



Service Plan Template for 2007/08 (covering April 2007 – March 2010)

Service Plan for: Public Services

Directorate: Resources

Service Plan Holder: James Drury (AD Public Services)

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

Director: Simon Wiles

Signed off _____

Date: _____

EMAP : Corporate Services, Cllr Q. Macdonald

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 £33.2m. 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 83,000 domestic and 5,600 business properties for debt totalling £70m and £76m 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 p.a.), deaths (2,800), marriages (850) and Civil Partnerships (100). Undertake baby naming, renewal of vows and commitment ceremonies. 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, ASDA superstore at Monks Cross and York Hospital.

York Customer Centre (YCC)

Centre will provide 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 three functions: York Pride Action Line (over 6,000 calls per month), Switchboard (over 50,000 calls per month) and Planning & Building Control. Proposed extensions to services include Revenues (late 2006/07) and Benefits services (in 2007/08). Based at Little Stonegate

Systems Support and Development

Provide user support for a number of corporate IT systems – FMS, Delphi, Northgate Revenues & Benefits and Anite @ Work document management system. Provide user support for Resources IT systems – QPR, Magique, Galileo, Incase, Radius Icon, Radius ARMS and Technology Forge. Departmental co-ordination/representation of Resources in key corporate activities – IT Strategy and Corporate Operations Group. Manage and maintain the Council's website, Content Management System and intranet, providing advice on web development work for all directorates. Provide support of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system used within YCC. Based at City Finance Centre and Swinegate Court East.

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.

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, subsidy and to secure DWP funding

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 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 Ensure that the IT resource is fit for purpose and that development, replacement and utilization is focused on key Council objectives.

SO16 Make key contributions to change management projects, for example easy@york and Admin Accommodation review

SO17 To provide support and guidance to staff on Health and Safety, within legislative guidelines

SO18 To monitor and report sickness absence and provide HR support for the Resources directorate

Section 2: The Drivers

Driver type	How might this affect our service	Sources
<p>External drivers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) legislation changes including introduction of Local Housing Allowances (LHA) and changes to Performance Standards 2. Registration On Line (RON) for Births, Deaths& Marriages - national implementation 3. Lyons Inquiry into Local Government and response from Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) 4. Key Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) (R) 5. Varney review on Service Transformation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LHA national roll-out starts April 2008 so Benefits Service needs to start implementation work in 2007/08 including extension of payments direct into bank accounts. All Performance Standards require close monitoring to ensure we maintain a “Good” Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating. Changes to the Security Performance Measures changes emphasis from “interventions” to “reductions” requiring changes in working practices and seeking to influence customer behaviour in reporting changes. 2. Experience of the introduction for Civil Partnerships (late 2005) indicates possible initial backlogs if systems are not robust. May need to handle public complaints. 3. Potential changes in balance of funding, new basket of local taxes, Council Tax valuation and streamlining of Council Tax Benefit claims for pensioners. Depending on the outcomes this could have an impact on the structure and delivery of services within Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits teams. 4. All Benefits BVPIs are closely monitored to ensure service improvements are realised and CPA rating maintained. Further review of working practices and structure required ensuring that performance does not deteriorate. Improvements in the collection and recovery of both current year and arrears of Council Tax ongoing to ensure increase in the collection rate and improve Collection Fund position (and consequent impact on level of Council Tax) Note: Government intend to replace BVPIs with new set of national indicators from April 2008 and CPA with Comprehensive Area Assessment from April 2009. 5. Potential impact across the division in terms of e-channels for customer interaction, mobile working, data exchange, national change of circumstances service and contact centre performance 	<p>www.dwp.gov.uk</p> <p>Welfare Reform Bill</p> <p>www.gro.gov.uk</p> <p>www.lyonsinquiry.org www.communities.gov.uk</p> <p>Council Plan Benefit Fraud Inspectorate Audit Commission Guidance DWP Performance Standards</p> <p>Local Government & Public Involvement in Health Bill</p> <p>Service Transformation, Sir Peter Varney, Dec 2006</p>

<p>Corporate drivers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easy@York Project and extended service provided by YCC (R) 2. Corporate priority to improve our focus on the needs of customer and residents 3. Lead role in Benefits take-up 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further service improvement work within Revenues and Benefits service to identify front/back office split and produce service level agreements. Efficiencies are expected to realise savings of £25k in 2007/08. Realignment of responsibilities for handling customer calls. Council will offer more customer access channels and self-service options. Increased level of knowledge by front-line Customer Service Representatives will increase first time resolution and improve customer satisfaction. Systems Support team need to support new technologies within YCC 2. Public Services will play a key role in delivering the actions in the under this priority principally through the opening of the YCC, introduction of interactive services and review of customer standards 3. PSA funded post to achieve target to increase take-up for pension age claimants by March 2008 (Local Area Agreement Outcome HCOP9). Contribute to deliverables under corporate priorities for IE7 and IE 8 (see section 4) 	<p>Customer Access Strategy Easy@york project Functional specifications</p> <p>Corporate Strategy 2006-2009 and Delivery & Innovation Plans</p> <p>LPSA Agreement 2005-2008 Equality Strategy 2005-08 Corporate Strategy 2006-2009</p>
<p>Directorate drivers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Current budget position 2. Sustainability Agenda 3. IT Development Plan and system replacement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Budget savings of £228k identified for 2007/08 which will require a stringent review of existing activities and close monitoring of income collection rates and benefit subsidy maximisation. Reduction in staff levels could have detrimental impact on service delivery and key BVPI data Growth bid proposed of £190k for “loss” of subsidy arising from placement of Homeless B&B cases 2. Leading on the implementation of the Green Office Policy within Resources. Support for Director of Resources to achieve corporate priority on “improving efficiency and reduce waste” 3. Systems team input or project management for FMS, ISIS, Payroll & HR and B stubs (Miscellaneous Income) replacement projects and Corporate DMS project. 	<p>Revenue Budget 2007/08</p>
<p>Service drivers</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IT system enhancements for Northgate Revenues & Benefits and Anite@Work document management system 2. Charter Mark application for Registry Office 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Testing resource needed to implement new HTML front-end (Version 6) and Auto Letters 2. Resources required to submit application. Further work on public consultation needed 	<p>Northgate-IS and Anite Release Notes</p>

Section 3: Critical Success Factors (CSFs)

CSFs for 2007/08	Why a CSF?
Improvement In administering benefits Change of Circumstances notifications and New Claims (R)	Necessary to ensure (a) that BVPIs are not “qualified” in 2007/08 (b) to help maintain a Good Benefits CPA score, (c) to reduce the level of benefit overpayments and minimise the level of local authority error. There is a proposed legislation change to allow notification of changes to be accepted over the telephone which should positively impact on service delivery and BVPIs Note: BVPI 78b for Changes processed in 2005/06 was qualified by the Audit Commission and BVPI 78a for New claims qualified in the previous year.
Successful operation and support of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system within YCC	Critical to ensure improved response to our customers, implement e-enabled services and help satisfy the Customer Access Strategy. Operationally this impacts on the YCC team and is supported by the Systems Support & Development team.
Increase in take-up of benefits for people aged 60+ (LPSA target)	Addresses objectives in the Council’s Equalities Strategy (see Thriving City theme). Helps secure funding under the LPSA scheme.
Transfer of front office Council Tax and Benefits Service into YCC	Successful implementation is important to ensure continuous service delivery. Service improvement work must be completed to redesign the service delivery model and ensure effective links between front and back office.

Section 4: Links to corporate priorities

Improvement Statement (IS)	Contribution
IS7 – 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”
IS8 – 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”
IS10 – Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services	Assistant Director (Public Services) is Priority Champion and as such the service plays a major role. Key deliverables include transfer of services to YCC, promote more efficient ways for customers to enquire, book and pay for services, review customer standards, review complaints/compliments system, implement transactional website.
IS13 – Improve efficiency and reduce waste to free up more resources	Support Director of Resources who is Priority Champion regarding Green Office policy within the Directorate. Develop campaigns and targets to obtain ISO accreditation
IS3 – 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
IS12- Improve the way the council and its partners work together to deliver better services	Work with partners will help to deliver e-solutions and telephony within the YCC
Links to other plans easy@york programme plan FMS Replacement project ISIS Replacement project Admin Accommodation project ITT Development Plan Housing Strategy 2006-2009 Local Area Agreement 2007-2010	

Section 5: Balanced Scorecard of outcomes and measures

Customer based improvement

Outcomes	Measures					Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved customer satisfaction ratings for the service 2. Meet the standards set out in Customer First policy 3. Increase first time resolution for customer enquiries 4. Expand the payment options to promote choice and help increase collection rates 5. Establish new corporate customer standards 	Measure	Current	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support development and expansion of CRM and telephony solutions as part of easy@york project 2. Lead in development, support and expansion of Content Management System 3. Introduce external speech server 4. Benefits Customer Satisfaction Survey – respond to any issues raised in 2006/07 and implement actions (within resources available) 5. Benefits Appeals & Revisions – review resources to ensure standards are met 6. Business Rates – review service provision, working with Regional Centre of Excellence 7. Promote paperless sign-up for Direct Debit 8. Extend options for telephone payments within YCC 9. Submit Charter Mark application for Registry Office service 10. Develop a range of customer satisfaction measures to monitor the effectiveness of YCC service provision
	C1-% of YCC calls answered in 20 secs	tbc	95%	95%	95%	
	C2-Customer satisfaction (benefits)	62% (est.)	No survey	No survey	83%	
	C3-% letters answered in 10 days	92.14%	95%	95%	95%	
	C4-% calls answered in 20 secs (excl. YCC)	75.38%	95%	95%	95%	
	C5-% revenues changes in 10 days	58%	85%	95%	95%	
	C6-% of Direct Debit take-up (Council Tax)	64.45%	66%	67%	67.5%	
	C7-% of e-payment for Council Tax	3.1%	4%	4.5%	5%	
	C8- Meet AAA conformance for web accessibility	N/A	AA	AA/AAA	AAA	

Process based improvement

Outcomes	Measures					Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure the benefits service meets national performance standards 2. Increase both speed and accuracy of processing 3. Improve the Council's financial position through effective collection of in-year and prior year debt 	Measure	Current	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fully develop the Quality Assurance role within benefit to improve accuracy, identify training needs, review procedures and inform policy 2. Review working arrangements with the benefits team to ensure effective prioritisation of work 3. Introduce mobile working and other technology (e-benefits module) to reduce processing times (links to easy@york project)
	P1-average days to process new claims	34 days	32 days	30 days	29 days	
	P2-average days to process benefit changes	14 days	15 days	9 days	8 days	
	P3-accuracy of processing	97.6%	98.4%	98.5%	98.5%	
	P4-% of new claims outstanding > 50 days	7.8%	8%	7.5%	7.5%	

<p>4. Ensure that bills are issued on time and minimise number of void accounts and properties</p> <p>5. Establish new Front Office process and SLA with Back Office</p>	P5-% of new claims decided within 14 days of all information received	72%	90%	92%	92%	<p>4. Extend use of e-forms and automated workflows within YCC</p> <p>5. Implement new benefit reductions regime following change to DWP Performance Measure PM10 including better risk-assessed interventions and publicity to encourage reporting of changes by customers</p> <p>6. Write and implement benefits overpayments policy</p> <p>7. Increase level of overpayment recovery rate</p> <p>8. Implement new front end (Version 6) of Northgate Revenues & Benefits system</p> <p>* P11: target of reductions is given to the Council by DWP and this will increase each year. To achieve an Excellent score Council must achieve over 100%</p>
	P6-% of HB overpayments recovered	66%	70%	72%	73%	
	P7-% of Council Tax collected (in-year)	97.1%	97.5%	97.8%	97.8%	
	P8-% of Council Tax arrears collected	50%	55%	60%	60%	
	P9-% of Business rates collected (in-year)	98.4%	98.95%	99%	99%	
	P10-invoices paid within 30 days	Check	100%	100%	100%	
	P11-% benefit reductions target achieved*	New	101%	101%	101%	

Finance based improvement

Outcomes	Measures					Actions
1. Maximisation of subsidy grant and court costs income 2. Match expenditure to budgets 3. Achieve cost neutral registration service 4. York Customer Centre – costs transferred from Back Office	Measure	Current	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target	1. Improve trend analysis and monitoring of subsidy against budget and thresholds 2. Monitor fees income and charges income throughout Public Services 3. Review SLAs with Bailiff companies 4. Identify further efficiencies to meet EMAP savings proposals (In 2007/08: £75k management savings and £55k subsidy)
	F1-% of subsidy received against benefit paid	97.5%	97.5%	98%	98%	
	F2-service budget variance	=/-0.6%	+/- 0.5%	+/- 0.5%	+/- 0.5%	
	F3-% of courts costs income collected	60%	70%	80%	80%	

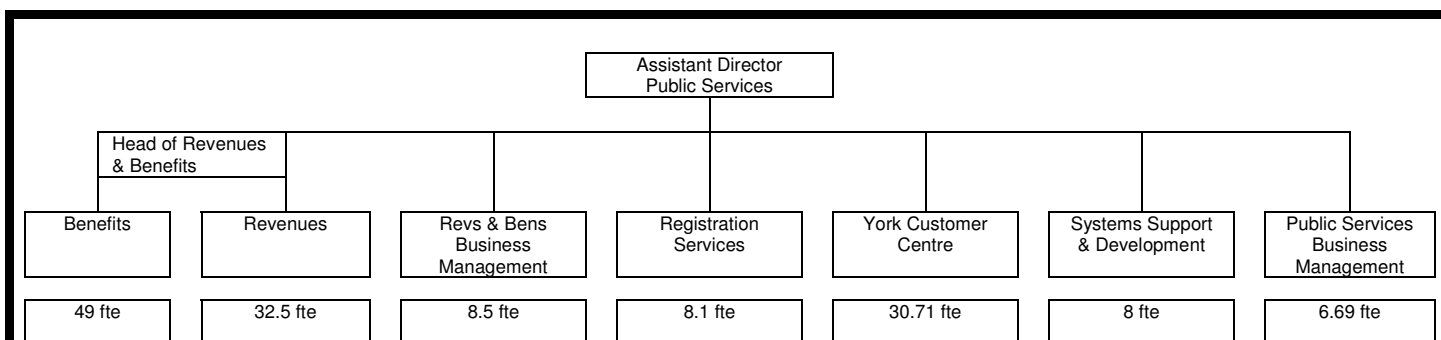
Staff based improvement

Outcomes	Measures					Actions
1. Improve staff expertise and skills to help provide improved services for our customers 2. Increase job satisfaction and retention amongst staff 3. Staff have clear targets and objectives set 4. Establish new York Customer Centre team 5. Deliver the training and development plan to support the YCC as detailed within the easy@york program	Measure	Current	2007/08 Target	2008/09 Target	2009/10 Target	1. Fully develop QA role in benefits to ensure feedback loop working successfully 2. Extend use of e-learning software (IRRV Euclidian Benefits and Council Tax) subject to funding/growth bid. 3. Re-introduce training log 4. Introduce Return to Work Interview sheets and recording 5. Review training budgets 6. Contribute to Staff Action Plan theme groups
	S1-mimimum number of training & development days per staff member	2.5 days	3 days	3 days	3 days	
	S2-% of days lost to sickness absence	3.92%	4%	3.75%	3.5%	
	S3-% of staff expressing job satisfaction	N/A	66%	No survey	tbc	
	S4-% of staff appraised	90%	92.5%	95%	95%	

Section 6: Corporate Issues

Actions/Evidence	Deadline
Equalities action/s	
Targeted take-up work e.g. hard to reach groups, BME, and pension age (LPSA funded)	March 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
Establish alternative ways for customers to contact the Council through the York Customer Centre and easy@york program. Consult with different client groups about service provision.	Ongoing
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 2008
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. Develop training packs for benefits overpayments	September 2007
Failure to assess benefit entitlement accurately and within timescales. Further develop QA role and ensure that training needs are addressed. Develop Training Strategy and Training Plan	June 2007
Failure to achieve council tax collection rate targets Direct impact on budgets and Collection Fund. Develop and test e-forms for use within YCC to ensure accurate billing information is obtained. Ensure monthly recovery timetable is maintained. Roll-out paperless Direct Debit sign-up. Offer web and automated telephone payment options. Liaise with Valuation Office Agency regarding impact of banding appeals following recent “council tax cashback” publicity.	March 2008
Gershon – Efficiency improvement	
Dealing with more customer contacts through York Customer Centre (non cashable)	
Improvement in the collection of Council Tax (non-cashable). Achieved through increase in taxbase, reduction in voids, effective review and monitoring of discounts, exemptions and reliefs.	
Improvements in payment transaction costs (non-cashable). Achieved through increase in Direct Debit take-up (“paperless” option introduced) and e-payments.	
Improvements in the processing of new claims for council tax and housing benefit (non-cashable). Achieved through improved average days (BVPI 78a) figure and increase in caseload	
Efficiencies in handling customer enquiries (non-cashable) by increasing the number of webpage hits through the promotion of on-line forms, benefits calculator or downloadable forms	
Improvements in the efficiency of the administration and recovery of benefit overpayment	
Competitiveness statement	
<p>During 2006/07 the Revenues and Benefits service undertook a full tendering exercise for the provision of, on an ad-hoc basis, off-site processing for council tax, business rates and benefits work. The revenues service is currently in very early discussions with neighbouring authorities and the Regional Centre of Excellence exploring the possibilities for shared or managed service provision of the business rates function.</p> <p>Key PIs are monitored nationally using data from the DCLG and DWP. The revenues and benefits service undertakes some benchmarking with neighbouring unitary authorities. The benefits service currently uses the National Performance Management Framework and the DWP’s online Housing Benefit Operational Database.</p>	

Section 7: Resources



Budget

	<u>2006/07</u>	<u>2007/08</u>
	£'000	£'000
Employees	2,783	3,312
Premises	2	2
Transport	18	16
Supplies and Services	382	598
Miscellaneous		
– Recharges	1,914	1,874
– Benefits Subsidy	31,752	35,449
Capital Financing	0	0
Gross cost	36,851	41,251
Less Income	(34,315)	(38,343)
Net cost	2,536	2,908

There has been a 15% increase in our net cost budget since last year. This is due to the creation of the York Customer Centre and the transfer from Chief Exec's of the Web team.

Section 8: Monitoring and reporting arrangements

The Public Services Management Team will review progress against the plan quarterly. Formal progress reports will be made twice during the year to the Resources EMAP meeting. QPR performance management system will be updated quarterly (some BVPI data is input monthly) Key PI data and workload statistics for the Benefits and Revenues Service are distributed monthly to the Revenues and Benefits Management Team, Assistant Director, Director of Resources and the Executive Member and copies are made available for all staff.