



Committee and date

Audit Committee

17 September 2009

4.45pm

Item No

7

Public

Revenues and Benefits Issues - Update

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Summary

This is to update the Audit Committee on the continued progress within the Revenues & Benefits project.

Recommendations

- A. That the contents of the report are noted.

Report

Background

1. 5 databases from previous Districts and Boroughs who used 2 different software systems, migrated to one common software system 'Northgate' for 2009/10 Annual Billing for Council Tax, Business Rates & payment of Housing Benefits.
2. All paper based information transferred to a Document Image Processing System so all staff access all data regardless of workbase.
3. Introduction of Virtual Call Centre so staff can take calls from anywhere in the county.
4. Staff relocated from Guildhall to Shirehall.
5. 126,000 Council Tax bills issued valuing £126 million.
6. 11,000 Business Rates bills issued valuing £73 million.
7. 23,000 Benefit Notification letters issued.

8. 20,000 Swipe Cards issued.
9. 76,000 Direct Debit Mandates seamlessly transferred from old district and borough accounts to Shropshire Council.
10. All statutory government returns submitted for 2008/09.
11. 5 new databases merged to one single database.
12. Benefits payments and entitlements reconciled to legacy systems.
13. Council Tax/Business Rates reconciled at transactional level.

Update

14. £94 million of income collected to date.
15. National Non Domestic Rate Deferral Scheme Applications forms have been distributed. Businesses are able to apply for a deferral of 60 per cent of the increase in their 2009-10 rates bills caused by: the RPI adjustment to the non-domestic rates multiplier; and the end of the transitional relief scheme for the 2005 revaluation period from 31st July 2009.
16. Performance Management and Quality Assurance modules tested and due to go live 14th September.
17. Paperless Direct Debits – now operational.
18. Recovery delayed as parts of the process were not functioning as expected in the latest software release following the merger of the 5 District and Borough Databases, however, Recovery started week beginning 7th September.

Work in Progress

19. Reconciliation of arrears carried forward to legacy system, after being alerted to possible anomaly in exemption tables of database for Business Rates. Complete except on Shrewsbury business rate database.
20. Benefits, Council Tax and Business Rates have two weeks worth of backlog due to continued implementation/holidays.
21. Interfaces: Bailiff ready to go / Payment system being tested.

Future Tasks

22. Introduction of E Benefits / E Services and Wireless technology due to start testing during late September 2009.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Human Rights Act Appraisal

The recommendations contained in this report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights act 1998
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Environmental Appraisal

N/A

Risk Management Appraisal

The payment of benefits is critical in supporting the most vulnerable members of Shropshire society. The collection of NNDR and Council Tax is essential to the funding of the Local Authority.

Community / Consultations Appraisal
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N/A

Cabinet Member

Brian Williams, Chairman of Audit Committee

Local Member

N/A

Appendices

Not applicable
