



Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Monday 7 July 2014
Time 9.30 am
Venue Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham

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 27 March 2014. (Pages 1 - 8)
5. Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 4 2013/14 (Pages 9 - 12)
Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
6. Quarter 4 2013/14 Performance Management Report (Pages 13 - 34)
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
7. Customer feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Year End Report 2013/14 (Pages 35 - 52)
Report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services.
8. Creditor Payment Performance 2013/14 (Pages 53 - 58)
Report of the Corporate Director Resources.
9. Refresh of the Work Programme 2014/15 for the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 59 - 66)
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
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
27 June 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, A Shield, T Smith,
P Stradling, L Taylor, A Turner, M Wilkes, S Wilson and R Young

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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 1A, County Hall, Durham** on **Thursday 27 March 2014 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Alvey, J Armstrong, L Armstrong, G Bleasdale, P Crathorne, K Henig (Vice-Chairman), J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, P McCourt, A Shield, T Smith, P Stradling, L Taylor and S Wilson

1 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Buckham.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 19 February 2014 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

The Head of Planning and Performance, Assistant Chief Executives (ACE), Jenny Haworth asked Members to note that the report "Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future" – A Review of Durham County Council's Area Action Partnerships (Minute 7, 19 February 2014 refers) would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board at its meeting on 28 April 2014.

5 Quarter 3 2013/14 Performance Management Report

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Improvement Manager, ACE, Tom Gorman who was in attendance to speak to Members in relation to the Quarter 3, 2013/14 Performance Management Report (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillors noted that some of the key achievements in Quarter 3 included: the number of telephone calls being answered within 3 minutes being ahead of target; the processing of Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims being ahead of target; the

average number of days lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent (FTE) having reduced from the previous quarter; and the total tenant rent arrears for Durham City Homes (DCH) had fallen and was now ahead of target, albeit there was a 2 week rent-free period in December that could have contributed to the improvement in the figures.

Members noted progress with Council Plan actions, compliance with the Public Service Network Code of Connection (PSN CoCo) and the Digital Durham Programme.

It was added that key performance issues going forward included: payment of supplier invoices within 30 days, at 91% below a target of 92%; Employee appraisals completed and recorded across the Council being at 73.3% below a target of 80%; and the percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within 20 days being at 80%, below target and national standard of 85%.

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Improvement Manager and asked Members for their questions on the report.

Councillors asked questions relating to: having the number, in addition to percentages relating to employees sickness, broken down by short, medium and long term and the types of sickness, looking at trends/underlying causes; the pressure on staff after redundancies are made, increased workloads and the types of support offered; identifying cancer within sickness reporting, in understanding patterns of long term sickness; trigger points for referral to Occupational Health and whether this was an in-house service; patterns within sickness absence figures to identify any specific issues or groups, noted as a potential topic for review by the Committee; and the management of absence, how return to work interviews were scheduled and how employees were monitored upon "reporting in sick".

The Policy, Performance and Planning Manager, Resources, Bev Stobbart noted that the numbers of employees could be provided in addition to percentages and that monitoring of sickness used percentages to help identify trends and work was ongoing with colleagues from Human Resources (HR) at Attendance Management Groups. It was added that management offered support to staff, with courses such as change management and counselling offered where appropriate.

The Policy, Performance and Planning Manager explained that the 12 categories of sickness as recorded was based upon a nationally agreed list of the Local Government Employers (LGE) and these were the categories programmed into the recording software.

It was explained that the Occupational Health service was provided in-house by DCC with referrals being after a trigger of 20 days, or sooner if deemed appropriate and in line with advice from HR. Members added that information as regards the percentage of staff returning to work before trigger points may be useful for Members. The Head of Planning and Performance noted this was a different breakdown of figures and could be looked at. The Policy, Performance and Planning Manager added that figures could be broken down in a myriad of ways as Members required. It was added that the system as regards return to work interviews was in effect automatic, once a period of sickness was inputted into the system managers would be given an alert to remind them of the requirement for an

interview to take place and should the interview still not be undertaken and recorded the issue would be escalated to the next level of management.

The Policy, Performance and Planning Manager explained that the approach was flexible in conducting interviews with staff on long term sickness, with managers meeting with those staff at times and venues appropriate to their circumstances. Members were reminded that e-mail or text message were not appropriate methods of contact as regards reporting sickness, a manager must be contacted by telephone, then information is recorded into the MyView system.

The Committee asked additional questions in relation to: invoices not paid within 30 days, whether the invoices were incorrectly presented; communication between the Authority and Suppliers as regards template invoices and systems in place; whether the below target response to FOI requests was a resource issue; and comparing like-for-like figures, for example percentages of Council Tax collected, not cumulative figures compared to year end forecasts.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager, Resources, Ian Ferguson explained that several small issues had been identified in the move to new software used for invoices and payments, including ensuring that invoice templates being used by suppliers matched those being used by the system, for example suppliers with more than one address/site, and that the software company had provided on-site support to address issues. It was explained that suppliers were contacted as regards providing correct invoices and purchase orders so that they could be matched up within the system to ensure prompt payment. It was added that information as regards resolution of issues could be reported back to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Head of Planning and Performance noted that like-for-like data regarding Council Tax Collection and Business Rates would be provided for Members for the next meeting. The Head of Planning and Performance added that in respect of FOI requests, there had been an increase in the number of requests. It was explained that the resource in dealing with FOI request remained the same and the complexity of requests appeared to be increasing, with 18 hours of officers' time per request being allowed under regulations. Members were asked to note that many neighbouring Local Authorities were not hitting targets for FOI responses, however, a positive point to note was that the quality of the information being provided was high, evidenced by the low number of challenges from the Information Commissioners' Office (ICO).

Members commended Officers as regards the success of customer service improvements, most specifically telephone calls being answered within 3 minutes. The Head of Projects and Business Services, Neighbourhood Services, Alan Patrickson thanked Members and noted that staff had worked very hard over the last 12 months to make a number of "small-gains" that in total added up to improved performance

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

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

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which provided details for each service grouping in relation to both statutory and non-statutory complaints, compliments and suggestions received in Quarter 3 2013/14 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Projects and Business Services proceeded to provide detail regarding complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the council during Quarter 3, 2013/14 and it was reported that between 1 October 2013 and 31 December 2013, 707 non-statutory complaints, 299 compliments and 58 suggestions were received. It was added that there was steady improvement from Quarter 1 to Quarter 3, noting an increase in Stage 2 complaints. It was further reported that analysis of the data for the quarter showed that the highest number of complaints received overall were due to refuse and recycling, changes to household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) and the Revenue and Benefits Service. Section 2 of the report provided in depth detail for each service grouping and the Head of Projects and Business Services provided a summary against each, highlighting key data for the quarter. Detail was also reported in respect of Local Government Ombudsman current activity.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Projects and Business Services and asked Members for their questions on the report.

Councillor L Armstrong commented as regards the table on page 25 of the report, specifically that the figure for complaints received by Children and Adults Services (CAS) up to Quarter 3 2013/14 was 49, higher than the full year figure for 2012/13 of 33. Councillor L Armstrong added that the figure for Quarter 3, for CAS, was set out in the table as 24 however it was set out on at paragraph 18 as 20. The Head of Projects and Business Services noted that the figure at paragraph 18 was a typographical error, the table on page 25 being correct with a figure of 24. Councillor L Armstrong noted that the CAS Quarter 3 figure for 2013/14 was at least 5 times higher than the Quarter 3 figure for 2012/13.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

7 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2013/14

The Committee considered two reports, the first of the Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) and the second of the Corporate Director, Resources which provided details of the forecast outturn budget position highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position at the end of December 2013 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Accountant, Peter Dowkes provided a summary report for the Assistant Chief Executive's service grouping detailing the analysis by Head of Service and highlighting significant variances in the core budget. Councillor J Armstrong asked what the £34,000 additional income against Overview and Scrutiny referred to. The Principal Accountant noted that this was in reference to a grant relating to the Police and Crime Panel.

Councillors noted that the overall position, after taking into account Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings, was for a forecasted year-end underspend of £84,000.

The second report related to the Resources service grouping and an analysis by Head of Service was provided alongside those significant variances to the core budget. Members noted that there were underspends in respect of Audit fees; bank costs; and within Financial Services an underspend as regards early MTFP savings relating to employees within Revenues and Benefits. It was added that there were underspends as regards HR, ICT, and Legal and Democratic Services, relating to early MTFP savings.

The Chairman thanked the Principal Accountant and asked Members for their questions on the report.

Councillor N Martin asked for further details as regards capital programme overspends set out on page 56 of the report: telephony replacement; Coco – Government Connects Secure Extranet; homeworking; NHS Datacentres; and Voice Recording for Mitel Telephone System. The Principal Accountant agreed to provide a response to the Councillor.

Resolved:

That the content of the reports be noted.

8 Council Plan - Refresh of the Work Programme for Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman asked the Head of Planning and Performance to speak to Members in relation to report on the Refresh of the Work Programme for the Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Planning and Performance explained that the report set out information as contained within the relevant sections of the Council Plan 2014-17 reflecting the 4 objectives and subsequent actions identified for the “Altogether Better Council” priority theme. It was added that this was the initial opportunity for Members to input into the Work Programme for the Committee, with the final draft to come back to Committee in July for further comments and ratification.

The Committee noted the 4 objectives were: putting the customer first; working with our communities; effective use of resources; and support our people through change. Councillors were reminded of the work that had been previously undertaken by the Committee in relation to: the budget and MTFP process; Postal Services; Telephones; and Area Action Partnerships (AAPs). It was added that in addition to the in depth and systematic reviews, there were several areas of overview activity, namely: ICT Strategy; Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA); Welfare Reform; Customer First Strategy; Asset Management Strategy; Direct Services; Customer Feedback; and the quarterly budget and performance monitoring reports.

The Head of Planning and Performance noted the rolling work programme including the ongoing Customer First Task and Finish Group and highlighted a potential topic within the

objective “supporting our people through organisational change” of Workforce Development Planning.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Planning and Performance and asked Members for their questions and comments as regards the report.

Councillor J Armstrong noted that the MTFP was an area of major focus for the Committee and that early involvement of Overview and Scrutiny allowed for proactive involvement. Councillor J Armstrong added that Councillor R Bell had mentioned at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board “fairness of funding” and noted that County Durham had not been classed as a rural county by Government, accordingly “rural proofing” would be important. Councillor J Armstrong added that as a caring Local Authority, continued emphasis would need to be given to change management, succession planning and career paths within the Authority.

Councillor N Martin reiterated previous comments as regards the information as presented within the regular quarterly Performance Reports relating to sickness absence and the need to look at the topic in order to have benefits for both staff and taxpayers, looking at best practice within other Local Authorities and organisations. Councillor N Martin added that another area the Committee had highlighted was the payment of invoices within 30 days and suggested a light touch review with a small Working Group, reporting back to the Committee accordingly, could be a sensible approach.

Councillor J Armstrong noted that capacity to carry out a number of reviews would need to be taken into account, ensuring that there was some capacity in place should a pressing matter need to be addressed by the Committee.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor K Henig took the opportunity to thank Officers for their work over the previous year, commending the workshop looking at Performance Indicators, undertaken earlier in the process as per Members’ request. Councillor K Henig added that the review of Customer Services was welcomed and that the issue of asset transfer to the community was an area for the Committee to be aware of. Councillor J Armstrong noted that seminars giving information to the public as regards possible community building transfers would be important and Councillor P Stradling added that how the information was communicated would be key.

Resolved:

- (i) That the information within the Council Plan 2014-17, Altogether Better Council priority theme be noted.
- (ii) That the Work Programme be refreshed as discussed, taking into account the actions identified under the Altogether Better Council priority theme of the Council Plan 2014-17.
- (iii) That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a further report detailing the Work Programme for the Committee 2014-16 at its meeting to be held 7 July 2014.

9 Customer First Task and Finish Group - Progress Update

The Chairman asked the Head of Planning and Performance to give a verbal update in relation to the Customer First Task and Finish Group.

The Head of Planning and Performance reminded Members that the Task and Finish Group had met 4 times and was making good progress, having received a demonstration of the new website for the Council and noted issues of: Strategy; the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system; access channels; the use of social media and service standards. Councillors noted that there would be site visits organised in April and also there would be work undertaken in relation to benchmarking DCC against other comparable organisations, and looking at examples of best practice.

Members were reminded that the final draft of the report would be brought back to the Committee in June and that Members could provide any further comments via the Chairman or Overview and Scrutiny Officers.

Resolved:

That the update be noted.

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**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

7 July 2014

**Report on the Council's use of powers
under the Regulation of Investigatory
Powers Act 2000 – Quarter 4 2013/14**



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

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 January 2014 until 31 March 2014 to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

Background

2. As members are aware, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) enables local authorities to carry out certain types of surveillance activity provided that specified procedures are followed. The Local Authority is able to rely upon the information obtained from those surveillance activities within court proceedings.
3. This report gives details of RIPA applications that have been authorised during the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014.

Quarter 4 Activity

4. During the reporting quarter there have been 3 new RIPA directed surveillance authorisations. The authorisations related to surveillance operations conducted by Trading Standards regarding test purchases to detect the underage sales of alcohol or tobacco, the sale of illicit cigarettes and tobacco and underage sales of alcohol and tobacco.

5. There were no difficulties or issues raised by the Magistrate in approving the applications.
6. The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during the quarter is consistent with the Council's policy and the policy remains fit for purpose.

Recommendations and Reasons

7. It is recommended that members receive the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2014 and resolve that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

Background Papers

None

Contact: Clare Burrows**Tel: 03000 260548**

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance: None

Staffing: None

Equality and Diversity: None

Accommodation: None

Crime and Disorder: The appropriate use of an oversight of RIPA powers will enable the Council to provide evidence to support appropriate prosecutions and tackle crime.

Human Rights: None

Consultation: None

Procurement: None

Disability Discrimination Act: None

Legal Implications: None

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**Corporate Issues
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

7 July 2014



**Quarter 4 2013/14
Performance Management Report**

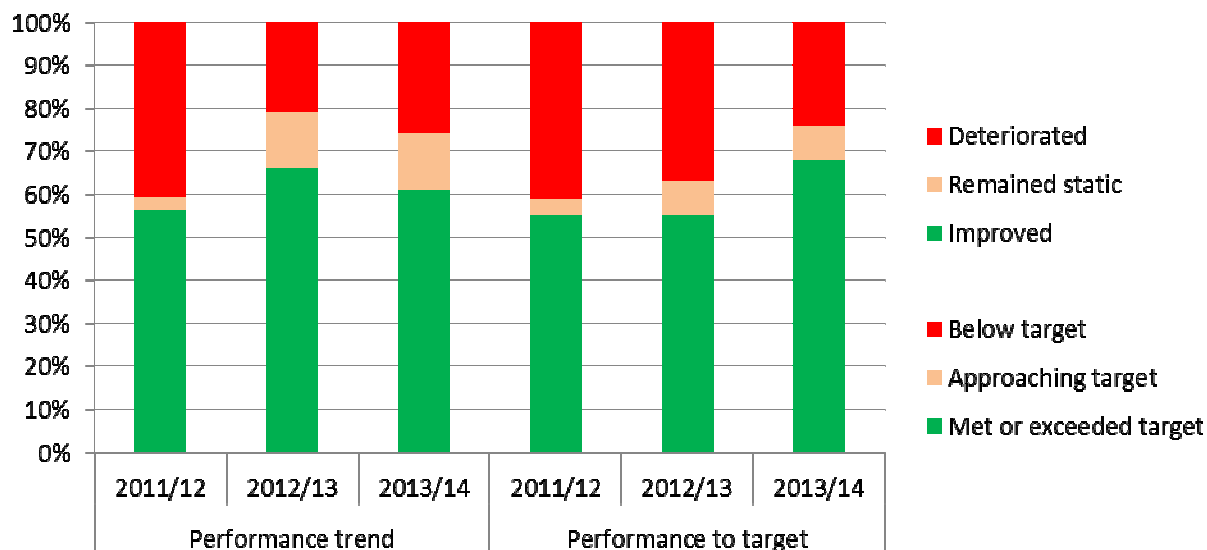
**Report of Corporate Management Team
Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive
Councillor Simon Henig, Leader**

Purpose of the Report

1. To present progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators (PIs) for the Altogether Better Council theme and report other significant performance issues for the 2013/14 financial year.

Overall Council Performance

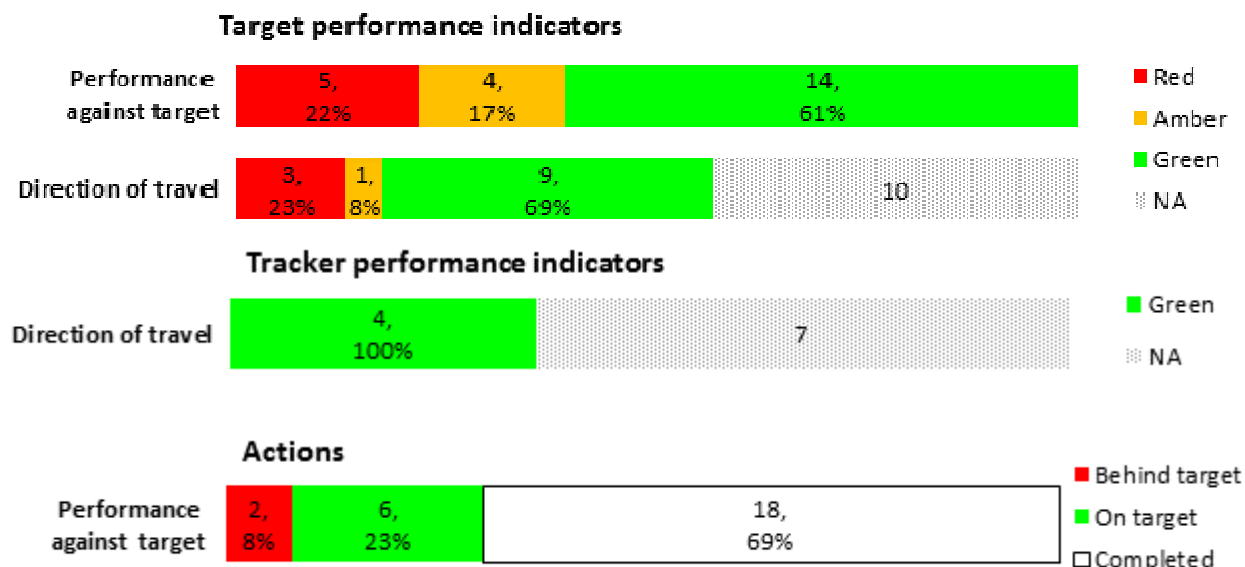
2. Since 2010, the council has been required to make significant financial savings following reductions in government grants. We have delivered just under £114million savings to date and have plans in place to make a further £23million of reductions in 2014/15.
3. At the same time, the council has also had to cope with a very changing environment over this period and manage the introduction of new legislation which has fundamentally changed the shape of public services in areas like health, policing and crime and welfare reform.
4. Demand has increased over the previous year for key services such as children in need referrals and residents using our customer access points in addition to an increase in people being rehoused through the Durham Key Options scheme.
5. It is critical that against this backdrop of reducing resources, increasing demand and level of change that we continue to actively manage performance and ensure that the difficult decisions we have had to make do not have a detrimental effect on the services that we provide and that we are focusing on what matters.
6. The following chart shows that we have improved or maintained performance in 74% of our key performance indicators over the last year. It is this strong focus on service performance that was a key factor that the judges highlighted when they awarded Durham County Council as LGC Council of the Year 2014.



Altogether Theme Performance

7. This is the end of year corporate performance report for the Altogether Better council theme for 2013/14. The report contains information on key performance indicators, risks and Council Plan progress.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Work has been carried out by officers and members on developing the proposed indicator set and targets for 2014/15 (see Appendix 5) to ensure that our performance management efforts continue to stay focused on the right areas.

Altogether Better Council: Overview



Council Performance

11. Key achievements this quarter include:

- a. Despite higher volumes of calls during the quarter 4 period, resulting from demand associated with council tax annual billing, performance has continued to improve. Between January and March 2014, 246,312 telephone calls were answered which is 96% of all calls received compared to 91% at quarter 3. During quarter 4, 95% were answered within three minutes against a target of 80%, an improvement on quarter 3, when 87% were answered within three minutes. Telephone calls answered within one minute also shows improved performance with 85% of calls answered in one minute compared with 56% at same period last year. The volume of telephone calls shows a 9.4% increase in calls received this quarter (257,158) when compared with quarter 3 (235,064) but slight reduction compared to same period last year (264,908) (see Appendix 4, Chart 1). This is due to a combination of better planning of resource allocation during this time; support from the Fraud, Benefits and Revenues Teams; improved skills as a result of training and a strengthened performance monitoring framework.
- b. During quarter 4, the average waiting time at a Customer Access Point (CAP) was 3 minutes 45 seconds, which is well within the 15 minutes target. Footfall in our CAPs increased from 78,729 in quarter 3 to 88,745 in quarter 4. An additional 10,148 customers visited our CAPs during quarter 4, 2013/14 compared to the same period last year. Even though there has been greater demand, the average wait time at CAPs has improved from 4 minutes 34 seconds during quarter 4, 2012/13 to 3 minutes 45 seconds during quarter 4, 2013/14. This is partly due to the introduction of an appointment system at one CAP, changes to service delivery processes and the introduction of a more intensive performance monitoring process (see Appendix 4, Chart 2).

- c. During 2013/14, new housing benefit (HB) claims were processed in 22.39 days on average while new council tax reduction (CTR) claims were processed in 24.21 days on average. The end of year performance is better than the 25 day target and it has significantly improved, compared to the end of year performance of 38.5 days for 2012/13.

The volume of new HB claims processed has slightly decreased from 3,453 in quarter 3 to 3,407 this quarter. The volume of new CTR claims processed has slightly decreased from 3,801 in quarter 3 to 3,787 this quarter (see Appendix 4, Chart 3). There were 13,156 new HB claims and 14,799 new CTR claims processed during 2013/14.

- d. Processing rates for changes of circumstances improved significantly in 2013/14 with monthly performance exceeding target particularly during the latter half of 2013/14. However, performance when averaged out over the year did not quite achieve the yearend target of 12 days (12.14 days for HB claims and 13.28 days for CTR claims). This is as a result of a period at the beginning of 2013/14 when processing was affected by increased volume of work arising from welfare reform issues, and backlogs that arose when annual billing for 2013/14 took longer than anticipated.

The volume of change of circumstances for HB claims processed has increased from 22,873 in quarter 3 to 33,015 this quarter. The volume of change of circumstances for CTR claims processed has increased from 24,319 in quarter 3 to 30,707 this quarter (see Appendix 4, chart 4). There were 113,614 changes of circumstances for HB claims and 112,567 changes of circumstances for CTR claims processed during 2013/14.

- e. The average days lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent (including school based employees) increased by 0.89% from 8.92 days in quarter 3 (January to December 2013) to 9.00 days this quarter (April 2013 to March 2014). Current performance is better than the 9.05 days corporate target for the second consecutive quarter. Improving the management of attendance and reducing incidences of sickness absence is a priority for the council. From quarter 1 2014/15 a broader suite of measures will be provided.
- f. The percentage of council tax collected during 2013/14 was 95.44%, an improvement of 0.44 percentage points over the previous year performance of 95%. Whilst marginally short of the 95.5% target, the collection of over 95% of council tax owing is a good outcome after taking into account the large increase in collectable debt (c £10m) during 2013/14 arising from changes to empty property discounts, increases in precepts and tax base growth from new build developments.

Analysis revealed that when additional empty property charges and council tax reduction claimants are excluded from the calculation, the collection rate increases to 97.3%. A detailed review is to be undertaken in 2014/15 with the aim of improving the 85.6% empty property charge collection rate.

- g. The 96.42% collection rate for business rates in 2013/14 equates to payments of £112m. Performance is better than target of 96.2%, and an improvement from 95.9% in 2012/13. The continued improvement is

welcome given the change in localised business rates funding that splits the income 50/50 between the council and central government.

- h. Tenant rent arrears have fallen for Durham City Homes from 2.86% in 2011/12 and 2.50% in 2012/13 to 2.07% this quarter and the target of 2.5% has been met. Arrears level at year-end stand at £499,771. Dale and Valley Homes performance of 1.21% at year-end is well within target of 3% and it has significantly improved from 1.63% reported in 2012/13 and from 20.7% reported in 2011/12. Arrears currently stand at £199,520. Arrears for East Durham Homes have fallen from 3.24% in 2011/12 and 3.02% in 2012/13 to 2.72% this quarter and the target of 3% has been achieved. Arrears currently stand at £771,498. Performance at year-end is testament to the additional resource invested in welfare services and advice given to tenants by all three housing providers to address the difficulties faced in light of welfare reform and increasing living costs.
- i. Good progress has been made in increasing availability of technology across the county by developing the Digital Durham programme which has seen significant progress throughout 2013/14 and delivery is ahead of plan at this point. South Tyneside Council has now joined Digital Durham so the programme now covers nine north-east councils of the twelve in total. Additional funds have been secured through the approval of a combined Durham and Tees Valley Rural Community Broadband Fund application (£1.053m to cover 3,545 premises – British Telecom added £300K to this amount); the Government has also allocated an additional £3.9m to address the remaining premises which will not have access to a superfast broadband service (to be fully matched by councils). The BDUK Broadband Assurance Board recently reviewed Digital Durham and agreed that there was a high level of confidence that the required level of contract management is in place, concrete evidence of sustained assurance activity, and excellent levels of knowledge and compliance with contractual mechanisms.

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

- a. Despite renewed focus on paying supplier invoices on time, performance in quarter 4 was 89%, 3 percentage points below the 92% target. Just over 35,000 out of more than 370,000 supplier invoices were paid beyond the 30 day target during 2013/14. This equates to annual outturn of 90.5%, which is below the target. January performance of 86% had an adverse impact on both quarter 4 and outturn performance due to a software issue that slowed down the invoice payment process. Monthly improvement meetings, attended by representatives from all service groupings, are being held to discuss process changes and system enhancements. In addition, supervisors from the Accounts Payable Team are meeting monthly with each service to discuss service-specific issues and developments. Discussions are ongoing with ICT and Oracle System Support to improve the responsiveness of the DbCapture software and thereby improve automated invoice processing speed and performance.
- b. Employee appraisal activity across the council, whilst increasing significantly to 68.9% at the end of 2013/14, has not achieved target of 80%, and continues to require further and sustained effort 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 council average deteriorated over the last two quarters of 2013/14 from the 75% achieved in quarter 2. All service groupings now have access to the appraisal module within MyView. It is anticipated that this will continue to increase appraisal recording and ensure that any data produced is more reflective of appraisals undertaken. Managers are notified of non-compliance with the appraisal process and all Heads of Service are receiving a monthly summary of employees in their service area who have not had appropriate appraisal activity in the rolling year period so that appraisal performance can be actively managed from a senior level.

- c. The percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within 20 days was 70% this quarter which is significantly below the national target of 85%. Performance has dropped by 10 percentage points from the previous quarter. Current performance reflects the highest volume of requests received in any quarter (see Appendix 4, chart 5).
- d. Key Council Plan actions which have not achieved target in this theme include:
 - i. Re-launching the council's website as a principal service channel by April 2014. The project has been subject to delay for technical reasons and will launch this summer.
 - ii. Significant progress has been made to implement the Community Buildings Strategy, which is on track to ensure at least 94 will remain in community usage. 75 community buildings have been asset transferred to community management groups, passed to housing providers or declared as surplus and a further 30 are on track to be asset transferred by October 2014, which has allowed additional time to ensure that each centre is viable and has a sustainable future. Of the remaining 15 centres 12 are on track to be either transferred or closed by March 2015, two were given Cabinet approval to have their transfer extended to July 2015 and one will require further work to establish a way forward as the Council is the tenant of this building.

13. The key risks to successfully delivering the objectives of this theme are:-

- a. *Ongoing government funding cuts which now extend to at least 2017/18 will continue to have an increasing major impact on all council services.* Management consider it highly probable that this risk could occur, and to mitigate the risk, 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 delivery of the agreed MTFP savings projects, this will require further savings to be made from other areas, which may result in further service reductions and job losses.* Management consider it possible that this risk could occur, which will result in a funding shortfall, damaged reputation and reduced levels of service delivery. To mitigate the risk, the implementation of the delivery plan by the Assistant Chief Executive team is closely monitored by Corporate Management Team and

Cabinet as described above. It should be recognised that this will be a significant risk for at least the next 4 years.

- c. *Potential restitution of search fee income going back to 2005.*
Management consider it highly probable that the risk will occur as a firm of solicitors has taken action against all councils across England and Wales to recover the alleged land charge fees overpayment. The mitigation of this risk is dependent upon the outcome of the negotiations and litigation currently being defended by lawyers instructed in group litigation.
- d. *The council could suffer significant adverse service delivery and financial impact if there are delays in the procurement and implementation of the new banking contract.* Pre-procurement meetings will be held with alternative providers to establish what services can and cannot be provided. Awareness-raising will take place at Tier 4 manager level that banking arrangements are due to change. The new contract is expected to be in place by September 2015 to ensure a smooth transition.
- e. *If we were to fail to comply with central government's Public Services Network (PSN) Code of Connection criteria, this would put some of our core business processes, such as revenues and benefits, at risk.* An ongoing project is in place to maintain compliance.

Recommendations and Reasons

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

Contact: Jenny Haworth, Head of Planning and Performance
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Appendix 1: Implications

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

Appendix 2: Key to symbols used within the report

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

Page 22
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
Altogether Better Council										
75	Percentage of calls answered within 3 minutes	95	Jan - Mar 2014	80	GREEN	New indicator	NA			
76	Average waiting time at a customer access point (mins:secs)	03:45	Jan - Mar 2014	15:00	GREEN	04:34	GREEN			
77	Percentage all ICT Service Desk incidents resolved on time	90.25	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	90	GREEN	95	RED			
78	Average time taken to process new housing benefit claims (days)	22.39	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	25.0	GREEN	New indicator	NA	22 RED	24** GREEN	Oct - Dec 2013
79	Average time taken to process new council tax reduction claims (days)	24.21	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	25.0	GREEN	New indicator	NA			
80	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims (days)	12.14	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	12.0	AMBER	New indicator	NA	12 RED	13** GREEN	Oct - Dec 2013
81	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for council tax reduction claims (days)	13.28	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	12.0	RED	New indicator	NA			
82	Percentage of council tax recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.36	As at Mar 2014	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
83	Percentage of business rates recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.28	As at Mar 2014	98.5	GREEN	NA	NA			
84	Savings delivered against the MTFP (£m)	19.3	16 Apr 2014	20.9	RED	NA	NA			
85	Percentage of council tax collected in-year	95.44	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	95.5	AMBER	95	GREEN	97.4	96.7*	2012/13
86	Percentage of business rates collected in-year	96.42	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	96.2	GREEN	95.9	GREEN	97.7	96.7*	2012/13
87	Percentage of accounts paid to the council within 30 days (debtors)	75.2	Jan - Mar 2014	73.0	GREEN	72.8	GREEN			
88	Income generated from council owned business space (£)	2,513,000	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	2,420,000	GREEN	2,845,000	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	1.21	As at Mar 2014	3.0	GREEN	1.63	GREEN			
91	Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit - Durham City Homes	2.07	As at Mar 2014	2.5	GREEN	2.5	GREEN			
Page 23	Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit - East Durham Homes	2.72	As at Mar 2014	3	GREEN	3.02	GREEN			

Page 24	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
93	Average asset rating of Display Energy Certificates (DECs) in county council buildings	97.7	As at Mar 2014	96.0	AMBER	99.7	GREEN			
94	Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within statutory deadlines	70	Jan - Mar 2013	85	RED	70	AMBER			
95	Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers	89	Jan - Mar 2014	92	RED	90	RED			
96	Percentage of performance appraisals completed	68.9	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	80.0	RED	NA	NA			
97	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services including school staff	9	Apr 2013 - Mar 2014	9.05	GREEN	9.08	GREEN			

Table 2: Key Tracker Indicators

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
Altogether Better Council										
169	Staff aged under 25 as percentage of post count	5.59	As at Mar 2014	5.45	NA	4.52	NA			
170	Staff aged over 50 as a percentage of post count	38.34	As at Mar 2014	37.79	NA	38.04	NA			
171	Women in the top 5 percent of earners	51.02	As at Mar 2014	52.11	NA	50.20	NA			
172	BME as a percentage of post count	1.42	As at Mar 2014	1.4	NA	1.55	NA			
173	Staff with disability (DDA definition) as a percentage of post count	2.85	As at Mar 2014	2.9	NA	3.14	NA			
174	Percentage of abandoned calls	4	Jan - Mar 2014	9	GREEN	17	GREEN			
175	Percentage of calls answered within 1 minute	85	Jan - Mar 2014	76	GREEN	56	GREEN			
176	Staff - total headcount (ONS return)	17,581	As at Mar 2014	17,577	NA	17,724	NA			
177	Staff - total full time equivalent (FTE) (ONS return)	14,225	As at Mar 2014	14,211	NA	14,316	NA			

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
178	Number of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	10	Jan - Mar 2014	20	Not comparable [1]	16	GREEN			
179	Percentage of posts with no absence (excluding SCHOOLS)	72.81	Jan - Mar 2014	73	RED	72.10	GREEN			

[\[1\] 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

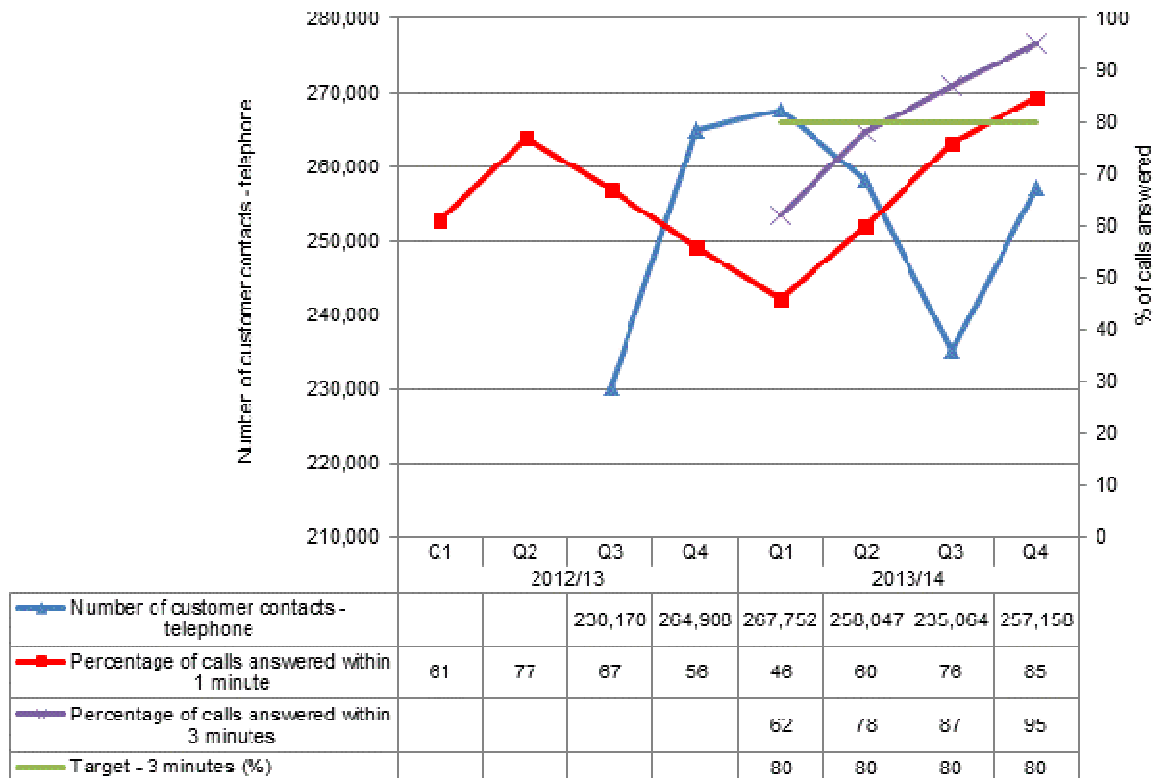


Chart 2 – Face to face contacts

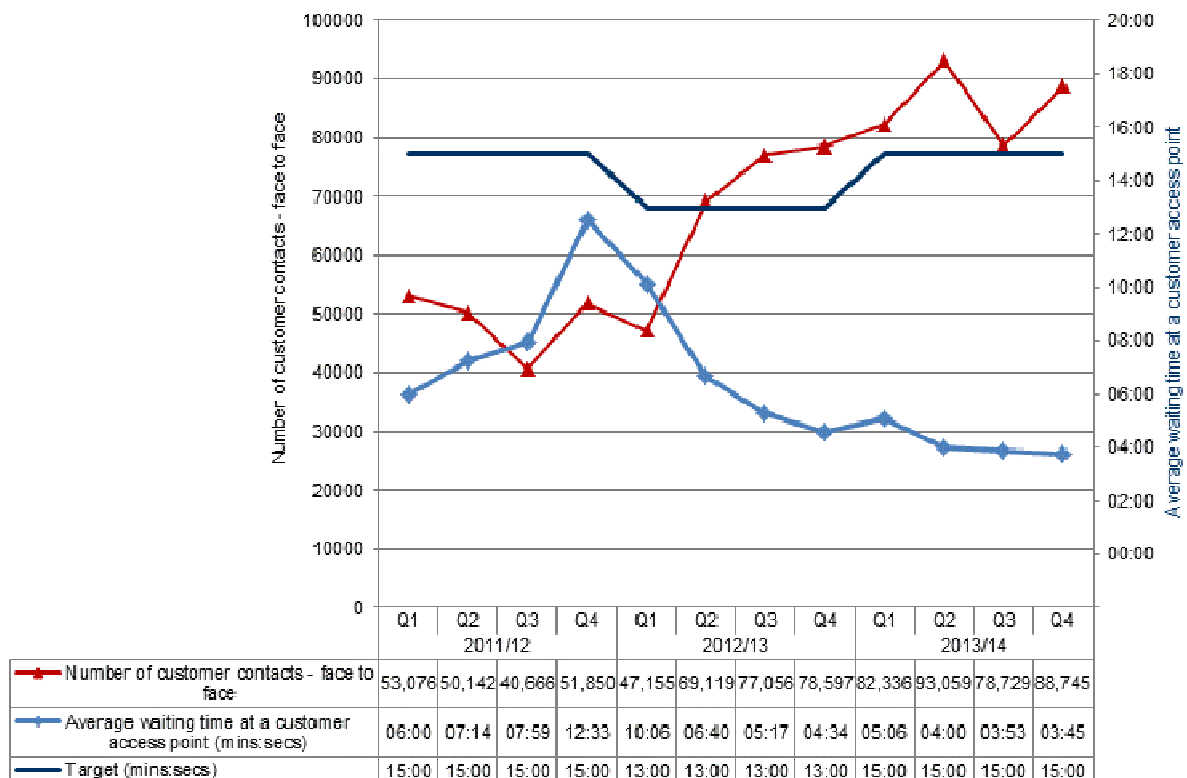


Chart 3 – Benefits – new claims

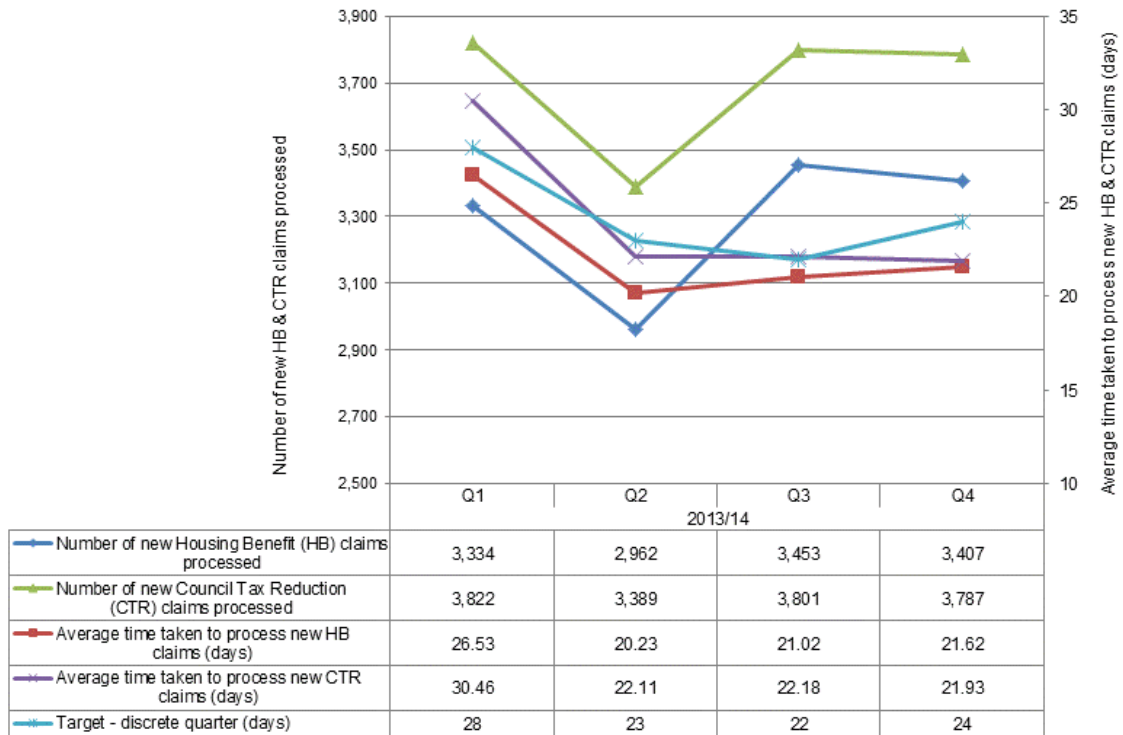


Chart 4 – Benefits – changes of circumstances

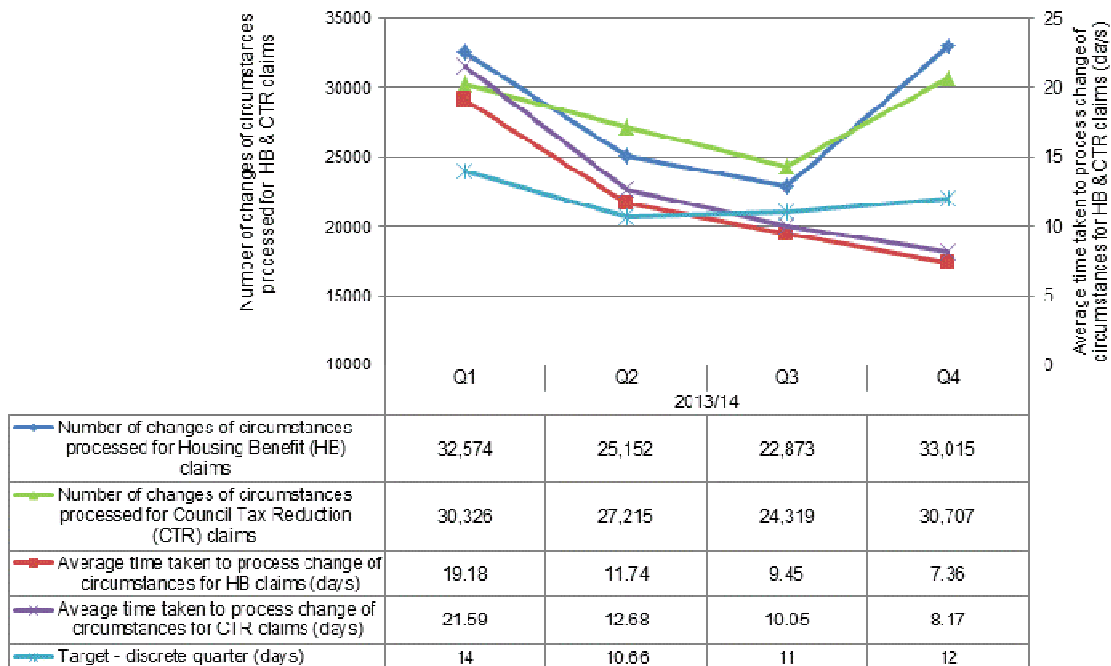
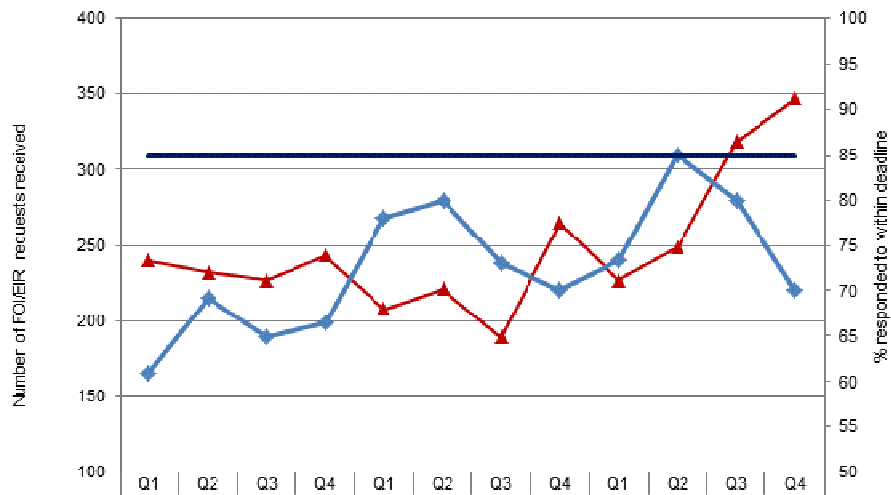


Chart 5 – Freedom of Information (FOI) requests



	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	347
% of FOI/EIR requests responded to within statutory deadlines	61	69	65	66	78	80	73	70	73	85	80	70
Target (%)	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85

Appendix 5: Proposed 2014/15 Corporate Indicator set

Indicator type	PI Ref	Performance Indicator Definition	Service Grouping	Frequency	Welfare Reform	Performance		2013/14 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
						2012/13	2013/14 Q3		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	
Altogether Better Council												
Tracker	NS43a	Number of customer contacts- face to face	NS	Quarterly		N/A	78,729					
Tracker	NS43b	Number of customer contacts-telephone	NS	Quarterly		N/A	235,064					
Tracker	NS43c	Number of customer contacts- web forms	NS	Quarterly		N/A	4,196					
Tracker	NS43d	Number of customer contacts- emails	NS	Quarterly		N/A	13,290					
Tracker	NS20	Percentage of abandoned calls	NS	Quarterly		17	9					
Target	NS22	Percentage of calls answered within 3 minutes	NS	Quarterly		N/A	87	80	80	80	80	
Target	NS24	Percentage of customers seen within 15 minutes at a CAP	NS	Quarterly		TBC	TBC	TBC	95	95	95	
Target	RES/038	Percentage of all ICT Service Desk incidents resolved on time	RES	Quarterly		95%	91%	90%	90%	90%	90%	
Tracker	NS100	Number of complaints recorded on the CRM	NS	Quarterly		3,634	2,610					
Tracker	RES/013	Staff aged under 25 as a headcount	RES	Quarterly		4.52%	5.45%					
Tracker	RES/014	Staff aged over 50 as a headcount	RES	Quarterly		38.04%	37.79%					
Tracker	RES/LPI/011a	Women in the top 5% of earners	RES	Quarterly		50.20%	52.11%					

Indicator type	PI Ref	Performance Indicator Definition	Service Grouping	Frequency	Welfare Reform	Performance		2013/14 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
						2012/13	2013/14 Q3		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	
Tracker	RES/LPI/011b(i)	BME as a percentage of headcount	RES	Quarterly		1.55%	1.40%					
Tracker	RES/LPI/011c(i)	Staff with disability (DDA definition) as a percentage of headcount	RES	Quarterly		3.14%	2.90%					
Tracker	REDPI79	Number of tenants of the seven main housing providers seen through the triage process	RED	Quarterly	Y	New indicator	485					
Tracker	REDPI79 a	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers who were given employability advice	RED	Quarterly	Y	New indicator	44% [214]					
Tracker	REDPI79 b	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers who were given debt advice	RED	Quarterly	Y	New indicator	55% [269]					
Tracker	REDPI79 c	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers who were given income advice	RED	Quarterly	Y	New indicator	65% [317]					
Tracker	REDPI79 d	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers that have been rehoused	RED	Quarterly	Y	New indicator	6% [27]					
Tracker	RES/028	Discretionary Housing Payments - number/value for customers affected by social sector size criteria	RES	Quarterly	Y	New indicator	951 £353,417					

Indicator type	PI Ref	Performance Indicator Definition	Service Grouping	Frequency	Welfare Reform	Performance		2013/14 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
						2012/13	2013/14 Q3		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	
Tracker	RES/029	Discretionary Housing Payments - number/value for customers affected by Local Housing Allowance Reforms	RES	Quarterly	Y	New indicator	115 £369,433					
Target	RES/NI/181a1	Time taken to process new Housing Benefit claims year to date and (discreet quarter)	RES	Quarterly		27.44 Days	21.02 Days	25 Days	23 Days	21 Days	21 Days	
Target	RES/NI/181a2	Time taken to process new Council Tax Reduction claims year to date and (discreet quarter)	RES	Quarterly		N/A	22.18 Days	25 Days	23 Days	21 Days	21 Days	
Target	RES/NI/181b1	Time taken to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims	RES	Quarterly		9.63 Days	9.45 Days	12 Days	11 Days	10 Days	10 Days	
Target	RES/NI/181b2	Time taken to process change of circumstances for Council Tax Reduction claims year to date and (discreet quarter)	RES	Quarterly		9.63 Days	10.05 Days	12 Days	11 Days	10 Days	10 Days	
Target	RES/001	Savings delivered against the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	RES	Quarterly		100% £26.6m	£18.7m (96%)	£20.9m	£23.0 25m	£39.0 42m	£47.7 12m	
Target	RES/002	Percentage of Council Tax Collected In-Year	RES	Quarterly/ Cumulative		94.9%	82.9%	95.5%	96.0%	96.4%	96.8%	
Target	RES/003	Percentage of business rates collected in-year	RES	Quarterly/ Cumulative		95.2%	85.4%	96.2%	96.5%	97.0%	97.3%	
Tracker	RES/034	Staff - total headcount (ONS Return)	RES	Quarterly		17,724	17,577					

Indicator type	PI Ref	Performance Indicator Definition	Service Grouping	Frequency	Welfare Reform	Performance		2013/14 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
						2012/13	2013/14 Q3		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	
Tracker	RES/035	Staff - total full time equivalents (ONS Return)	RES	Quarterly		14,316	14,211					
Target	RES/129	Percentage of council tax recovered for all years excluding the current year	RES	Yearly		New indicator	99.1%	98.5%	98.5%	98.5%	98.5%	
Target	RES/130	Percentage of business rates recovered for all years excluding the current year	RES	Yearly		New indicator	99.2%	98.5%	98.5%	98.5%	98.5%	
Target	REDPI33	Percentage of Council owned business floor space that is occupied	RED	Quarterly		73%	76.5%	75%	77%	79%	81%	
Target	REDPI39	Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit	RED	Quarterly	Y	DVH 1.62% DCH 2.50% EDH 3.02%	DVH 1.58% DCH 2.05% EDH 2.85%	DVH 3% DCH 2.5% EDH 3%	2.45%	Not set	Not set	
Target	REDPI49 b	£ saved from solar installations on council owned buildings	RED	Quarterly		New indicator	£214,000	£242,000	£242,000	Not set	Not set	
Target	REDPI68	Average asset rating of Display Energy Certificates in County Council buildings	RED	Quarterly		99.7	Not due	96	98	97	96	
Target	REDPI76	Income generated from Council owned business space (£)	RED	Quarterly		2,845,000	715,991	2.57m	3.03m	Not set	Not set	
Target	REDPI78	Percentage of capital receipts received	RED	Quarterly		New indicator	21.5%	100%	100% (£8.5m)	100% (£9m)	100% (£9m)	

Indicator type	PI Ref	Performance Indicator Definition	Service Grouping	Frequency	Welfare Reform	Performance		2013/14 Target	Proposed targets			National Comparison
						2012/13	2013/14 Q3		2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	
Target	ACE006	Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within statutory deadlines (20 working days)	ACE	Quarterly		70%	80%	85%	85%	85%	85%	
Target	RES/LPI/010	Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers	RES	Quarterly		90%	91%	92%	92%	93%	94%	
Tracker	RES/020	Percentage of time lost to sickness in rolling year	RES	Quarterly (Rolling Year Figure)		New indicator						
Target	RES/011	Percentage of performance appraisals completed	RES	Quarterly (Rolling Year Figure)		47.82%	73.27%	80%	85%	95%	95%	
Tracker	RES/036	Number of RIDDOR Incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive	RES	Quarterly/Cumulative		20	17					
Tracker	RES/052	Percentage posts with no absence (excluding schools) rolling year	RES	Quarterly		72.10%	73%					
Target	RES/LPI/012	Days/shifts lost to sickness absence - all services including school staff	RES	Quarterly (Rolling Year Figure)		9.08 Days	8.92 Days	9.05 Days	8.7 Days	8.5 Days	8.2 Days	
Target	RES/LPI/012(a)	Days/Shifts lost to sickness absence - all services excluding school staff	RES	Quarterly (Rolling Year Figure)		12.55 Days	12.03 Days	Tracker	11.8 Days	11.5 Days	11.2 Days	

**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

7 July 2014



**Customer Feedback: Complaints,
Compliments and Suggestions
Year End Report 2013/14**

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

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CIOSC) the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Year End 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.

Year End 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 the Year End Report 2013/14.

Recommendation

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

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Appendix 1: Implications

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 Year End report 2013/14



Altogether better



Overview

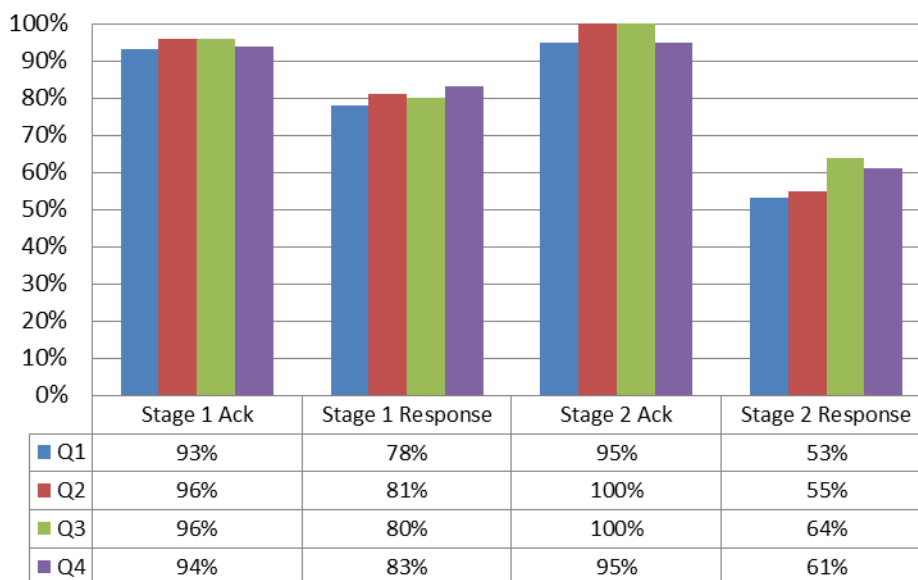
- 5 This report provides the performance information and learning outcomes in relation to Customer Feedback across the Council in 2013/14. Complaints are categorised as:
- **Statutory.** A complaint which arises from the duties placed on a local social services authority to provide assessments and care services under the provisions of relevant adult and children’s social care legislation. The process followed for managing these complaints is prescribed in Regulations.
 - **Non-Statutory.** All other complaints
- 6 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.
- 7 The report is divided into 2 main parts; overall performance summary and detailed information for each service grouping in relation to all customer feedback for 2013/14

PART ONE: Summary of complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the Council during 2013/14

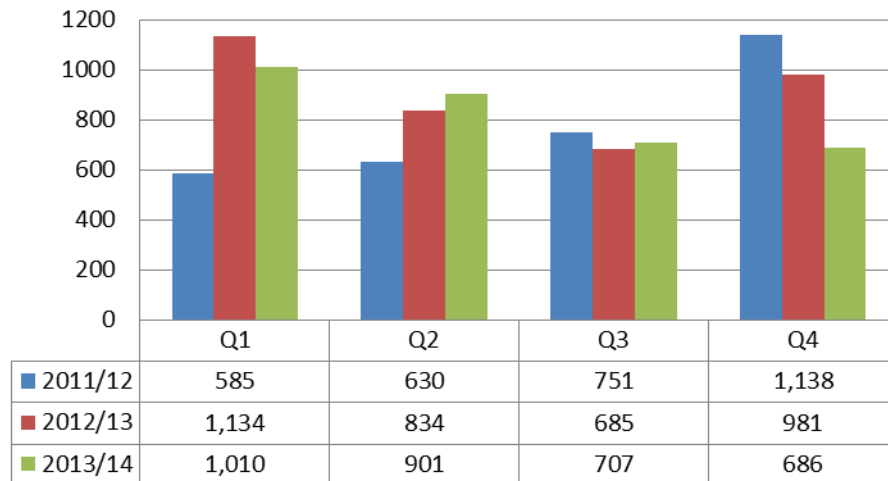
- 8 Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, Durham County Council received 3,298 non-statutory complaints, 1,003 compliments and 325 suggestions. 194 complaints were escalated to stage 2 of the complaints process.

Complaints

- 9 Response to target performance has improved over the course of the year, as follows:



- 10 The graph overleaf shows a quarter by quarter breakdown of the total numbers of complaints received across the Council since April 2011. Complaints received during 2013/2014 have reduced by 9% when compared to the previous year.



- 11 The table below shows numbers of complaints received across Service Groupings since 2011/12:

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	1	9
CAS	83	4	15	4	10	33	10	15	18	11	54
NS	1,589	737	537	431	693	2,398	724	614	446	446	2,230
RED	327	94	95	93	105	387	93	128	96	96	413
RES	1,095	299	185	157	168	809	180	141	139	132	592
TOTAL	3,104	1,134	834	685	981	3,634	1,010	901	701	686	3,298

- 12 Analysis of the data shows that the highest numbers of complaints received were due to:

- **Missed Bins:** 461 complaints were received regarding missed bins during 2013/14, a 38% decrease when compared with 2012/2013.
- **Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's):** 231 complaints were received regarding HWRCs during 2013/2014, a 93% increase when compared to the previous year. Analysis has shown that this increase is due to changes to contracts that led to tighter control of the waste being put through the sites. A number of complaints also related to site closures and changes in operating hours.

- **Revenues and Benefits Service:** During 2013/14, the Revenues and Benefits service received 538 complaints, a 30% decrease compared to 2012/2013, due to a reduction in complaints regarding delays in processing new claims and changes in circumstances and in relation to the review of the exemptions policy affecting the charging of council tax on empty properties following welfare reform changes.

- 13 Further investigation of stage 1 complaints received shows that during 2013/14 there were 1,366 occasions (41% 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.
- 14 If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, DCC is left with 1,879 (57%) justified complaints, from which there is possibility of learning.

Compliments and Suggestions

- 15 The following table shows the numbers of compliments and suggestions received across service groupings during 2013/2014:

Service Grouping	Compliments	Suggestions
ACE	49	14
CAS	184	5
NS	506	248
RED	185	39
RES	79	19
TOTAL	1003	325

- 16 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 2013/14

- 17 The following sections provide details for each Service Grouping in relation to Customer Feedback received in 2013/14 and the learning outcomes applied to improve service delivery.

Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

Overview

- 18 Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, 9 complaints, 49 compliments and 14 suggestions were recorded by ACE.

Service Grouping ACE	Number Received											% Change*
	11/12 Total	Dec-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	1	9	+80
Compliments	24	3	3	7	12	25	3	9	25	12	49	+96
Suggestions	14	0	1	1	7	9	3	3	4	4	14	+100

*Total 2013/14 figure compared with Total 2012/13 figure

Key Areas and Learning

- 19 Analysis shows that the number of complaints received by ACE in 2013/14 when compared with 2012/13 has increased by 29%.
- 20 The complaints are in relation to:
- A radio advertisement for Durham County Council which mentioned only male abusers and this was felt to be imbalanced.
 - A range of issues relating to DCC service provision.
 - Feedback on the website and council publications.
 - Lack of information in relation to a community engagement event held in May/June 2013 regarding Stanley master plan front street proposals.
 - A project funded by an Area Action Partnership and an AAP funding application.
- 21 The 9 complaints received during 2013/14 were attributed to 1 administration error, 3 miscommunications and 5 service failures; all 9 complaints were resolved within 10 working days. Of the 9 complaints received during 2013/14, only 6 were upheld, indicating that although service users were dissatisfied with the service received, the service had in fact acted properly and followed appropriate procedures.
- 22 Actions as a result of complaints include:
- The Council has lodged a complaint with the distribution company with regard to Durham County News.
 - Where a council event was wrongly adverted, the council has sent an apology with a complimentary leisure pass.
 - The web team has fixed the link on the council's website

Compliments and Suggestions

- 23 During 2013/14, 49 compliments were received by ACE. The majority of compliments relate to the helpfulness of staff and the efficiency of service provided across all service areas within ACE.

- 24 It is worth noting that the increase in the number of compliments received is a result of the County Records Office transferring to ACE, as this is a front facing service.
- 25 Alongside compliments recorded on the CRM system, there are also many that are captured using local systems including AAP and Forum events.
- 26 During 2013/14, ACE service grouping received 14 suggestions. Suggestions covered a variety of subjects, relating mostly to communications and publications.

Children and Adults Services (CAS)

Corporate Complaints Overview

- 27 From 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 a total of 54 corporate complaints were received. This represents an increase of 64% on the previous year.
- 28 As shown in the table, there has been some variation in the number of complaints, compliments and comments received and actioned in each quarter through the Council's corporate complaints process during 2013/14.

Service Grouping CAS	Number Received										% Change*
	12/13				12/13 Total	13/14				13/14 Total	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Complaints	4	15	4	10	33	10	15	18	11	54	+64%
Compliments	149	150	145	103	547	88	42	47	7	184	-66%
Suggestions/Comments	15	0	0	11	26	0	0	1	4	5	-81%

*Total 2013/14 figure compared with Total 2012/13 figure

- 29 Of the 54 complaints, 100% were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt; and 38 (70%) were responded to within 10 working days. The remaining 16 complaints (30%) were not responded to within timescale as they were particularly complex cases.

Key Areas and Learning

- 30 Corporate complaints about CAS tend to be diverse in nature but some themes have been identified. These are:
- There were 13 (24%) complaints made about the One Point service, relating to poor communication. Service users stated that published information wasn't clear enough or staff didn't give clear explanations about their role and why they had contacted families to offer services.
 - Eight (15%) complaints were about Blue Badges in relation to loss of documentation and delays in issuing badges.
 - There were also 5 complaints (9%) received in relation to the closure of Roseberry College which were about the consultation process.

- 31 In most instances issues raised within corporate complaints are of a singular nature and personal to the complainant.
- 32 Some actions as a result of learning from corporate complaints are shown below:
- Personal information had been discussed in the foyer of a Court building and staff were reminded that suitable rooms should be used to speak to clients to ensure confidentiality and privacy.
 - Information was not widely publicised on fire evacuation in a Day Care Centre which members of the public also access. Posters have now been displayed in key areas.
 - Staff have been reminded of the necessity for timely responses to communications between the Service and service users.
 - Holding meetings 'out of hours' is to be given consideration by senior management to take into account parents day time commitments.
 - Staff have been reminded that procedures in relation to contacting members of the public must be strictly adhered to, in order to avoid situations where inappropriate services are offered.

Compliments and Suggestions

- 33 Suggestions have reduced by 80%. Reasons for this decrease have been considered and the range of suggestions and comments submitted both in 2012/13 and 2013/14 is diverse and unrelated, with no particular themes.
- 34 The table below shows a breakdown by service area of the 184 compliments received by CAS during 2013/14. Compliments received have decreased by 66% this reduction is attributed to the relocation of Welfare Rights of a front-facing service from Adults services to Resources. This service had historically attracted many compliments.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Totals
Children's Services*	74	39	29	3	145
Education	12	1	18	4	35
Planning & Service Strategy	2	2	0	0	4
Totals	88	42	47	7	184

Statutory Complaints

- 35 Please refer to the Annual Representations Report for Social Care Services 2013/14, agenda item Corporate Issues, Overview and Scrutiny 19 September 2014.

Neighbourhood Services (NS)

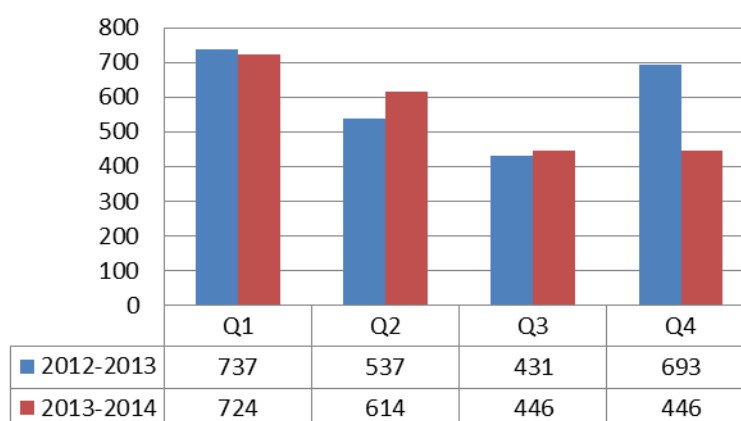
Overview

- 36 During 2013/2014, 2,230 complaints, 506 compliments and 248 suggestions were received. A summary of feedback since 2011/12 is shown in the table below:

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	446	2,230	-7
Compliments	419	75	67	108	152	402	126	134	125	121	506	+26
Suggestions	415	71	55	49	40	215	62	57	41	88	248	+15

*Total 2013/14 figure compared with Total 2012/13 figure

- 37 Complaints data for Neighbourhood Services for 2013/14 compared to the previous year is shown below.



- 38 Further investigation of the complaints received shows that during 2013/14, there were 903 occasions (40%) 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

- 39 Detailed analysis of the complaints received during 2013/2014 shows that 43% can be attributed to the following:
- **Missed Bins:** 461 complaints were received regarding missed bins during 2013/14, a 38% decrease when compared with 2012/2013. This improvement can be attributed to a number of factors including the bedding in of the alternative weekly collection service, the introduction of a new strengthened 'Repeat Missed Container' Monitoring Process, improved communications in relation to collection dates during bank holidays and the implementation of the incab 'Bartec' system that has supported improvement of the operational delivery of the service
 - **Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres:** We received 231 complaints regarding HWRCs during 2013/2014. Although complaints of this nature have reduced over the course of the year, this is a 93% increase when

compared to 2012/2013. Contract changes in June 2013 led to tighter control of the waste put through the sites, closure of some sites and changes in operating hours at the remaining sites. These issues, along with attitude of staff, are the main reasons for complaints regarding this service.

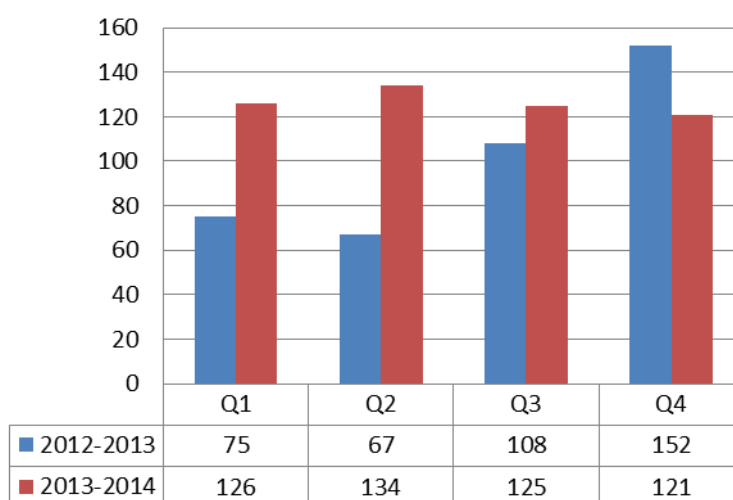
- **Charges for replacement wheeled bins:** 99 complaints were received from residents objecting to the £20 charge for replacement bins. Complaints of this kind have remained the same since 2012/2013, when 99 bin charge complaints were also received.
- **Attitude of refuse crews:** 76 complaints were received from customers unhappy with the attitude of their refuse crew during 2013/2014; a 16% increase when compared with 2012/13. The increase may be attributed to stricter enforcement of policy on waste collection and refuse and recycling staff being more challenging when addressing contamination issues
- **Refuse staff not returning bins/containers:** 84 complaints were received from residents regarding refuse bins/containers not being returned to the correct location. This is a 21% decrease when compared with 2012/13.

40 The “Customer Experience” group continues to consider a range of 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 process for managing customer demand and complaints in relation to missed refuse and recycling bins to reduce repeat contact
- Review and refresh of process for capturing customer enquiries resolved at first point of contact to improve service intelligence and inform improvement activity
- Development of web forms for all Street Scene Service Requests, to allow customers to access services online.
- Introduction of a new process for managing customer contact in relation to reports of Untidy Gardens and Yards
- Development of detailed process and system design for managing customer demand and administration in relation to new Contamination Education/Enforcement Process

Compliments and Suggestions

- 41 Compliments received by NS for 2013/14 compared to 2012/13 have increased by 26% as illustrated in the graph below



- 42 The majority of compliments relate to staff in 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 their professionalism, politeness and swift responses.
- 43 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
- 44 Suggestions include:
- Extending 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 flow of customers into the facility

Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

Overview

- 45 Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, 413 complaints, 185 compliments and 39 suggestions were received by the Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) Service Grouping. A summary of feedback is shown in the following table:

Service Grouping RED	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	336	94	95	93	105	387	93	128	96	96	413	7%
Compliments	122	38	39	37	11	125	34	27	85	39	185	48%
Suggestions	48	9	11	10	3	33	11	6	13	10	39	18%

*Total 2013/14 figure compared with Total 2012/13 figure

- 46 During 2013/14, RED received 413 complaints, an increase of 6% on the previous year. Of these 40 were escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process. RED responded to 80% of complaints within the 10 working day deadline, a significant improvement from 2012/13 when 45% of complaints were responded to within deadline.
- 47 The proportion of complaints found to be justified or part justified is 48%

Key Areas and Learning

- 48 Detailed analysis of the complaints received during 2013/14 shows that 3 areas of the service grouping account for 78% of the complaints received:
- **Durham City Homes:** 149 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 is an increase of 55% from the previous year.
 - **Planning and Building Control:** 100 were in relation to Planning Development mainly in connection to planning decisions and building control. This is a slight increase of approximately 4% on the previous year.
 - **Strategic Traffic:** 73 were received by Strategic Traffic, the majority are parking and road works related. This is an increase of 55% on the previous year.

Compliments and Suggestions

- 49 The service grouping received 185 compliments in 2013/14. These are generally thanks to staff for the service they have provided. 125 (67%) of the compliments received were for Planning Development.
- 50 RED received 39 suggestions during 2013/14 covering a wide range of subjects and service areas, including building control, transport information and improvements to town centres.

Resources (RES)

Overview

- 51 For the period 01 April 2013 – 31 March 2014, there were a total of 592 complaints for Resources; this represents an improved performance position with a 27% reduction when compared with the previous year.
- 52 The proportion of complaints responded to within the 10 day standard was 69% across 2013/14 which was an improvement when compared to the previous year. The proportion responded to within the 10 day standard during quarter 4 reached 82%.

RES	Number Received											
	11/12 Total	12/13 split by quarter				12/13 Total	13/14 split by quarter				13/14	%* Change
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
Complaints	327	299	185	157	168	809	180	141	139	132	592	-27
Compliments	69	16	21	15	17	69	14	10	17	38	79	+14
Suggestions	24	11	7	0	6	24	3	5	3	8	19	-21

*Total 2013/14 figure compared with Total 2012/13 figure

- 53 Of the 592 complaints received in 2013/14 for Resources, 58% were either justified or part justified, and 42% were not justified. Incidences where complaints were not upheld, whilst arising from customer dissatisfaction, indicate that appropriate action and procedures were followed by Resources' services. The following analysis is based on all complaints received.

Key Areas and Learning

- 54 Resources' services are committed to improvement and continually analyse customer feedback to identify any emerging trends. Feedback from customers and engagement with all stakeholders are integral to ongoing service review and improvement. Detailed analysis shows that 93% of the 2013/14 complaints relate to the following three areas:
- **Benefits:** The Benefits Service received a total of 235 complaints in 2013/14, a reduction of 53% compared to 2012/13. This reduction can be largely attributed to a significant drop in complaints relating to delays in processing claims which only accounts for 21% of the complaints received in 2013/14. This is a result of much improved levels of service now being consistently provided to customers by the Benefits Service. By achieving monthly claims processing targets across the majority of 2013/14, the overall number of complaints reduced and the nature of those received changed from being mostly associated with delays to being more balanced over a number of areas, including dissatisfaction with the decision or calculation of their claim which accounts for 19% of the complaints received. Further analysis reveals that over the year 33 complaints (14%) were submitted by landlords; this represents a significant reduction compared to 2012/13 when in the first quarter alone, 141 complaints were received from landlords.
 - **Revenues:** The Revenues Service received a total of 303 complaints in 2013/14, an increase of 14% compared to 2012/13. This increase coincides

with new council policy in relation to charging Council Tax for empty properties and makes up 22% of the complaints received in 2013/14. Over the same period, approximately 25% of complaints were associated with recovery action, with the remainder arising from liability discrepancies, correspondence and processing delays (particularly during system downtime for annual Council Tax billing), and bailiffs. With increased recovery activity to ensure improved collection rates, the increase in associated complaints was not unexpected.

- **Registration Service:** Over the year 12 complaints were received relating to the Registration Service, an increase of 1 over 2012/13. One third of those received in 2013/14 related to difficulties making contact with staff at Registration Offices. It is anticipated that a review of the Registration Service during 2013/14 will provide improved contact and the overall service delivered to customers.

Compliments and Suggestions

- 55 Over the year, 79 compliments and 19 suggestions were received from satisfied customers. The majority of the compliments related to the conduct of wedding ceremonies; others highlighted excellent service from Revenues and Benefits Service officers.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): current activity

- 56 During 2013/14 the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) made initial enquiries / initiated investigations into 121 matters relating to a range of complaints covering many of the services delivered by the Council. These can be summarised as follows:

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

- 57 During the year, the Council were notified of 18 Planning related complaints which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman, and have been determined as follows:
- One case was still open at year end and the outcome of that investigation is awaited;
 - In 4 cases, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the cases were subsequently closed;
 - 3 cases was determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman;
 - One case, although subject to investigation, was subsequently closed as the Ombudsman discontinued involvement based on a lack of evidence of maladministration.
 - Two complaints were made to the Ombudsman prematurely and were therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the internal Complaints Procedure.
 - Seven cases were subject to investigation and were subsequently closed with decisions of No Maladministration and No Further Action to be taken.

BENEFITS & TAX

58 During the year, the Council were notified of 28 Benefits & Tax related complaints which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman, and have been determined as follows:

- One case was still open at year end and the outcome of that investigation is awaited;
- In 10 cases, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the cases were subsequently closed;
- 9 cases was determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman;
- 2 cases, although subject to investigation, were subsequently closed as the Ombudsman discontinued involvement based on a lack of evidence of maladministration.
- 1 complaint was made to the Ombudsman prematurely and was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the internal Complaints Procedure.
- 2 cases were subject to investigation and were subsequently closed with decisions of No Maladministration and No Further Action to be taken.
- Following investigation, 1 case was closed on the basis that the Council had agreed to action remedies as suggested by the Ombudsman as Maladministration and Injustice were identified.
- In 2 cases, although the Ombudsman identified Fault/Maladministration, no Injustice was identified and so the cases were closed with No Further Action.

EDUCATION & CHILDRENS SERVICES

59 During the year, the Council were notified of 10 Education & Childrens related complaints which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman, and have been determined as follows:

- 1 case was still open at year end and the outcome of the investigation is awaited;
- In 1 case, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the case was subsequently closed;
- 4 cases were determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman.
- One complaint was made to the Ombudsman prematurely and was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the internal Complaints Procedure.
- 1 case was subject to investigation and was subsequently closed with decision of No Maladministration and No Further Action to be taken.
- Following investigation, 2 cases were closed on the basis that the Council had agreed to action remedies as suggested by the Ombudsman as Maladministration and Injustice were identified.

SCHOOL ADMISSION APPEALS

60 During the year, the Council were notified of 6 complaints relating to school admission appeals, which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman. In 5 cases, although all subject to investigation, all were closed on the basis that No Maladministration or Fault was identified.

- 61 In one case, the Ombudsman originally delivered a decision of Maladministration but No Injustice and as such proposed No Further Action by the Council. However the complainant has since requested that the decision be reviewed by an Assistant Ombudsman, as such the case has been re-opened and an outcome is now awaited.

ADULT CARE SERVICES

- 62 During the year, the Council were notified of 12 Adult Care Services complaints which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman, and have been determined as follows:

- 2 matters remained open at year end and the outcome of the investigations is awaited;
- 1 complaint was made to the Ombudsman prematurely and was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the internal Complaints Procedure;
- In 3 cases, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the cases were subsequently closed;
- 1 case was determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman;
- Following investigation, 5 cases were closed by the Ombudsman all with findings of No Maladministration and No Fault.

HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORT

- 63 During the year, the Council were notified of 12 Highways & Transport related complaints which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman, and have been determined as follows:

- One case was still open at year end and the outcome of that investigation is awaited;
- In 1 case, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the case was subsequently closed;
- 5 cases was determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman;
- 1 complaint was made to the Ombudsman prematurely and was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the internal Complaints Procedure.
- Four cases were subject to investigation and were subsequently closed with decisions of No Maladministration and No Further Action to be taken.

HOUSING

- 64 During the year, the Council were notified of 6 Housing related complaints which were considered by the Local Government Ombudsman and have been determined as follows:

- In 2 cases, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the cases were subsequently closed;
- 1 case was determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman;
- Following investigation, 2 cases were closed on the basis that the Council had agreed to action remedies as suggested by the Ombudsman;
- Following investigation, 1 case was closed with No Further Action to be taken.

CORPORATE AND OTHER SERVICES

65 During the year, the Council were notified of 13 complaints which were categorised as Corporate and Other Services related complaints by the Ombudsman. These cases and their outcomes can be summarised as follows:

- One case was still open at year end and the outcome of the investigation is awaited;
- In 3 cases, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the cases were subsequently closed;
- 8 cases were determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman;
- One complaint was made to the Ombudsman prematurely and was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the internal Complaints Procedure.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES/PUBLIC PROTECTION & REGULATION

66 During the year, the Council were notified of 16 complaints relating to the above category. These cases and their outcomes can be summarised as follows:

- Two cases were still open at year end and the outcome of those investigations is awaited;
- In 8 cases, having made preliminary enquiries, the Ombudsman decided that a full investigation should not be initiated and the cases were subsequently closed;
- 1 case was determined to be outside of the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman;
- One case, although subject to investigation, was subsequently closed as the Ombudsman discontinued involvement based on a lack of evidence of maladministration.
- One complaint was made to the Ombudsman prematurely and was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the internal Complaints Procedure.
- One case was subject to investigation and was subsequently closed with decision with No Further Action to be taken.
- Following investigation, 1 case was closed on the basis that the Council had agreed to action remedies as suggested by the Ombudsman;
- In one case, following investigation, the Ombudsman upheld the case and require the Council to undertake several actions to remedy the complaint.

Recommendations and Reasons

67 Corporate Issues, Overview and Scrutiny to note the report

Contact:

Alan Patrickson

Head of Projects and Business Services

Tel: 03000 268161

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee



7 July 2014

Creditor Payment Performance 2013/14

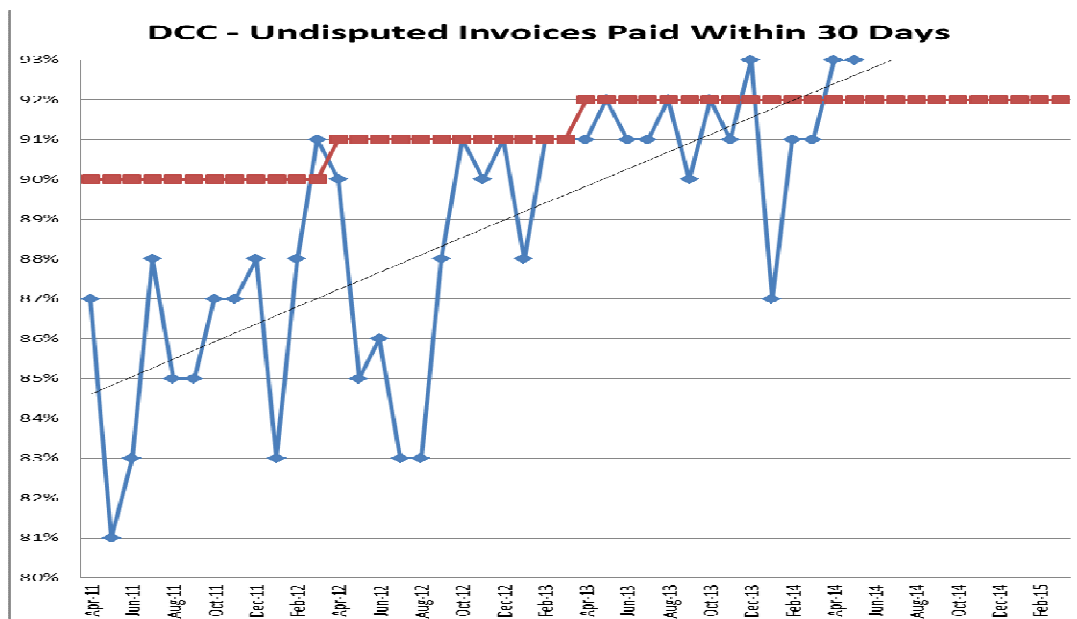
Paul Darby, Head of Finance – Financial Services

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present an overview of Creditors payment performance for 2013/14 and actions being undertaken to improve performance.

Background

2. The Council set a performance target to pay 92% of undisputed creditor invoices within 30 days from the date of invoice. The target in 2013/14 was 1% point higher than the 2012/13 target, despite the Council only achieving the previous 91% target in three months in 2012/13. The 92% target has been retained in 2014/15.
3. Whilst the creditor performance has been improving over the last two years, with less volatility in terms of variances in month to month performance, overall creditor payment performance for 2013/14 was only 90.47%.
4. Month to month performance during 2013/14 was at or around 91% throughout 2013/14 (see graph below) but the overall annual performance figure was impacted by poor performance during January when the corporate performance only achieved 87%. There were a number of reasons for this, including both the Council’s and suppliers shut down over the Christmas period and the consequent catching up of outstanding work items in January.



Context - Current performance

5. The Creditors Team, supported by an Invoice Payments Improvement Group, chaired by the Head of Finance (Financial Services), have focused on consolidating and reducing the volumes through the use of payment cards and consolidation of invoices over the last two years as well as developing the corporate systems and procedures.
6. The Oracle E-Business Suite, introduced in 2008, is the system used to make the creditors payments. At the time of the introduction of the system, scanning and limited Optical Character reading (OCR) functionality was adopted enabling matching of single-line purchase orders only.
7. Since that date there have a number of upgrades to the system including enhancements to the OCR functionality to enable multi-line purchase order matching, automatic import of emailed invoices into the system and the ability undertake specified amendments within the system resulting in a more efficient end-to-end process.
8. The most recent upgrade to the system (November 2013) has proved problematic, owing to poorer response times from the system. This was compounded by templates not being kept up to date to allow the OCR system to function effectively.

Actions taken to improve performance

9. An action plan, developed in partnership with ICT and our software supplier, Patech, was agreed with specific actions which are closely monitored, including:
 - A new server was installed w/c 10 February 2014.
 - The role of 'template champion' and a 'template team' has been established. 4 members of the Accounts Payable (AP) staff were trained on 19 March 2014 on the creation and amendment / maintenance of supplier invoice templates.
 - Improved workflow / work queues and individual performance monitoring arrangements within the central creditors team
10. The Central Creditors team is now responsible for the maintenance and creation of all templates used for OCR matching and automation. The team is also responsible for proactively engaging with suppliers to ensure where possible invoices and templates can be matched. The top 20 suppliers have been reviewed and early indications suggest that approximately 30% of invoices are now being auto-matched (previously it was estimated this was approximately 10%). Work is continuing to further develop additional templates.

11. Additional resources have been targeted to address any backlog in invoices awaiting payment. This has proved successful is driving up performance, which was 91% in both February and March and 93% for April and May 2014.
12. New ways of working have been introduced. A telephone Rota has also been established to better manage enquiries from suppliers. All calls are diverted to a small team allowing the remainder of the team to work uninterrupted.
13. The monthly Invoice Payment Improvement Group Meetings include representatives from each service to discuss developments, processes changes and system enhancements in order to improve performance across the Council. In addition to this meeting AP Supervisors are holding monthly meetings with each service area to discuss developments which are specific to their service.
14. Implementation of Oracle Business Intelligence (BI) has allowed the development of up to date dash-boards on a daily basis. These dashboards have allowed AP staff and service representatives to adopt a proactive approach to prioritising invoice payments and identify corrective actions to prevent invoice payments becoming late. Whilst also identifying late payment trends.
15. A review of the date of receipt of invoices and the date of the invoice has indicated that a number of suppliers print invoices early in the month but do not send them until later on the month. Informal discussions have been held with key suppliers to improve their internal processes, including prompt issuing of invoices.

Continuing actions

16. System response times continue to be an ongoing issue. Patech have acknowledged that system performance is should be better and are currently undertaking investigations in order to improve this area.
17. The service is working with ICT, Patech and Internal Audit. A full business process review is to be undertaken across the summer. The purpose of the review is to ensure that the system is being properly utilised and that work is undertaken in the most appropriate module of the system and to challenge existing process, procedure and culture and redesign as appropriate.
18. Ongoing development and roll out of Oracle Business Intelligence module, which provides real time performance analytics thereby allowing the team to address any performance issues straight away.
19. Upgrading the current Oracle system to Version 12 is underway with a planned implementation date of 28 July 2014. Although the initial upgrade is a 'lift and shift', the upgrade does offer additional functionality and modules including iSupplier and enhanced workflow functionality, which would have a beneficial impact on payment performance and this will be prioritised post implementation of R12.

20. As noted above, the actions taken over the last few months appear to be proving successful, with these measures and the input of additional resources, performance in the first two months of 2014/15 has recovered to 93%.

Conclusion

21. Performance has improved but there is still work to be done in order to maintain the current performance levels.
22. Payment performance will continue to be closely monitored and resources employed accordingly.
23. The service will continue to work with ICT, Patech and internal audit to deliver a robust and efficient system which will consistently meet the required performance levels
24. The Invoice Payment Improvement Group and individual Service meetings will continue and any developments identified as part of the above meetings will be fully considered and agreed development will be implemented and monitored.

Recommendations

25. Members are asked to note the report and the progress made in relation to payment of undisputed invoices to suppliers within 30 days.

Contact: Ian Ferguson

Tel: 03000 260419

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance – None. Re-prioritising of existing resources has allowed additional support and capacity to be provided to ensure performance is improved.

Staffing – Staffing levels will remain at current levels until system performance issues are addressed and the end to end process review is completed and any outcomes implemented.

Risk – If work with ICT, Patech and internal audit fails to deliver a robust and efficient system and processes, performance may not be maintained if resources are allocated elsewhere within the service. This could lead to a loss of reputation with suppliers. However, by closely monitoring performance utilising and prioritising existing resources any associated risk will be quickly identified and addressed.

Equality and Diversity - none

Accommodation – Not Applicable

Crime and Disorder – Not applicable

Human Rights – Not Applicable

Consultation – Not Applicable

Procurement - None

Disability - None

Legal Implications - None

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Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee



7 July 2014

Review of the Committee's Work Programme 2014-2015

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide for Members consideration an updated work programme for the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee for 2014 -15.

Background

2. At its meeting on 27th March 2014, the Corporate Issues O/S Committee considered the actions identified within the Council Plan 2014 – 2017 for the Altogether Better priority theme and agreed to refresh its work programme to include a number of these actions.

Detail

3. In accordance with this decision, a work programme for 2014 - 2015 has been prepared, please find attached at Appendix 2.
4. Members are requested to also identify any possibly areas of scrutiny investigation, (indepth and light touch reviews). Members may recall, at the CIOSC meeting of 27th March, discussions included:
 - The MTFP is the ongoing area of major focus and that early involvement is important;
 - Sickness absence as a potential topic for future review;
 - The possibility of a future light touch review on progress with payment of invoices within 30 days (links to a previous scrutiny review)

Recommendation

5. Members of the Committee are asked to agree the attached work programme.

Background Papers

Council Plan 2014 – 2017.

Corporate Issues OSC Report 27 March 2014 – Council Plan 2014-17 – Refresh of Work Programme for Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Contact: Jenny Haworth, Head of Planning and Performance
Tel. 03000 268071 Email: jennyhaworth@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

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 – 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

<p>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2014 TO 2015</p> <p>Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CIOSC)</p> <p>Lead Officer: Jenny Haworth</p> <p>IPG contact: Jeff Garfoot/Paul Darby</p>	<p>Note:</p> <p>O/S Review - A systematic 6 monthly review of progress against recommendations/Action Plan</p> <p>Scrutiny/Working Group – In-depth Review/Light Touch Review</p> <p>Overview/progress – information on an issue; opportunity to comment, shape, influence, progress with a scrutiny review</p> <p>Performance/Budget – ongoing monitoring (quarterly) performance reports/budgets</p>
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	When	Who	Outcome	Comment
Scrutiny/Working Group <i>(Light Touch/In-depth review)</i>				
Customer First Strategy	Feb – July 2014	Alan Patrickson Mary Readman S Gwilym	To enable Scrutiny Members to have input into the Customer First Strategy	Task and Finish Group – objectives: Customer First Strategy; efficient and effective access channels; Customer standards; Learning from customer feedback.
Future topics to be agreed following Members' engagement into identified areas of scrutiny review				

Overview/Progress				
Budget and MTFP process Improving efficiency and value for money	Sep 2014 – March 2015 Dates to be confirmed	Don McLure/ Lorraine O'Donnell/Jeff Garfoot	To enable scrutiny Members to comment and feed into MTFP and DCC's budget setting process – and also to monitor continuously as a priority for CIOSC (joint with OSMB).	A commissioned approach to look at any issues/reviews linked to achieving savings within the MTFP, as and when requested Update reports considered by CIOSC
Regulation of Investigatory Powers	Annual Review – 7 July or 19 Sept 2014 Q3 and Q1 – 7 July 2014 Q2 – 14 Nov 2014 Q3 – 9 March 2015	Colette Longbottom/Clare Burrows	To inform Members of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') on a quarterly basis.	Members' information.
Sickness Absence	Performance Managements reports: Q1 – 19 Sept 2014 Q2 - 23 Jan 2015 Q3 – 20 Apr 2015 Q4 – tbc	Jenny Haworth/ Kim Jobson	To enable Members to monitor sickness absence within DCC	Regular updates to CIOSC – through Performance reporting.

Customer First Strategy	19 Sept 2014	M Readman	To update Members on the revised Customer First Strategy – scrutiny have had input to the Strategy through the light touch review.	CIOSC Task and Finish Group set up in Jan 2014 to look at the Customer First Strategy refresh
Web development/online services		Roger Goodes/ Mary Readman		Links into the Customer First Strategy, and also monitored in quarterly performance reporting.
Review of Accounts Payable (Invoices paid)	7 th July 2014 Performance Management reports: Q1 – 19 Sept 2014 Q2 - 23 Jan 2015 Q3 – 20 Apr 2015 Q4 – tbc	Ian Ferguson	To keep Members updated re ongoing system improvements.	Scrutiny review carried out in May 2011. Monitored through quarterly performance reports.

Work with Town and Parish Councils	14 Nov 2014	Gordon Elliott/ Donna Jefferson	To update Members on partnership work carried out by DCC with Town and Parish Councils	Linked to Local Councils Working Group
Customer Feedback – Compliments, Complaints, Suggestions quarterly report	7 July 2014 19 Sept 2014 14 Nov 2014 23 Jan 2015	A Patrickson/M Readman	Following transfer from Standards Committee quarterly reports to CIOSC.	Members' information.
CAS Annual Representations Report	14 Nov 2014	Gill Ward/Clare McLaren	Following changes to reporting for Representations within Durham County Council (DCC), the (CAS) Annual Representations Report 2012/13 to be presented to CIOSC.	Members' information.
ICT Services ICT Prioritisation process	9 March 2015	Phil Jackman	To regularly update Members on ICT services	Members' information.
Community Asset Transfer	To be agreed	Gordon Elliott	To update Members on Community Asset Transfer	
Engaging Effectively with our communities and partners, through AAPs	Future update as needed	Gordon Elliott	To monitor progress	Systematic review and sign off of the 'Fit for Purpose, Fit for the Future' O/S Review went to CIOSC 19 Feb 2014. Agreed should remain on CIOSC Work Programme and reported regularly to OSMB through CDP Updates.

Performance/Budget				
Performance Quarter Reporting (Assistant Chief Executives and Resources)	Q1 – 19 Sept 2014 Q2 - 23 Jan 2015 Q3 – 20 Apr 2015 Q4 – tbc	Jenny Haworth		Standing item
Budget Outturn Report Quarter Reporting (Assistant Chief Executives and Resources)	Q4 – 19 Sept 2014 Q2 - 23 Jan 2015 Q3 – 20 April 2015 Q4 – tbc	Jeff Garfoot		Standing item

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