

TO: **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE – 14 MARCH 2006**

SUBJECT: **BENEFITS SERVICE STAFFING**

FROM: **CUSTOMER INFORMATION AND ADVICE DIRECTORATE**

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To request Member approval for the re-designating of post T03110 from Take-up Officer to Visiting Officer.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Since July 2003 the Benefits Service has been undertaking a benefit take-up campaign and in January 2005 it appointed a Take-up officer with specific responsibilities for increasing benefit awareness in the local community.

- 2.1.1 This campaign has been very successful with the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit caseload (number of live claims on the computer system) increasing by 5% during this time.

- 2.1.2 The increase has come about through a combination of general awareness work (posters, leaflets, forms and such like) allied to specific surgery and community meeting initiatives. However, over the last twelve months the local picture has changed in that other agencies are becoming much more proactive in promoting take-up.

- 2.1.3 The Benefits Service has been able to take advantage of these initiatives by forming partnerships with The Pension Service and Warwickshire Welfare Rights Advice Service so that most of its home visiting work is now done by these partner agencies.

- 2.1.4 At the same, Warwick District Council Benefits Service has also been able to lead on a Countywide take-up project which is forming part of the County's LPSA2 (Local Public Sector Agreement) bid. This will see a dedicated Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit take-up resource in the south of the County for the next 3 to four years

- 2.1.5 Consequently it is felt that the current resource the Benefits Service devotes to take-up work would be better deployed on alternative visiting tasks such as "in-year" claim checks, welfare assistance and property inspections. This would be achieved by re-designating the post as a Visiting Officer.

**2.2 Staffing implications**

- 2.2.1 The officer currently employed in the Take-up officer post is on a fixed-term contract until the end of March 2006. As a consequence of the proposals contained within the report the officer has joined the council's Redeployment Register and it is to be hoped that he will secure suitable alternative employment, possibly in the new Visiting Officer role.

### 2.3 Revenue Costs

Redesignation From..... Take-up Officer	= -£19,796
To..... Visiting Officer	= +£19,796
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	= nil
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## 3 **POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK**

3.1 Members have identified that a key objective for the Council is to target resources at the areas of greatest need. This is reflected in Corporate Strategy target CO 7(3) which is, "To undertake a benefit and council tax campaign that results in the Council receiving 10% more benefit applications by 2007." It is considered that the proposals in this report do not put this objective in jeopardy.

3.1.1 The proposals have no revenue or capital budgetary affect.

## 4 **RECOMMENDATION**

4.1 Members approve the proposals detailed in Section 1 of the report.

**Andrew Jones**  
**Head of Revenues and Customer Services**

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**None**

**Areas in District Affected:** All

**Key Decision:** No

**Included in Forward Plan:** No

**For further information about this report please contact:**

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