

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL INFORMATION
REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No

meeting date: 26 JANUARY 2010
title: MOBILE OFFICE/ALLPAY UPDATE
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Committee on the progress made with the introduction of ALLPAY.

1.2 Relevance to Council's priorities:

Council's Ambitions/Community Objectives/Corporate Priorities

The Cashiering Service is an essential element in the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates. Without the revenue collected from Council Tax and Business Rates we would be unable to meet the Council's Ambitions, Community Objectives and Corporate Priorities.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Revenues and Benefits Section provides a cashiering service for the Council as a whole and processes income in respect of Council Tax, Business Rates, Rents, Sundry Debtors and other miscellaneous income (e.g. car parking fees, building control & planning fees etc).

2.2 As the Mobile Office was approaching the end of its economic life and also use of the service was in decline a review was carried out last summer to determine the feasibility of continuing to provide this service.

2.3 After careful consideration, this Committee agreed at its meeting on 22 September 2009 to cease the Mobile/Longridge Office and instead introduce an alternative payment method which would enable our residents to make payments at Post Offices and certain shops throughout the borough. It was agreed to appoint ALLPAY to carry out this service.

3 ISSUES

3.1 The introduction of ALLPAY was completed on schedule for 1 November 2009.

3.2 During November and December customers who came to the Mobile/Longridge Office were informed of the changes and encouraged to request an ALLPAY card.

3.3 As of 12 January 2010, 343 cards have been issued and staff at the Mobile/Longridge Office have had a very positive response from customers.

3.4 In Longridge where we currently open for one full day and two half days there are now four outlets some of which offer a 24 hour, 7 day a week service.

3.5 As at 12 January 2010, 210 payments have been made through ALLPAY totalling £17,415.28. At the same time payments at the Mobile/Longridge Office have

declined by almost 300 transactions from December in comparison with November this year.

Staff Redeployment

- 3.6 Members will recall the two Mobile Office Area Collectors were informed of the council's intention to redeploy them into similar roles where possible. One member of staff has been redeployed into a vacant post within the main cashiers office which was being held on a fixed term basis in recognition that a restructuring of the section would occur.
- 3.7 Another post which became vacant on 4 January 2010, as a result of the retirement of a member of staff in the main Revenues section has been left unfilled so that the remaining Area Collector can be redeployed into that post when the service ceases.
- 3.8 This will mean both officers will have been successfully redeployed.

Vehicle Issues

- 3.8 The Mobile Office is scheduled to undergo an MOT on 18 January 2010. At the time of writing this report the outcome of which is unknown.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

Resources

- 4.1 Staffing savings as a result of ceasing the service will be £47,220 in 2010/11. In addition we will save annual vehicle costs of £4,540. Offset against this is the cost of Allpay which is £5,000. In addition, we will lose income of £32,280 from Ribble Valley Homes due to the end of the Service Level Agreement.

Technical, Environmental and Legal

- 4.2 There is no legal requirement to provide a cash collection service. However, we are required to accept all forms of legal tender as payment and therefore it is important that we provide a variety of methods of payment. The use of ALLPAY to provide this service has helped to satisfy this requirement.

Equality and Diversity

- 4.3 The rural nature of the authority means that it can be difficult to ensure that access to services is equal across the borough. The Mobile Collection office has long been recognised as a valuable service in providing access to the Revenues and Benefits Service in remote parts of the council's area.
- 4.4 The change to ALLPAY has improved this service for our residents, as there are more outlets where they can pay which provide greatly improved opening times. It has also provided a welcome boost to rural Post Offices and Stores, as a result of the income they receive for processing these transactions and increased usage.

Political and Reputational

- 4.5 The replacement of the Mobile/Longridge Office by ALLPAY so far appears to have been welcomed by our customers.
- 4.6 During the inclement weather and due to other unforeseen circumstances it has been necessary to suspend the operation of the Mobile Office for several weeks. The introduction of ALLPAY allowed us to provide an alternative that is more convenient for our customers.
- 5 CONCLUSION
 - 5.1 The introduction of ALLPAY has been completed on schedule.
 - 5.2 Customers have shown a positive response and take up has been in line with what was expected.
 - 5.3 The Mobile/Longridge Office is due to close on 1 April 2010 and all staff will be redeployed.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS MANAGER

PF3-10/ME/AC
14 January 2010