

**REPORT TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE 9 JANUARY 2013**

**PORTFOLIO: COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION, BENEFITS AND STRATEGIC HOUSING FUNCTIONS**

**REPORT FROM HEAD OF COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**SUBJECT: REVENUES AND BENEFITS CAPITA TELEPHONE CALLS CONTRACT**

**1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED**

- 1.1 To award Capita LGS a further 12-month contract from 1 April 2013 for taking the Council's Revenues and Benefits telephone calls.

**2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 At the Executive meeting of 11 January 2012, Members agreed to Capita LGS being awarded a 12-month contract from 1 April 2012 and therefore officers have now obtained a new quotation for the renewal of this contract for a further 12-months.
- 2.2 The cost of the current contract for 2012/13 is £62,100 and the quotation received for 2013/14 is for just an RPI increase capped at 3.5%. This would mean that the maximum cost would be £64,274 for 2013/14.
- 2.3 The key elements of the contract are as follows:-
- Operating hours to remain the same as the current contract, ie, 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday.
  - Service level target of 85% of calls to be resolved at first point of contact.
  - If the RPI is less than 3.5% at 1 April 2013 then the contract price will be lower than quoted in section 2.2 of this report.

**3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 3.1 Consideration has been given to bringing the calls back in-house and whilst this remains a possibility for the future, it is not felt that it would be practical at this time. The main reason for this view is due to the amount of change that is already being implemented in the Revenues and Benefits service for 2013/14 ie:-
- Implementation of the new Local Council Tax Support scheme that is replacing Council Tax benefit.
  - Dealing with the various other benefit related changes resulting from the Welfare Reform Bill.

- Bringing back the administration of the National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) from Chelmsford.

- 3.2 In addition to the above reasons, the service provided by Capita over the last 12 months has run smoothly and the renewal quotations have not been increased significantly, as was initially being proposed last year.
- 3.3 It should also be noted that in the current situation where the benefit claim caseload remains high (with the potential to increase further in light of some of the impending benefit changes), continuing to separate the telephone calls from the processing staff will have a positive impact on endeavouring to achieve the best possible times for processing of claims.

#### **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The cost of a new 1-year contract with Capita LGS for taking the Revenues and Benefits telephone calls will be £62,100 + RPI capped at 3.5%, giving a maximum cost of £64,274.

#### **5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 It is important that the Revenues and Benefits telephone call service is provided in a manner that ensures that all sections of the community have an easy and equal access to the service.

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

SMT Lead Officer Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**Head of Community Services**

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#### **Background Papers:-**

None.

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