b>PM 2: % of new claims outstanding over 50 days</b>	6	13	20	6	6	4
<b>PM 3: % of new claims decided within 14 days of receiving all information</b>	95	97	93	91	94	4
<b>PM 4: % of rent allowance claims paid on time or within 7 days of a decision being made</b>	96	97	95	98	97	4
<b>PM 5: Average time for processing changes of circumstances (days)</b>	11	8	11	4	7	4
<b>PM 6: % of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due is correct</b>	100	99	100	98	99	3

Source: Hartlepool Council

(Full year figures are based on an annual calculation and may not reflect the average of 4 quarters performance)



1.8 In 2006 we reported that the council met all 6 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against 5 of the 6 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met 15 of the 16 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it again met 15.

1.9 In order to maintain an excellent performance the council told us that in addition to the national Performance Standards the Benefits Team work to challenging local targets that are closely monitored, the outcomes of which are reported to both customers and stakeholders.

1.10 Although the council has set high level targets for debt recovery it recognises that to achieve enabler 14 these targets need to be developed further and its performance against them monitored.

## Security

1.11 In April 2006, Performance Standards were revised to include a scoring mechanism for performance measure PM16. This takes account of the number of successful sanctions applied in relation to a council's live caseload.

1.12 Hartlepool Council's performance measure data for Security is shown in Figure 1.3.

**Figure 1.3: Security Performance measure scores 2006/07**

Performance measure	Annual target	Performance	Score
PM 10: Interventions where review action completed	6180	109%	4
PM 11: Data matches resolved within 2 months	Not Applicable	100%	4
PM 12: Customers visited	2060	109%	4
PM 16: Number of successful sanctions per 1,000 caseload	Not Applicable	6.5	4

Source: Hartlepool council

1.13 In 2006 we reported that the council met each of the 3 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against all 4 of the performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met each of the 21 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it again met 21.

1.14 The council has a robust approach to counter fraud that is supported by a business plan detailing fraud targets that promote incremental improvements. The council has introduced an on-line fraud referral form available to the public via its website and is to introduce new software to improve its effectiveness in targeting fraud.



## User focus

1.15 Hartlepool Council's performance measure data for User focus is shown in Figure 1.4.

**Figure 1.4: User focus performance measures 2006/07**

Performance measure	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Full year	Score
PM 17: % of applications for reconsideration /revision actioned and notified within 4 weeks	37	90	87	78	69	4
PM 18: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 4 weeks	38	100	71	100	65	3
PM 19: % of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in 3 months	100	100	86	100	95	3

Source: Hartlepool Council

(Full year figures are based on an annual calculation and may not reflect the average of 4 quarters performance)

1.16 In 2006 we reported that the council met each of the 3 performance measures. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it achieved a rating of excellent against one of the 3 performance measures scored by the Department. We also reported that the council met each of the 12 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it again met 12.

1.17 Although there was a drop in the performance of the number of applications for reconsideration or revision actioned and notified within 4 weeks from 77% in 2005/06, to 69% in 2006/07, the council maintained its score of 4. However, the council significantly improved its performance for the percentage of appeals submitted to the Tribunal Service within 4 weeks from 33% in 2005/06 to 65% in 2006/07 taking its score from one to 3.

## Resource management

1.18 In 2006 we reported that the council met each of the 16 enablers. The council's most recent self-assessment showed that it still met 16.

1.19 The council told us it is committed to retaining and developing its workforce, with all managers and a significant number of staff undertaking training programmes. All managers undertake specific management development training to ensure they are equipped to deliver the corporate agenda.



## Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2007 – Supporting narrative report

Please provide a supporting narrative report detailing the factors that have affected your performance over the year. This should cover the 4 Performance Standards themes and include details of changes to enablers that were agreed with BFI as met since your CPA 2006 assessment.

Also include any exceptional circumstances that have affected your performance in 2006/07. These should only include issues that caused you **to invoke your business continuity plan**. You should set out details of what steps were taken to address these issues and how they directly affected your Benefits service performance.

### Hartlepool Borough Council

#### Claims administration

##### Narrative:

An established comprehensive performance management framework is in place that ensures performance is regularly reviewed and problems quickly addressed to ensure a consistently high quality service is delivered to our customers. As part of continuous improvement the Council has acquired the Aspiren Performance Management Framework model.

Staff are given regular feedback on their performance and understand the teams objectives and the importance of achieving high levels of performance both from a performance management perspective and in order to be responsive to the needs of our customer.

In addition to the national Performance Standards targets, the Benefits Team work to some challenging local targets that are monitored each month and published locally to make them easily accessible to customers and other stakeholders.

Revenues and Benefits produce an annual performance report "Working Hard for You", which details performance and service features, it is available at any of the Councils Main enquiry points.

The Council has set high level targets for overpayment debt recovery in line with BVPI 79, however these need to be further developed for debt profiling and need to be supported by improved management information from the Benefits Technical Support Unit.

Supporting evidence (please list documents etc being sent):

Appendix 1 Benefits Service Plan April 07

Appendix 2 Benefits Action Plan April 07

#### Security

##### Narrative:

We have a robust a robust approach and attitude toward Counter Fraud. This is detailed in



both our Counter Fraud Policy & Strategy and also within our Prosecution Policy. We have a sound business plan that promotes incremental improvement on counter Fraud targets as detailed within our Benefits Service Plan.

An annual report on counter fraud activity is submitted to members as part of the accountability arrangements. The Council has agreed to implement the Aspiren Intercept product to improve future effectiveness in targeting potential fraudulent activity and has introduced an on-line fraud referral form on the Council's website so that the public can raise issues quickly and efficiently on a 24/7 basis.

Supporting evidence (please list documents etc being sent):

Appendix 4 Counter Fraud Strategy

Appendix 5 Prosecution Policy

### User focus

Narrative:

We have a dedicated team with responsibility for liaison with Landlords, promoting the take-up of Housing and Council Tax Benefit and targeting vulnerable groups who may otherwise have difficulty in accessing the benefits service. Landlords have a named individual and a dedicated telephone number for any queries, they may have. Feedback from correspondence and via our quarterly Landlord forums is excellent.

The benefit liaison team organise benefits exhibitions in the town centre, often working in partnership with other agencies and service providers. We also attend community events to publicise the service. The team have undertaken joint working with the Pensions Service, community groups and the ethnic community in order to reach a wider audience.

We are committed to social inclusion for all members of the community and work as part of the Council's Financial Inclusion Partnership.

In December 2006 our Benefits Team and Counter Fraud Investigation team were re-accredited with the prestigious Charter Mark status, a national award for excellence in customer service and the Benefits Service was short listed in 2006 for Team of the Year in the national IRRV performance awards.

Supporting evidence (please list documents etc being sent):

Appendix 8 Benefit Liaison Plan

### Resource management

Narrative:

The Council is committed to retaining and developing its workforce and all managers and a significant number of staff are undertaking training programmes. All managers undertake a training programme titled "Be the Difference" which is a management development programme to ensure managers are equipped with the required skills to deliver the corporate agenda. All other staff are given the opportunity to join the "Tomorrows



Manager" programme as part of their personal development. This programme has been accessed by a number of Benefits staff.

Please also include in this section details of any discrepancies you may have discovered between the Performance information held by the Department and your own statistical data. Please account for the difference and state what evidence you are including to support your assessment.

#### Any other factors affecting performance in 2006/07

##### Narrative:

2006/2007 reflected the full year effects of the Council's Anti Poverty Strategy which restricts overpayment recovery rates in non fraudulent overpayment cases where the individual is in receipt of IS/JSA. This is shown in the small fall in the overpayment recovery BVPI's 79b(i) and 79b(ii), which was anticipated. However, the Council is satisfied that the arrangement is not significantly adversely affecting recovery of overpayment debt given the overall robust arrangements and the Council feels at this stage the policy change is sustainable but will be subject to future review.

Supporting evidence (please list documents etc being sent):

Please indicate which of the following documents you are enclosing with your evidence.

Supporting evidence required	Included Yes or No
Benefits service Business or Service plan 06/07 and 07/08	Yes
Benefits service Improvement Plan – current	Yes
Management information and latest performance report to Chief Executive and Members	Yes
Current counter-fraud policy and strategy	Yes
Details of process used to check and validate quarterly performance returned to the Department	Yes
Any Internal and External Audit reports produced during 2005/06 & 2006/07	Yes
A hard copy of your March 2007 HB/CTB Performance Standards self-assessment.	Yes

Name	John Morton
Contact telephone number	01429 523093

Where possible please send your supporting evidence electronically on CD.

If you have any queries or concerns, please contact my CPA 2007 Project Manager, Brian Keating, by telephone on 01423 832928, or by e-mail at [brian.keating@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:brian.keating@dwp.gsi.gov.uk).

All narrative reports and supporting evidence should be submitted to:

**CPA 2007 Co-ordinator, Benefit Fraud Inspectorate**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Berkeley House, 12a North Park Road, Harrogate, HG1 5QA**

Supporting evidence (please list documents etc being sent)	Indicate whether you are attaching with your evidence
A hard copy of your March 2007 HCOTB Performance Standards self-assessment	Yes
Any Internal and External Audit reports produced during 2006/07	Yes
Details of process used to check and validate quality performance returned to the Department	Yes
Current counter-fraud policy and strategy	Yes
Management information and latest performance report to Chief Executive and Members	Yes
Benefit service Improvement Plan - current	Yes
Benefit service Business or Service plan 06/07 and 07/08	Yes





## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** REVENUES AND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGER

**DIVISION:** CUSTOMER AND WORKFORCE SERVICES

**GRADE:** BAND ~~14~~ 13

**RESPONSIBLE TO** CHIEF FINANCIAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES  
OFFICER


**POST REF NO:** 101099

### **Purpose of Post**

- To manage the resources of the team including work allocation, quality management, budget control and the provision of supervision and appraisal
- To ensure statutory duties within the remit of the post are met.
- To develop and sustain relationships with key partners and stakeholders.

### **Service Remit**

1. Effective performance management of operational service delivery, which meets the specific and general requirements of all customers.
2. Ensuring service delivery is delivered by the most efficient means for customers and cost effective for the Council.
3. Finding ways of integrating services within the division to achieve efficiencies and improve quality of service delivery.
4. To manage the resources of the team including work allocation, quality management, budget control and the provision of supervision and appraisal.
5. Building a valued confident, developed, empowered and innovative workforce. Ensure employees feel valued and understand their role in achieving the Council's vision and objectives in a supportive and learning environment which protects and enhances their personal well-being.

- 
6. To ensure that working procedures and practises within the team comply with the Council's statutory duties, policies and procedural guidelines.
  7. Ensuring the provision/commissioning of safe, effective and high quality services that are responsive to local need and are provided within a clear quality framework and comply with the statutory duties which fall under the responsibility of the post holder.
  8. To maintain up to date knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure the team are briefed on changes and emerging best practice.
  9. To ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to deal with complaints.
  10. To brief the Chief Financial and Customer Services Officer and refer issues as appropriate.
  11. To initiate and develop procedure and practice to improve service delivery, which ensure compliance with legislation and/or national standards.
  12. To listen and respond to clients and customers using advising, guiding, negotiation or persuasion skills.
  13. Ensure appropriate risk management arrangements for the team are in place.
  14. To undertake cross organisational team working.
  15. Continuously striving to reduce the teams costs.
  16. Continuously striving to maximise the teams income.
  17. Providing professional or technical advice in relation to the teams area of responsibility.
  18. To maintain up to date detailed knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure both the divisional management team and the service are briefed on changes.
  19. Undertaking case work in relation to the team's area of responsibility.
  20. Working with relevant partners and stakeholders in a spirit of partnership and collaboration and develop effective working relationships.





## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OFFICER (FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY)

**DIVISION:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S – FINANCE DIVISION

**GRADE:** BAND 11

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** HARTLEPOOL FINANCIAL INCLUSION PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE GROUP (ENCOMPASSING THE CAB, CREDIT UNION, HBC, HOUSING HARTLEPOOL, HARTLEPOOL WATER AND NWA) AND ASSISTANT CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER (FINANCIAL SERVICES)

**POST REF NO:** FIN102

### **Purpose of Post**

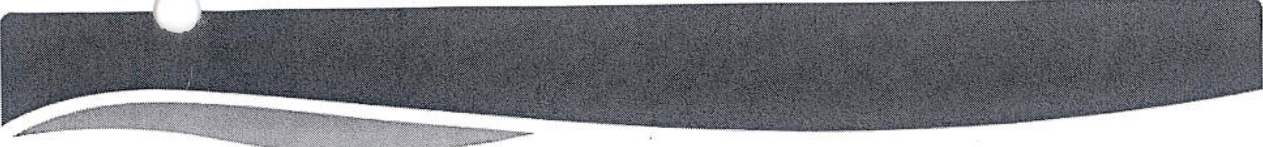
Design and develop a strategy and associated "Way Forward" action plan, and lead on the subsequent programme of work intended to ensure the effective development and sustainability of Hartlepool's Financial Inclusion Partnership. The role will involve working closely with residents, community groups and partner agencies/businesses in the public, private and third sector and include the provision of a full secretariat service for the Partnership.

### **Relationships**


The postholder will be expected to work effectively with a range of external agencies / stakeholders. In addition the postholder will work closely with the Council's Community Engagement Officer in the development and production of publicity materials; the organisation and delivery of community events; and the coordination of initiatives and projects, which aim to promote the principles and objectives of Hartlepool's Financial Inclusion Partnership.

### **Main Duties & Responsibilities:**

1. Develop a HFIP Strategy and associated "Way Forward" Action Plan that joins up related policies and strategies, and ensures the Partnership develops sustainable approaches to addressing financial inclusion across the Borough.

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2. Monitor progress against all actions identified in the "Way Forward" Plan, reporting quarterly to the Partnership Executive Group on progress made and future planned activities. Develop the Plan for future years in response to emerging financial inclusion issues at both a local and national level.
  3. Overall management, administration and monitoring of budgets allocated to the Partnership, and to proactively seek resources to further the Partnership's aims and objectives.
  4. Provide full administrative and secretariat support to the Partnership including organising meetings, minute taking, planning & organising events, report writing etc.
  5. Promote the Partnership's activities, aims and objectives in person or by other means to increase membership from the public, private, voluntary and third sectors.
  6. Undertake research, analyse information and statistics, prepare reports as necessary to ensure that the partnership is aware of and acts upon Government policy and initiatives in respect of financial inclusion and related issues.
  7. Assist partnership stakeholders to work towards influencing policy both locally and nationally through evidencing issues and barriers in relation to the Financial Inclusion Agenda.
  8. Drive forward the recommendations made in the "Mapping the Gaps" report to target client groups requiring financial services and money advice.
  9. Develop publicity campaigns, events and promotional materials to promote financial inclusion initiatives, including power-point presentations suitable for audiences of all levels e.g. residents, elected members, local authority officials, voluntary sector organisations, schools and local businesses.
  10. Develop and deliver initiatives and projects that promote and encourage access to and the availability of free money advice, affordable credit, Credit Union membership/ethical banking, welfare benefits and other initiatives, to reduce and remove barriers to financial inclusion.
  11. Ensure the consistent provision of money management / debt advice in the Borough by coordinating joint training initiatives, and encouraging the sharing of best practice amongst agencies / organisations.
  12. Coordinate the production of management information reports from the key delivery agents to map variations in demand and nature of money management support and advice in the Borough.



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13. Develop working links with other similar partnerships at both regional and national levels.
  14. Produce reports and information on behalf of the partnership to inform for example, Hartlepool's Local Strategic Partnership, Economic Forum, and other interested parties about Financial Inclusion progress in the Borough of Hartlepool.
  15. Identify funding opportunities and produce funding applications to ensure the future sustainability of the Partnership and to support the provision of community events / activities to be undertaken.
  16. Act as a point of contact for the Partnership, dealing with enquiries/requests for information by telephone, in writing or in person.
  17. Develop and maintain administration and IT systems necessary for the efficient secretariat support service required for the operation of the Partnership.
  18. Undertake training and attend conferences as deemed appropriate.
  19. Undertake any other duties in relation to the post as directed by the HFIP Executive or by the Assistant Chief Financial Officer (Financial Services).

### **Changes**

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions/responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable but may change commensurate with the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation which may involve a Trade Union/Professional Association representative.

JM: May 2009





## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** Recovery and Money Advice Liaison Officer

**DIVISION:** Chief Executive's – Finance Division

**GRADE:** Band 9

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Recovery Manager

**POST REFERENCE NO:**

### **Purpose of Post**

To act in a coordinating role between the Council, Housing Hartlepool and the various advice agencies in securing agreed repayment plans in respect of corporate and Housing Hartlepool debts for those customers experiencing hardship in the Borough. The role will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy

### **Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other Departments of the Council and external agencies as appropriate, in relation to Revenues and Benefits matters.

### **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

1. To act as a point of contact for Housing Hartlepool Officers and the various local money advice centres, in the assessment of a customer's means and subsequent negotiations to secure a realistic repayment plans that meets the needs of the individual and the various stakeholder organisations.
2. To act as a point of contact for customers experiencing hardship and contacting the Council under the terms of the Anti-Poverty Strategy.
3. To carry out income and expenditure assessments and amalgamate a customer's debt position to the Council and Housing Hartlepool, with a view to securing appropriate repayment arrangements on behalf of both organisations.
4. To liaise with the Council's Bailiff on behalf of the customer and money advice centres as required, with a view to suspending enforcement action whilst an appropriate repayment plan is in force.
5. To monitor arrangements for repayment made under the terms of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and instigate recovery action in accordance with the council tax and business rate legislation as and when required.

6. To undertake home visits as required.
7. To deal with telephone enquiries, correspondence and personal visits to the Civic Centre, from customers experiencing hardship and/or in connection with the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy.
8. To identify customers experiencing complex multiple-debt problems and refer them to the CAB's Money Advice Officers.
9. To review and monitor the systems and procedures in operation for assisting customers under the terms of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy.
10. To assist with the implementation of quality initiatives such as Charter Mark.
11. To liaise with external agencies and other departments within Council on matters affecting the collection and enforcement of Council Tax and Business Rates.
12. To assist in the recruitment, training and development of staff and undertake such personal training as may be deemed necessary to meet the duties and responsibilities of the post.
13. To undertake any other duties of a related nature, which might reasonably be required and allocated by the Recovery Manager

### **Changes**

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions/responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable but may change commensurate with the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation which if wished may involve a Trade Union/Professional Association representative.



**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT - FINANCE DIVISION**

**JOB DESCRIPTION**

Job Title: Senior Revenues Officer  
Division: Chief Executive's - Finance Division  
Grade: Band 9  
Responsible to: Principal Revenues Officer  
Post Ref:

**Purpose of Post**

To supervise a team of staff dealing with the valuation, billing and collection functions for Council Tax.

All staff will be expected to consider their role in the context of the objectives that the Department is working towards and to constructively contribute to the continuous improvement, performance management and best value culture.

**Relationships**

All staff will be expected to promote team working within their particular staff group/service area but also across the Department as whole, with corporate colleagues and external agencies as appropriate, in relation to Revenues matters.

**Main duties and responsibilities**

1. To assist in the design, implementation and review of office procedures and arrangements to ensure the efficient and effective administration of Council Tax.
2. To ensure that amendments to accounts and subsequent Council Tax bills are issued within the Division's local performance targets.
3. To update the Council Tax system with banding notifications and amendments from the Valuation Office, and to ensure that both systems reconcile.
4. To assist with annual billing and year end for Council Tax.
5. To plan and undertake surveys to review liability, entitlements to discounts, exemptions and property ownership, liaising with the Section's Inspection Officer with a view to carrying out property visits as required.
6. To administer schemes for different payment methods and for processing applications for disabled relief, exemptions and discounts.
7. To ensure that all refunds and recalled payments are administered correctly.
8. To deal with Council Tax appeals and represent the Council at Valuation Tribunal hearings.
9. To deal with the more complex enquiries regarding liability, billing and the collection of Council Tax.

10. To ensure that payments are allocated to the correct accounts and, within accounts, allocated to the correct financial year and debt/arrangement type.
11. To undertake the process of requesting Direct Debits, and actioning ADDACS and AUDDIS reports.
12. To make claims on behalf of the Council in Bankruptcy and Liquidation proceedings.
13. To produce monthly performance statistics in accordance with the Division's Performance Management Framework.
14. To interpret new legislation and regulations relating to Council Tax liability.
15. To take a lead role in the preparation for and the implementation of the 2007 Council Tax Revaluation, and subsequent revaluations thereafter.
16. To assist with the supervision and allocation of the NNDR workload in the absence of the Senior Revenues Officer (NNDR).
17. To liaise with other sections and departments within the council and develop, and maintain links with external agencies on matters affecting the work of the Revenues & Benefits Section.
18. To test new software releases on the SX3 Revenues Systems.
19. To recruit and personally direct the training and development of staff, and to undertake such personal training as may be deemed necessary to meet the duties and responsibilities of the post.
20. Any other duties of a related nature which might reasonably be assigned to the post by the Principal Revenues Officer.

### **Development**

The work of all Local Government departments changes continuously which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions/responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable and may change with the grading of the post. Any such changes will naturally be the subject of discussion and consultation.

September 2004



## **HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVES DEPARTMENT** **FINANCE DIVISION**

#### **JOB DESCRIPTION**

Job Title: Internal Bailiff  
Division: Chief Executive's – Finance Division  
Grade: Band 9  
Responsible to: Recovery Manager  
Post ref:

#### **Purpose of Post**

To be responsible for the collection and enforcement of council tax and business rates arrears once a Liability Order has been issued. More specifically this role will involve visiting debtors at home, assessing financial circumstances in order to secure a suitable repayment plan and list appropriate goods for removal. Where bailiff action fails, the Officer will be required to assist in the removal of the debtor's goods, or obtain a 'no goods' certificate to enable further enforcement action.

#### **Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other departments of the Council and external agencies, as appropriate, in relation to enforcement matters.

#### **Main duties and responsibilities**

1. Act within the limits of the Council's Bailiff Code of Conduct at all times and observing and applying the Revenues & Benefits Customer Charter in any dealings with the general public.
2. Attend customers' home addresses and businesses with a warrant of execution, with a view to obtaining full payment with the debtor, agreeing terms of repayment or removing goods for sale.
3. Accept and account for any council tax and business rate payments during visits, providing debtors with a receipt at all times.
4. Assess debtors' goods in accordance with the Council's Bailiff Code of Conduct and the relevant statutory regulations.
5. Apply the relevant schedule 5 enforcement costs to debtor's account once a visit has been undertaken.
6. Identify debtors experiencing hardship and signpost them to the relevant welfare benefits / debt counselling advice.
7. Assist with the design, implementation of internal bailiff and enforcement procedures to ensure the efficient and effective recovery and enforcement of Council Tax and Business Rates arrears.
8. Liaise with other sections and departments within the Council and develop, and maintain links with external agencies, particularly enforcement agents, on matters affecting the work of the Revenues & Benefits Section.

9. Assist in the interpretation of the legislation and regulations relating to enforcement activities.
10. Undertake such personal training as may be deemed necessary to meet the duties and responsibilities of the post.
11. Although not integral to the duties of the Internal Bailiff the post holder may be required to monitor arrangements for payment resulting from internal bailiff action, ensuring that the appropriate action is taken against defaulters.
12. Although not integral to the duties of the Internal Bailiff the post holder may be required to deal with correspondence and telephone enquiries from debtor's, as a result of a bailiff visit.
13. Any other duties of a related nature that might reasonably be assigned to the post by the Recovery Manager.

### **Development**

The work of all Local Government departments changes continuously which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions/responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable and may change with the grading of the post. Any such changes will naturally be the subject of discussion and consultation.

June 2006





## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** REVENUES OFFICER

**DIVISION:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S – FINANCE DIVISION

**GRADE:** Band 7

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** BILLING / RECOVERY TEAM LEADER\*

**POST REFERENCE NO:**

### **Purpose of Post**

To be part of a team of Revenues Officers, responsible for all areas of Council Tax and Business Rates administration. More specifically, the Revenues Officers will be required to work in one of the following areas:

- Valuation, billing and collection of Council Tax and Business Rates;
- Recovery and enforcement of Council Tax and Business Rates.

To aid personal development, the Revenues Officers will be encouraged to gain experience in each area of work.

### **Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other Departments of the Council and external agencies as appropriate, in relation to Revenues and Benefits matters.

### **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Dealing with customer enquiries received by telephone, correspondence and personal visit to the Civic Centre.
2. To make arrangements for payment of outstanding Council Tax and Business Rates.
3. The valuation, billing and collection of Council Tax and Business Rates, which may include:
  - The preparation, checking and dispatch of bills at the beginning of the financial year, and during the year following changes in liability, occupation or ownership;
  - To pass information to the Valuation Office about changes which may affect property banding or the rating list;
  - To action Valuation List updates, ensuring that the total rateable value is reconciled and issue amended business rate accounts as necessary;
  - Processing account amendments to reflect changes in property occupation, and amending council tax benefit where appropriate;
  - Undertaking reviews to verify property ownership, entitlements to reductions and ensure correct liability to pay council tax and business rates;
  - Administration of payment and instalment schemes;

- Determining and processing applications for discounts, exemptions and reductions;
  - Inputting account adjustments and processing refunds, and recalled payments;
  - Calculating interest on overpayments arising from reductions in rateable value (for subsequent authorisation and payment) and preparation of the related tax certificate.
4. The recovery and enforcement of Council Tax and Business Rates, which may include:
    - The preparation, checking and dispatch of reminders, final notices and summonses;
    - The preparation of cases for court action and attendance at court to deal with customer enquiries;
    - The issue of forms requesting financial information and the assessment of the completed forms to determine the most appropriate form of recovery action to be taken;
    - Setting up and monitoring arrangements for payment and initiating further recovery action in cases of default;
    - The preparation and issue of Attachment of Earnings Orders and Attachment of Benefits Orders, and monitoring payments received;
    - The preparation and issue of accounts to the Bailiff;
    - The preparation of statutory demands, bankruptcy orders and prosecutions for non-return of requests for information.
  5. The implementation of quality initiatives such as Charter Mark.
  6. To liaise with external agencies and other departments within Council on matters affecting valuation, billing, collection and enforcement of Council Tax and Business Rates.
  8. To undertake any other duties of a related nature, which might reasonably be required and allocated by the respective Team Leaders and Managers.

### **Changes**

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions/responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable but may change commensurate with the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation which if wished may involve a Trade Union/Professional Association representative.



**Hartlepool Borough Council**

**Chief Executive's Department**  
**Finance Division**

**Job Description**

**Job Title:**               **Inspection Officer**

**Division:**               **Finance Division**

**Grade:**

**Responsible to:**       **Principal Revenues Officer**

**Purpose of the Post**

To undertake visits to domestic and non-domestic properties with a view to establishing and monitoring entitlements to reductions in accordance with the legislation governing Council Tax and Business Rates administration.  
To trace the whereabouts of absconded non-payers within the limitations of the Data Protection and Human Rights Act, and other relevant legislation.

**Relationships**

All staff are expected to promote team working within their particular area and across the department as a whole, with corporate colleagues and external agencies as appropriate.

**Main Duties and Responsibilities**

1. To carry out regular inspections of domestic and non-domestic properties within the borough of Hartlepool, in accordance with inspection timetables and requests from other members of staff.
2. To deal with enquiries and correspondence generated as a result of inspections.
3. To undertake visits to the elderly, vulnerable or housebound individuals and provide them with information about their accounts and assistance in completing relevant forms.
4. To ensure that occupation and ownership information derived through the course of outside visits is reflected on all documentation issued by the Revenues Section, preparing reports and making recommendations as required.
5. During the course of external visits monitor changes of use of properties, new developments and alterations within the Borough, and to issue completion notices as required by the regulations.
7. To undertake visits to empty properties ensuring that entitlements to empty property exemptions and discounts are correct.
8. To trace absconded non-payers.

9. To hand deliver committal summonses as required by the Recovery Manager.
10. To be the Council's contact officer in respect of applications for a disabled relief reduction.
11. To undertake visits in respect of applications for a disabled reduction and, wherever possible, advise the taxpayers at the time of the visit of the outcome of their application.
12. To undertake visits in respect of applications for Class A exemptions and, wherever possible, advise the taxpayers at the time of the visit of the outcome of their application.
13. Any other duties of a similar nature which might reasonably be assigned to the post by the Principal Revenues Officer.
14. To make yourself aware and fully comply with the Council's health and safety rules and legislative requirements

### Changes

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously, which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions / responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable but may change commensurate with the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation which is wished may involve a Trade Union / Professional Representative.





Hartlepool Borough Council

Chief Executive's Department

**Job Description**

**JOB TITLE:** CASHIER/CLERICAL ASSISTANT

**DIVISION:** FINANCE DIVISION

**GRADE:** SCALE 3

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** ASSISTANT SENIOR CASHIER

**POST REFERENCE NO:** FIN170

**PURPOSE OF POST**

To provide an efficient cash collection service within the Revenues and Benefits Section.

**RELATIONSHIPS**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other departments of the Council and external agencies as appropriate, in relation to cash receipting matters.

**MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Day to day operation of the Council's computerised cash receipting facilities (and manual systems in the event of computer breakdown) to secure the safe and efficient collection, receipting and banking of all monies received by the Council.
2. The handling, receipting and banking of postal remittances.
3. The opening, reconciling, processing and banking of remittances received via the handitill facility.

4. Assisting with clerical duties in other areas of the Revenues and Benefits Section, as directed by the Principal Revenues Officer.
5. Any other duties of a related nature which might reasonably be assigned to the post by the Assistant Senior Cashier.

### **DEVELOPMENTS**

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions/responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable but may change commensurate with the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation, which if wished may involve a Trade Union/Professional Association representative.

22 November 2004





## **CHIEF EXECUTVE'S DEPARTMENT**

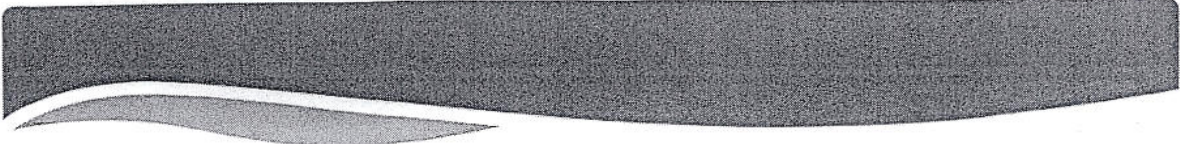
**JOB TITLE:** AWARDS AND BENEFIT SECURITY MANAGER  
**DIVISION:** CUSTOMER AND WORKFORCE SERVICES  
**GRADE:** BAND 14  
**RESPONSIBLE TO:** CHIEF FINANCIAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES OFFICER  
**POST REF NO:** 105001

### **Purpose of Post**


- To manage the resources of the team including work allocation, quality management, budget control and the provision of supervision and appraisal
- To ensure statutory duties within the remit of the post are met.
- To develop and sustain relationships with key external stakeholders.

### **Service Remit**

1. Effective performance management of operational service delivery, which meets the specific and general requirements of all customers.
2. Ensuring service delivery is delivered by the most efficient means for customers and cost effective for the Council.
3. Finding ways of integrating services within the division to achieve efficiencies and improve quality of service delivery.
4. To manage the resources of the team including work allocation, quality management, budget control and the provision of supervision and appraisal.
5. Building a valued confident, developed, empowered and innovative workforce. Ensure employees feel valued and understand their role in achieving the Council's vision and objectives in a supportive and learning environment which protects and enhances their personal well-being.
6. To ensure that working procedures and practises within the team comply with the Council's statutory duties, policies and procedural guidelines.

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7. Ensuring the provision/commissioning of safe, effective and high quality services that are responsive to local need and are provided within a clear quality framework and comply with the statutory duties which fall under the responsibility of the post holder.
  8. To maintain up to date knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure the team are briefed on changes and emerging best practice.
  9. To ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to deal with complaints.
  10. To brief the Chief Financial and Customer Services Officer and refer issues to them as appropriate.
  11. To initiate and develop procedure and practice to improve service delivery, which ensure compliance with legislation and/or national standards.
  12. To listen and respond to clients and customers using advising, guiding, negotiation or persuasion skills.
  13. Ensure appropriate risk management arrangements for the team are in place.
  14. To undertake cross organisational team working.
  15. Continuously striving to reduce the teams costs.
  16. Continuously striving to maximise the teams income.
  17. Providing professional or technical advice in relation to the teams area of responsibility.
  18. To maintain up to date detailed knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure both the divisional management team and the service are briefed on changes.
  19. Undertaking case work in relation to the team's area of responsibility.
  20. Working with relevant partners and stakeholders in a spirit of partnership and collaboration and develop effective working relationships.
  21. Responsible for maximising the extent to which services are delivered directly to the user.



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22. Continuously uses Business Process Re-engineering to rationalise and reduce bureaucracy and duplication.
  23. To ensure equalities and diversity issues are effectively assessed, planned and implemented.
  24. To undertake higher level case work in relation to the service.

### **Key Relationships**

1. Establish and maintain effective liaison arrangements with internal and external stakeholders including Job Centre Plus, Pensions Service, Landlords, Registered Social Landlords and the Rent Officer Service.
2. Contribute with other stakeholders to the development and sustainability of the Hartlepool Financial Inclusion Partnership.

### **Specific Duties Relating to the Post**

1. Ensure an effective benefits counter fraud and data quality framework is in place.
2. To develop strategies and improvement action plans in response to national standards defined by the Dept for Work and Pensions and Audit Commission external inspections.
3. In conjunction with the Senior Appeals Officer, responsibility for attending as the Council's representative at Benefit Appeal Tribunals.
4. To determine an annual work programme for the team, implement and review it.
5. Ensuring the effective delivery of corporate Financial Inclusion Initiatives.

### **Developments**

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously which in turn requires post holders to adapt and adjust. The functions / responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as permanent but may change as appropriate to the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation which the post holder and where necessary, with a trade union representative.



**HARTLEPOOL**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** Senior Reconsiderations & Appeals Officer

**DIVISION:** Customer & Workforce Services Officer

**GRADE:** Band 12

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Head of Awards & Benefit Security

**POST REFERENCE NO:**

**Purpose of Post**

To undertake and control reconsiderations caseload and assist with Appeals activity as appropriate to ensure Performance Targets are delivered.

**Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other Departments of the Council, with the Dept for Work and Pensions, landlords, and other agencies as appropriate.

**Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Ensuring the effective management and control of reconsiderations activity in accordance with service delivery targets, including requests for backdated benefit, benefit on two homes and other general correspondence including correspondence relating to overpayments as reasonably allocated.
2. Ensuring the effective investigation and review of claimant reconsideration requests, including the maintenance of effective records of request received / actions / outcomes. Interviewing and/or visiting appellants to obtain further information to progress reconsiderations and/or appeals.
3. To draft and issue appropriate substantive responses to reconsideration requests.
4. Interpretation and provision of advice and guidance covering legislation, statutory regulations, government circulars etc relating to Benefits.
5. As required by workload assist in the evaluation of claimant appeals and the determination of the Council's position based on statutory regulations, case law and commissioner determinations.
6. As required, for cases determined as appropriate for Tribunal consideration, the preparation of associated relevant case submission papers.



7. To be responsible for presenting the Authorities case at Appeals Tribunals.
8. Liaison with internal and external bodies, including landlords / agents. In particular, provide feedback to the Head of Awards & Benefit Security on reconsiderations cases and attend management team meetings as appropriate.
9. Contributing to the annual Audit Commission Kloe and Customer Service Excellence submission.
10. To maintain up to date knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure relevant staff are briefed on changes and emerging best practice.
11. To initiate and develop procedure and practice to improve service delivery, which ensure compliance with legislation and/or national standards.
12. To prepare and deliver training to staff as required on issues arising from appeals and reconsiderations activity.
13. To prepare reports and attend when necessary as the Chief Customer & Workforce Services Officer's representative at Portfolio meetings, working groups etc.
14. To ensure equalities and diversity issues are effectively assessed, planned and implemented.
15. To deputise for the Head of Awards & Benefit Security as required and undertake any other duties of a related nature, which might reasonably be required and allocated.

### **Changes**

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously which in turn requires staff to adapt and adjust. The functions/responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as immutable but may change commensurate with the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation which if wished may involve a Trade Union/Professional Association representative.

April 2010



### **CUSTOMER AND WORKFORCE SERVICES**

**JOB TITLE :** PRINCIPAL BENEFIT OFFICER AWARDS

**DIVISION:** CUSTOMER AND WORKFORCE SERVICES

**GRADE:** BAND 11

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** AWARDS AND BENEFIT SECURITY MANAGER

**POST REFERENCE :** ? X 2

#### **Purpose of Post**

- To manage the resources of the team including work allocation, quality management, budget control and the provision of supervision and appraisal
- To ensure statutory duties within the remit of the post are met.

#### **Service Remit**

1. Effective performance management of operational service delivery, which meets the specific and general requirements of all customers.
2. Ensuring service delivery is delivered by the most efficient means for customers and cost effective for the Council.
3. Finding ways of integrating services within the division to achieve efficiencies and improve quality of service delivery.
4. To manage the resources of the team including work allocation, quality management, budget control and the provision of supervision and appraisal.
5. Building a valued confident, developed, empowered and innovative workforce. Ensure employees feel valued and understand their role in achieving the



Council's vision and objectives in a supportive and learning environment which protects and enhances their personal well-being.

6. To ensure that working procedures and practises within the team comply with the Council's statutory duties, policies, procedural guidelines and effectively address operational weaknesses identified by data quality checks.
7. Ensuring the provision/commissioning of safe, effective and high quality services that are responsive to local need and are provided within a clear quality framework and comply with the statutory duties which fall under the responsibility of the post holder.
8. To maintain up to date knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure the team are briefed on changes and emerging best practice.
9. To ensure that effective mechanisms are in place to deal with complaints.
10. To brief the Awards and Benefit Security Manager and refer issues to them as appropriate.
11. To agree with the Awards and Benefit Security Manager the annual work programme for the team, implement and review it.
12. To initiate and develop procedure and practice to improve service delivery, which ensure compliance with legislation and/or national standards.
13. To listen and respond to clients and customers using advising, guiding, negotiation or persuasion skills.
14. Ensure appropriate risk management arrangements for the team are in place.
15. To undertake cross organisational team working.
16. Continuously striving to reduce the teams costs.
17. Continuously striving to maximise the teams income and reduce overpayments through Local Authority error
18. Providing professional or technical advice in relation to the teams area of responsibility.
19. To maintain up to date detailed knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure both the divisional management team and the service are briefed on changes.
20. Undertaking case work in relation to the team's area of responsibility.
21. Working with relevant partners and stakeholders in a spirit of partnership and collaboration and develop effective working relationships.

22. Responsible for maximising the extent to which services are delivered directly to the user.
23. Continuously uses Business Process Re-engineering to rationalise and reduce bureaucracy and duplication.
24. To ensure equalities and diversity issues are effectively assessed, planned and implemented.
25. To undertake higher level case work in relation to the service.

### **Key Relationships**

1. *Establish and maintain effective liaison arrangements with internal and external stakeholders including Job Centre Plus, Pension Service, Landlords, Registered Social Landlords and the Rent Officer Service.*
2. *Contribute with other stakeholders to the development of the Hartlepool Financial Inclusion Partnership*

### **Specific Duties Relating to the Post**

1. *Responsibility for leading, managing and supervising the staff of the Awards Team including work allocation and performance management.*
2. *Work with the Awards and Benefit Security Manager to develop and implement strategies and action plans in response to national standards defined by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Audit Commission, including preparation for external inspections.*
3. *To determine an annual work programme for the team, implement and review it.*
4. *To ensure equality and diversity issues are effectively assessed, planned and implemented.*
5. *Ensure all publicity material and website content is up to date and relevant.*

### **Developments**

The work of all Local Government departments changes and develops continuously which in turn requires post holders to adapt and adjust. The functions / responsibilities above should not therefore be regarded as permanent but may change as appropriate to the grading of the post. Any major changes will involve discussion and consultation which the post holder and where necessary, with a trade union representative.





**HARTLEPOOL**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** Senior Reconsiderations & Appeals Officer

**DIVISION:** Customer & Workforce Services Officer

**GRADE:** Band 10

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Principal Benefit appeal and Security Officer

**POST REFERENCE NO:**

### **Purpose of Post**

To undertake and control reconsiderations caseload and assist with Appeals activity as appropriate to ensure Performance Targets are delivered.

### **Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other Departments of the Council, with the Dept for Work and Pensions, landlords, and other agencies as appropriate.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Ensuring the effective management and control of reconsiderations activity in accordance with service delivery targets, including requests for backdated benefit, benefit on two homes and other general correspondence including correspondence relating to overpayments as reasonably allocated.
2. Ensuring the effective investigation and review of claimant reconsideration requests, including the maintenance of effective records of request received / actions / outcomes. Interviewing and/or visiting appellants to obtain further information to progress reconsiderations and/or appeals.
3. To draft and issue appropriate substantive responses to reconsideration requests.
4. Interpretation and provision of advice and guidance covering legislation, statutory regulations, government circulars etc relating to Benefits.

5. As required by workload assist in the evaluation of claimant appeals and the determination of the Council's position based on statutory regulations, case law and commissioner determinations.
6. As required, for cases determined as appropriate for Tribunal consideration, the preparation of associated relevant case submission papers.
7. To be responsible for presenting the Authorities case at Appeals Tribunals.
8. Liaison with internal and external bodies, including landlords / agents. In particular, provide feedback to the Principal Benefit Appeals and Security Officer on reconsiderations cases and attend management team meetings as appropriate.
9. Contributing to the annual Audit Commission KLOE and Customer Service Excellence submission.
10. To maintain up to date knowledge of legislation and national policy and to ensure relevant staff are briefed on changes and emerging best practice.
11. To initiate and develop procedure and practice to improve service delivery, which ensure compliance with legislation and/or national standards.
12. To prepare and deliver training to staff as required on issues arising from appeals and reconsiderations activity.
13. To prepare reports and attend when necessary as the Chief Customer & Workforce Services Officer's representative at Portfolio meetings, working groups etc.
14. To ensure equality and diversity issues are effectively assessed, planned and implemented.
15. To deputise for the Awards & Benefit Security Manager as required and undertake any other duties of a related nature, which might reasonably be required and allocated.

### **Changes**

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April 2010





## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** Senior Support Officer

**DIVISION:** Customer & Workforce Services

**GRADE:** Band 9

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** Principal Benefit Officer Appeals and Security

**POST REFERENCE NO:**

### **Purpose of Post**

To undertake and control Discretionary Housing Benefit Applications and Safeguarding application caseload and assist with Fraud and DQC activity as appropriate to ensure Performance Targets are delivered.

### **Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other Departments of the Council, with the Dept for Work and Pensions, landlords, and other agencies as appropriate.

### **Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Ensuring the effective management and control of Discretionary Housing Benefit applications and Safeguarding requests in accordance with service delivery targets, including requests for direct payment to landlords and correspondence relating to disputes between tenants and landlords and other general correspondence as reasonably allocated.
2. Ensuring the effective investigation and review of claimant or landlord requests under the Safeguarding Policy, including the maintenance of effective records of request received / actions / outcomes. Interviewing and/or visiting Discretionary Housing Benefit applicants to obtain further information to progress applications and/or appeals.
3. To draft and issue appropriate substantive responses to Safeguarding and discretionary Housing Benefit requests.

4. Interpretation and provision of advice and guidance covering legislation, statutory regulations, government circulars etc relating to Benefits.
5. As required by workload assist in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of fraud and abuse of the Benefits system.
6. Undertake investigations of potential irregularities referred by Revenues and Benefits Staff, the Housing Benefit Matching Service, the Audit Commission, National Fraud Initiative and other sources.
7. Interviewing claimants, members of the public and other appropriate people, under caution where necessary.
8. Preparation of prosecution case papers and appearing in court when necessary in relation to prosecution activity.
9. When required administer the levy of financial penalties and cautions following determination by supervisory officers.
10. To develop/deliver Fraud Awareness Training initiatives to Council staff and external organisations/agencies.
11. Liaison with internal and external bodies, including landlords / agents/ DWP and Pension Service. In particular, provide feedback to the Principal Benefit Officer Appeals and Security on safeguarding and Discretionary Housing Benefit cases and attend management team meetings as appropriate.
12. Contributing to the annual Audit Commission Kloe and Customer Service Excellence submission.
13. To maintain up to date knowledge of legislation and national policy, and to monitor best practice in these areas.
14. To assist with developing procedure and practice to improve service delivery, which ensure compliance with legislation and/or national standards.
15. To prepare and deliver training to staff as required on issues arising from Safeguarding, Discretionary Housing Payments and Fraud Investigation and Enforcement.
16. To prepare reports and maintain accurate records of all requests and payments made in respect of Discretionary Housing Benefit and of the number of applications and the results under the Safeguarding Policy.
17. To deputise for the Principal Benefit Officer Appeals and Security as required.



## **Changes**

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April 2010



## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO SAFEGUARDING AND  
PROMOTING THE WELFARE OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND  
VULNERABLE ADULTS**

**THIS POST IS SUBJECT TO SAFER RECRUITMENT MEASURES, INCLUDING A  
CRB CHECK.**

**JOB TITLE:** FRAUD INVESTIGATION AND ENFORCEMENT  
OFFICER

**DIVISION:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S – FINANCE DIVISION

**GRADE:** BAND 9

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** PRINCIPAL BENEFITS OFFICER APPEALS AND  
SECURITY

**POST REF NO:** SR-101129

### **Purpose of Post**

To assist in the provision of an integrated fraud investigation service in relation to local taxation and benefits.

### **Relationships**

To assist in the development and maintenance of links with the Revenues and Benefits section of the Finance Division, external agencies including the Department for Work and Pensions, Police and local courts and other local authorities and interested parties in connection with the prevention, detection and investigation of fraud and abuse of the Benefit system.

### **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

1. Day to day involvement in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of fraud and abuse of the Benefits system including:

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- a) Undertaking investigations of potential irregularities referred by Revenues and Benefits staff, by the Housing Benefit Matching Service, the Audit Commission National Fraud Initiative and other sources.
  - b) Carrying out special investigations including surveillance where appropriate.
  - c) Assisting in the identification and development of appropriate proactive investigation activity.
  - d) Interviewing claimants, members of the public, and other appropriate people, under caution where necessary.
  - e) Preparation of Prosecution case papers and appearing in court where necessary in relation to prosecution activity.
  - f) Administering the levy of financial penalties and cautions following determination by supervisory officers.
  - g) Preparation of drafts and reports on the conclusion of investigations, follow up work on the action taken in relation to identified fraud.
  - h) Joint investigations with DWP, Internal Audit, Police and other agencies as required.
  - i) Completion of missing cheque reports for Police investigation where appropriate.
2. Verification of data via accessing the Council's computer systems, liaison with outside agencies, employers and accessing information from the DWP systems.
  3. To exercise Authorised Officer powers in accordance with the Social Security Administration Act 1992.
  4. To develop/deliver Fraud Awareness Training initiatives to Council staff and external organisations/agencies, eg Housing Hartlepool, Registered Social Landlords.
  5. Operation where required of the team's visiting communications systems.
  6. Assisting where required with all aspects of administration and the provision of statistical information where required.
  7. Any other duties of a related nature which might reasonably be required and allocated by the Principal Benefits Officer Appeals and Security or other relevant manager.



## **Changes**

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Feb 2011

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Laura burns

## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** BENEFITS OFFICER  
**DIVISION:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S – FINANCE DIVISION  
**GRADE:** BAND 7  
**RESPONSIBLE TO:** TEAM LEADER  
**POST REF NO:** FIN196a

### **Purpose of Post**

To provide a totally integrated benefits and local taxation service within the Revenues and Benefits Unit.

### **Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Officers in other Departments of the Council and external agencies as appropriate, in relating to Benefits and Local Taxation matters.

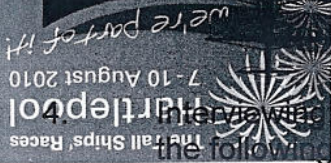
### **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

1. The prompt and accurate assessment of all benefit claim forms received, including the verification of all forms of income and capital, in accordance with council policy and procedures, government regulations and legislative requirements as appropriate.
2. The periodic reviews of all such benefit claims and where appropriate the determination, allocation and notification of all benefit over/underpayments. To classify overpayments to include claimant error, fraud error and local authority error whilst setting a recovery rate where applicable in accordance with council policy.
3. The referral of appropriate benefit cases to the council's Fraud Investigation Unit and actioning of subsequent recommendations when appropriate.

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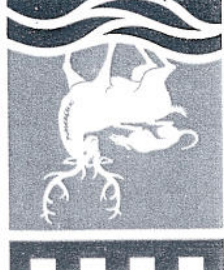
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4. Interviewing members of the public following Contact Centre referrals including the following:-

- Advising members of the public in relation to Benefits and Local Taxation issues
  - Making special arrangements for payments from defaulting Council Tax payers
  - Completing pro-formas to facilitate the opening of council cheques
  - Representing the council to resolve problems, enquiries and complaints both efficiently and effectively in accordance with council policy and procedures
5. To be conversant with the Department for Work and Pensions CIS procedures including the security of the system.
  6. Dealing with all correspondence received from the public and ensuring that a substantive response is made in accordance with council policy and government regulations. To consider and appraise applications arising from enquiries which may result in the issue of a written statement.
  7. Answering enquiries from members of the public on the telephone, via e-mail and in person.
  8. To assist senior staff/colleagues where necessary.
  9. Identifying claimant's entitlement to other means tested benefits and advising them of the same in accordance with Council policy.
  10. Processing of computerised data as required.
  11. To be responsible for the processing of all benefit applications, notifications and cancellations notified by the Department for Work and Pensions, Pensions Service, Inland Revenue and Rent Officer Service.
  12. The preparation and despatch of accurate benefit notification letters.
  13. Dealing with relevant Council Tax changes in the course of handling a Benefit claim including the award of any relevant discounts and exemptions.
  14. Liaison with both internal and external bodies including Department for Work and Pensions, Pensions Service, Rent Officer Service and Inland Revenue.





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15. Where required undertake Benefits Officer Overpayments work to ensure service targets are attained.
  16. Any other duties of a related nature, which might reasonably be required and allocated by the respective Assistant Senior Benefits Officer and Senior Benefits Officer.

### **Changes**

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Nov 2006



## **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT**

**JOB TITLE:** BENEFITS LIAISON OFFICER

**DIVISION:** CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S - FINANCE DIVISION

**GRADE:** SCALE 6

**RESPONSIBLE TO:** BENEFITS MANAGER

**POST REFERENCE NO:**

### **Purpose of Post**

The development and evaluation of partnerships and service agreements with registered social landlords, private sector landlords and other key stakeholders with Benefits Administration. The postholder shall also be required to promote sound liaison between benefits administration and all partner organisations for the purpose of benefit take-up.

### **Relationships**

To develop and maintain links with Senior Officers in other departments of the Council and a number of external agencies as appropriate, in relation to the Administration of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Second Adult Rebate and Discretionary Housing Payments.

### **Main Duties and Responsibilities**

1. The dedicated first point of contact for landlords and agents. Dealing with all correspondence received from the landlords and other stakeholders ensuring that a substantive response is made in accordance with Council policy & procedures, government regulations and legislation. Where applicable reappraise applications and issue written statements accordingly.
2. The day to day liaison of benefits administration, within the Revenues & Benefits Section, with partners and stakeholders ensuring that an efficient and effective service is provided to benefit customers and local tax payers in accordance with council policy & procedures, government regulations and legislation.
3. Development and training of benefits and revenues staff with regards to initiatives associated with promoting liaison and effective links with partners and stakeholders. This will require the provision of procedural guidance to staff, ensuring an efficient and effective service whilst respecting the rights of benefit recipients. Disseminate changes in priorities and



procedures at regular meetings with the Benefits Manager and Principal Benefits Officer.

4. Particular responsibility for the following:-

- Ensuring all benefit applications, associated with Private Sector Landlord enquiries, received by the benefits section are calculated promptly and accurately in accordance with the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations 1987 and the Council Tax Benefit Regulations 1992
  - Liaison with private sector landlords in connection with the preparation and despatch of accurate benefit notification letters, demand notes, reminders and final notices.
  - The referral of appropriate cases to the Fraud Investigation Unit and the actioning of subsequent recommendations as appropriate.
5. Dealing with all requests for reconsiderations of benefit entitlement and overpayments. Where appropriate being a member of the Sections Appeals Panel in relation to such requests.
  6. To continually review the communications and information provided to landlords and other partners both from the Civic Centre and Surgeries in order to ensure clarity and understanding. Promoting the awareness amongst partners of the potential entitlement to means tested benefits for customers and wherever possible assisting in maximising such entitlement.
  7. To be fully conversant with the Department for Work & Pensions Remote Access Terminal (R.A.T.) security procedures.
  8. Processing rent officer referrals and requests for pre-tenancy determinations together with their subsequent actioning as a result of the decision of the Rent Officer service.
  9. The collation of performance data in relation to liaison. To monitor the output of the associated benefits officer, providing information on a weekly basis to the Benefits Manager.
  10. Represent the council at liaison meetings with other council departments associated with benefits liaison, the Department for Work & Pensions, Pensions Service, Rent Officer Service and Inland Revenue. Attendance at designated training courses/consortium meetings.
  11. To liaise with landlords, partners and officers from other departments, by telephone and in person, to identify and resolve problems, queries and complaints in relation to the administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefit.
  12. The preparation and attendance at outreach surgeries and the issue of benefits publicity as appropriate.
  13. Processing of computerised data as required.
  14. The ordering and control of resources used within the remit of the postholder. The review of forms/literature utilised within the section with specific reference to private sector landlords.

15. Any other duties of a related nature which might reasonably be required and allocated by the Senior Benefits Officer or Benefits Manager.

### **Changes**

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