

TO: EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE AGREEMENT TAKE-UP OFFICERS – 19th
SEPTEMBER 2006

FROM: REVENUES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To request Member approval to add two Benefit Take-up Officer posts to the council's staffing establishment to be wholly funded by Central Government.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Acting as the lead authority for the five districts and boroughs of Warwickshire (*the partnership*), Warwick District Council has been able to secure Central Government funding from Local Public Service Agreement 2 (LPSA2) to undertake a county-wide Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit take-up campaign.
- 2.2 To receive this funding *the partnership* had to devise a business case to satisfy Central Government that the claimant caseload across the county would increase by 10% by March 2009.
- 2.3 The business case was based around the recruiting of two benefit take-up officers who would work throughout the county on various take-up initiatives. *The partnership* was able to demonstrate that the short-term funding it had previously received from the Department for Work and Pensions to undertake take-up activities had been effectively used and consequently the business case had a lot of credibility.
- 2.4 Central Government has awarded *the partnership* £100,000 to be spent by March 2009. This funding is to support the recruitment, employee and service related costs for two take-up officers for a period of two years.
- 2.5 Warwick District Council has agreed to act as the employing authority for the project, however, *the partnership* has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix) to ensure that any redundancy and pension costs arising out of the termination of the project will be met equally by the partners. Due to the nature of the contracts, there would be no entitlement to enhanced severance or early retirement benefits. Any statutory costs would be met from within current budgets.
- 2.6 The Memorandum of Understanding has been scrutinised by legal officers at Warwick District and Rugby Borough Councils so there is a high degree of confidence that all eventualities that could occur have been considered.
- 2.7 The project will be managed along sound business principles with the take-up officers reporting quarterly to a Project Board and half-yearly to a Programme Board made-up of the Heads of Revenues Services from *the partnership*.

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 March 2007."
- 3.2 The Take-up officers and their work will be wholly funded by LPSA2 funding so there will be no financial cost to the authority.

4 **RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1 Members approve the proposal detailed in Section 1 of the report.

Andrew Jones
Head of Revenues and Customer Services

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Memorandum of Understanding

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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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