

## **Statement of the Cabinet Member for Customer Services**

**10 April 2012**

### **Customer Services**

Customer Services came together as a Shared Service with the launch of the Joint Contact Centre on the 16<sup>th</sup> December. Staff are contracted to provide cover at either Council as necessary. This is working well but the service will continue to be monitored for workload as more and more enquiries are dealt with at the first point of contact.

### **Waste and Recycling**

It is acknowledged that the wording on the Bin Tags for collections over the winter period were not as definitive as should be expected. The service are working on tags for next winter and we propose to consult with Members on the clarity of the information on the new tag.

The current fleet of refuse vehicles are due for renewal in July and trials of vehicles have been taking place and tendering being undertaken, the services White Young Green who advised on the tender process for the recycling contract have been retained to assist with the vehicle contract.

The recycling vehicles are due to be replaced in November and again trials have been taking place to assess what is available on the market to enable us to improve our recycling rates and to collect a wider range of products.

### **Revenues and Benefits**

With the Coalition Government's proposal to refine the Benefits system and introduce Universal Credit, the Heads of Service have been meeting with the DWP and also other local councils to assess if it would be possible to administer Universal Credit as a hub. Nationally the District Council Network is also looking at the possibility of submitting a pilot scheme to the DWP. The DWP had expected that 80% of claimants would be able to do this online, but it is questionable whether this would be the case.

In relation to Council Tax and Council Tax Benefit, the Council as the collecting authority will have its own scheme, but again discussions have been taking place to identify if a joint scheme would be possible across the local area to maintain uniformity. A key part of the scheme is to decide who should be able to receive Council Tax Benefit. Present and future pensioner claimants have to be protected and with 80% of previous grant available this will not be an easy question to answer. The local benefit scheme is to start April 2012.

Unfortunately with both of the above schemes the information coming through from the DWP has been low on detail.

**Councillor Brian Phillips**  
**Cabinet Member for Customer Services**