

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

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Agenda Item No

meeting date: 8 JUNE 2010  
title: REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE PLAN 2010/11  
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES  
principal author: MARK EDMONDSON

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To approve the service plan for the Revenues and Benefits Service.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities.

The Revenues and Benefits Service Plan sets out and demonstrates how the service links to the Council's ambitions and priorities.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Service Plan is attached to this report.

## 3 ISSUES

3.1 The Service Plan considers the issues facing the service for the forthcoming three year period commencing 2010/11 and includes a comprehensive action plan of tasks to be completed.

## 4 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

4.1 Consider and approve the service plan with any amendments Members wish to make.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS MANAGER

PF25-10/ME/AC  
17 May 2010

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### 1. INTRODUCTION

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This Service Plan covers the activities of the Revenues and Benefits service. The Revenues Section deals with Council Tax, National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) and Cashiering Services and the Benefits Section deals with the administration of Housing and Council Tax Benefit.

The Revenues and Benefits Section aims to be a well-managed section providing efficient services to our customers and achieving top quartile performance against our best value performance indicators.

Within the Resources department, the Revenues and Benefits Section(s) delivers the following services:

- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Council Tax Collection
- NNDR Collection
- Cashiering

#### ***Key Objectives***

The Key Service Objectives for the section for the year's 2010/11 are:

##### *Benefits Section*

- To process claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit in an accurate and timely manner.
- To detect and investigate instances of benefit fraud to ensure public funds are used correctly.

##### *Revenues Section*

- To identify the correct liable parties for Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) and issue accurate bills in a timely manner.
- To take appropriate recovery action against those taxpayers and ratepayers who don't make payment in accordance with their bills.
- To provide a Cashiering service for all Council services.

#### ***Key Policies and Strategies***

The Revenues and Benefits section works to all appropriate Council policies and strategies and these help to ensure the Council's Ambitions and Objectives are met. The following is a list of policies and strategies relating to this section:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### ***Working in Partnership***

Over the last year the revenues and benefits section has been actively involved with partnership arrangements with various bodies. Through these we have achieved efficiency savings and provided an improved service.

- We have developed joint mandofoms (online forms) with ELEP.
- We now have a joint benefits application form with Burnley, Hyndburn and Rossendale Councils.
- We have outsourced our bailiff activities to Rossendales Limited.
- We are members of the Lancashire Shared Service Contact Centre (SSCC).
- We are members of the Lancashire Revenues and Benefits benchmarking groups
- We have a joint Council Tax leaflet with Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Fire Authority and several other districts.
- We undertook a joint procurement exercise for secure cash collection with several other Northwest Council's helping to reduce our costs by almost 70%.

### ***Providing Service Excellence in Response to our diverse communities***

Ribble Valley is the largest district council in Lancashire and within its boundaries includes a range of geographically and socially diverse communities. In an effort to provide services that best meet the needs of these diverse communities the Revenues and Benefits Service has sent information to every household and business in the borough, undertaken a Benefit take up campaign with Lancashire County Council's Welfare Rights Service and has introduced a third party collection service which allows payments to be made in rural areas and supports the local Post Office network.

### ***Statement of Equality***

As part of RVBC the Resources department wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment and the provision of services. Our commitment to equal opportunities is shared equally by both Councillors and staff. All employees within the Revenues and Benefits section are aware of the Council's equal opportunities policy, and the standards of behaviour that are expected of them.

### ***Health and Safety***

The role of the Health and Safety Advisor is to formulate policies on health and safety and engender these into the Council's workforce, raising awareness and promoting a positive health and safety culture through the establishment and by the creation and monitoring of relevant performance standards.

The primary focus of the post during 2010/11 is to continue to advise CMT and Service Managers on the effective management of the Health, Safety and Welfare of employees for which they have responsibility and to reinforce the importance of Leadership, Management Competence and Worker Involvement in line with the Health and Safety Executive's new Strategy.

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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### 2. RESOURCES: FINANCE

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#### *How much does your service cost?*

The Revenues and Benefits Service is projected to cost £544,040 in 2010/11. Further details of the costs of the service can be found at Appendix A.

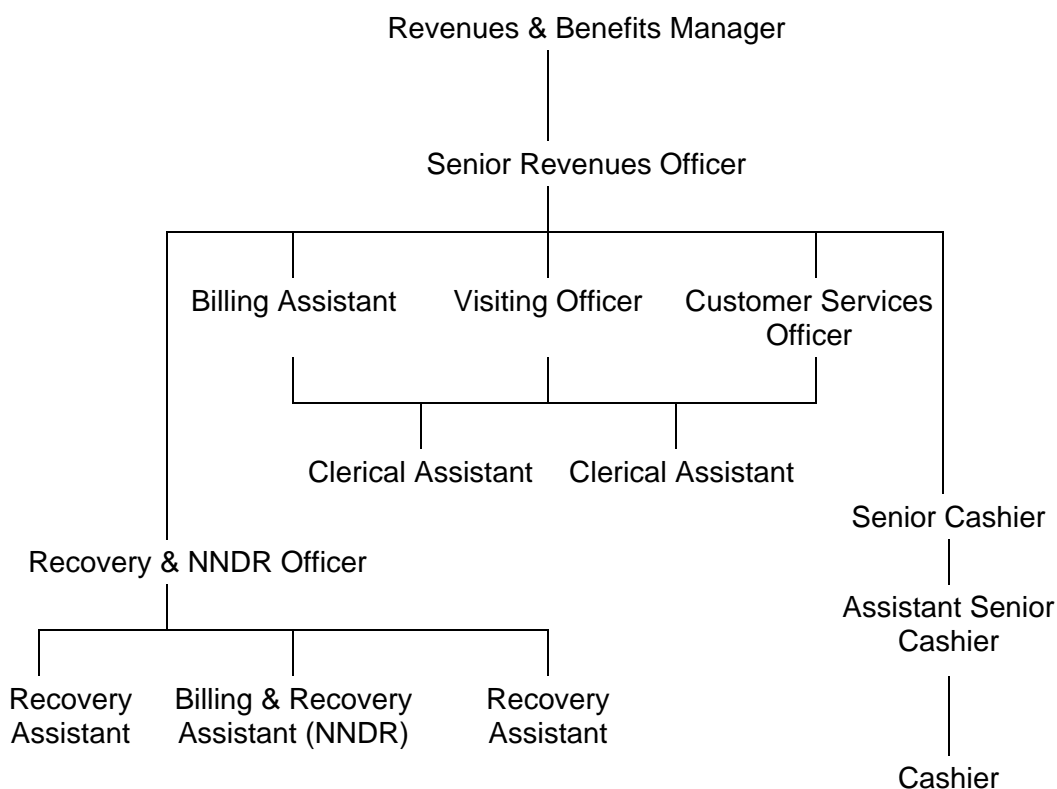
### 3. RESOURCES: STAFF

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#### *How many members of staff does your service employ?*

The Revenues and Benefits Service employees 23 full time posts in 2010/11. Two full time posts have been removed from the service as a result of a restructure that has seen the withdrawal of the Mobile/Longridge Office.

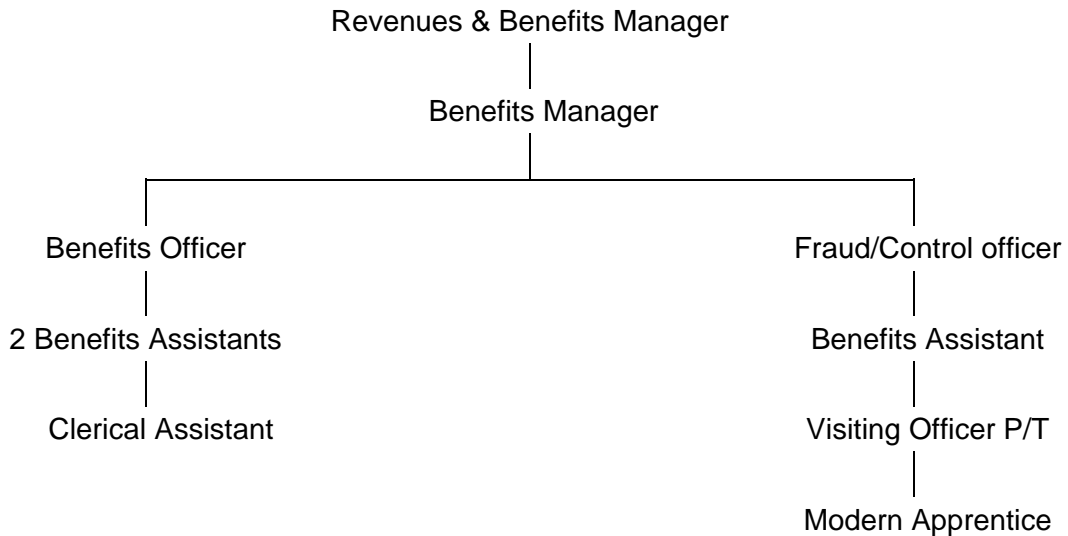
#### Revenues Section



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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### Benefits Section



The Revenues and Benefits Service has achieved excellent results based on the dedication of well qualified and experienced staff. The last few years have seen significant changes in personnel and the section has a number of staff who are approaching retirement age. The recession has resulted in significant increases in the workload of both the Revenues and Benefits sections and it will continue to be necessary to monitor performance and staff levels in 2010/11.

## 4. RISKS

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The Revenues and Benefits service is subject to a number of operational risks. These are assessed using a traffic-light system via GRACE Risk Management Software. The red risks are those that have been identified as high-level risks. We do not currently have any red risks.

## 5. SWOT ANALYSIS

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The following strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats have been identified:

### ***Strengths***

- Dedicated knowledgeable staff
- Top quartile performance
- Low cost
- Customer friendly office
- No queues
- Telephone calls answered
- High levels of professional qualifications amongst staff
- Minimum number of staff

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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### *Weaknesses*

- ❖ No economies of scale
- ❖ Failure to implement technological improvements, lack of investment such as document imaging
- ❖ Staff turnover due to lack of career opportunities and low comparable salaries, inability to compete with salaries offered by other local authorities in the area

### *Opportunities*

- ❖ Shared service contact centre
- ❖ Partnership working with other districts

### *Threats*

- ❖ Shared service contact centre
- ❖ Changing benefits legislation
- ❖ Council tax rebellion
- ❖ Credit Crunch/Recession

## **6. KEY SERVICE ISSUES OVER THE NEXT 3 YEARS**

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The following key service issues arising over the next three years will be reflected in the medium Term Financial Strategy as appropriate.

### *Benefits*

- 1 The continued problems associated with the Locality changes and introduction of LHA.
- 2 Credit crunch/Recession leading to more claims.
- 3 Continuing changes to Housing and Council Tax Benefit legislation.
- 4 Possible reforms to Housing/Council Tax benefit by new Government

### *Revenues*









- 1 NNDR collection issues due to the reform of EPR
- 2 NNDR and Council Tax collection issues due to credit crunch and possible recession
- 3 NNDR revaluation in 2010
- 4 Reform of LABGI
- 5 Any reforms implemented by new Government

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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### 7. ACHIEVEMENTS

#### Revenues and Benefits Performance Information

PI Status		Long Term Trends	
	Alert		Improving
	Warning		No Change
	OK		Getting Worse
	Unknown		
	Data Only		









#### Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit

PI Code	Short Name	Type	2008/09		Q1 2009/10		Q2 2009/10		Q3 2009/10		Q4 2009/10		2009/10		Current Performance	Trend	Latest Notes
			Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target			
<b>LPI RB7 (BV76c)</b>	Housing Benefits Security number of fraud investigations	Number	52.61	35.00	18.78	13.75	17.97	13.75	14.56	13.75	12.79	13.75	63.97	55.00			
<b>LPI RB8 (BV76d)</b>	Housing Benefits Security number of prosecutions & sanctions	Number	3.58	3.00	.77	1.20	1.49	1.20	1.49	1.20	.73	1.20	4.49	4.78			







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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

PI Code	Short Name	Type	2008/09		Q1 2009/10		Q2 2009/10		Q3 2009/10		Q4 2009/10		2009/10		Current Performance	Trend	Latest Notes
			Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target			
<b>LPI RB10 (BV79b1)</b>	Percentage of Recoverable Overpayments Recovered (HB) that are recovered during period	Percentage	89.69%	75.00%	94.47%	75.00%	119.86%	75.00%	81.74%	75.00%	86.20%	75.00%	93.76%	75.00%			
<b>LPI RB11 (BV79b2)</b>	HB overpayments recovered as % of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding	Percentage	48.12%	40.00%	15.87%	10.00%	22.75%	10.00%	19.54%	10.00%	15.63%	10.00%	45.92%	40.00%			
<b>LPI RB12 (BV79b3)</b>	Percentage of Recoverable Overpayments Written Off (HB)	Percentage	.95%	3.00%	2.09%	3.00%	.00%	3.00%	.00%	3.00%	9.14%	3.00%	7.08%	3.00%			a data-cleanse exercise has taken place on the northgate system to clear out old non-recoverable debts from 1993 - upto date - these debts are mainly from deceased customers or local authority errors which RVBC has had full subsidy from the DWP for these debts
<b>LPI RB13 (BV78a)</b>	Speed of processing - new HB/CTB claims	Number	21.0	25.0	26.6	21.0	20.1	21.0	20.7	21.0	22.1	21.0	22.6	21.0			

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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

PI Code	Short Name	Type	2008/09		Q1 2009/10		Q2 2009/10		Q3 2009/10		Q4 2009/10		2009/10		Current Performance	Trend	Latest Notes
			Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target			
NI 180	The number of changes of circumstances which affect customers' HB/CTB entitlement within the year.	Number	2161	2360	1460	675	2548	1350	2971	2025	4341	2700	4341	2700			above 15% of target - central government disregarded child benefit and some capital in November which increased our figure.
NI 181	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events	Number	10.2	15.0	18.0	13.0	13.8	13.0	12.4	13.0	6.9	13.0	9.0	13.0			

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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### Revenues

PI Code	Short Name	Type	2008/09		Q1 2009/10		Q2 2009/10		Q3 2009/10		Q4 2009/10		2009/10		Current Performance	Trend	Latest Notes
			Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target	Value	Target			
LPI RB1	CTAX direct debit take-up as a percentage of chargeable accounts	Percentage	71.07%	71%	72.98%	71.25%	72.68%	71.25%	72.17%	71.25%	71.67%	71.25%	71.67%	71.25%			
LPI RB2	CTAX Direct Debit take-up as a percentage of receipts	Percentage	75.56%	75%	74.39%	75.75%	76.36%	75.75%	77.3%	75.75%	76.42%	75.75%	76.42%	75.75%			
LPI RB3	NNDR Direct Debit take-up as a percentage of total properties	Percentage	53.35%	50%	52.8%	53.5%	52.85%	53.5%	51.76%	53.5%	56.95%	53.5%	56.95%	53.5%			
LPI RB4	NNDR Direct Debit take-up as a percentage of receipts	Percentage	55.22%	50%	53.98%	55.5%	55.9%	55.5%	56.24%	55.5%	55.68%	55.5%	55.68%	55.5%			
LPI RB5 (BV9)	% of Council Tax collected	Percentage	99.07%	98.50%	30.41%	24.77%	59.12%	49.54%	87.72%	74.31%	99.04%	99.08%	99.04%	99.08%			
LPI RB6 (BV10)	Percentage of Non-domestic Rates Collected	Percentage	98.29%	98.50%	30.78%	24.63%	58.24%	49.25%	86.52%	73.88%	97.82%	98.50%	97.82%	98.50%			NNDR collection has been affected by the economic recession that occurred in 2009. The 2009-10 collection rate is slightly higher than in the supporting evidence document, NNDR 2009-10, as that does not reflect the £27682.80 of Rates that have been deferred.




# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11



### 8. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS & TARGETS

#### Revenues and Benefits Action Plan Monitoring Report

##### Effective Administration of Benefit Fraud

Action	Description	Expected Outcome	Linked PIs	Status	Progress	Due Date	Start Date	Completed Date	Milestone	Milestone Completed	Assigned To	Latest progress update from assigned user
08-RB 06.1 Investigate cases identified from CT NFI SPD exercise	Investigate cases identified from CT NFI SPD exercise	Investigation of potential benefit fraud cases as identified through CT NFI SPD exercise			100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2008	29 Oct 2009			Mark Edmondson	29 Oct 2009 Exercise completed for 2009/10.
08-RB 06.2 Proactively target fraud	Proactively target fraud	Reduction in number of benefit fraud cases			100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2008	10 May 2010			Mark Edmondson	10 May 2010 Several exercises conducted.
08-RB 06.3 National Fraud Initiative	Fraud identified and reduced	Reduction in number of benefit fraud cases			100 %	31 Mar 2009	01 Apr 2008	29 Oct 2009			Mark Edmondson	29 Oct 2009 Exercise completed.





##### Efficient Administration of Council Tax Benefit

Action	Description	Expected Outcome	Linked PIs	Status	Progress	Due Date	Start Date	Completed Date	Milestone	Milestone Completed	Assigned To	Latest progress update from assigned user
08-RB 05.2 Take Up campaign	Successful Take Up campaign	Increase in take-up of CTB and 2AR			100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2008	10 May 2010			Mark Edmondson	10 May 2010 Take up campaign completed.
09-RB 05.3 Review sections compliance with KLOE's					100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2009	10 May 2010			Mark Edmondson	10 May 2010 KLOEs identified and reviewed



# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### Efficient Administration of Housing Benefit

Action	Description	Expected Outcome	Linked PIs	Status	Progress	Due Date	Start Date	Completed Date	Milestone	Milestone Completed	Assigned To	Latest progress update from assigned user
08-RB 04.3 Review performance standards	Review performance standards	All performance standards reviewed			100 %	31 Mar 2009	01 Apr 2008	29 Oct 2009			Mark Edmondson	29 Oct 2009 Performance standards reviewed.
08-RB 04.4 Take Up campaign	Successful Take Up campaign	Increased housing benefit take-up			100 %	31 Mar 2009	01 Apr 2008	29 Oct 2009			Mark Edmondson	29 Oct 2009 Take up campaign completed for 2008/9.
09-RB 04.5 Complete VF training for homeless section					100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2009	10 May 2010			Mark Edmondson	29 Oct 2009 Decision taken to give VF training to Ribble Valley Homes instead.
09-RB 04.6 Review sections compliance with KLOE's					100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2009	10 May 2010			Mark Edmondson	10 May 2010 KLOE's reviewed.




### To Provide an Efficient Cashiering Service for the Whole Council

Action	Description	Expected Outcome	Linked PIs	Status	Progress	Due Date	Start Date	Completed Date	Milestone	Milestone Completed	Assigned To	Latest progress update from assigned user
08-RB 03.1 Automate banking processes	Automate banking processes	All processes to be automated			25 %	01 Sep 2009	01 Apr 2008				Mark Edmondson	10 May 2010 Work not completed due to greater priority for IT resources.
08-RB 03.2 Review service	Review cashiers service	Review of cashiers service to be completed			100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2008	28 Aug 2009			Mark Edmondson	28 Aug 2009 Report taken to committee and decision taken to close Mobile/Longridge Office from 1.4.10.



# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL






## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### Efficient Administration & Collection of Council Tax

Action	Description	Expected Outcome	Linked PIs	Status	Progress	Due Date	Start Date	Completed Date	Milestone	Milestone Completed	Assigned To	Latest progress update from assigned user
08-RB 01.2 Payment of refunds by BACS	Payment of refunds by BACS	To start paying all refunds by BACS			50 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2008				Mark Edmondson	10 May 2010 Work further delayed to resources new target date 31.3.11
08-RB 01.1 Complete NFI SPD exercise	Complete NFI SPD exercise	Completion of exercise within current resources			100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2008	28 Aug 2009			Mark Edmondson	28 Aug 2009 Exercise completed.
09-RB 01.5 Review disabled band reductions					100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2009	29 Oct 2009			Mark Edmondson	29 Oct 2009 Reviews completed.

### Efficient Administration & Collection of National Non-Domestic Rates

Action	Description	Expected Outcome	Linked PIs	Status	Progress	Due Date	Start Date	Completed Date	Milestone	Milestone Completed	Assigned To	Latest progress update from assigned user
08-RB 02.3 Review all cases of Small Business Rates Relief					100 %	31 Mar 2010	01 Apr 2008	29 Oct 2009			Mark Edmondson	29 Oct 2009 Government decided that this is no longer required.
09-RB-02.4 Manage the NNDR 2010 Revaluation		Bills issued correctly in March 2010			100 %	31 Mar 2010	10 May 2010	10 May 2010				10 May 2010 All revaluation data loaded and bills issued accordingly.

Action Status	
	Cancelled
	Overdue; No longer assigned
	Unassigned; Not Started; Check Progress
	Resuming; In Progress; Assigned
	Completed

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### 9. COMMITMENT TO SERVICE EXCELLENCE – LISTENING TO OUR CUSTOMERS

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The Revenues and Benefits service is focused on delivering excellent services to its customers and is keen to gain feedback from customers on a regular basis. The Benefits section undertook a comprehensive customer satisfaction survey in 2009/10 the results of which are as follows:

Survey Question	2006/07	2009/10	Trend
Overall satisfaction with the service: contact with the office	90	90.5	↑
Overall satisfaction with the service: Service in the office	90	89.1	↓
Overall satisfaction with the service: Telephone service	92	87.9	↓
Overall satisfaction with the service: Staff in the office	91	88.5	↓
Overall satisfaction with the service: Forms	77	71	↓
Overall satisfaction with the service: Speed of service	88	88.6	↑
Overall satisfaction with the service: Overall satisfaction	91	89.1	↓

These results demonstrate the continued excellence of the service provided by the Benefits Section.

The Revenues section undertook a survey of visitors to the revenues enquiry counter and the cash office in 2006/7. The key findings of these surveys are as follows:

Cashiers Survey Key Findings: -

95% of respondents agreed (40% strongly) that they didn't have to wait long to be seen  
94.5% strongly agreed/agreed that they prefer to make a payment in person  
91.9% strongly agreed/agreed that staff were polite and helpful  
92% were satisfied overall with their payment

A full copy of this report can be found at  
[http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/site/scripts/download\\_info.php?fileID=5641](http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=5641)

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

Revenues Survey Key Findings: -

90.2% of respondents agreed (40% strongly) that they didn't have to wait long to be seen  
90.2% agreed that staff were polite and helpful  
82.4% agreed that their reason for visiting the office was resolved satisfactorily  
84.4% agreed that their enquiry was dealt with quickly  
82.4% were satisfied overall

A full copy of this report can be found at  
[http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/site/scripts/download\\_info.php?fileID=5640](http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=5640)

## 10. BENCHMARKING, OTHER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT MODELS AND COMPARISON METHODS

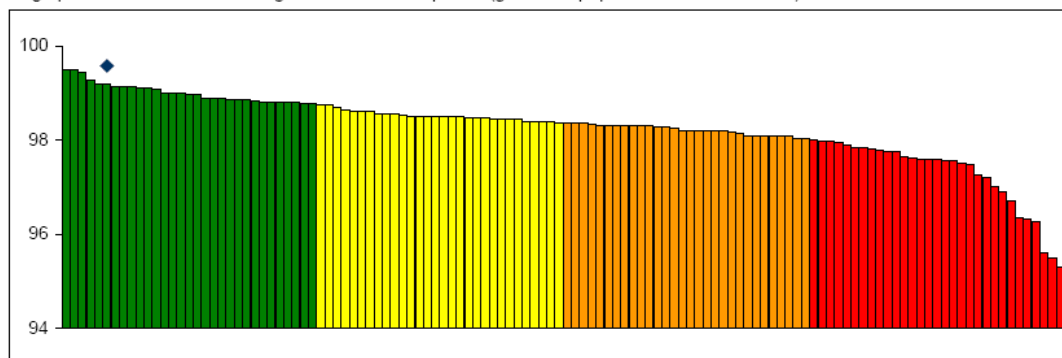
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The Revenues and Benefits service is a member of the Lancashire Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefit benchmarking groups. Detailed benchmarking is undertaken to compare how our services fare against other Lancashire authorities. However as a rural authority it is more appropriate to compare ourselves to other similar authorities.

SPARSE provide us with comparison information with similar authorities. The two graphs below show how we compare for Council Tax collection and the cost of Benefits administration:-

### BV9:Percentage of Council Tax collected

The graph is colour coded according to district council quartile (green is top quartile and red is bottom).



#### ◆ Ribble Valley

2007/08 rank: **6** out of 122 predominantly rural councils. 2006/07 rank: **13** Change in rank: **+ 7**

2007/08 quartile: **top** 2006/07 quartile: **top** 2005/06 quartile: **second**

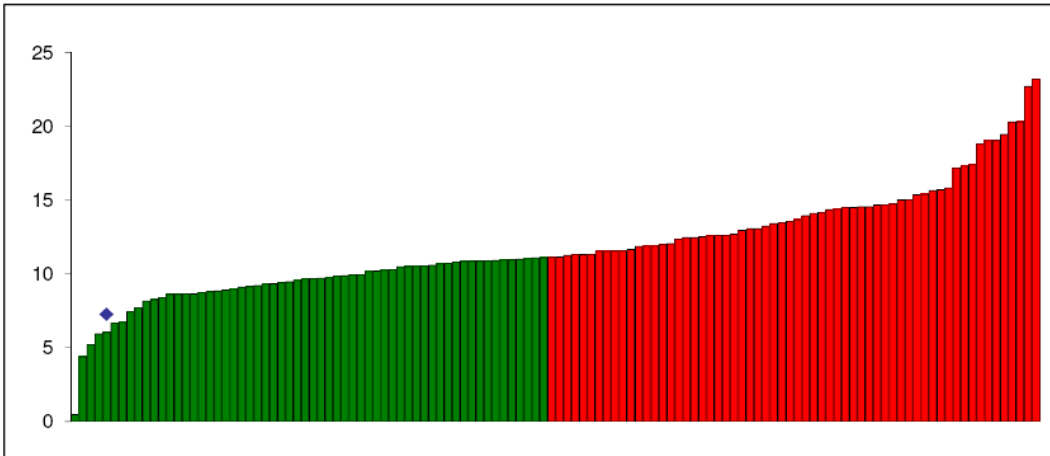


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## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### Cost of Benefits Administration

The data comes from the Audit Commission VFM profile tool and shows cost data for 2007/08 which is sourced from RA form returns which each authority is required to make each year. Lower than average costs are shown as green bars on the graph and higher than average costs are shown in red.



◆ Ribble Valley  
2007/08 cost rank: 5 2006/07 rank: 4 out of 122 predominantly rural councils in terms of cost of benefits admin.  
Change in rank: - 1

## 11. FINDINGS OF RECENT INSPECTIONS

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No inspections of the Revenues and Benefits service have been carried out over the last year.

## 12. INNOVATIVE IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS OR CHANGES TO SERVICE DELIVERY

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The Revenues and Benefits service has recently introduced ALLPAY as a method of payment in replacement of the Mobile /Longridge Collection Office. This has proved very popular with Council Tax payers and helped to reduce significantly the cost of this service. The number of customers making payment by electronic methods continues to rise year on year which will provide continued efficiency savings.

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

### 13. WHAT ACTIONS WILL WE TAKE TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICE?

The following Action Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Council's medium Term Financial Strategy.

#### Corporate Ambition/ Objective:

Key Service Objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Links	Responsible Officer	Resource requirements
The efficient administration and collection of council tax	Complete NFI SPD exercise	To be a well managed council	Exercise completed by 31.3.11	Audit Commission	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Senior Revenue Officer	Within existing resources
	Council Tax Refunds by BACS	To be a well managed council	Introduced by 31.3.11	None	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Senior Revenue Officer	Within existing resources
The efficient administration and collection of national non-domestic rates	Review Discretionary Relief	To be a well managed council	Cases reviewed by 31.3.11	NNDR Legislation	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Senior Revenue Officer	Within existing resources
	Deal with changes to Small Business Rates Relief from 1.10.10.	To be a well managed council	Changes implemented and new bills issued by 1.10.10.	NNDR Legislation	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Senior Revenue Officer	Within existing resources
To provide an efficient cashing service for the whole Council	Automate banking processes	To be a well managed council	Processes automated by 31.3.11.	None	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Senior Revenue Officer	Within existing resources
	Tender for 3 <sup>rd</sup> party cash collection service	To be a well managed council	New provider in place for 1.4.11.	None	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Senior Revenue Officer	Within existing resources

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Revenues and Benefits Service Plan 2010/11

Key Service Objective	Action	Outcome	Target	Links	Responsible Officer	Resource requirements
The efficient administration of housing benefit	Complete VF training for RV Homes Ltd	To be a well managed council	RV Homes Ltd VF compliant by 31.3.11.	DWP Benefits Legislation	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Benefits Manager	Within existing resources
	Review Section's compliance with KLOE's	To be a well managed council	KLOE's reviewed by 31.3.11.	CAA	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Benefits Manager	Within existing resources
The efficient administration of council tax benefit	Take up campaign	To be a well managed council	Take up of CTB and 2AR increased	DWP	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Benefits Manager	Within existing resources
	Review Section's compliance with KLOE's	To be a well managed council	KLOE's reviewed by 31.3.11.	CAA	Revenues and Benefits Manager, Benefits Manager	Within existing resources
The effective administration of benefit fraud	Investigate cases identified from CT NFI SPD exercise	To be a well managed council	Investigated	DWP and Audit Commission	Director of Resources, Benefits Manager	Within existing resources
	Complete NFI exercise	To be a well managed council	Cases investigated by 31.3.11.	DWP	Director of Resources, Benefits Manager	Within existing resources

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### 14. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

#### Revenue Services - 2009/10

	Inflation Rate	REVUE		CLTAX	NNDRC	LRGOF	MOBIL	CTBEN	HGBEN	TOTAL	
		Revenues & Benefits Section		Council Tax	National Non Domestic Rates	Longridge Office	Mobile Office	Council Tax Benefits Administration	Housing Benefits		
		£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
<b>Expenditure</b>											
Direct employee related expenses											
- Pay ( Incl allowances)		478,080								478,080	
- Ni		30,620								30,620	
- Superannuation		73,980								73,980	
			582,680	0	0	0	0	0	0		582,680
Indirect employee related expenses			7,460	0	0	0	0	0	3,450		10,910
Premises related expenses			0	0	0	580	790	0	0		1,370
Transport related expenses			9,600	0	0	0	4,280	0	0		13,880
Supplies & services			10,210	44,750	1,190	0	320	0	37,440		93,910
Transfer payments			0	0	25,040	0	0	2,076,000	4,942,570		7,043,610
Support Services											
- Council offices			36,390	0	0	0	0	0	0		36,390
- Civic suite			780	0	0	0	0	0	0		780
- Mobile Office			0	7,190	0	0	0	0	0		7,190
- Bank charges			0	16,920	0	0	0	0	0		16,920
- Longridge office			580	0	0	0	0	0	0		580
- Community services			0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
- Resources - Financial services			26,910	13,430	8,400	0	550	6,270	46,580		102,140
- Resources - IT services			0	66,940	11,810	0	0	0	36,640		115,390
- Resources - Legal services			180	1,370	0	0	0	0	6,940		8,490
- Resources - Revenue services			0	354,070	67,820	0	1,240	114,290	122,940		660,360

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	Inflation Rate	REVUE		CLTAX	NNDRC	LRGOF	MOBIL	CTBEN	HGBEN	TOTAL	
		Revenues & Benefits Section		Council Tax	National Non Domestic Rates	Longridge Office	Mobile Office	Council Tax Benefits Administration	Housing Benefits	£	£
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
- Organisation & Member development			15,390	0	0	0	0	0	0		15,390
			690,180	504,670	114,260	580	7,180	2,196,560	5,196,560		8,709,990
<b>Income</b>											
Government grants			0	0	-83,630	0	0	-2,158,710	-5,146,170		-7,388,510
Customer & client receipts			-32,290	-71,070	-5,730	0	0	0	0		-109,090
Recharges to other general fund services			-668,620	0	0	-580	-7,190	0	0		-676,390
			-700,910	-71,070	-89,360	-580	-7,190	-2,158,710	-5,146,170		-8,173,990
<b>2009/10 OE</b>			-10,730	433,600	24,900	0	-10	37,850	50,390		536,000
Non recurring items			0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
<b>Sub-total after removal of non recurring items</b>			-10,730	433,600	24,900	0	-10	37,850	50,390		536,000
Provision for inflation	1.5		-160	6,500	370	0	0	570	760		8,040
<b>2010/11 OE</b>			-10,890	440,100	25,270	0	-10	38,420	51,150		544,040

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### ***Ideas for Efficiencies and Savings (Possible Areas for Reduction and Possibilities of Shared Working)***

The Revenues and Benefits service has continued to provide efficiency savings year on year. Since 2003/04 there has been a 2.9% increase in the number of domestic properties and an 11.2% increase in the number of business properties in the Ribble Valley. Staffing numbers have remained constant meaning that we are doing more with the same resources

The number of direct debit transactions for Council Tax and NNDR has increased from 147,486 in 2003/04 to 173,629 in 2009/10, an increase of over 17.7%. Every year we continue to increase the number of customers making payment by Direct Debit, which is the most efficient method of payment. As a result we achieved the 7<sup>th</sup> highest Council Tax collection rate in England and Wales in 2008/09.

In 2009/10 we decided to restructure the Cashiering function within the Revenues and Benefits Service. As a result a decision was made to cease to provide the Longridge/Mobile collection office from 1 April 2010. As the budget referred to above is a base budget these changes have not been taken into consideration. Two full time posts have been removed from the establishment resulting in a saving of £47,220 from the direct employee related expenditure above. However our contract to provide cashiering services to Ribble Valley Homes Ltd has not been renewed which will result in reduced income of £32,280. Taking into account the other savings relating to the provision of the Longridge/Mobile Office the budget above will be reduced by a net amount of £19,480. Finally we have appointed ALLPAY to provide an alternative collection service, which will cost approximately £5,000 per annum reducing the net saving to £15,480.

The NNDR cost of collection grant was estimated at £83,630 whereas in fact we have been awarded £84,195.65 resulting in additional income of £565.65 for 2010/11.

Finally, during 2009/10 we have achieved significant savings in the Benefits section. Due to recession/credit crunch the Government allocated additional resources to local authorities to deal with the increase in Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims. We have managed to maintain the excellent service that we provide via minimal staff overtime and as a result have made savings on the initial estimated budget for 2009/10. Additional resources have been made available for 2010/11 also and it is projected that we will once again be able to achieve savings during this year.

#### *Possible areas for reduction*

It is my belief that we are operating our Revenues and Benefits service on the minimal level of staff possible. Any reduction would seriously compromise our ability to maintain current collection rates and benefits processing times.

#### *Possibilities for shared working*

The Revenues and Benefits service has been at the forefront of shared working for many years. We have identified and implemented several joint working projects, such as:

- Joint Council Tax leaflet – 5 districts plus LCC and LFA combined to produce a joint leaflet for the past three years reducing costs substantially and providing a more coherent leaflet for taxpayers.
- Joint Benefit Application Form – 3 districts have combined to produce a joint benefit application form which has resulted in cost savings and again provides a better service to claimants with consistency among neighbouring authorities. This has been a major benefit to RVBC as a small rural authority, as we have been able to utilise economies of scale. We have also made improvements to the form, such as the award of Charter Mark and the ability to provide it in other languages etc. that would otherwise have been costly on our own.

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- We jointly tendered with a number of North West authorities for the provision of secure cash collection services which resulted in our costs reducing by almost 70%.
- We are currently in negotiations to take part in a joint tendering exercise with 12 North West council's for provision of a third party cash collection service. The aim of this is to keep costs to a minimum by achieving bulk discounts which would not be possible for a local authority of our size alone.
- Lancashire Benefits Training Consortium (Meritec) – 10 Local Authorities have combined to purchase training for Benefits Staff. Housing and Council Tax benefits legislation is constantly changing e.g. the recent introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). In order to maintain standards it is essential that staff undergo regular training and legislative updates. This would be impossible to achieve on our own and the consortium has been a huge success.

### ***Potential cost pressures***

Revenues and Benefits have been subject to constant changes since the early 90's. With a new Government there is an expectation that more changes will occur that may place additional cost pressure on local authorities.

### ***Opportunities & Requests for Additional Resources***

None

### ***Maximising Income***

The Revenues and Benefits Service receives income from the costs levied on Council Tax and NNDR debtors that do not make payment on time. These costs were last reviewed in 2007/08 and increased from £40 to £50 in order to achieve savings under that year's service plan procedure.

A total of £76,800 income is included in the budget in the Resources section of this template relating to costs. This has substantially increased since 2003/4 when the level of costs were £25.00 and the total income was £27,925. This equates to an increase in income of in excess of 175% over this period. It is not recommended that the level of costs is increased during 2010/11 but consideration will be required for 2011/12.