

## THE EXECUTIVE

24 JANUARY 2006

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

<b>ATTENDANCE AT THE INSTITUTE OF REVENUES RATING AND VALUATION ANNUAL HOUSING BENEFITS CONFERENCE 2006</b>	<b>FOR DECISION</b>
<p><b>Summary:</b></p> <p>The Executive is asked to agree representation of the Council by 2 persons at the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuation Annual Housing Benefits Conference and Exhibition 2006 which is to be held over a 3–day period. This is in accordance with the Council’s Conferences, Visits and Hospitality Rules, which states that the Executive must approve such attendance where the cost is likely to exceed £1,000</p> <p>The principle benefits of attending the conference include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Awareness of recent or proposed changes to statutory framework in respect of Housing Benefits and other technical updates</li><li>▪ Networking Opportunities to improve awareness of good practice and service improvement initiatives</li><li>▪ Opportunity to raise the profile and general pride of the Borough</li><li>▪ Professional development of staff demonstrating the Council's commitment to learning and development in line with IIP principles</li></ul> <p><b>Wards Affected:</b> None.</p>	
<p><b>Implications:</b></p> <p><b>Financial:</b></p> <p>The total cost of this proposal is estimated to be £1,305 plus VAT, (excluding travel and subsistence allowance) and can be met from the existing budget of Revenue Services.</p> <p><b>Legal:</b></p> <p>There are no legal implications. However, attendance at the conference would enable officers to update themselves on any recent or proposed changes to the statutory framework in respect of Housing Benefits administration.</p> <p><b>Risk Management:</b></p> <p>There are no key Risk management issues, other than to ensure service continuity and management cover whilst attendees are at the conference. It should be noted that attendance at the conference is a mitigating control measure to address the risk of the Authority’s non compliance with statutory or good practice requirements in Housing Benefits administration.</p>	

**Social Inclusion and Diversity:**

As this report does not concern a new or revised policy there are no specific adverse impacts insofar as this report is concerned. The conference is expected to highlight any good practice examples of how authorities have addressed social inclusion and diversity issues within a revenues and benefits context.

**Crime and Disorder:**

There are no specific implications insofar as this report is concerned.

**Recommendation(s)**

The Executive is asked to agree:

1. The attendance at the Institute of Revenues, Ratings and Valuation Annual Housing Benefits Conference and Exhibition 2006 by the Revenues Business Unit Manager (Rents & Benefits) and the Benefits Manager.

**Reason(s)**

This report is being brought to the Executive for approval as the total cost of attending the conference will exceed £1,000.

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**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Institute of Revenues Ratings and Valuation is the professional body of Revenues and Benefits practitioners. The IRRV holds an annual Housing Benefits conference in Harrogate each year. This year it is being held from the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> February 2006.
- 1.2 The annual conference and exhibition is regarded as a valuable conference promoting the Institute's purpose to maximise the contributions that Benefits practitioners can make to the well being of communities.
- 1.3 Attendance at the IRRV annual conference is an opportunity to learn about forthcoming changes and share good practice operating within the Housing Benefits industry. It is also an opportunity to network with Housing Benefits practitioners from other local authorities and central government departments. This is very much in line with the community priority of "raising general pride in the Borough"

## **2. Detail**

- 2.1 The Institute's mission is expressed through its policy work and research; the advice it gives to governmental and other agencies; its educational initiatives and promotion of standards of lifelong learning and teaching; and its national and international conferences, seminars and training programmes
- 2.2 This year's conference is based around the current issues and changes facing Housing Benefits practitioners in the near future. It will cover topics that include
- ◆ A keynote address from James Plaskett MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State responsible for Housing Benefits, which may include proposed changes to the Benefits regulations.
  - ◆ An update on current Benefits legislation, including recent case law from Commissioners decisions
  - ◆ Changes to Housing Benefits Subsidy, Administration Subsidy and Anti-Fraud Funding arrangements
  - ◆ Comprehensive Performance Assessment-the Housing Benefits Performance Standards
  - ◆ Joint Working with the Pension Service
  - ◆ Demonstrations of a range of national products that have been funded by the Performance Standards Fund.
- 2.3 The conference will bring together a distinguished set of speakers and presenters with diverse expertise and backgrounds relevant to Housing Benefits. The programme has been put together by the IRRV with a range of partners to ensure it remains at the cutting edge of policy, practice and implementation on issues pertaining to the efficient administration of the Housing Benefits scheme.
- 2.4 The conference is also a learning and self development opportunity for attendees. Supporting the attendance of our managers is in line with the Council's commitment to the development of its staff and our commitment to Investor in People principles.

## **3. Financial**

- 3.1 The conference cost is £620 plus VAT per delegate for IRRV members (£685 for non-members). This includes accommodation, but does not include travel costs or expenses relating to subsistence.
- 3.2 One delegate - the Revenues Business Unit Manager (Rents & Benefits) is a member of the IRRV; the other delegate – the Benefits Manager is not a member, this means that the total expenditure on delegate fees is £1,305 plus VAT (excludes travel and subsistence expenses). These costs will be met from the training budget of Revenue Services.

### **Persons Consulted in the preparation of this report**

- None

### **Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:**

- Executive Report (Attendance at Institute of Revenues Rating Valuation Annual Conference 2004) Minute 49, July 2004.
- Promotional Brochure - IRRV Annual Housing Benefits Conference 2006