



## Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date** Thursday 27 March 2014  
**Time** 9.30 am  
**Venue** Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham

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### Business

#### Part A

**Items during which the Press and Public are welcome to attend. Members of the Public can ask questions with the Chairman's agreement.**

1. Apologies.
2. Substitute Members.
3. Declarations of Interest, if any.
4. Minutes of the meeting held 19th February 2014 (Pages 1 - 6)
5. Quarter 3 2013/14 Performance Management Report (Pages 7 - 20)  
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
6. Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Quarter 3 Report 2013/14 (Pages 21 - 42)  
Report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services.
7. Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2013/14 (Pages 43 - 56)
  - (i) Report of the Assistant Chief Executive
  - (ii) Report of the Corporate Director Resources.
8. Council Plan - Refresh of the Work Programme for Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 57 - 74)
9. Customer First Task and Finish Group - Progress Update  
Verbal update.
10. Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

**Colette Longbottom**  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

County Hall  
Durham  
19 March 2014

To: **The Members of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)  
Councillor K Henig (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors J Alvey, J Armstrong, L Armstrong, G Bleasdale, J Buckham,  
P Crathorne, J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, P McCourt, E Murphy, A Shield,  
T Smith, P Stradling, L Taylor, A Turner, M Wilkes, S Wilson and R Young.

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**Contact: Lucy Stephenson**

**Tel: 03000 269712**

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**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE ISSUES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Wednesday 19 February 2014 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Alvey, J Armstrong, L Armstrong, P Crathorne, K Henig (Vice-Chairman), J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, A Shield, T Smith, P Stradling, L Taylor and R Young

**Also Present:**

Councillor J Brown.

**1 Apologies.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Wilkes and S Wilson.

**2 Substitute Members.**

There were no substitute members.

**3 Declarations of Interest, if any.**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4 Minutes of the meetings held on:**

The minutes of the following meetings were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman:

- (i) 25<sup>th</sup> November 2013
- (ii) 27th January 2014, Special Joint Meeting with Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

**5 ICT Strategy 2013/16**

The Committee considered a report and presentation from the ICT Services Manager which provided background to the ICT Strategy which covers a three year period from April 2013 (for copy of report and slides of presentation see file of minutes).

The Head of ICT Services advised that 270 staff were employed within the service, which included; Design and Print, Business Support and School staff, providing assistance to

over 10,000 users and 70,000 pupils. In addition the service dealt with approximately 10,000 calls on the service desk per month.

140 members of those staff were employed to deal specifically with corporate ICT.

ICT Services had five main functions which were to:

- Maintain
- Fix
- Supply
- Change; and
- Inform

Each of the above assisted the council in achieving its Altogether Better themes and to provide reliable and robust services which in turn helped residents to get more out of technology and support the regeneration of County Durham.

It was reported that 75,000 service desk calls were handled during the period. 93% of which were dealt with within the Service Level Agreement timeframe.

Moving on the presentation provide in detail information relating to the ICT Strategy and its key aims which were to:-

- Focus on Durham
- Better Technology
- Better Engagement
- Better People
- Better Processes.

Details of the actions associated with these aims were contained within the slides alongside the associated timescales for implementation.

Councillor Martin commented that within the presentation reference was made to Digital Durham and how superfast broadband would be delivered to all business and homes. He commented that this was inaccurate as only 98% would be achieved. In response the Head of ICT Services advised that 98% of businesses and homes would be achieved by 2016 with an aim to achieving 100% in the longer term.

Councillor Martin further commented that a local school who had taken the decision to operate a paperless administration had incurred difficulties in their Ofsted inspection, as the body were not prepared to deal with that approach. He therefore commented that if the council were encouraging schools and other organisations to operate on a paperless basis, it was important to factor in the associated risks and only use technology where appropriate.

He further asked when the council would be launching a better functioning website. It was noted that testing and consultation on the new website would commence the following week and would be launched later in the spring.

Further discussion then took place regarding the use of members ICT equipment and the training resources which were available to them. Councillor J Brown, Portfolio Holder for

Corporate Services advised that to date members ICT training sessions had been poorly attended and subsequently one to one training was now being offered. She further advised that ICT were now able to log which members were using which pieces of equipment that they had been provided with. It was noted that appointments could be made by contacting the PA to the Head of ICT Services.

Councillor K Henig queried whether the new website would link to the CRM system and also offer extended online services. In response the Head of ICT Services advised that extensive work was being undertaken in relation to council customer relationship management and on procurement to replace the existing CRM system.

Councillor Smith asked whether the service was looking into mobile developments and applications as she was concerned that Durham County Council were being left behind in that regard. She further queried whether consideration had been given to developing an app purely for Members use. In addition queries were made regarding wifi access in council buildings and e-learning to upskill staff and members.

Councillor L Armstrong commented that in his opinion the council's website was good in comparison to some other local authorities, however he appreciated significant improvements could be made. He suggested that 'How to' videos were an excellent tool to include in the website.

In response to the comments made the Head of Planning and Performance advised that all the points raised at this meeting would be fed in to the consultation. In addition she advised that the Customer First Task and Finish Group would also be looking into this subject in more depth and a specific session was to be held to look at the new website.

Councillor J Armstrong added that the issues of some members not accessing various pieces of equipment should be addressed. In addition he questioned what plans were ahead to rationalise the service in line with the MTFP, from the top down. In response the Head of ICT Services advised that the service were operating with 42% less staff than in 2009, in addition management had been halved. With regard to the future cuts, the service would be continuing to review licences and assess ways in which savings could be achieved through the better use of ICT across the authority.

Further discussion then ensued regarding mobile working and plans to further encourage this where possible in the future.

Councillor Shield raised a query regarding the recent change over of servers from BT to Plusnet and asked whether the cost of changing over all Members' computers was being absorbed by the council or by BT. In response the Head of ICT Services advised that Plusnet was a subsidiary part of BT and it was noted that the new technology was significantly cheaper than that currently used, therefore there was a net saving.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **6 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 3**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 October 2013 until 31 December 2013 to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose (for copy see file of minutes).

### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

## **7 Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future - A Review of Durham County Council's Area Action Partnerships - Final Update**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided a final update on progress of the recommendations of the scrutiny review of Area Action Partnerships – 'Fit for Purpose, Fit for the future' (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that the report provided an update on the 2011 review and actions which had been implemented since that time. She welcomed both Shealagh Pearce and Sandy Denney, Principal Area Action Partnership Co-ordinators who were in attendance to provide detail on those recommendations.

S Denney, Principal Area Action Partnership Co-ordinator advised that the majority of the 14 recommendations were now completed with the remaining on target to be completed by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Armstrong commented that the AAPs had been an unmitigated success and the main focus should now be on what path the AAPs take in the future. In addition he also commented that due to their success, interest in the AAPs had been seen as far as Sweden. In addition the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had made his interest in the AAPs known. In conclusion he asked that the report be signed off and an executive summary of the report be taken to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Councillor Martin commented that he welcomed the participatory budget sessions and added that he found the sessions to be very good. He added however that he found some of the consultation to be inadequate, with presentations and questions only reaching the 'usual suspects' who attended forum meetings. In his opinion this did not fairly represent the views of an area.

In response Councillor Stradling commented that he felt that the strength of the AAPs was their individuality and his AAPs area's approach to consultation was very different and had good levels of participation.

Councillor Martin added that in his opinion this was only effective when the issue was specific to the area, and he found that more general county wide issues generated less interest.

In responding to comments raised by Councillors Martin and Stradling.

S Pearce, Principal Area Action Partnership Co-ordinator advised that the definition of consultation was sometimes so broad that it could leave some feeling frustrated. It was also reported that in many cases consultation carried out at AAP Forum meetings was delivered by partner organisations and therefore the AAP had little control over how this was delivered.

Councillor Smith added that in her experience AAP Forum meetings were an amazing vehicle for engagement and also helped her massively in her role as Councillor to gain a better understanding of issues in her area.

Councillor Huntington also commented that the AAP also had presence at other community meetings such as PACT meetings, Resident and Community Association meetings.

In conclusion it was noted that members were happy that all actions within the report were being addressed. Councillor Armstrong added that it would be useful for the Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement and the Portfolio Holder to attend a future meeting to provide a presentation on the direction of travel and what the plans were for the future of AAPs.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

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**Corporate Issues  
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**



**27 March 2014**

**Quarter 3 2013/14  
Performance Management Report**

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**Report of Corporate Management Team  
Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive  
Councillor Simon Henig, Leader**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators (PIs) and report other significant performance issues for the third quarter of 2013/14.

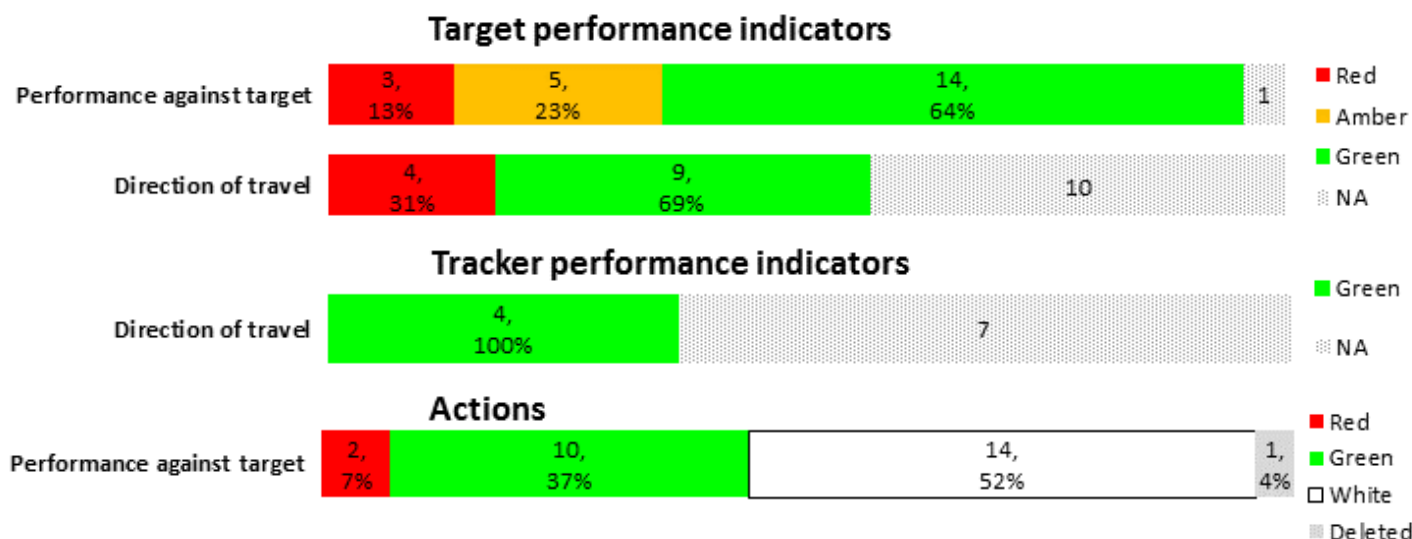
**Background**

2. This is the third quarterly corporate performance report of 2013/14 for the council highlighting performance for the period October to December 2013. The report contains information on key performance indicators, risks and Council Plan progress.
3. The report sets out an overview of performance and progress by Altogether priority theme. Key performance indicator progress is reported against two indicator types which comprise of:
  - a. Key target indicators – targets are set for indicators where improvements can be measured regularly and where improvement can be actively influenced by the council and its partners; and
  - b. Key tracker indicators – performance will be tracked but no targets are set for indicators which are long-term and/or which the council and its partners only partially influence.
4. A summary of key performance indicators is provided at Appendix 3. More detailed performance information and Altogether theme analyses are available on request from [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk).

**Developments since Last Quarter**

5. There is a stronger focus this year on volume measures in our performance framework. This allows us to better quantify productivity and to monitor the effects of reductions in resources and changes in volume of activity. Charts detailing some of the key volume measures which form part of the council's corporate basket of performance indicators are presented in Appendix 4.

## Altogether Better Council: Overview



## Council Performance

### 6. Key achievements this quarter include:

- a. Between October and December 2013, 212,323 telephone calls were answered which is 91% of all calls received compared to 88% at quarter 2. Improvements have also been seen in call handling times. During quarter 3, 87% were answered within three minutes against a target of 80%, an improvement on quarter 2, when 78% were answered within three minutes. The volume of telephone calls show 8.9% fewer calls received this quarter (235,064) when compared with quarter 2 (258,047) (see Appendix 4, Chart 1).
- b. During quarter 3, the average waiting time at a customer access point was 3 minutes 53 seconds, which is well within the 15 minutes target. Footfall in our Customer Access Points decreased from 93,059 in quarter 2 to 78,729 in quarter 3, partly due to the Christmas close down period. Face to face contact dropped in November and December, however contact during quarter 3 this year was 2.2% higher than the same period last year (see Appendix 4, Chart 2).
- c. During quarter 3, new housing benefit (HB) claims were processed in 21.02 days on average while new council tax reduction (CTR) claims were processed in 22.18 days on average. Current performance is better than the 25 day end of year target and the Great Britain average of 24 days for processing new HB claims.

The volume of new HB claims processed has increased from 2,962 in quarter 2 to 3,453 this quarter. The volume of new CTR claims processed has increased from 3,389 in quarter 2 to 3,801 this quarter (see Appendix 4, Chart 3).

Processing rates for changes of circumstances have continued to improve and have been well below the 12 day target for both HB and CTR claims for the last three months. The average time taken to process change of circumstances was on average 9.45 days for HB claims and 10.05 days for CTR claims. Performance is better than the Great Britain average of 11 days for HB claims.

The volume of change of circumstances for HB claims processed has fallen from 25,152 in quarter 2 to 22,873 this quarter. The volume of change of circumstances for CTR claims processed has fallen from 27,215 in quarter 2 to 24,319 this quarter (see Appendix 4, chart 4).

- d. The average days lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent (including school based employees) reduced from 9.31 in quarter 2 (October 2012 to September 2013) to

8.92 days this quarter (January to December 2013). This represents an improvement of over 4% and places current sickness levels better than the 9.05 days corporate target for the first time in 2013/14. Improving the management of attendance and reducing incidences of sickness absence is a priority for the council.

- e. Tenant rent arrears have fallen for Durham City Homes from 2.24% in quarter 2 to 2.05% this quarter and the target of 2.5% has been met. Dale and Valley Homes performance of 1.58% is well within target of 3% and it has improved from 1.64% reported last quarter. Arrears for East Durham Homes have fallen slightly from 2.89% in quarter 2 to 2.85% this quarter and the target of 3% has been achieved. There has been an improvement in performance during this quarter which is assumed to be linked to the two weeks rent free period in December.
- f. Good progress has been made with the following Council Plan and service plan actions:
  - i. Become public service network compliant allowing the council to trade services by March 2014. The Public Service Network Code of Connection (PSN CoCo) is a set of standards that govern the security, risk management and information assurance of networks connected to the Government Conveyance Network (GCN) and Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx). The council achieved PSN CoCo compliance on 22 October 2013 through a documented submission containing a number of planned activities to mitigate outstanding risks. The council's compliance is effective until mid-2014, when further assessment will be required.
  - ii. Increase availability of technology across the county by developing the Digital Durham programme for next generation broadband delivery to all areas of the county by March 2015. December 2013 saw the official launch of the first fibre cabinet in the programme located in Durham City Marketplace. This cabinet can supply fast speed broadband to businesses and residents in the heart of the city, supporting regeneration, economic growth and job opportunities. Also during December 2013 a further 22 cabinets were surveyed and are progressing to build stage. With an additional 112 cabinets to be surveyed before the end of March 2014, the first phase of the nine phase programme is well underway. Additional funding from the Rural Community Broadband Fund is being sought for Teesdale and Weardale with a final application to DEFRA expected during quarter 4 2013/14.

7. The key performance improvement issues for this theme are:

- a. Despite renewed focus on paying supplier invoices on time, performance continues to hover around 91%, short of the 92% target. Although December performance was 93%, performance is not yet consistent enough to deliver on-target performance over a quarter. Whilst it is clear that consistent compliance with agreed business processes is a matter that needs to be continuously highlighted, addressed and reinforced, a software issue arose during quarter 3 that slowed down the invoice payment process and may affect future performance.
- b. Employee appraisals recorded across the council has shown real improvement over the last year in particular and the introduction of email alerts for managers seems useful in this regard, but further and sustained effort is required by managers and supervisors to ensure that all relevant employees have undergone an appropriate appraisal event in the last 12 months and that this is recorded on the 'MyView' system. The percentage of performance appraisals completed and recorded fell slightly from 75.3% in quarter 2 to 73.3% this quarter. This is short of the 80% corporate target.
- c. The percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within 20 days was 80% this quarter which was below the national standard of 85%. Current performance reflects a good month in

October but slightly lower performance in November and December. The volume of FOI and EIR requests received this quarter was 319 which has increased compared with 249 last quarter and 189 at same period last year (see Appendix 4, chart 5).

- d. Key Council Plan actions behind target in this theme include:
    - i. The production of a regeneration investment plan to maximise external funding for the council and its partners was due for completion by December 2013. This has been delayed until April 2014. This action was delayed from September 2013 to December 2013 in quarter 2.
    - ii. The delivery of a programme of data protection health checks to ensure that personal data held by the council is managed effectively was due by December 2013. An initial pilot programme has been completed with full rollout now due by September 2014.
  - e. There is also one action that has been deleted which is to undertake a review of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme by December 2013. This action has been deleted as there are no changes required for 2014/15 and the review will be carried out in the Spring of 2014 ahead of a decision for 2015/16.
8. The key risks to successfully delivering the objectives of this theme are:-
- a. Government ongoing funding cuts which now extend to at least 2017/18 will continue to have an increasing major impact on all council services. This key risk is categorised with critical impact and highly probable likelihood. Sound financial forecasting is in place based on thorough examination of the Government's "red book" plans.
  - b. If there was to be slippage in the delivery of the agreed Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings projects, this will require further savings to be made from other areas, which may result in further service reductions and job losses. This key risk is categorised with critical impact and possible likelihood. The implementation of the delivery plan by ACE is closely being monitored by Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet.
  - c. If local authority schools and other local authority services choose not to take council services, together with the loss of community buildings, both Technical and Building Services could see a loss of business. This key risk is categorised with major impact and probable likelihood. A draft booklet will be produced to promote Building Services ready for distribution throughout council services.
  - d. Potential restitution of search fees going back to 2005. This key risk is categorised with moderate impact and highly probable likelihood. The mitigation of this risk is dependent upon the outcome of the negotiations and litigation currently being defended by lawyers instructed in group litigation.
  - e. If we were to fail to comply with central government's Public Services Network Code of Connection criteria, this would put some of our core business processes at risk, for example, revenues and benefits. This key risk is categorised with critical impact and possible likelihood. In May 2013, an ICT Health Check was carried out and a number of recommendations were made to bring the council to a position of compliance.

## Recommendations and Reasons

9. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the report and consider any performance issues arising there from.

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**Contact: Jenny Haworth, Head of Planning and Performance**  
**Tel: 03000 268071**      **E-Mail [jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk)**

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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### **Finance**

Latest performance information is being used to inform corporate, service and financial planning.

### **Staffing**

Performance against a number of relevant corporate health PIs has been included to monitor staffing levels and absence rates.

### **Risk**

Reporting of significant risks and their interaction with performance is integrated into the quarterly monitoring report.

### **Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty**

Corporate health PIs and key actions relating to equality and diversity issues are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

A number of PIs and key actions relating to crime and disorder are continually monitored in partnership with Durham Constabulary.

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

### **Procurement**

Not applicable

### **Disability Issues**

Corporate health PIs and key actions relating to accessibility issues and employees with a disability are monitored as part of the performance monitoring process.

### **Legal Implications**

Not applicable

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## Appendix 2: Key to symbols used within the report

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Where icons appear in this report, they have been applied to the most recently available information.

### Performance Indicators:

#### Direction of travel

Latest reported data have improved from comparable period

**GREEN**

Latest reported data remain in line with comparable period

**AMBER**

Latest reported data have deteriorated from comparable period

**RED**

#### Performance against target

Performance better than target

Getting there - performance approaching target (within 2%)

Performance >2% behind target

### Actions:

**WHITE**

Complete (Action achieved by deadline/achieved ahead of deadline)

**GREEN**

Action on track to be achieved by the deadline

**RED**

Action not achieved by the deadline/unlikely to be achieved by the deadline

### Benchmarking:

**GREEN**

Performance better than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available

**AMBER**

Performance in line with other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available

**RED**

Performance worse than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available

## Appendix 3: Summary of Key Performance Indicators

Table 1: Key Target Indicators

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
<b>Altogether Better Council</b>										
75	Percentage of calls answered within 3 minutes	87	Oct - Dec 2013	80	GREEN	New Indicator	NA			
76	Average waiting time at a customer access point (mins:secs)	03:53	Oct - Dec 2013	15:00	GREEN	05:17	GREEN			
77	Percentage all ICT Service Desk incidents resolved on time	91	Oct - Dec 2013	90	GREEN	93	RED			
78	Average time taken to process new housing benefit claims (days)	21.02	Oct - Dec 2013	22.0	GREEN	New Indicator	NA	23 GREEN	25** GREEN	Jul - Sept 2013
79	Average time taken to process new council tax reduction claims (days)	22.18	Oct - Dec 2013	22.0	AMBER	New Indicator	NA	33 GREEN	27** GREEN	Jan - Mar 2013
80	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims (days)	9.45	Oct - Dec 2013	11.0	GREEN	New Indicator	NA	11 GREEN	9** RED	Jul - Sept 2013
81	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for council tax reduction claims (days)	10.05	Oct - Dec 2013	11.0	GREEN	New Indicator	NA	16 GREEN	12** GREEN	Jan - Dec 13
82	Percentage of council tax recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.1	As at Dec 2013	98.5	GREEN	NA	NA			
Page 83	Percentage of business rates recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.2	As at Dec 2013	98.5	GREEN	NA	NA			

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
84	Savings delivered against the MTFP (£m)	18.7	As at Dec 2013	20.9	<a href="#">Not comparable</a> [1]	NA	NA			
85	Percentage of council tax collected in-year	82.9	Apr - Dec 2013	84.0	AMBER	82.7	GREEN	97.4 Not comparable	96.7* Not comparable	2012/13
86	Percentage of business rates collected in-year	85.4	Apr - Dec 2013	86.0	AMBER	84.3	GREEN	97.7 Not comparable	96.7* Not comparable	2012/13
87	Percentage of accounts paid to the council within 30 days (debtors)	79.5	Oct - Dec 2013	73.0	GREEN	73.6	GREEN			
88	Income generated from council owned business space (£)	1,986,971	Apr - Dec 2013	1,927,500	GREEN	2,134,000	RED			
89	Percentage of local authority tenant satisfaction with landlord services	86	As at Apr 2013	87	AMBER	New indicator	NA			
90	Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit - Dale & Valley Homes	1.58	As at Dec 2013	3.0	GREEN	1.72	GREEN			
91	Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit - Durham City Homes	2.05	As at Dec 2013	2.5	GREEN	2.45	GREEN			
92	Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit - East Durham Homes	2.85	As at Dec 2013	3	GREEN	2.88	GREEN			
93	Average asset rating of Display Energy Certificates (DECs) in county council buildings	98.9	As at Sept 2013	96.0	RED	98.4	RED			



Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
94	Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within statutory deadlines	80	Oct - Dec 2013	85	RED	73	GREEN			
95	Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers	91	Oct - Dec 2013	92	AMBER	91.4	RED			
96	Percentage of performance appraisals completed	73.3	Jan - Dec 2013	80.0	RED	NA	NA			
97	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services including school staff	8.92	Jan - Dec 2013	9.05	GREEN	9.7	GREEN			

[\[1\] Annual target](#)

**Table 2: Key Tracker Indicators**

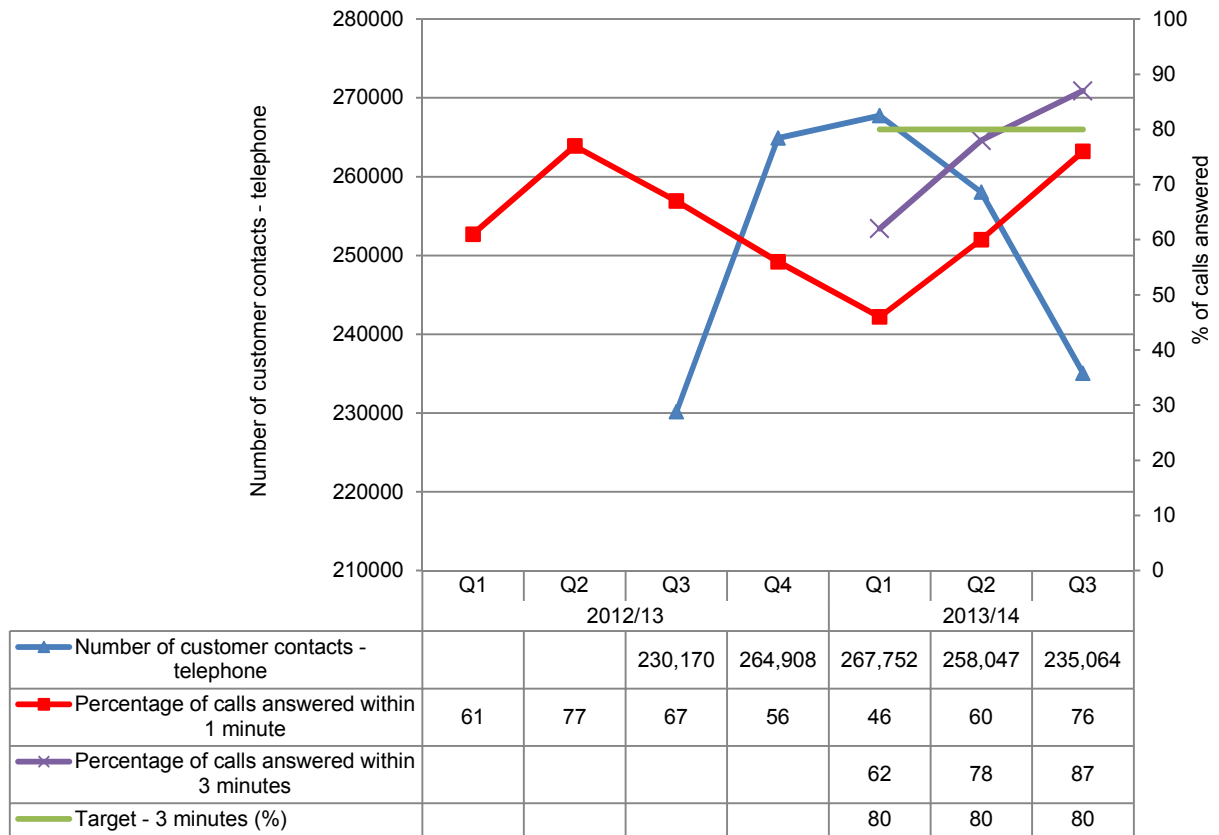
Page Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Previous period data	Performance compared to previous period	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
<b>Altogether Better Council</b>										
169	Staff aged under 25 as percentage of post count	5.45	As at Dec 2013	5.55	NA	4.37	NA			
170	Staff aged over 50 as a percentage of post count	37.79	As at Dec 2013	36.84	NA	37.80	NA			
171	Women in the top 5 percent of earners	52.11	As at Dec 2013	51.53	NA	50.20	NA			
172	BME as a percentage of post count	1.4	As at Dec 2013	1.4	NA	0.96	NA			
173	Staff with disability (DDA definition) as a percentage of post count	2.9	As at Dec 2013	2.93	NA	3.10	NA			
174	Percentage of abandoned calls	9	Oct - Dec 2013	12	GREEN	10	GREEN			
175	Percentage of calls answered within 1 minute	76	Oct - Dec 2013	60	GREEN	67	GREEN			
176	Staff - total headcount (ONS return)	17,577	As at Dec 2013	17,533	NA	17,743	NA			
177	Staff - total full time equivalent (FTE) (ONS return)	14,211	As at Dec 2013	14,198	NA	14,276	NA			
178	Number of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries,	17	Apr - Dec	16	<a href="#">Not comparable [2]</a>	26	GREEN			

Ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Previous period data	Performance compared to previous period	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
	Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)		2013							
179	Percentage of posts with no absence (excluding SCHOOLS)	73	Oct - Dec 2013	78.31	<b>RED</b>	69.44	<b>GREEN</b>			

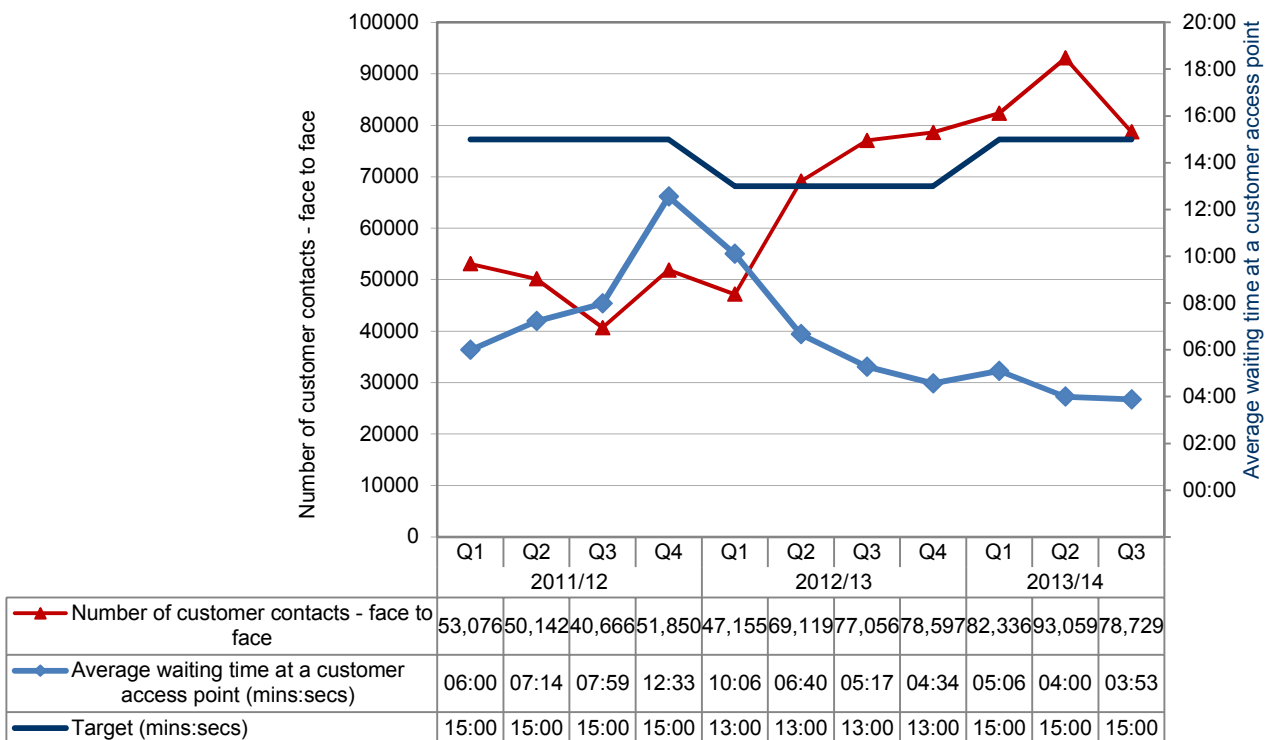
[\[2\] This data is cumulative and the figure is based on 12 months data for the year end so comparisons are not applicable.](#)

## Appendix 4: Volume Measures

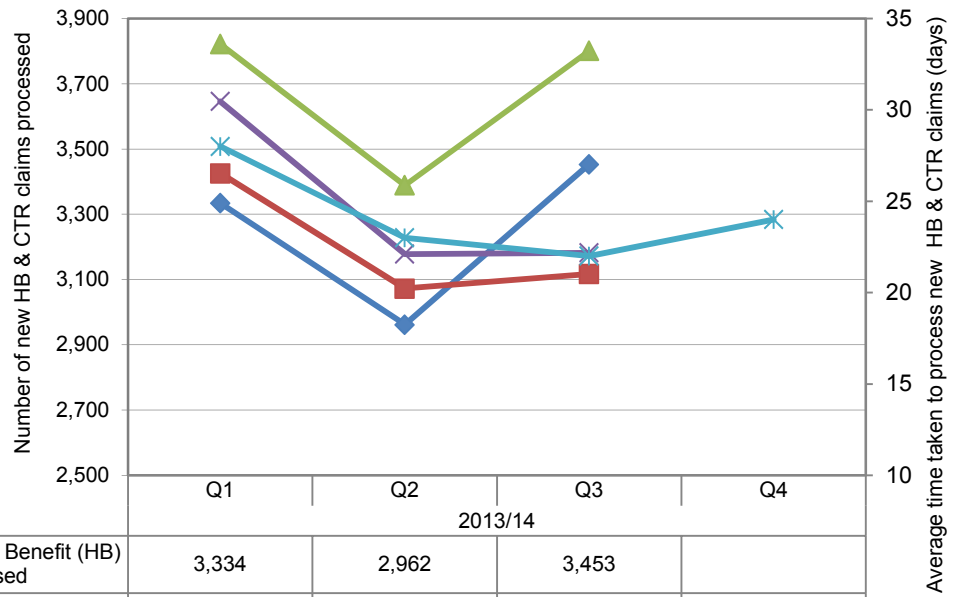
### Chart 1 - Telephone calls



### Chart 2 – Face to face contacts

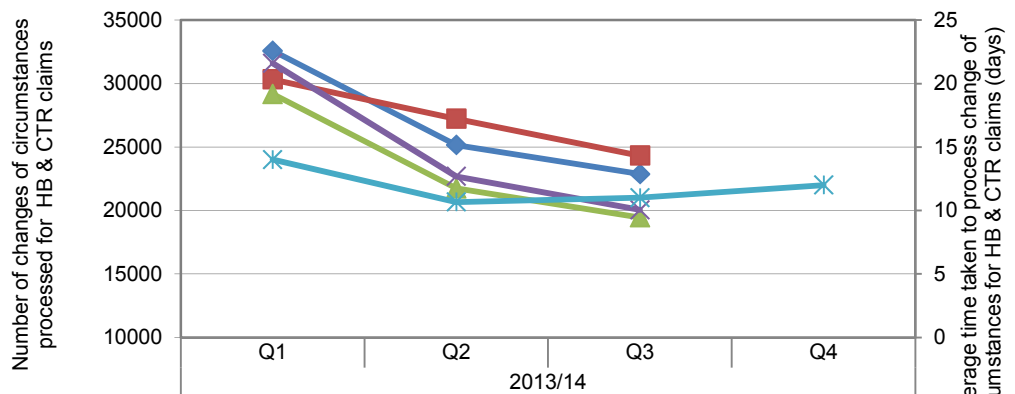


**Chart 3 – Benefits – new claims**



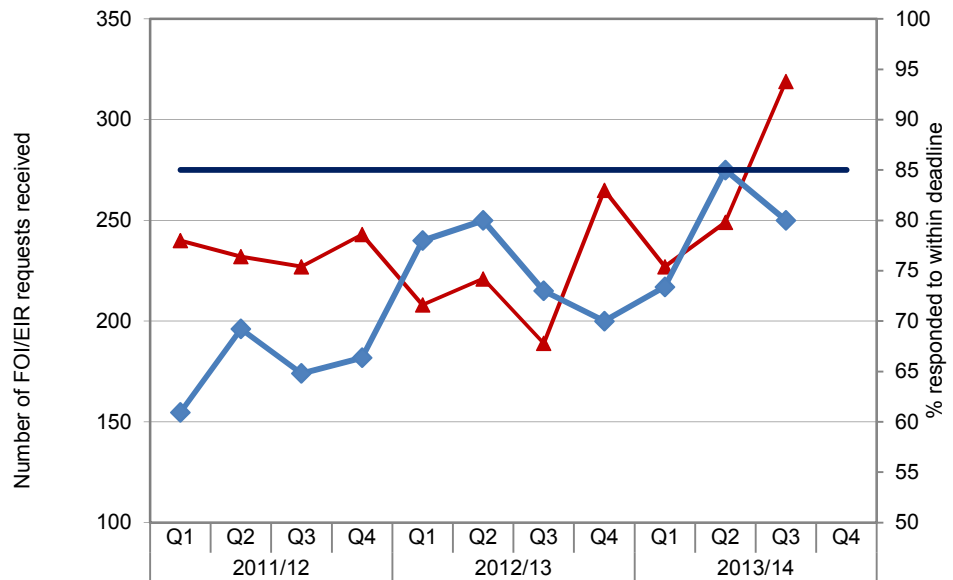
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of new Housing Benefit (HB) claims processed	3,334	2,962	3,453	
Number of new Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims processed	3,822	3,389	3,801	
Average time taken to process new HB claims (days)	26.53	20.23	21.02	
Average time taken to process new CTR claims (days)	30.46	22.11	22.18	
Target - discrete quarter (days)	28	23	22	24

**Chart 4 – Benefits – changes of circumstances**



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Number of changes of circumstances processed for Housing Benefit (HB) claims	32,574	25,152	22,873	
Number of Changes of Circumstances processed for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims	30,326	27,215	24,319	
Average time taken to process change of circumstances for HB claims (days)	19.18	11.74	9.45	
Average time taken to process change of circumstances for CTR claims (days)	21.59	12.68	10.05	
Target - discrete quarter (days)	14	10.66	11	12

**Chart 5 – Freedom of Information (FOI) requests**



	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	2011/12				2012/13				2013/14			
Number of FOI/EIR requests received	240	232	227	243	208	221	189	265	227	249	319	
% of FOI/EIR requests responded to within statutory deadlines	61	69	65	66	78	80	73	70	73	85	80	
Target (%)	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85

**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**27 March 2014**



**Customer Feedback: Complaints,  
Compliments and Suggestions  
Quarter 3 Report 2013/14**

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**Report of Terry Collins, Corporate Director for Neighbourhood  
Services**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present to Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CIOSC) the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Quarter 3 Report 2013/14 (full report attached at Appendix 2).

**Background**

- 2 The report in relation to the council's performance and key issues regarding complaints, compliments and suggestions is aligned to the performance reporting mechanisms, so the implications of this customer feedback can inform scrutiny of council performance.

**Quarter 3 Report 2013/14**

- 3 The full report at Appendix 2 provides details for each service grouping in relation to both statutory and non-statutory complaints compliments and suggestions received in quarter 3 2013/14.

**Recommendation**

- 4 Members are asked to note the information in the report.

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**Contact: Mary Readman Tel. 03000 268161  
Email: [mary.readman@durham.gov.uk](mailto:mary.readman@durham.gov.uk)**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance – N/A**

**Staffing – N/A**

**Risk – N/A**

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty – N/A**

**Accommodation – N/A**

**Crime and Disorder – N/A**

**Human Rights – N/A**

**Consultation – N/A**

**Procurement – N/A**

**Disability Issues – N/A**

**Legal Implications – N/A**



# Customer Feedback report: Complaints, compliments and suggestions Quarter 3 2013/14



*Altogether better*



## Overview

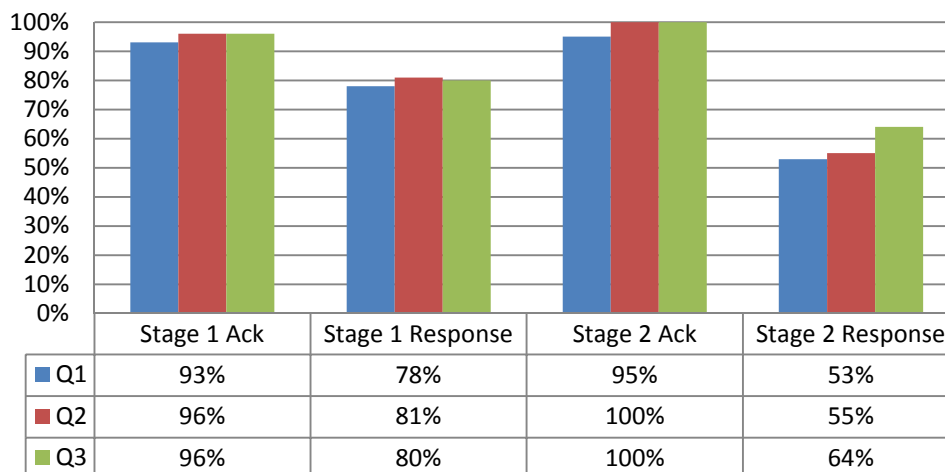
1. This report provides the performance information and learning outcomes in relation to complaints, compliments and suggestions across the Council. Information on complaints relates to the 2 types of complaint the Council deals with:
  - **Statutory.** A complaint which arises from the duties placed on a local social services authority to provide assessments and care services under the provisions of relevant adult and children's social care legislation. The process for managing such complaints is prescribed in Regulations.
  - **Non-Statutory.** All other complaints
2. The council's service standards for dealing with non-statutory complaints are:
  - Acknowledging all complaints within 2 working days;
  - Responding to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days
  - Responding to stage 2 complaints within 20 working days.
3. The report is divided into 2 main parts; overall performance summary and the detailed information for each service grouping in relation to the complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the Council during Quarter 3, 2013/14

## PART ONE: Summary of Complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the Council during Quarter 3, 2013/14

4. Between 1 October 2013 and 31 December 2013, Durham County Council received 707 non-statutory complaints, 299 compliments and 58 suggestions.

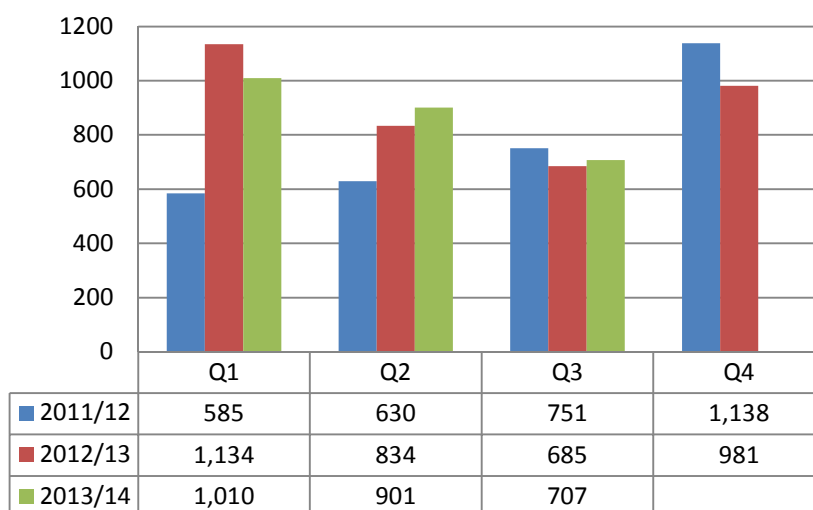
### Complaints

5. The graph below shows a comparison of the performance in relation to responding to complaints across the Council for 2013/14.



6. The graph illustrates a steady improvement in performance throughout the year with a 9% increase in the number of stage 2 complaints responded to within the agreed timescales as a result of service improvement activity.

7. The graph below shows a comparison of the total numbers of complaints received across the Council since April 2011. Complaints received in this quarter have increased by 3% in comparison with the same period last year.



8. The table below shows a breakdown of complaints received across Service Groupings since 2011/12, showing increases in quarter 3 compared to the same period last year across all Services with the exception of Resources:

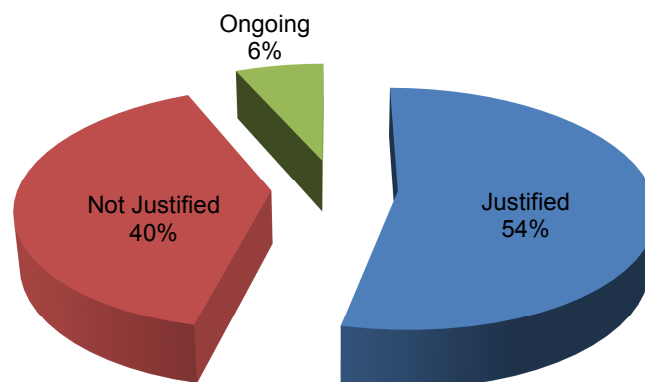
Service Grouping	2011-12 Total	2012 - 2013					2013 - 2014				
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
ACE	10	0	2	0	5	7	3	3	2		8
CAS	83	4	15	4	10	33	10	15	24		49
NS	1,589	737	537	431	693	2,398	724	614	446		1784
RED	327	94	95	93	105	387	93	128	96		317
RES	1,095	299	185	157	168	809	180	141	139		460
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,104</b>	<b>1,134</b>	<b>834</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>3,634</b>	<b>1,010</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>707</b>		<b>2618</b>

9. Analysis of the data shows that the highest numbers of complaints received during the quarter were due to:

- Refuse and Recycling Service:**  
 90 complaints were received regarding missed bins during quarter 3 2013/14. This is a 30% decrease when compared with quarter 2 2013/14.
- Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs):**  
 We received 48 complaints regarding HWRCs, which is a 37% decrease when compared with quarter 2 2013/14. Contract changes leading to tighter control of the waste put through the sites and customer liaison are the main reasons for these complaints
- Revenues and Benefits Service:**  
 The Benefits service received 47 complaints of which 6 (13%) were made by landlords or agents either about speed of processing or disputing payments made directly to tenants. Analysis of the complaints indicates that 32 (68%) related to the amount of evidence requested in support of claims which, customers see as, causing a delay in their claim being processed or updated.

The Revenues service received 75 complaints this quarter, with 25% of these relating to delays in processing changes or responding to correspondence. 11% related to changes to council policy and the charging of council tax on empty properties, 24% related to recovery action with 7 of these being complaints regarding bailiffs.

10. Further investigation of the stage 1 complaints received shows that during quarter 3, 2013/14 there were 280 occasions (40% of complaints processed) where the complaint was not upheld, indicating that although service users were dissatisfied with the service received, the service had in fact acted properly and followed the correct procedures.
11. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, DCC is left with 381 (54%) justified complaints, from which there is possibility of learning.



### Compliments and Suggestions

12. The following table shows the numbers of compliments and suggestions received across service groupings during quarter 3:

Service Grouping	Compliments	Suggestions
ACE	25	4
CAS	47	1
NS	125	41
RED	85	9
RES	17	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>58</b>

13. A large proportion of compliments are for staff in recognition of their support and help in resolving the customer's concerns and issues. On each of these occasions, the individual officer is notified of the compliment and thanked by their line manager. Many of these relate to the professionalism, politeness and general helpfulness of staff.

## PART TWO: Detailed report for each service grouping for quarter 3, 2013/14

14. The following sections provide details for each Service Grouping in relation to complaints compliments and suggestions received in quarter 3 and the learning outcomes applied to improve service delivery for those complaints which were justified

### Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

#### Overview

15. The ACE service grouping received 2 complaints, 25 compliments and 4 suggestions between 1 Oct 2013 and 31 Dec 2013.

Service Grouping ACE	Number Received										
	11/12 Total	12/13				12/13 Total	13/14				13/14 Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	6	0	2	0	5	7	3	3	2	-	8
Compliments	24	3	3	7	12	25	3	9	25	-	38
Suggestions	14	0	1	1	7	9	3	3	4	-	12

#### Feedback areas and learning

16. The two complaints received in quarter 3 concerned the AAPs and both have been escalated to Stage 2. One related to a project funded by an AAP and the second concerned a delay in responding to an AAP funding application and refusal to give information. Both investigations have now concluded and the complaints identified as not justified.

#### Compliments and Suggestions

17. 16 compliments out of the 25 received were in relation to Partnerships and Community Engagement, thanking staff for their efforts around the successful AAP Forum events. 8 compliments were for the County Records Office and one was received by Policy and Communications.

All 4 suggestions received by Policy and Communications related to council web pages and have been passed onto relevant teams for action

### Children and Adults Services (CAS)

#### Corporate Complaints Overview

18. During quarter 3, CAS received 20 complaints, 47 compliments, 4 comments and 1 suggestion in relation to corporate representations.
19. The overall number of corporate representations received by CAS has increased from the previous quarter (from 57 in quarter 2 to 68 in quarter 3), however there has been a 54% decrease when compared to the corresponding quarter in 2012/13.



20. Complaints have increased by 5 in comparison with quarter 2 and by 16 when compared to the same quarter in 2012/13. 10 complaints received in quarter 3 were in relation to Children and Young People and 10 were in relation to Adult Services. Complaints were received in the following Service Areas:

- Children’s Services received 4 complaints
- Education received 6 complaints
- Planning & Service Strategy received 8 complaints
- Adult Social Care received 2 complaints

Service Grouping CAS	Number Received											% Change*
	11/12 Total	12/13				12/13 Total	13/14				13/14 Total	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
<b>Complaints</b>	<b>83</b>	4	15	4	10	<b>33</b>	10	15	20	-	<b>45</b>	+400%
<b>Compliments</b>	<b>158</b>	149	150	145	103	<b>547</b>	88	42	47	-	<b>177</b>	-68%
<b>Suggestions</b>	<b>24</b>	15	0	0	11	<b>26</b>	0	0	1	-	<b>1</b>	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>68</b>	-	<b>223</b>	-54%

\*Q3 figure 2013/14 compared with Q3 figure 2012/13

21. Of the 20 complaints received, 100% were acknowledged within 2 working days and 19 were responded to within 10 working days. Of the 20 complaints received, 7 were upheld, 12 were not upheld and 1 was partially upheld.

### Feedback areas and learning

22. The following actions are being taken in response to learning from complaints in the quarter:
- Service Users are given an alternative contact for the One Point service when staff are on leave.
  - The Occupational Therapy Service is to conduct a review of the application of the Blue Badge criteria, following complaints about assessment outcomes for renewals.
  - Raised awareness of Fire Evacuation procedures in a Care Day Centre following a recent practice drill.

### Compliments and Suggestions

23. During the quarter, 47 compliments were received, a reduction of 68% in comparison to the corresponding period in 2012/13. Children’s Services received 29 compliments (13 for the Youth Offending Service, 13 for the Pathfinder Service and 3 for the One Point Service), and Education received 18 (12 for the Education Development Service, 5 for Educational Psychology Services and 1 for the School and Governor Support Service). It should be noted that many compliments were received by the newly transferred Welfare Rights service and is likely to be a factor in the lower numbers of compliments received in this quarter.
24. Four comments were received regarding the closure of Roseberry School and one suggestion was received regarding dance/musical theatre classes in primary schools.

### CAS Statutory Representations Overview

25. The total number of representations has decreased from 265 in quarter 3 of 2012/13 to 140 in quarter 3 of 2013/14. This represents a 47% decrease. The number of statutory

complaints and compliments has also decreased in quarter 3 in comparison to the corresponding period in 2012/13 and also between quarter 2 and quarter 3 of 2013/14.

Service Grouping CAS	Number Received											% Change*
	11/12 Total	12/13				12/13 Total	13/14				13/14 Total	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Complaints	251	72	66	84	54	276	64	75	43	-	182	-49%
Compliments	399	152	226	181	199	758	155	100	97	-	352	-46%
Suggestions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>1034</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>-47%</b>

\*Q3 figure 2013/14 compared with Q3 figure 2012/13

### Statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions/comments – Children's

26. During quarter 3, a total of 23 complaints were received in relation to children's social care services. There were 6 complaints managed informally (e.g. within a short timescale usually by phone or in person, without the need for a management intervention or investigation), 16 complaints managed at Stage 1 of the statutory procedure and 1 complaint managed at Stage 2 of the statutory procedure. There was a reduction of 3 formal complaints in quarter 3 in comparison to quarter 2 of 2013/14.
27. All 16 Stage 1 complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt. Six complaints were resolved within the prescribed timescales (37.5%) and 2 outside of the timescales. The remaining 8 complaints remain on-going, 7 of these are outside of the timescales due to the complex nature of the complaints.
28. Maximum efforts are made to resolve complaints informally. When complaints cannot be resolved informally, they will proceed to Stage 1 where an investigation will be undertaken by a manager of the service.
29. Continued efforts to improve performance in the number of Stage 1 complaints escalating to Stage 2 of the Statutory Complaints Procedure include a focus on improving responses at stage 1. Complaints received, by team, are shown below:

Complaints received by Teams in the quarter		
Teams	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Aycliffe Secure Services	0	1
Disabled Children and Families Team	0	1
Initial Response Team	4	0
Looked After Children - Aycliffe	0	0
Looked After Children - Durham	0	1
Safeguarding Children - Aycliffe	1	0
Safeguarding Children Bishop Auckland	0	4
Safeguarding Children Crook	0	4
Safeguarding Children Chester-le-Street	1	5
Safeguarding Children - Durham	2	0
Safeguarding Children Easington	1	0
Safeguarding Children - Peterlee	1	0
Safeguarding Children Seaham	4	0
Safeguarding Children Spennymoor	0	1
Safeguarding Children Stanley 2	1	1
Young People's Service - South	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>

30. No complaints were declined in the quarter.

### Category of Complaint

31. 'Poor Service' was an element in 13 of the 16 Stage 1 complaints received. The categories with the next highest number of complaints were 'Disputed Decision' which formed all or part of the reason behind 5 complaints and 'Professional Conduct of Staff' which was an element in 2 complaints. This is concurrent with themes in the previous quarter. It is possible for a complaint to relate to more than one category.

### Outcome of complaints

32. Of the 8 complaints completed in the quarter, 6 were not upheld, 2 were partially upheld and none were upheld as the table below outlines:

Outcome of Children's Complaints received in the Quarter				
Team	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Total
Initial Response Team	3	1	0	4
Safeguarding Children Aycliffe	1	0	0	1
Safeguarding Children Seaham	1	0	0	1
Safeguarding Children Stanley 2	0	1	0	1
Young People's Service - South	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

### Action taken as a result of statutory complaints

33. As a result of all complaints received and concluded during the period the following actions have been undertaken:

- Where service users ask to remain anonymous in referrals, this will be recorded and actioned; and
- Where Social Workers are asked to return service users calls, they will do so in a reasonable timeframe, recording where this has not been possible

### Stage 2 complaints

34. During the quarter, 1 complaint was escalated to Stage 2.

### Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

35. During the quarter the LGO made preliminary enquiries in 1 case and issued Final Decision letters about 2 further cases, neither of which were upheld.

### Compliments

36. 33 compliments were received in quarter 3, an increase of 16 from the previous quarter.

Teams	Compliments Received	
	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Community Support Team	22	9
Disabled Children and Families Team	2	1
Looked After Children	1	2
Initial Response and Prevention	0	0
Specialist Services	6	2
Safeguarding Services	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>17</b>



## Statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions – Adults

37. During the quarter, a total of 20 complaints were received in relation to adult social care services, representing a 5% decrease in comparison to the previous quarter.

Comparison of Complaints received by quarter					
Service Area	Q4 12/13	Q1 13/14	Q2 13/14	Q3 13/14	Direction of Travel from previous quarter
Adult Care	19	26	21	20	↓

38. All complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days. Complaints Resolution Plans (CRPs) were completed for all 20 complaints; 16 were completed within the quarter and timescales set out in the CRP. The remaining 4 cases were ongoing at the quarter end but are still within their agreed completion timescales.
39. The Adult Social Work Teams (Older Persons/Mental Health Services for Older People/Physical Disability/Sensory Support Services) received the greatest number of complaints at 10, followed by 6 in the Commissioning Service Area as shown below:

Complaints received by Service Area in the quarter		
Service Area	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Adult Social Work Teams: Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services	10	13
Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services	3	2
Commissioning	6	3
County Durham Care and Support	0	1
Safeguarding and Practice Development	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>

### Declined Complaints

40. Four complaints were declined in the quarter, 2 as they were beyond DCC's jurisdiction and 2 as they had previously been investigated and responded to.

### Category of Complaint

41. 'Lack of Service – Communications/Information' and 'Disputed Decision' constituted the categories with the highest number of complaints recorded at 5 each. The categories with the next highest number of complaints were *Provision of Service – Equipment* with 4 complaints and *Finance – Charging Policy* with 3 complaints.

### Outcome of Complaints

42. Of the 16 complaints completed in the quarter, 12 were not upheld, none were partially upheld and 4 were upheld.

Outcome of Complaints received and completed in the quarter				
	Not upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld	Total
Social Work Teams: Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older	5	0	3	8

Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services				
Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services	1	0	1	2
Safeguarding and Practice Development Team	1	0	0	1
Commissioning	5	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>

### Actions as a result of statutory complaints

43. Investigation into complaints relating to the new stair lift maintenance policy has shown there was a lack of clarity on when the lift maintenance would cease for people who had been assessed as no longer meeting the eligibility criteria for stair lift provision. The Commissioning Department has now written to service users and clarified that DCC maintenance would cease from 31 March 2014.

### Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

44. During the quarter the LGO has made preliminary enquiries in 1 case and commenced an investigation into 2 cases.
45. In a case from a previous quarter, the LGO has issued a Final Decision which stated that the Council was not at fault for its consideration of a safeguarding referral highlighting concerns about the quality of care in a nursing home. The same investigation by the LGO into the Council's response to limits placed on the complainant's visits to the care home was referred to the Court of Protection.

### Compliments

46. 64 compliments were received in the quarter, representing a decrease of 19 in comparison to the previous quarter.

Service Area	Compliments Received	
	Current Q3	Previous Q2
County Durham Care and Support	36	54
Social Work Teams: (Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services)	26	28
Social Work Teams (Learning Disabilities/Mental Health/Substance Misuse Services)	1	1
Planning & Service Strategy	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>83</b>

### Neighbourhood Services (NS)

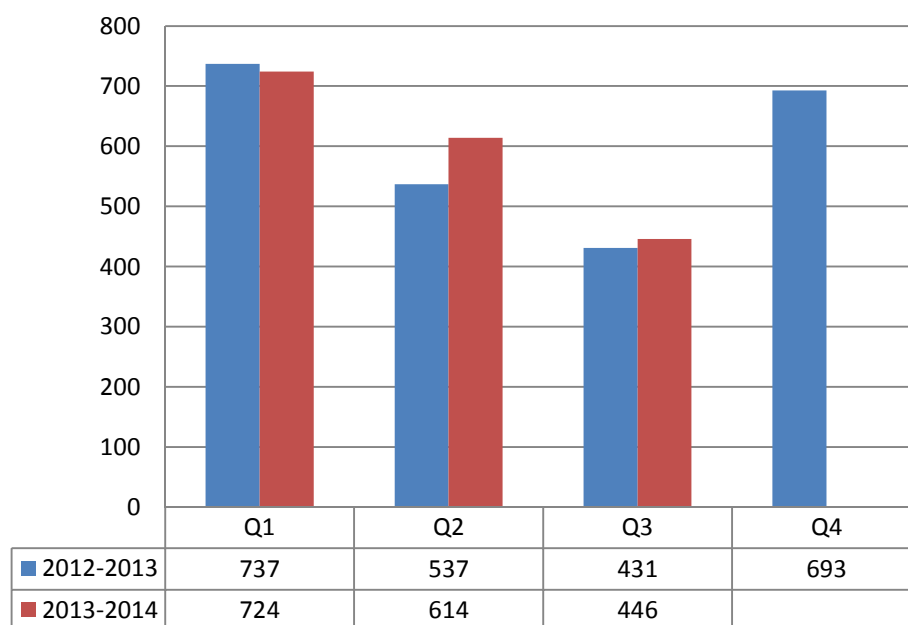
#### Overview

47. For quarter 3 of 2012/13, 2013, 446 complaints, 125 compliments and 41 suggestions were received. A summary of feedback since 2011/12 is shown in the following table

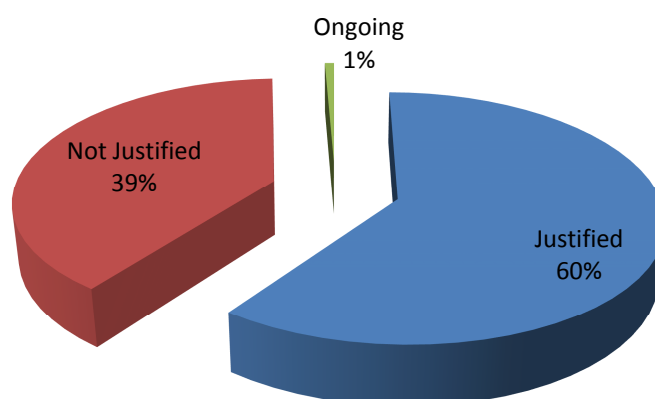
NS	Number Received											%* Change
	11/12 Total	12/13 split by quarter				12/13 Total	13/14 split by quarter				13/14	
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Complaints	1,589	737	537	431	693	2,398	724	614	446	-	1,784	+3
Compliments	419	75	67	108	152	402	126	134	125	-	385	+16
Suggestions	415	71	55	49	40	215	62	57	41	-	160	-16

\*Q3 13/14 compared to the same period last year

48. The number of complaints received by NS in quarter 3 has increased by 3% in comparison to the same period last year. Analysis of the data shows that there has been an increase in complaints regarding the changes to HWRCs, with an additional 43 complaints received and the implementation of new LED Street Lighting; 15 complaints in relation to this were received in this quarter.
49. There has however, also been a reduction in some of the most common complaints received. The highest reductions relate to drainage issues, showing an 85% decrease; charges for replacement wheeled bins have reduced by 31% and there has been a 47% reduction in relation to complaints concerning damage caused by the council; this includes damage to residents cars either by the refuse wagon or by the bins hitting cars when being pulled out and damage to grass verges when driven on by council vehicles.



50. Further investigation of the complaints received shows that during quarter 3, 2013/14, there were 175 occasions (39%) where the complaint was not upheld, indicating that, although service users were dissatisfied with the service received, the service had acted properly and followed appropriate procedures.



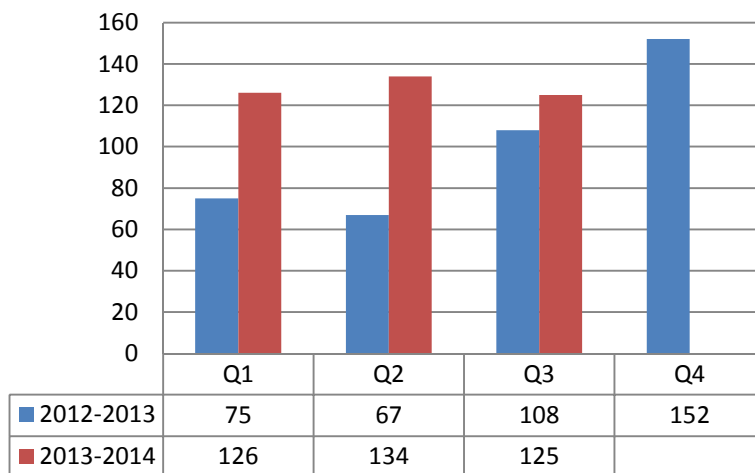
## Key Areas and Learning

51. Detailed analysis of the complaints received during quarter 2 shows that 43% can be attributed to the following:
- **Missed Bins:** 90 complaints were received regarding missed bins during quarter 3 2013/14, a 30% decrease when compared with quarter 2 2013/14.
  - **Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres:** We received 48 complaints regarding HWRCs during this quarter. Although, complaints of this nature remain high there has been a steady decrease in the number received; with a 37% decrease when compared to quarter 2 2013/14. Contract changes leading to tighter control of the waste put through the sites and customer liaison are the main reasons for these complaints
  - **Charges for replacement wheeled bins:** 25 complaints were received from residents objecting to the £20 charge for replacement bins. Complaints of this kind have reduced by 31% when compared with the same quarter in 2012/13
  - **Attitude of refuse crews:** 23 complaints were received from customers unhappy with the attitude of their refuse crew; a 43% increase when compared with quarter 2 2013/14.
  - **Refuse staff not returning bins/containers:** 20 complaints were received from residents regarding refuse bins/containers not being returned to the correct location. This is a 30% increase when compared with quarter 2 2013/14 and a reduction of 17% when compared with the same quarter in 2012/13
  - **Street lighting energy reduction project:** Since the introduction of the new street lighting policy during quarter 3, 15 complaints were received from customers regarding the installation of the new LED street lighting in their area. Customers had concerns regarding reduced lighting in residential areas.
52. A regular meeting, with a range of staff from Direct Services and Customer Services, named the "Customer Experience", continues to meet to exchange data, including complaints and suggestions, in order to make improvements in relation to our contact with customers. Some of the improvement actions include:
- Implementation of a strengthened "Repeat Missed Container" Monitoring Process, to reduce repeat missed bin complaints.
  - Introduction of a new streamlined process for managing customer requests for sand bags, including making requests online.
  - Implementation of a new process for managing and monitoring enquiries and complaints in relation to the street lighting energy reduction project.
  - Development of web forms for all Street Scene Service Requests, to allow customers to access services online.
  - Development of the booking engine and web payment facility for replacement bin requests to enable customers to access this service online.

53. In relation to HWRC's, further engagement has taken place with the contractor and customer care training has been delivered to all of their staff to address complaints regarding staff attitude and complaints have reduced as a result.

### Compliments and Suggestions

54. Compliments received by NS in quarter 3 2013/14 compared to quarter 3 2012/13 have increased by 16% as illustrated in the graph below



55. The majority of compliments relate to staff from the Refuse and Recycling, Clean and Green and Customer Service teams in recognition of their support and help in resolving customer enquiries. There were a number of compliments regarding helpfulness of staff at HWRCs, many of these relate to the professionalism, politeness and swift responses from staff.
56. The remaining compliments relate to service provision, including the standard of work, e.g. keeping local areas clean and tidy, carrying out work on hedges and trees, road improvements and speed of work, e.g. footpath repairs, returning to collect missed bins
57. Suggestions related to a number of issues, including:
- Extension to the garden waste scheme collection dates. This feedback will be considered as part of the review.
  - Improvements to customer access points (seating, privacy, etc.). A number of improvements have been made including a new reception desk at the Durham CAP To improve the stocks of books in our libraries

## Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

### Overview

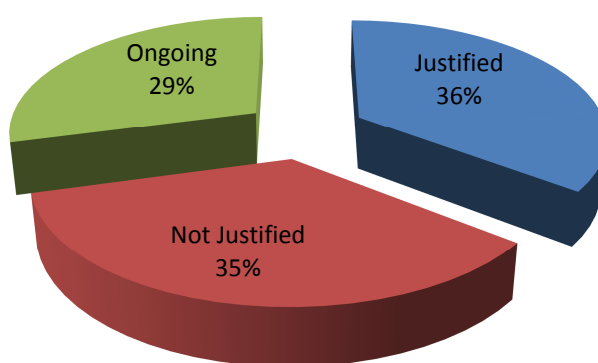
58. Between 1 October and 31 December, 96 complaints, 85 compliments and 9 suggestions were received
59. The table below shows the level of compliments and suggestions received by RED has reduced slightly (3%) when compared to Q2. When compared with previous quarters in

12/13 and 13/14 numbers remain consistent suggesting the normal trend has resumed following a reduction of complaints in relation to Durham City Homes.

Service Grouping RED	Number Received										%* Change	
	11/12 Total	12/13				12/13 Total	13/14					13/14 Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Complaints	336	94	95	93	105	387	93	128	96	-	316	+3
Compliments	122	38	39	37	11	125	34	27	85	-	148	+130
Suggestions	48	9	11	10	3	33	11	6	13	-	30	+30

\*13/14 compared to the same period last year

60. During quarter 3, 35% of complaints were not upheld; in these cases, although service users were dissatisfied with the service received, the service had in fact acted properly and followed appropriate procedures.



### Key Areas and Learning

61. Detailed analysis of the complaints received during quarter 3 shows that 69% of these can be attributed to the following:
- **Durham City Homes:** 36 complaints were received in relation to Durham City Homes, particularly in regard to the handling of repairs and maintenance issues and the associated contractors. This shows a 25% reduction in the number of complaints received compared to the previous quarter.
  - **Planning and Building Control:** 17 were in relation to Planning Development mainly in connection to planning decisions and building control. This shows a significant reduction of 48% from the previous quarter.
  - **Strategic Traffic:** 13 were received by Strategic Traffic, the majority are parking and road works related. This shows a 41% reduction from the previous quarter.

### Compliments and Suggestions

62. The service grouping received 85 compliments in quarter 3; these are generally thanking staff for the service they have provided. There has been a significant increase in the numbers received by Planning Development - 63 were recorded in Quarter 3 from 17 in Quarter 2. All compliments have been passed to the relevant staff and teams highlighting the importance of a positive customer focus.

63. RED received 13 suggestions during quarter 3 covering a wide range of subjects and service areas, including building control, transport information and improvements to Durham City and Stanley

## Resources (RES)

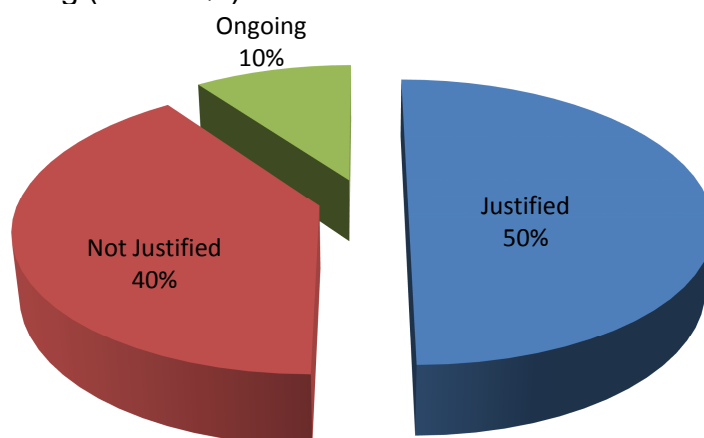
### Overview

64. In the third quarter of 2013/14, Resources received 139 complaints; this represents a 1% decrease since quarter 2, and an 11% reduction compared to quarter 3 2012/13.

RES	Number Received										%* Change	
	11/12 Total	12/13				12/13 Total	13/14					13/14
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Complaints	327	299	185	157	168	809	180	141	139	-	460	-11
Compliments	69	16	21	15	17	69	14	10	7	-	41	-53
Suggestions	24	11	7	0	6	24	3	5	3	-	11	-

\*% change compared to Q3 2012/13

65. The majority of quarter 3 complaints (122) related to the Revenues & Benefits Service.
66. The proportion of complaints responded to within the 10 days standard improved from 54% in Q2 to 85% in Q3 2013/14.
67. Of the 139 complaints received in Q3 for Resources, 50% were either justified or part justified (56% in Q2), 40% were not justified (35% in Q2) and 10% were unresolved at the point of reporting (9% in Q2).



### Key Areas and Learning

68. Detailed analysis of the complaints received during quarter 3 shows that 98% of these can be attributed to the following:
- **Benefits Service:** The Benefits service received 47 complaints of which 6 (13%) were made by landlords or agents either about speed of processing or disputing payments made directly to tenants. Analysis of the complaints indicates that 32 (68%) related to the amount of evidence requested in support of claims which, in the eyes of the customer, caused a delay in their claim being processed.

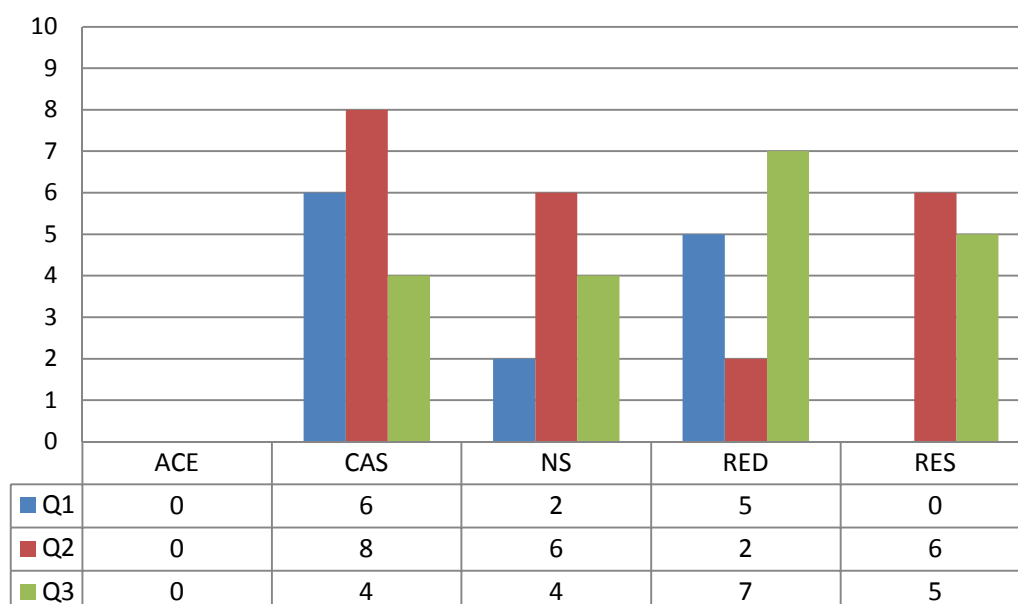
- Revenues Service:** The Revenues service received 75 complaints this quarter. Analysis suggests that 25% of complaints related to delays in processing changes or responding to correspondence. 11% related to council policy and the charging of council tax on empty properties. 24% related to recovery action with 7 of these being complaints regarding bailiffs. All complaints regarding the attitude of the bailiff officers are referred to the respective company for investigation. However, given the contentious nature of their role, most are unfounded whereby being 'firm' is construed as being aggressive. However, all complaints, whether justified or not, are recorded against each individual bailiff and so it would be apparent should a pattern emerge. In any instance where a bailiff may attend an incorrect address, for whatever reason, our records and those of the relevant company are checked for any errors or failures and these issues are dealt with appropriately.
- Contacting the Registration Service:** Five complaints related to difficulties making contact with staff at Registration Offices. Three complaints related to issues with Electoral Services, 2 of which were as a result of the complainant's not understanding correspondence which they had received. The remaining 2 complaints were in respect of land related issues. Both were allocated across the council for input and the Legal Service was asked to contribute to both responses.

### Compliments and Suggestions

- There were 17 compliments received into the Resources service grouping in quarter 3 2013/14. The majority of these (13) were for the Registrars Service for conducting wedding ceremonies and the excellent service provided by individual members of staff in Revenues and Benefits. Four compliments this quarter were for the involvement of members of staff in Finance (Financial Services) and Legal & Democratic Services who assisted in running an Area Action Partnership participatory budget consultation event.
- Three suggestions were received this quarter; one for Revenues and Benefits recommended a review of the Single Persons Discount policy regarding inherited properties and two in relation to policy and procedures and the North East jobs portal.

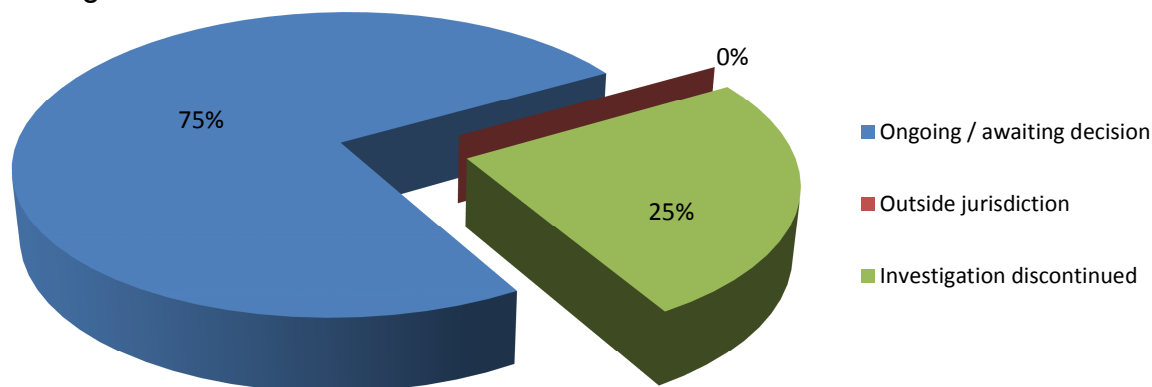
### Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): current activity

- The graph below outlines the number of complaints received by the LGO, for each Service Grouping during 2013/14:





72. During the quarter the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) made initial enquiries / initiated investigations into 20 matters. The chart below illustrates the position of these investigations.



73. Of the 20 complaints:

- 3 are subject to ongoing investigation and relate to benefits/council tax issues
- 12 have been subjected to enquiries from LGO and we await the outcome. These relate to:
  - Adult Social Care (3)
  - Children's Services (1)
  - Planning and Development (1)
  - Rights of Way (1)
  - housing relating to Home Improvement Grant (1)
  - Housing Solutions relating to homelessness (1)
  - Recruitment of fleet driving instructors (1)
  - Anti-social behaviour (1)
- LGO decided not to initiate a full investigation into 4 complaints and discontinued their involvement. These relate to:
  - Benefits/Council Tax (2)
  - Property damage (1).
  - Committee complaint relating to Highways Committee (1)
- LGO found no fault by the Council in respect of 1 complaint and discontinued their involvement; the complaint related to Environmental Health

74. LGO delivered decisions on 14 matters which had been subject to investigations initiated prior to the beginning of quarter 3. Of these 14 matters:

- LGO completed their investigations into 9 complaints and concluded there was no fault by the Council. These relate to:
  - Adult Care Services (2)
  - Highways (2)
  - Benefits and Tax (1)
  - Planning and Development (1)
  - Fixed Penalty Notice/Stray Dog (1)
  - School Admission Appeals (2)

- LGO identified some fault by the Council in relation to 5 complaints but closed the investigation on the basis that the Council would complete specific action(s).
  - noise nuisance/antisocial behaviour relating to a skate park (1)
  - Environmental relating to the closure of a watercourse (1).
  - Housing / Building Control (1). The actions included a financial settlement.
  - Housing Repairs (1)
  - Children’s Services (1). The actions included a financial settlement.

75. The chart below illustrates the decision outcomes of the investigations, showing 57% of complaints investigations were either discounted or LGO found no fault by the Council.



76. During the quarter LGO also notified the Council of the outcome in relation to a range of matters which were not subject to full investigation. LGO investigators reached their decisions on the basis of the details supplied by complainants, supplemented in some instances with contextual information from Council officers. These matters can be summarised as follows:

- Investigation was not initiated in 4 cases. These related to:
  - Data Breach (1)
  - Garage Rents (1).
  - Highways & Transport (1)
  - Benefits & Tax (1)
- 2 complaints were reported to LGO prematurely and were therefore referred back to the Council to deal with under the complaints procedure. These related to
  - Planning (2)
- 2 matters were determined to be outside the jurisdiction of the LGO. These related to:
  - Children’s Services (1)
  - Commercial premises lease (1)

### Learning Outcomes/Actions Taken

77. In respect of the Housing Repairs complaint which was closed during the period, the Housing Regeneration Team did report on learning outcomes/actions taken, further to the Ombudsman’s final decision. Comments made were as follows:-

### *Learning Outcomes*

“It is felt that the Housing Regeneration Team did everything it could to resolve the issues raised within reasonable timescales. The complaints were responded to in a professional and timely manner. However, we believe that we should have set up a central file early in the process as we had to pull information for the complaint from a variety of sources. It would have been easier and more efficient if all correspondence had been held in a more central/accessible location.

### *Action taken*

“Spoken with staff members and advised that if any future complaints are received then, in the first instance, we should log them and set up a central file containing all copies of correspondence and only close it as and when the complaint is resolved”.

78. For one of the Highways complaints which were closed during the period, the Traffic & Community Engagement Team did report on learning outcomes/actions taken, further to the Ombudsman’s final decision. Comments made were as follows:-

### *Learning Outcomes*

“When the complainant was responded to by letter, it is possible that the plan accompanying the letter became detached from the letter prior to posting although the complainant did not raise this for a number of months.

A new process has been put in place to ensure that relevant attachments are included with correspondence”.

### **Recommendations and Reasons**

79. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the report and consider any issues arising there from.

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**Contact: Alan Patrickson**  
Head of Projects and Business Services

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**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**27 March 2014**



**Assistant Chief Executives: Quarter 3  
Revenue and Capital Forecast Outturn  
2013/14**

**Joint Report of Corporate Director Resources and Assistant Chief Executive**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Assistant Chief Executive's (ACE) service grouping highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2013.

**Background**

2. County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2013/14 at its meeting on 20 February 2013. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers between service groupings and budget reprofiling between years. This report covers the financial position for the following major accounts maintained by the ACE service grouping:

- ACE Revenue Budget - £11.443m (original £11.178m)
- ACE Capital Programme – £2.231m (original £3.959m)

3. The original ACE General Fund budget has been revised to incorporate a number of budget adjustments as follows:

- Job evaluation adjustment and appeals +£9k
- Luncheon Club Transport -£3k
- Purchase of annual leave adjustment -£12k
- Transfer of Web Development Team +£84k
- Adjustment for staff not in pension fund -£22k
- Reduction in stationery budget -£3k
- Use of Strategic Reserve to meet redundancy costs +76K
- Increase in Pay Budget for 1% Pay Award +£47k
- Transfer of budget for Durham Managers Programme -£2k
- Use of Customer Focus Reserve +£36k
- Use of Modern Ways of Working Reserve +£4k
- Review of Capital Charges +£51k

The revised General Fund Budget now stands at £11.443m.

4. The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2013/14 and show:-
- The approved annual budget;
  - The actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
  - The variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
  - For the ACE revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

### Revenue - General Fund Services

5. The service is reporting a cash limit spend which is **£0.084m** underbudget against the **£11.443m** allocation. However, this includes a contribution of £0.353m to the Council's Strategic Reserve to aid the meeting of future redundancy payments. Excluding this contribution it is forecast that spend is £0.437m underbudget. The previous Quarter 2 forecast was underbudget by £0.366m which represents an improvement of £0.071m. There has been further tight control across all three areas within the ACE service grouping.
6. The tables below compare the actual expenditure with the budget. The first table is analysed by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense), and the second by Head of Service.

### Subjective Analysis

	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Employees	6,948	5,308	6,888	(60)	67	(127)
Premises	277	265	152	(125)	(56)	(69)
Transport	75	46	60	(15)	0	(15)
Supplies and Services	2,487	1,489	2,413	(74)	(91)	17
Agency and Contracted	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer Payments	2,214	1,437	2,204	(10)	-	(10)
Central Costs	2,449	191	2,453	4	(353)	357
<b>GROSS EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>14,450</b>	<b>8,736</b>	<b>14,170</b>	<b>(280)</b>	<b>(433)</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>(3,007)</b>	<b>(1,314)</b>	<b>(4,034)</b>	<b>(1,027)</b>	<b>(790)</b>	<b>(237)</b>
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>11,443</b>	<b>7,422</b>	<b>10,136</b>	<b>(1,307)</b>	<b>(1,223)</b>	<b>(84)</b>

## Analysis by Head of Service

Head of Service Grouping	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Partnership and Community Engagement	8,068	4,704	7,098	(970)	(910)	(60)
Planning and Performance	1,917	1,189	1,642	(275)	15	(290)
Policy and Communications	2,303	1,529	2,241	(62)	25	(87)
Central	(845)	-	(845)	-	(353)	353
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>11,443</b>	<b>7,422</b>	<b>10,136</b>	<b>(1,307)</b>	<b>(1,223)</b>	<b>(84)</b>

7. Attached in the table below is a brief commentary of the variances with the revised budget analysed into Head of Service groupings. The table identifies variances in the core budget only and excludes items outside of the cash limit (e.g. central repairs and maintenance) and technical accounting adjustments (e.g. capital charges):

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget
Partnership and Community Engagement (PACE)	Area Action Partnerships	£54k managed overbudget on employees mainly agency to cover sickness and maternity. Small underbudget on car allowances and supplies.	48	<b>(60)</b>
	Community Buildings	£12K managed overbudget on employees (fully staffed). £67k underbudget on premises costs.	(55)	
	PACE	£30k underbudget on employees as a result of vacancies and maternity. £13k underbudget on supplies. £10k underbudget on grant aid to the communities.	(53)	
Planning and Performance	Planning, Performance and Improvement	£30k underbudget on employees through management of staff vacancies. £85k managed underbudget on supplies and services including residents place survey. £36k over recovery of income.	(151)	<b>(290)</b>
	Overview and Scrutiny	£105k underbudget on employees as a result of restructure and vacancies £34k additional income against budget.	(139)	
Policy and Communications	Policy, Communications and Public Relations	£7k overbudget on employees (fully staffed) £5k underbudget on supplies. £26k additional income for advertising.	(24)	<b>(87)</b>
	Civil Contingencies Unit and Programme Office	£60k underbudget on employees as a result of vacancies. £7k underbudget on transport. £23k underbudget on supplies. £27k under recovery of income.	(63)	
Central	Central Costs	Contribution to the Corporate Strategic Redundancy Reserve	353	<b>353</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>(84)</b>

8. In summary, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit. It should also be noted that the estimated outturn position incorporates the MTFP savings required in 2013/14 which amount to £0.653m.

### Members Neighbourhoods Revenue Budget

9. Each elected member receives an annual allocation of £20,000; £10,000 revenue and £10,000 capital. The revenue budget allocation for the current year is £1.260m. Previous years unspent allocations totalling £0.892m are held in an earmarked reserve as all spending has been committed to specific projects. At present £0.386m of the current year's budget allocation has been either spent or committed and it is expected that the remaining budget will be allocated during the 2013/14 financial year.
10. The Members' Initiative Fund Element of this budget equates to £252k based on £2k per elected member. At this stage of the year it is expected that this will be fully expended.

### AAP Area Budgets

11. Each of the 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAP) has an annual allocation of £120k to develop projects to meet the agreed AAP priorities. Combined with revenue budgets carried forward from previous years (relating to committed expenditure on agreed projects) the total revenue budget available is £2.636m. At this stage in the year a total of £2.132m has either been committed or spent and it is expected that the remaining £0.504m will be committed later in the year.

### Capital Programme

12. The ACE capital programme comprises three schemes, Assets in the Community, Members Neighbourhoods Capital and Community Facilities in Crook.
13. The Assistant Chief Executive capital programme was revised at Outturn for budget rephased from 2012/13. This increased the 2013/14 budget to £3.959m. Further reports to the MOWG in 2013/14 detailed further revisions, for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget reprofiling into later years. The revised budget now stands at **£2.231m**.
14. Summary financial performance to the end of December is shown below.

Service	Original Annual Budget 2013/14 £000	Revised Annual Budget 2013/14 £000	Actual Spend to 31 December £000	Remaining Budget £000
Assets in the Community	2,130	98	65	33
Members Neighbourhoods	1,260	2,065	567	1,498
Community Facilities Crook	569	68	56	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,959</b>	<b>2,231</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>1,543</b>

15. Officers continue to carefully monitor capital expenditure on a monthly basis and £688k of actual expenditure has been incurred to date. This is 31% of the total



estimated spend in the year. At this stage it is anticipated that the full budget will be committed in 2013/14.

16. At year end the actual outturn performance will be compared against the revised budgets and service and project managers will need to account for any budget variance.

**Recommendations:**

17. The Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

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**Contact: Azhar Rafiq – Finance Manager**

**Tel: 03000 263 480**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital projected outturn position for 2013/14.

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Crime and disorder**

None.

### **Human rights**

None.

### **Consultation**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

### **Disability Issues**

None.

### **Legal Implications**

None.

# Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27 March 2014

## Resources: Quarter 3 Revenue and Capital Forecast Outturn 2013/14



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### Report of Corporate Director – Resources

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#### Purpose of the Report

1. To provide details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2013.

#### Background

2. County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2013/14 at its meeting on 20 February 2013. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers between service groupings and budget reprofiling between years. This report covers the financial position for the following major accounts maintained by the Resources service grouping:

- *RES Revenue Budget - £23.623m (original £22.326m)*
- *RES Capital Programme – £5.267m (original £17.606m)*

3. The original Resources General Fund budget has been revised to incorporate a number of budget adjustments as follows:

- Contribution to corporate budget for electrical equipment testing -£5k
- Job Evaluation Appeals +£61k
- Contributions received for Durham Managers Programme +£17k
- Increase in Procurement Rebate income budget -£250k
- Reduction in staffing budget to reflect Purchase of Annual Leave -£75k
- Transfer of Web Development Team to ACE -£84k
- Reduction in budget to reflect employees not in pension scheme -£164k
- Use of Local Elections Reserve for May 2013 Elections +£650k
- Corporate saving for reduction in stationery budget -£23k
- Sure Start budget target for Financial Services team +£82k
- Transfer of Direct Debit admin from CAS + £5k
- Durham Manager Programme from ACE +£2k
- Transfer of Welfare Rights service from CAS +£1,084k
- 1% Pay Award for 2013/14 +£262k
- Cash Limit - Discretionary Rate Relief -£330k
- Cash Limit – Coroner’s Pay +£29k
- Corporate Funding of Redundancy Payments +£242k

- Cash Limit- Reserve contribution to Local Council Tax Support Scheme - £1,031k and Welfare Reform New Burdens Grant -£201k
- Cash Limit-Reserve contribution for Strategic Pay and Conditions +£12k
- Revision to Capital Charges +£1,014k

The revised General Fund Budget now stands at **£23.623m**.

4. The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2013/14 and show: -
- The approved annual budget;
  - The actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
  - The variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
  - For the Resources revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

### **Revenue - General Fund Services**

5. The service is reporting a cash limit spend which is £0.379m overbudget against the **£23.623m** allocation. However, this includes a contribution of £2.573m to the Council's Strategic Reserve to aid the meeting of future redundancy payments. Excluding this contribution it is forecast that spend is £2.194m underbudget (excluding Centrally Administered Costs). This is an increase of £0.512m from the previous forecast (Quarter 2) of spend of £1.682m underbudget.
6. The tables below compare the actual expenditure with the budget. The first table is analysed by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense), and the second by Head of Service.

## Subjective Analysis (in £'000s)

£'000	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Employees	41,620	30,893	40,349	(1,271)	(305)	(1,576)
Premises	349	314	317	(32)	-	(32)
Transport	1,300	643	919	(381)	-	(381)
Supplies and Services	18,159	13,561	17,869	(290)	85	(205)
Agency and Contracted	4,399	2,951	3,037	(1,362)	1,348	(14)
Central Costs	31,001	548	30,615	(386)	3,086	2,700
<b>Gross Expenditure Exc HB</b>	<b>96,828</b>	<b>48,910</b>	<b>93,106</b>	<b>(3,722)</b>	<b>4,214</b>	<b>492</b>
Income	(72,947)	(20,774)	(73,241)	(294)	45	(249)
<b>Net Expenditure Exc HB</b>	<b>23,881</b>	<b>28,136</b>	<b>19,865</b>	<b>(4,016)</b>	<b>4,259</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>HB Transfer Payments</b>	188,244	140,300	188,772	528	-	528
<b>HB Central Costs</b>	300	179	300	-	-	-
<b>HB Income</b>	(188,802)	(1,638)	(189,000)	(198)	(330)	(528)
Housing Benefit Net Expenditure	(258)	138,841	72	330	(330)	-
<b>TOTAL NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>23,623</b>	<b>166,977</b>	<b>19,937</b>	<b>(3,686)</b>	<b>3,929</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Excluding Centrally Administered Costs</b>						<b>379</b>

## Analysis by Head of Service (in £'000s)

Head of Service Grouping	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Centrally Administered Costs	3,018	1,123	1,534	(1,484)	1,348	(136)
Central Establishment Recharges	(12,674)	-	(12,674)	-	2,573	2,573
Corporate Finance	2,686	2,810	2,258	(428)	260	(168)
Financial Services	7,034	7,456	5,835	(1,199)	308	(891)
Human Resources	6,228	4,410	6,052	(176)	(27)	(203)
ICT Services	9,266	6,490	9,345	79	(200)	(121)
Internal Audit and Insurance	1,175	764	979	(196)	-	(196)
Legal & Democratic Services	6,739	4,794	6,158	(581)	(3)	(584)
Service Management	409	289	378	(31)	-	(31)
<b>Net Expenditure Excl HB</b>	<b>23,881</b>	<b>28,136</b>	<b>19,865</b>	<b>(4,016)</b>	<b>4,259</b>	<b>243</b>
Housing Benefit	(258)	138,841	72	330	(330)	-
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>23,623</b>	<b>166,977</b>	<b>19,937</b>	<b>(3,686)</b>	<b>3,929</b>	<b>243</b>
<b>Excluding Centrally Administered Costs</b>						<b>379</b>

7. The table below includes a brief commentary of the variances with the revised budget analysed into Head of Service groupings. The table identifies variances in the core budget only and excludes items outside of the cash limit (e.g. coroner's service) and technical accounting adjustments (e.g. capital charges):

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget
Centrally Administered Costs (C.A.C.)	C.A.C.	£22k underbudget for Audit Fees £30k underbudget on costs associated with raising loans £62k underbudget against bank charges/payment cards £22k underbudget on various subscriptions	(136)	(136)
Corporate Finance	Management	£49k managed underbudget against employees reflecting early achievement of 14/15 savings £21k underbudget on supplies and services available for 14/15 savings	(70)	(168)
	Financial Systems	£47k underbudget on pay as a result of holding a vacancy £15k overbudget for software	(32)	
	Procurement	£11k overbudget on employees £19k overbudget on supplies and services £65k additional income from SLAs and Community Right to Challenge Grant	(35)	
	Strategic Finance	£38k overbudget on employees( fully staffed) £15k overbudget against a range of supplies and services £84k over recovery of income for VAT work	(31)	
Financial Services	Management	£270k managed underbudget for employees reflecting early achievement of 14/15 savings £107k underbudget on supplies and services	(377)	(891)
	Financial Management	£5k underbudget on employees £3k underbudget on car allowances £38k managed underbudget against supplies and services £24k over recovery of SLA income	(70)	
	Revenues and Benefits	£326k underbudget on employees due to close management and control of vacancies pending restructure £162k underbudget on transport £380k managed overbudget on work packages £24k overbudget on supplies and services £360k over recovery of income including £10k DWP grant and £350k on court fee income	(444)	
Human Resources	Occupational Health	Minor variance	(2)	(203)
	Health and Safety	£169k underbudget on employees arising from service restructure and vacancies monitoring. £11k additional SLA income Minor variances of £13k	(193)	
	Payroll and Pensions	£55k underbudget on employees from vacant post being held open to meet future MTFP savings £22k overbudget on pensions computer software £2k minor variance	(35)	
	Human Resources	£19k increased income from payroll services to schools £46k overbudget on supplies and services	27	

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget
ICT	Design and Print	£52k underbudget on printing costs, £158k underbudget on materials and communications, and £56k underbudget on postages. Minor variance of £6k overbudget	(260)	
	ICT Services	£225k underbudget on employees pending future restructure to meet 14/15 MTFP savings. £31k underbudget on premises due to movement of staff from the Renny's Lane property £83 underbudget on transport costs £191k overbudget on supplies and services £279k under recovery of income £7k minor overbudget variance	138	(121)
Internal Audit and Risk	Insurance and Risk	£5k overbudget on employees (fully staffed)	5	
	Internal Audit	£195k underbudget on employees through close management and control of vacancies and secondments pending restructure £6k additional income from SLAs	(201)	(196)
Legal and Democratic Services	Corporate and Democratic	£33k underbudget on computer hardware £28k underbudget on subscriptions £14k underbudget on mobile phone charges £13k underbudget on Members Support Staff Vacancies £10k underbudget on Chauffeurs Service £29k underbudget on Members Travelling, including car allowances £6k underbudget on various minor variances	(133)	
	Legal Services	£344k – underbudget from the early achievement of 2014/15 MTFP Savings £60k – underbudget on employees £18k – underbudget on transport £29k of small underbudget across various headings	(451)	(584)
Service Management	Service Management	£31k rebate income generated from the arrangement with Comensura with regard to agency staff	(31)	(31)
Benefits Payments and Subsidy	Benefits	Changes under this heading are budget neutral	-	-
Central Establishment Recharges	Central Establishment Recharges	£2.573m overbudget - contribution to Strategic ER/VR and Redundancy Reserve	-	2,573
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>243</b>
				<b>379</b>
<b>Excluding Centrally Administered Costs</b>				

9. In summary, the service grouping is forecasting a cash limit spend of £0.379m overbudget (excluding Centrally Administered Costs). However, prior to the contribution of £2.573m to the Council's Strategic Reserve, to aid the meeting of future redundancy payments, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit. It should also be noted that the estimated outturn position incorporates the MTFP savings required in 2013/14, which amount to £2.137m.

## Capital Programme

10. The Resources capital programme comprises 27 schemes managed within ICT with the exception of one scheme managed in Finance.
11. The Resources capital programme was revised at Outturn for budget rephased from 2012/13 which increased the 2013/14 budget. Further reports to the MOWG during the year have detailed further revisions, for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget reprofiling into later years. The revised budget now stands at **£5.267m**.
12. Summary financial performance to the end of December 2013 is shown below.

Service	Original Annual Budget 2013/14 £000	Revised Annual Budget 2013/14 £000	Actual Spend to 31 December £000	Remaining Budget £000
Finance	-	300	295	5
ICT	17,606	4,967	2,293	2,674
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,606</b>	<b>5,267</b>	<b>2,588</b>	<b>2,679</b>

13. The revised Resources capital budget is £5.267m with a total expenditure to date of £2.588m (49%). A full breakdown of schemes and actual expenditure to December 2013 is given in Appendix 2.
14. At year end the actual outturn performance will be compared against the revised budgets and service and project managers will need to account for any budget variance.

### Recommendations:

15. The Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

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**Contact: Azhar Rafiq – Finance Manager**

**Tel: 03000 263 480**

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**Appendix 1: Implications**

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**Finance**

Financial implications are detailed throughout the report which provides an analysis of the revenue and capital projected outturn position.

**Staffing**

None.

**Risk**

None.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

None.

**Accommodation**

None.

**Crime and disorder**

None.

**Human rights**

None.

**Consultation**

None.

**Procurement**

None.

**Disability Issues**

None.

**Legal Implications**

None.

## APPENDIX 2 – Resources 2013/14 Capital Programme

Resources Capital Budgets	Revised Budget	Profiled Budget	Actual Spend to 31 Dec 2013	Remaining Budget
Oracle Development	300,000	289,261	295,275	4,725
<b>Finance Total</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>289,261</b>	<b>295,275</b>	<b>4,725</b>
.Net Application Development Architecture	50,000	25,000	0	50,000
Archiving Of Obsolete Systems Based On Non Supported Hardware	250,000	155,549	69,498	180,502
CIP Project – ICT	27,571	15,227	4,665	22,906
Telephony Replacement	21,994	21,160	77,374	(55,380)
Coco - Government Connects Secure Extranet	79,598	60,684	103,498	(23,900)
Corporate Mail Fulfilment	10,650	9,860	9,070	1,580
Councillor Replacement Of ICT Equipment	150,000	140,390	98,878	51,122
Dark Fibre Installations and Circuit/Microwave Upgrades	395,000	197,500	0	395,000
Dark Fibre Networking	283,328	185,554	152,503	130,825
Desktop Replacement	963,295	876,663	533,483	429,812
Digital Durham	11,109	5,555	0	11,109
Fibre Channel Network For Storage	60,000	58,980	53,879	6,121
GIS Architecture	60,000	30,000	0	60,000
Homeworking	6,004	6,004	6,260	(256)
ICT Business Continuity	1,119,300	807,416	752,751	366,549
ICT Vehicle Purchase 2013/14	24,881	12,440	0	24,881
Infrastructure Environmental Monitoring	216,000	112,162	8,332	207,668
Langley Park Institute Internet Provision	2,174	2,174	0	2,174
Learning Gateway	18,223	12,280	3,169	15,054
NHS Datacentres	106,752	106,752	176,063	(69,311)
Ongoing Server Replacement	110,000	101,270	57,620	52,380
Public Internet Access Portal	37,000	18,500	0	37,000
Sharepoint Architecture	58,804	32,486	6,167	52,637
Tanfield DataCentre Core Switching Replacement	175,000	110,406	66,032	108,968
Tanfield DataCentre LAN Switching Replacement	650,000	325,000	0	650,000
Voice Recording For Mitel Telephone System	80,000	80,000	113,888	(33,888)
<b>ICT Total</b>	<b>4,966,683</b>	<b>3,509,012</b>	<b>2,293,130</b>	<b>2,673,553</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,266,683</b>	<b>3,798,273</b>	<b>2,588,405</b>	<b>2,678,278</b>

**Corporate Issues Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**27 March 2014**



**Council Plan 2014-2017 -  
Refresh of the Work Programme  
for the Corporate Issues  
Scrutiny Committee**

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**Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive**

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members with information contained within the Council Plan 2014 -2017, relevant to the work of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This allows the opportunity for members to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the 4 objectives and subsequent actions identified within the Council Plan for the Council's Altogether Better Council priority theme.

**Background**

2. The current Overview and Scrutiny Committees Work Programmes for 2013 -2015 focus on the priority areas identified within the context of the Council Plan, Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.
3. In relation to the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee, Members will recall that the Work Programme for 2013-15 agreed to focus on the Medium Term Financial Plan. Further areas of focus for the Committee were added to reflect changing Government policy and at the request of Members related to performance concerns.

**Council Plan 2014- 2017**

4. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council, which covers a four year period and is updated on an annual basis. The plan sets out the corporate priorities for improvement and the key actions the Authority will take in delivering the long term goals in the Sustainable Community Strategy (2014-2030). Attached at Appendix 2 is the Altogether Better Council section of the Council Plan for members' consideration.
5. The Council's Altogether Better Council priority theme links to the work of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee containing the enablers that allow the council to effectively manage change and deliver improvement across the other themes within the Council Plan. It is imperative that delivery is made against these objectives which are increasingly important in times of significant change.

6. To help improve the performance of the Council, there are 4 objectives for an Altogether Better Council, underpinned by 11 outcomes:
- Putting the customer first:
    - A range of access routes to services
    - Responsive and customer focused services
    - People are treated fairly and differences respected.
  - Working with our communities:
    - Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with
    - Effective partnership working
    - The effects of the welfare reform agenda are managed.
  - Effective use of resources
    - A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities
    - Council assets are optimised and information managed
    - Efficient and effective services.
  - Support our people through change:
    - Employee and member well-being
    - A strategic approach to organisational development.
7. The Council Plan also identifies a series of high level action plans detailing the work which needs to be undertaken by the Authority in order to deliver the outcomes identified above (see Appendix 2 attached).

### **Current Work Programme**

8. During 2013, Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, in-depth and light touch Scrutiny Reviews, systematic 6 monthly reviews of progress against recommendations and overview presentations in relation to the following areas:

#### **In depth Scrutiny Reviews**

- Budget and MTFP process  
*(Objective: Effective use of resources: A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7)*

#### **Systematic reviews of progress against recommendations**

- Postal Services within Durham County Council  
*(Objective: Effective use of resources - Efficient and effective services ABC 9)*
- Telephones  
*(Objective: Putting the Customer First - A range of access routes to services ABC 1; Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2; People are treated fairly and differences respected ABC 3)*
- Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future (O/S Review of AAPs ) – final sign off of recommendations  
*(Objective: Working with our communities – Communities and Stakeholders are engaged and communicated with ABC 4)*

## Areas of Overview Activity

- ICT Strategy Update  
(Objective: *Effective use of resources – Efficient and effective services ABC 9*)
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000  
(Objective – *Effective use of resources*)
- Welfare Reform Updates  
(Objective: *Working with our communities - The effects of the welfare reform agenda are managed ABC 6*)
- Customer First Strategy (refresh)  
(Objective: *Putting the Customer First – A range of access routes to services ABC 1; Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2; People are treated fairly and differences respect ABC 3*)
- Asset Management Strategy (including Accommodation Strategy)  
(Objective: *Effective use of resources – Council assets are optimised and information managed ABC 8*)
- Direct Services  
(Objective: *Effective use of resources – Council assets are optimised and information managed ABC 8*)
- Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Reports  
(Objective: *Putting the Customer First – People are treated fairly and differences respected ABC 2*)

## Budgetary and performance monitoring

- Quarterly budgetary and performance monitoring for ACE and Resources.  
(Objective: *Effective use of resources - A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7*)

## Areas for consideration in the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

9. Having considered the Altogether Better Council section of the Council Plan for 2014 - 2017 it is suggested that the following action areas could be considered in the update of the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee work programme (where they already link to the current work programme this is highlighted):

### **Putting the customer first** – the high level action plan includes:

- Adoption of the new Customer First Strategy (on the CIOSC work programme) – a Task and Finish Group of CIOSC Members was set up in January 2014 to look at this, working with officers from Neighbourhood Services.
- Improved customer access to online services – this will be considered by the Task and Finish Group details above, and also as part of quarterly performance monitoring.

- Improve Complaints reporting and monitoring – CIOSC receive quarterly Customer Feedback reports, and the annual CAS Representations report.
- Strengthen integration of equality and diversity requirements to support effective decision making – CIOSC has input into the MTFP and savings planning process.
- **Working with our communities** - the high level action plan includes:
  - Support better use of community buildings and the wider asset transfer approach – Corporate Asset Management Plan and Property Strategy and also the Community Buildings Strategy is on the CIOSC work programme.
  - Improve partnership working with the VCS and Town and Parish Councils – this is on the CIOSC work programme for an update to a future meeting.
  - Increase the level of external funding attracted – regular updates on the Area Action partnerships will be presented to CIOSC, and remains an ongoing item on the work programme.
- **Effective use of resources.** The council continues to meet the challenges of achieving substantial savings. Extensive public consultation exercises have been carried out to take into account the requirements of the residents of County Durham. It is not likely there will be any let-up in funding reductions for the foreseeable future, the council will therefore continue to plan for and manage any further changes as required.
- Quarterly corporate performance reports are presented to CIOSC, and this is a rolling item on the CIOSC work programme.

The high level action plan includes:

- Develop the 2015-2016 – 2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan – this is on the CIOSC work programme.
- Deliver and complete the current accommodation programme for council buildings – this is considered by CIOSC as part of the Corporate Asset Management Plan and Property Strategy, and is ongoing on the work programme.
- **Support our people through organisational change** – the high level action plan states:
  - Workforce Development Planning: Develop a strategic approach towards workforce development planning that ensures adequate support for managers in relation to progressing planned MTFP savings and meeting future business needs – CIOSC receive regular updates on the MTFP, but may wish to consider the wider action in relation to their work programme.

## Next Steps

11. The current Committee work programme was devised for a two year period, 2013 - 2015 and therefore this provides the ideal opportunity for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee to consider refreshing its work programme for 2014-2016 within the context of the Council Plan.
12. The Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the appropriate section from the Council Plan, Appendix 2 (copy attached) to inform the Committee work programme for 2014-2016, reflecting on the current work programme detailed in paragraphs 8 and 9 above.
13. Members will receive a further report at the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee on 7 July 2014 confirming/agreeing the Committee's work programme for 2014-2016 based on today's discussion and agreement.

### **Recommendations**

14. That the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee notes the information contained in the Council Plan 2014-2017, Altogether Better Council theme (copy attached at Appendix 2).
15. That the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee refreshes the work programme for 2013 - 2015 by discussing and considering those actions identified under the Altogether Better Council priority theme of the Council Plan 2014 - 2015, as in paragraph 9.
16. That the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 July 2014 receives a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2014 - 2016.

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**Contact:** Jenny Haworth      Tel: 03000 268071

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

The Council Plan sets out the corporate priorities of the Council for the next 3 years. The Medium Term Financial Plan aligns revenue and capital investment to priorities within the Council Plan.

### **Staffing**

The Council's strategies are being aligned to achievement of the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

### **Risk**

Consideration of risk is a key element in the corporate and service planning framework with both the Council Plan and Service Plans containing sections on risk management.

### **Equality and diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty**

Individual equality impact assessments have been prepared for each savings proposal within the Medium-Term Financial Plan which also underpins the Council Plan. In addition a full impact assessment has previously been undertaken for the Council Plan. The actions in the Council Plan include specific issues relating to equality and aim to improve the equality of life for those with protected characteristics.

### **Accommodation**

The Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan is aligned to the corporate priorities contained within the Council Plan.

### **Crime and disorder**

The Altogether Safer section of the Council Plan sets out the Council's contributions to tackling crime and disorder.

### **Human rights**

The priorities and actions in the Council Plan are in line with relevant articles of the Human Rights Act, for example, many of the actions support the right to family life.

### **Consultation**

Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including consultation carried out as part of the development of the interim Sustainable Community Strategy and this has been reaffirmed by subsequent consultation on the budget. Results have been taken into account in developing our resourcing decisions.

### **Procurement**

None.

### **Disability Issues**

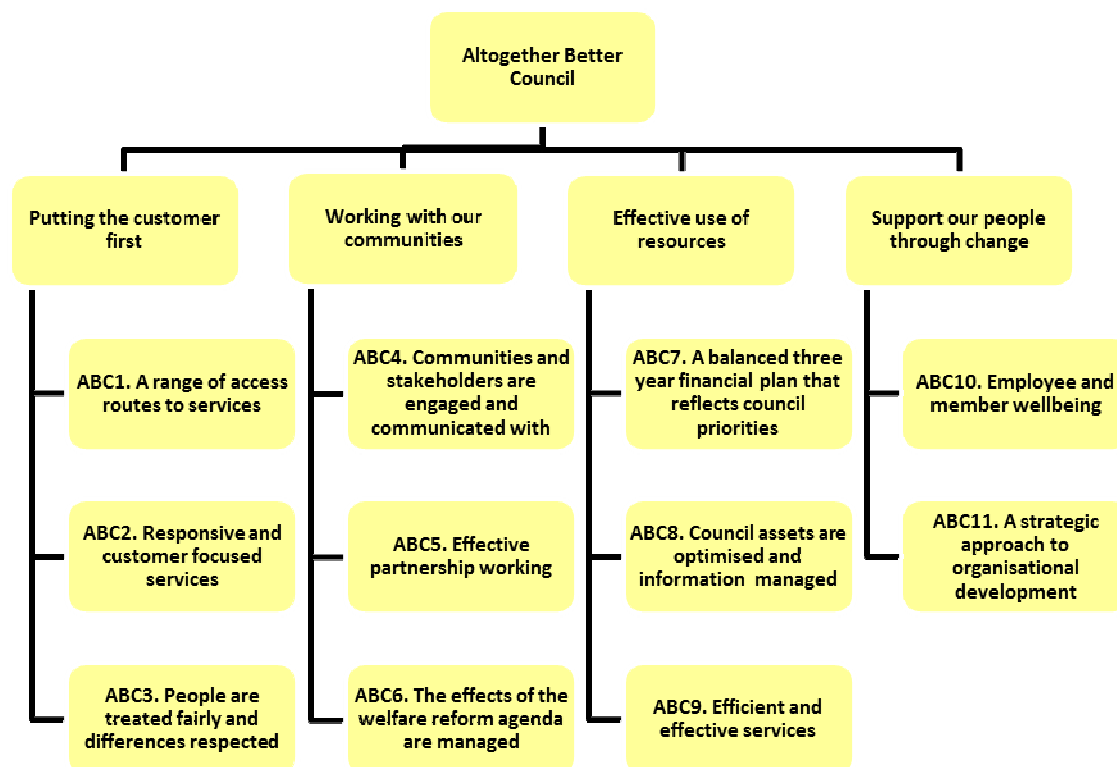
See equality and diversity implications above.

### **Legal Implications**

None.



# Altogether Better Council



The Altogether Better Council priority theme looks at those things that enable us to effectively manage change and deliver improvement across the other themes within this plan. Our plans in this area are structured round four key objectives of serving our customers effectively, working with our communities, using our resources in an effective manner and supporting both councillors and employees through change. These are important areas and they relate to all services within the council. Achieving these objectives is increasingly important in times of significant change.

## 1. Putting the customer first

Providing good customer service remains of paramount importance. This is why we have revised our Customer First Strategy to reflect changing needs. Residents and customers pay for the services that we deliver through their taxes and through fees and charges. We need to understand what services our customers want from their local council and ensure that they have a say in the shaping of services delivered to them. Increasingly, people want to do their business with the council at a time and place which is convenient to them. Many people are comfortable with booking tickets for the cinema, paying bills or reporting a fault online either using a computer or through their mobile phone. It is more cost effective for the council and the customer to divert much of the business transacted with customers to online delivery channels. The council's new Customer First Strategy will set out how we intend to further improve how we deliver services to our customers.

### Going well

- We have added 25 more venues to the current 1000 buildings in County Durham listed on the DisabledGo website [www.disabledgo.com](http://www.disabledgo.com) including access information for disabled residents and visitors.
- New Customer Access Point including a library service, at the Witham, Barnard Castle.
- Joint working with Cestria Housing, resulting in a co-located Customer Access Point in Chester-le-Street town centre.

### Cause for concern

- Some key council services still cannot be accessed online.
- Increased demand for some services as a result of the economic downturn and changes to the welfare system.

### Did you know?

- Each year our Customer Services Team, answer more than one million telephone enquiries and deal with almost 333,000 face to face enquiries.
- You can apply for housing benefit or council tax support online.
- You can report potholes, blocked drains and street lighting issues online through our website.

### Look out for:

- Our new Customer First Strategy.
- Ongoing quarterly editions of County Durham News and the annual service guide.
- Web-based search and pay facility for bereavement records (including grave, burial and headstone information).
- E-billing for council tax and business rates bills.

## High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Adoption of new Customer First Strategy	Head of Projects and Business Services	July 2014
Improved customer access to online services		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New website to improve access to customer information and services</li> </ul>		May 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the way in which we capture data from our customers in order to streamline service delivery and develop better customer insight</li> </ul>		September 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase online transactions</li> </ul>		Dec 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make it easier for customers to contact the council by reducing telephone numbers through an integrated approach</li> </ul>		March 2017
<p>Improve complaints reporting and monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Corporate Complaints Pilots to inform revised process</li> </ul>	Head of Policy & Communications	June 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Customer Complaints process</li> </ul>		March 2015
<p>Strengthen integration of equality and diversity requirements to support effective decision making by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing the process to ensure that equality and diversity implications are considered in all procurement and commissioning contracts</li> </ul>	Head of Planning and Performance	Sept 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that decisions relating to making future financial savings take account of the impact on those groups protected under equality legislation</li> </ul>		March 2015

## 2. Working with our communities

Effective engagement with local residents has been a major focus for Durham County Council since local government reorganisation. Our 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) across the county are key to achieving this. To date, just under £21 million has been awarded to local communities through AAPs, attracting an additional £34 million in

matched funding. As a council we believe that it is important to involve communities in making major decisions on the future of local services and let people have a say about their local communities. Our nationally recognised work on participatory budgeting through the 'Your Money, Your Choice' events held in 2013 involved nearly 10,700 people, allocating £449,000 to 120 projects. Over 3,300 people participated in our consultation on the council's budget with 1,300 taking part in our financial prioritisation exercise. The public have also played a major part in deciding on the future of a range of services from community buildings to leisure centres.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 heralded some of the largest policy changes introduced by the current government. Areas with a history of heavy industry have a larger proportion of the population with a disability and who are dependent on benefits. The government's welfare reforms have had a significant impact on County Durham. The council has been working in partnership with housing providers and the voluntary and community sector to help residents most affected by the changes to the benefits system.

The government's reductions in public sector spending have meant that we have had to make large spending reductions across our whole range of services. Other public sector organisations have also been affected by the savings requirements. In these times it has been critical to maintain a focus on effective partnership working, in particular working through the County Durham Partnership to ensure continued integrated delivery of public services across the county. It is also important that we protect insofar as possible vulnerable people. We continue to assess the potential impact of all our spending plans on those people who characteristics are protected by equalities legislation and identify what we can do to reduce these impacts.

### **Going well**

- Our ongoing work with the voluntary sector and local Town and Parish Councils.
- Over 10,000 voted in the 'Your Money, Your Choice' participatory budgeting exercises, allocating £449,000 to 120 community projects.
- Just over 3,300, or about one in three people, also gave us their views on our medium term financial plan including 1,300 who took part in the financial prioritisation game.

### **Cause for concern**

- County Durham has a high proportion of low income and benefit dependent families and is therefore more affected than other parts of the country by changes to the welfare system.
- Government spending reductions mean that financial support for voluntary and community groups will have to be continually reviewed like all areas of council spending.

### **Did you know?**

- We have 14 Area Action Partnerships covering the whole county. These are used by the council to engage with residents. Anyone can get involved. More

information is available at [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

- Any member of the public can take part in our online consultations through our website. Last year we ran consultation exercises on a range of issues including street lighting, garden waste collections, taxis in Durham city, school crossing patrols, provision of play parks and the council's budget.
- We staged 20 'Your Money, Your Choice' consultation events across the county, working with parish councils and the community and voluntary sector through our network of 14 Area Action Partnerships.
- We were short-listed for Council of the Year in Local Government Chronicle Awards 2014

#### Look out for:

- The new Sustainable Community Strategy 2014 – 2030 setting out the County Durham Partnership and Council's long term vision for the county, to be published in April 2014.
- The new look Durham County Council website which will go live in April 2014.
- World War I Centenary project – interactive map of commemorative sites and information.

## High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Support better use of community buildings and the wider asset transfer approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain agreement for council owned community buildings to asset transfer, close or formally agree alternative individual building strategies with Cabinet</li> </ul>	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	December 2014
Improve partnership working with the VCS and Town and Parish Councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree a volunteering action plan</li> </ul>	Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement	May 2014

<p>to improve co-ordination and outcomes for volunteers, clients and host organisations</p>		October 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop on-the-shelf projects for VCS funding.</li> </ul>		March 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote increased input of Town and Parish Councils in participatory budgeting exercises and Asset transfer programmes for community facilities</li> </ul>		
<p>Increase the level of external funding attracted:</p>	<p>Head of Partnerships and Community Engagement</p>	Sept 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a community led local development structure to maximise involvement of AAPs to increase resources for local actions</li> </ul>		Sept 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review current approach to use of AAP resources to maximise degree of matched funding</li> </ul>		Sept 2014
<p>Completion and monitoring of all risk and project plans, and compliance with the Electoral Commission's performance standards for the following elections:</p>	<p>Head of Legal and Democratic Services</p>	<p>June 2014 May 2015</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Union Elections</li> <li>• Parliamentary Elections</li> </ul>		
<p>Individual Electoral Registration Prepare to implement Individual Electoral Registration in line with government guidance and deadlines</p>	<p>Head of Legal and Democratic Services</p>	December 2014
<p>Work with communities to commemorate the centenary of WWI</p>	<p>Head of Culture and Sport</p>	March 2015

2014-2018 by developing a programme of events in partnership with AAP's.		
Review of the Local Council tax Support Scheme for 2015/16: Undertake a review of the LCTSS adopted 01 April 2013 and extended into 2014/15	Head of Finance (Financial Services)	March 2015
Programme manage a series of projects and activities to ensure that the changes identified through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 are fully understood, administered effectively and communicated to residents, stakeholders and other specific groups	Head of Policy and Communications	March 2015

### 3. Effective use of resources

Like all public services, we have had to plan for and cope with a shrinking public purse since 2010. Against an initial plan to save £125 million over four years, from 2011 we have delivered just under £114 million by 31 March 2014 and are on track to meet our target. In line with our strategy, 64 percent of savings have been made from non-frontline services and 29 percent through rationalising management. Our plans have been informed by extensive public consultation in 2010 and again recently in 2013. Balancing the books has meant taking some tough decisions such as on the restructuring of residential care, waste management, refuse collection, home to school transport, libraries and indoor leisure provision. We have worked with communities to protect them as far as possible from funding reductions. Five leisure facilities have been transferred into community ownership and we are currently at an advanced stage in transferring 120 community buildings too.

Recent government announcements show that it is unlikely that there will be any let-up in funding reductions in the foreseeable future. We will continue to plan for and manage any further changes as required.

#### Going well

- The council has delivered or is on track to achieve savings identified in our financial plans for 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14
- The council continue to develop sub-county information to better understand the local communities and help identify and tackle disadvantage and target resources.
- Our accounting systems continue to be improved to provide more user friendly financial information to allow service managers to manage their own budgets.
- Processing performance in the Benefits Team and in-year recovery rates for council tax, business rates, and sundry debts are all improving.

- The statutory value for money conclusion made by our auditors identified that the council has robust arrangements in place to secure financial resilience.
- The county and Parish elections held in May 2013 were well managed.

### **Cause for concern**

- Evidence has been presented to the government showing that local authorities with greater levels of deprivation have had to face greater funding reductions than more affluent areas. Despite this, the funding formula for local government has not been changed for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial settlements.

### **Did you know?**

- We successfully handled 1,368 requests for information made under the Freedom of Information Act or the Environmental Information Regulations over the last year.
- Our ICT Service supports over 30,000 desktops for internal and external customers, over 1000 servers and over 800 buildings.
- The council manages £2bn of investments on behalf of the Durham County Council Pension Fund.
- The council's ICT service brings in £6million worth of income from external customers.
- The council is the largest social landlord in Durham with owning around 40% of all social properties generating £60m rental income.
- There are 236,000 residential properties in County Durham with a gross Council tax liability of £266m and over 80% are in the lowest bands A to C.

### **Look out for:**

- Quarterly corporate performance reports to Cabinet, setting out latest information on the council's performance.
- Digital Durham, an ambitious programme to provide superfast broadband access to all homes, businesses and communities, starts in spring 2014.
- On-line access to Council Tax Accounts, Business Rates Benefits and e-billing, e-reminder functionality from April 2014.



## High level Action Plan

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Develop the 2015-2016 -2017/18 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 5)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-ordination of Service Grouping proposals for additional MTFP savings and Capital Bidding</li> </ul>	Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) /Head of Policy & Communications/Head of Finance (Financial Services)	October 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyse and report upon the impact of Budget announcements and Finance Settlements</li> </ul>	Head of Finance (Corporate Finance)	April 2014 & December 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to deliver robust monitoring of delivery of MTFP savings programme</li> </ul>	Head of Policy & Communications	Quarterly through to March 2017
Improve data protection arrangements regarding customer data sharing:	Head of Planning and Performance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A rolling programme of data protection audits, eg, records storage and procurement clauses.</li> </ul>		May 2015
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the use of Privacy Impact Assessments for regular data sharing.</li> </ul>		March 2015
Deliver and complete the current accommodation programme for council buildings	Head of Economic Development & Housing	November 2015

### 4. Support our people through change

The Authority is continuing to undergo significant change in relation to the workforce over the medium term, due to the challenge we face in having to find savings as a result of reductions in government grant support. The council's original estimate in 2011 of 1,950 reductions in posts by the end of 2014/15 is still expected to be accurate. Further work will be carried out over the forthcoming year to estimate the impact of further reductions on posts up to 2016/17.

Expressions of interest in early retirement, voluntary redundancy and flexible working continue to be invited from all employees from across the council in order to minimise the impact on compulsory redundancies in meeting the significant savings that are required. We will continue to engage with the workforce in helping us to manage and implement the necessary changes, alongside developing strategic workforce development plans that can support the development of skills and capacity in a continually changing workforce, in order to support the future needs of the organisation over this period.

**Going well** 

- An induction programme successfully delivered to all newly elected councillors.
- The Durham Manager programme was successfully launched.
- Introduction of an Attendance Management Framework across the council to effectively manage sickness absence.
- Continued reduction in the number of accidents and health and safety reportable incidents.

**Cause for concern** 

- Reductions in organisational capacity together with increasing levels of demand for many council services.
- Industrial relations in the light of continuing budget reductions.

**Did you know?**

- Since the launch of the new Mental Health and Wellbeing policy, approximately 50 line managers have accessed the Managers Competency Indicator Tool (MCIT) to assist with management of stress in the workplace.

**Look out for:**

- Changes to Local Government Pension Scheme affecting 17,000 employees.
- A new Council Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy launched in Feb/Mar 2014.

**High level Action Plan**

Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Workforce Development Planning: Develop a strategic approach towards workforce development planning that ensures adequate support for managers in relation to progressing		

planned MTFP savings and meeting future business needs:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Modernise process for management of starters/leavers and changes</li> </ul>	Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	Sept 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify critical roles and occupational groupings and put plans in place to ensure that the potential to recruit in these areas is increased</li> </ul>	Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	March 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and promote existing policies and initiatives that support effective workforce management i.e. Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy, Establishment Control</li> </ul>	Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	March 2016
Improve the level and quality of appraisals undertaken across the council with a view to increasing individual and organisational performance	Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	March 2015
Improving Attendance (By reducing sickness absence)  Provide support to services and implement actions to improve attendance and the management of sickness absence and associated costs.	Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development	March 2015

