



**COMMUNITY COMMISSION  
2 OCTOBER 2006**

DERBY CITY COUNCIL Report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Housing

## **New Computer System for Revenues and Benefits Service**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. To note the report.

### **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **2.1 Background**

At the Community Commission on 24 July 2006, you resolved to continue receiving periodic performance reports on housing benefit processing. You also asked for a brief update position on how well our major project, to implement our new council tax, business rates and housing benefits processing computer system has gone and the impact on the service received by customers.

- 2.2 I am pleased to report that the computer system went live on 17 July 2006, on time and within budget. This was an excellent achievement and all credit is due to our project team and employees working in the service.

Our new software supplier and partner is Capita Software Services and we have implemented their Academy Revenues and Benefits System.

Although we have been live on the new system for less than 2 months, the early signs are that the system is already streamlining working practices in our Council Tax and Business Rates Collection Teams and our outstanding workload is steadily reducing and we are confident that we will be up to date during October 2006.

Because of the complexities of the housing benefit system, getting our Housing Benefit Service back to steady state will take up to nine months to fully recover and get us back to the same level of service we have been providing to customers over the past couple of years. We had planned for this and our aim is to consistently process all new customer claims in less than 5 weeks which is at national standard set by the Department of Works and Pensions.

Appendices 2 and 3 show analysis of the outstanding workload position before and after implementation of the new computer system.

## 2.3 Improvement Strategy

In order to ensure we meet our targets, we have put in place an Improvement Strategy which sets out key targets against milestone dates up to Christmas 2006.

All changes in benefit and cancellations of benefit are being given priority and being actioned as soon as we are notified however, it is currently taking us 12 weeks on average to process new customer benefit claims.

Our target is to improve our processing times to 8 weeks by Christmas and then to continue steadily improving until we reach our 5 weeks target by June 2007. Our action plan includes regular 'checkpoint' stages so that we can monitor progress and take corrective action if need be.

## 2.4 Communication

We are communicating our strategy for improvement to our front line staff in Derby Direct, to our customers and key stakeholders, including Derby Homes, registered social landlords and private landlords so that they are all aware of our current workload position and for them to expect some temporary delay in service standards.

Regular updates will be provided to this Commission and all elected members over the coming months so that you will be in a position to answer any queries from constituents who may be affected by the short term delays they are encountering in benefits processing.

<b>For more information contact:</b>	01322 255284 e-mail don.mclure@derby.gov.uk
<b>Background papers:</b>	None
<b>List of appendices:</b>	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Benefits workload position

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>
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**Financial**

1. None arising from this report

**Legal**

2. The Council has a statutory duty to provide a Housing and Council Tax Benefit Service under the provisions of the Social Security Act 1986

**Personnel**

3. None arising from this report

**Equalities impact**

4. Our benefits take up strategy is aimed at encouraging all low income households to apply for Housing and Council Tax benefit with specific targeting of pensioners, low earners and black and minority ethnic communities

**Corporate Priorities**

5. The Council's Corporate Plan 2006/09 recognises the importance of a high quality and performing Benefits Service in helping meet its priorities of 'improving the quality of life in Derby's neighbourhoods' and 'delivering excellent services, performance and value for money'. This report identifies the progress we are making in the Benefits Service to help achieve these priorities.