



Civic Centre,
Crook,
County Durham.
DL15 9ES
Tel: 01388 765555 Fax: 01388 766660
Minicom: 01388 761515 e-mail: i.phillips@wearvalley.gov.uk

Iain Phillips Chief Executive

9th March 2007

Dear Councillor,

I hereby give you Notice that a Meeting of the **CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE** will be held in the **COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC CENTRE, CROOK** on **MONDAY 19th MARCH 2007** at **6.00 P.M.**

AGENDA

	Page No.
1. Apologies for absence.	
2. To consider the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Committee held on 24 th January 2007 as a true record.	Copies previously circulated
3. To consider disposing of land at Thistleflat/West Road, Crook.	1 - 3
4. To consider a request to purchase land adjacent to Riding Hall Carpets, Low Willington.	4 - 6
5. To consider a request from the Community Fund from Disability Access.	7 - 8
6. To consider a request from the Community Fund from Rape Crisis Centre.	9 - 12
7. To consider the Resource Management Service Plan 2007/08.	13
8. To consider the constitution of the Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Services Partnership Joint Committee.	14 - 39
9. To consider the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2007/08.	40 - 49
10. To consider the Internal e-mail use and Internet and external e-mail use policies.	50 - 72
11. To consider the Discretionary Housing Payments policy.	73 - 82
12. To consider an Energy Management Policy for the Council.	83 - 85
13. To consider a National Non-Domestic Rates write off.*	86

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| 14. | To consider Housing Benefits overpayments.* | 87 - 88 |
| 15. | To consider Housing sundry debtors arrears.* | 89 - 90 |
| 16. | To consider such other items of business which, by reason of special circumstances, the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency. | |

*It is likely that items 13, 14 & 15 will be taken in the closed part of the meeting in accordance with paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006.

Yours faithfully



Chief Executive

Members of this Committee: Councillors Mrs Brown, Mrs Burn, Grogan, Harrison, Hayton, Mrs Jones*, Kay, Kingston, Laurie, McKellar, Mews, Mowbray, Murphy*, Mrs Pinkney, Stonehouse, Taylor and Mrs Todd.

*Ex-officio, non-voting capacity

Chair: Councillor Hayton

Deputy Chair: Councillor Mrs Pinkney

TO: All other Members of the Council for information
Management Team



**WEAR
VALLEY**
DISTRICT COUNCIL

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Asset Management Group
LAND AT THISTLEFLAT/WEST ROAD, CROOK

purpose of the report

1. To seek Members' approval to dispose of land at the above location.

background

2. The applicant, RFP Land and Property Limited, has recently obtained planning permission for the demolition of Lindale House and the erection of 14 houses with access to the site via the existing adopted highway along West Road. For clarification this road runs alongside Steward Drive, Gardner Court and Snowball Close. The extent of the adopted highway is shown black on the plan at Annex A.
3. Planning permission (reference 3/2006/0881) contains a condition that before the commencement of any other parts of the development the proposed vehicular access (along West Road) is constructed to the standards contained within submitted plans. This condition effectively requires the improvement and widening of the adopted highway to include both a pavement and service strip. The applicant has therefore requested to purchase a strip of land, shown hatched on the plan, from the Council in order to fulfil the planning condition. This hatched area comprises approximately 505 square metres.
4. Members will recall that the Central Resources Committee held on 27 September 2006 refused the applicant's request to acquire Council land off Thistleflat Road and lying to the west of Lindale House to provide vehicular access to this site (Minute No. 189 refers) following objections raised as a result of the open space advertisement.

consultations

5. As the land is open space the usual open space advertisement, in accordance with Section 122/123 of the Local Government Act 1972, has been undertaken. Notices were also displayed on site. No objections were received.
6. The Strategic Director for the Environment and Regeneration advises that the creation of the access would involve the slight encroachment onto land allocated as protected open space by policy BE14. Given the proposal will involve the provision of an improved access with adjacent footpath he is of the view that the improvements will have a positive impact on the use of the open space and the loss of a 2 to 3 metre wide strip would not compromise the open space allocation. On this basis he has no objection to the proposed disposal.

7. The Acting Head of Community and Cultural Services (AHCCS) offers no objection of a technical nature to the sale of the land. The proposal may require the soil bank near the A689 to be regraded. One tree may be affected by the proposals.

financial implications

8. The sale of the land would produce a capital receipt.

legal implications

9. There are no legal implications other than the open space advert referred to above.

human rights implications

10. Article 6 and Article 1 of the 1st Protocol are relevant to this matter and are tabled for Members consideration. This Committee comprises a tribunal in accordance with Article 6 and it is considered that the consideration of this item by the Committee complies with the Council's obligations in this regard. It should be noted that the applicants are entitled to make representations to the Committee before a decision is taken. Article 1 of the 1st Protocol requires the Committee to have regard to the applicants' rights in Lindale House and to the rights of those adjoining owners who may be affected by the proposal.

conclusion

11. The consultation process has seen no objections being received. The proposal will enable the existing highway to be upgraded and a new footpath created.

RECOMMENDED that the land shown hatched on the plan be sold to RFP Land and Property Limited at a valuation to be agreed with, or given by, the District Valuer subject to the following conditions:

- a. The applicant meet the Council's legal and valuation fees;
- b. If the event that the AHCCS considers the soil bank requires regrading to accommodate the access road then the applicant will be required to undertake such works to the satisfaction of the AHCCS.

background papers

File Number 81478

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
Gary Ridley	Andrew Coates
Strategic Director for Resource Management	Legal Executive
Ext 227	Ext 418

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management
LAND ADJACENT TO RIDING HALL CARPETS, LOW WILLINGTON

purpose of the report

1. To seek Members' approval to a request to purchase land at the above location.

background

2. The Developer Charles Church is the owner of land adjoining the requested site at Low Willington and is in the process of building a residential development on the said adjoining land.

proposal

5. A request has been received from the Developers, Charles Church North East of Charles Church House, Bowburn to purchase the land shown hatched black on the plan at Annex B for the purpose of incorporating the land into their current housing development.

consultations

4. The Strategic Director for Environment and Regeneration confirms that he has no objection to the sale of the land. He confirms the land was included with the application site for residential development which was granted planning permission on 3 August 2006 under reference 3/2006/0413.
5. The Strategic Director for the Community has no objection to the sale of the land. He suggests that the applicants be requested to provide and maintain a suitable boundary structure in accordance with planning regulations.

legal and financial implications

6. The Council has a legal duty to obtain the best price within the terms of Section 122/123 of the Local Government Act 1972. As the land adjoins the Applicants current development, it is highly unlikely that any other person would be interested in purchasing the land.
7. The disposal of the land would result in a capital receipt.

conclusion

8. If after considering the report Members are of the opinion that the request should be approved I would recommend that the sale to Charles Church be approved subject to the following terms and conditions;
- (a) Valuation to be agreed with, or given by, the District Valuer.
 - (b) Applicant to be responsible for the erection and future maintenance of the boundary structure.
 - (c) Applicant to be responsible for the Council's legal and valuation costs.

RECOMMENDED that the sale be approved upon the terms agreed with the District Valuer and also subject to the conditions as set out above.

background Papers

File no. 81538

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource Management
Ext. 227

Author of the report

Diane Hathaway
Legal Executive
Ext. 319

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management **REQUEST FROM COMMUNITY FUND**

purpose of the report

1. To seek Members' views on a request from the Community Fund from Disability Access.

background

2. Disability Access is a voluntary organisation operating in Crook which provides the following services:
 - Advice to individuals regarding disability issues.
 - Free training to organisations re: disability issues.
 - Access audits of buildings to organisations for which it makes a charge.
3. The organisation is staffed by 2 paid employees and a number of volunteers.
4. Disability Access has requested funding from the Authority of almost £32,000 over a 3 year period i.e. approximately £11,000 p.a. Their current financial position is as follows:
 - They incur costs (salaries/rent/energy etc.) of approximately £4,000 per month.
 - They have sufficient reserves to last until August 2008.
 - They are currently awaiting the result of a bid from the Lottery, which is due in late April/early May 2007. If this bid is successful, it will leave them with a deficit each year of approximately £11,000.
 - They have submitted other bids for funding but these are not expected to be successful.
 - No funding has been received from other local authorities.
5. Disability Access is a unique organisation in Wear Valley offering an advisory service which other organisations do not. They state in their literature that in the last year they have given advice to over 2,500 individuals. They are requesting financial support to fund the cost of roadshows, insurance, rent, rates, utilities etc.

financial implications

6. Any contribution to Disability Access would need to be met from within existing Council resources.

legal implications

7. The Authority is allowed to part fund such organisations as Disability Access.

officer comment

8. Members will be aware that Committee agreed to fund Signpost for a limited period as a result of their financial position, which included premises costs. Disability Access are requesting funding toward premises costs and it may be worth exploring with 2D whether scope exists to rationalise the provision of advice rather than risk both organisations closing.

RECOMMENDED that Members views are sought.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource
Management
Ext. 227

Author of the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource
Management
Ext. 227

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management REQUEST FROM COMMUNITY FUND

purpose of the report

1. To seek Members' views on a request from the Community Fund from Rape Crisis Centre.

background

2. The Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre have requested emergency funding of £2,500 p.a. towards core costs offered to local residents. Any annual contribution given would help the Centre to:
 - Provide specialist information, support and counselling for girls and women aged 13 and over who have been raped, sexually abused or experienced domestic abuse at any time in their lives.
 - Raise awareness about rape, sexual abuse and domestic violence and provide training, education and outreach work.
 - Contribute to policy development initiatives aimed at improving service provision for women survivors.
 - Support and help develop initiatives aimed at prevention and detection of childhood sexual abuse, adult rape/sexual assault and domestic abuse.
3. Annex C to the report details how the work of the Centre contributes to local and national strategies. It is not clear from the organisation's request how many individuals have been assisted from the Wear Valley area.

financial implications

4. Any contribution to Rape Crisis Centre would need to be met from within existing Council resources.

officer comment

5. At present the Centre offers a free service to individuals and any support given may well assist the Centre in obtaining other funding.

legal implications

7. The Authority is allowed to part fund such organisations as described above.

RECOMMENDED that Members views are sought.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource
Management
Ext. 227

Author of the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource
Management
Ext. 227



WEAR
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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Director of Resource Management
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SERVICE PLAN 2007/08

purpose of the report

1. To seek Member approval for the Department's Service Plan.

background

2. The Department has produced a service plan in line with the corporately agreed framework. The plan is shown at Annex D.

consultation

3. Staff have been consulted on the Plan, especially in relation to the setting of performance indicator targets and action plans.

human resources/financial implications

4. The Department considers that there are sufficient resources (staff, asset, money etc.) to deliver the performance levels and targets set out in the Service Plan. The plan will be monitored by members after 6 months.

RECOMMENDED that Members agree the Resource Management Service Plan at Annex D.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Director of Resource Management
Ext 227

Authors of the report

Anna Barker – AD Legal & Administration
Stuart Reid – AD Finance & I.T.
Exts 310/258



**WEAR
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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Strategic Director of Resource Management
**TEESDALE AND WEAR VALLEY SHARED SERVICES PARTNERSHIP JOINT
COMMITTEE**

purpose of the report

1. To consider the constitution of the Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Services Partnership Joint Committee.

background

2. In November 2006, members approved the formation of the Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Services Partnership. The partnership was formed to administer housing and council tax benefit services for both Councils. The partnership also included the provision of information technology support by Wear Valley to Teesdale District Council (TDC) in respect of revenues services (council tax and non-domestic rates). The partnership became operational on 2nd January 2007.
3. The partnership took the form of a lead authority model in which Wear Valley would provide services to TDC in return for an agreed fee. In order to provide accountability to and participation from members of each authority in the functioning of the partnership, it is proposed to form a joint committee. Such a committee requires a constitution in order to function effectively and is a condition of the service level agreement that has been signed by both Councils.

functions of joint committee

4. The draft constitution for the Joint Committee is attached as Annex E. The principal functions of the joint committee are to:
 - set progress and performance goals for the shared services partnership through approval of an annual business plan
 - review progress and performance of the shared services partnership
 - approve reports from the senior officer board

membership

5. Each Council will appoint three representatives as members of the joint committee. A quorum of three members is required to transact business.

structure

6. An officer board consisting of senior officers from both Councils will report to the committee.

frequency of joint committee meetings

7. The Joint Committee will be scheduled to meet quarterly.

partnership duration

8. The partnership will initially run for three years terminating on the 31st March 2010. It can be extended beyond that date by agreement of both councils.

legal implications

9. The Joint Committee is established under Section 101(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 20(1) of the Local Government Act 2000.

RECOMMENDED that the constitution as per Annex E be approved.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource
Management
Ext 227

Author of the report

Stuart Reid
Assistant Director - Finance and I.T.
Ext 258



WEAR
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CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Director of Resource Management

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2007/08

purpose of the report

1. To advise Members and to seek their agreement on the above for the 2007/08 financial year.

background

2. The Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to 'have regard to' the Prudential Code for Treasury Management (or promulgated by CIPFA) and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. As part of the 2007/08 budget setting process the Council set a number of Prudential Indicators and these are set out in paragraph 10.
3. The Act therefore requires the Council to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing and to prepare an Annual Investment Strategy; this sets out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments.

2007/08 strategy

4. The suggested strategy for 2007/08 in respect of the following aspects of the treasury management function is based upon the Treasury officers' views on interest rates, supplemented with leading market forecasts provided by the Council's treasury advisor. The strategy covers:
 - Treasury limits in force which will limit the treasury risk and activities of the Council;
 - Prudential Indicators;
 - The current treasury position;
 - The borrowing requirement
 - Prospects for interest rates;
 - The borrowing strategy;
 - Debt rescheduling;
 - The investment strategy;
 - Other issues.

5. It is a statutory requirement under Section 33 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for the Council to produce a balanced budget. In particular, Section 32 requires a local authority to calculate its budget requirement for each financial year to include the revenue costs that flow from capital financing decisions. This, therefore, means that increases in capital expenditure must be limited to a level whereby increases in charges to revenue from:-
 - (i) Increases in interest charges caused by increased borrowing to finance additional capital expenditure, and
 - (ii) Any increases in running costs from new capital projectsare limited to a level which is affordable within the projected income of the Council for the foreseeable future.

treasury limits for 2007/08 to 2009/10

6. It is a statutory duty under S.3 of the Local Government Act 2003 and supporting regulations, for the Council to determine and keep under review how much it can afford to borrow. The amount so determined is termed the “Affordable Borrowing Limit”. This is covered in paragraph 10.
7. The Council must have regard to the Prudential Code of Treasury Management when setting the Affordable Borrowing Limit, which essentially requires it to ensure that total capital investment remains within sustainable limits and, in particular, that the impact upon its future council tax and council rent levels is ‘acceptable’.
8. Whilst termed an “Affordable Borrowing Limit”, the capital plans to be considered for inclusion incorporate financing by both external borrowing and other forms of liability, such as credit arrangements. The affordable borrowing limit is to be set, on a rolling basis, for the forthcoming financial year and two successive financial years.

prudential indicators for 2007/08 – 2009/10

9. The following prudential indicators set out below are relevant for the purposes of setting an integrated treasury management strategy.
10. The Council is also required to indicate if it has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management. This was adopted in 1996 by the full Council. The following are the Council's indicators as required under the CIPFA Code relating to Prudential Borrowing.

(i)	Estimated Capital Finance Costs as % of Net Revenue Stream			
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
		%	%	%
	General Fund	1.4	0.9	0.5
	Housing Revenue Account	15.2	14.9	14.6
(ii)	Estimated Incremental Impact of Capital Investment			
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
		£	£	£
	Rent	50.66	50.66	50.66
	Council Tax	201.80	201.80	201.80
(iii)	Estimated Capital Expenditure			
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
		£m	£m	£m
	General Fund	2.74	2.26	1.91
	Housing Revenue Account	3.14	3.72	3.43
(iv)	Estimated Capital Financing Requirement			
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
		£m	£m	£m
	General Fund	12.73	12.23	11.73
	Housing Revenue Account	30.54	30.94	31.34
(v)	Authorised Limit			
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
		£m	£m	£m
	Overall	68	70	72
(vi)	Operational Boundary			
		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
		£m	£m	£m
	Overall	66	68	70
(vii)	Maturity Structure of Borrowing			
		% (Upper)	% (Lower)	
	Under 12 months	25	0	
	12 months within 24 months	25	0	
	24 months within 5 years	40	0	
	5 years within 10 years	40	0	
	10 years and above	65	0	

current treasury position

11. The Council's treasury portfolio position at 31 March 2007 comprised:

	Principal		Ave. rate
		£m	%
Fixed rate funding – maturity	PWLB	23,500,000	
	Market	<u>6,500,000</u>	30,000,000 5.4
Fixed rate funding – Annuity	PWLB	6,124,160	
	Market	<u>-</u>	6,124,160 10.10
Other long term liabilities		-	
TOTAL DEBT		<u>36,124,160</u>	7.7
TOTAL INVESTMENTS		21,500,000	4.97

prospects for interest rates

12. The Council has appointed Sector Treasury Services as treasury adviser to the Council and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The following table gives the Sector central view of interest rate projections.

Sector View: Interest rate forecast

	Q/E1 2007	Q/E2 2007	Q/E3 2007	Q/E4 2007	Q/E1 2008	Q/E2 2008	Q/E3 2008	Q/E4 2008	Q/E1 2009	Q/E2 2009	Q/E3 2009	Q/E4 2009	Q/E1 2010	Q/E2 2010	Q/E3 2010
Bank rate	5.50%	5.50%	5.25%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	4.75%	4.75%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.75%	4.75%	4.75%
5yr PWLB rate	5.50%	5.25%	5.00%	4.75%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%
10yr PWLB rate	5.00%	5.00%	4.75%	4.75%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%
25yr PWLB rate	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%	4.50%
50yr PWLB rate	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%	4.25%

Sector's current interest rate view is that Bank Rate will:-

- Peak at 5.50% in quarter 1 2007.
- Fall to 5.25% in Q4 2007 and then to 5.00% in Q1 2008.
- Fall to 4.75% in Q2 2008 before rising back to 5.00% in Q3 2009.

economic background

13. The following points outline the current UK and international factors which may impact upon interest rates.
- (i) The US, UK and EU economies have all been on the upswing of the economic cycle in 2005 and 2006 and so have been raising interest rates in order to cool their economies and to counter inflationary pressures stimulated by high oil, gas and electricity prices which could feed through into increases in wage inflation, producer prices etc.
 - (ii) The US is ahead of the UK and EU in the business cycle and it looks as if the Federal Reserve bank rate has probably already peaked at 5.25% whereas there is still an expectation in the financial markets of further increases in the EU and UK.
 - (iii) The major feature of the US economy is a still steepening downturn in the housing market which is likely to drag consumer spending, and so the wider economy, down with it (e.g. house building, employment etc.). Falling house prices will also undermine household wealth and so lead to an increase in savings (which fell while house prices were rising healthily) and so conversely will lead to a fall in consumer expenditure.
 - (iv) The Federal Reserve may be reluctant to respond to the aforementioned downturn in the economy if inflationary pressures remain stubbornly high. This could exacerbate the downturn both in the US and the world economies.
 - (v) EU growth picked up strongly in the first half of 2006 and remained healthy in the second half. Growth is expected to slow moderately in 2007 due to weaker US and global demand.
 - (vi) Despite sharply increased energy prices, disinflationary pressures from falls in prices of manufactured goods from China and India have helped to keep headline inflation in the advanced economies to an average of around 3% and will fall as the energy effects go into reverse.

uk

- (vii) The UK is on the upswing of the economic cycle from a low point reached in June 2005. Robust growth is expected to continue for a little longer but a modest cooling is expected in 2007 (2006 2.7%, 2007 2.2%) and then to edge up to 2.5% in 2008.
- (viii) Recovery in consumer spending and retail sales has underpinned this upswing in the economy.
- (ix) The housing market has proved more robust than expected; house price inflation over 8% p.a.
- (x) Higher than expected immigration from Eastern Europe has strengthened growth and dampened wage inflation.

- (xi) The Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England's decision to raise Bank Rate in November 2006 and January 2007 were needed to bring Consumer Price Index inflation down to the 2% target level two years ahead. The MPC has been concerned that short term price increases (CPI has been significantly above target since June 2006) could feed through into wage settlements in the current pay round and anchor inflation expectations at a higher level.
- (xii) Household income growth to recover in 2007 as inflation falls and pay rises. But extra income likely to go into a recovery of the savings rate, pension saving and servicing debt costs (as rates rise) rather than consumer expenditure.
- (xiii) Public sector real increase in expenditure per annum to weaken to 2.5% over the next few years from 3% average over 2000-2005.
- (xiv) The three increases in Bank Rate in August and November 2006 and then January 2007, are expected to dampen the housing market and increases in unsecured borrowing although one more increase in Bank Rate is forecast.
- (xv) World slowdown in growth in 2007 will dampen UK exports.
- (xvi) Once inflation is back under control, Bank Rate will switch to a falling trend in the second half of 2007 to counter the above negative effects on the economy and growth.

borrowing strategy

14. The Sector forecast is as follows:-

- The 50 year PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) rate is expected to remain flat at 4.25%. As the Sector forecast is in 0.25% segments there is obviously scope for the rate to move around the central forecast by +/- 0.25% without affecting this overall forecast.
- The 25-30 year PWLB rate is expected to stay at 4.50% for the foreseeable future.
- The 10 year PWLB rate will fall from 5.00% to 4.75% in Q3 2007 and then fall again to 4.50% in Q1 2008 and remain at that rate for the foreseeable future.
- 5 year PWLB rate will fall from 5.50% to 5.25% in Q2 2007 and continue falling until reaching 4.5% in Q1 2008 when it will remain at that rate for the foreseeable future.

15. This forecast indicates, therefore, that the borrowing strategy for 2007/08 should be set to take very long dated borrowing at any time in the financial year.

Variable rate borrowing and borrowing in the five year area are expected to be more expensive than long term borrowing and will therefore be unattractive throughout the financial year compared to taking long term borrowing.

16. If the Authority wishes to minimise its debt interest costs, the main strategy is therefore as follows:
 - When the 50 year PWLB rate falls back to the central forecast rate of 4.25%, borrowing should be made in this area of the market at any time in the financial year. This rate will be lower than the forecast rates for shorter maturities in the 5 year and 10 year area. A suitable trigger point for considering new fixed rate long term borrowing, therefore, would be 4.25%.
17. Against this background caution will be adopted with the 2007/08 treasury operations. The Strategic Director for Resource Management will monitor the interest rate market and adopt a pragmatic approach to changing circumstances, reporting any decisions to committee as appropriate.

sensitivity of the forecast

18. The main sensitivities of the forecast are likely to be the two scenarios below. The Council officers, in conjunction with the treasury advisers, will continually monitor both the prevailing interest rates and the market forecasts, adopting the following responses to a change of sentiment:
 - *if it were felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp rise in long and short term rates, perhaps arising from a greater than expected increase in world economic activity, then the portfolio position will be re-appraised with the likely action that fixed rate funding will be drawn whilst interest rates were still relatively cheap.*
 - *if it were felt that there was a significant risk of a sharp fall in long and short term rates, due to e.g. growth rates remaining low or weakening, then long term borrowings will be postponed, and any rescheduling from fixed rate funding into variable or short rate funding will be exercised.*

debt rescheduling

19. As the first fall in Bank Rate is expected in Q3 2007, there will be a sharp difference between higher shorter term rates and cheaper long term rates in quarters 2 to 3 of 2007. Later on in 2007/08, this advantage will gradually diminish once Bank Rate, and short term rates generally, start falling. There will therefore be opportunity during quarters 2 to 3 of 2007 to restructure shorter term debt into long term in order to optimise the potential savings achievable in the financial year 2007/08. Any positions taken via rescheduling will be in accordance with the strategy position outlined in paragraph 13 above.
20. In addition, the Council will actively give consideration during the year to taking advantage of small movements in PWLB rates to reduce the cost of existing debt

in the portfolio by reborrowing at lower rates without making significant changes to the type of debt (fixed/variable) or maturity periods.

21. The reasons for any rescheduling to take place will include:
 - The generation of cash savings at minimum risk;
 - Help fulfil the strategy outlined in paragraph 7 above; and
 - Enhance the balance of the portfolio (amend the maturity profile and/or the balance of volatility).
22. CIPFA issued a draft accounting standards document SORP (Statement of Recommended Practice) 2007 on 18 October 2006, and a final draft in November, which includes major potential changes in the treatment of the valuation of debt and investments, the calculation of interest and the treatment of premia and discounts arising from debt rescheduling. There will be a three month consultation period before proposals are finalised. It is also expected that these proposals, once finalised, may make necessary the issue of legislation by the Government to take effect from 1 April 2007 (DCLG issued draft regulations in November/December 2006). The Authority's treasury management strategy will be reviewed once the final decisions in this area are known to see whether any changes will be required in borrowing, investment or debt rescheduling strategies.
23. All rescheduling will be reported to committee as appropriate.

annual investment strategy

investment policy

24. The Council will have regard to the DCLG's (Department of Communities and Local Government) Guidance on Local Government Investments ("the Guidance") issued in March 2004 and CIPFA's Treasury Management in Public Services Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes ("the CIPFA TM Code"). The Council's investment priorities are:-
 - (a) the security of capital and
 - (b) the liquidity of its investments.
25. The Council will also aim to achieve the optimum return on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity.
26. The borrowing of monies purely to invest or on-lend and make a return is unlawful and this Council will not engage in such activity.
27. Investment instruments identified for use in the financial year are listed below under the 'Specified' and 'Non-Specified' Investments categories. Counterparty limits will be as set through the Council's Treasury Management Practices – Schedules.

specified investments

28. All such investments will be sterling denominated, with maturities up to maximum of 18 months, meeting the minimum 'high' rating criteria where applicable.

	<u>Maximum Loan per Organisation</u>
(i) UK Clearing Banks & their Wholly Owned Subsidiaries (except Co-op Bank which is £2.5m)	£2M
(ii) Banks and Building Societies - Top 10 UK and the Republic of Ireland, rated either F1 or P1 as per Fitch and Moody's ratings	£2M
(iii) Local Authorities	£2M

The criteria which the Council uses is to put the emphasis on the safety of the investment.

investment strategy

29. In-house funds: The Council's in-house managed funds are mainly cash flow derived and investments will accordingly be made with reference to the core balance and cash flow requirements and the outlook for short-term interest rates (i.e. rates for investments up to 18 months).
30. Interest Rate Outlook: Sector is forecasting Bank Rate to peak at 5.5% in Q1 2007 before falling to 5.25% in Q4 2007, to 5.00% in Q1 2008, and then to trough at 4.75% in Q2 2008, remaining at that level before rising again to 5.00% in Q3 2009.
31. The Council will therefore seek to lock in longer period investments at higher rates before this fall starts for some element of their investment portfolio which represents its core balances.
32. For its cash flow generated balances, the Council will seek to utilise its business reserve accounts and short-dated deposits (3-18 months) in order to benefit from the compounding of interest.

end of year investment report

33. At the end of the financial year, the Council will report on its investment activity as part of its Annual Treasury Report.

other issues

- 34. The Treasury Management implications arising from the ALMO will need careful management as critical decisions will need to be taken e.g. timing of payments. This strategy gives the Council the necessary flexibility to respond to such challenges.

legal implications

- 35. The Authority's treasury management activities are carried out in accordance with statutory provisions as outlined in the report.

financial implications

- 36. The 2007/08 budget includes sums for external interest payments and investment income. Should these budgets be exceeded, this will be reported to Members as part of the budget monitoring process.

human resources implications

- 37. Senior officers within the Department are responsible for the execution of the Treasury Management policy, as outlined in the Authority's treasury management practice statements.

RECOMMENDED that Members note the report and agree the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2007/08.

Officer responsible for the report	Author of the report
Gary Ridley	Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource Management	Strategic Director for Resource Management
Ext 227	Ext 227

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management
INTERNAL E-MAIL USE and INTERNET & EXTERNAL E-MAIL USE POLICIES

purpose of the report

1. To seek Member approval for the Internal e-mail use and Internet & external e-mail use policies.

background

2. We have had an email system and access to the Internet for some years now without the policies to be able to officially protect and control the Authorities information processing systems.
3. As part of an Audit Commission report in 2002/2003 it was recommended that we develop and implement acceptable email and Internet use policies.
4. Best Practice guidelines only, are given to new starters. This is due to the fact that as an Authority we do not have formal policies.
5. We have had several occasions where Internet and email use has been abused. With no formal policies in place, we have had to use other means to ensure that the best practice guidelines have be enforced.
6. With formal policies in place we can inform staff and members of what we are filtering, why and what the consequences of circumventing the policies are.
7. We have a legal obligation to protect the Authority and its information processing systems.

purpose of the policies

8. The policies are attached as per Annexes F and G. The purposes of both policies are to:-
 - Protect the Authority from damage to its information and systems via items like computer viruses.
 - Protect the staff and members of the Authority from accessing inappropriate images and documents, which may be considered to be offensive or unacceptable.

- Protect the reputation of the Authority by preventing inappropriate images and documents from being sent via Authority based systems.
- Inform staff and members as to how and why internet and email filtering is conducted.

human resources implications

9. This policy has been subject to consultation with the relevant trade unions. The policy will be added to the staff handbook.

financial implications

10. We have the systems in place already and as such there will be no financial implication to implementing these systems.

legal implications

11. These policy documents provide valuable guidance to staff and Members. This will reduce the risk of legal challenge to the Council in respect of internet and e-mail use. The existence of these policies and the operation of the procedures contained therein is in accordance with the principles of good governance.

conclusion

12. This policy seeks to regulate existing practice and is designed to protect both staff, managers and Members.

RECOMMENDED that Members approve the Internal e-mail use and Internet & external e-mail use Policies attached as per Annexes F and G.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource Management
Ext 227

Author of the report

Paul Woods
Assistant IT Manager
Ext. 535



**WEAR
VALLEY**
DISTRICT COUNCIL

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Strategic Director for Resource Management
DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS POLICY

purpose of the report

1. To seek Member approval for the Discretionary Housing Payments policy.

background

2. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) were introduced from 2 July 2001. They are not payments of benefit but are free-standing payments made at the discretion of the local authority, subject to an annual cash limit, in cases where the local authority considers that additional help with rent and/or Council Tax is needed.
3. Housing costs covers rent and council tax liability. Therefore both homeowners as well as local authority and private tenants can apply under the scheme.
4. The periods of award are weekly and are usually for a limited period of time that allows a person to improve their circumstances by, for example, seeking more affordable accommodation.

purpose of the policy

5. The policy is attached as per Annex H. The purpose of the policy is to specify how the Benefits Service will operate the DHP scheme and to indicate some of the factors that will be considered when deciding if a DHP can be made. Each case will be treated strictly on its merits and the policy will ensure consistency and equality in the treatment of all DHP applications.
6. The Benefits Service is committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties in the District to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits and this will be reflected in the administration of DHP schemes. This policy has been designed in consultation with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The guidelines used by the CAB to compile a customers' financial statement have now been adopted by the Benefits Service as a starting point when considering a DHP application.
7. The Benefits Section will seek through the operation of this policy to help customers live in affordable housing. This is one of our objectives set out in the current Benefits Service Business Plan.

financial implications

8. A cash limited sum is given to the Council by government each year for the purpose of paying DHP's. Payments in excess of that sum would require to be funded from the Council's budget.

RECOMMENDED that Members approve the Discretionary Housing Payments Policy attached as per Annex H.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource Management
Ext 227

Author of the report

Maureen Clayton
Deputy Benefits Manager
Ext. 243



**WEAR
VALLEY**
DISTRICT COUNCIL

CENTRAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

19 MARCH 2007

Report of the Asset Management Group
ENERGY MANAGEMENT POLICY

purpose of the report

1. To approve an Energy Management Policy for the Council.

background

2. Due to the recent significant increases in energy prices over the last 12 months, the management of energy use within the Council's public buildings has become an issue of priority. The Carbon Trust, an independent organisation which provides free advice on energy efficiency, conducted a survey of the Council's major buildings.
3. As a result of their findings, an action plan was formulated to undertake some basic low cost measures to reduce energy consumption within the Council's public buildings. This was approved by Corporate Management Team (CMT). A representative of the Carbon Trust also made a brief presentation to CMT on the report.

energy management policy

4. A key finding of the Carbon Trust Report was the absence of an energy management policy. Such a policy provides focus and demonstrates commitment from senior officers that the Council is serious about energy efficiency. It also motivates employees to take the necessary steps to reduce energy consumption.
5. The creation of an energy management policy was one aspect of the action plan. The policy is attached as Annex I.

RECOMMENDED that Members approve the energy management policy attached as Annex I.

Officer responsible for the report

Gary Ridley
Strategic Director for Resource
Management
Ext 227

Author of the report

Stuart Reid
Assistant Director – Finance & I.T.
Ext 258



Land at Thistleflat / West Road, Crook

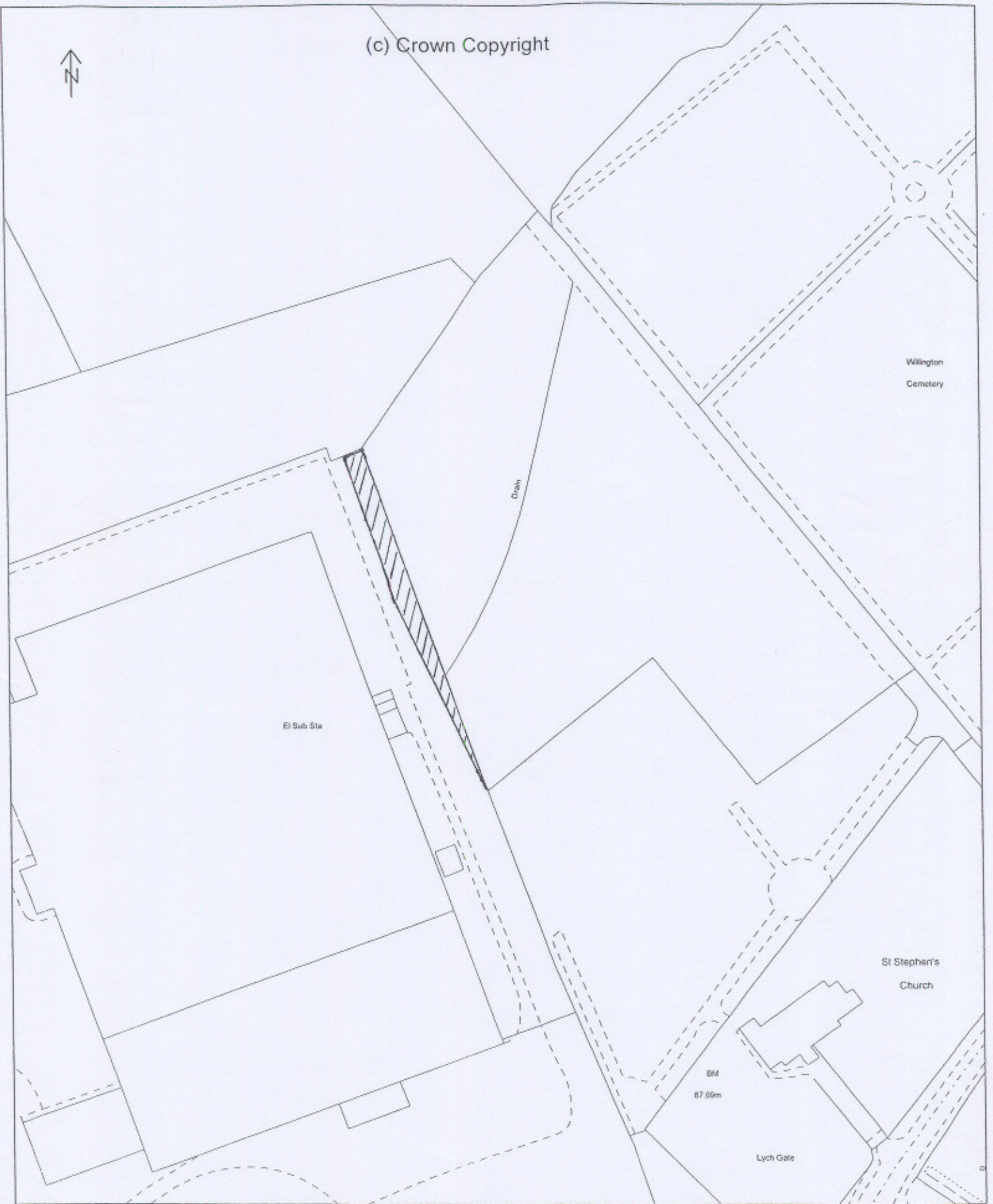
WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

SCALE: 1:1250

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Land at Low Willington - 332 sq. metres or thereabouts

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The Centre

How our service supports PCT and Local Authority contribution to local and national strategies

The Centre's work covers a number of areas including:

Mental Health	<p>Over 90% of women accessing The Centre's counselling services have mental health problems</p> <p>The Centre's work contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Strategies • NSF for Mental Health • NHS Plan • Women's Mental Health: Into the Mainstream • Suicide Prevention Strategy
Learning Disability	<p>There is a higher incidence of sexual abuse/assault amongst particular vulnerable groups including those with Learning Disabilities</p> <p>The Centre's work contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing People • National and local sexual health strategies and HIV prevention • Vulnerable Adult Policies
Domestic Violence	<p>Rape/sexual abuse can be one form of domestic violence, and The Centre takes a number of referrals from Women's Aid, The Refuge, The Domestic Violence Forum, No 31/No 75 and SODA in Sedgfield and Wear Valley</p> <p>The Centre's work contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strategic aims of the Domestic Abuse strategy & action plan for Darlington, helping to achieve performance outputs & targets: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Freedom Programme (2) Supporting women whose partners are on the Perpetrators Programme (3) Counselling support
Children	<p>Child Protection is an issue for The Centre given the number of clients who are under 16 and the number of clients who are parents. The Centre receives referrals from probation, social services and CAMHS - links can be made between offending behaviour and previous experiences of rape and sexual abuse/assault.</p> <p>The Centre's work contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Guarding Children's Board • Every Child Matters

Sexual Health	<p>The Centre is the only local agency providing a specialist woman-only counselling service for victims of both adult rape, childhood sexual abuse and domestic abuse</p> <p>The Centre's work contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Sexual Health and HIV Strategy
Policing in County Durham & Darlington	<p>The Centre supports County Durham's only SARC Counsellor and our work contributes to the well being of witnesses helping Durham Constabulary achieve Home Office Targets</p>
Drug and Alcohol	<p>Many women use drug/alcohol to cope with traumatic experiences of sexual abuse/rape. Specialist counselling can help reduce reliance. The Centre takes a number of referrals from local agencies who work with drug/alcohol issues.</p> <p>The Centre's work contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug Action Team plans • Drug Overdose: Prevention & Response • Criminal Justice System • National and Local Offender Strategies
Refugees/Asylum Seekers	<p>An increasing number of clients include refugees and asylum seekers. Counsellors have received training on working with survivors of sexual violence, torture and using Interpreters within counselling.</p> <p>The Centre's work contributes to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health Strategies • NSF for Mental Health • National and local sexual health strategies and HIV prevention

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

SERVICE PLAN 2007/08 - 2009/10

CONTENTS

	<u>Page Number</u>
Chairman and Director's Statements	2 - 4
Departmental Profile	4 – 9
Equality and Diversity	10
Review of 2006/07	11 - 15
Council Plan/Balanced Scorecard	16 - 17
Customers and Consultation	18
Service Based Action Plans	19 - 25
Service Performance Targets	26 - 31
Use of Resources	32 - 35
Risk	35 - 37
Statement of Internal Control	38 - 42
Data Quality/Partnerships	43

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

The activities of the Resource Management Department contribute to meeting all of the Council's corporate objectives. The Department will continue to support the Council Plan by serving the needs of external customers such as benefit claimants, council tax and non-domestic rate payers, users of electoral services and callers to our first stop shop as well as internal customers through the provision of expertise in the areas of finance, I.T., legal, members' services and asset management.

This must be achieved whilst ensuring value for money which is a considerable challenge. The Department has a key role to play in facilitating efficiencies throughout the Council. This is achieved through robust financial management, maximising the use of information technology and providing professional advice to support other departments. The Department will continue to develop staff through both formal and informal training to ensure our employees maximise their potential so that they can perform their job effectively.

There have been some notable successes in the last twelve months. A partnership has been formed in the area of benefits which will improve value for money and provide a platform for future sharing of services. We have continued to renew our IT infrastructure to keep up to date with technology and provide employees with the best tools to do the job so that we can give our customers the best possible service. It is expected that we will also receive an improved assessment from the Audit Commission on the effectiveness of our financial management.

This plan sets out how the department will build upon these successes through continually striving for improvement and continually checking that we are delivering what our customers want.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

This plan sets out the activities of the Resource Management Department. Covering the period 2007/08 to 2009/10 and follows the corporately agreed format.

To become the best District Council in England, Wear Valley's Resource Management Department must provide services, both internally and externally, which encompass the concepts of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and quality as a means of achieving corporate objectives. This is achieved through articulating in this plan the targets, plans and actions to be undertaken during the period covered by the plan.

The vision for the Department is to ensure service delivery which:

- (i) Is citizen focused and centred around customers
- (ii) Is speedy and accurate
- (iii) Seeks to reduce the risk of errors and fraud

- (iv) Is accessible
- (v) Encourages good performance
- (vi) Is accountable to stakeholders.

Within this the following standards will apply:

- (i) The principles of good customer care
- (ii) Services provided objectively without personal bias or discrimination
- (iii) Due care and competence applied at all times
- (iv) Constructive relationships fostered both internally and externally
- (v) Confidentiality will be observed.

The aims of the Departmental Service Plan document are:

- (i) To clarify the Department's contribution to the Council Plan.
- (ii) To clarify to our customers, both internal and external, the services which we provide and the standards of service that they can expect. This is achieved through the setting and monitoring of challenging yet realistic targets.
- (iii) To make the department's performance more visible to all stakeholders so as to provide a platform for service improvement.
- (iv) To make staff aware of the wider environment in which they fulfill their duties and responsibilities and how their role contributes to achieving departmental objectives.
- (v) To give staff ownership of the processes and procedures which they operate.

The above can only be achieved by:

- (i) Measuring where we are today.
- (ii) Deciding where we want to be in the future.
- (iii) Planning on how to get there.

A key element of achieving the above is via customer surveys which will give the Department invaluable feedback in terms of service delivery and also identify areas for improvement. All key service areas will carry out customer surveys during the lifetime of this document. This will ensure that a focus of meeting the needs of the customer (either internal or external to the Council) is embedded into the culture of the Department.

The performance targets that are set are challenging and based upon the ethos of seeking continuous improvement in the efficiency and quality of service delivery and the aim of reaching top quartile performance in all areas by 2008/09.

Staff commitment and effective empowerment is a key to continuous improvement. The Department will continue to induct all new members of staff and produce Personal Development Plans for all staff annually which are linked to our performance targets. Departmental Training Plans will also be produced annually and used in helping to achieve our goals. Training budgets will reflect the development needs of staff, who will be supported in attaining external/professional qualifications relevant to their post.

The Department has to tackle a considerable agenda. First and foremost it will continue to ensure that the Council has the resources in the short and long term to carry out the activities contained within the Council Plan so that our corporate objectives can be met. This is a significant challenge with tightening financial limits and uncertainty over the future of external funding upon which the Council relies heavily. Our Medium Term Financial Strategy will determine how this is to be achieved. Financial stability will be supported by efficient and effective collection of monies due such as Council tax which are used to fund services.

The benefits service will continue to consolidate upon the significant improvements achieved in recent years. The partnership with Teesdale District Council demonstrates our willingness and ability to be innovative and promote value for money in service delivery to maximise benefit to the customer.

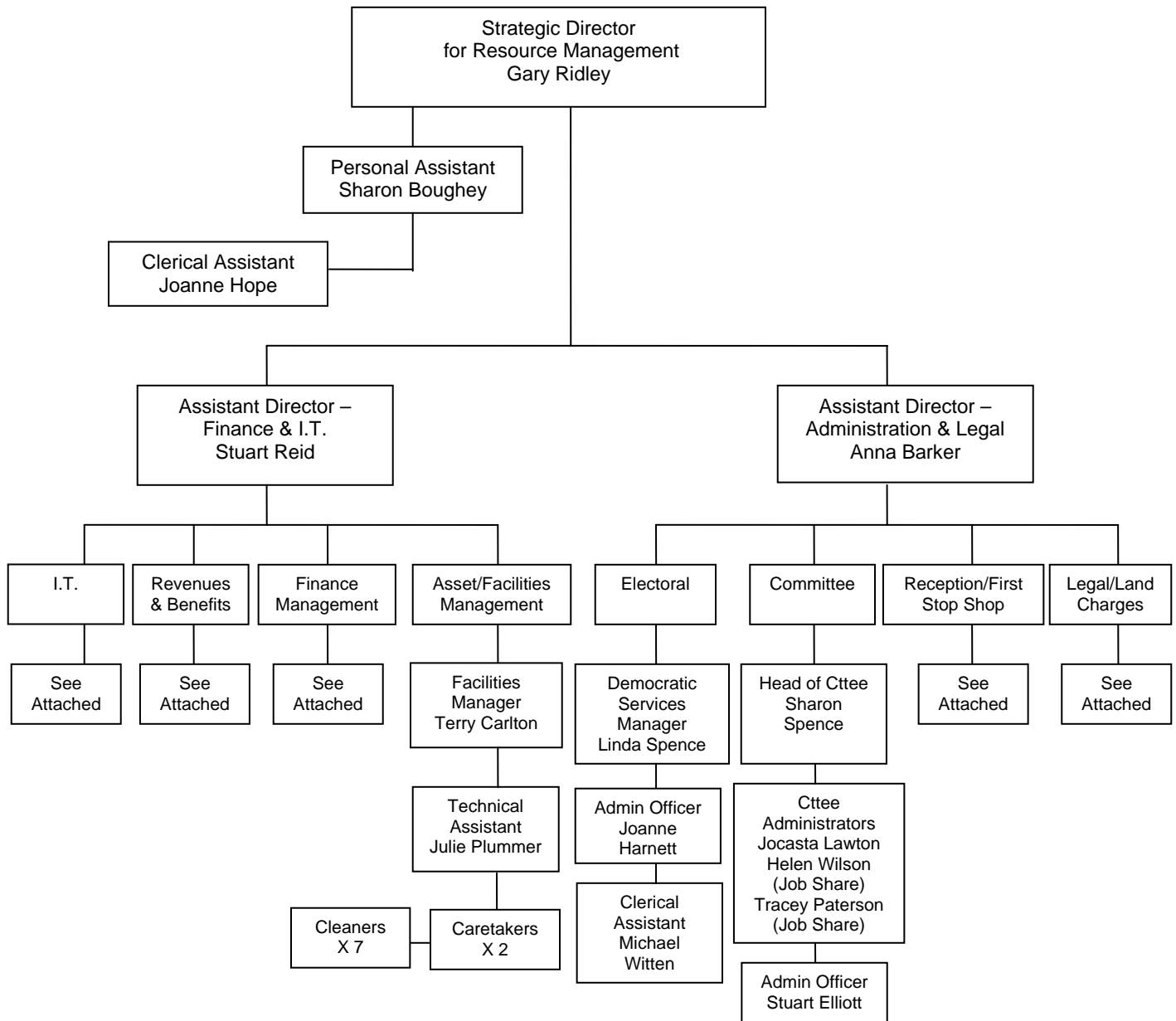
Efficient service delivery will become ever more dependent upon continual investment in I.T services. The department will continue to play a leading role in the promotion of technology to increase customer access to services. We will also continue to manage our buildings effectively and target resources where they will make the biggest impact.

The Department's activities will contribute towards meeting our corporate objectives and support the Council's ambition to have its improvements recognised externally through the Audit Commission's assessment process.

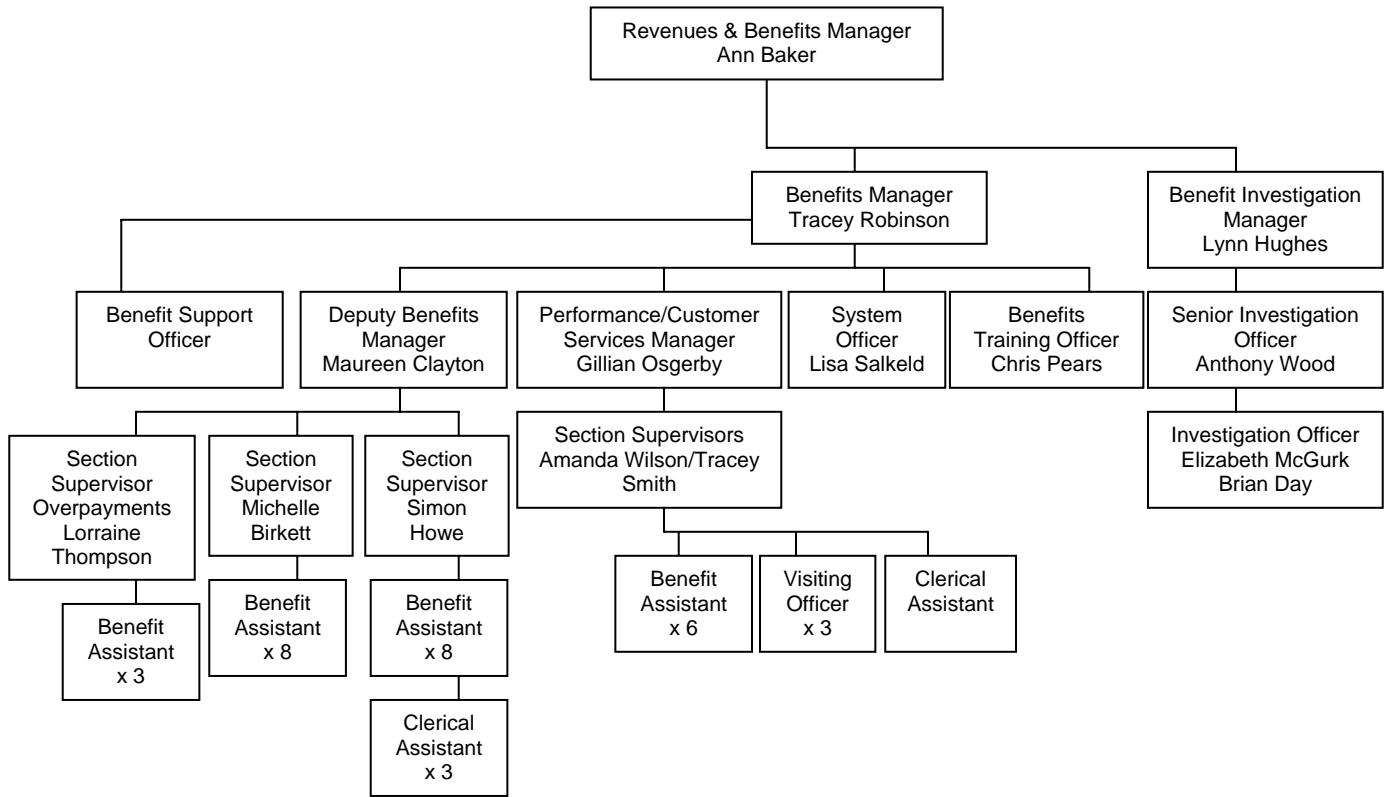
2 DEPARTMENTAL PROFILE

2.1 Activities

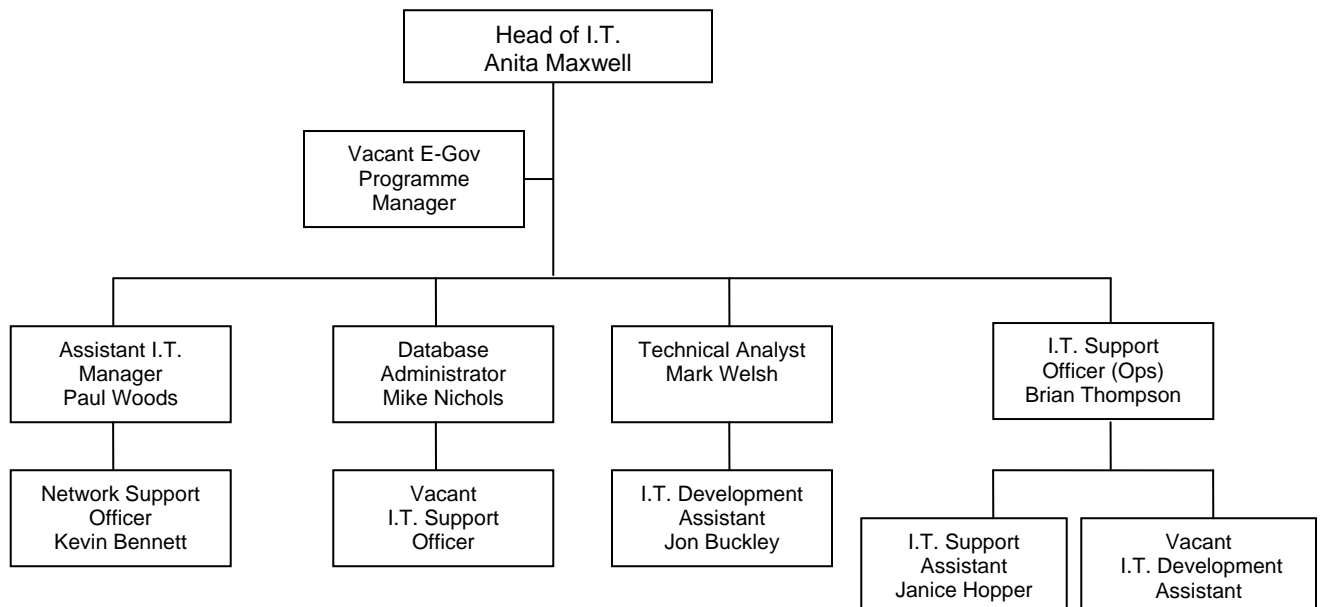
The basic structure of the Department is shown in the following diagram:



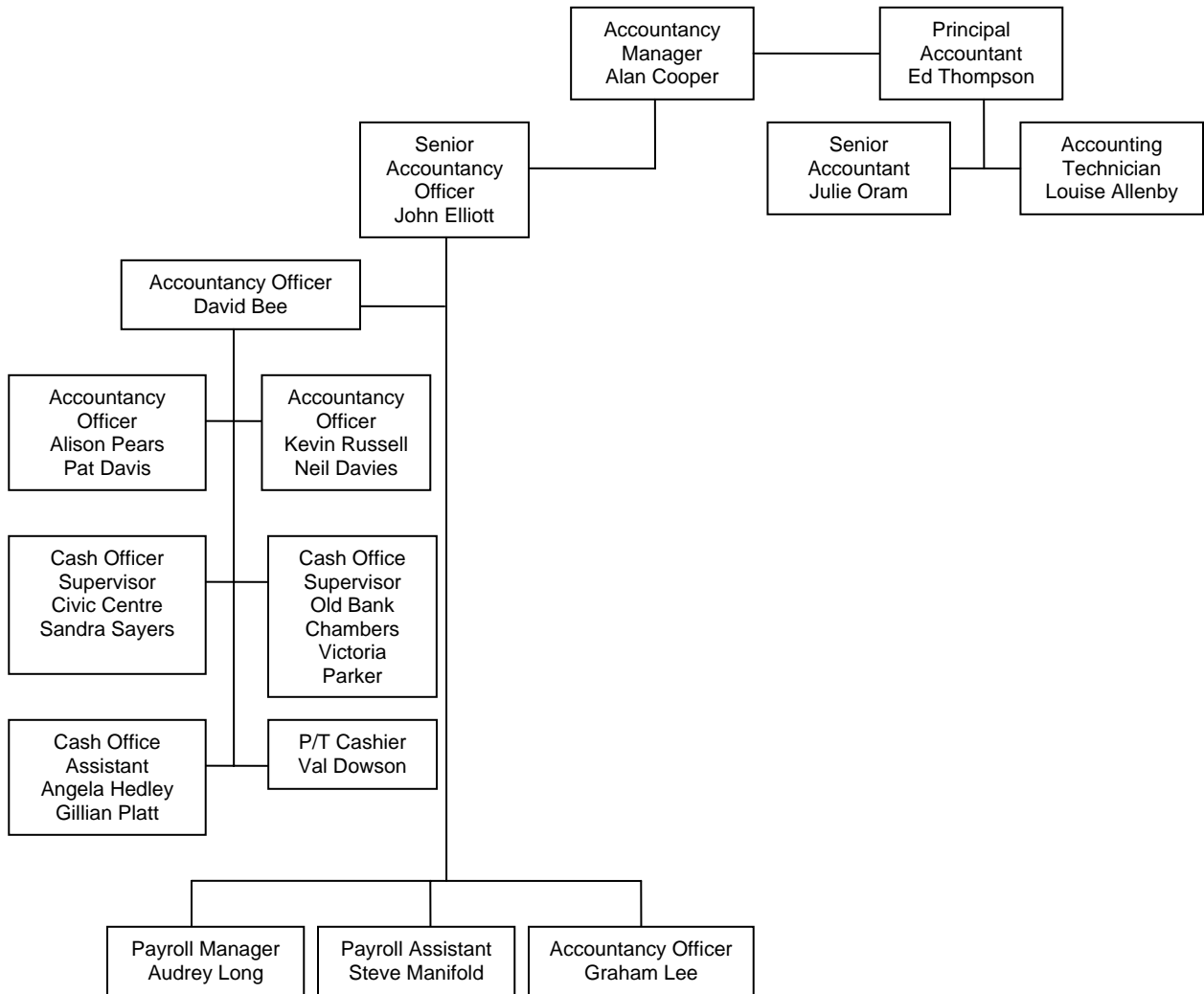
BENEFITS, FRAUD, COUNCIL TAX, RECOVERY AND NNDR



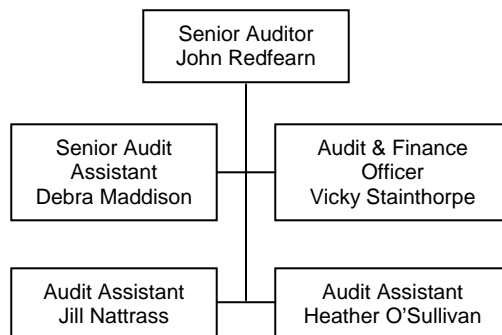
I.T SECTION



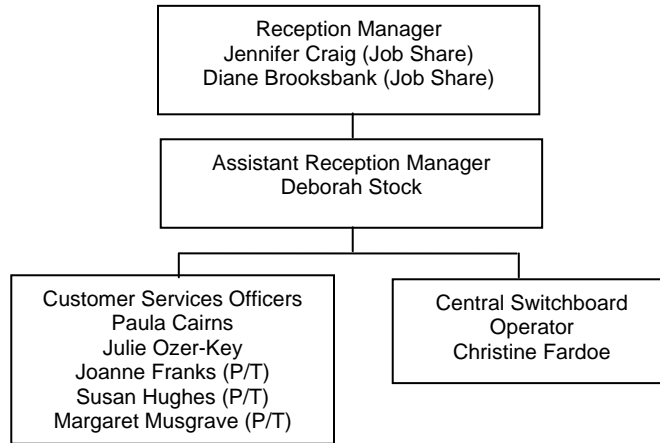
FINANCE FUNCTION AND AUDIT



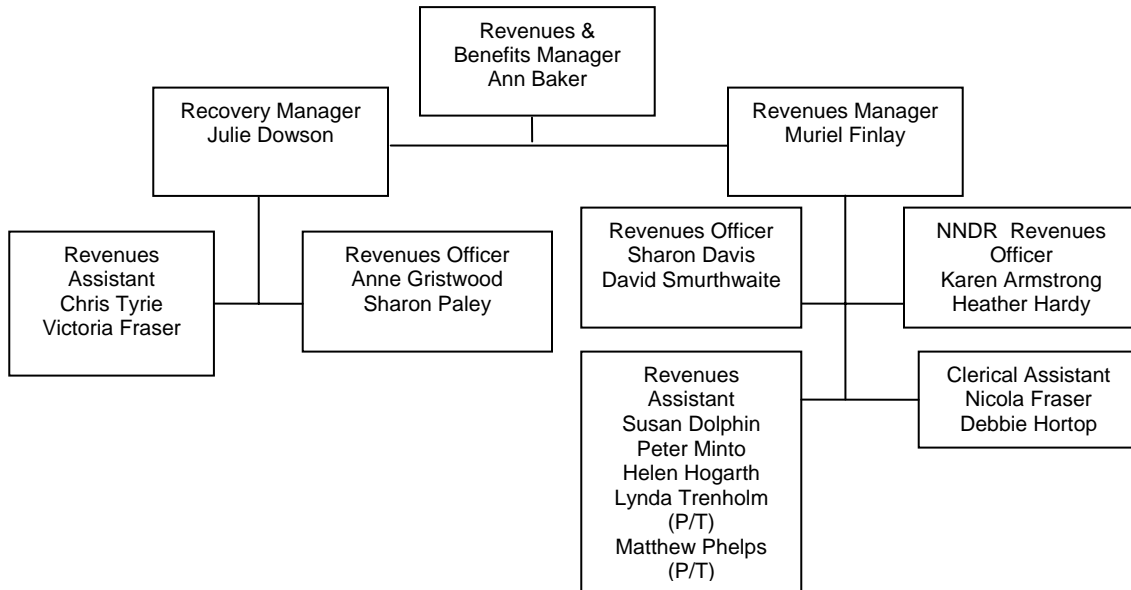
AUDIT



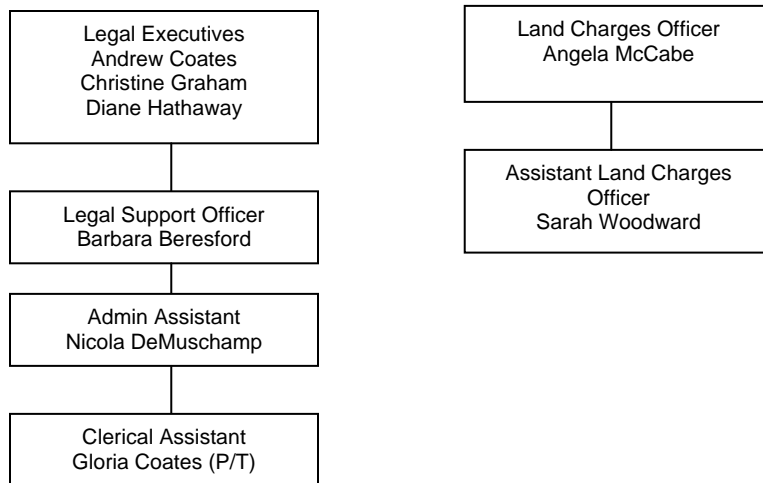
RECEPTION/FIRST STOP SHOP



COUNCIL TAX, RECOVERY AND NNDR



LEGAL SERVICES/LAND CHARGES



2.3 Financial Resources

The table below shows the total departmental revenue cost of providing services.

Cost Centre Description	Estimate 2007/08 £000
Corporate Management	585
Members Allowances	374
Members Support	150
Treasury Management	20
Council Tax Administration	484
Business Rates	(22)
Land Charges	(79)
Support to Community Organisations	115
Local Elections	50
Electoral Registration	109
Concessionary Travel	1,016
Housing Advances	1
Housing Benefit Administration	453
Benefit Investigation Unit	134
Housing Benefit Rent Allowance	(30)
Housing Benefit - Rent Rebates	(30)
Asset Management Revenue Account	157
Precepts and Levies	192
Central Postage	80
Legal Services	238
Property Management	12
Reception / First Stop Shop	124
Telephone	60
Rent Accounting	34
Cashiers	197
Exchequer - Miscellaneous Services	192
Accountancy	269
Internal Audit	108
IT	534
Central Resources - Departmental Admin.	65
Unapportionable Overheads	221
Miscellaneous	440
Investment Income	(1,291)
Consolidated Revenue Account	(280)
	4,682

Equality and Diversity

The Department recognises its obligations under legislation to promote equality and diversity in the areas of gender, ethnicity and disability. Through investment, it will ensure that its public buildings are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act. A programme has been compiled to carry out impact assessments upon the Department's policies and procedures to ensure that there are no barriers to customers accessing services either implicitly or explicitly and that treatment is non-discriminatory. The table below shows the 3 year timetable as agreed by Committee:

Function	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Accountancy and Cashier Payments		X	
Benefits	X		
Concessionary Travel			X
Council Tax	X		
Electoral Services		X	
ICT			X
Land Charges			X
Legal		X	
Non-Domestic Rates	X		

Impact assessments will be carried out following a corporately agreed process and will involve external expert consultation as appropriate.

REVIEW OF YEAR

Ref.	What We Planned to Do	What We did Do
Financial Management		
1	To integrate business planning with financial planning	Medium Term Financial Strategy updated and approved by members
2	To update the Asset management Plan and Capital Strategy	Documents updated and approved by members
3	Develop training and improve reporting on risk management	Training given to members and staff. Risk management strategy updated.
4	To support revised arrangements for demonstrating Value for Money in the Council's budget	Comparative data on service costs provided and analysed
5	Completion and reporting of Final Accounts by end of June 2006	Accounts completed by deadline and unqualified opinion given by members
6	More efficient processing of sundry debt	Visions payments being now collected by direct debit
7	More efficient collection of rents	Campaign ran resulting in increase in direct debit
8	To provide financial support to service Departments	Closer integration with service departments through attendance at monthly management teams
9	To ensure proper accounting arrangements following changes to the Council structure and commencement of the ALMO	Arrangements agreed with Dale and Valley Homes
10	To provide management accounting information that meets the needs of budget holders	Consultation undertaken with all budget holders and information amended
11	To further streamline the process of accounting for income received	Business improvement techniques used with support from North East Centre of Excellence
12	To maximise the efficiency of the procure to pay cycle	Work ongoing to automate information flows to assist the roll out of purchasing cards
13	To implement new computerized payroll system	Project ongoing but implementation now scheduled for next year

Ref.	What We Planned to Do	What We did Do
Revenues and Benefits		
1	To improve customer service to all benefit claimants	Introduced increased no. of access points following establishment of partnership with Teesdale District Council
2	To improve the recovery of benefit overpayments	New measures introduced following staff workshop
3	To attain above average performance for all benefit fraud performance measures	Partially achieved. Fraud awareness for staff included as part of corporate induction and new system of performance management introduced
4	To encourage payment of council tax and NNDR by most cost efficient methods	Campaign ran resulting in increase in direct debit take up
5	To provide excellent customer service to our council tax and NNDR customers	Surveys carried out and very high satisfaction rating achieved
6	To ensure council tax and NNDR billing is adhering to best practice	Compliance with best practice guidelines increased
7	To ensure recovery of council tax and NNDR is adhering to best practice	Compliance with best practice guidelines increased
8	To improve responsiveness to customer enquiries and management information	Document imaging and workflow still not implemented due to problems with IT supplier

Ref.	What We Planned to Do	What We did Do
Information Technology		
1	To further develop CRM system	Environmental services added to CRM
2	Further develop IT security / disaster recovery	System introduced but site still not full functional. Positive report received from Audit Commission on progress
3	Deliver capital programme	Successful migration to new operating system for revenues, benefits and housing. 60 pc's replaced.

Ref.	What We Planned to Do	What We did Do
Internal Audit		
1	To comply with CIPFA Code on Internal Audit	Full compliance including ensuring suitable coverage of IT audit. However, a significant number of audit recommendations still not implemented
2	To support revised arrangements for demonstrating Value for Money in the Council's budget	Internal Audit expertise not requested although reports provided to relevant officers
3	To contribute towards improved assessment under CPA	Improved score on internal control section of Use of Resources assessment
4	Raise Internal Audit profile and demonstrate effectiveness to internal customers	Regular reports on internal audit activity given to members and corporate management team
5	To maximize completion of audit plan	Audit plan not fully completed due to staff sickness

The majority of last year's plan was completed. Those activities not carried out will be completed in the forthcoming financial year.

Some service areas were not included in last year's plan and consequently do not fit within the review framework set out above. The following is relevant in relation to those service areas:

Committee Administration & Members Support

The Committee section recruited and trained two new staff through the year, to replace vacant posts. The section provided support to 58 council meetings (up to end February 2007) and numerous other partnership and informal meetings. All reports and minutes of council meetings (excluding confidential items) are now available on the Council website.

A standardized report writing protocol has been developed for use throughout the council designed to improve the quality of all reports considered by Members. Training has been provided on its' use.

The parish forums have been developed and further progress has been made regarding pursuing the Members Charter.

Election Services

Election Services faced a number of challenges in the year 2006/07, not least the retirement of the previous democratic services manager and the appointment of his successor. Regrettably there was a significant period where the post was vacant, which increased the pressure on the section. Fortunately, the Democratic Services Manager has now been in post for 4 months.

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 made significant changes to the administration of the service, which have been addressed in readiness for the District and Parish elections to be held in May 2007.

There was a very successful canvas and we obtained a return rate of Electoral Canvass forms of 95.83%.

Land Charges

The Land Charges section continues to improve the performance indicator, whilst also handling a higher volume of work. However, the growth of the personal search companies has changed the profile of the work processed by the section, as can be seen by the table below. This has had a consequent impact on both the delivery of the service and the income derived from it, due to the fact that the personal search fee received by the Council is considerably less than that received for full searches.

Searches Received	2005/6	2006/7 (to end Feb)
(Full)	1432	1163
(Local Land Charges)	435	636
(Personal)	600	986
Total	2467	2785
Performance Indicator (Full only)		
Target	93%	98.5%
Actual	98.01%	99.28%

Legal Services

The section has faced a difficult year, with the retirement of the Head of Service and staff shortages. However, the section is now fully staffed which is enabling outstanding issues to be tackled. The section provides service to a number of different areas, handling a variety of service requests. Certain elements of the work are more predictable and are routinely monitored. As can be seen from the table below, the monitored workload has been fairly consistent over the last year, however some areas have increased significantly (e.g. disrepair letters)

	05/06	06/07 (to end Feb)
Right To Buy Sales	133	100 (estimated)
Right To Buy Offer Notices	168	172
Section 106 Agreements	14	16
Conveyancing Transactions (excluding RTB)	25	31
Possession Hearings	193	150
Eviction applications	86	98
Disrepair letters before action	0	272
Gas servicing letters before action	47	91

1st Stop Shop

The 1st Stop Shop provides reception services, switchboard and customer services. In the last year, the section has further implemented CRM (customer relationship management) and re-located workstations to accommodate this. The CRM system was developed to include the handling of all calls relating to bulky waste collection and the associated charging for this service. The section also was the “front-line” during the gas crisis.

External Inspections/Assessments

The Council received a score of 2 “adequate” for its annual use of resources assessment. Due to substantial work carried out during the year, a score of 3 “good” is anticipated for the current year’s assessment. The Council’s financial accounts also received an unqualified opinion from our external auditors.

An external review was commissioned into the Council’s asset management arrangements. It concluded that whilst progress had been made in a number of areas, there are a number of important commitments that have not been carried through into action. These are now being addressed.

The Department continued to perform well as measured by national indicators. Of the 15 indicators that will be the prime responsibility of the Department in the coming year 9 are forecast to be amongst the top 25% nationally. Of the remaining 6, 3 are forecast to be above average and 3 below average. Measures will be adopted to have all performance indicators in the top quartile by 2008/09.

COUNCIL PLAN/BALANCED SCORECARD

The Department has lead responsibility for a number of actions contained within the Council Plan. It will also contribute towards a variety of others as shown below:

<u>Council Plan/ Balanced Scorecard</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Responsible Officer/Team</u>	<u>Milestones</u>	<u>Comment</u>
Improved life expectancy and reducing premature mortality rates	Corporate Targets	Director of Resource Management/ Corporate Development Unit	To increase leisure centre attendance rates by 2% in 2007/08 To assist in funding PCT programmes to implement physical activity programmes, reduce obesity and teenage pregnancy	To conduct marketing campaign and make leisure facilities more attractive To work with partners in developing and implementing programmes including holding public awareness sessions
Reduced sickness absence in Wear Valley District Council	9 days per annum per employee	Director of Resource Management/ Corporate Development Unit	9 days per annum per employee in Resource Management Department	All managers to have sickness absence management training
Increasing proportion of population attaining basic skill standards	Corporate Target	Director of Resource Management/ Corporate Development Unit	100 people to be engaged with programmes established	Funding to be provided to Bishop Auckland college and support infrastructure agreed with partners
Increased number of working people with qualifications in key SOA's	Corporate target	Director of Resource Management/ Corporate Development Unit	25 additional people to gain a qualification	To establish relationship with Bishop Auckland college and make financial contribution as part of the NRF process

<u>Council Plan/ Balanced Scorecard</u>	<u>Target</u>	<u>Responsible Officer/Team</u>	<u>Milestones</u>	<u>Comment</u>
No. of employees with accredited qualifications	Corporate target	Director of Resource Management/ Corporate Development Unit	8 additional staff in Resource Management Department to attain accredited qualifications	Programmed through PDP process
Increased number of modern apprentices	3 modern apprentices employed locally	Director of Resource Management/ Corporate Development Unit	3 modern apprentices employed locally	To identify departmental need
Increased income of those reliant upon state benefits	Improved % of claimants making new claims based on Council campaigns.	Asst. Dir. – Finance and IT	5 events attended 15 individuals awarded benefit as a result of campaign £10,000 awarded per annum as a result of campaign	Activity directed through take up strategy
Deliver Gershon efficiency savings	2.5% per annum	Director of Resource Management/ Corporate Management Team	Efficiencies being achieved as year progresses	Monitoring report on progress during the year
Improved CPA score	Year on year improvement in score	Resource Management/ Corporate Management Team	Attain score of 3 “good” under Use of Resources assessment	Action plan formulated and being carried out
Satisfaction surveys	2% year on year improvement	Director of Resource Management	To improve year upon year	Will conduct surveys of internal and external customers and act upon areas of dissatisfaction

CUSTOMERS AND CONSULTATION

The Department is committed to identifying customer needs and addressing these. Planned consultation for the coming year is shown below:

<u>Area of Consultation</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Use and Resource Implications</u>
Information Technology	Head of I.T.	During 2007/08	To conduct first comprehensive survey of internal customers of the I.T service. Managed internally.
Internal Audit	Senior Internal Auditor	After each audit	Auditees surveyed on content and usefulness of audit
Financial reporting	Accountancy Manager	April/May 07	To seek views of stakeholders on the publication of summarised financial information. Managed internally.
Benefits	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Scheduled liaison with Citizens Advice Bureau	To share information and act upon concerns
Benefits	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Scheduled liaison with Wear Valley Landlords Forum	To share information and act upon concerns
Benefits	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Scheduled liaison with Dale and Valley Homes	To share information and act upon concerns
1 st Stop Shop	Corporate Customer Care Officer	During 2007/08	To conduct internal and external customer survey for both telephone and face to face contacts.
Land Charges	Assistant Director – Legal & Admin	During 2007/08	To conduct survey of external customers and internal stakeholders. Managed internally
Legal Services	Assistant Director – Legal & Admin	During 2007/08	To conduct comprehensive survey of internal customers of the legal service. Managed internally.

SERVICE BASED ACTION PLANS

Service improvement can only be made by identifying specific actions and officers responsible for ensuring they are implemented. All of the activities support the Council Plan by contributing towards meeting corporate objectives or exemplifying the Council as a centre of management and organizational excellence. The detailed plans are shown below:

Accountancy Action Plan 2007/08

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To improve the Council's CPA score	To formulate and ensure implementation of an action plan for the Use of Resources assessment	Asst. Dir. – Finance and I.T.	To attain a score of "good"
2	Completion and reporting of Final Accounts by end of June 2007	Close down on high level estimates and carry out early reconciliation of data	Accountancy Manager	Completion by deadline and accounts unqualified after audit
3	More efficient processing of sundry debt	To expand the proportion of sundry debt collected by direct debit.	Accountancy Manager	Percentage of sundry debt invoices collected by direct debit
4	More efficient collection of rents	To introduce the use of AUDDIS and paperless direct debit	Accountancy Officer (DB)	To reduce costs of rent collection
5	To streamline exchequer processes	To implement agreed changes arising from the ongoing business improvement project	Senior Accountancy Officer	% of changes implemented
6	To further streamline the process of accounting for income received	To integrate data from different systems e.g. Financial Director	Senior Accountant	Reduce cost of processing
7	To improve and formalise budget preparation process	To fully exploit the tools available in the Financial Management System	Accountancy Manager	Information prepared more quickly

Revenues and Benefits Action Plan 2007/08

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To improve customer service to all benefit claimants	As per Benefits Business Plan.	Benefits Manager	No. of complaints/ days to process claims
2	To improve the system of recovering benefit overpayments	As per Benefits Business Plan.	Deputy Benefits Manager	Percentage recovered
3	To increase the instances of claim information submitted correctly by the customer first time	To target the provision of information to support benefit claims	Benefits Manager	Reduced processing times
4	To attain above average performance for all benefit fraud performance measures	As per Benefits Investigation Business Plan.	Benefits Investigation Manager	To achieve Pi targets
5	To encourage payment of council tax and NNDR by most cost efficient methods	To increase %age of payers using direct debit facility by promotion of weekly payment	Revenues Manager	To achieve target
6	To ensure council tax and NNDR billing is adhering to best practice	To increase compliance with best practice guidelines	Revenues Manager	Level of compliance with best practice
7	To ensure recovery of council tax and NNDR is adhering to best practice	To increase compliance with best practice guidelines	Recovery Manager	Level of compliance with best practice
8	To improve responsiveness to customer enquiries and management of information	To implement document image processing, workflow and customer relationship management within revenues function	Revenues Manager/ Recovery Manager	No. of complaints/ days to process changes
9	To update customer accounts promptly	Implementation of ADDACS and ARRUD	Revenues Manager	To increase percentage of council tax and NNDR recovered

I.T. Action Plan 2007/08

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	Further develop CRM system	Rollout CRM to agreed timetable	CDeGP Partnership	E-enable service requests as per E-government Partnership timetable
2	Further develop IT security/ disaster recovery	As outlined in external audit reports	Asst. I.T. Manager	%age of external audit recommendations carried out
3	To tailor service to meet customer needs	To conduct detailed customer survey and act upon results	Head of I.T	Survey conducted and action taken in response
4	To enhance performance management within the I.T. function	To benchmark cost and performance against high performers	Head of I.T	Compare performance and act upon results

Internal Audit Action Plan 2007/08

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To comply with CIPFA Code on Internal Audit	Ensure 90% of audit recommendations are implemented	All audit staff	To meet target
2	To support revised arrangements for demonstrating Value for Money in the Council's budget	To support Value for Money studies	Senior Internal Auditor	Audit Commission approved on Use of Resources assessment
3	To contribute towards improved assessment under CPA	To support improvement work relating to Use of Resources Assessment especially internal control	Senior Internal Auditor	Audit Commission approved on Use of Resources assessment

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
4	Raise internal Audit profile and demonstrate effectiveness to internal customers	Promote work through reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Management Team	Asst. Dir. – Finance and I.T.	Number of reports to Corporate Management Team and Overview and Scrutiny
5	To maximise completion of annual Audit Plan	Improve speed of turnaround of reports from draft to final stage	All audit staff	Ensure 95% completion
6	To support the Council's data quality arrangements	To audit the completion of high risk performance indicators	All audit staff	Score achieved on data quality KLOE's

Asset/Facilities Management 2007/08

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To update the Asset Management Plan and ensure all actions carried out	To secure joint ownership and responsibility through the Asset Management Group	Asset Management Group	Actions within plan carried out
2	To increase staff capacity in asset management	To investigate joint working and/or external funding possibilities	Asset Management Group	Additional staffing/ external support in place
3	To improve the condition of the public buildings portfolio	To project manage the asset management backlog capital budget	Asset Management Group	Building conditions improved
4	To minimise energy consumption within public buildings and promote green energy use	Continue implementation of energy action plan	Asset Management Group	All actions carried out

Committee Services & Member Support

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To revise working practices to ensure that service is delivered in the most effective and efficient manner	To conduct a thorough review of operational practices & procedures	Committee Services Manager	Review conducted and action taken in response
2.	To ensure that all members are aware of their responsibilities and are confident in their role	Conduct member training for all members	AD – Admin. & Legal/ Committee Services Manager	Training Programme delivered in May/June 07
3.	To promote the Members Charter	To draw up and implement an action plan to achieve the Members Charter in accordance with national accreditation scheme	AD – Admin. & Legal/ Committee Services Manager	Charter Achieved

Election Services

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To revise working practices to ensure that service is delivered in the most effective and efficient manner	To conduct a thorough review of operational practices & procedures	Democratic Services Manager	Review conducted and action taken in response
2	To increase return rate of Electoral Canvass forms to 97%	To improve the training provided to canvassers	Democratic Services Manager	Training programme delivered in July 07
3	To maximise return of Personal Identifier information in respect of Absent Voters, in order to reduce the incidences of fraud in this area	Issue reminders to postal/proxy voters to prompt return of information	Democratic Services Manager	Reminders issued
4	To encourage greater turn voter turn out at Local and Parish Elections	Increase use of media to promote the election	Democratic Services Manager	Turnout increased

Land Charges

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To revise working practices to ensure that service is delivered in the most effective and efficient manner	To conduct a thorough review of operational practices & procedures, including improved usage of SX3 and GIS systems	AD – Administration & Legal	Review conducted and action taken in response
2	To process local searches as quickly and efficiently as possible	To achieve BVPI of percentage searches conducted within 10 days of 99.4%	Land Charges Officer	Target of 99.4% achieved
3	To adapt the service to respond to the statutory Home Information Packs scheme (in force 1 st June 2007)	To review the service and requirements of the HIP scheme and make any necessary adjustments to method of service delivery	AD – Administration & Legal/Land Charges Officer	HIP request successfully processed within appropriate timescales
4	To adapt the service to respond to the likely changes to the national form Enquiries (Con 29)	To review the service and requirements of the revised Con 29 and make any necessary adjustments to method of service delivery	AD – Administration & Legal/Land Charges Officer	Search requests successfully processed within appropriate timescales

Legal Services

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To revise working practices to ensure that service is delivered in the most effective and efficient manner	To conduct a thorough review of operational practices & procedures	AD – Administration & Legal	Review conducted and action taken in response.
2	To tailor service to meet customer needs	To conduct detailed customer survey and act upon results, including the introduction of service standards for routine work	AD – Administration & Legal	Survey conducted and action taken in response

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
3	To develop and implement a land disposal policy and procedure	Consider best practice advice and produce policy and procedure which reflects local circumstances	AD – Administration & Legal	Policy and procedures implemented
4		Devise and implement a procedure to ensure that Home Information Packs are produced for sales of all miscellaneous dwellings	AD – Administration & Legal/ Legal Executive (AC)	Policy and procedures implemented
5	To process section 106 agreements as swiftly as possible to assist in achieving BVPI's in relation to planning applications	To develop and implement a procedure for processing section 106 agreements	AD – Administration & Legal/ Legal Executive (CG)	Policy and procedures implemented
7	To fulfil the Council's objectives in relation to car parking	To draft and implement a new Off Street Car Parking Order	Legal Executive (AC)	Off Street Car Parking Order in force

1st Stop Shop

No.	Objective	Action	Responsible Officer	Success Measures
1	To revise working practices to ensure that service is delivered in the most effective and efficient manner	To conduct a thorough review of operational practices & procedures	Corporate Customer Care Officer	Review conducted and action taken in response
2	Extend the use of CRM to manage Customer Enquiries and Interactions		Corporate Customer Care Officer	
3	To monitor and improve service efficiency and effectiveness	Devise & implement appropriate performance indicators, performance monitoring and reporting procedures	AD – Administration & Legal / Corporate Customer Care Officer	Indicators, monitoring and reporting in place and utilised

SERVICE PERFORMANCE TARGETS

The Council has a duty under “Best Value” to continuously improve its performance. Below is a table of the national performance indicators (BVPI’s) that measure the department’s performance in a number of areas.

Q1 = best 25% of all district authorities in the country

Q2 = above average of all district authorities in the country

Q3 = below average of all district authorities in the country

Q4 = worst 25% of all district authorities in the country

<u>BVPI</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Link to Corporate objective</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Prior year Performance + Quartile</u>	<u>2007/08 Target</u>	<u>2008/09 Target</u>	<u>2009/10 Target</u>	<u>Targeted Quartile Performance by 2008/09</u>
8	Invoice Payments - %	Economy through prompt payment of suppliers	Accountancy Manager	98.6 (Q1)	98.7	98.8	99.0	Q1
9	Council tax collection	Supports corporate value of being citizen focused	Revenues and Benefits Manager	99.1 (Q1)	99.1	99.2	99.3	Q1
10	NNDR Collection	Supports corporate value of being citizen focused	Revenues and Benefits Manager	99.0 (Q2)	99.4	99.4	99.4	Q1
76b	No. of Fraud Staff/ 1,000	Crime and disorder	Revenues and Benefits Manager	0.35 (Q2)	0.35	0.45	0.45	Q1
76c	No. of fraud investigations/1,000	Crime and disorder	Revenues and Benefits Manager	52.3 (Q2)	57.0	62.0	63.0	Q1

<u>BVPI</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Link to Corporate objective</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Prior year Performance + Quartile</u>	<u>2007/08 Target</u>	<u>2008/09 Target</u>	<u>2009/10 Target</u>	<u>Targeted Quartile Performance by 2008/09</u>
76d	No. of prosecutions and sanctions/1,000	Crime and disorder	Revenues and Benefits Manager	4.6 (Q3)	6.4	8.2	8.2	Q1
78a	New benefit Claims (days)	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	21 (Q1)	20	19	18	Q1
78b	Change of circumstances benefit Claims (days)	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	7 (Q1)	7	6	6	Q1
79a	Accuracy – benefit %	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	99 (Q1)	99	99	99	Q1
79b (i)	The amount of housing benefit overpayments recovered during the period being reported as a % of HB deemed recoverable overpayments during that period	Supports corporate value of being citizen focused	Revenues and Benefits Manager	80 (Q1)	85	90	92	Q1

<u>BVPI</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Link to Corporate objective</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Prior year Performance + Quartile</u>	<u>2007/08 Target</u>	<u>2008/09 Target</u>	<u>2009/10 Target</u>	<u>Targeted Quartile Performance by 2008/09</u>
79b (ii)	Housing benefit over payment recovered during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period	Supports corporate value of being citizen focused	Revenues and Benefits Manager	50 (Q1)	55	58	60	Q1
79b (iii)	HB overpayments written off during the period as a % of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayment identified during period.	Supports corporate value of being citizen focused	Revenues and Benefits Manager	6% (Q3)	4%	2%	2%	Q1
80a	Benefits access – satisfaction (%)	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	83 (Q2)	Triennial Survey	Triennial Survey	85	Q1
80b	Benefits office – satisfaction (%)	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	86(Q1)	Triennial Survey	Triennial Survey	90	Q1

<u>BVPI</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Link to Corporate objective</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Prior year Performance + Quartile</u>	<u>2007/08 Target</u>	<u>2008/09 Target</u>	<u>2009/10 Target</u>	<u>Targeted Quartile Performance by 2008/09</u>
80c	Benefits telephone – satisfaction (%)	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	78(Q2)	Triennial Survey	Triennial Survey	80	Q1
80d	Benefits staff – satisfaction (%)	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	85(Q2)	Triennial Survey	Triennial Survey	90	Q1
80e	Benefits forms – satisfaction %	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	69(Q1)	Triennial Survey	Triennial Survey	75	Q1
80f	Benefits – speed of service	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	82(Q1)	Triennial Survey	Triennial Survey	85	Q1
80g	Benefits – Overall satisfaction (%)	Health and Well being	Revenues and Benefits Manager	86(Q1)	Triennial Survey	Triennial Survey	90	Q1
157	Number of types of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery as a percentage of the types of interactions that are legally permissible for electronic delivery	Management Excellence	Head of I.T.	100 (Q1)	100	100	100	Q1
179	The percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days	Management Excellence	AD – Legal & Administrative Services	99.28%	99.4%	99.5%	99.6%	Q1

Local PI's

<u>LPI Number</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Link to Corporate objective</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Previous year's Performance</u>	<u>2007/08 Target</u>	<u>2008/09 Target</u>	<u>2009/10 Target</u>
1	% of benefit customers seen within 15 minutes of arrival	Health and Well being	Benefits Manager	85%	95%	96%	97%
2	% of council tax / NNDR bills issued in 10 working days of change being notified	Citizen focused	Revenues Manager	88%	90%	92%	94%
3	% of council tax / NNDR bills issued in 10 working days of change being notified	Citizen focused	Revenues Manager	91	90	92	94
4	Number of referrals for benefit fraud investigation	Crime	Benefits Investigation Manager	620	700	720	740
5	Average days sickness per employee	Management Excellence	All managers	8	6	5	4
6	Number of disabled employees	Equality and Diversity	All managers				
7	% of top 5% paid employees within department that are women	Equality and Diversity	Director of Resource Management	50%	50%	50%	50%

<u>LPI Number</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Link to Corporate objective</u>	<u>Responsible Officer</u>	<u>Previous year's Performance</u>	<u>2007/08 Target</u>	<u>2008/09 Target</u>	<u>2009/10 Target</u>
8	% of prior year council tax collected	Management Excellence	Revenues and Benefits Manager	99.6%	99.8%	99.8%	99.8%
9	% of prior year NNDR collected	Management Excellence	Revenues and Benefits Manager	99.4%	99.8%	99.8%	99.8%

USE OF RESOURCES

1. **Value for Money**

The Department is committed to achieving value for money in all its activities. It is responsible for a number of actions set out in the Council's approved value for money strategy. We will monitor both the cost and performance of all our services and compare these with other authorities using robust data. The targeted cost and performance data for some of the Department's services are shown below:

Service	Cost Driver	Cost Performance	Performance Measure	Last year's Performance	Target Performance	Customer Satisfaction	Target Performance
Housing Benefits	Claims	Per weighted claim	LPI	£51.28	£52.50	86%	90%
Council Tax	Households	Per household	LPI	£14.50	£14.90	94%	95%
Sundry Debt	Invoices	Per Invoice	LPI	£5.71	£5.80	4.18 out of 5	4.20

2. **Procurement**

The Department has many contracts with external providers for goods and services. These will be review periodically to ensure value for money is obtained. Those subject to review next year are shown below:

Contract Description	Supplier	Responsible Officer	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	Extension Period	Contract Type	Review Date	Comments
Bailiff Collection	Jacobs Ltd	Recovery Manager	01/04/04	31/03/2007	2 years	SLA	2006	Currently undergoing retendering exercise

Contract Description	Supplier	Responsible Officer	Contract Start Date	Contract End Date	Extension Period	Contract Type	Review Date	Comments
Payroll System	Wealden	Senior Accountancy Officer	1990	None	N/A	SLA	2006	Currently undergoing retendering exercise
Pickwick Electoral Registration System	MVM Pickwick	Democratic Services Manager	1995	None	N/A	SLA	2007	The service provider has just released a revised Windows based system as an upgrade. This will be evaluated and the contract reviewed during 2007

Assets

The table below gives information relating to assets used by the Department.

Asset	Value	Service provided by Asset	Link to Corporate Objective	Replacement Strategy
Civic Centre	£1,080,000	Council headquarters	All	Maintenance to suitable standard
Royal Corner	£349,000	IT and HR functions as well as let to external bodies	All	Maintenance to suitable standard
Old Bank Chambers	£140,000	Cashiering and tenancy enforcement functions	Tenancy enforcement – crime	Future use to be reviewed with possible relocation of services

Capital Programme

Scheme Description	Value (£)	Responsible Officer	Link to Corporate Objective	Outcomes/Outputs
IT / PC Replacement	100,000	Head of IT	Management Excellence	Replacement of 100 PC's
Asset Management Backlog	30,000	Facilities Manager	Management Excellence	To improve condition of public buildings portfolio
Civic Centre – heating and lighting improvements	60,000	Facilities Manager	Management Excellence	To reduce energy consumption
Civic Centre – battery back up system	6,500	Facilities Manager	Management Excellence	To safeguard the operation of the building in the event of an emergency

Asset Management PI's

PI Reference	Description	Last year's Performance	Target 2007/08	Target 2008/09	Target 2009/10
PI1A	%age assets in categories A & B (satisfactory condition)	100%	100%	100%	100%
PI1B	Backlog maintenance to bring asset up to a high standard	£403,150	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
PI2	Rate of Return (Royal Corner)	0%	0%	0%	0%
PI3	Management Costs per sq m	£5.67	£5.70	£5.80	£5.90
PI4	Running Costs Per sq m	£15.54	£16.00	£16.50	£17.00
PI5	Capital schemes completed on time and on budget	71%	100%	100%	100%

RISK

1. Council Plan Risks

Council Plan Action	Responsible Officer	Risks	Risk Management Action
Reduce sickness absence	Director of Resource Management	Failure to act promptly in cases of long term sickness	Ensure all staff trained and understand sickness absence procedure
To increase the income of those reliant upon state benefits	Director of Resource Management	Benefit assessment is prioritised at the expense of take up activity	Monitor work against agreed actions in take up strategy
To increase the number of employees with accredited qualifications	Director of Resource Management	Lack of staff awareness of opportunities available	Raise awareness through PDP process
Deliver Gershon efficiency savings	Director of Resource Management	Savings impact upon service quality	Target areas of budget where minimal impact upon customer satisfaction and service quality

Council Plan Action	Responsible Officer	Risks	Risk Management Action
Improved CPA score	Director of Resource Management	Effort is misdirected	Continued liaison with external audit to target areas of improvement
Improve customer satisfaction	Director of Resource Management	Data collection and fact finding becomes end in itself	Ensure follow up to results and findings

2. Departmental Risks

Risk Heading	Responsible Officer	Risks	Risk Management Actions
Asset Management and Capital Investment	Asst. Dir. Of Finance and I.T	Failure to effectively manage/maintain assets leading to reduced efficiency and increased costs	Update Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy
Budgetary Control and Financial Management	Asst. Dir. Of Finance and I.T	Lack of effective budgetary control leading to poor allocation and control of resources	Established budget process followed. Quarterly reports on budget submitted to members.
Treasury Management	Asst. Dir. Of Finance and I.T	Risk of losing investment leading to monetary loss and loss of reputation	Adopt CIPFA treasury management practices and ensure regular bank reconciliation
Staff Security (revenues and benefits)	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Possibility of staff assault/accident whilst working alone	Review lone worker policy
Benefit Payment	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Failure to process benefit on time	Performance data monitored weekly and prompt response to prevent backlogs
Collection Rates	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Failure to collect NNDR and Council Tax leading to financial loss	Effective recovery procedures necessary/ staff training /collection rates monitored monthly
Physical Damage to Computer Room Equipment	Head of I.T.	Flood, fire, sabotage etc. resulting in loss of service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce effect of disaster • Control access to computer room • Disaster Recovery Plan

Risk Heading	Responsible Officer	Risks	Risk Management Actions
I.T Security	Head of I.T.	Corruption of data and/or programs via malicious or accidental means	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security Policy • Security Handbook for Users
Systems Implementation Failure	Head of I.T.	Systems not installed on time/ budget and/or not producing required functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements Specification • Project Planning • Acceptance Testing • Post Implementation review(s)

3. **Corporate Risks**

To be agreed.

Statement of Internal Control

1. Fulfilment Of Corporate Responsibilities

Reference	Area of Responsibility	Confirmation (Yes / No)	Evidence	Exceptions & Action Plan
1.1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> key controls over systems and arrangements are in place to ensure Council assets are safeguarded from error or irregularity key controls are kept under review and action taken to address internal control weaknesses identified. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segregation of duties Up to date procedures Regular bank reconciliation Asset Management plan Budget monitoring Internal audit reviews Team meetings Action plans 	
1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All resources are deployed in the achievement of Council corporate objectives the use of resources is kept under review and action taken to address any instances of ineffective, inefficient and uneconomic use. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget process Service planning Service plan review Budgetary control Benchmarking to assess value for money Performance management 	

Reference	Area of Responsibility	Confirmation (Yes / No)	Evidence	Exceptions & Action Plan
1.3	<p>The departmental service plan contributes to the Council's wider business priorities and is reflective of existing policies and strategies. This can be demonstrated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key performance targets and indicators • Budget setting and allocation of resources • Identifiable improvements in service, including achievement of explicit outputs and/or milestones • Action plans prepared to assist with achievement of objectives, further improvements in service delivery and performance, or to overcome service delivery and performance failures. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits service business plan • Evaluation of budget bids • PI's in top quartile • Customer survey results • Actions contained within service plans • Departmental service plan • Action plans e.g. energy use, performance standards compliance etc. 	

Reference	Area of Responsibility	Confirmation (Yes / No)	Evidence	Exceptions & Action Plan
1.4	<p>With regard to business risk management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business risks are identified and assessed arising from new initiatives • action is taken to manage and review business risks that are within my department • These business risks are included in the Department's Risk Register 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option appraisal • Use of risk matrix • Regular risk management update to members • Regular risk management update to members 	
1.5	<p>All staff have access to, are familiar with and work in accordance with the following and that action is taken where non-compliance is identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Financial Regulations and Procedures • Employee Code of Conduct • Standing Orders Relating To Contracts 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial regulations available on lotus notes database • Standing orders available on lotus notes database • Report writing protocol • Staff training 	

Reference	Area of Responsibility	Confirmation (Yes / No)	Evidence	Exceptions & Action Plan
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Scheme of Delegation 	Yes		
1.6	<p>decisions are taken and the activities of the department are done with due regard for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Councils' corporate objectives • Value for money and service improvement • Legality • Financial implications • Staffing & other resource implications • Equal opportunities implications • Community safety implications • Health & Safety improvement implications • Asset Management implications • Anti-Fraud & Corruption implications • Business risk. 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of service plan with council plan • Benchmarking of activities • Report writing protocol • Ongoing liaison with HR function • H & S standing item on team meeting agenda • Asset Management Plan • Anti-fraud and Corruption Strategy • Risk management strategy 	

2. Accounts - Financial and Legal Implications

Reference	Accounts - Financial and Legal Implications	Confirmed (Yes / No)	Evidence	Exceptions & Action Plan
2.1	There are no instances of non-compliance with laws or regulations that are likely to have a significant effect on the finances or operations of the Council.	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report writing protocol • Unqualified accounts • Annual audit letter 	
2.2	There are no pending claims, proceedings or litigation that are likely to have a significant effect on the finances or operations of the Council.	Yes	No ongoing litigation	
2.3	There are no other significant transactions with related parties other than those already disclosed.	Yes	None	
2.4	There are no instances of known error, irregularity, including fraud, which are likely to have a significant effect on the finances or operations of the Council.	Yes	No known instances	

Data Quality

Source	Responsible Officer	Data Quality Issue
IBS Revenues and Benefits system	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Accuracy of performance indicators. Verified through sample checking
Agresso Financial System	Accountancy Manager	Accounts are accurate. Verified through budget monitoring, reconciliations and work of external audit
All systems (electronic and manual)	Senior Internal Auditor	Records are accurate. Samples verified during audit process

Partnership Profile

Name of Partnership	Purpose/Outputs	Authority financial contribution (£'s)	Contribution to Objectives	Specifying/monitoring arrangements
Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Services	To administer housing and council tax benefit services for both authorities and provide I.T support to Teesdale District Council (TDC) revenues services	Fee payable by TDC	Management excellence	Quarterly joint member committee and officer board
County Durham e-Government Partnership (CDeGP)	To progress the e-government agenda across County Durham	£15,000 per annum	Supports corporate value of being citizen focused through improving access to services	Scheduled meetings of the partnership board on which there is officer and member representation
County Durham Partnership Against Poverty (CDPAP)	To maximise benefit take up	Staff time only	Health and well-being	Attendance at CDPAP Officer groups Regular attendance at events/venues plus publicity given out
I.T. Management	To share management expertise and skills	£25,000 per annum	Management excellence	Regular meetings with Head of I.T.

TEESDALE AND WEAR VALLEY SHARED SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

CONSTITUTION

1.0 ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT COMMITTEE

1.1 The Councils shall establish a Joint Committee called “**Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Services Joint Committee**” under Section 101(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 20(1) of the Local Government Act 2000

1.2 The Councils shall discharge their functions under the following Acts through the Joint Committee in so far as they relate to the Joint Committee Services:

- Local Government Act 2000;
- Local Government Finance Act 1992;
- Part III of the Local Government Finance Act 1988;
- Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992; and
- Social Security Administration Act 1992.

1.3 Each Council represents to the other that it has validly passed a resolution or otherwise obtained lawful authority to appoint the Joint Committee and enter into this Agreement.

1.4 Each Council establishes the Joint Committee to provide the Joint Committee Services throughout each Council’s constituency from 2nd January 2007, for a period until 31st March 2010 in line with the requirements laid out in the Housing Benefits Shared Service Partnership Service Level Agreement (Appendix A refers). The Service Level Agreement covers the provision of housing and council tax benefits claims processing and associated information technology services by Wear Valley District Council on behalf of Teesdale District Council.

1.5 Each Council warrants that it shall not do or omit to do or permit to be done anything which prevents or inhibits or seeks to prevent or inhibit the Joint Committee from carrying out all or any of its functions.

1.6 The Councils shall at all times co-operate with each other and shall work within the spirit of openness, honesty, trust and with a friendly approach and respect of each other.

2.0 LEAD AUTHORITY

2.1 The Lead Authority shall (unless the Joint Committee otherwise, in exceptional circumstances, so decide) be Wear Valley District Council

2.2 Accordingly Wear Valley District Council is hereby appointed on the date hereof as the Lead Authority for the purposes mentioned throughout this Agreement.

2.3 The role of the Lead Authority shall be exercised subject to the approval of the Joint Committee and shall be as follows:-

- to undertake the duties and responsibilities of the Lead Authority referred to in the Agreement
- to act on behalf of the Joint Committee when authorised to do so to achieve Best Value or to add value to the Shared Services Partnership or to promote the attainment of the Objectives or the performance of the Functions and/or;
- to make and provide all appropriate accounting and audit arrangements and services required for the due and proper receipt, holding and application of the Shared Service Partnership arrangements and/or;
- to ensure that the assets owned by the Shared Service Partnership are duly listed in the Asset Register and are secured and insured

3.0 JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

3.1 The Councils shall each appoint 3 (three) Members to the Joint Committee. It will be for each Authority to determine how these numbers are made up.

3.2 Each Joint Committee Member shall remain in office for the period of this Agreement unless removed by his/her appointing Council, or ceases to be a Joint Committee Member.

3.3 Either Council may change or replace its Joint Committee Members at any time and shall give the other Council written notice of any change within 5 (five) Working Days of it occurring.

3.4 The proceedings of the Joint Committee shall not be invalidated by any vacancy among the Joint Committee Members or by any defect in the appointment or qualification of any Joint Committee Member (subject to any meeting of the Joint Committee being quorate).

4.0 INTERESTS OF MEMBERS IN CONTRACTS AND OTHER MATTERS

4.1 Every member of the Joint Committee shall at all times comply with the principles specified by the Secretary of State under Section 49 of the Local Government Act 2000 which are to govern their conduct

4.2 Any member of the Joint Committee who has an interest defined in the members' code of conduct of his or her Council shall comply with the requirements of that code as regards the disclosure of that interest and as regards withdrawing from participation in consequence of that interest

4.3 The Joint Committee shall keep a record of particulars of any disclosures by members which shall be open during normal office hours for public inspection.

5.0 MEETINGS OF JOINT COMMITTEE

5.1 Meetings of the Joint Committee ("**JC Meeting**") shall be held at such time and place as the Chair decides.

5.2 A JC meeting may be called by any JC Member giving at least 10 (ten) Working Days' notice to all the JC Members.

- 5.3 A meeting may be called on shorter notice if all the JC Members agree but, save in the case of urgent business, such notice shall be not less than 5 (five) working days
- 5.4 Notice of a JC Meeting must be given to the Treasurer and the Chief Executive of each Authority..
- 5.5 No business may be transacted at a JC Meeting unless a quorum is present. The quorum for a JC Meeting is 3 (three) JC Members present in person, 1 (one) of whom must be a Wear Valley JC Member and 1 (one) of whom must be a Teesdale JC Member.
- 5.6 If a quorum is not present within 15 (fifteen) minutes after the start time of the JC Meeting or a quorum ceases to be present during a JC Meeting it must be adjourned to such time and place as the Joint Committee decides.

6.0 NOTICE OF MEETINGS

- 6.1 At least 5 clear days before a meeting of the Joint Committee:
- 6.2 A summons to attend the meeting specifying business proposed to be transacted shall be sent by post to the last address given for that purpose by each member of the Joint Committee and to the Chief Executive of each Authority; and
- 6.3 Notice of the time and place of the intended meeting shall be published at the offices of each Authority by the Chief Executive of that Authority
- 6.4 Lack of service on a member of the Joint Committee of the summons referred to above shall not affect the validity of a meeting of the Joint Committee
- 6.5 Except in the case of business required by this standing order to be transacted at a meeting of the Joint Committee and other business to be brought before the meeting as a matter of urgency, of which the Chairman Vice Chairman and the Secretary shall have prior notice and which the Chairman, Vice Chairman and the Secretary consider should be discussed at the meeting, no business shall be

transacted at a meeting of the Joint Committee other than that specified in the summons relating thereto.

7.0 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

- 7.1 The Joint Committee must have a Chair and a Vice-Chair. Both are to be JC Members elected by the Joint Committee on an annual basis.
- 7.2 Each Chair and Vice-Chair shall be appointed by the Joint Committee at the first JC Meeting after the start of each Municipal Year. The Chair and Vice Chair roles will be drawn from alternate councils, each year.
- 7.3 The Chair and Vice-Chair roles shall be held by one JC Member from each of the Partnership Councils.
- 7.4 The Chair and Vice-Chair may resign from their positions at any time (without necessarily resigning as JC Members at the same time).
- 7.5 The Chair and Vice-Chair may be removed during their term of office only at a JC Meeting with a majority of the total number of JC Members at the time in favour. The Chair or the Vice-Chair (as the case may be) must be given an opportunity to say why he/she should not be removed.
- 7.6 If the Chair or Vice-Chair is removed or resigns from their term of office the Joint Committee shall appoint a new Chair or Vice-Chair for the remainder of the Municipal Year providing that the appointment shall be made from the same Council's JC Members.
- 7.7 If the Chair is not present within 5 (five) minutes after the starting time of a JC Meeting or if the Chair is unable to chair a JC Meeting, then the Vice-Chair should chair that JC Meeting unless he/she is unable to do so.
- 7.8 If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are not present within 5 (five) minutes after the start time of a JC Meeting or both are unable to chair the JC Meeting then the Joint Committee must elect 1 (one) of the JC Members who is present to chair the JC Meeting.

7.9 The responsibilities of the Chair are to:

- act as an ambassador for the Joint Committee and to represent the views of the Joint Committee to the general public and other organisations;
- ensure that JC Meetings are conducted efficiently;
- give all JC Members an opportunity to express their views;
- establish a constructive working relationship with, and to provide support for, any officers of the Councils to whom the Joint Committee has delegated its functions [see *Officers*];
- ensure that the Joint Committee monitors the use of delegated powers
- The Joint Committee shall refer to the Authorities any matter which falls outside the Joint Committee's delegated powers or where the Joint Committee consider that the matter is one which for any reason should properly be decided upon by the Authorities and not by the Joint Committee
- The Joint Committee shall not have power to borrow
- The Joint Committee shall not employ any employees

7.10 The role of the Vice-Chair is to deputise for the Chair during any period of their absence and, for that period, his/her functions shall be the same as those of the Chair.

7.11 Except to the extent that this Agreement provides otherwise neither the Chair nor the Vice-Chair has any authority beyond that of any other JC Member.

8.0 COMMITTEE ADMINISTRATOR

8.1 The Committee Administrator shall take notes of all JC Meetings and decisions made by the Joint Committee and within 5 (five) Working Days of a JC Meeting shall provide copies of the notes to all of the JC Members.

8.2 The Committee Administrator shall be an officer of Wear Valley when a JC Meeting is held at Wear Valley's offices and an officer of Teesdale when a JC Meeting is held at Teesdale's offices.

9.0 FINANCE

9.1 Each Council shall appoint an officer who shall perform the functions of the relevant financial officer for the purposes of Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (SI 2003/533) in respect of the Council from which they are employed.

10.0 STANDING ORDERS

10.1 The Joint Committee shall conduct its business in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Standing Orders) contained within the constitution of the Lead Authority'

10.2 The Joint Committee may from time to time co-opt one or more advisers to attend such meeting or meetings of the Joint Committee as the Joint Committee may specify having regard to the knowledge or skill of the co-opted adviser, and the contribution he may make to the business of the Joint Committee at that meeting or those meetings. Such co-opted adviser(s) shall be entitled to speak but not to vote.

11.0 NEW MEMBERS

11.1 If at any time it is agreed by the Councils that a local authority other than the Councils shall join in or benefit from the activities of the Joint Committee, under Regulation 11(2C) of the 2000 Regulations, this Agreement shall be terminated and a new joint committee arrangement entered into on the same terms as this Agreement unless the Councils agree otherwise.

12.0 ROLE OF JOINT COMMITTEE

12.1 The Joint Committee shall:

- perform and develop the Joint Committee Services;
- set progress and performance goals for the Joint Committee Services;
- review the progress and performance of the Joint Committee Services;
- approve reports from the Senior Officer Board;

- ratify and amend the operational policies of the Joint Committee;
- adopt or reject recommendations of the Senior Officer Board;
- approve, modify or amend the draft annual business plan produced by the Senior Officer Board;
- examine and approve the annual audit of the Joint Committee;
- promote the achievement of best value in the procurement and provision of the Joint Committee Services;
- undertake such other functions as are reasonably necessary to further any of the purposes of the Joint Committee or the Joint Committee Services.

13.0 VOTING BY THE JOINT COMMITTEE

- 13.1 The mode of voting at meetings of the Joint Committee shall be based upon the principle of consensus.
- 13.2 Any proposal to change a policy shall not be effective unless it is a unanimous decision of voting members of the Joint Committee who are representatives of the Authorities and who are present at the meeting in question

14.0 DISTURBANCE AT MEETINGS

- 14.1 If a member of the public interrupts the proceedings of any meeting the Chairman shall warn that person. If the interruption continues the Chairman shall order the person's removal from the meeting room
- 14.2 In the case of general disturbance in any part of the meeting room open to the public the Chairman shall order that part to be cleared.
- 14.3 If a member of the Joint Committee in the opinion of the Chairman behaves improperly or offensively or deliberately obstructs business the Chairman shall warn that person. If the member continues to behave improperly the Chairman or any member may move that either the member leave the meeting or that the meeting is adjourned for a specified period. Such action should be seconded and voted upon before the individual concerned is removed, or the meeting adjourned.

15.0 OFFICERS

- 15.1 The Joint Committee may arrange for the discharge of its functions by 1 (one) or more officers of either Council.
- 15.2 The Joint Committee may only arrange for the discharge of its functions to officers offered by either Council as being available and capable of performing those functions.
- 15.3 Each officer appointed by the Joint Committee, to discharge their functions, must report to the Joint Committee on his/her exercise of the functions of the Joint Committee as the Joint Committee determines.
- 15.4 Each officer appointed by the Joint Committee, to discharge their functions, is to hold such office from the date of his/her appointment until the term of office for which he/she has been appointed by the Joint Committee expires or until he/she resigns or is removed by the Joint Committee or his/her employing Council. At no time will appointed officers be employed by the Joint Committee.

16.0 IN WITNESS whereof the Authorities have sealed this Agreement as a Deed EXECUTED (but not delivered until the Date hereof) by affixing:
the Common Seal of
Wear Valley District Council
In the presence of:

Chairman
Authorised Officer:

And the Common Seal of
Teesdale District Council
In the presence of

Chairman:
Authorised Officer:

Service Level Agreement

Between

Wear Valley District Council

And

Teesdale District Council

For the provision of
Housing and Council Tax Benefits Administration Services

Service Level Agreement 2006-2010

Service Provider

Organisation Wear Valley District Council

Name Gary Ridley

Position Director of Resource Management

Signature _____ Date _____

Customer

Organisation Teesdale District Council

Name Susan Reay

Position Director of Corporate Services

Signature _____ Date _____

1 The Agreement

1.1 Statement of Intent

This document (“the Agreement”) is an operating level agreement between Wear Valley District Council (“the Provider”) and Teesdale District Council (“the Customer”) in relation to the provision of Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration and associated ICT Services.

While the Agreement is not legally binding it represents the intention of both parties to enter into an agreement for services. This intent is embodied in the Partnership Principles outlined below.

1.2 Parties to the Agreement

Mr Gary Ridley Director of Resource Management, Wear Valley District Council
Mrs Susan Reay Director of Corporate Services, Teesdale District Council

1.3 Partnership Principles

In the spirit of partnering, the parties will work to develop an environment of cooperation and trust, using the following Partnership Principles:

- **Be accountable** - to the joint responsibilities set out in this Agreement
- **Collaborate and co-operate** - establish and adhere to the governance structure and to ensure that service activities are delivered and actions taken on a joint basis
- **Aim to share** - any efficiencies from year 2 onwards on a proportionate basis to be agreed'
- **Be open** – communicate openly about major concerns, issues or opportunities relating to the services provided
- **Learn, develop and achieve potential** – share information, experience and skills to learn from each other and develop new ways of working. Work collaboratively to identify business improvements, eliminate inefficiencies and reduce the cost of service provision
- **Adopt a positive outlook** – demonstrate a positive, “can do” attitude, looking at ways to continuously improve services
- **Focus on excellent customer and public service** – support this Agreement through an Annual Service Plan, which will show how delivery will be targeted and managed

1.4 Term of Agreement

The term of the Agreement, which covers the services specified in section 2.1 will commence on 2nd January 2007 and extend to 31st March 2010.

- The date upon which the ICT elements of this Agreement become operational is 15th January 2007

The Agreement will be reviewed annually by the parties.

A formal review of the Partnership and its continued operation will be undertaken in June/July 2009. In April 2009 the Partnership Senior Officer Board will meet to formulate the process by which this formal review will be undertaken; its scope and objectives, and present recommendations to the Joint Committee for approval.

This Agreement will continue to operate beyond the specified period until it is formally superseded by another Agreement, or either party gives notice to withdraw in accordance with Section 8.2.2 below.

1.5 Obligations

The Provider will deliver the agreed services within the agreed timeframes, standards and costs, and in accordance with the policies and corporate commitments of the Customer and government.

The Customer will not duplicate services provided under this Agreement.

Both parties agree to act in good faith and in a reasonable and timely manner with regard to the operation of the Agreement.

1.6 Document Sign-Off and Security

The Agreement is to be signed by delegated officers in duplicate and retained by both parties in a secure format.

Electronic versions of the Agreement held by either party must also be kept in a secure format.

2. Service Overview

2.1 The services to be provided

- Housing and Council Tax Benefits Claims processing
- Interventions
- Initial on-site presence at Teesdale's Customer Service Point to deal with complex customer benefits enquiries
- Telephone service
- Postal application address
- Adjudication, Appeals and overpayments
- Take-up activities
- Completion of Government Statistics and resolution of queries
- Performance Standards completion and evidence collection
- Delivering Key Stakeholder Service Level Agreements
- Finance and subsidy completion, submission and reporting, so as to maximise Teesdale District Council's financial position
- Training of Teesdale Council's and other 3rd party organisation's staff in relevant legislation and procedures to assist the delivery of a customer-focused Benefits Service
- IBS Open Revenues system administration, support and maintenance

2.1.1 Benefits Services

The back-office services are to be delivered from a single location which is to be the Wear Valley District Council offices, in Crook.

Front-line customer services for Teesdale District Council operate through a customer service point, which will continue to receive Benefits face-to-face enquiries. The initial on-site presence is required in the Teesdale Customer Service Point to deal with complex Benefits enquiries on a face-to-face basis.

- It is anticipated that the percentage of occasions when Teesdale's Customer Service staff cannot deal with an enquiry in its entirety will reduce to 20% or less within 12 months of the start of this agreement.

The current customer access points in both Wear Valley and Teesdale Districts will accept enquiries from both Councils' customers, so increasing the overall number of access points available.

A single telephone number will be promoted for Benefits customers of both Councils.

A single postal address will be promoted for Benefits customers of both Councils.

2.1.2 ICT support and maintenance

The provision of a comprehensive support, upgrade and maintenance service for the IBS Open Revenues system (for both Benefits and Council Tax) will be operated from Wear Valley District Council offices, and will include

- Provision of a Helpdesk facility for Users to report technology faults
- Liaison with IBS as a 3rd party supplier, to resolve technology faults
- A nightly back-up service of Revenues and Benefits data
- A IBS 'New User' set up facility

- The maintenance of both a 'live' and 'test' instance of the Teesdale District Council dataset
- Installation of new releases of applications as required by IBS
- Support for year-end and annual uprating processes
- The opportunity to request enhancements to systems, for consideration and costing

The provision of additional ICT services to support the Partnership, including

- Access to, and appropriate maintenance of Teesdale District Council images through the Document Management and workflow system
- A VPN link between Wear Valley District Council and Teesdale District Council for Revenues and Customer Services staff remaining at Teesdale District Council to access the IBS Open Revenues and Document Management systems/data
- Provision of associated VPN authenticated logon facilities (envisaged as token and pin)
- A Network support facility via Wear Valley District Council IT Section and the Helpdesk facility above
- Act as communications lead on behalf of Teesdale District Council, in the event of loss of connectivity/fault/outage of the internet connection and VPN
- Provision of Disaster Recovery facilities in relation to all of the above systems through Sedgfield Borough Council

2.2 Monitoring of Agreement

Monitoring to facilitate the effective operation of the Agreement is the responsibility of both parties and as a minimum is to include:

- Quarterly Joint Committee meeting of 2 Elected Member representatives from each Council to
 - Monitor this Service Level Agreement
 - Receive progress reports and any associated action plans
 - Approve the Annual Service Plan
 - Constantly monitor the Annual Service Plan
- Quarterly Senior Officer meeting
 - to discuss the development of the Annual Service Plan
 - to monitor the SLA and Annual Service Plan

3. Governance Structure

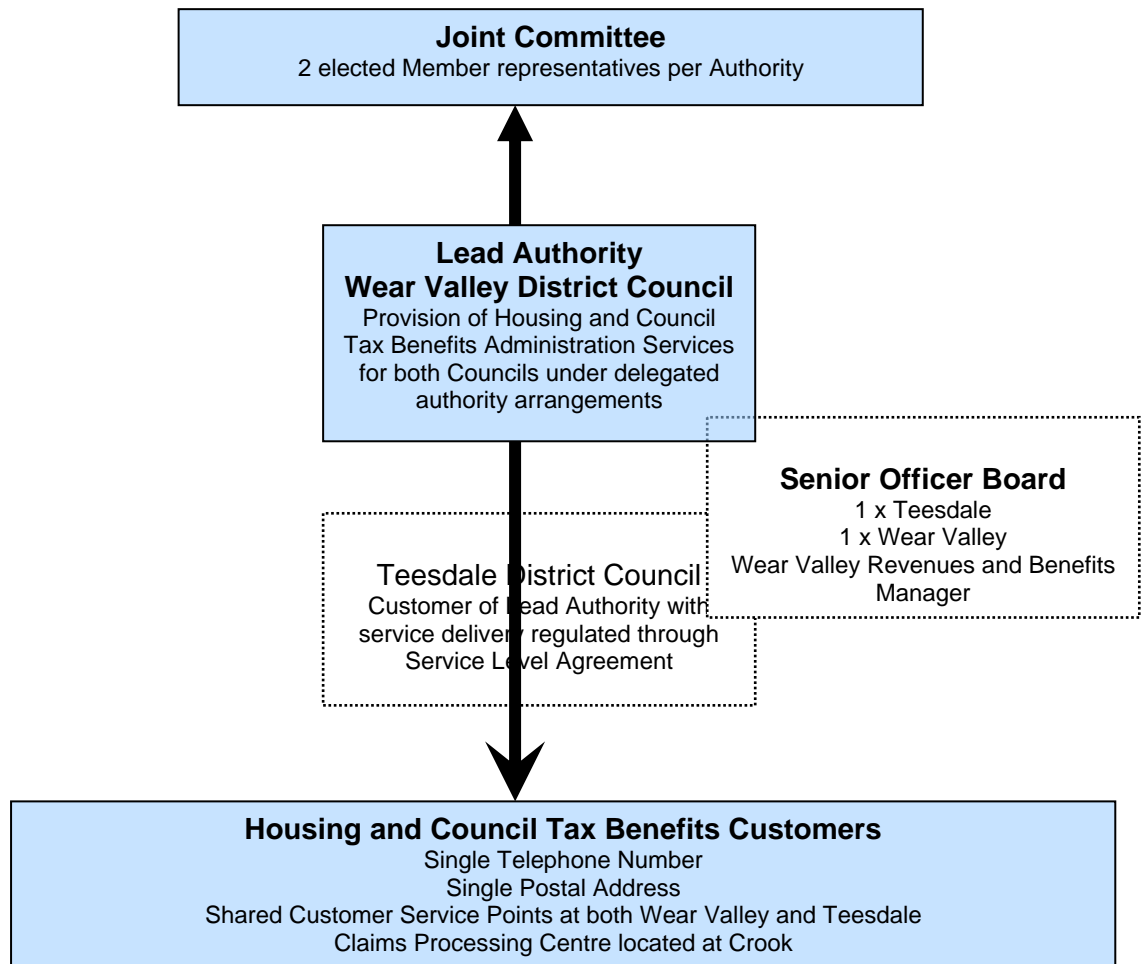
Both parties to this Agreement will seek to ensure that the Shared Service Operation continues to meet the needs of its Customers.

The Shared Service arrangements to which this Service Level Agreement relates operates on the principles of a Lead Authority Model under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and/or Part II of the Local Government Act 2000.

This is a legitimate model of local authority collaboration under the shared services agenda. Through this model Teesdale District Council are delegating their statutory function to provide Housing and Council Tax Benefits Administration Services to another Local Authority (as Lead Authority). Wear Valley District Council is, through this Agreement, requested to deliver Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration

and associated ICT Services on behalf of Teesdale District Council under delegated arrangements, for the duration of this Agreement.

The decision-making structure of this Arrangement is through a Joint Committee, with 2 Elected Members from each Authority meeting on a quarterly basis, supported by a Senior Officer Board, as illustrated by the diagram below (direct relationships and accountability represented by the blue fill):



The Members of the Joint Committee are

- Wear Valley District Council
- Wear Valley District Council
- Teesdale District Council
- Teesdale District Council

In the spirit of partnership working, the Shared Service Operation will provide easy access for its Customer to:

- Discuss audit reports
- Provide information as requested by auditor and Government bodies promptly
- Review benchmarking data and results

This will be through more informal (quarterly, or as required) meetings of Senior Officers from Wear Valley and Teesdale District Councils, and Wear Valley's Revenues & Benefits Manager, namely

Susan Reay	Director of Corporate Services, Teesdale District Council
Gary Ridley	Director of Resource Management, Wear Valley District Council
Ann Baker	Revenues & Benefits Manager, Wear Valley District Council

4. Performance

4.1 Housing and Council Tax Benefits Administration

The Shared Service Partnership will aim to provide the following service standards for each Authority:

- 4.1.1 National performance indicators to be in the top quartile for districts
- 4.1.2 Attain, and maintain the highest category performance for Performance Standards
- 4.1.3 Increase benefit take-up year-on-year
- 4.1.4 Increase customer satisfaction, as defined by the statutory triennial survey, subject to funding being made available by the customer
- 4.1.5 Engage with landlords and tenants

Take-Up activity will be carried out in an effective and efficient manner based upon experience at Wear Valley.

The philosophy and intention of this agreement is that there is no perceptible difference in published performance between Wear Valley and Teesdale Councils.

However, it is recognised that the starting point for each Council is different, and with this in mind the following specific targets in relation to improving Teesdale District Council's performance are agreed by both parties:

- a) Teesdale District Council to be Top Quartile of District Councils performance in the fourth quarter outturn 2007/8, and maintained in each annual outturn thereafter in respect of
 - (i) All National BVPI's within scope of this Agreement, for any relevant year
- b) Teesdale District Council to achieve top quartile performance (for district councils) for overpayment indicators by the 4th quarter 2008/9, and maintain thereafter

4.2 ICT Support and maintenance

The Shared Service Partnership will ensure that the ICT services provided under this arrangement, in relation to Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration, are sufficient to enable the achievement of the service targets contained in this Agreement.

A separate SLA covering the additional ICT services to be delivered to Teesdale District Council (supporting Customer Services and business critical Revenues activity) via this Partnership forms an addendum to this agreement and is appended at A.

5. Issue Management

Parties are to notify the other party promptly of any issues, concerns or complaints regarding any matter under or in the Agreement.

The parties will use every endeavour to resolve, by a process of consultation, any differences or issues arising between them. However in order to provide a formal mechanism for the resolution of issues that may arise in relation to the provision of services, the following escalation procedure will be used.

If the issue is not resolved at the initiating level, it will proceed to the next level. This escalation process will continue until the issue is resolved.

Level 1	Wear Valley's Revenues and Benefits Manager
Level 2	Senior Officer Board
Level 3	Partnership's Joint Committee

6. Compliance

The parties and their representatives must comply with all statutory requirements and Government policies as they apply to all services required and delivered under the Agreement. The parties note in particular, but not exclusively, the following areas:

6.1 Data Protection

6.1.1 Wear Valley District Council agrees that in relation to any personal data (as defined in the Data Protection Act (DPA)) it holds in relation to this Agreement it will comply, as a data controller if necessary, with the DPA including:

6.1.1.1 the eight data protection principles listed in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the DPA;

6.1.1.2 requests from data subjects for access to data held by it; and

6.1.1.3 the requirements relating to notification to the Information Commissioner by data controllers under Part 11 of the DPA.

6.1.2 Wear Valley District Council agrees that if it acquires personal data from any other party in connection with this Agreement it will:

- 6.1.2.1 maintain a valid and up to date registration or notification under the DPA which covers all processing of such data which it undertakes:
- 6.1.2.2 only undertake processing of such personal data where it is reasonably required in connection with the performance of its obligations under this Agreement;
- 6.1.2.3 not disclose such personal data to any third party other than:
 - (i) a disclosure on terms substantially the same as and no less stringent than those required by this Clause, to its employees, agents and contractors to whom such disclosure is reasonably necessary in connection with the performance of its obligations under this Agreement; or
 - (ii) as required by court order;
- 6.1.2.4 bring into effect and maintain all technical and organisational measures to prevent unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data including taking reasonable steps to ensure the reliability of staff having access to the personal data; and
- 6.1.2.5 Obtain the consent of data subjects to the disclosure of any personal data disclosed under this Agreement.

6.1.3 Nothing in this Agreement requires any Council to disclose any information to another party if that Council considers that to do so would be in breach of the DPA.

6.2 Freedom of Information 2000

- 6.2.1 In regard to requests for information that are made to Wear Valley District Council in respect of services performed on behalf of Teesdale District Council under this agreement, Wear Valley District Council will deal with the request in full compliance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. In discharging this function Wear Valley District Council will notify the Head of Democratic Services at Teesdale District Council when a Freedom of Information request has been received and provide the Head of Democratic Services with a draft copy response 5 working days before the deadline for statutory reply.
- 6.2.2 Requests for information that are made to Teesdale District Council in respect of the work performed by Wear Valley District Council under this agreement will be forwarded to the Revenues and Benefits Manager. Wear Valley District Council will supply the Head of Democratic Services at Teesdale District Council with a draft copy response 5 working days before the deadline for statutory reply.

6.3 Human Rights Act 1998

- 6.3.1 In providing services on behalf of Teesdale District Council, Wear Valley District Council will have regard to and comply with the provisions of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms 1950 which have been incorporated into United Kingdom Legislation as a result of the implementation of the Human Rights Act 1998.

6.4 Equal Opportunities

- 6.4.1 Wear Valley District Council shall have in place an equal opportunities policy which will apply to service users, potential users of the Service; their Advocates; other agencies and professionals' employees'; job applicants and the general public. Wear Valley District Council shall observe the Race Relations 1976, which places a general duty on the local authorities to be proactive in promoting race equality in terms of employment and service delivery.
- 6.4.2 Wear Valley District Council will take all appropriate steps to ensure that the service is provided in such a way that complies with its statutory obligations in respect of equality and the duty of non discrimination on the grounds of age, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, unrelated criminal convictions, colour, race, ethnic origin, nationality, employment status of customers, marital status, religion or responsibility for dependents.
- 6.4.3 In the event of any finding of unlawful discrimination against Wear Valley District Council arising from services performed by Wear Valley District Council on behalf of Teesdale District Council during the period covered by this Agreement by any Court, Employment Tribunal, or an adverse finding in any formal investigation by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Racial Equality Commission or the Disability Rights Commission over the same period, the Provider shall inform Teesdale District Council of this finding forthwith and shall take appropriate steps to prevent repetition of the discrimination.
- 6.4.4 Wear Valley District Council shall, on request, provide Teesdale District Council with details of any steps taken under these circumstances and provide such information as the Council may reasonably request from time to time for the purposes of monitoring compliance in relation to this agreement.

7 Change Control

This Agreement is to be a living document, capable of being updated and amended, over time, with the agreement of both parties. All changes should be made through the change control procedure. Potential updates will fall into a number of types.

a. Routine changes

Through discussion and agreement between the Provider management team and the Customer, changes can be made to the service agreement at any time, to meet the changing requirements and constraints of the organisation.

b. Periodic review

In addition to changes outlined above, the Service Level Agreement would be reviewed on a periodic basis to ensure it remains appropriate for the service it provides and the requirements it places on the wider organisation.

c. Service Development

Enhancements as further Cluster activities are incorporated into the Service Centre – in the pre-go live phase of additional cluster activity being added to the Service Centre, the Service Level Agreement would be re-visited to ensure it remains appropriate for the activities being undertaken.

All changes and amendments to this Service Level Agreement must be approved by the Joint Committee before coming into effect. Once agreed, all updates and amendments will be formally documented and signed off, with the amended Service Level Agreement issued to all parties highlighting the changes.

8. Termination & Exit

8.1 Termination Rights

Termination of the Agreement before the agreed term duration is possible under the following circumstances:

8.1.1 by Agreement

8.1.2 Giving Notice of a minimum of 6 months

8.1.3 Unforeseen Change in Circumstances rendering this agreement unlawful or incapable of continued execution

8.1.4 Either Council may withdraw from the Joint Committee on giving 12 (Twelve) Months' written notice to the Joint Committee.

- The actual date of service transfer will be agreed by both Councils, not less than 6 (six) months and not more than 12 (Twelve) months after the date of receipt of the written notice. This arrangement is to facilitate both Councils making appropriate arrangements for the continued delivery of the service to its customers.

8.1.5 Each Council will act in good faith and use its all reasonable endeavours to minimise the loss or harm to the other Council as a result of the termination of the agreement;

8.2 Indemnities and Liabilities

8.2.1 Wear Valley District Council will indemnify Teesdale District Council against any loss, damage, legal fees and costs suffered or incurred by Teesdale District Council resulting from:

8.2.1.1 Any act neglect or default of Wear Valley District Council; or

8.2.1.2 Any breaches of this Agreement by Wear Valley District Council, except that this clause shall not apply where such loss, damage, legal fees and costs suffered or incurred arise from any act, neglect, default or breach of this agreement, by Teesdale District Council.

8.2.2. Teesdale District Council will indemnify Wear Valley District Council against any loss, damage, legal fees and costs suffered or incurred by Wear Valley District Council resulting from:

8.2.2.1 Any act neglect or default of Teesdale District Council; or

8.2.2.2 Any breaches of this Agreement by Teesdale District Council. except that this clause shall not apply where such loss, damage, legal fees and costs suffered or incurred arise from any act, neglect, default or breach of this agreement, by Wear Valley District Council.

8.2.3 No duty of care shall arise under this Agreement.

8.3 Confidentiality

8.3.1 Each Council agrees that (except as required by Law) it will:

8.3.1.1 keep confidential and not divulge to any person any confidential, technical or commercial information concerning the business, accounts, finance, technology, expertise, contractual arrangements or other dealings, transactions or affairs of the other; and

8.3.1.2 Not use any such information for its own purposes (except as contemplated in this Agreement).

8.3.2 Each Council agrees to use its reasonable endeavours to prevent the publication or disclosure of any such confidential information.

8.3.3 Clauses 8.5.1 and 8.5.2 do not apply to any confidential information used, divulged or communicated

8.3.3.2 pursuant to a Supplier Contract;

8.3.3.3 pursuant to procurement of goods and services in accordance with Clause 22 [*Procurement Process*]

8.3.3.4 pursuant to this Agreement;

8.3.3.5 on the instructions of the other;

8.3.3.6 to its employees and professional advisers on terms that this information is confidential to them; or

8.3.3.7 under any Court order or where there is statutory obligation to disclose it.

8.3.4 Neither Council shall without the consent of the other Councils make any press or other announcement concerning any aspect of The Partnership or make any use of the name of the other in consequence of this Agreement.

9 Charging

9.1 Charging Mechanism

9.1.1 The format of charging for this agreement is on the basis of an annual management fee, payable quarterly in advance, by Teesdale District Council to Wear Valley District Council (as Lead Authority).

9.1.2 This fee covers the cost of provision of all of the services outlined in this Agreement, to the standards and performance levels documented herein.

9.1.3 Teesdale District Council will take complete responsibility, separately to the Agreement, for the ongoing maintenance/revenue costs of the following items purchased as part of the Shared Service Partnership:

- 15 IBS Revenues and Benefits Licenses
- Internet link between the two council offices
- IBS integrated Workflow
- SSL VPN with two-factor authentication
- Open Query Revenues Data Model (for TEESDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL dataset)
- Anite interface (to TEESDALE DISTRICT COUNCIL dataset)
- 5 DR Progress licenses
- 5 other Progress licenses

In addition, Teesdale District Council will continue to be responsible for the on-going cost of its current level of IBS services (represented by the sum of £26,780 in 2006/7).

9.1.4 The baseline annual fee is £280,000 (2006/7). An annual payment of £223,667 is to be made to Wear Valley District Council, with the remainder to be met by Teesdale District Council. This annual fee is to rise in line with inflation (RPI prevailing at 31 Dec of the relevant year) or 3%, whichever is the lower.

9.1.5 A pro-rata amount is payable for the transition year (2006/7), covering the period from the start of Partnership, to the 31st March 2007.

9.1.6 50% of any separate identifiable (notified through the annual DWP Grant, or mid year notification) Local Housing Allowance (LHA) subsidy paid to Teesdale District Council will be paid to Wear Valley District Council as a one-off additional payment. (Note: it is anticipated that this Grant Payment, if available, will be notified in the 2008/9 year.)

9.2 Charging Schedule

Due Date	Amount Due Calculated with inflation at 3% per annum	Period covered
1st January 2007	£55,916.75	1 st January – 31 st March 2007
1st April 2007	£57,594.25	1 st Apr – 30 th June 2007
1st July 2007	£57,594.25	1 st Jul – 30 th September 2007
1st October 2007	£57,594.25	1 st Oct – 31 st December 2007
1st January 2008	£57,594.25	1 st Jan – 31 st March 2008
1st April 2008	£59,322.08	1 st Apr – 30 th June 2008
1st July 2008	£59,322.08	1 st Jul – 30 th Sept 2008
1st October 2008	£59,322.08	1 st Oct – 31 st Dec 2008
1st January 2009	£59,322.08	1 st Jan – 31 st March 2009
1st April 2009	£61,101.75	1 st Apr – 30 th June 2009
1st July 2009	£61,101.75	1 st Jul – 30 th September 2009
1st October 2009	£61,101.75	1 st Oct – 31 st December 2009
1st January 2010	£61,101.75	1 st Jan – 31 st March 2010

9.2.1 Payments will be made by BACS to a nominated account provided by Wear Valley District Council.

9.3 Service Changes

The Shared Service operation will work on the basis of common objectives. The charge outlined above will not be altered, except where there are substantive changes to the service standards sought by the customer. (Section 7 Change Control refers.)

***** This is the end of this Agreement. *****

Wear Valley District Council

Internet & External E-Mail Use Policy

1 Introduction: the purpose of the policy

- 1.1 The use of the Internet has become part of our social culture and, like the mobile telephone, has become an essential item for everyone to use. The Internet is also being used to enhance the effective and efficient working practices of the Authority. This Internet and External E-mail Use Policy, which forms part of the Information Security Policy Document [ISPD]¹, contains rules and guidelines for using the internet facilities. The policy applies to all staff and elected members.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all our IT equipment and networks, whether or not they are used during ordinary office hours.
- 1.3 The main aim of this policy is to avoid damaging our business and reputation. Damage can take a number of forms, including but not limited to:
 - malicious damage to systems, especially through viruses;
 - advertisements or 'chain-letter' communications clogging up the systems;
 - communications that are illegal, defamatory or likely to be considered offensive.
- 1.4 We need to set out certain rules to reduce the risk of damage. Rules about access are set out in section 2. Rules about use are set out in section 4. The policy provides guidance on the good practice that you should use.
- 1.5 You need to read this document and be sure that you understand it fully. It sets out some rules that apply to you, and we expect you to follow them. If you do not follow these rules, you may be liable to disciplinary action or even (in some circumstances) criminal prosecution.
- 1.6 If you need more detailed information about using the systems mentioned in this policy, contact the IT Helpdesk on ext. 231.
- 1.7 This policy will be reviewed in line with the recommendations in the ISPD.

2 Access to internet services

- 2.1 Access to the Internet is included as part of the standard set up on all PC's. This means that you have been granted permission to utilise this tool for business purposes, and occasional (paid for) private use.

¹ The Information Security Policy Document is a top level policy document, it contains statements of intention regarding Information Security. All other policy and procedure documents (regarding information security) are written to ensure that the statements made in the ISPD are achieved.

- 2.2 You may only use the internet service provider (ISP) we approve. Where there are limits to using the approved ISP, other internet service providers must be authorised (in writing or in electronic form) by the Head of IT.
- 2.3 The internet service provider we approve uses a filtering service to prevent access to some internet sites. If other internet services have been authorised, you must make sure that you choose the filtering option if the service provider offers one.
- 2.4 Our internet facilities are for business use but we will allow staff and elected members to use them for private purposes, as long as it is reasonable and does not affect productivity. If you use these facilities, you must keep to and not break any of the conditions in this policy and pay for private use.
- 2.5 You may not use internet facilities until you have signed the declaration described in section 3.
- 2.6 You can only use internet-based e-mail accounts if the Head of IT has authorised them. To seek authorisation you may apply in writing, or use the internal e-mail system.
- 2.7 If you intentionally access a computer system or information without permission, you are breaking the law under the Computer Misuse Act 1990.
- 2.8 You must not encourage other people to break the restrictions set out above.

3 The Declaration

- 3.1 If you use or have access to our internet facilities, you need to read this policy carefully and make sure that you understand it. You need to sign the declaration (see appendix B) to confirm that you have read, understood and will keep to the policy. You must also understand that we may take action against you if you wilfully break the conditions of the policy.
- 3.2 We will keep the signed declaration in your personal file (if you are staff) or in a file kept by the Director for Resource Management (if you are an elected member). Sometimes, we may ask you to confirm that you still understand and accept the rules.
- 3.3 Appendix A contains guidelines that tell you what is and what is not good practice when you use external e-mail services.
- 3.4 If you break any of the rules on purpose, we may:
 - withdraw your access to the e-mail or internet facilities, temporarily or permanently;
 - take disciplinary action against you (if you are staff);
 - refer the matter to the Standards Committee (if you are an elected member);
 - report the matter to the Police whether or not we notify you first;

- bring criminal proceedings against you, if the matter is also a criminal offence; or
- do a combination of these things.

See also section 6.

4 Specific conditions of use

4.1 Computer viruses

4.1.1 It is a crime to deliberately introduce a computer virus, under the Computer Misuse Act 1990. You must not use our internet facilities for:

- intentionally accessing or transmitting computer viruses or other damaging software; or
- intentionally accessing or transmitting information about, or software designed for, creating computer viruses.

4.1.2 We have an automatically active virus protection system, which is licensed for use throughout the Authority. If you find a virus, or you think any material has one, you must immediately break the connection, stop using the computer and inform the IT Helpdesk, on extension 231.

4.1.3 You must always follow the instructions that the IT Helpdesk, Assistant IT Manager or Head of IT give you about virus attacks. If you are not sure how to use the virus protection system, you should get advice from the IT Section.

4.2 Prohibited content

4.2.1 You must not use, or try to use, our internet facilities to create, distribute or display in any form any material that is or may be considered to be illegal, offensive or unacceptable under our rules and policies. It is impossible to give a complete list of what is considered offensive or unacceptable, but the following are included (and in some cases may also be illegal). Anything that:

- is pornographic or obscene, or includes any form of sexually explicit humour;
- is intimidating, discriminatory (for example, racist, sexist or homophobic) or breaks our anti-harassment and equal opportunities policies in any other way;
- is defamatory;
- shows or encourages violence;
- is hateful;
- is fraudulent;
- shows or encourages criminal acts;

- may give the Authority a bad name/damage its reputation; or
- is a deliberate harmful attack on systems we use, own or manage.

4.2.2 If you want to investigate an illegal or unethical activity, you must make sure that your Head of Service or, if you are an elected member, the Director for Resource Management, knows what you are doing and that you also tell the Head of IT and Head of Internal Audit in the Central Resources Department.

4.2.3 You must not use our internet facilities for time-wasting activities, such as chain letters, or for sending private e-mails to everyone on a global address list.

4.2.4 You must not encourage other people to break the restrictions set out above.

4.3 Security

4.3.1 You must not tell anyone your password. You must not write down your password. You must not pass on your password by any method.

4.3.2 You **must not** use or try to use our facilities for:

- accessing or transmitting information about, or software designed for, breaking through security controls on any system;
- breaking through security controls on any system; or
- accessing, without permission, any e-mail that is not for you, even if it is not protected by security controls.
- Signing up to any service that is not work related.

4.3.3 If you find or suspect anyone of using the computer system illegally or unethically, you should report it to the Head of IT and your Director.

4.4 Copyright

4.4.1 Copyright presents difficulties. You should know that copyright applies to most documents automatically and that if you break the copyright rules you may be committing a criminal offence. However, a large amount of copyright material is put onto the internet with the expectation that it will be copied and distributed. The only sensible approach is to ask yourself whether the author or owner of what is being transmitted is likely to object. For example, you can pass on an e-mail that contains government advice but you should get permission before you pass on an e-mail containing some technical advice from a commercial consultant.

4.4.2 Copyright protection also applies to e-mails. For example, unlawfully scanning a chapter from a textbook and distributing the resulting file by e-mail breaks the author's copyright just as much as photocopying the chapter and sending the copies by post.

4.4.3 Computer software has copyright protection in the same way as written documents. You must not transmit copyright software from your computer to

the internet, or allow any other person to access it on your\their computer through the internet.

4.5 **Publishing information**

4.5.1 The appropriate Head of Service or, if you are an elected member, the Director for Resource Management, must authorise any information that is published on the Internet. We will not allow unauthorised publishing on our facilities. The Chief Executive's Office is responsible for managing our website.

4.5.2 Officers must make sure that any advice or information that they transmit by e-mail or over the Internet (as with other forms of correspondence) does not contradict our policies or interests. If they are in any doubt, officers should ask their Head of Service.

4.6 **Confidential or sensitive information**

4.6.1 You must not break the conditions of the Data Protection Act 1998 when you use the e-mail services of the Internet for transmitting information. If you need any more advice about these conditions, you should contact the Data Protection Officer.

4.6.3 The system will automatically attach the following disclaimer to e-mails that have been transmitted over the internet.

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please delete this email and take no action based on it. This footnote also confirms that this email message and any attachments have been scanned by Trend AntiVirus Software for the presence of computer viruses and are believed to be virus free, but it is your responsibility to carry out all necessary virus checks. Wear Valley District Council accepts no liability in connection therewith. This e-mail does not form a binding contract and are not necessarily the views of the Authority.

www.wearvalley.gov.uk

*****!

5 **Monitoring and recording**

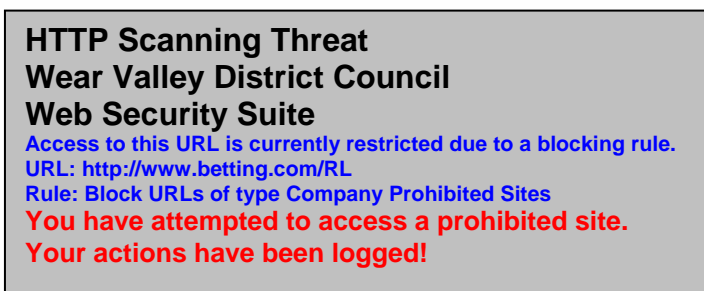
5.1 We have the right to monitor and inspect:

- any internet activity conducted using the Authority's systems;
- any web page that has been accessed using the Authority's systems;
- any external e-mails sent by our employees using our systems, both to internal and external e-mail addresses;
- any e-mails our employees receive using our systems;

- any material our employees download from the internet using our systems; and
- any electronic material our employees store on our systems.

Please note the storing of personal computer files on the councils computer system is strictly forbidden. Breach of this rule may result in disciplinary action being taken against you if you are staff or, if you are an elected member referring the matter to the Standards Committee.

- 5.2 This monitoring will make sure that this policy is effective and that our employees are keeping to it. It also assists in the effective and efficient running of the councils systems.
- 5.3 We own our e-mail systems which means that we also own all copies of messages created, received or stored on the systems. This means that nothing will be private, even if you mark it as 'private'.
- 5.4 The authority uses an Internet filtering application. This application is used to block access to web sites and pages that come under the categories as stated in section **4.2 Prohibited Content**.



Example of what the blocking notification message may look like.

- 5.5 The Authority uses an application that filters all incoming and outgoing e-mail. The filtering process is used to protect the systems, applications and computers against threats from malicious activity. It also protects the users of the e-mail system against inappropriate messages and images. The system also filters out SPAM e-mail messages.
- 5.6 This filtering process may entail the blocking of e-mails, if they appear to break any of the policy statements. A notification e-mail message will be sent to the sender and the intended recipient, stating why the message was blocked.
- 5.7 We centrally record how our internet facilities are used. We regularly inspect the records to check for any access or attempted access to Internet sites that are not allowed under the conditions of this e-mail and internet use policy. We also monitor the records to make sure that our business is not affected by people using the Internet too much or without permission.
- 5.8 If you access a prohibited internet site unintentionally, you must break the connection immediately and report it to the IT Helpdesk, your Head of Service or, if you are an elected member, to the Director for Resource Management. If you do not do this, we may take action against you.

- 5.9 You should protect yourself by not allowing unauthorised people to use your Internet facility. If you share an Internet facility with other users, the person whose name the account is in should protect themselves by keeping a record of everyone who uses their facility and that they have read and understood this policy. This record should show the date and start and finish times of access, and the name of the user (see also paragraph 2.5).

6 If you break this policy

- 6.1 If you misuse our systems, we could take disciplinary action against you which may lead to you being dismissed. Serious cases will result in you being dismissed for gross misconduct.
- 6.2 If you try to damage, defeat or deceive one of our security facilities, we will take disciplinary action against you.
- 6.3 If you suspect someone has broken this policy, you should report this to your line manager and IT Helpdesk. If a problem is discovered at an early stage, we can usually deal with it at a local level. However, if the case is more serious, the line manager should report it to the Head of Service or Director. In certain circumstances, we may need to carry out an investigation and inform internal audit.

Part 1

External E-mail code of practice

The following guidelines tell you what is and what is not good practice when you use external or internet e-mail services.

You **should**:

- check your external e-mail inbox for new messages every day;
- reply to all e-mails in line with your department's standards for dealing with correspondence, making sure that you get the appropriate authorisation;
- check the message and think how the person will react to it, or how you would feel if you received it, before you send it;
- make sure you use correct and up-to-date e-mail addresses;
- attach a signature to your e-mails giving your name, job title and contact details, preferably in rich text format (RTF);
- file e-mails when you have dealt with it and delete any items that you do not need to keep; and

You **should not**:

- use e-mail to manage staff where face-to-face discussion is more appropriate;
- create wide-distribution e-mails (for example, to addressees throughout the world).
- print out messages you receive or send unless you need a hard copy;
- attach large files to e-mails and send to many addressees²;
- send an e-mail that the recipient will think is a waste of resources; or
- use any jargon, abbreviations or symbols if the recipient may not understand them.

Part 2

Internet code of practice guidelines

The following guidelines tell you what is and what is not good practice when you use Internet services.

You **should**:

- Remember that Internet access is provided as a business tool.

² If this must be done then contact the I.T. helpdesk who will provide guidance and assistance.

- End the Internet connection when it is no longer required.
- Use only services you have authorisation to access.
- Always represent yourself as yourself -- never someone else.
- Respect copyrights and licenses.

You **should not** use the Internet access for;

- signing up to anything, without the prior authorisation of a Head of Service or Director.
- downloading any files, data, images, screensavers, music or documents without permission.
- personal gain or profit.
- solicitation of employees.
- providing information about, or lists of, company employees to others.
- commercial solicitations of a non-authority enterprise.
- violating any law or the rights of any person.
- accessing or storing any material that would be considered inappropriate, offensive or disrespectful to others.
- mis-representing yourself or representing yourself as someone else.



Declaration for Internet users

You must read, understand and sign this form if you are authorised and use Internet services on any of the Councils systems. We will keep the completed form in your personal file if you are staff, or in a file kept by the Director for Resource Management if you are an elected member.

Declaration

I confirm that, as an authorised user of the council's internet facility, I have read, understood and accepted all of the conditions in the Internet & External E-mail Use policy.

I also fully accept that if I deliberately break any conditions in the policy, you may:

- withdraw my access to internet facilities, temporarily or permanently;
- take disciplinary action against me (if I am staff);
- refer the matter to the appropriate ethics or standards committee (if I am an elected member);
- report the matter to the Police whether or not we notify you first;
- begin criminal proceedings against me, if the matter is also a criminal offence; or
- do a combination of these things.

Your details

Name:

Job title:

Department:

Your signature:

Date:

7. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Author: bennek	Date: 15/11/2004
Checked by: PE	Date: 15/02/2005
Authorised by: PW	Date: 02/03/2005

Version	Date	Revision Description and Revisors Name.
Draft 1.0	15/11/2004	Draft version not checked and not approved.
1.1	02/03/2005	Checked and approved, first live version.
1.11	27/04/2005	KB- Description of ISPD added to page 1. Reference to corporate flyer re passwords removed from section 4.3.
1.12	18/05/2005	Amendments made to approvers (GR) recommendations. Was Internet Use Policy, now Internet & External E-Mail Policy. KB
1.13	26/05/2005	Internet use guidelines added to appendix A. KB.
1.14	17/11/2005	Amendments web filtering and blocking added. KB
1.141	25/11/2005	Amendment made to include signing up for non work related services prohibited. KB.
1.142	03/07/2006	Amendment made as consequence of union review, page 8 large file attachments. KB.

Wear Valley District Council

Internal E-mail Use Policy

1 Introduction: the purpose of the policy

- 1.1 E-mail is the third most common use of communication, only beaten by the spoken word and the telephone. We as an organisation use this medium to distribute information to both internal and external contacts. This policy, which will form part of the Information Security Policy Document [ISPD], sets out the rules and best practice methods for its use. It applies to all staff and elected council members.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all our I.T. equipment and networks, whether they are used during ordinary office hours or not.
- 1.3 The aim of this policy is to reduce or negate the damage that may be incurred while using e-mail systems. Damage can take a number of forms, including but not limited to:
- malicious damage to systems, especially through viruses;
 - advertisements or 'chain-letter' communications clogging up the systems; and
 - communications that are illegal, defamatory or likely to be considered offensive.
- 1.4 We need to set out certain rules to reduce the risk of damage. The rules concerning Conditions of Use are set out in section 3. The policy also provides guidance on the good practices that you should use; these are in Appendix A
- 1.5 If you need more detailed information about using the systems mentioned in this policy, contact the IT Help desk on ext. 231.
- 1.6 This policy will be reviewed as per the recommendations as set out in the ISPD.
- 1.7 This policy relates to the Information Security Policy Document [ISPD] section 2.2.75 'Technical Controls' and to BS7799: Part Two section 4.6.7.4 'Security of electronic mail'.

2 Access to e-mail

- 2.1 All requests for internal e-mail accounts must be authorised in writing or in electronic form by:
- your Head of Service or Director (if you are staff); or

- the Director for Resource Management (if you are an elected member).
- 2.2 The authority's e-mail facilities are provided for business use but, we will allow staff and elected members to use them **for private purposes**, as long as it is reasonable and does not impact on your productivity. All private e-mail messages should be distinguishable from business e-mails by suitable phrasing in the subject header.
- 2.3 Please note that the sending of, or the replying to, an email is considered to be contractually binding as defined in 3.6.3.
- 2.4 You may not use the e-mail facilities until you have signed the declaration as described in section 6.
- 2.5 If you intentionally access a computer system or information without permission, you are breaking the law under the Computer Misuse Act 1990.

3 Specific conditions of use

3.1 Computer viruses

3.1.1 It is a crime to deliberately introduce a computer virus, under the Computer Misuse Act 1990. You must not use our e-mail facilities for:

- intentionally accessing or transmitting computer viruses or other damaging software; or
- intentionally accessing or transmitting information about, or software designed for, creating computer viruses.

3.1.2 We have an automatically active virus protection system, which is licensed for use throughout the council. If you find a virus, or you think the material has one, you must immediately break the connection, stop using the computer and tell the IT Helpdesk, on extension 231 immediately.

3.1.3 You must always follow the instructions that the IT Helpdesk, Assistant IT Manager or Head of IT give you about virus attacks. If you are not sure how to use the virus protection system, you should get advice from the IT Help desk on ext. 231.

3.1.4 You must never switch off the anti virus software, or cause the anti-virus checking process to be by-passed in any way.

3.2 Prohibited content

3.2.1 You must not use, or try to use, our e-mail facilities to create, distribute or display in any form any material that is or may be considered to be illegal, offensive or unacceptable under our rules and policies. It is impossible to give a complete list of what is considered offensive or

unacceptable, but the following are included (and in some cases may also be illegal). Anything that:

- is pornographic or obscene, or includes any form of sexually explicit humour;
- is intimidating, discriminatory (for example, racist, sexist or homophobic) or breaks our anti-harassment and equal opportunities policies in any other way;
- is defamatory;
- shows or encourages violence;
- is hateful;
- is fraudulent;
- shows or encourages criminal acts;
- may give us a bad name; or
- is a deliberate harmful attack on systems we use, own or manage.

3.2.2 If you want to investigate an illegal or unethical activity, you must make sure that your Head of Service or, if you are an elected member, the Director of Central Recourses, knows what you are doing and that you also tell the Head of IT and Head of Internal Audit in the Central Resources Department.

3.2.3 You must not encourage other people to send you e-mails that break the restrictions above.

3.2.4 You must not use our e-mail system for time-wasting activities, such as chain letters, or for sending private e-mails to everyone on a global address list.

3.2.5. You may not use the Council e-mail system, or Council provided Internet based e-mail systems, or any computer system owned by the council for the purpose of conducting private business.

3.2.6. You may not use the Council e-mail systems, or Council provided Internet based e-mail systems, to forward or send 'chain' emails.

3.3 Security

3.3.1 You must not tell anyone your password. You must not write down your password unless it is in a disguised form. You must not pass on your password by any method. For more information please see the corporate flyer on passwords.

3.3.2 You **must not** use or try to use our facilities for:

- accessing or transmitting information about, or software designed for, breaking through security controls on any system;
- breaking through security controls on any system; or

- accessing, without permission, any e-mail that is not for you, even if it is not protected by security controls.
- running a private business.
- the dissemination of any information that is derogatory about the council, any of the councils employees or any of the elected members.
- The sending of any documentation or data that you have not been authorised to have access to.
- Signing up to any service that is not work related.

3.3.3 If you find or suspect anyone of using the computer system illegally or unethically, you should report it to the Head of IT and your Director.

3.4 **Copyright**

3.4.1 Copyright presents difficulties. You should know that copyright applies to most documents automatically and that if you break the copyright rules you may be committing a criminal offence. However, a large amount of copyright material is put onto the Internet with the expectation that it will be copied and distributed. The only sensible approach is to ask yourself whether the author or owner of what is being transmitted is likely to object. For example, you can pass on an e-mail that contains government advice but you should get permission before you pass on an e-mail containing some technical advice from a commercial consultant.

3.4.2 Copyright protection also applies to e-mails. For example, unlawfully scanning a chapter from a textbook and distributing the resulting file by e-mail breaks the author's copyright just as much as photocopying the chapter and sending the copies by post.

3.4.3 Computer software has copyright protection in the same way as written documents. You must not transmit, copy or send copyright software from any computer or system owned by the council

3.5 **Publishing information**

3.5.1 Officers must make sure that any advice or information that they transmit by e-mail or over the Internet (as with other forms of correspondence) does not contradict our policies or interests. If they are in any doubt, officers should ask their Head of Service.

3.6 **Confidential or sensitive information**

3.6.1 You must not break the conditions of the Data Protection Act 1998, when you use the e-mail services for transmitting information. If you need any more advice about these conditions, you should contact the Data Protection Officer.

3.6.2 Any and all Internet e-mail facilities are not a secure way of transmitting confidential, sensitive or legally privileged information. Internet e-mail is as insecure as a postcard that you send through the normal post. So, you should make sure that Internet e-mail is a suitable medium for transmitting the information. If you need to send information that is confidential, sensitive or legally privileged, take advice from your IT section about special security measures (such as encryption) that you must use. If you allow anyone to see this type of information without permission, you may be breaking the law.

3.6.3 The e-mail system will automatically attach the following disclaimer to e-mails that have been transmitted over the internet.

This email and any files transmitted with it are confidential and intended solely for the use of the individual or entity to whom they are addressed. If you have received this email in error please delete this email and take no action based on it. This footnote also confirms that this email message and any attachments have been scanned by Trend AntiVirus Software for the presence of computer viruses and are believed to be virus free, but it is your responsibility to carry out all necessary virus checks. Wear Valley District Council accepts no liability in connection therewith. This e-mail does not form a binding contract and are not necessarily the views of the Authority.

www.wearvalley.gov.uk

4. Monitoring and recording

4.1 We have the right to monitor and inspect:

- any e-mails sent by our employees using our systems, both to internal and external addresses;
- any e-mails our employees receive using our systems;
- any material our employees download from the internet using our systems; and
- any electronic material our employees store on our systems.

Please note the storing of personal computer files¹ on the councils computer system is strictly forbidden. Breach of this rule may result in disciplinary action being taken against you if you are staff or, if you are an elected member referring the matter to the Standards Committee.

4.2 This monitoring will make sure that this policy is effective and that our employees are keeping to it. It also assists in the effective and efficient running of the councils systems.

¹ 'Personal files' are those files that are not directly related to the business of the authority.

- 4.3 The council owns the e-mail system, which means that we also own all copies of messages created, received or stored on the systems. This means that nothing will be private, even if you mark it as 'private'.
- 4.4 All information gathered during the normal day-to-day monitoring process will only be used for the analysis of the e-mail systems.
- 4.5 The Authority uses an application that filters all incoming and outgoing e-mail. The filtering process is used to protect the systems, applications and computers against threats from malicious activity. It also protects the users of the e-mail system against inappropriate messages and images. The system also filters out SPAM e-mail messages.
- 4.6 This filtering process may entail the blocking of e-mails if they appear to break any of the policy statements. A notification e-mail message will be sent to the sender and the intended recipient stating why the message was blocked.
- 4.7 If a suspected breach of security or misuse of the email system is detected, then the Head of I.T. will instigate an investigation that may lead to email messages being monitored and recorded. The information gathered from this monitoring process will only be used to determine whether a security breach or a misuse of the email system has occurred.
- 4.8 This information will only be kept for as long as it is pertinent to the task that it was collated for, and will not be used for any other purpose. The information will be destroyed when it is no longer required.
- 4.9 At times it may be necessary to authorise access to an absent staff members e-mail messages. This authorisation will only be given to ascertain if there are business related communications that need to be dealt with in the staff members absence. Such authorisation can only be given by the absent members head of department (or his representative).

5 If you break this policy

- 5.1 If you misuse our systems, we could take disciplinary action against you which may lead to you being dismissed. Serious cases will result in you being dismissed for gross misconduct.
- 5.2 If you try to damage, defeat or deceive one of our security facilities, we will take disciplinary action against you. Which may result in you being dismissed for gross misconduct.
- 5.3 If you suspect someone has broken this policy, you should report this to the line manager and IT Helpdesk. If a problem is discovered at an early stage, we can usually deal with it at a local level. However, if the case is more serious, the line manager should report it to the Head of Service or Director. In certain circumstances, we may need to carry out an investigation and internal audit.

6 Declaration of acceptance

- 6.1 If you use or have access to our e-mail facilities, you need to read this policy carefully and make sure that you understand it. You then need to sign the declaration (see appendix B) to confirm that you have read, understood and will keep to the policy. You must also understand that we may take action against you if you wilfully break the conditions of the policy.
- 6.2 We will keep the signed declaration in your personal file (if you are staff) or in a file kept by the Director for Resource Management (if you are an elected member). Sometimes, we may ask you to confirm that you still understand and accept the rules.
- 6.3 If you break any of the rules on purpose, we may:
- withdraw your access to the e-mail facilities, temporarily or permanently;
 - take disciplinary action against you (if you are staff);
 - refer the matter to the Standards Committee (if you are an elected member);
 - bring criminal proceedings against you, if the matter is also a criminal offence; or
 - report the matter to the Police whether or not we notify you first;
 - do a combination of these things.

Internal E-mail code of practice guidelines

The following guidelines (some of which also apply to other forms of correspondence) tell you what is and what is not good practice when you use internal e-mail services.

You **should**:

- check your e-mail inbox for new messages every day;
- reply to e-mails in line with your department's standards for dealing with correspondence, making sure that you get the appropriate authorisation;
- check the message and think how the person will react to it, or how you would feel if you received it, before you send it;
- make sure you use correct and up-to-date e-mail addresses;
- attach a signature to your e-mails giving your name, job title and contact details, preferably in rich text format (RTF);
- file mail when you have dealt with it and delete any items that you do not need to keep; and
- use the 'Out of Office' facility to tell internal and possible external e-mail senders when you will read their message, or use the 'delegate' facilities so another authorised person can read and deal with new e-mails while you are out.

You **should not**:

- use e-mail to manage staff where face-to-face discussion is more appropriate;
- create wide-distribution e-mails (for example, to addressees throughout the world) unless this form of communication is vital;
- print out messages you receive or send unless you need a hard copy;
- send large file attachments to e-mails to many addressees;
- send an e-mail that the person who receives it will think is a waste of resources; or
- use jargon, abbreviations or symbols if the person who receives the e-mail may not understand them.

Declaration for e-mail users

You must read, understand and sign this form if you use our e-mail services. We will keep the completed form in your personal file if you are staff, or in a file kept by the Director for Resource Management if you are an elected member.

Declaration

I confirm that, as an authorised user of the council's e-mail facilities, I have read, understood and accepted all of the conditions within the e-mail use policy.

I fully accept that any e-mail message, that I am the sender or recipient of, may be intercepted for such business purposes as the Lawful Business Practice Regulations 2000 and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 allow.

I also fully accept that if I deliberately break any conditions in the policy, you may:

- withdraw my access to the internal e-mail facility, temporarily or permanently;
- take disciplinary action against me (if I am staff);
- refer the matter to the Standards Committee (if I am an elected member);
- report the matter to the Police whether or not we notify you first;
- begin criminal proceedings against me, if the matter is also a criminal offence; or
- do a combination of these things.

Your details

Name:

Job title:

Department (if this applies):

Location (if this applies):

Your signature:

Date:

DOCUMENT HISTORY

Author: bennek	Date: 13/12/2004
Checked by: PE	Date: 15/02/2005
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Version	Date	Revision Description and Revisors Name.
Draft 1.0	13/12/2004	Draft version not checked and not approved
1.1	02/03/2005	Checked and approved, first live version.
1.11	19/05/2005	Amendments made to approvers (GR) recommendations. Was E-Mail Use Policy now Internal E-Mail Use Policy.
1.12	17/11/2005	Amendments made to include e-mail filtering and blocking process. KB.
1.121	25/11/2005	Amendments made to include signing up for non working services not allowed. KB
1.122	03/07/2006	Amendments made as consequence of union review, definition of personal files added to item 4.1 page 5. KB



Teesdale & Wear Valley
SHARED SERVICES

Benefits Service

**DISCRETIONARY HOUSING
PAYMENTS POLICY**

TEESDALE AND WEAR VALLEY SHARED SERVICE

POLICY FOR THE AWARD OF DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS

Background

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) were introduced to take effect from 2nd July 2001.

They replaced existing Exceptional Hardship Payments. DHP's are not payments of benefit. They are free-standing payments to be made at the discretion of the local authority, subject to an annual cash limit, in cases where the local authority considers that additional help with housing costs is needed.

Housing costs covers rent and council tax liability which opens the scheme up to home owners as well as local authority and private tenants.

The legislation governing DHP's can be found in the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001 (SI2001/1167).

The main features of the scheme are that:

- It is completely separate from the Housing and Council Tax Benefit schemes.
- Housing or Council Tax Benefit must be in payment and the weekly amount of DHP awarded must not exceed the maximum HB or CTB that could be awarded.
- The operation of the scheme is at the council's discretion, apart from a few specific areas.
- The claimant does not have a statutory right to a payment.
- The amount that the authority can pay out in any financial year is cash limited by the Secretary of State.
- To apply for a payment the only requirement is that the claimant has a Housing and/or Council Tax benefit entitlement.
- Payments cannot be made in respect of housing costs that are otherwise not eligible for Housing Benefit, for example, fuel charges included in a person's rent.
- If rent or council tax payments are increased due to arrears, a DHP payment cannot be made to cover these.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to specify how Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Service will operate the DHP scheme and to indicate some of the factors that will be considered when deciding if a DHP can be made. Each case will be treated strictly on its merits and all customers will be treated equally and fairly. The Benefits Service is committed to working with the local voluntary sector, social landlords and other interested parties in the Districts to maximise entitlement to all available state benefits and this will be reflected in the administration of DHP schemes.

Statement of Objectives

The Benefits Section will consider making a DHP to customers who meet the qualifying criteria as specified in this policy. The Benefits Section will treat all applications on their individual merits and will seek through the operation of this policy to:

- Alleviate poverty.
- Encourage and sustain Teesdale and Wear Valley residents in employment.
- Safeguard Teesdale and Wear Valley residents in their homes.
- Help those who are trying to help themselves.
- Keep families together.
- Support the vulnerable in the local community.
- Promote stability in the private rented sector.
- Help customers through personal crises and difficult events.
- Minimise the risk of Teesdale and Wear Valley residents losing their homes.

Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Service considers that the DHP scheme should be seen primarily as a short-term emergency fund. It is not and should not be considered as a “way round” any current or future entitlement restrictions set out within the Housing and Council Tax benefit legislation.

Claiming a DHP

A claim for a DHP must be made in writing on paper or via email. A letter or signed statement, including a “change of circumstances report” form, will be deemed sufficient and treated as the date of claim providing the following conditions are met:

- The customer completes and returns the DHP application form within one month of the date the form was issued by the Benefit Section (if one has not already been provided).
- The Benefits Section may request any reasonable and relevant information or evidence in support of a claim for DHP. The customer will be asked to provide the information or evidence within one calendar month of the request. The time limit will be extended in appropriate circumstances.
- If the customer is unable or does not provide the required information or evidence, the Benefit Section will consider the application and will take into account any other available evidence including that held on the Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit claims. A decision will be made on the available information.

- The Benefit Section reserves the right to verify any information or evidence provided by the claimant in appropriate circumstances. This would include contacting Third Parties to verify information. The council may disregard any unsubstantiated evidence and they will look to draw their own conclusions based on the evidence that is available.

Period of Award

The Benefits Section will decide both the level and duration of the award of DHP based on the known facts and evidence supplied.

The start of a DHP award will usually be:

- The Monday after the written letter, email, signed statement or application form is received by the authority.
- The date on which entitlement to HB/CTB commenced, providing that the DHP claim is made within one month of the council notifying the customer of the HB/CTB decision.

whichever is the most appropriate.

The Benefit Section cannot award a DHP for any period for which the customer has no entitlement to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit under the HB/CTB statutory scheme.

The minimum period for which a DHP may be awarded is one week, but in most cases DHP's will be awarded for not less than 13 weeks.

The Benefit Section will not normally make an initial award of DHP for a period exceeding 60 weeks, but on review the reviewing officer may decide to repeat, terminate, increase or decrease the award.

The Benefit Section will consider any reasonable request for backdating a DHP claim, but such backdating will not usually be extended for more than 52 weeks before the date on which the Section receives the customer's request for backdating.

Awarding a DHP

The Benefits Supervisor dealing with the DHP claim shall consider the full circumstances and make a recommendation on how much, if any, DHP to award.

The Supervisor will pass the recommendation to the Deputy Benefits Manager (or Benefits Manager in his/her absence) who shall agree or amend the recommendation.

The Deputy Benefits Manager will pass the recommendation to the Head of Finance (or Revenues & Benefits Manager or Strategic Director of Resource Management in his/her absence) who will make the decision to agree/refuse/amend the recommendation.

Wherever possible, the Benefits Section will make a decision on any claim for a DHP within 2 weeks of receiving the necessary information and evidence, or as soon as is reasonably practicable thereafter.

In deciding whether to award a DHP, the Benefit Section will take into account any of the following factors, which may be relevant:

- The shortfall between HB/CTB and the rental/council tax liability (net of any ineligible charges).
- Whether the amount of rent has been restricted by a Rent Officer's decision.
- Any steps taken by the customer to reduce their rental or council tax liability.
- The financial and medical or social needs and circumstances of the claimant, their partner and any other persons in the household.
- The income and expenditure of the claimant, their partner and any other persons in the household.
- Any savings or capital held by the claimant or family members.
- The level of debt of the claimant and family.
- Any exceptional circumstances of the claimant or family members.
- Any special reasons which make it necessary or especially desirable for the claimant to occupy the dwelling in respect of which the liability arises.
- The probable consequences of rent or council tax arrears for the claimant or family members, especially if any of them are vulnerable by reason of age, sickness or disability.
- Whether a pre-tenancy determination was conducted prior to accepting the tenancy.
- The circumstances surrounding the claimants move.
- Details of previous accommodation and rent charged if applicable.
- Whether family members external to the household help in any way towards the financial expenditure.
- Whether a notice to quit has been served.
- Any steps taken by the claimant to help him or herself, for example, looking for suitable alternative cheaper accommodation.

The Benefit Section will also have to consider:

- The amount of DHP budget which they have for the financial year.
- The ability to make future payments of DHP to other claimants.

An award of DHP does not necessarily make the claimants eligible to receive the payment again once the initial award runs out. This applies even if the claimant's circumstances remain the same.

Method of Payment

As a general rule DHP's will be paid together with housing or council tax benefit.

Where the claimant is a private tenant, the DHP will be issued to the normal payee alongside the housing benefit entitlement.

If the claimant provides evidence that they have been paying their proportion of the rent, where the DHP is for a back period, these arrears can be issued to the tenant.

Where the tenant is a local authority tenant, the DHP payments will be credited to their rent account.

Where the DHP is used to help with council tax liability, the DHP payment will be credited to their council tax account.

In the event that the award of a DHP puts a customer's rent or council tax account in credit, the customer will have the option of applying for a cash refund or leaving the credit on the account against future liability.

In any event the Benefits Section will have the final decision as to the most appropriate person to pay, the method and timing of payments, based upon the particular circumstances of each case.

Notification

The Council will inform the claimant of the outcome of their claim in writing. They will be notified of the following:

Successful applicants

- The weekly amount of DHP awarded.
- The period of award.
- How, when and to whom the award will be paid.
- The requirement to report any relevant change.

Unsuccessful applicants

- The reason why their application was unsuccessful

All applicants

- Their appeal rights

Changes of Circumstances

As the recipient of a DHP is also in receipt of HB/CTB they must adhere to the same regulations of reporting a change in their circumstances that might effect their HB/CTB and DHP.

- All changes in circumstances must be reported within one month of the change happening.
- Depending on the nature of the change, we may review the award of DHP.
- A review will also be made, when there is a change in the amount of HB and/or CTB the claimant receives, or their rent or council tax alters.

Rights of Appeal

DHP's are not payments of Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit and are therefore not subject to the statutory appeals mechanism.

The Benefits Section will operate the following policy for dealing with appeals about a refusal to award a DHP, a decision to award a reduced amount of DHP, a decision not to backdate a DHP or a decision that there has been an overpayment of a DHP.

- A claimant or appointee who disagrees with a DHP may dispute the decision. The request shall be made in writing, signed by the claimant (or signed authorisation for someone to act on their behalf) and received by the Benefit Section within one month of the written decision about the DHP. Where appropriate, a Benefits Supervisor will explain the DHP decision to the claimant by telephone, at interview or in writing and will seek to resolve the matter.
- Where agreement cannot be reached, a different Benefits Supervisor will look at the DHP application again. The Supervisor will consider the full circumstances again and will make a recommendation as to whether the original decision was correct, and of any changes they would recommend to the decision. This recommendation in turn is passed to the Benefits Manager, who will agree or amend the recommendation. The final decision will then lie with the Revenues and Benefits Manager. The claimant will be advised of the decision and given further appeal rights.
- Should the claimant still disagree with the second decision they will be entitled to have the appeal heard by the Strategic Director for Resource Management (SDRM) (or such other person as he shall appoint, being either a Director or Assistant Director of the Council) providing the appeal is delivered in writing within one calendar month of the date of the second decision sent to the claimant.

The SDRM may access all the information held by the Benefit Section and interview Officers involved in the decision making process. The claimant will be invited to present their case to the SDRM (or a representative of their choosing) and the Deputy Benefits Manager or Benefits Manager will also be present to represent the Benefits Section. The decision made by the panel will wherever possible be given verbally to all parties on the day the appeal is heard and also notified in writing to both the Benefits Manager and to the claimant.

The decision of the SDRM will be final and binding and may only be challenged via the judicial review process or by complaint to the Local Government Ombudsmen.

Overpayments

In the event that a DHP is found to have been overpaid, Officers will consider whether it is appropriate to recover it in full, in part or not at all. As a general rule, overpayments caused by official error will not be recovered, unless the customer caused or contributed to the error or was aware that too much was being paid.

Overpaid DHP's will be recoverable from the claimant or payee. In most cases the council will invoice the claimant or payee. Under no circumstances will recovery be made from HB or CTB payments due to the claimant.

Any letter notifying a customer of a decision on overpaid DHP's, recoverability or the person from whom recovery will be made, shall offer the opportunity for the customer to seek review.

Publication

The Benefit Section will publicise the scheme and will work with all interested parties to achieve this.

Fraud

Teesdale and Wear Valley Shared Service is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. A claimant who tries to fraudulently claim a DHP by falsely declaring their circumstances, providing a false statement or evidence in support of their application, may have committed an offence under the Theft Act 1968. Where it is alleged, or the council suspects, that such a fraud may have been committed, the matter will be investigated. If fraud is found to have occurred, action will be taken including the recover of overpaid monies and, if appropriate, criminal proceedings.

Wear Valley District Council

Energy Management Policy

Introduction

Wear Valley District Council is committed through its corporate objectives to protect and enhance the environment. Consequently, it has signed the Nottingham Declaration that sets out the environmental, social and financial benefits from tackling the effects of climate change. By signing the declaration, the Council is committed through action at a local level to delivery of the national climate change programme and a reduction in the volume of harmful emissions resulting from its activities.

The Council aims to minimise the environmental impacts of its activities whilst providing cost-saving benefits. It also acknowledges the significant impact that its energy use has on the natural environment, on the use of finite fossil fuels and on the cost to local taxpayers.

Policy Aim

To raise awareness and promote good practice amongst all staff and users and to promote the benefits of energy efficiency throughout the Council through reducing energy consumption in Council buildings and facilities thereby minimising expenditure and reducing environmental pollution, particularly CO₂ emissions.

Responsibility

This Energy Management Policy is the responsibility of the Asset Management Group (AMG). The AMG will ensure that the aims and objectives of the policy are reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant. The AMG also monitors the implementation of any action plan associated with achieving the objectives and targets set down in this policy. The chairman of the Central Resources Committee will act as Member champion to promote the aims and objectives of this policy.

Objectives

Wear Valley District Council will comply with all relevant environmental legislation, regulation and any other requirements to which the authority is subject. As part of the Nottingham Declaration and its associated energy-related activities, we will implement a structured energy management system that will include:

- Policy
- Organisational structure and responsibilities
- Target setting, recording, monitoring and reporting
- Involvement and training of employees
- Work procedures
- Effective investment and reporting.

Our commitment to reducing our energy consumption will aim to:

- Eliminate all forms of energy waste, thus reducing energy costs and emissions.
- Record, monitor, evaluate and report performance levels against the agreed targets and review these annually
- Purchase energy at the lowest economic and environmentally friendly rate using effective contract procurement
- Establish performance improvement targets, related to energy consumed per m₂ of building floor area
- Establish the members of the Asset Management Group as energy efficiency champions
- Increase awareness of energy efficiency amongst all employees and provide necessary training
- Invest in worthwhile and cost-effective energy efficient projects having regard to life-cycle running costs
- Ensure that all new build and refurbishment projects are designed for best practice energy use
- Evaluate and adopt the use of renewable energy sources as appropriate
- Liaise with other local authorities to share good practice, including energy procurement and the purchase of “green” electricity
- Ensure a comfortable working environment for staff where temperature and humidity levels do not compromise productivity

These aims will be achieved through actions detailed within plans formulated by the AMG. The AMG will report periodically to the Corporate Management Team and members on progress against achieving the Energy Management Policy Objectives.

Performance Management

The Council will aim to reduce its energy consumption by 15% across its major buildings and facilities by 2010. This is calculated using 2006/07 consumption levels as the base. Other energy related targets are set down in the Council’s Asset Management Plan. It will also increase the use of renewable energy technologies within public buildings.

Performance against targets will be reported annually to Members as part of the current monitoring arrangements for asset management.

Communication

This policy will be communicated by:

- Providing a copy to every employee
- Publicising its content through staff newsletters
- Publicising its content within Wear Valley Matters
- Placing a copy on the Council’s website