



Service Plan Template for 2008/09 (covering April 2008 – March 2011)

Service Plan for: Public Services

Directorate: Resources

Service Plan Holder: James Drury

Workplans: Benefits, Revenues, Registration Services,
York Customer Centre,
Business Support

Director: Simon Wiles

Signed off

Date:

EMAP : Corporate Services,
Cllr Ceredig Jamieson-Ball

Signed off

Date:

Section 1: The service

Service description

The Public Services division covers six major functions:

Benefits Service

Calculate and pay Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit for 12,000 claimants totalling £37.3m. Maximise benefit take-up and provide a welfare benefits advice service. Prevent and detect fraud through regular interventions and visits. Provide an enquiry service to customers. Based at City Finance Centre with reception points in Library Square and Acomb.

Revenues Service

Bill and collect the Council Tax and Business Rates for 83,700 domestic and 5,700 business properties for debt totalling £74m and £79m respectively. Maintain accurate property valuation records. Pursue customers for non-payment. Provide a cash collection and banking service for the whole Council. Based at City Finance Centre.

Registration Service

Provide registration services for births (3,200 per annum), deaths (2,800), marriages (850) and Civil Partnerships (40). Undertake baby naming, renewal of vows, commitment ceremonies and civil funerals. Provide certificates for historic entries from 1837 onwards. Licence approved premises for marriages and civil partnerships. Service falls under the remit of the Council and the Registrar General. Delivered from 56 Bootham, Mothercare at Clifton Moor and York Hospital.

York Customer Centre (YCC)

Centre provides a single point of contact for telephone and email enquiries offering access to information, raising Service Requests and signposting callers to the appropriate destination. Currently providing a service for four functions: York Pride Action Line, Switchboard, Council Tax and Planning and Building Control handling 8,000 calls per week. Based at Little Stonegate

Business Management

Provide a departmental HR and administrative support service. Manage incoming and outgoing post and electronically scan items (700k p.a.). Handle controlled stationery. Co-ordinate Health & Safety and Admin Accommodation issues. Based at City Finance Centre.

Web Team

Manage and maintain the Council's website, Content Management System and intranet, providing advice on web development work for all directorates.

Note: The **Systems Support and Development** team are currently under the caretaker management of ITT and therefore any actions or measures relevant to them appear in the ITT Service Plan

Service objectives

SO1 To deliver continuous service improvement whilst working within the legislative framework and performing to the national benefit standards set by the DWP

SO2 To maximize the income due to the Council in the form of Government grants, taxation and subsidy

SO3 To pay benefit to the right people, for the right amount at the right time

SO4 To promptly and accurately bill and collect money in respect of the Council Tax and Business Rates ensuring that customers claim the discounts, exemptions and reliefs to which they are entitled

SO5 To reduce benefit overpayments and improve the rate of recovery

SO6 To monitor and maintain a high level of customer satisfaction with the service

SO7 To maximize benefit take-up, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, with particular consideration to hard to reach groups and BME (black and minority ethnic) groups

SO8 To be proactive in preventing and detecting fraudulent abuse of the benefits scheme

SO9 To communicate with staff effectively and encourage staff development

SO10 To use performance management to monitor workloads and productivity in order to maximise the use of resources and aid planning

SO11 To be the premier civil ceremony venue in the country

SO12 To develop and deliver improved customer service to customers covering a range of services within the York Customer Centre

SO13 To lead on all corporate customer service initiatives

SO14 Improve stakeholders accessibility to Council services

SO15 To provide support and guidance to staff on Health and Safety, within legislative guidelines

SO16 To monitor and report sickness absence and provide HR support for the Resources Directorate

Section 2: The Drivers

| Driver | How might this affect our service |
|--|--|
| <p>National Performance Framework to replace CPA from 2009. Benefits Service measured against Audit Commission's Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE), replacing DWP's Performance Standards and Measures. New National Performance Indicators to replace BVPIs.</p> | <p>Increased emphasis on customer consultation and benchmarking which has resource implications.</p> <p>Right Time and Right Benefit indicators need managing through data scans to the DWP. Software changes needed and local targets to be set.</p> <p>New indicator for "avoidable contact" (NPI 14) requires investment in management reporting and sampling across the Council with lead from YCC</p> |
| <p>Legislation. New Legislation to be implemented: Local Housing Allowance (LHA), Tribunal Courts & Enforcement Act (TCEA) White Paper on Supplementary Business Rates (SBR). Following on from Lyons Report possible reform of Council Tax Benefit and introduction of "pay as you throw" tax.</p> | <p>LHA – implement April 2008. Impact of BRMA review and DHP budget. Provision of money advice</p> <p>TCEA – possible negative impact on collection rates, review SLAs with enforcement agents</p> <p>SBR – resources, additional software</p> <p>CTB Reform</p> <p>"Pay as you throw"</p> |
| <p>Service Transformation. Varney Review and Cabinet Office Standards for Contact Centres. Introduction of Accreditation Scheme.</p> | <p>Need to work towards Blueprint for Publicly Funded Contact Centres. Full response to transformation proposals still to be defined and implemented. Working with neighbouring authorities on a joint response.</p> |
| <p>Population. Changing demographics of the city and increase in house building.</p> | <p>Increase in taxbase. Targeting hard to reach groups. Monitoring of take-up amongst BME groups as part of Equalities Action Plan</p> |
| <p>Customer Satisfaction. Reduced satisfaction levels (former BVPI80) for the benefits service.</p> | <p>Improvements in service should be delivered through staff restructure and implementation of new technology for new claims and changes. Need to devise ways of monitoring and tracking changes in customer satisfaction and expectations</p> |
| <p><u>easy@york</u> programme</p> | <p>Continue to work with the programme to finalise the improvements for the benefits service.</p> <p>On Phase 2 YCC working with additional services to integrate system and staff</p> |
| <p>Restructures. Directorate-wide following departure of two Assistant Directors. Service-wide with benefits.</p> | <p>Changes in management reporting lines. Need to ensure corporate responsibilities are transferred, for example, the Customer Champion. Benefits changes to ensure customer-centric service is maintained.</p> |
| <p>Customer Relations Improvements</p> | <p>Rollout new corporate standards, collection and reporting mechanism. Implement new system for customer feedback, compliments and suggestions.</p> |
| <p>Financial Constraints. Council budget position, continued need to realise Gershon efficiencies and 5% reduction benefits admin subsidy</p> | <p>Need to identify any efficiencies. Continue to monitor subsidy loss areas to minimise impact on budgets. Improvements in training, checking and accuracy ongoing.</p> |
| <p>Registration Online. Impact on Register Office service</p> | <p>National rollout to re-commence and should extend to marriages</p> |

Section 3: Critical Success Factors (CSFs)

| CSFs for 2008/09 | Why a CSF? |
|---|--|
| Maintain a 'Good' CPA rating for the Benefits Service Inspection and respond to the new national Performance Framework | <p>Benefits CPA score is a major contributor to the Council's overall rating.</p> <p>Change of inspection regime means that inspection will be made against new Key Lines of Enquiry judgment rather than DWP's Performance Standards.</p> <p>Action plan needed to identify key improvements once KLOE has been agreed. This will have resource/budget implications.</p> <p>KLOE for Access to Services, Use of Resources and Revenues also need to be considered</p> |
| Successfully implement the benefits restructure whilst meeting revised national indicator targets | <p>Restructure involves both changes to team structures and job responsibilities and the introduction of new technology for new claims and changes. Significant training implications to ensure staff are properly skilled in new roles. Need to ensure that we meet new targets for speed of processing (NPI 181) and correctness of claims (NPI 180)</p> |
| Implementation of sampling, monitoring and reporting mechanisms for "reduction in the amount of avoidable contact" measure (NPI 14) | <p>A key measure to help us monitor levels of customer satisfaction and the overall customer experience. Customer journey mapping techniques will help us better meet customer expectations.</p> <p>Progress measure 1 of the Service Transformation Agreement (HM Treasury October 2007) seeks to achieve a 50% reduction in avoidable contact over the period 2008-2011.</p> |

Section 4: Links to corporate priorities

| Improvement Statement (IS) | Contribution |
|--|--|
| Improve the health and lifestyles of the people who live in York, in particular among groups whose level of health are the poorest | Delivery & Innovation plan action to "increase the benefit take-up of groups whose level of health is the poorest" |
| Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city | Delivery & Innovation plan action to "undertake targeted benefit take up and awareness campaigns to support children, young people and families" |
| Improve the actual and perceived condition & appearance of the city's streets, housing & publicly accessible places | York Pride Action Line within YCC will help to improve response times to customer requests |

Section 5: Balanced Scorecard of outcomes and measures

Customer based improvements

Customer Measures

| Measure | Current | 2008/09 Target | 2008/09 Target | 2009/10 Target |
|--|---------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| C1- Percentage of YCC calls answered in 20 secs* | 79.4% | 95% | 95% | 95% |
| C2 – Customer satisfaction (Benefits) | 64% | tbc | tbc | tbc |
| C3 – Percentage of letters answered in 10 working days* | | 95% | 95% | 95% |
| C4 – Percentage of calls answered in 20 secs (excl. YCC)* | 98.93% | 95% | 95% | 95% |
| C5 – Average number of customer contacts per received customer request (National Indicator NPI 14) | New | TBC | TBC | TBC |
| C6 – Percentage of revenues changes in 10 working days | | 95% | 95% | 95% |
| C7 – Percentage of Direct debit take-up (Council Tax) | 65.69% | 67% | 67.5% | tbc |
| C8 – Percentage of e-payments for Council Tax | 4.67% | 5% | 5.5% | 6% |
| C9 – Meet AAA conformance for web accessibility | AA | AA/AAA | AAA | AAA |

* These are the current measures and they may change following review of Customer First standards

Customer Actions

| Improvement action | Deadline |
|--|----------------|
| Complete and implement review of Customer First standards and YCC service levels and call resolution | September 2008 |
| Develop CRM system reports and sampling techniques to monitor NI14 measure | June 2008 |
| Test and implement web self-serve for council tax changes | September 2008 |
| Review current e-forms and automation for council tax. Consider options for further automation | September 2008 |
| Advertise availability of DD and online payments | December 2008 |
| Review and re-design benefit claim forms | June 2008 |
| Implement system for monitoring and responding to benefits customer satisfaction | December 2008 |

Process based improvements

Process Measures

| Measure | Current | 2008/09 Target | 2008/09 Target | 2009/10 Target |
|---|----------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| P1 – Average number of days to process benefit claims and changes (National Indicator NI 181) | 22 days* | TBC | TBC | TBC |
| P2 – Percentage of changes to benefit within the year (National Indicator NPI 180) | New | TBC | TBC | TBC |
| P3 – Percentage of council tax collected (in-year) | 97.2% | 97.5% | 97.8% | TBC |
| P4 – Percentage of business rates collected (in year) | 98.9% | 99.0% | 99.2% | TBC |
| P5 – Percentage of housing benefit overpayments recovered | 72% | 78% | 84% | TBC |

* New measure but current performance based on combined processing times for new claims and changes

Process Actions

| Improvement action | Deadline |
|--|----------------|
| Test and implement new e-benefits and e-changes software modules | June 2008 |
| Introduce in-year benefit statements to review claim details | September 2008 |
| Devise benefits take-up plan and campaigns | May 2008 |
| Test and implement workflows on core revenues and benefits system | March 2009 |
| Full review of discounts and exemptions to ensure accuracy of billing data | February 2009 |

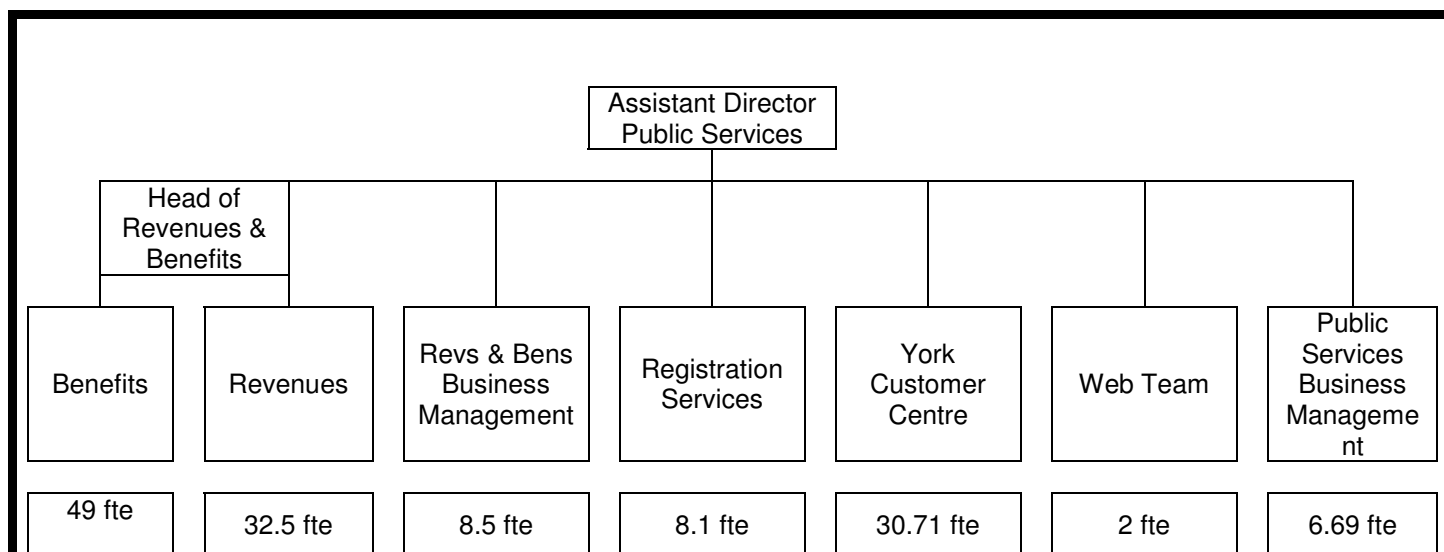
Resource management improvements**Resource Measures**

| Measure | Current | 2008/09 Target | 2008/09 Target | 2009/10 Target |
|---|---------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| F1 – Percentage of subsidy received against benefit paid | 97.66% | 98.00% | 98.00% | 98.00% |
| F2 – Service budget variance | | +/-0.5% | +/-0.5% | +/-0.5% |
| F3 – Percentage of court costs income collected | 41.05% | 80% | 80% | 80% |
| F4 – Minimum number of training and development days per staff member | | | | |

Customer Actions

| Improvement action | Deadline |
|---|---------------|
| Regular monitoring and reports on subsidy loss areas | March 2009 |
| Review budget and cost centre structure following service re-structures | December 2008 |
| Implement revised fee structure for Register Office and monitor income | April 2008 |

Section 6: Resources



Budget

| | <u>2007/08</u> | <u>2008/09</u> |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Employees | £3,261 | £XXXX |
| Premises | £2 | £XXXX |
| Transport | £14 | £XXXX |
| Supplies and Services | £597 | £XXXX |
| Miscellaneous | £35,449 | £XXXX |
| – Recharges | £1,874 | £XXXX |
| – Other | £ - | £XXXX |
| Capital Financing | £ - | £XXXX |
| Gross cost | £41,197 | £XXXX |
| Less Income | £(38,343) | £XXXX |
| Net cost | £2,854 | £XXXXX |

There has been a XX% increase/decrease in our budget since last year. This is due to.....

Cross-cutting improvements

| Actions/Evidence | Deadline |
|---|----------------|
| Equalities action/s | |
| Deliver improvements in accordance with the Benefits Equalities Improvement Plan (developed in response to the Commission for Racial Equalities, now Equality and Human Rights Commission) | July 2008 |
| Increase benefit take-up of groups whose level of health is the poorest | March 2009 |
| Increase benefit take-up to support children, young people and families | March 2009 |
| Operational Risk – red risk action/s | |
| Failure of the York Customer Centre ensure continuity of service Need to maintain, review and test Business Continuity Plan | February 2009 |
| Failure of system to provide accurate and reliable information for benefits and revenues service. Ensure that full test programs are used. Develop Business Objects and sql reports to enhance existing reports. | September 2008 |
| Failure to assess benefit entitlement accurately and within timescales. Evaluate new QA module. Undertake full Training Needs Analysis and devise full training plan. Appoint Training Officer | July 2008 |
| Failure to achieve council tax collection rate targets Direct impact on budgets and Collection Fund. Review current e-forms used within YCC to ensure accurate billing information is obtained. Ensure monthly recovery timetable is maintained. Advertise online and Direct Debit payment methods. Evaluate use of recovery workflows to automate post summons liability order progression. | March 2009 |
| Gershon – Efficiency improvement | |
| Reduction in Housing Benefit payment transaction costs with migration from cheques to direct payments | June 2008 |
| | |
| | |
| <u>Competitiveness statement</u> Major parts of the Public Services division (council tax, business rates, benefits and the register office) are statutory functions. However, we are currently undertaking some joint working with the Pension Service to review claims for our shared customers aged 60+. We are also exploring the possibility for shared or managed service provision of the business rates function. Key performance data is monitored nationally using information from the DCLG and DWP. The revenues and benefits service undertakes some benchmarking with neighbouring unitary authorities. The benefits service currently uses the DWP's online Housing Benefit Operational Database. | |