

Service Review Ideas.....

Maximising revenue

Aim: Bring new properties into taxation

Require: Accurate data collection; effective relations with appropriate agencies (SNN, VO, Building Control);

How do we receive the information?

- Forms (paper & on line)
 - Clear
 - Concise
 - Asks for all we need to know
- On line services
 - Clear information on what we require
- Visiting officers
 - Requesting full/relevant information
 - Efficient mechanism for getting information acted on.
 - Effective use of completion notices
- Contact centre
 - Requesting full/relevant information
 - Efficient mechanism for getting information acted on.

Implement – **New property module (Academy)**

VO integration – testing module for effectiveness

Who provides the information?

- Building companies
- Street naming and Numbering
- Building Control
- New owners

Build relationships with other organisations/departments by

- Understanding others part in the process
- Understanding others needs in the process
- Ensure our needs and requirements are understood by other parties
- Meet to discuss requirements/put names to faces
- Be professional and helpful

Increase speed of collection

Aim: Correct bill first time

Require: Accurate data collection

How do we get the information?

- Forms (paper & on line)
 - Clear
 - Concise

- Asks for all we need to know
- On line services
 - Clear information on what we require
- Visiting officers
 - Requesting full/relevant information
 - Efficient mechanism for getting information acted on.
- Contact centre
 - Requesting full/relevant information
 - Efficient mechanism for getting information acted on.

Ensure all information requests are for the required information and clear (ongoing staff training/culture and review of forms

Where possible use alternative, more cost effective methods of review. (data match with USAF, NFI, Northgate – investigating working with education departments)

Ensure Visiting officer have clear understanding of requirements

Build good working relations with other agencies and organisations (meetings held with external agencies to establish needs and understand interface of departments/organisation – requires on going dialogue to maintain relationships and joined up working)

Ensuring information remains accurate & up to date

Aim: To capture changes in information to increase revenue

Require: Review information held on discounts/exemptions

How do we achieve these reviews?

- Post
 - Postal review – form clear, requests correct information
 - To customer
 - To agency/organisation
- Visiting Officer
- Liaison with other Agencies/Organisations
 - USAF – data reconciliation
 - Educational establishments
 - Valuation Office – TOOT

Ensure all information requests are for the required information and clear (ongoing staff training/culture and review of forms

Where possible use alternative, more cost effective methods of review.

Ensure Visiting officer have clear understanding of requirements

Build good working relations with other agencies and organisations (see above for how...)

Utilise SPD mismatch report (benefits)

Utilise Rising 18 report (benefits)

Cross reference where customers are on Attendance allowance, DLA, Carers allowance for possible take up of Disabled relief, & disregards

Assist with collection rates

Aim: maximise take up of discount/exemptions/disabled relief

Require: Promotion of available reductions

Promote these reductions by or through:

- **Authority publications**
- **On line**
- **Annual Leaflets**
- **Stands at events (CAB, Benefit, Housing Assn etc.)**
- **Advertising (costs!!) – schools/Drs surgeries**
- **Benefit take up module??**
- **Video in contact centres/sports centres?**
- **RAD line messages (telephone holding information)**
- **Bulk email canvassing**
- **Text message canvassing**
- **Closer working with Benefits & Visit team**
- **Ensure procedures include enquiring if other people resident etc.**

Aim: maximise take up of Benefits

Require: Promotion of available reductions

Promote benefit take up through

- **Authority publications**
- **On line**
- **Annual Leaflets**
- **Stands at events (CAB, Benefit, Housing Assn etc.)**
- **Advertising (costs!!)**
- **Benefit take up module??**
- **Working closely with Benefit team**
- **Visiting Officers – awareness of criteria to advise when meeting customers.**
- **Video link in contact centres/sport centres?**
- **RAD line messages (telephone holding information) – awaiting new telephony system)**
- **Stands at events (CAB, Benefit, Housing Assn etc.)**
- **Bulk email canvassing**
- **Text message canvassing**
- **TV at customer access points**

Direct Debit take up

Aim: Increase the number of people paying by direct debit

Require: promotion and incentives to encourage take up

Raise awareness and promote DD take up by

- **Promotional literature in all non DD bills/adjustments issued**
- **Poster campaign**

- **Targeted DD take up campaign**
- **Prize draw (Next years CT free if pay by DD all this year??)**
- **Articles in LA publications – nothing in EC**
- **Joint advertising with other Nfk/Sfk/Cambs authorities (papers or mags?)**
- **RAD line messages (telephone holding information)**
- **Stands at events (CAB, Benefit, Housing Assn etc.)**
- **Bulk email canvassing**
- **Text canvassing – happens on text reminders**

Quality & Equality of service

- Uniformity across partnership authorities
- Telephony systems
- Customer perception
 - Customer forum to establish service perception
 - Customer services delivery
 - Bailiff behaviour
 - Visiting officers
 - Speed of response
 - Website – including on line services
 - Payments taken over the phone
 - CIPFA customer survey
- Anti poverty strategy

Align service provided for as much uniformity as possible. Areas such as:

Taking payments over the phone – FH & BR in place EC to be implemented

Telephony systems used for taking/monitoring calls (Spec and tender in progress)

**Bailiff services (new contract started this year)
align stationery – headed paper black & white**

Recovery Actions:

Identifying most cost effective method of recovery for each account:

- Where benefit in payment
- Where in employment
 - How do we collect/find details of employment/benefit?
 - Penalties for not providing information
- Members allowances

Potential to reduce cost of collection by maximising use of these options – eg using a work trace system

Reminders:

- Prompt reminders for outstanding amounts to encourage prompt payment.

Consider reducing the number of days (currently 14) between due date and reminder issue bearing in mind number of days payments take to clear, volume of calls that would be generated etc. – will remain same but will produce ‘soft’ reminders in the interim.

‘Soft’ reminder to be sent prior to first reminder 5 days after due date.

New Debts – current year

- Arrangements covering more than 1 year
 - ensure priority of debt collection is current year first

Consider role of Costs and collection

- Collect costs before debt – goes to Authority
- Collect debt before costs – increase collection rate but reduce funds for Council

Old Debts – previous years

- Focus on collection of old debt non live accounts
 - Arrangements
 - Attachments
 - Collection agents
 - (Bailiff)
 - Further recovery actions

What value outstanding on old debts

Potential for income

Targeted campaign on arrears/credits for prev years

Provision for bad debt

Tracing

- Returned post
 - Investigating promptly
 - Collection of relevant information
 - Methods used (VO, systems, tracing agents)

Review current tracing suppliers – to be dealt with under new bailiff contract

Collection agencies

- Bailiffs

- Selection
- Monitoring performance
- Quality – customer perspective
- Efficiency – obtaining money/information
- Communications
- Small debt collectors
 - Selection
 - Monitoring performance
 - Quality – customer perspective
 - Efficiency – obtaining money/information
 - Communications
- Returned from Bailiff debt collectors
 - Selection
 - Monitoring performance
 - Quality – customer perspective
 - Efficiency – obtaining money/information
 - Communications

New bailiff contracts with:

- **penalty clauses for non performance – move/reduce risk to collection**
- **Performance monitoring in place – reports/meeting**
- **Accessibility to back office & in the field bailiff staff**

Negotiation to reduce fees on collection agency – done as part of the bailiff contract

Negotiate new contract for collection agency work

Bailiff integration (IT)

DWP payment integration (IT)

Further recovery actions

- Insolvency
- Charging orders
- Committals

Commence forced sales on properties where charging orders in place and payments not forthcoming – currently identifying cases to take

Commence committal actions where appropriate for ‘example cases’

Time publicity for actions taken to ensure message received by public re intolerance of non payment where there is the means to pay - ongoing

These options should be on targeted cases only due to high cost of taking action

Systems

- Telephony
 - Provide information to the customer

- Provide monitoring information to managers
 - Provide flexibility for staff use
- Receiving payments
 - Ability to take payments over the phone
 - Ability to accept Credit card payments
- Interactive services
 - Increasing the amount of transactions available on line
 - Automating information pass to back office systems
- Mobile services
 - wireless internet access – villages/van
- PC/network speed
 - PC with better performance will save officer time & increase output
- Working from home
 - maximising output/flexibility etc
- Quality/performance monitoring
 - Staff output
 - No of errors returned
 - Customer complaints

Upgrade telephony system to provide better service to customer and flexibility to staff (incl. home worker access, caller line interrogation,

Maximise on line functions to reduce customer interaction (however there are ongoing improvements)

Provide facility for all CT staff to take telephone payments while customer is on the phone – currently not all staff have access(licensing issues)

Provide roaming access to officer to allow customers to use services in remote areas

Investigate cost/provision of Chip PC's and Citrix access (IT Roll out to commence by end of November 2010)

Monitor staff to ensure accurate processing. Align to current HB methodology (RB solutions) – trial complete, implementation dependant on finance availability

Monitor customer complaints to assess success or otherwise of procedures being used

Investigate the use of Blogs, UTube and imbedding info video clips on the web site in order to promote DD, Disregards and Benefit take up and provide information for customers.

Staffing

- **Home working**
- **Structure**

Review the home working policy – is it meeting our needs, can it be improved

Review structure as changes to working practices change to ensure

Savings

- Annual leaflets – 3 Counties?
- Information leaflets – Consortium?
- Print services – Consortium or partnership?
- Bulk ordering (paper etc) Consortium
- Provide own telephone customer services for all authorities
- Increase take up of e-billing
- Increase DD payers
- Provide better telephony systems to allow more integrated home working and reduce accommodation costs (???)
- Cheaper accommodation (????)
- IT contract costs (Steria)
- IT supplier costs (Academy, comino etc.) look at what we are using and what we are paying for – are they the same???
- Integration to reduce officer time
- Simplification and stream lining to reduce officer time (policies for write off etc)