

## **SCOPING DOCUMENT – MCC REVENUES SERVICE**

### **DELIVERING A SHARED REVENUES SERVICE**

Scope - The new service will be hosted by Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC). The scope of the service to be delivered for Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) is as follows

- The billing, administration and collection of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates (including annual billing)
- System administration for Monmouthshire Northgate

All staff engaged in these activities will be transferred to the Shared Revenues Service following an initial period of interim management, subject to TUPE.

Richard Davies will be the point of contact for all Member, Officer and Freedom of Information queries. Statistical and data returns will be prepared and submitted by the Shared Revenues Service, approval will be required from MCC. Detailed analysis will be provided for the Council's Council Tax base report and will be prepared in line with both the statutory reporting requirements and Monmouthshire's MTFP timetable. Performance, budget monitoring and year end reporting will also be provided in line with Monmouthshire's agreed timetables.

The service will not include MCC's retained sundry debtors function. Income / cash paid in respect of Council Tax / NDR will be administered via MCC creditors / banking systems.

### Governance

The governance arrangements for the Shared Revenues Service will replicate the Shared Benefits Service with a Memorandum of Understanding and Service Specifications setting out the

responsibilities of the client and contractor including performance targets.

Regular meetings to review the service will be held as part of the same cycle of Board Meetings covering the Shared Benefits Service.

The Board will be responsible for agreeing any changes in future service delivery including any potential additional one off or recurring costs or savings.

It is envisaged that there would be a need for MCC to develop a more dedicated client / financial oversight function working with the new service including the review of Council Tax base, NNDR returns, Collection Fund, legal policies, contracts and other procedural changes. This would align financial oversight in a similar way to current process in TCBC and it will be possible to share expertise in this respect.

## **BUSINESS CASE FOR A SHARED REVENUES SERVICE**

**Reduce management and service delivery costs, increased resilience and economies of scale** – the Shared Revenues Service will lead to reduced costs and increased resilience. The overall management cost to delivering its Revenues service will be substantially reduced. (exact costs to be agreed)

Key staff within Monmouthshire have either retired or given notice of their retirement within the next 12 months. This represents both a challenge and an opportunity. A Shared Revenues Service will address the significant loss of experience and expertise and ensure service continuity.

Management responsibilities will be shared across the two authorities and the potential for the cross-over of other responsibilities will be evaluated.

The Shared Benefits Service has underlined the value of combining duties and the reduction in duplicated effort. In addition, Monmouthshire will now have access to a greater pool of qualified officers in the Revenues field.

Economies of scale will be achieved where, for example, the staffing resource needed to manage two systems is not directly proportional to the number required to attend to just one. In addition, the new service will provide opportunities for staff development and progression as responsibilities are combined.

**Maintaining a high level of performance** – the Shared Revenues Service will have stringent targets with respect to collection rates in order to maximise revenue and maintain existing high levels of performance (including the current 98.2 per cent in year collection rate for Monmouthshire). The Shared Benefits Service has consistently met or exceeded performance targets for both Monmouthshire and Torfaen and an equivalent level of priority will be given to this within the Shared Revenues Service.

We will be looking at a range of measures to maximise returns including the potential to increase revenue from prior year collection levels, by increasing the number of courts attended by the Council and the implementation of automated processes with respect to cash income (DWP, attachment of earnings etc) and recovery processes.

**Delivering customer service improvements** – the new service would work closely with the Hubs in Monmouthshire to deliver improvements for Revenues customers. In addition to the rollout of Citizen Access to the Hubs we would provide training and support on Council Tax for frontline officers and where necessary specialist duty

lines to assist with enquiries. With respect to telephone calls we would look at alternative ways of dealing with demand created by reminders and summons in order to transfer most of the basic or common queries to a front office prior to service transfer. In turn this would free up resource in the back office for more complex work.

**Aligned recovery processes, systems and networks** - The two services (TCBC and MCC) have significant common characteristics.

They use many common business processes as defined by legislation. They attend the same magistrate courts. They also deploy the same two bailiff companies to act where enforcement is required.

In terms of systems they both use Northgate Revenues and Benefits and from May 2019 will be using the same document management platform as MCC begin use of TCBC's Information@Work via the Torfaen network.

The Shared Benefits Service has paved the way for the new service by resolving many of the cross-network and communication issues that may have been encountered by a new shared service. E-mail accounts and information flows are fully integrated between the two networks.

**Existing Monmouthshire experience** - Due to the success of the Shared Benefits Service its service offer to Monmouthshire and Torfaen has increased substantially to include Education Benefits and Guardianship and Adoption Order Assessments. Therefore, there are very well established links between the Benefits service hosted by Torfaen and Monmouthshire departments including Education, Housing and Social Services. In addition, Council reports initiated by the Shared Benefits Service have been presented to and considered by MCC Members.

**Delivering new software and innovation** – MCC and TCBC have worked closely together to deliver common software solutions in the field of Revenues and Benefits sharing expertise and coming together to work on MCC annual billing. The combination of our two system administration teams will increase resilience and allow us to pool expertise more effectively.

We have both recently agreed a new five year contract with Northgate confirming that the software supplier will continue to provide dedicated database administration support and a series of software developments. TCBC Revenues has successfully implemented recovery modules to improve administration of Council Tax recovery and filter cases referred to the final stages of recovery including enforcement. They have also introduced a text reminder system to forewarn customers that they have failed to pay their cash instalment. We will also continue to deliver improved customer experience via the next phase of Citizen Access for both authorities giving customers more access to information about their Revenues accounts and Benefit claims.

**Alignment of policies and processes**– the collaboration will enable the alignment of policies and processes and the sharing of best practice. Skills sharing will also be realised where two people may need to be skilled in a particular process. However, local characteristics or Member requirements within discretionary areas of legislation will also be fully reflected in the provision of the service.