

**AGENDA ITEM NO.**

**TO: MEMBERS/TRADES UNIONS JOINT CONSULTATION AND SAFETY  
PANEL – 18<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2007**

**SUBJECT: RIVERSIDE HOUSE RECEPTION CASH HANDLING PROCEDURES**

**FROM: REVENUES AND CUSTOMER SERVICES**

---

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise Members and the Trades Unions of the outcome of the independent assessment of the cash handling procedures at Riverside House.

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Following the closure of the Cashiers Service in January 2005, there was considerable discussion regarding the security arrangements which were in place at Riverside House reception. These discussions resulted in a bid for extra resources to employ a security guard. Although the bid was rejected, the Council did request that an independent assessment of the cash handling procedures be undertaken which would build on the work undertaken by the authority's own internal audit team.

- 2.1.1 The audit had not only looked at the financial control arrangements but also received the input of the council's Health and Safety Officer.

Audit Report Findings

- 2.2 The audit of the new cash receipting arrangements took place in the autumn of 2005. The timing was apposite as there had then been an opportunity for the new working procedures and practices to "bed-in" and for documented working procedures to be updated.

- 2.2.1 In relation to the reception security the report found the following weaknesses:
- Cash drawers not in use should be kept locked at all times;
  - Armed Robbery training should be provided for temporary agency staff as well as permanent members;
  - The "hatch" at reception should be closed at all times unless reception staff need access;
  - Cash should not be transferred downstairs to the Document Management Centre via the lift.

- 2.2.2 These weaknesses have now been addressed in their entirety (although the turnover in temporary staff is an issue which needs revisiting) and the

recommendations made in the audit have been agreed. The documented operating procedures for cash handling at Riverside House reception have been updated to reflect the recommendations.

- 2.2.3 Although not mentioned in the audit report it had been noted that reception staff were “cashing-up” at the end of the day in full view of the public. This practice has now been ended and staff “balance” the till in a room behind the reception.

### Independent Assessment

- 2.3 The independent assessment was undertaken by Messam Rider, experts in Health and Safety, during March of this year. A copy of the Practitioner’s findings is attached at the Appendix. By and large the authority was given a “clean bill of health”, however the recommendations are detailed in full for completeness along with the Management response:

- *Recommendation:* Consider not accepting cash payments for any transactions.  
*Response:* Whilst this would be desirable, there are still those members of the community who rely on payment by cheque or cash. The number of transactions by cash is however, small.
- *Recommendation:* Install a dedicated cash handling booth.  
*Response:* It is considered that the introduction of a booth would in reality increase the risk of theft as the current arrangements give little indication that a cash-handling function is carried out.
- *Recommendation:* Procedures for security need to be documented.  
*Response:* This is agreed. Whilst there are various documents about different aspects of the security arrangements, these need to be brought together and validated to ensure they include non-cash security arrangements.
- *Recommendation:* The security cameras should be made more obvious.  
*Response:* This will be considered.
- *Recommendation:* Consider enhancing the effect of the panic alarms.  
*Response:* This will be considered.
- *Recommendation:* Staff should be trained in conflict management:  
*Response:* This is agreed.
- *Recommendation:* Employ security staff at peak periods.  
*Response:* This has been rejected by Full Council.

- *Recommendation:* Keep the reception desk door locked during office hours to prevent persons casually entering the reception area.  
*Response:* Staff will be reminded of the importance of ensuring that this happens.

2.3.1 Whilst the consultant has made the aforementioned recommendations, he does recognize that “the threat needs to be kept in proportion”. The consultant has not identified fundamental flaws in the arrangements.

### 3. **POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK**

3.1 The council seeks to be a good employer and the most important objective is to protect the health and safety of its staff. The cash handling procedures put in place try to minimize any risk whilst recognizing that such activity cannot eliminate risk entirely.

3.1.1 There are no budgetary implications arising from this report.

### 4. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

4.1 The Panel to note the content of this report and take any further action they consider necessary.

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

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

NIL

**Areas in District Affected:** All

**Executive Portfolio Area and Holder:** Customer and Community Services  
Misan McFarland

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

Contact Officer: Andrew Jones

Tel: 01926 456830

E-Mail [andrew.jones@warwickdc.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.jones@warwickdc.gov.uk)