

CENTRAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

18 March 2004

FINANCE DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2004/05

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Finance Department's business plan for 2004/05 is attached. The Business Plan provides a link between the Council's strategic priorities and the key activities of the Department. The plan has been compiled in the revised corporate format and includes the following sections -

- a brief description of the service and its purpose(s);
- links between services and the Council's strategic priorities
- a summary of the primary services to be delivered during the coming financial year;
- a summary of proposed improvements/developments;
- the priorities for the coming year;
- the resource implications of services and improvements;
- the key performance indicators;
- proposals for forthcoming public consultation; and
- the management of identified risks.

Performance against the key performance indicators will be reported to this Committee.

Service Plans have been prepared for Accountancy, Support Services and Revenues. These plans are more detailed and contain action plans that provide a framework for monitoring progress against targets, for demonstrating continuous improvement and for setting individual appraisal objectives for staff. They are working documents and may be adjusted through the year as circumstances warrant. Performance against these plans will be reported to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources and any issues of concern will be reported to this Committee.

The service plan for Revenues also includes the Local Taxes and Benefits Services Vision Statement (Section D, Appendix C) which Members are asked to endorse. The vision, aims and policy objectives form a statement of intent for the services and have been developed to

meet the requirements of the DWP Performance Standards. The policy objectives contained in this statement have been developed to support the Council's key priorities.

Members are also asked to endorse Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti Fraud Policy (Section D, Appendix D), Housing Benefit Overpayments Policy (Section D, Appendix E), Benefit Fraud Prosecution Policy (Section D, Appendix F), Benefits Investigation Terms of Reference (Section D, Appendix G), Investigation Officers' Code of Conduct (Section D, Appendix H) and Visiting Officers' Code of Conduct (Section D, Appendix I). The policies have been brought to Members in the past and but have now been updated. There are no significant changes to be brought to Members' attention.

Finally, approval is sought to write off one housing benefit overpayment amounting to £10,455.28 as the debtor has passed away and there are no funds available in the estate to clear the debt.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended to Cabinet that:

- 1 The Finance Department Business Plan 2004/05 be approved.
- 2 The Local Taxes and Benefits Services Vision Statement, Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti Fraud Policy, Housing Benefit Overpayments Policy, Benefit Fraud Prosecution Policy, Benefits Investigation Terms of Reference, Investigation Officers' Code of Conduct and Visiting Officers' Code of Conduct, be endorsed.
- 3 Approval be sought to write off one housing benefit overpayment amounting to £10,455.28.

#### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

##### 1 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

1.1 The proposals accord with the key priorities of the Council's Corporate Strategy, in particular:

- To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do.

##### 2 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

2.1 Most of the actions in the plan can be supported within current finance and staffing budgets. Some of the improvements require investigation and a business case to be prepared. Any additional resources required would be identified as part of this process in each individual case.

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Papers held within the Finance Department

APPENDICES:

Finance Department Business Plan 2004/05

Local Taxes and Benefits Services Vision Statement (Section D, Appendix C)

Housing and Council Tax Benefit Anti Fraud Policy (Section D, Appendix D)

Housing Benefit Overpayments Policy (Section D, Appendix E)

Benefit Fraud Prosecution Policy (Section D, Appendix F)

Benefits Investigation Terms of Reference (Section D, Appendix G)

Investigation Officers' Code of Conduct (Section D, Appendix H)

Visiting Officers' Code of Conduct (Section D, Appendix I)