

TO: **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE – 16 MARCH 2005**

SUBJECT: **BENEFITS SERVICE STAFFING**

FROM: **CUSTOMER INFORMATION AND ADVICE DIRECTORATE**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To request Member approval for the re-designating of posts T03/110, T03/280, T03/115, T03/116, T03/230 and T03/240 from temporary to permanent.

2. BACKGROUND

The Verification Framework

- 2.1 In June 2002 the Executive agreed to adopt the Government's Verification Framework as a means of securing the Benefit system from fraud and error. Authorities were permitted to adopt the three modules of the Framework in stages and the Benefits Service took this approach. In accepting the principles and requirements of the Framework, Central Government made available additional funding.
- 2.11 As the authority took on further modules funding increased so that the Service now receives £115,065 ongoing funding each year. However, the level of funding is not confirmed until December each year and is dependent upon continued compliance with the Verification Framework requirements.
- 2.12 Due to the way the funding is received, Members were asked to approve increased staffing levels but that the posts should be temporary in nature. This did not cause a problem initially and the Service was able to appoint competent applicants. However, subsequent recruitment drives have been more difficult with a limited number of candidates coming forward.
- 2.13 It is considered that a major handicap to recruitment is the temporary nature of the roles and whilst contracts are extended each year this cannot be guaranteed at an interview.
- 2.14 To remove this problem the Benefits Service is therefore advocating that the posts are made permanent.

New Tax Credits and Pension Credit

- 2.2 An analogous position occurs with another stream of funding the Service receives for administering the work associated with the Governments New Tax Credits and Pension Credit.
- 2.21 In February 2003 the Executive agreed to the addition of two temporary posts linked to additional Government funding. The temporary nature of the posts was advocated because it was unclear how much funding the authority would receive from 2005/2006 onwards.

2.22 Central Government has now confirmed that an amount of £38,891 will be received in future years and this provides for the full cost (including on-costs) of the two Grade G officers linked to the funding.

2.23 Consequently as the future funding position is now known, the Benefits Service is advocating that the posts are made permanent.

2.24 **Revenue Costs in 2005/2006**

The Verification Framework

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|---|-----------|
| Three Grade G officers & One Grade H (including on costs) (Post Numbers T03/110, T03/280, T03/115, T03/116) | = £82,442 |
|---|-----------|

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|---------------------------------|------------|
| Funding from Central Government | = £115,065 |
| | ----- |
| | £ 32,623 |

(the balance goes to the General Fund)

New Tax Credits and Pension Credit

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|---|-----------|
| Two Grade G officers (including on costs) (Post Numbers T03/230 and T03/240) | = £36,157 |
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|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Funding from Central Government | = £38,891 |
| | ----- |
| | £2,734 |

3 POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK

3.1 Members have identified the Benefits Service as key to meeting one of its corporate objectives by targeting resources at the areas of greatest need. A stable, well-trained workforce is integral to achieving that aim. This aim is better facilitated where the authority is able to offer potential applicants permanent contracts.

3.2 Central Government provides funding so that the additional posts have not needed to be resourced locally with a balance of funding actually going to the General Fund. Continuation of the posts will mean that overtime there is a diminishing amount going to the Fund, however, the amount is negligible.

4 RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Members approve the proposals detailed in Section 2 of the report.

Andrew Jones
Head of Revenues and Customer Services

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Executive Report - June 2002
Executive Report – February 2003
Executive Report – September 2004
Central Government letter to Director of Finance – November 2002

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| 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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