

The Arc  
High Street  
Clowne  
Derbyshire  
S43 4JY

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2017

Dear Sir or Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council to be held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 1000 hours.

Register of Members' Interest - Members are reminded that a Member must within 28 days of becoming aware of any changes to their Disclosable Pecuniary Interests provide written notification to the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

You will find the contents of the agenda itemised on page 2.

Yours faithfully




Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

To: Chairman and Members of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee

## **ACCESS FOR ALL**

If you need help understanding this document or require a larger print or translation, please contact us on the following telephone number:-

 **01246 242529**  
**Minicom: 01246 242450**

**Democratic Services**  
**Fax: 01246 242423**



**Tel** 01246 242424    **Fax** 01246 242423    **Minicom** 01246 242450  
**Email** [enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk)    **Web** [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk)

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



**CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**Monday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 1000 hours in the Council Chamber,**  
**The Arc, Clowne**

Item No.		Page No.(s)
	<b><u>PART A – FORMAL</u></b>	
	<b><u>PART 1 OPEN ITEMS</u></b>	
1.	<b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b>	
2.	<b><u>Urgent Items of Business</u></b>	
	To note any urgent items of business which the Chairman has consented to being considered under the provisions of Section 100(B) 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972	
3.	<b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b>	
	Members should declare the existence and nature of any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and Non Statutory Interest as defined by the Members' Code of Conduct in respect of:	
	a) any business on the agenda	
	b) any urgent additional items to be considered	
	c) any matters arising out of those items	
	and if appropriate, withdraw from the meeting at the relevant time.	
4.	Minutes of a meeting held on 13 <sup>th</sup> February 2017.	3 to 7
5.	List of Key Decisions & Items to be Considered in Private. <i>(Members should contact the officer whose name appears on the List of Key Decisions for any further information).</i>	8 to 14
6.	Safe and Warm Scheme update	Verbal Update
7.	Derbyshire Revenues and Benefits Initiative – Housing Benefit and Local Taxation Support Verification Policy	15 to 25
8.	Annual Scrutiny Conference <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation of Date</li> <li>• Suggestions for Reviews</li> </ul>	Discussion
9.	Arrangements for the next meeting:	
	Members to decide whether the meeting on 18 <sup>th</sup> April 2017 should be cancelled as there are currently no items of business for the agenda.	
10.	Work Plan	26 to 29

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2017 at 1000 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor R. Bowler in the Chair

Councillors P.M. Bowmer, M.G. Crane, R.A. Heffer, A. Joesbury, D. McGregor, J.E. Smith and E. Stevenson

Also in attendance with the permission of the Chair were Councillors T. Connerton, M. Dooley and M.J. Ritchie (until Minute No. 0670)

Officers:-

S.E.A. Sternberg (Assistant Director – Legal and Governance, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer), S. Barker (Assistant Director – Human Resources and Payroll) (until Minute No. 0671), K. Drury (Information, Engagement and Performance Manager) (until Minute No. 0670) and A. Brownsword (Senior Governance Officer)

### **0664. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C.P. Cooper and R. Turner

### **0665. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **0666. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **0667. MINUTES – 16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2017**

Moved by Councillor R.A. Heffer and seconded by Councillor A. Joesbury

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of a meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2017 be approved as a true and correct record.

### **0668. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

Members considered the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document.

Moved by Councillor R.A. Heffer and seconded by Councillor A. Joesbury

**RESOLVED** that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document be noted.

### **0669. CORPORATE PLAN TARGETS PERFORMANCE UPDATE – OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2016 (Q3 – 2016/17)**

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager presented the report which gave details of the performance outturn for those targets which sit under 'providing our customers with excellent service' and 'transforming our organisation' aims as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016. The information was correct as of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017. Most of the targets were on track.

Aim – Providing our Customers with Excellent Customer Service

C 01 – Retain Customer Service Excellence accreditation year on year.

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager noted that the 2017 assessment would take place in April and work would commence this quarter.

C 04 – Promote the Council website and increase (unique) visitor numbers by 7% year on year.

It was noted that this aim was operating well above the target.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

C 07 – Install 150 new lifelines within the community each year.

It was noted that overall 138 lifelines had been installed so far and the target was expected to be met.

C 10 – Carry out 300 disability adaptations to Council houses each year.

335 adaptations had been carried out to date in this year.

C 15 – Ensure a minimum of 50% of clients receiving parenting support each year express a positive outcome.

100% of feedback forms received expressed a positive outcome.

Aim – Transforming our Organisation

T 05 – Initiate a build programme for the new Clowne leisure facility by December 2015 and complete by December 2016

The Leisure Centre was now fully operational.

T 06 – Introduce alternative uses to 20% of garage sites owned by the Council by March 2019

It was hoped that work was to start on the Derwent Drive, Tibshelf and Hilltop Avenue, Shirebrook sites by the end of Quarter 4.

T 10 – Reduce the level of Former Tenants Arrears by 10% through early intervention and effective monitoring by 2019

The Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) had previously confirmed that there was a reasonable chance of achieving the target by 2019.

T 12 – Develop a series of strategies and plans to support the ambition of a sustainable leisure service by March 2017

The Assistant Director of Leisure was confident that the target would be achieved.

T 13 – Increase on-line self service transactions dealt with by the Contact Centre by 20% each year.

The target had already been exceeded.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor R.A. Heffer  
**RESOLVED** that progress against the Corporate Plan 2015-2019 targets be noted.

Councillors T. Connerton, M. Dooley and M.J. Ritchie left the meeting.

The Information Engagement & Performance Manager left the meeting.

### **0670. ACTION PLAN AND UPDATE ON THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING SURVEY**

The Assistant Director – Human Resources and Payroll presented the Action Plan and reminded Members that the Action Plan had been formulated by the Health Champions as a result of the Health and Wellbeing Survey undertaken with staff. A range of actions were proposed including free health checks and lunchtime fitness sessions.

Members asked whether the health checks would be available at venues other than The Arc and it was confirmed that the health checks would be available at outlying offices and feedback would be available following the sessions. Members asked questions regarding the numbers of employees and types of sessions to be offered.

The Assistant Director – Human Resources and Payroll also noted that following the Employee Survey, a consultant had been employed who was carrying out facilitated sessions with employees, particularly in areas which had indicated lower scores in terms of staff morale. Feedback would be available following the sessions.

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor P.M. Bowmer  
**RESOLVED** that a quarterly update on the Health and Wellbeing Survey Action Plan and the Employee Survey be added to the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee work Plan.

(Assistant Director – HR and Payroll/Scrutiny Officer)

### **0671. WORK PLAN**

The Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee Work Plan was circulated for Members' information.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE AND TRANSFORMATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Assistant Director –Governance, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer noted that the Risk Based Verification Policy would be presented to the Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> March and HR monitoring would be added to the meeting to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2017. It was likely that the meeting scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017 would be cancelled unless any items came forward for discussion.

Moved by Councillor J.E. Smith and seconded by Councillor R.A. Heffer  
**RESOLVED** that the Work Plan be noted.

### **0672. UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF DISTRICT HEATING**

The Chair updated Members on the progress of the Review of District Heating. It was noted that a greater reduction had been agreed than that reported to the last meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee. The Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) had been instructed to provide an update report to the Executive in 12 months time.

Members felt that the Committee had done the right thing by carrying out the review to reveal the unfairness within the system and it was part of the Scrutiny role. The commencement of the Safe and Warm Scheme would ensure that each property would be billed for the fuel used by the occupant. It was felt that all Council Members needed to be informed of the background to the Review.

The Chair noted that the Committee needed to keep pressure on the Executive to ensure that the Safe and Warm Scheme continued to roll out. An action plan, schedule and details of how the schemes were to be prioritised would be necessary for Members information.

Moved by Councillor D. McGregor and seconded by Councillor J.E. Smith  
**RESOLVED** that the Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC) be invited to the next meeting of the Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee for an overall discussion on Hard to Let Properties and the Safe and Warm Scheme.

(Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC)/  
Scrutiny Officer)

The meeting concluded at 1054 hours.



The Arc  
High Street  
Clowne  
Derbyshire  
S43 4JY

## **Key Decisions & Items to be Considered in Private**

**To be made under the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012**

**Published on: 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017**



## INTRODUCTION

The list attached sets out decisions that are termed as “Key Decisions” at least 28 calendar days before they are due to be taken by the Executive or an officer under delegated powers.

Preparation of the list helps Executive to programme its work. The purpose of the list is to give notice and provide an opportunity for consultation on the issues to be discussed. The list is updated each month with the period of the list being rolled forward by one month and republished. The list is available for public inspection at the The Arc, High Street, Clowne, S43 4JY. Copies of the list can be obtained from Sarah Sternberg, Assistant Director – Governance & Monitoring Officer at this address or by email to [sarah.sternberg@bolsover.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.sternberg@bolsover.gov.uk). The list can also be accessed from the Council’s website at [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk).

The Executive is allowed to make urgent decisions which do not appear in the list, however, a notice will be published at The Arc and on the Council’s website explaining the reasons for the urgent decisions. Please note that the decision dates are indicative and are subject to change.

The names of Executive members are as follows:

Councillor A.M. Syrett - Leader  
Councillor M. Dooley – Deputy Leader  
Councillor T. Connerton  
Councillor S.W. Fritchley  
Councillor B.R. Murray-Carr  
Councillor K. Reid  
Councillor M.J. Ritchie

The Executive agenda and reports are available for inspection by the public five clear days prior to the meeting of the Executive. The papers can be seen at The Arc at the above address. The papers are also available on the Council’s website referred to above. Background papers are listed on each report submitted to the Executive and members of the public are entitled to see these documents unless they contain exempt or confidential information. The report also contains the name and telephone number of a contact officer.

Meetings of the Executive are open to the public and usually take place in the Council Chamber at The Arc. Occasionally there are items included on the agenda which are exempt and for those items the public will be asked to leave the meeting. This list shows where this is intended in Part 2 and the reason why the reports are exempt or confidential. Members of the public may make representations to the Assistant Director – Governance, & Monitoring Officer about any particular item being considered in exempt.

The list does not detail all decisions which have to be taken by the Executive, only “Key Decisions. In these Rules a “Key Decision” means an Executive decision, which is likely:

- (1) to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (2) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District.

In determining the meaning of “significant” the Council must have regard to any guidance for the time being issued by the Secretary of State. The Council has decided that income or expenditure of £50,000 or more is significant.

**The dates for meetings of Executive in 2016/17 are as follows:**

2017 27 February  
27 March  
24 April  
22 May

The Council hereby gives notice of its intention to make the following Key Decisions and/or decisions to be considered in private:

Matter in respect of which a decision will be taken	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Is this decision a Key Decision?	Is this key decision to be heard in public or private session
<p><b>Addressing Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour</b></p> <p>To update Executive concerning the implementation of the agreed migration from CCTV and the reinvestment of funding in alternative approaches to tackling Crime and ASB.</p>	Executive	March/April 2017	Report of Councillor J. Ritchie – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety	Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC)	No	Public
<p><b>Chesterfield and District Crematorium Delivery Options</b></p> <p>To look at delivery options</p>	Executive	March 2017	Report of Councillor B Murray-Carr - Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing	Report of Joint Crematorium Committee	Yes – involves savings or expenditure of £50,000 or more.	Private – relates to the Council's financial or business affairs

Matter in respect of which a decision will be taken	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Is this decision a Key Decision?	Is this key decision to be heard in public or private session
<p><b>Public Art contract - Gleeson Development- Doe Lea</b></p> <p>To receive tenders</p>	Executive	March 2017	Report of Councillor M. Dooley – Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Plan, HR and Leisure	Assistant Director - Leisure	Yes – involves expenditure of £50,000 or more.	Public
<p><b>Kerbside Recycling Service Procurement arrangements for re-tendering the Council's Kerbside (burgundy bin) Recycling Service.</b></p>	Executive	February to July 2017	Reports of Councillor T Connerton, Portfolio Holder with Responsibility Neighbourhood Services	Assistant Director - Streetscene	Yes – likely to incur expenditure of £50,000 or more and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District.	Private – relates to the Council's financial or business affairs

Matter in respect of which a decision will be taken	Decision Maker	Date of Decision	Documents to be considered	Contact Officer	Is this decision a Key Decision?	Is this key decision to be heard in public or private session
<b>Regeneration Framework priority projects</b>	Executive	March/April 2017	Report of the Leader of the Council.	Assistant Director – Economic Growth	Yes - is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District.	Public
<b>Management Arrangements for heat meters to be installed in District Heating Schemes.</b>  To consider options for the procurement of this service	Executive	March 2017	Report of Councillor J. Ritchie – Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Safety	Assistant Director – Community Safety and Head of Housing (BDC)	Yes – involves expenditure of £50,000 or more.	Public

<b>Matter in respect of which a decision will be taken</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Date of Decision</b>	<b>Documents to be considered</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>	<b>Is this decision a Key Decision?</b>	<b>Is this key decision to be heard in public or private session</b>
<p><b>Joint Venture Report</b></p> <p>To provide Members with an update</p>	Executive	March 2017	Report of Councillor A Syrett - Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth	Assistant Director – Property and Estates	Yes – involves savings or expenditure of £50,000 or more.	Private – relates to the Council’s financial or business affairs

**Bolsover District Council**

**Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee**

**13 March 2017**

**Derbyshire Revenues and Benefits Initiative – Housing Benefit and Local Taxation  
Support Verification Policy**

**Report of Assistant Director – Finance, Revenues & Benefits**

This report is public

**Purpose of the Report**

To approve the Housing Benefit and Local Taxation Support Verification Policy as part of implementing the ongoing Derbyshire wide benefits processing initiative.

**1 Report Details**

- 1.1 On 25th April 2016, the Council took the decision to become part of a consortium of Derbyshire authorities working together to improve the Revenues and Benefits Service with the objective of:
- Increasing income collection on Council Tax and NNDR;
  - Securing improvements in the flexibility and accessibility of the service for local residents through enabling internet access;
  - Securing service efficiencies through facilitating the use of self service;
  - Using data matching to reduce the potential for fraud and error;
  - Securing service efficiencies by adopting a risk based approach to handling and managing housing benefit and council tax support claims;
  - Participating in a Derbyshire wide group that may bring further opportunities for service improvement or efficiencies.
- 1.2 To enable some of the above objectives to be met, it was essential to have an intuitive online housing benefit and local council tax support claim form which has the ability to work on any mobile device. This form has now been developed, tested and we are planning to implement from 1 April 2017.
- 1.3 In order to enable the use of this form, the Council are required to adopt a risk based verification policy in relation to processing housing benefit and council tax support claims.
- 1.4 In the early 1990's the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) introduced a "verification framework policy" for administering Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims. This was a voluntary policy that strongly recommended that local Councils should obtain a substantial amount of documentary evidence, carry out numerous pre-payment checks and/or visits before making any payment on a new claim or processing a change in circumstances. It had to be applied to all new claims and

changes, was costly, and there was little scope for local discretion. Although it was abandoned in 2006 by the DWP, most Councils, including Bolsover, have continued to use at least some of the verification guidelines set out in the framework.

In 2011, the DWP allowed Councils to apply a different type of approach to reducing fraud and error, based on Risk Based Verification (RBV) principles. This concentrates on the risk profile of each claimant. Resources can then be targeted at the higher risk groups where the majority of error is likely to occur. It is an approach used by many public services as well as businesses in the commercial world aimed at preventing errors and mistakes from entering into the system at the outset.

- 1.5 The Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support Verification Policy in Appendix 1 will allow the Council to implement a risk based verification approach to assessing its housing benefit and council tax support claims.
- 1.6 The introduction of this policy should deliver service improvements and efficiencies within the team and for residents applying for housing benefit and council tax support. The system will feature secure data protection controls and will be able to be accessed by residents at home, via a mobile device or at the Council offices, enabling residents to process their claims online. This provides a significant improvement in access and convenience for local residents, and facilitates a more timely processing of claims. For the Council, there are significant efficiencies which include the fact that the information provided in the electronic format goes directly into the back office system therefore significantly reducing paper communication and retyping of data.

## **2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation**

- 2.1 This report and the approval of the policy will enable all Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support claims to be assessed using risk based verification from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. Having this in place from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 will give a clear separation between financial years, therefore making the audit process smoother and more transparent.

## **3 Consultation and Equality Impact**

- 3.1 These have been considered within the policy.

## **4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 4.1 The alternative option would be that the Council decides against implementing the recommendations outlined within this report. This would significantly reduce the opportunity to improve the service to our residents and disadvantage the Council in participating in the Derbyshire wide project.

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Finance and Risk Implications**

There are no financial implications arising out of this report.



## 5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

Legal and data protection implications have been fully considered during the production of this policy in consultation with the Data Protection Officer.

## 5.3 Human Resources Implication

None arising directly from this report.

## 6 Recommendations

- 6.1 That Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee notes the Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support Verification Policy to be submitted to Executive for approval.

## 7 Decision Information

<b>Is the decision a Key Decision?</b> (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
<b>District Wards Affected</b>	N/A
<b>Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework</b>	Providing our customers with excellent services. Transforming our organisation.

## 8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support Verification Policy
<b>Background Papers</b> (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Report Author	Contact Number
Dawn Clarke – Assistant Director – Finance, Revenues & Benefits	01246 242214

# **Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support Verification Policy**

**March 2017**



**We speak your language**

---

**Polish**

**Mówimy Twoim językiem**

---

**Slovak**

**Rozprávame Vaším jazykom**

---

**Chinese**

**我们会说你的语言**

---

If you require this publication in  
**large print** or another format  
please call us on **01246 242424**

**CONTROL SHEET FOR  
HOUSING BENEFIT AND LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT VERIFICATION POLICY**

<b>Policy Details</b>	<b>Comments / Confirmation (To be updated as the document progresses)</b>
Policy title	Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support Verification Policy
Current status – i.e. first draft, version 2 or final version	Final Version
Policy author (post title only)	Assistant Director – Finance, Revenues & Benefits
Location of policy (whilst in development) – i.e. L-drive, shared drive	
Relevant Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr K Reid, Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for
Equality Impact Assessment approval date	n/a
Partnership involvement (if applicable)	
Final policy approval route i.e. Executive/ Council	Executive
Date policy approved	27th March 2017
Date policy due for review (maximum three years)	March 2020
Date policy forwarded to Improvement (to include on Intranet and Internet if applicable to the public)	

## **1. Introduction**

In the early 1990's the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) introduced a "verification framework policy" for administering Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims. This was a voluntary policy that strongly recommended that local Councils should obtain a substantial amount of documentary evidence, carry out numerous pre-payment checks and/or visits before making any payment on a new claim or processing a change in circumstances. It had to be applied to all new claims and changes, was costly, and there was little scope for local discretion. Although it was abandoned in 2006 by the DWP, most Councils, including Bolsover, have continued to use at least some of the verification guidelines set out in the framework.

In 2011, the DWP allowed Councils to apply a different type of scheme to try to reduce fraud and error, based on Risk Based Verification (RBV) principles. This concentrates on the risk profile of each claimant. Resources can then be targeted at the higher risk groups where most of the fraud and error is likely to be. It is an approach used by many public services as well as businesses in the commercial world, from finance to the police and immigration authorities.

This policy is approved by the Section 151 Officer as it will form the guidance for internal and external audit of benefit claims. Recent guidance has stated that any RBV policy adopted should indicate the start date and that claims should be clearly marked as having gone through the process, to enable auditors to differentiate sampling when conducting audits.

## **2. Scope**

RBV principles will apply to new claims and change of circumstances for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims from March 2017. This approach is being adopted to reduce the burden on customers to provide excessive evidence, reduce the time spent by customer service advisors photocopying and authorising original documents and to reduce the cost of administering claims, for example postage costs of letters to claimants requesting documentary proof. It will also allow more resources to be targeted at high risk claims.

## **3. Principles**

The policy will link to the Council's Corporate Plan aims by;

- Providing Our Customers with Excellent Service
- Transforming our Organisation

The policy will also link to the Council's Corporate Plan priorities of;

- Process all new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims within an average of 21 days.
- Process changes to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support within an average of 9 days.
- Through successful delivery of projects within the Transformation programme, achieve total savings/income of £600,000 by March 2019.
- Increase on-line self service transactions dealt with by the Contact Centre by 20% per year.

#### 4. Statement

##### Background

Bolsover District Council must adhere to Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support legislation. The regulations within the legislation do not specify what information and evidence they should obtain from a customer. However, it does require an authority to have information which allows an accurate assessment of a claimant's entitlement, both when a claim is first made and when the claim is reviewed.

Housing Benefit Regulation 86 states;

*“a person who makes a claim, or a person to whom housing benefit has been awarded, shall furnish such certificates, documents, information and evidence in connection with the claim or the award, or any question arising out of the claim or the award, as may reasonably be required by the relevant authority in order to determine that person's entitlement to, or continuing entitlement to housing benefit and shall do so within one month of being required to do so or such longer period as the relevant authority may consider reasonable.”*

Furthermore; Section 1 of the Social Security (Administration) Act 1992 dictates a National Insurance number must either be stated or enough information provided to trace or allocate one. This legislation applies to both customers and their partners.

*(1A) No person whose entitlement to any benefit depends on his making a claim shall be entitled to the benefit unless subsection (1B) below is satisfied in relation both to the person making the claim and to any other person in respect of whom he is claiming benefit.*

*(1B) this subsection is satisfied in relation to a person if–*

*(a) The claim is accompanied by–*

*(i) a statement of the person's national insurance number and information or evidence establishing that that number has been allocated to the person; or*

*(ii) information or evidence enabling the national insurance number that has been allocated to the person to be ascertained; or*

*(b) the person makes an application for a national insurance number to be allocated to him which is accompanied by information or evidence enabling such a number to be so allocated.*

Given those requirements are at the core of the process of administering claims these shall be adhered to at all times and be considered process within the Quality Assurance checks completed on Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support claims assessed.

##### Risk Based Verification

Bolsover District Council have implemented an ICT solution for Risk Based Verification following a fundamental service review process which highlighted a significantly high percentage of time was being used in verifying and requesting documentation. Risk Based Verification is a method of applying different levels of

checks to Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support claims according to the risk associated with those claims. This allows officers to target activity toward checking those cases deemed to be at highest risk of involving fraud and/or error. The purpose of Risk Based Verification is to increase the levels of fraud and error detected by focusing resource appropriately.

The process of Risk Based Verification can be used for assessing New Housing Benefit and/or Local Council Tax Support Claims and also incorporates associated changes in circumstances.

For the purposes of applying verification on a risk basis, each claim is ranked into one of three categories i.e. Low, Medium and High Risk. The table at *Appendix 1* shows the requirement to be upheld dependent on the risk grouping. A national Insurance number and identity confirmation must be made in all cases irrelevant of the risk grouping; this is to comply with the aforementioned legislation.

### Low Risk

The only checks to be made on cases classed as low risk are proof of identity and a National Insurance number. The Council will utilise the data available from the Department for Works and Pensions.

### Medium Risk

Cases in this category should be treated as based on the original Verification Framework policy but the documentation can be photocopies in this instance.

### High Risk

For high risk cases original documentation is recommended and there must be an additional check above that of medium risk. This can be by using a Credit Reference Check (CRA) to determine if there are any discrepancies between the information provided by the customer on a claim form and the information available via CRA checks, or by other methods e.g. visits, interviews etc.

### Recording and Monitoring

In line with Department of Work and Pensions estimates, around 55% of cases could be Low Risk, 25% Medium and 20% High.

All risk scores are recorded by the software used to process claims and they must be recorded on the assessment officers record posted to a customer's account. Bolsover District Council also performs a minimum of 2% blind sampling which means cases from lower categories are upgraded to test the software assumptions and this information can be fed back into the propensity models, provided by the supplier, to support the parameters of the Risk Based Verification portal. Cases cannot be downgraded by an assessment officer; they can be increased though with approval from a Team Leader. Cases which are upgraded will be done so with supporting explanation.

Bolsover District Council will monitor the risk scoring splits on a monthly basis by using ICT tools available. The reports will show the categories of risk by percentage

and the level of fraud across the authority in comparison to a baseline position. Information will be derived from cells 222 and 231 within the Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE), which is provided to the DWP, in order to be able to produce statistical data.

Bolsover District Council also undertakes to carry out targeted interventions each year. This will help monitor the effect of Fraud and Error detection rates compared to the baseline rate. It is expected that the levels of Fraud and Error will be small in Low Risk cases, increased in Medium Risk cases and highest in High Risk cases.

This Policy has been produced in line with Department of Work and Pensions guidance on the use of Risk Based Verification circular S11/11.

### Equalities Impact

Risk Based Verification will apply to all new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. A mathematical model is used to determine the risk score for any claim. This model does not take into account any of the protected characteristics specified by the Equality Act 2010; the authority nevertheless has a statutory duty to have due regard to equality in all its functions.

The course of action to be taken in respect of the risk score is governed by this policy. As such there should not be any equalities impact.

Where it is intended to carry out visits, these will be undertaken by a trained visiting officer. These officers are used to carrying out visits to the vulnerable, elderly and disabled, as these groups of claimants are often unable to access council services in any other way.

### Legal Implications

The risk based verification policy complies with the recommendations from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) outlined in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Circular HB/CTB S11/2011. It should be noted that this policy will be the basis on which the Council is audited. For this reason, the policy must be approved by the Council's Section 151 Officer and elected members.

Any errors or fraud overpayments identified following the review of claims, will be dealt with under the Housing Benefit Regulations or the current Council Tax Support Scheme, as they are now..

## **5. Responsibility for Implementation**

This policy will form an integral part of the processes and procedures that operate within the Revenues and Benefits Section and will be the responsibility of the Assistant Director – Finance, Revenues & Benefits.



## Appendix 1

Type of Evidence	Sub-category of evidence	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk	
<b>Identity and S19 (NINO)</b>	Identity	Originals or Photocopies	Originals or Photocopies	Originals required	
	S19 NINO	Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
<b>Residency/Rent</b>	Private Tenants		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
	Social Landlords		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
	Public Sector				
	Registered		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
<b>Household Composition</b>	Partner ID/S19/Income/Capital	Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
	Dependants under 18		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
	Non-dependants - remunerative work			Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required
	Non-dependants – passported benefit				
	Non-dependant - student		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
	Non-dependant - not in remunerative work/other			Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required
<b>Income</b>	State Benefits				
	Earnings/SMP/SSP		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
	Self employed earnings		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
<b>Child Care Costs</b>			Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	
<b>Student Status</b>	Income also required	Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals or Photocopies	Originals required	
<b>Capital</b>	Below lower capital limit		Originals or Photocopies accepted if over £5500 for Working Age or over £9500 for Elderly - not required if under these amounts	Originals if over £5500 for Working Age or over £9500 for Elderly - not required if under these amounts	
	Above lower capital limit		Originals or Photocopies	Originals required	
	Property		Originals or Photocopies accepted	Originals required	

**Customer Service and Transformation Scrutiny Committee**

**Work Programme – 2016 - 2017**

Date of Meeting	Items	Lead Officer	Notes
23 <sup>rd</sup> May 2016, 10.00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarter 4 Performance Monitoring</li> <li>• Scrutiny reviews 2016/17 – selection and scoping exercise</li> </ul>	<p>Jane Foley – JAD – Customer Service &amp; Improvement</p> <p>Claire Millington, Scrutiny Officer</p>	
27 <sup>th</sup> June 2016, 10.00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CAN Rangers update</li> <li>• Approval of Scoping Document – Review of District Heating System.</li> </ul>	<p>Peter Campbell, Assistant Director of Community Safety and Head of Housing.</p> <p>Claire Millington, Scrutiny Officer</p>	
25 <sup>th</sup> July 2016, 10.00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring</li> <li>• Assessing the impact of the automated cash machines (revisiting the recommendation made in the review of <i>impact of welfare reform on the Contact Centres</i> – 2014)</li> </ul>	<p>Kath Drury – Information, Engagement and Performance Manager.</p> <p>Jane Foley – JAD – Customer Service and Improvement + Alison Donohue – Customer Contact Manager</p>	

<b>19<sup>th</sup> September 2016, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the use of on-line services – update</li> <li>• Update on the Transformation Programme.</li> </ul>	<p>Jane Foley, JAD – Customer Service and Improvement -and- Charlotte Greveson – CIS Developer</p> <p>Jane Foley, JAD – Customer Service and Improvement</p>	
<b>17<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee Survey results</li> </ul>	<p>Steph Barker – JAD – Human Resources and Payroll</p>	
<b>14<sup>th</sup> November 2016, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring</li> <li>• Draft Procurement Strategy</li> <li>• Mobile Device Policy</li> <li>• Client ICT Strategy</li> </ul>	<p>Kath Drury, Information, Engagement and Performance Manager</p> <p>Sarah Sternberg, JAD – Governance and Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Nick Blaney, ICT Manager</p> <p>Nick Blaney, ICT Manager</p>	
<b>12<sup>th</sup> December 2016, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutiny Review of Heating costs to tenants in properties with a District Heating Scheme – Final Report</li> </ul>		

<b>16<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback on the review of heating costs to tenants in properties with a district heating system</li> </ul>	Chair/Vice Chair of Scrutiny Committee	
<b>13<sup>th</sup> February 2017, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring</li> <li>Health and Wellbeing Survey update</li> </ul>	Kath Drury, Information, Engagement and Performance Manager  Clare Ashton, HR	
<b>13<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safe and Warm Scheme update</li> <li>Risk Based Verification Policy</li> <li>Annual Scrutiny Conference             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Confirmation of the date</li> <li>- Suggestions for Scrutiny Review</li> </ul> </li> <li>Arrangements for next meeting (18<sup>th</sup> April 2017).</li> </ul>	Bryan Mason, Director of Operations  Dawn Clarke, Assistant Director of Finance and Revenues & Benefits  Chair/Scrutiny Officer	<p><b>Members to discuss whether to hold this meeting – are there any items for the agenda?</b></p>
<b>18<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>		

<b>15<sup>th</sup> May 2017, 10.00 am</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarter 4 Performance Monitoring</li>   <li>• Quarterly update on the Health and Wellbeing Survey Action Plan and the Employee Survey</li> </ul>	<p>Kath Drury, Information, Engagement and Performance Manager</p> <p>Assistant Director, HR and Payroll.</p>	
---	---	--	--

Customer Service & Transformation Scrutiny Committee Membership

Councillors; - Rose Bowler (Chair), Jim Smith (Vice-Chair), Pauline Bowmer, Paul Cooper, Malcolm Crane, Ray Heffer, Andrew Joesbury, Duncan McGregor, Emma Stevenson, Rita Turner.