

Portfolio Holder Business Transformation and HR Work Priorities for 2010/11

- Corporate Services Directorate provides core support services across the whole Council yet nearly half its staff provide key front line services, namely Housing Benefits, Customer Service Centre including telephony, and Council Tax
- Regardless of whether it is front-line or back-office, the overall objective is the same, to provide effective, efficient services at the most economical cost
- Benefits are currently performing above the levels commended by the external auditors last year but it will be a struggle to maintain this as caseload increases. The last year has seen a 6% increase in claimants, the number has increased from 10,400 to 11,000. This disguises the additional work from assessing claims that do not result in an award of benefit. For example, for every two successful claims there are about three unsuccessful ones. So, for the 600 new claimants, staff will have to assess nearly 1,500 applications. Despite this, performance has been sustained and improved and further savings identified for next year by streamlining processes.
- More customers are visiting or telephoning the Council seeking advice or services such as housing/homelessness, benefits or parking permits. Since January this year, the Customer Service Centre has seen something like a 20% increase in contacts (face to face and telephone). The challenge is to maintain acceptable levels of service without any additional resources.
- Key back-office support in finance, HR and IT will be critical in the downsizing and re-focusing the Council must undergo in order to adjust to significantly less income. There will be increased demand on these services during the change process yet they will be operating with reduced resources also.
- Overall last year, corporate services reduced its staffing by almost 5%, some 10 FTE posts and provided cash savings of £436,000, about 4%, and a similar outcome will be needed again for next year.

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