

BUSINESS RATE COLLECTION - PREFERRED PARTNER

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members to consider the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which identifies a 'preferred partner' for the delivery of the Business Rate Collection Service.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Best Value Review of Financial Services pointed towards working with another local authority for the delivery of the National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) collection service. One of the principal reasons for this decision was the rising cost of the service (£116.21 per property in 2003/4) and the fact that the Council, in effect, acts as an agent for the Government, all monies collected being passed into the central pool. In Rochford we collect around £11.2 million in Business Rate but only get back £2.1 million in grant.
- 2.2 Together with the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) the Head of Service canvassed local authorities in Essex to see whether any would be prepared to take over collection responsibilities. Brentwood Borough Council, Castle Point Borough Council and Chelmsford Borough Council responded.

3 EVALUATION

- 3.1 An evaluation exercise was undertaken to determine the most suitable partner based on the following criteria:

Computer System	-	to ensure compatible data transfer
Document Management and Workflow	-	again to ensure compatible data transfers
Performance	-	percentage of Business Rate collected in year
Confidence factor	-	scored 1, 2 or 3 based on a variety of factors such as staff stability, CPA overall performance and knowledge of the organisation

- 3.2 The evaluation matrix shown below points to Chelmsford Borough Council being the preferred partner.

Criteria	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford
Computer system in use	I. World	IBS	Academy
Data management and workflow system in use	None	Developing a new system with IBS	Comino

Criteria	Brentwood	Castle Point	Chelmsford
Collection achieved in:			
2002/3	99.7%	97.8%	99.2%
2003/4	99.3%	99.4%	99.6%
Confidence factor	2	1	3

- 3.3 Rochford has used Academy Business Rate system since 1990 and has recently signed an agreement with Comino to provide a Document Management and Workflow system.
- 3.4 Chelmsford's collection performance is consistently high and staff have been in post for many years.

4 PROPOSED ACTION

- 4.1 Pressure has increased on this initiative since our Business Rate expertise has been lost to a neighbouring authority and we are having to back fill with contracted staff at premium rates. If Members are happy with the recommendation then it is intended to develop an Action Plan jointly with Chelmsford Borough Council. In view of the urgency of the matter it is proposed that the Plan be agreed between the Corporate Director and the Chairman of Policy and Finance Committee.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- 5.2 That Chelmsford Borough Council be advised that they are our preferred partner and that this matter be progressed as outlined above.

Steve Clarkson

Head of Revenue & Housing Management

Background Papers:

None

For further information please contact Steve Clarkson on:-

Tel:- 01702 318005

E-Mail:- steve.clarkson@rochford.gov.uk