

**REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL AND
BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

SHARED SERVICES BOARD

8th March 2012 at 5.30pm

THE CONFERENCE ROOM, THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BROMSGROVE

Present: Councillors Roger Hollingworth (Chairman), Margaret Sherrey, Steve Colella and Mike Webb. (Bromsgrove District Council)

Councillors Carole Gandy, Michael Braley, Malcolm Hall and Bill Hartnett (Redditch Borough Council)

Officers: Sue Hanley, Deb Poole, Teresa Kristunas, Amanda de Warr, Liz Tompkin and Helen Mole

Notes: Rosemary Cole

1. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the Board held on 26th January 2012 were agreed as a correct record.

CONFIDENTIALITY

These notes are an open public record of proceedings of the Board.

[Meetings of the Board are not subject to statutory Access to Information requirements; but information relating to individual post holders and/or employee relations matters would nonetheless not be revealed to the press or public.]

3. PROGRESS ON INTERVENTIONS

As an alternative on this occasion to a formal Report on the progress of Shared Services, The Board received a number of presentations from Heads of Service currently leading on Interventions. The presentations focussed on progress to date and the experiences of the teams involved.

Members of the Board raised queries for clarification during the presentations and Heads of Service

It was noted that copies of the presentations would be forwarded to all BDC and RBC Members.

a) Strategic Purposes for Both Authorities

Ms Poole reminded the Board of the Workshops and subsequent discussions which had taken place including Cabinet or Executive Members and the Senior Management Team in October and November 2011.

This work together with the use of existing data from other organisations and the Authorities' own data on customer demand had been utilised to develop Operational and then Strategic Purposes for each Authority.

It was noted that the next steps would involve aligning system interventions around the Strategic Purposes, establishing ownership of the purposes together with a set of measures. It was also emphasised that Strategic Purposes would change over time as demand changes.

b) Revenues and Benefits Services

Ms Kristunas gave a detailed presentation on the work undertaken to date on transformation of the Revenues and Benefits Service at both Authorities.

In relation to the Benefits Service it was stressed that there was close working with the Department of Works and Pensions as the requirements of the DWP had been an issue in the past when ways of working had been reviewed.

The work undertaken on work flow had revealed that there was a "loop" with the Customer initially being asked to provide standard information and then often additional information. The number of customer contacts required before a benefit was decided was a cause for concern.

Analysis of failure demands had revealed that Customers often did not understand what was required of them or letters/forms which had been sent to them.

Some redesign of the service had been put in place with a key aspect being the locating of Benefits Officers on a rota basis within the Customer Service Centre so that the "experts" were closer to the Customer and queries could be dealt with on a face to face basis.

The Board were pleased to note the improvement which had already been achieved in the services offered.

With regard to Revenues, similar issues had arisen with information required not being captured at the point of contact which resulted in Customers contacting more than once. The service would be redesigned partly with a view to moving the "experts" closer to the Customer and empowering some of the Customer Service Assistants to deal with more of the process. Again improvements to the service were already being demonstrated.

c) Post Print and Design

Ms De Warr gave a brief presentation on the work which had been undertaken so far within the Post, Print and Design service. Clearly the service was not so “transactional” as Revenues and Benefits and was internal to the Authorities but there were still improvements and savings which could be achieved.

Within the Post Rooms reasons for failure demand were varied but Recharges and coding issues were a significant area. Within the Design service, unclear instructions were an issue.

Whilst the intervention was still on going, some improvements had already been put in place. Staff felt more empowered to raise issues and to do things differently.

d) Housing Transformation (RBC) Rent and Welfare/Locality

Ms Tompkin gave a brief presentation on the Intervention which had commenced in Housing at RBC in relation to Rent and Locality. Clearly this had an impact on the Housing Benefit Service.

The work undertaken to date in profiling a sample of rent accounts had revealed that reasons for tenants falling into arrears were largely related to the tenants working issues.

More work was required in order to better understand the real problems and to enable the service to be redesigned to address these.

4. JOINED UP WORKING

Ms Hanley updated the Board on the work which was being undertaken with partner agencies and organisations to advance Joined up Working. This was at an early stage but workshops had taken place which had involved powerful and distressing real life examples, including young people who had been within “the system” throughout their lives.

It had been recognised by many partners that the way in which services were designed at present was impacting negatively upon those who needed assistance. Whilst this was very early days, organisations were willing to challenge how they were working.

Ms Poole referred to the role of the Authorities in becoming “Leaders of the Community”.

5. NEXT MEETING

Members thanked Heads of Service for the presentations which had been very worthwhile. As a number of Members and officers had other commitments it was agreed that the remaining presentations on Repairs and Maintenance and ICT helpdesk be carried forward to the next meeting of the Board.

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on 19th April 2012 at RBC commencing at 5.30 pm, as previously scheduled.

The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm
and closed at 7.25 pm.