



The Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership

Post Opening Policy

Benefits Service

28th February 2008

Author: Steve Knights

Post Opening Policy

DOCUMENT SPONSOR (Client Officers): Forest Heath - Andrew Claydon

Breckland - Paul Calkin

East Cambs Alex Colyer

DOCUMENT AUTHOR:

Steve Knights

Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership

DATE DOCUMENT APPROVED AT: - 28th February 2008

JOINT COMMITTEE:

LAST REVISION DATE: 28th February 2008

NEXT REVISION DATE: 28th February 2009

Post Opening Policy

ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The ARP is responsible for opening and distributing the post received for all Revenue Services at Breckland House Thetford.

It is recognised that a secure post opening procedure is essential to the smooth running of the ARP's business. If the post opening operation is not secure it will expose the ARP and each Council to the risk of not meeting it's legal and financial responsibilities.

POLICY STATEMENT

Forest Heath District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Breckland Council working as the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP), under authority of Section 101(b) of The Local Government Act 1972, will ensure that all post received at Breckland House is opened in a secure environment and original documents returned to customers without delay or risk of being lost.

OBJECTIVE

This policy is provided to ensure that the Local Authorities through the ARP fulfill their statutory requirements whilst dealing with incoming post, fulfill their duty of care to their customers original documents, dealing with them appropriately, in a fair and open manner, and with regard to the Statutory duties of each Council and the Corporate post opening policies of the authorities.

EQUALITY

ARP is committed to equality of opportunity and valuing diversity in both the provision of services and in its role as a major employer. We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect. We are committed to the elimination of unfair and unlawful discrimination in all our policies, procedures and practises. We are determined to ensure that no member of the public, employee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of their age, child care or other caring responsibilities, disability, gender, HIV status, language, marital status, race, religion, sexuality, membership or non-membership of a trade union, or by any requirement which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

DATA PROTECTION

This policy is compatible with Data Protection requirements.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT

This policy is compatible with Section 17 of the above act. All staff are aware of their responsibilities and duty under this, and are mindful of its relevance. It is part of the induction process and training programme.

BACKGROUND

This policy imposes controls to ensure that no items of mail are lost, stolen or interfered with and that no fraudulent documents enter the system. The policy is to be adhered to at all times and may only be amended following review by the ARP and each respective Council. A regular review will be undertaken on an annual basis. Interim reviews may be undertaken by referral to the Revenues Management Team meetings.

The ARP does not have overall control of the Post Opening at any of the other Council Offices or Customer contact centres as these are either directly controlled by other Departments of each Council or the Customer Contact Centre, however the ARP accepts that their procedures fulfill the Arp's requirements.

THE ARP BENEFIT SERVICE'S POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is ensure that the ARP deal with the opening post on behalf of Forest Heath District Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, and Breckland in a secure and sensitive manner, and within a secure and controlled environment as stated in the procedure document.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The ARP will ensure that the Local Authorities through the ARP, fulfill their Best Practice requirements with regard to the opening of post. There is a set procedure that is followed and reviewed regularly to ensure required standards are maintained.

RECEIPT OF POST

Post is received from two sources:

- Post office delivery by mail bag to the main reception
- Hand delivered mail through the letter box

The post delivered by the Royal Mail must be immediately taken in the closed bags to the post room.

The Post is to be removed from the locked Postbox and taken direct to the Post Room by the ARP Officer responsible under the Post Opening Procedure document.

The post box will be opened and emptied at a time defined in the Post Opening Procedure document.

THE POST ROOM

The post room is a secure room, The door will be locked once the post has been received and will not be unlocked until all post has been dealt with.

ACCESS TO THE POST ROOM.

Access to the post room will only be granted to the post opening team during the post opening period. Once the post opening has commenced, the post room will be locked and entry refused to any other person. The post opening staff will not then leave the post room until the operation is complete, except in case of an emergency when the supervisor will be responsible for ensuring that the room is secure.

The post opening team will consist of one supervisor and a minimum of two other staff.

POST OPENING

The Revenues post will be opened and dealt with in accordance with the Post Opening Procedure document, that is reviewed regularly.

All mail addressed to the Revenues department including letters marked 'private and confidential' is to be opened in the post room.

SCANNING

Once all Revenues post is opened it will be scanned onto the Document Image Processing system in the post room.

RETURN OF DOCUMENTS

All documents are to be returned to the customer as soon as possible and in a manner that is appropriate to the particular documents to be returned, as specified in the Post Opening Procedure document.

DELIVERY

All post that is not claim or account related will be distributed at the end of the post opening, by member of the Post Room staff.

FRAUD

The ARP is committed to the fight against fraud in all its forms. This Policy ensures that all post is dealt with securely and any fraudulent activity is identified and dealt with appropriately.

This complies with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act.