



Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date Monday 20 April 2015
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. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2015 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. Declarations of Interest, if any.
5. Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 3 - 2014/15 (Pages 9 - 12)
Report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
6. Q3 2014/15 Performance Management Report (Pages 13 - 30)
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
7. Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Q3 Report 2014/15. (Pages 31 - 48)
Joint Report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services and Assistant Chief Executive.
8. Q3 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2013/14 (Pages 49 - 62)
 - (i) Report of the Assistant Chief Executive
 - (ii) Report of the Corporate Director Resources.
9. Refresh of the Work Programme for Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (Pages 63 - 74)
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.

10. Sickness Absence Management Policy - Proposed Corporate Issues
OSC Review (Pages 75 - 78)
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
11. 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
10 April 2015

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, Carr, P Crathorne,
J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, A Shield, T Smith, P Stradling, L Taylor,
A Turner, M Wilkes, S Wilson and R Young

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE ISSUES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 23 January 2015 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors J Armstrong, L Armstrong, Carr, K Henig (Vice-Chairman), J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, M Wilkes and S Wilson

Also Present:

Councillors B Graham, A Hopgood and J Shuttleworth

1 Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Bleasdale, A Shield, T Smith and R Young.

2 Substitute Members.

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

3 Minutes of the meeting held 21 November 2014.

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Declarations of Interest, if any.

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

5 Medium Term Financial Plan

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director Resources and Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the 2015/16 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan MTFP(5), the Council Tax base position for 2015/16 and Service Plans 2015/16 to 2017/18. The Committee also received a second report on the MTFP(5) 2015/16 to 2017/18 and the 2015/16 Budget following the Government's Local Financial Settlement announcement on 18 December 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) advised that no cuts in addition to the previously announced £40m of funding reductions had been announced in the Autumn statement for

2015/16 however the government were forecasting that further public expenditure reductions would be required in every year up to 2019/20. The statement had also provided some good news in that the doubling of Small Business Rate Relief would continue for a further year into 2015/16.

The Head of Finance continued to provide a summary on the key messages from each report and welcomed questions from Members.

Councillor Martin asked for clarification on cashflow on the model as there was disparity between figures on the tables included on pages 33 and 79 and in particular the provisional settlement details on page 68 being £7m less than that shown in the model.

In addition Councillor Martin noted that there was no mention of NHS funding. In addition he made a comment in regard to price inflation and he noted variances in inflation within services provided by the Council. He therefore suggested that consideration could be given to reviewing the current price inflation rate of 1.5% within the plan against the current inflation rate of 0.5% with a view to identifying further savings.

The Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) advised that the council was receiving significant funding for social care which was being utilised in order to protect social care. With regard to price inflation he advised that although the inflation rates are presently low there is no guarantee that this would continue throughout 2015/16. In addition the 1.5% price inflation allowance had been in place for a number of years when inflation was significantly in excess of that limit. Inflation levels would be monitored throughout 2015/16 to determine if any adjustments could be made to future years budget plans.

A further query was raised regarding cash limit reserve levels and the Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) advised that in the future these reserves would continue to be utilised for ERVR funding. If this reserve was not available to the council, savings would have been achieved less quickly and the council may have found itself in a much worse position at this stage in the MTFP.

Councillor J Armstrong in referring to the welfare provision grant added that the council was correct to plan ahead for the next two years at this stage.

Councillor Wilkes in referencing page 79 of the report asked whether the £500k budgeted for energy price increases was necessary when it was known that energy prices were currently falling and together with a reduction in buildings and staff energy costs should be reduced. He therefore suggested that this figure be reviewed and set at £250k with a view to reallocating the remaining to capital investment.

Councillor Armstrong advised that the question could be put forward for review by Cabinet.

Councillor Wilkes further asked whether it would be possible to review savings from 'Court cost fee income'. Councillor J Armstrong advised that Councillor Napier had already agreed to look in to this matter.

In response to comments raised regarding energy prices the Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) advised that in light of the reduction in oil prices the requirement for additional

budget for Energy is continually under review with adjustment in the council report being a possibility.

Councillor Hopgood in noting the impact to the loss of the £1.9 million welfare assistance grant suggested that if savings could be made from energy price reductions this may enable the council to mitigate some of the loss seen on the welfare assistance grant and place less strain on reserves.

Councillor J Armstrong agreed that this question could be put forward. In responding to comments made the Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) advised that the council have been aware for some time that this grant would be taken away and it had always been the intention to utilise reserves during 15/16 to ensure the continuation of welfare provision.

Councillor Martin in referring to the tables contained on pages 33 and 79 and the resource base, commented that there was a significant variance between the two and suggested that if this money had been moved into reserves then it should be explained so in the report. The Head of Finance (Corporate Finance) advised that it was about recognising the size of the challenge. £3m had been moved into the contingency budget at the beginning of the MTFP process, however now that the council were getting on top of the savings funds from within this budget could be released back into the MTFP during 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Further discussion took place with Councillor Martin on this topic and although he noted that there was significant variance between the two reports the Head of Finance advised that there had be no utilisation of reserves in this case and it was a separate corporate risk budget used which was in place to mitigate any costs associated with flooding or inclement weather..

Councillor Wilkes then commented that he failed to see why some of the savings now identified had not been achieved earlier. In particular he made reference to school transport and capital schemes to replace footpaths to provide safe walking routes for children, negating the requirement and subsequent cost of providing taxi's and buses. He felt that the council could do more in terms of investing to save and suggested that this also be raised with Cabinet.

It was noted that the school transport budget operated in academic years and involved a detailed consultation process which would have to be completed prior to the new school year, therefore this saving could not be achieved during 2015/16 but could potentially be considered within future budgets.

Members further suggested that it may of use in the future to invite portfolio holders to attend these sessions in order to seek further clarification of certain aspects of the budget.

Resolved:

That the comments and suggestions of scrutiny be formulated into a formal response and forwarded to Cabinet for their consideration.

6 Quarter 2 2014/15 Performance Management Report

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Better Council theme and reported upon other significant performance issues for the second quarter of 2014/15 covering the period July to September 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager provided detail on key performance highlights for the quarter including the processing times for new benefit claims and changes in circumstances; more customers seen at customer access points within the 15 minute target; improved call handling and occupancy levels of council owned business floor space.

Members further noted key performance challenges in respect of payment of supplier invoices within 30 days, sickness absence, appraisals and Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations requests responded to within the deadline.

The Chair then welcomed the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development who was in attendance to discuss further the issues surrounding sickness absence and appraisals.

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development proceeded to run through the presentation which highlighted data relating to sickness absence including and excluding schools. It was reported that members would note that days lost had dropped during quarter 3 and was therefore better than those figures presented at quarter 2, however figures were still too high and this was being managed by service managers. The presentation provided details relating to days lost, categories of sickness absence and long and short term absences.

Moving on to performance appraisals it was noted that although the number of appraisals completed in quarter 2 was low, quarter 3 figures showed an improvement at 87% which was above target.

Councillor Lethbridge reminded members at this point that sickness absence was included within the work programme for this committee and would be subject to further in depth review.

Councillor Armstrong commented that during his time on the authority the level of sickness absence had never changed in 15 years. In his opinion the only way it could be improved would be by having an aggressive policy in place and fully assessing where the council was at now and where it wanted to be in the future.

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development advised that there was academic data which suggested that there were higher levels of sickness in deprived areas. In addition it was difficult to find comparative or benchmarking data as there were no direct comparisons due to the complexity of the organisation.

She further added that in order to replicate the performance of smaller private organisations the council would have to recreate a small business culture in a large organisation.

Discussion ensued regarding the frequency of managers meeting with staff and how these sessions were crucial to managing staff absences and picking up on any issues in the workplace which may attribute to sickness absence.

Councillor Wilkes commented that his own research had proven that every council who had brought in an external company to manage sickness absence had seen significant improvements in performance and the overall health of the workforce had improved significantly. He further added that many staff did not wish to speak to their managers regarding personal issues which may be attributing to their absences and therefore felt that they could do so with more confidence by contacting an external agency.

He further added in respect of tenant arrears that he wished to congratulate the team for their performance however suggested that the target may now need revising as the team were so far ahead of the current one.

The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development advised that she had undertaken a similar research to that outlined by Councillor Wilkes however her conclusions did suggest that levels of sickness absence had not altered that significantly. She made reference to the former Durham City Council and the external system they operated noting that their results had not changed following its implementation. The Head of Planning and Performance advised that members could look at this evidence as part of the in-depth review.

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager advised that the target in respect of rent arrears would be removed from the indicator set following the completion of the transfer of housing.

Councillor Hopgood added that in her opinion the appraisals process was not difficult and the current target of 85% was too low and the target should always be set at 100%. She further suggested that it would be useful to see whether a mechanism could be put in place to see whether those members of staff who had been unfit for work for a period of 1 year or more had been appraised and whether there was anything identified within those appraisals which could have, if managed better prevented the sickness absence occurring.

Councillor J Carr added that it would be interesting to see whether absence was worse in certain service areas and which managers' areas these were. She further be raised a query regarding short unrelated periods of sickness absence. In response the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development advised that there was data available which could be presented through the review group.

Councillor L Armstrong commented that in his opinion disability related absence could not be treat the same as other areas of sickness and therefore asked how these absences were differentiated.

Councillor Hillary added that in his experience having an effective return to work interview was crucial. In addition he commented that the current appraisal target was simply not

good enough and all staff must be appraised. He did however add that he was pleased to hear that compulsory manager training was being undertaken.

Councillor Wilkes added that he would like to see in the next report the number of managers who had completed training and how their service was performing in terms of sickness absence. The Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development advised that this could be provided down to a certain level.

With regard to return to work interviews she agreed that they were critical in managing sickness absence. Further discussion on this topic could be undertaken during the course of the review.

In conclusion the Head of Planning and Performance advised that all the comments relating to sickness absence would be fed in to the review, with a draft scoping document being presented to the committee at the next meeting.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

7 Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Quarter 2 Report 2014/15

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services and Assistant Chief Executive which presented performance and learning outcomes in relation to Customer Feedback; Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions received for all Council Services during Quarter 2 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor Hillary in referring to page 113 of the report asked how many replacement bins had been replace at a cost of £20 as it was not clear whether the number of complaints relating to this charge was high or relatively small in comparison to the number of bins issued. He further asked how many of the suggestions that had been received had been wholly or partly implemented.

In response the Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised that she could provide further detail in response to those questions following the meeting.

Councillor Wilkes with reference to page 117 paragraph 72 asked whether of those issues that had been awarded financial settlement if figures could be anonymised and provided to members. In addition he also added that it would be useful for members to be able to have sight of the reasons why a complaint was upheld.

The Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager advised that she would take these comments forward to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services however commented that she would likely be of the opinion that Standards Committee was the appropriate place for this information to be considered and therefore would be reluctant to change that process of reporting information. Further discussion took place regarding this issue and Councillor J Armstrong asked that the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be consulted on the suggestions.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

The Chairman considered the following item of business to of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration because of a recently announced high court decision.

8. Sniperley LLP – High Court Decision.

Councillor Wilkes in referring to a matter raised at County Council pertaining to the judgement of a high court case and a lack of knowledge on this matter by local councillors, asked whether it would be possible to review the way in which backbench members were notified of cases of a certain level of importance, as there currently appeared to be an issue in the dissemination of information.

Further discussion took place regarding his issue and it was agreed that further information on this matter would be sought and reported back to members in due course.

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**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

20 April 2015

**Report on the Council's use of powers
under the Regulation of Investigatory
Powers Act 2000 – Quarter 3 - 2014/15**



**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 October 2014 until 31 December 2014 (Quarter 3) 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 October 2014 and 31 December 2014 and the outcomes following surveillance.

Quarter 3 Activity

4. During Quarter 3 there have been 3 new RIPA Directed Surveillance authorisations, which related to operations conducted by Trading Standards regarding sales of illicit cigarettes from a residential premises, unlicensed gambling at a premises and the sale of counterfeit clothing, footwear and accessories.

5. There were also 2 new Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) authorisations which related to operations which were conducted by Trading Standards and for which a Directed Surveillance authorisation was also obtained as outlined in paragraph 4.
6. All authorisations were approved the Magistrate and there were no difficulties or issues raised by the Magistrate in approving the applications.
7. The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during both quarters is consistent with the Council's policy and the policy remains fit for purpose.

Outcomes following surveillance

8. No formal action is to be taken in relation to the operation regarding unlicensed gambling at a premises. Whilst there have been no prosecutions yet in relation to the other operations carried out during the reporting quarter, potential defendants have been identified and interviewed.

Recommendations and Reasons

9. It is recommended that members receive the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 October 2014 to 31 December 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**

20 April 2015

**Quarter 3 2014/15
Performance Management Report**



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

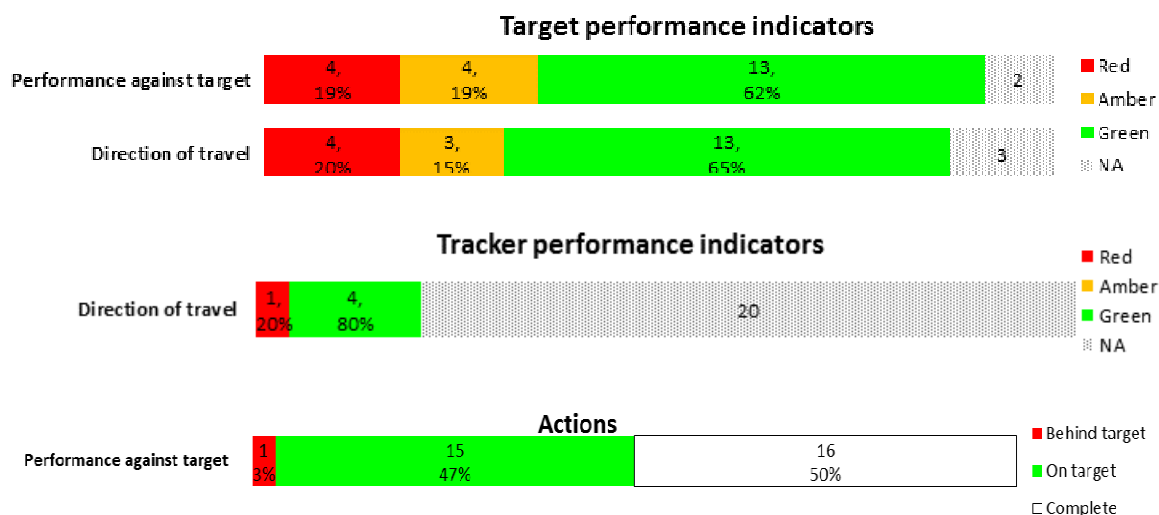
Purpose of the Report

1. To present progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators for the Altogether Better Council theme and report other significant performance issues for the third quarter of 2014/15 covering the period October to December 2014.

Background

2. The report sets out an overview of performance and progress for the Altogether Better Council 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 (see Appendix 3, table 1); 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 (see Appendix 3, table 2).
3. The report continues to incorporate a stronger focus on volume measures in our performance framework. This allows us to better quantify productivity and to monitor the effects of reductions in resources and changes in volume of activity. Charts detailing some of the key volume measures which form part of the council's corporate basket of performance indicators are presented in Appendix 4.
4. A corporate performance indicator guide has been produced which provides full details of indicator definitions and data sources. This is available to view from the intranet or can be requested from the Corporate Planning and Performance Team at performance@durham.gov.uk.

Altogether Better Council: Overview



Council Performance

5. Key achievements this quarter include:

- a. Between October and December 2014, 207,209 telephone calls were answered, which is 95% of all calls received, compared to 90% at the same period last year. 94% were answered within three minutes against the target of 80%. This was an improvement on the same period last year, when 87% were answered within three minutes. The volume of telephone calls shows a decrease in calls received this quarter (218,592) when compared with the previous quarter (244,074) and with the same period last year (235,064) (see Appendix 4, Chart 5). There were no additional automatic call distribution telephone lines added or removed this quarter, however there was less customer contact during December due to the shutdown over the festive period. There was also an 18% decrease in contact received via emails and web forms (14,323) compared to the same quarter last year (17,486). This was due to the Christmas closedown, the launch of the new website with customers getting used to navigating the new design and also some downtime was experienced due to technical issues with the web form links and a new platform.
- b. During quarter 3, the percentage of customers seen at a customer access point (CAP) within the 15 minutes target was 97%, better than the same period last year (95%). The figures show a decrease in customers from 57,763 in quarter 2 to 46,271 in quarter 3 as well as a decrease when comparing to the same period last year (60,479) (see Appendix 4, Chart 6).
- c. This quarter saw a high degree of activity in relation to business lettings within council owned factories and business support centres with 17 new lettings and nine tenants leaving, bringing the occupancy levels to 79.3%. Performance is above the target of 76.5% and the same period last year (76.5%). The increase in occupancy levels has resulted in increased income from council owned business space. Between April and December 2014 £2,367,000 was generated, better than the target of £2,265,000 and performance for the same time last year (£1,986,971).

- d. For the third consecutive quarter, 94% of Information Communication Technology (ICT) service desk calls were resolved on time, which is better than the 90% target. 86% of calls were answered within one minute.
- e. Better than target performance has been sustained for benefit claims processing for new claims and changes of circumstances during quarter 3. Processing times are better than the respective profiled target for quarter three and are better than the most recently reported national averages. During quarter 3:
 - i. New Housing Benefit (HB) claims were processed in 19.6 days on average, within the 21.3 day target and better than the same period last year (21). This compares favourably with the latest (quarter 2) national and nearest statistical neighbour figures of 23 and 21 days respectively. The volume of new HB claims processed decreased from 3,429 in quarter 2 to 3,174 this period (Appendix 4, Chart 1).
 - ii. New Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims were processed in 20.9 days on average, within the 21.3 day target and 1.3 days quicker than the same period last year. There were 3,453 new CTR claims processed compared to 3,798 in quarter 2 (Appendix 4, Chart 2).
 - iii. Changes to HB claims were processed in 9.5 days on average, within the 10 day target, but 0.02 days slower than the same period last year. Performance was better than both the quarter 2 national and nearest statistical neighbour averages of 10 and 11 days respectively. The volume of change of circumstances for HB claims processed decreased from 27,308 in quarter 2 to 24,881 this period (Appendix 4, Chart 3).
 - iv. Changes to CTR claims were processed in 9.2 days on average, within the 10 day target and 0.85 days faster than the same period last year. During quarter 3, 27,090 change of circumstances for CTR claims were processed compared to 28,732 in quarter 2 (Appendix 4, Chart 4).

Efforts to improve the flow of information between different parts of the Revenues and Benefits Service have contributed to this improved position. This remains an area of focus as processes and procedures are reviewed.

- 6. The key performance improvement issues for this theme are:
 - a. Improving the management of attendance and reducing sickness absence continues to be a priority for the council. Data for quarter 3 show:
 - i. The average days lost to sickness absence per full time equivalent (FTE) employee (including school based employees) for the rolling year has increased from 9.02 days at quarter 2 to 9.31 days at the end of quarter 3 2014/15, a deterioration of 3.22%. The target of 8.7 days has not been achieved.
 - ii. The average number of days lost to sickness absence per FTE (when excluding schools based employees) for the rolling year has remained at 11.97 days at the end of quarter 3 as at quarter 2. The target of 11.8 days has not been achieved.

- iii. During the rolling year, 47% of posts (excluding school based employees) had no sickness absence.
- iv. The percentage time lost to sickness absence (excluding schools) has remained at 4.73% at the end of quarter 3 as at quarter 2. A trend of less long and more short and medium term absence continued during quarter 3.

Work continues to ensure that all sickness absence is actively and consistently managed to achieve the improvement targets we set ourselves for 2014/15. Recent and forthcoming developments to manage reporting and support for managers across the organisation include:

- A streamlined draft Attendance Management Policy, including a 'rehabilitation' section, and a strengthened approach for the management of short term sickness.
 - Compulsory sickness absence training for managers (tiers 4 and 5).
 - The rollout of ResourceLink's leave management module has been completed across all service groupings except Children and Adult Services, which will follow from February 2015. This enables managers to input sickness absence directly via MyView and will improve the speed and accuracy of recording absence.
 - Sickness absence data including proportions of short, medium and long term sickness is being monitored at service level.
- b. Significant efforts during quarter 3 have resulted in a much improved employee appraisal rate with 81.7% of staff receiving an appraisal in the 12 months to December 2014. Whilst this is a significant increase of 24.5% compared to quarter 2 (65.6%) and more than double that of quarter 1 2012/13 (40.3%), the corporate target of 85% has not been achieved.

Human Resources will continue to provide support and encouragement to managers in relation to appraisal activity, developments and training, and promote the required improvements in this key organisational activity. Actions currently underway include:

- 'MyView Alerts' which assist managers and advise them when appraisals are due.
 - Performance appraisal training continues to be delivered
 - A new facility is available for managers to securely store electronic copies of performance appraisal documentation for their team in MyView.
- c. The percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers during quarter 3 was 91% which is a one percentage point improvement compared to the previous quarter, despite necessary interruption to business during the upgrade of the Oracle financials system. Performance however is one percentage point below the target of 92%. 73% of undisputed invoices were paid within ten days.
- d. The percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within 20 days was 74% this quarter, four percentage point deterioration from the previous

quarter (78%) and remaining below the national target of 85%. Several complex responses were handled in quarter 3 and the Christmas closure also delayed some responses (see Appendix 4, Chart 7).

7. A key Council Plan action which will not achieve the deadline of February 2016 relates to the office accommodation programme. This has now been delayed until April 2016. The scope of the Newton Aycliffe and Stanley CAP and Library projects has been redefined and a new completion date of April 2016 has been agreed. For both of these sites the design team is currently working on producing detailed designs prior to pricing. Following the decanting of Hopper House, it has now been decommissioned in preparation of the redevelopment of North Road. The CAP in Old Bank Chambers was closed on 23 December 2014. A new customer surgery opened in Bishop Auckland Library located in the Bishop Auckland Town Hall on 8 January 2015, where customers can see a customer services officer about council tax and housing benefits.
8. The key risks to successfully delivering the objectives of this theme are:
 - a. If there was to be slippage in the delivery of the agreed Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings projects, this will require further savings to be made from other areas, which may result in further service reductions and job losses. 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, a programme management approach for key projects has been established and embedded across the council. Monitoring by Corporate Management Team and Cabinet provides assurance over the implementation of the agreed MTFP savings projects. It should be recognised that this will be a significant risk for at least the next four years.
 - b. Ongoing Government funding cuts which now extend to at least 2019/ 20 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. This will also be a significant risk for at least the next four 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. Lawyers, instructed through the Local Government Association on behalf of local authorities, have produced framework for settlement and this is currently being considered. It is hoped that settlement will be reached by the end of the 2014/ 15 financial year.
 - d. The council could suffer significant adverse service delivery and financial impact if there are delays in the implementation of the new banking contract. The new banking contract has been awarded and a project board established to ensure a smooth transition process.
 - e. If we were to fail to comply with Central Government's Public Services Network Code of Connection criteria, this would put some of our core business processes, such as revenues and benefits, at risk. An ongoing project is in place to ensure compliance. A backup ICT site is now in place. The equipment has been installed, data has been transferred, and a full test

is planned once remedial electrical work is carried out at the council's primary data site.

Recommendations and Reasons

9. 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
Tel: 03000 268071 **E-Mail:** jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk

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 issues.

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 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 - 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



Latest reported data remain in line with comparable period



Latest reported data have deteriorated from comparable period



Performance against target

Performance better than target

Getting there - performance approaching target (within 2%)

Performance >2% behind target

Actions:



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



Action on track to be achieved by the deadline



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

Benchmarking:



Performance better than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available



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



Performance worse than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available

Appendix 3: Summary of Key Performance Indicators

Table 1: Key Target Indicators

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure N/A	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure N/A	Period covered
Altogether Better Council											
64	NS22	Percentage of calls answered within three minutes	94	Oct - Dec 2014	80	GREEN	87	GREEN			
65	NS24	Percentage of customers seen within 15 minutes at a customer access point	97	Oct - Dec 2014	95	GREEN	95	GREEN			
66	RES/038	Percentage all ICT service desk incidents resolved on time	94	Oct - Dec 2014	90	GREEN	91	GREEN			
67	RES/NI/18 1a1	Average time taken to process new housing benefit claims (days)	19.64	Oct - Dec 2014	21.33	GREEN	21.02	GREEN	23.00 GREEN	21** GREEN	Jul - Sep 2014
68	RES/NI/18 1a2	Average time taken to process new council tax reduction claims (days)	20.90	Oct - Dec 2014	21.33	GREEN	22.18	GREEN			
69	RES/NI/18 1b1	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims (days)	9.47	Oct - Dec 2014	10.00	GREEN	9.45	RED	10.00 GREEN	11** GREEN	Jul - Sep 2014
70	RES/NI/18 1b2	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for council tax reduction claims (days)	9.20	Oct - Dec 2014	10.00	GREEN	10.05	GREEN			

Ref	PI 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
									N/A	N/A	
71	RES/001	Savings delivered against the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (£m)	22.0	As at Dec 2014	23.0	Not comparable [1]	18.7	NA			
72	RES/002	Percentage of council tax collected in-year	82.94	Apr - Dec 2014	83.38	AMBER	82.90	GREEN	97.00 Not comparable	96.01* Not comparable	2013/14
73	RES/003	Percentage of business rates collected in-year	81.63	Apr - Dec 2014	80.69	GREEN	85.40	RED	97.90 Not comparable	97.76* Not comparable	2013/14
74	RES/129	Percentage of council tax recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.07	As at Dec 2014	98.50	GREEN	99.10	AMBER			
75	RES/130	Percentage of business rates recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.18	As at Dec 2014	98.50	GREEN	99.20	AMBER			
76	REDPI39	Current tenant arrears as a percentage of the annual rent debit	1.7	Oct - Dec 2014	2.45	GREEN	1.88	GREEN			
77	REDPI78	Percentage of capital receipts received	69.0	Apr - Dec 2014	75.0	RED	43.0	GREEN			
78	REDPI33	Percentage of council owned business floor space that is occupied	79.30	As at Dec 2014	76.50	GREEN	76.50	GREEN			
79	REDPI76	Income generated from council owned business space (£)	2,367,000	Apr - Dec 2014	2,265,000	GREEN	1,986,971	GREEN			
80	REDPI49b	£ saved from solar installations on council owned buildings	214,000	2013/14	Not set	NA	New indicator	NA			

Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Period target	Current performance to target	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure N/A	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure N/A	Period covered
81	REDPI68	Average asset rating of Display Energy Certificates in county council buildings	99.10	As at Dec 2014	98.00	AMBER	NA	NA			
82	RES/LPI/010	Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers	91.0	Oct - Dec 2014	92.0	AMBER	91.0	AMBER			
83	ACE006	Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within statutory deadlines	74	Oct - Dec 2014	85	RED	80	RED			
84	RES/LPI/012	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services including school staff	9.31	Jan - Dec 2014	8.70	RED	8.92	RED			
85	RES/LPI/012a	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services excluding school staff	11.97	Jan - Dec 2014	11.80	AMBER	12.03	GREEN			
86	RES/011	Percentage of performance appraisals completed (excluding schools)	81.7	Jan - Dec 2014	85.0	RED	73.3	GREEN			

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

Table 2: Key Tracker Indicators

Page 24 Ref	PI 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											
183	NS43a	Number of customer contacts- face to face	46,271	Oct - Dec 2014	57,763	NA	60,479	NA			
184	NS43b	Number of customer contacts-telephone	218,592	Oct - Dec 2014	244,074	NA	235,064	NA			
185	NS43c	Number of customer contacts- web forms	3,654	Oct - Dec 2014	4,352	NA	4,196	NA			
186	NS43d	Number of customer contacts- emails	10,669	Oct - Dec 2014	12,839	NA	13,290	NA			
187	NS20	Percentage of abandoned calls	5	Oct - Dec 2014	5	AMBER	9	GREEN			
188	NS100	Number of complaints recorded on the Customer Relationship Management database (CRM)	898	Jul - Sep 2014	617	RED	856	RED			
189	RES/013	Staff aged under 25 as a percentage of post count	5.59	As at Dec 2014	5.63	NA	5.45	NA			
190	RES/014	Staff aged over 50 as a percentage of post count	38.42	As at Dec 2014	38.16	NA	37.79	NA			
191	RES/LPI /011a	Women in the top five percent of earners	52.32	As at Dec 2014	52.30	NA	52.11	NA			
192	RES/LPI /011bi	Black and minority ethnic (BME) as a percentage of post count	1.5	As at Dec 2014	1.53	NA	1.40	NA			
193	RES/LPI	Staff with disability as a	2.73	As at Dec	2.75	NA	2.90	NA			

Ref	PI 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
	/011ci	percentage of post count		2014							
194	REDPI 79	Number of tenants of the seven main housing providers seen through the triage process	Not reported	Oct - Dec 2014	506	NA	557	NA			
195	REDPI 79a	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers who were given employability advice	Not reported	Oct - Dec 2014	33	NA	38	NA			
196	REDPI 79b	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers who were given debt advice	Not reported	Oct - Dec 2014	33	NA	48	NA			
197	REDPI 79c	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers who were given income advice	Not reported	Oct - Dec 2014	65	NA	57	NA			
198	REDPI 79d	Percentage of triaged tenants of the seven main housing providers that have been rehoused	Not reported	Oct - Dec 2014	Not reported	NA	5.0	NA			
199	RES028	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by social sector size criteria	934,274	Apr - Dec 2014	813,326	NA	353,417	NA			
200	RES029	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by local housing allowance reforms	115,379	Apr - Dec 2014	84,430	NA	69,433	NA			

Ref	PI 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
201	ACE016	Percentage of children in poverty (quarterly proxy measure) (Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)	23.3	As at May 2014	23.6	AMBER	24.4	GREEN	17.6	24*	As at May 2014
202	ACE017	Percentage of children in poverty (national annual measure) (Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)	22.7	2012	23.0	GREEN	23.0	GREEN	18.9	23.4*	2012
203	RES/034	Staff - total headcount (including schools)	18,039	As at Dec 2014	17,453	NA	17,577	NA			
204	RES/035	Staff - total full time equivalent (FTE) (including schools)	14,110	As at Dec 2014	14,076	NA	14,211	NA			
205	RES/052	Percentage of posts with no absence (excluding schools)	46.66	Jan - Dec 2014	46.58	GREEN	Data not available	NA [1]			
206	RES/020	Percentage of time lost to sickness in rolling year (excluding schools)	4.73	Jan - Dec 2014	4.73	AMBER	4.75	GREEN			
207	RES/036	Number of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	11	Oct - Dec 2014	18	N/A	21	NA			

[1] Frequency changed and past data not available

Appendix 4: Volume Measures

Chart 1 – Housing Benefits – new claims

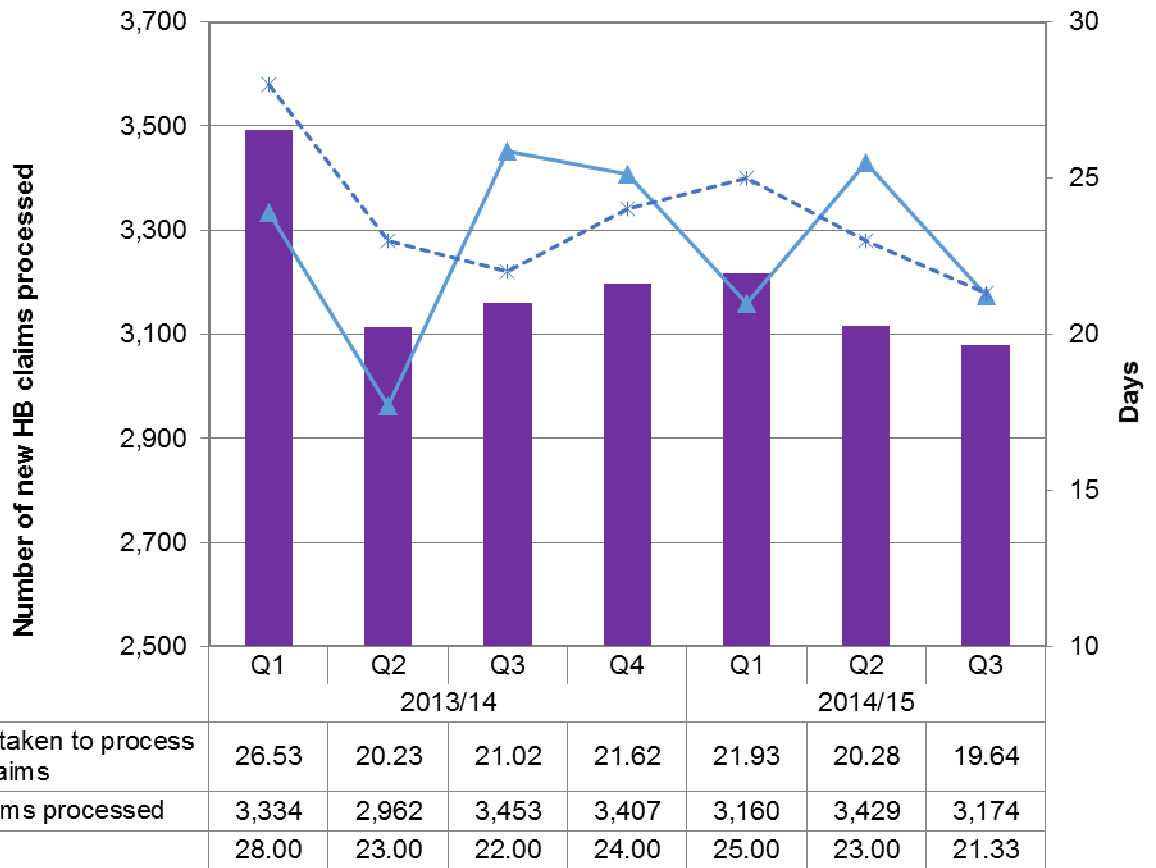


Chart 2 – Council Tax Reduction – new claims

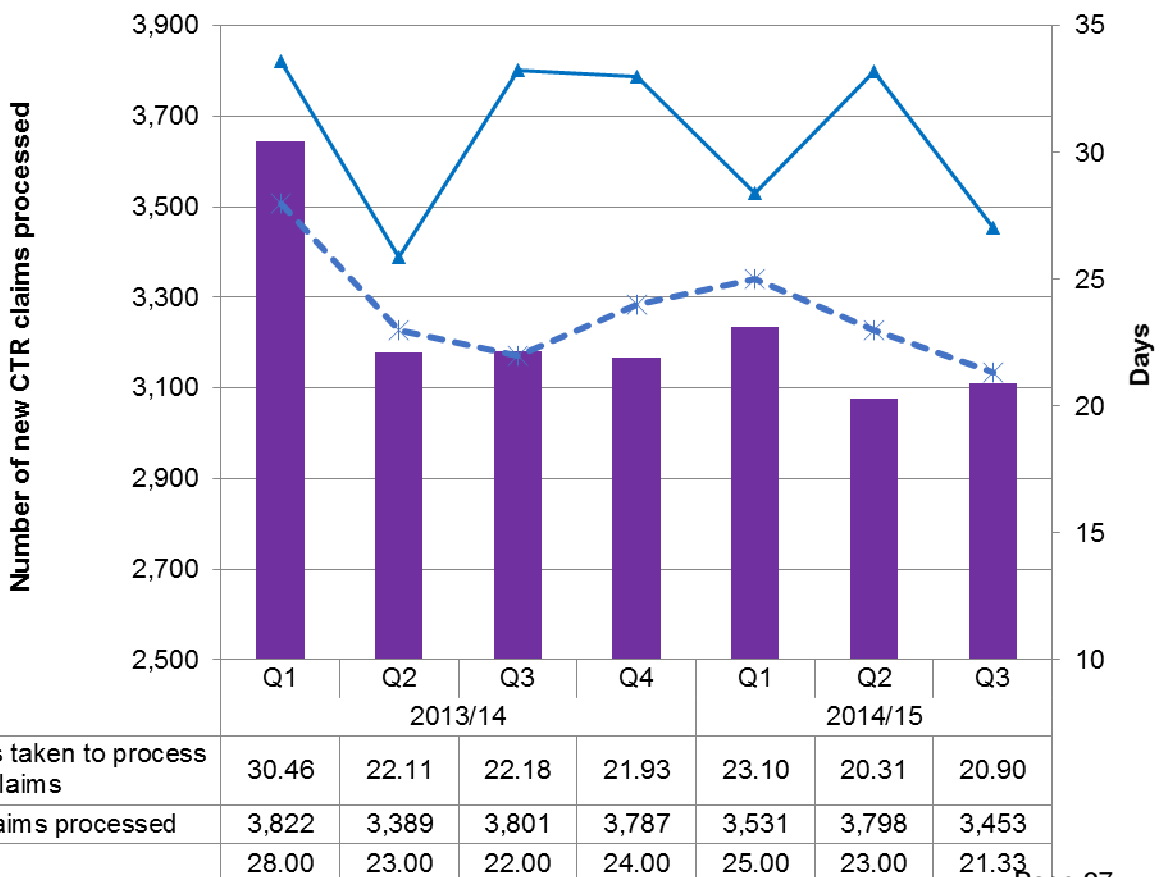


Chart 3 – Housing Benefits – changes of circumstances

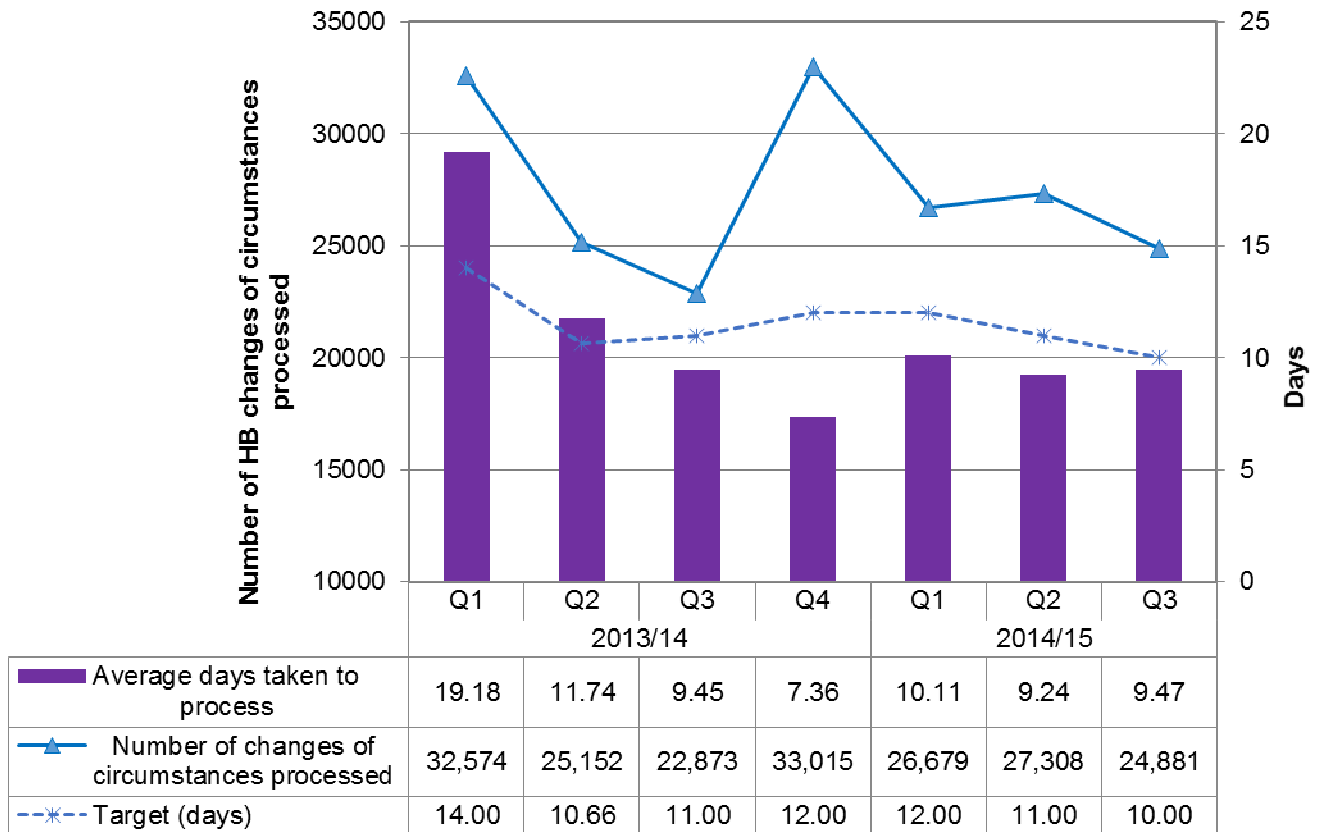


Chart 4 – Council Tax Reduction – changes of circumstances

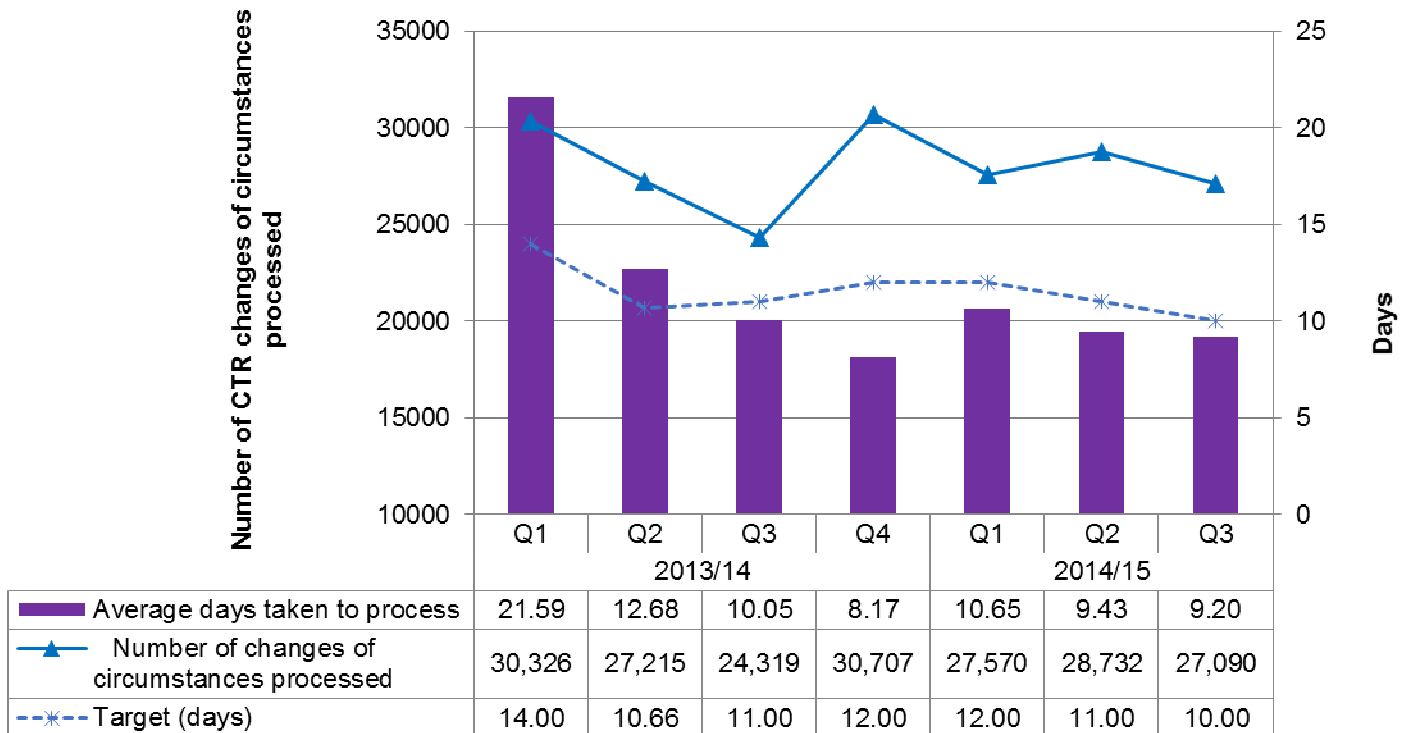


Chart 5 - Telephone calls

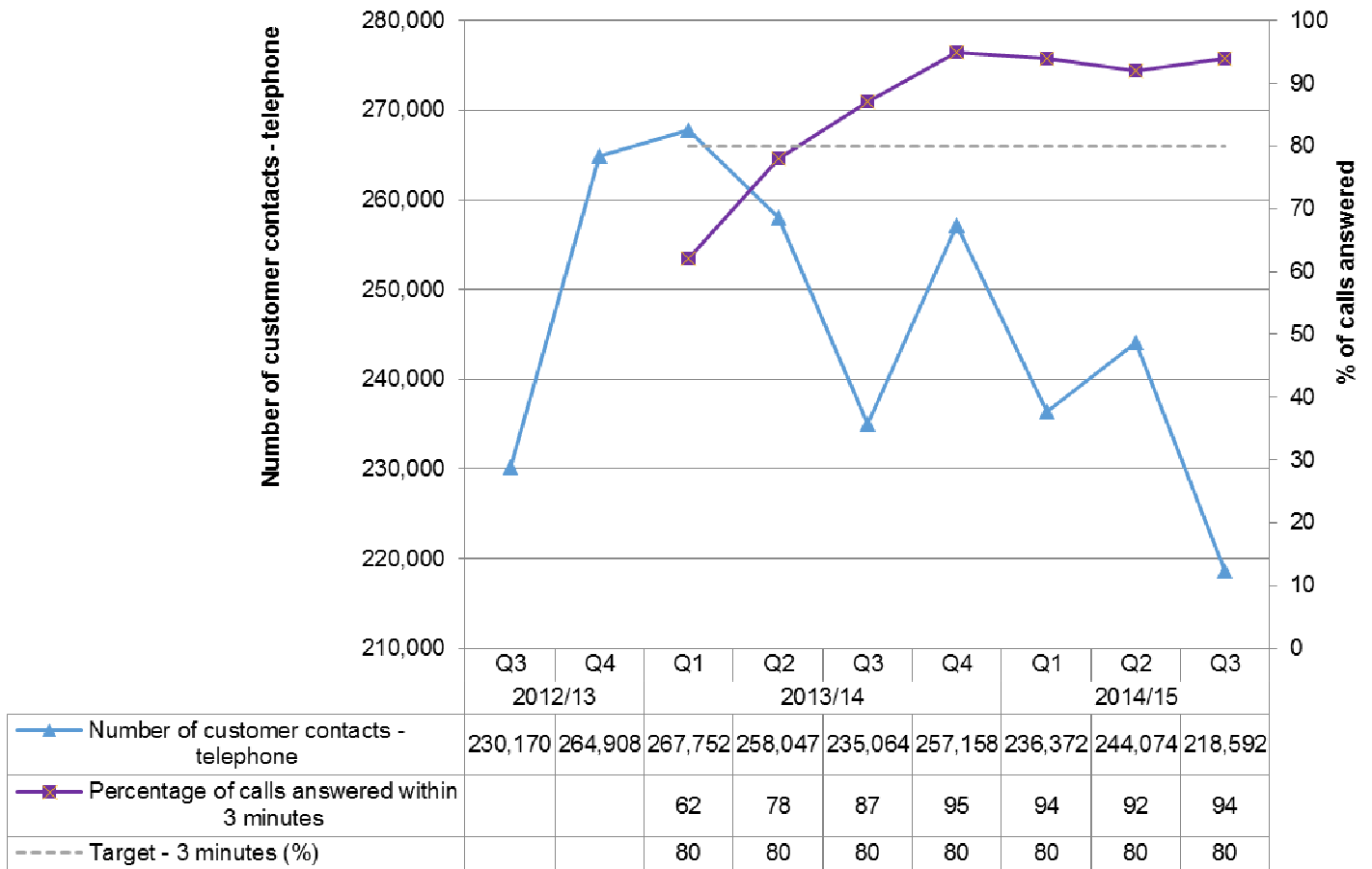


Chart 6 – Face to face contacts

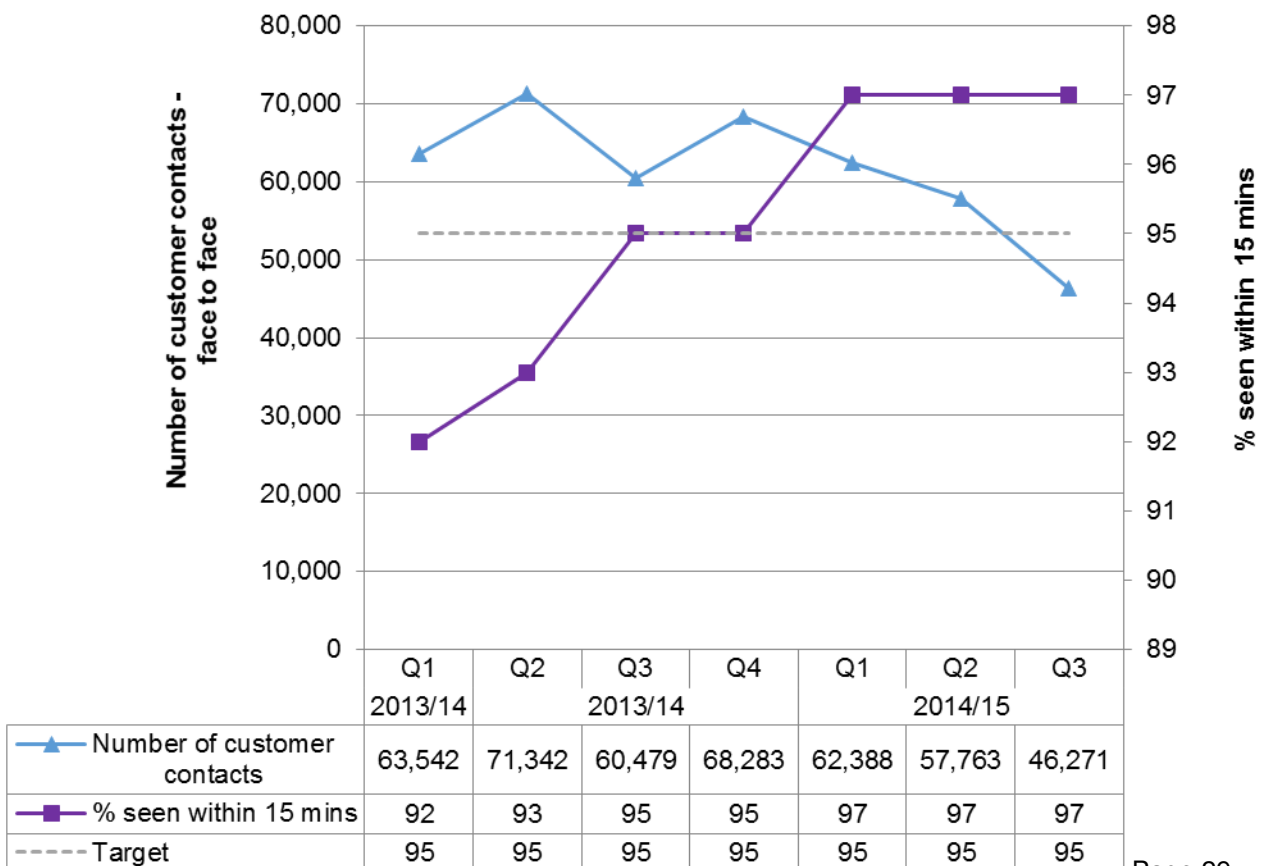
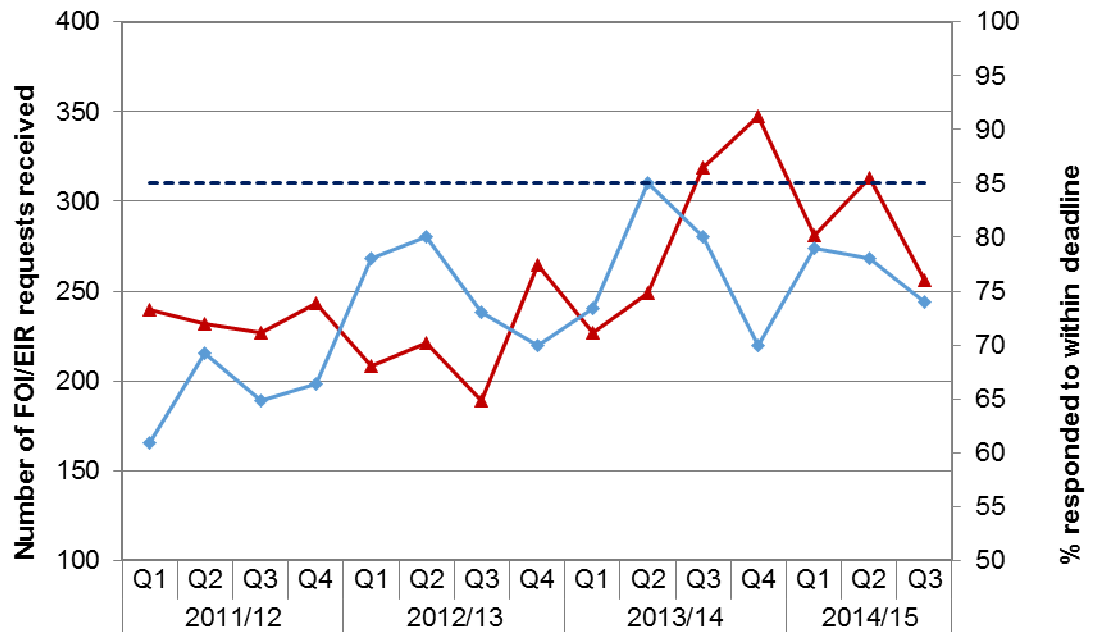


Chart 7 – Freedom of Information (FOI) requests



▲ Number of FOI/EIR requests received	240	232	227	243	208	221	189	265	227	249	319	347	281	313	256
◆ % of FOI/EIR requests responded to within statutory deadlines	61	69	65	66	78	80	73	70	73	85	80	70	79	78	74
----- Target (%)	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85	85

**Corporate Issues
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

20 April 2015



Customer Feedback Report Q3 2014 15

**Report of Terry Collins, Corporate Director of Neighbourhood
Services and Lorraine O'Donnell Assistant Chief Executive**

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To present to Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Quarter 3 Report 2014/15 (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. The full report at Appendix 2 provides details for each service grouping in relation to both statutory and non-statutory complaints compliments and suggestions received in Quarter 3 2014/15.

Recommendation

- 3 The Committee is asked to note the information in the report and provide feedback on the details surrounding the Q3 information.

**Contact: Mary Readman Tel. 03000 268161
Email: mary.readman@durham.gov.uk**

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

There can be financial settlements awarded by the Local Government Ombudsman where the council is found to be at fault.

Staffing

Complaints regarding staff are dealt with through the Council's HR policies

Risk

Complaints can have an impact on the reputation of the Council

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

Complaints regarding equalities issues are highlighted to the Corporate Equalities Team

Accommodation

None

Crime and Disorder

Not applicable

Human Rights

Not applicable

Consultation

Not applicable

Procurement

Not applicable

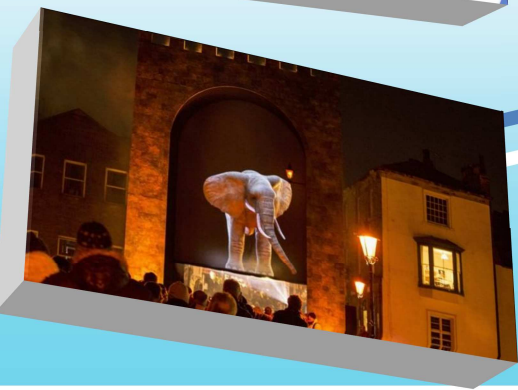
Disability Issues

As equalities

Legal Implications

Legal advice is sought for complex stage 2 complaints. Complaints escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman are handled within the Legal and Democratic Services Team.

Customer Feedback Report: Complaints, compliments and suggestions Quarter 3 report 2014/15



Altogether better



Overview

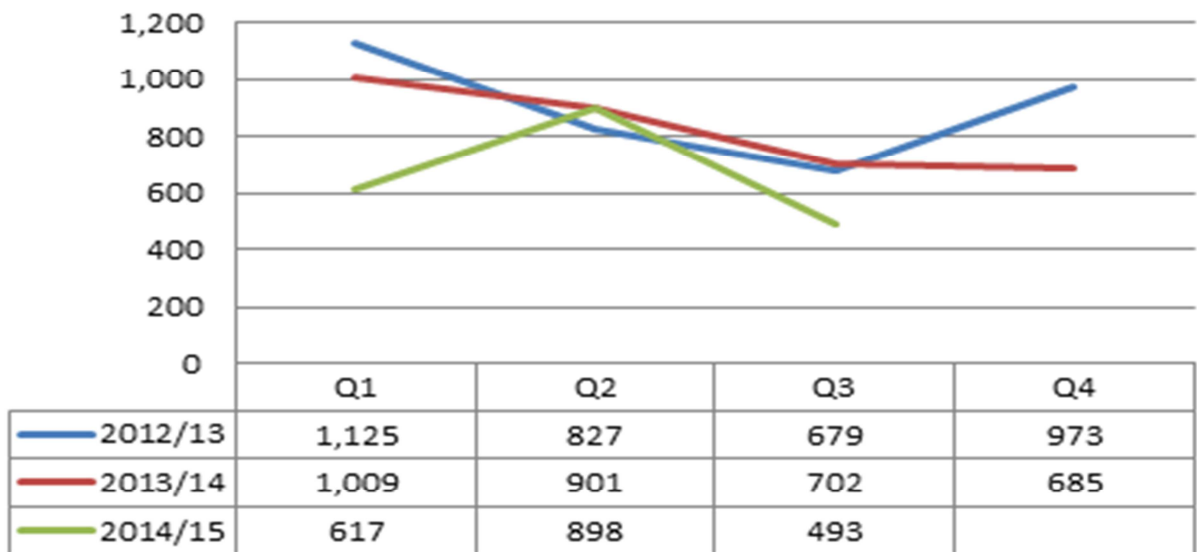
- This report provides the performance information and learning outcomes in relation to Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions received for all Council Services during quarter 3 2014/15. Complaints are categorised as:
 - Statutory.** A complaint arising from the duties placed on a local social services authority to provide assessments and care services under the provisions of relevant adult and children's social care legislation.
 - "Corporate"**. All other complaints

PART ONE: Summary of complaints, compliments and suggestions received across the Council during quarter 3 2014/15

- Between 1 October and 31 December 2014, Durham County Council received 493 stage 1 and 41 stage 2 corporate complaints, 288 compliments and 62 suggestions.
- During this period, there were 33 complaints and 121 compliments received in relation to the statutory services of adult and children's social care
- Performance against target in relation to the council's service standards for dealing with corporate complaints was:
 - 85% of stage 1 and 97% of stage 2 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days;
 - 80% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days
 - 39% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within 20 working days.
- Performance against target in relation to service standards for dealing with Statutory complaints was:
 - 100% of Stage 1 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt
 - 75% of the 20 statutory complaints about children's social care services were resolved within the prescribed timescale of 20 working days. Of the remaining 5 Stage 1 complaints, 2 were resolved after 20 working days; and 3 were ongoing at the quarter end.
- The table below shows numbers of complaints received across Service Groupings since 2012/13:

Service Grouping	2012-13	2013-2014					2014-2015			
	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total
ACE	7	3	3	2	1	9	1	2	2	5
CAS	33	10	15	18	11	54	6	8	7	21
NS	2,398	724	614	446	446	2230	447	691	339	1,477
RED	357*	92*	128	97*	95*	412*	67	79	67	213
RES	809	180	141	139	132	592	96	118	78	292
TOTAL	3,604	1,009	901	702	685	3,297	617	898	493	2,008

7. Numbers of complaints received are at their lowest level since quarter 4 2010/11. There has been a 30% reduction in complaints received this quarter when compared with the same period in 2013/14 and a 45% reduction from the previous quarter, as shown below



8. This decrease is apparent across all Service Groupings; however it is particularly noticeable in Neighbourhood Services who have seen a 51% reduction in complaints received in relation to their services from the last quarter.

Key Improvements

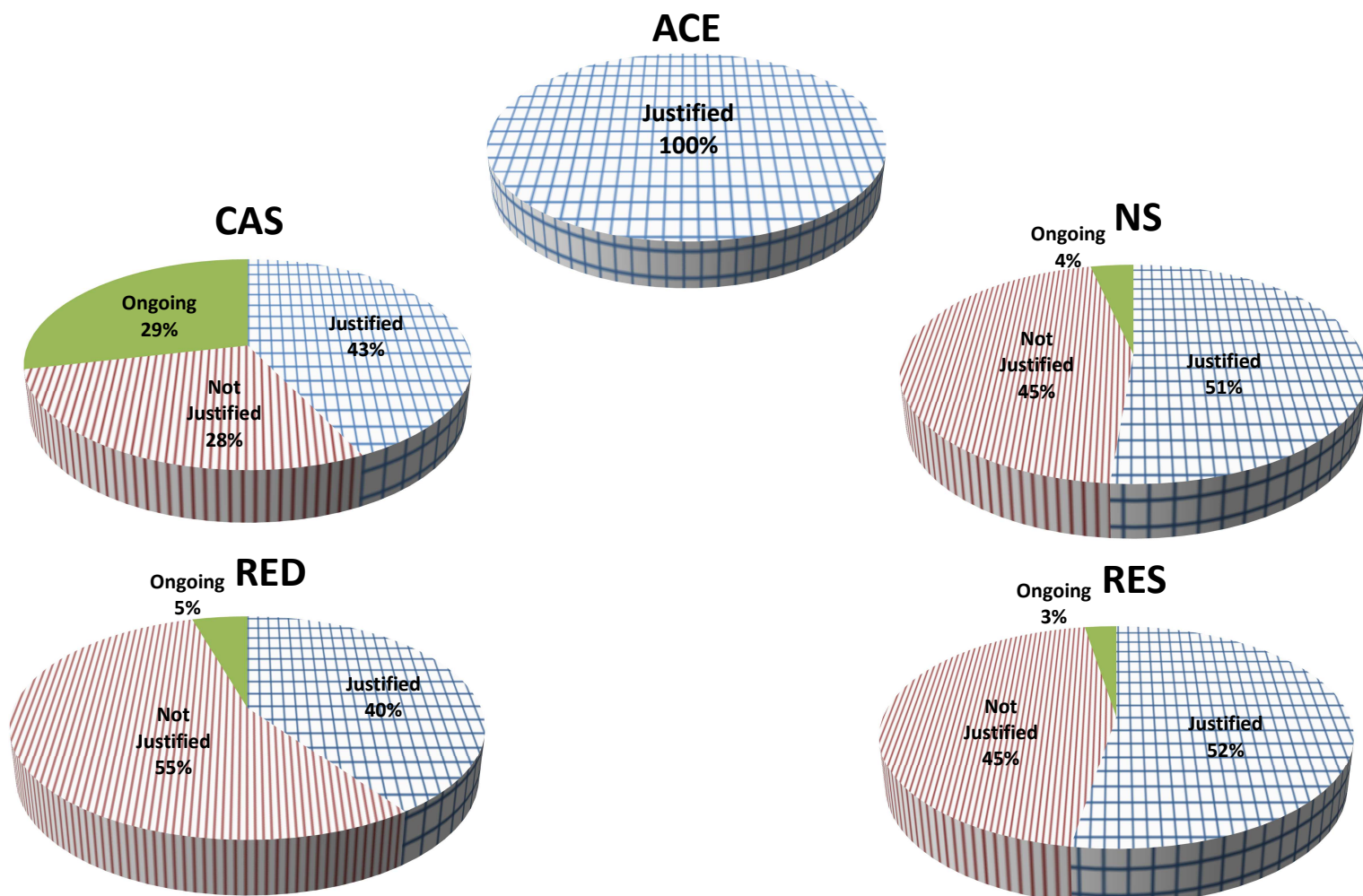
9. **Missed Bins:** The number of complaints received in relation to missed bins has reduced significantly throughout the year. This improvement can be attributed to a number of factors including the 'bedding in' of the Alternate Weekly Collection service; the new 'Repeat Missed Container' Process; improved communications in relation to bank holiday collection dates and the implementation of the incab 'Bartec' system which provides better operational information capture. During quarter 3, 56 complaints were received regarding missed bins, a 34% reduction when compared with the same period in 2013/14.
10. **Garden waste service:** During the quarter we received 25 complaints from customers unhappy with the changes to the garden waste service. We started to receive complaints in relation to the new scheme during September 2014 following communications about the introduction of a charge for this service. Complaints of this type are reducing and we have seen a 52% reduction from the previous quarter. As of 2 February 2015 over 40,000 customers have signed up to the scheme and we have received a total of 80 complaints.
11. **Durham City Homes:** 28 complaints were received in relation to Durham City Homes, mainly relating to the handling of repairs and maintenance issues. Complaints of this nature have reduced by 22% when compared to the same period last year.
12. **Planning Development:** 12 complaints received were in relation to Planning Development mainly in connection to planning decisions and building control. This is a 29% decrease compared to the same period last year.
13. **Revenues and Benefits:** As a result of ongoing improvements to practices & procedures the Revenues and Benefits Service has seen a significant reduction in the number of complaints received. The service received 74 complaints during quarter 3, which is a 39% reduction when compared with quarter 3 2013/14.

Challenges

14. **Contaminated waste:** Customers submitted 22 complaints regarding various aspects of the Council's process to reduce contamination of recycling bins. Complaints from customers related to their bin being incorrectly logged as contaminated and customers who did not consider themselves to be responsible for the incorrect items in their bin. Although previous work has been carried out to educate residents on recyclable materials, this campaign and enforcement activity has been ramped up to fully push the messages out and enforce behaviour change.

Investigation of complaints: Outcomes

15. Further investigation of stage 1 complaints received shows that during quarter 3 2014/15 there were 227 occasions (46% of complaints processed) where the complaint was not upheld. This indicates that, although service users were dissatisfied, the service had acted properly and followed the correct procedures.
16. If the not justified complaints and those that are ongoing are removed, DCC is left with 246 (50%) justified complaints, from which there is possibility of learning.
17. The charts below show a breakdown of the categorisation of complaints in terms of justification for each Service Grouping.



Compliments and Suggestions

18. The following table shows the numbers of compliments and suggestions received across service groupings during quarter 3 2014/15.

Service Grouping	Compliments	Suggestions
ACE	31	3
CAS	18	1
NS	152	45
RED	54	8
RES	33	5
TOTAL	288	62

19. 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.

PART TWO: Detailed report for each service grouping for quarter 3 2014/15

Assistant Chief Executive's Office (ACE)

Overview

20. A summary of the feedback since 2012/13 is shown below:

Service Grouping ACE	Number Received										
	12/13 Total	13/14				13/14 Total	14/15				14/15 Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	7	3	3	2	1	9	1	2	2	-	5
Compliments	25	3	9	25	12	49	8	5	31	-	44
Suggestions	9	3	3	4	14	24	1	2	3	-	6

Complaints

21. One complaint was received during quarter 3 relating to poor maintenance of a Community centre which has subsequently caused damp in a neighbouring private property.
22. The other was with reference to the accuracy of information on the DCC Website in relation to Durham car parking. Following investigation it was found that the information on the website was correct.

Compliments and Suggestions

23. 13 of the 31 compliments were in relation to the County Records Office, thanking staff for their help in providing comprehensive and swift replies in relation to various family and local history queries, including a compliment regarding the CRO website and the detail it provides anyone who wishes to visit. The other 18 compliments were received by Partnerships and Community Engagement, 15 of which were in relation to Spennymoor

AAP and the work put into planning, organising and delivering a successful 'It's Up 2 U' event and three were thanking the AAPs for grants to help community projects and for facilitating the Children's Centre review sessions.

24. There were 3 suggestions for Policy and Communications. One was for a text messaging service for deaf people which has been responded to, providing information on the various communication mechanisms for the deaf such as a minicom service, a web contact form on the website, Facebook and Twitter. The second suggestion related to issues with finding information on the current leisure websites, which has been responded to informing that DCC had recently launched the new website and were undertaking a programme of content reviews, which would factor in the comments received. A further suggestion related to the Christmas lights switch on.

Children and Adults Services (CAS)

Corporate Complaints Overview

25. A summary of the feedback since 2012/13 is shown below:

Service Grouping CAS	Number Received									
	13/14				13/14 Total	14/15				14/15 Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	10	15	18	11	54	6	8	7		21
Compliments	88	42	47	7	184	55	51	18		124
Suggestions	0	0	1	4	5	0	4	1		5

Complaints

26. Complaints during this quarter have decreased by 61% when compared to quarter 3 of 2013/14 and relate to:
- The Young People's Service (1 complaint)
 - Education (1 relating to Special Educational Needs services, 1 relating to the Music Service, 1 relating to School Places and Admissions and 1 relating to the Educational Psychology service).
 - Planning and Service Strategy (1 relating to the Central Administration and Governance Team, and 1 relating to Locality Administration)

Compliments and Suggestions

27. During the quarter, 18 compliments were received. Children's Services received 12 compliments (9 for the One Point service, 2 for Think Family and 1 for Pathfinder service); and Education received 6 compliments (all for Educational Health Needs team). The low number of compliments is thought to be as a result of a delay in services reporting compliments received to the Complaints Team. Managers will be reminded to submit any compliment numbers and these will be reported in quarter 4.
28. The suggestion received during the quarter was received from a young person who wants to be a DJ who suggested that a weekly 'party night' could be held for young people in the Peterlee area. Arrangements were made for an area Youth Worker to meet with the young person to discuss his idea further.

CAS Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Comments Q3 2014/15

29. As shown in the table below, the total number of statutory complaints, compliments and comments has decreased from 173 in quarter 2 to 152 in quarter 3. However, when comparing with the corresponding period last year there has been an 8.6% increase.

Service Grouping CAS	Number Received									
	13/14				13/14 Total	14/15				14/15 Total
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	64	75	43	47	229	58	41	33		132
Compliments	155	100	97	87	439	148	130	135		413
Comments	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0		2
Total	219	175	140	134	668	206	173	168		547

30. The following is a breakdown of the complaints and compliments received about Children's Services and Adult Care in quarter 3:

	Children's Services	Adult Care	Totals
Complaints	20	13	33
Compliments	113	22	135

Children's Services Statutory Complaints, Compliments and Comments Q3 2014/15

Comparison of Children's Services Complaints received by quarter					
Complaint type	Q1 14/15	Q2 14/15	Q3 14/15	Q4 14/15	Direction of Travel from previous quarter
Stage 1	29	21	20		↓
Stage 2	1	0	2		↑

31. All 20 Stage 1 complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt. There were 15 Stage 1 complaints resolved within the prescribed timescale of 20 working days (75%); an improvement on the previous quarter's performance (38.1%). Of the remaining 5 Stage 1 complaints, 2 were resolved after 20 working days; and 3 were ongoing at the quarter end.
32. Two complaints were taken to Stage 2 during the quarter. One complaint relates to a case where the children were made the subjects of Child Protection Plans against their parents' wishes. The other complaint was in relation to Children's Services' involvement in a safeguarding case. Project Plans have been developed for both investigations which are due to be completed by the end of March 2015.

33. Stage 1 complaints received, by team, are broken down as follows:

Stage 1 Complaints received by Teams in the quarter		
Teams	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Assessment and Intervention – Bishop Auckland	4	2
Assessment and Intervention - Crook	2	0
Assessment and Intervention - Durham	1	1
Assessment and Intervention – Peterlee & Easington	0	1
Assessment and Intervention - Seaham	0	2
Assessment and Intervention - Spennymoor	0	0
Assessment and Intervention – Stanley 1	0	1
Child Protection - Peterlee	4	2
Child Protection - Spennymoor	1	1
Child Protection - Stanley	3	3
Children’s Home*	0	1
Disability social work	1	1
First Contact (previously Initial Response Team)	2	0
Fostering and Adoption	2	2
Independent Reviewing Officers	0	0
Looked After and Permanence	0	4
Total	20	21

*Note: Complaint was about another young person resident in the home.

Declined Complaints

34. Two complaints were declined in the quarter. One case was about matters which were over 1 year old and had been through legal processes. The other case was about matters which were over 1 year old, had previously been investigated and the complainant had stated that she would be taking legal action against the Council.

Themes of Complaints

35. “Professional Conduct of Staff” was the subject of the highest number of complaints, with 6 complaints containing this as a theme; and “Lack of Service - Communications/Information” was a theme in 5 complaints, followed by “Disputed Decision” in 4 complaints. It is possible for a complaint to contain more than one theme.

Outcome of Complaints

36. Of the 17 complaints completed in the quarter, 10 were not upheld, 5 were partially upheld and 2 complaints were fully upheld as the table below outlines:

Outcome of Children’s Complaints received in the Quarter			
Team	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld
A & I Bishop Auckland	3	1	0
A & I Crook	1	0	0
A & I Durham	1	0	0
Child Protection - Peterlee	0	3	1
Child Protection - Spennymoor	0	1	0
Child Protection - Stanley	2	0	1
First Contact	2	0	0
Disability social work	1	0	0
Total	10	5	2

Actions as a Result of Statutory Complaints

37. The following recommendations have been made as a result of review of complaints:
- In cases involving Private Law proceedings, parents should be issued with an 'Information Sheet' setting out the statutory role/responsibilities of Children's Services to appropriately manage parent expectations.
 - A review of the procedure for the sharing of Supervised Contact Records
 - The Full Circle service will review and update its published leaflets.
 - Improved communication where decisions have been agreed with a complainant and these are subsequently changed.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

38. During the quarter the LGO made enquiries and decisions in relation to 2 cases about children's social care services. One case was closed as it was outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. The other case, following changes as a result of a review of Special Guardianship payments, is being considered by the Ombudsman.

Compliments

39. There were 113 compliments received in quarter 3, an increase of 29 in comparison to the previous quarter. A breakdown of compliments received by team is shown below.

Teams	Compliments Received	
	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Aycliffe Secure Services	79	0
Assessment and Intervention Teams	3	11
Children's Homes	5	6
Child Protection Teams	5	1
Community Support Team	3	10
First Contact and Prevention service	0	1
Fostering and Adoption	4	0
Looked After and Permanence Teams	10	6
4 Real	0	3
Pathfinder teams	3	16
The Full Circle	0	1
Think Family	1	29
Total	113	84

Adults Services Statutory Complaints, Compliments Comments Q3 2014/15

Comparison of Complaints received by quarter					
Service Area	Q4 13/14	Q1 14/15	Q2 14/15	Q3 14/15	Direction of Travel from previous quarter
Adult Care	23	28	20	13	↓

40. All 13 complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days; 7 were completed within the quarter, 6 within the target timescales. The remaining 6 cases were ongoing at the quarter end but are still within their agreed completion timescales.

41. A summary of complaints by service is shown below:

Complaints received by service area in the quarter		
Service area	Current Q3	Previous Q2
Adult Social Work Teams: Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services	5	12
Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services	1	7
Commissioning	5	1
County Durham Care and Support	2	0
Emergency Duty Team	0	0
Total	13	20

Declined Complaints

42. One complaint was declined in the quarter on the grounds that the Council cannot become involved in the decisions made by an external agency (a care provider) in relation to personal matters between the agency’s employee and the complainant; nor can the Council act to enforce the agency to continue to provide a service where there has been an irretrievable breakdown in the relationship between the service user’s family and the care providers employee.

Category of Complaint

43. “Disputed Decision” was a theme in 4 complaints; “Professional Conduct of Staff” was also a theme in 4 complaints, as was “Finance - Direct Payment”. Three complaints contained “Staff Attitude” as a theme, and 3 complaints were in respect of “Quality of Service – Work of Other Agencies”. It is possible for a complaint to contain more than one theme.

Outcome of Complaints

44. Of the 7 complaints completed in the quarter, 1 was not upheld, 2 were partially upheld and 4 were upheld in full:

Outcome of Complaints received and completed in the quarter			
	Not upheld	Partially Upheld	Upheld
Social Work Teams: Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services	0	0	2
Adult Social Work Teams: Learning Disabilities, Mental Health, Substance Misuse services	0	1	0
Commissioning	0	0	2
County Durham Care and Support	1	1	0
Total	1	2	4

Actions as a result of statutory complaints

45. Learning outcomes include reminding staff of the need to:

- be mindful at all times regarding professionalism and communication skills, not least when dealing with service users who may have learning disabilities.
- ensure that service user information, including address and bank details where necessary, is updated.
- ensure a service user and families understand the purpose of an assessment and why the decisions have been made.
- use plain English and clearly explain what social care and health terminology means.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

46. During the quarter the LGO made enquiries in relation to 4 cases about adult's social care services. 3 of these cases are still under consideration and relate to:
- the way a service users' daughter felt that she had been treated.
 - a disabled service users request to have her property adapted.
 - a care provider.
47. In the fourth case, the Ombudsman made a decision that the Council had acted without fault when they had billed a service user for the costs of nursing care whilst residing in a care home.

Compliments

48. 22 compliments were received in the quarter, a decrease of 24 from the previous quarter.

Service area	Compliments Received	
	Current Q3	Previous Q2
County Durham Care and Support	5	22
Social Work Teams: (Older Persons /Mental Health Services for Older Persons/Physical Disability/ Sensory Support services)	14	21
Social Work Teams (Learning Disabilities/Mental Health/Substance Misuse Services)	1	3
Commissioning	2	0
Total	22	46

49. The low number of compliments is thought to be due to a delay in services reporting compliments received to the Complaints Team and will be rectified for quarter 4.

Neighbourhood Services (NS)

Overview

50. A summary of feedback since 2012/2013 is shown below:

NS	Number Received										
	2012-13	13/14 split by quarter				13/14 Total	14/15 split by quarter				14/15 Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	2,398	724	614	446	446	2,230	447	691	339		1,477
Compliments	402	126	134	125	121	506	129	161	152		442
Suggestions	215	62	57	41	88	248	52	49	45		146

Improvement

51. Analysis shows that when compared to the same quarter in 2013/14, the number of complaints received reduced by 24%, mainly due to:
- **Missed Bins:** 56 complaints were received regarding missed bins during quarter 3 2014/15, which is a 34% reduction when compared with the same period in 2013/14 and a 77% decrease compared to quarter 2 2014/15.
 - **Attitude of refuse crews:** there has been a 43% reduction in complaints received in relation to the attitude of refuse crews when compared with the same period last year

- **Changes to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs):** We received 13 complaints regarding HWRCs during this quarter, a 72% decrease when compared with quarter 3 2013/14. Complaints related to a number of issues including tighter control of the waste being put through the sites, waste permit issues, opening hours at sites and staff attitude.
- **Crew not returning bins to collection point:** 17 complaints were received from customers who were unhappy that refuse crews are not returning bins to their original collection point after emptying. This is a 15% reduction when compared with quarter 3 2013/14.
- **Garden waste service:** During the quarter we received 25 complaints from customers unhappy with the changes to the garden waste service. We started to receive complaints in relation to the new scheme during September 2014 following communications about the introduction of a charge for this service. Complaints of this type are reducing and we have seen a 52% reduction from the previous quarter. As of 2 February 2015 over 40,000 customers have signed up to the scheme and we have received a total of 80 complaints.

Challenges

- **Contaminated waste:** Customers submitted 22 complaints regarding various aspects of the contamination process. This is a 59% increase when compared with the same period last year. Complaints from customers related to their bin being incorrectly logged as contaminated and customers who did not consider themselves to be responsible for the incorrect items in their bin.

Compliments and Suggestions

52. 152 compliments were received during quarter 3 2014/15. The majority of compliments relate to helpfulness of staff and recognition of their support by resolving customer enquiries in a professional and timely manner.
53. 45 suggestions were received; a number of these were regarding extending garden waste collections into November. There were suggestions received regarding a number of issues such as bottle banks and commercial-sized waste bins being available in residential areas.
54. Previous suggestions which have been actioned include all refuse and recycling crews carrying a brush and shovel on the vehicle, to clear up items dropped during collection and the installation of additional dog poo bins in the Chester-Le-Street area

Regeneration and Economic Development (RED)

Overview

55. A summary of feedback since 2012/2013 is shown below; when compared to the same quarter in 2013/14, the number of complaints received has reduced by 31%.

Service Grouping RED	Number Received										
	12/13 Total	13/14 split by quarter				13/14 Total	14/15 split by quarter				14/15 Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	357	92	128	97	95	412	67	79	67		213
Compliments	125	34	27	85	39	185	15	27	54		96
Suggestions	33	11	6	13	10	40	8	5	8		21

Complaints

56. Detailed analysis of the complaints received during Quarter 3 shows that 3 areas of the service grouping account for 75% of the complaints received.
- **Durham City Homes:** 28 complaints were received in relation to Durham City Homes, particularly in regard to the handling of repairs and maintenance issues. This is a decrease of 22% from the same period in the previous year but an increase from Quarter 2 when 23 complaints were received. 1 Durham City Homes complaint was escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process during Quarter 3.
 - **Planning Development:** 12 complaints received were in relation to Planning Development mainly in connection to planning decisions and building control. This is a significant decrease (45%) on the previous quarter when 22 complaints were received. 7 Planning Development complaints were escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process during Quarter 3, a small reduction from 8 at Quarter 2.
 - **Strategic Traffic:** 10 complaints were received by Strategic Traffic in the quarter, the majority are parking and road layout related. This is a significant decrease of 33% from the same period in the previous year and a decrease from Quarter 2 when 12 complaints were received.

Compliments and Suggestions

57. The service grouping received 54 compliments in Quarter 3, 27 of which were for Care Connect. These are generally thanks to staff for the service they have provided.
58. RED received 8 suggestions during Quarter 3, covering a variety of subjects and service areas, including parking and planned student accommodation.

Resources (RES)

Overview

59. A summary of feedback since 2012/2013 is shown below:

RES	Number Received										
	12/13 Total	13/14 split by quarter				13/14 Total	14/15 split by quarter				14/15 Total
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Complaints	809	180	141	139	132	592	96	118	78		292
Compliments	69	14	10	17	38	79	32	40	33		105
Suggestions	24	3	5	3	8	19	6	1	5		12

60. Analysis shows that when compared to the same quarter in 2013/14, the number of complaints received reduced by 44%. 97% of these complaints are attributable to:

Revenues and Benefits Service:

61. The Assessment Team, responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit and the Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme received 26 complaints of which 2 were from landlords. During the same period the team processed 3174 new claims and 24881 change in circumstances. The complaints generally related to processes and procedures, but not to any one specific process or procedure. One complainant referred to the 'suspension' of claims, but upon review it was found that the decision to suspend benefit to minimise overpayment had been correctly applied. Two complaints arose from the decision making process for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) but the process had been appropriately applied.
62. The Awards and Collection teams received a total of 48 complaints. The Awards Team received 37 of these complaints, 22% of which were made by landlords about Council Tax liability on eight individual properties. The majority of complaints disputed Council Tax liability but review revealed that liability had been correctly applied. The Collection Team received 11 complaints about recovery action. The majority of complainants claimed to have no knowledge of outstating debts until receiving a summons, despite reminders and final notices having been issued.
63. Analysis of complaints and quality assurance is used to develop individual and team training plans and where error is found, remedial action is taken to ensure that policy and procedure is properly followed.

Legal & Democratic Services:

64. Two complaints were received for Legal & Democratic Services during Q3 2014/15, the lowest recorded for the last year.
65. One of the complaints related to the Electoral Canvass, undertaken across the County in early Autumn. In this instance, both canvasser and customer reported inappropriate attitude to each other. We apologised to the complainant for the canvasser's visit to her home not proceeding well and the situation was resolved.
66. The second complaint related to advice from Legal & Democratic Services on a former Council house with asbestos issues. The Conveyancing Team advised that as the complainant bought the house from a previous owner (not the Council); the Council would not become involved as it was a private matter.

Compliments and Suggestions

67. There were 33 compliments received by Resources in quarter 3 2014/15.
68. The Revenues and Benefits Service received 16 compliments during quarter 3 highlighting the excellent service provided by individual employees. Individual employees within the following teams were praised by customers: Welfare Rights, Collections team, Assessment team and the Awards team.
69. Thirteen compliments related to staff in Human Resources & Organisational Development. Legal & Democratic Services continue to receive compliments (four) arising from conducting wedding ceremonies.
70. 5 suggestions were received this quarter in relation to:
 - Councillors attending local libraries to assist members of the public
 - H&S officer to inspect a gymnastics centre in County Durham
 - DCC Health and Safety policies for Schools
 - Enabling customers to view their Council Tax balance on-line
 - Ceasing the e-billing prize draw incentive as it discriminates against non- internet users
71. Suggestions from customers are acknowledged and used as appropriate to inform service developments and improvements. However, the Revenues and Benefit Service, for example, is governed by prescriptive legislation and it is therefore not always possible to adopt customers' suggestions.

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO): current activity

72. During the quarter the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) made initial enquiries / initiated investigations into 19 matters.
73. The Ombudsman discounted their involvement in 2 of these cases as they found no fault by the Council. These related to:
 - 1 - Leisure Services
 - 1 - Adult Social Care
74. The Ombudsman also discontinued investigations into 3 cases as they were reported prematurely and therefore referred back to the Council to deal with under the complaints procedure. These related to:
 - 2 - Benefits
 - 1 - Land Bid Issue
75. We are still waiting for a decision on the following 13 cases which have been subject to LGO enquiries and relate to:
 - 3 - Adult Social Care
 - 2 - Planning issues
 - 1 - Garden Waste Collection
 - 1 - Overhanging Trees issue
 - 1 - Refuse and Pest Control issue
 - 1 - Environmental Health and Housing issue
 - 1 - Issue regarding the lease of a Business Premises

- 1 - Drainage, Highways and Insurance issue
- 1 - Drainage and Planning issue
- 1 - Children's Services

76. One case relating to Children's Services was closed by the Ombudsman after the Council responded to preliminary enquiries.

77. The Ombudsman delivered decisions on 14 matters which had been subject to investigations initiated prior to the beginning of the quarter:

- Three Adult Services issues – In 2 of the cases the investigations were concluded and the Ombudsman found there to be no evidence of fault by the Council. In 1 of the cases the Ombudsman concluded the investigation and found both maladministration and injustice to the complainant. The investigation was closed on the basis that the Council agreed to various actions to remedy the issues raised in the complaint. This included a financial settlement.
- Three Planning issues – no fault by the Council.
- Benefits issue – no fault by the Council.
- Procurement issue – no fault by the Council.
- Highways issue – no fault by the Council.
- Children's Services issue – no fault by the Council.
- One complaint regarding damage to a wall – The Ombudsman determined that the complaint had been reported to them prematurely, the complaint was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the complaints procedure.
- Electoral Services issue – The Ombudsman determined that the complaint had been reported to them prematurely, the complaint was therefore referred back to the Council to consider through the complaints procedure.
- Housing issue – the complainant withdrew the complaint.
- Procurement of driving instructors – The Ombudsman found both maladministration and injustice. The investigation was closed on the basis that the Council agreed to various actions to remedy the issues raised in the complaint. This included a financial settlement.

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

- 2 Garden Waste complaints – no fault by the Council
- 1 Recycling Centre issue – no fault by the Council
- 1 Refuse collection issue – no fault by the Council
- 1 Planning issue – no fault by the Council
- 1 Land & property sale issue – no fault by the Council
- 1 Insurance issue – Outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman
- 1 Overhanging Trees complaint – Outside the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman

Recommendation

79. To note the contents of the report

Contact: Mary Readman 03000 268161

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 April 2015

Assistant Chief Executives – Quarter 3 2014: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15



Joint Report of Corporate Director Resources and Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Assistant Chief Executive's (ACE) service grouping highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2014.

Background

2. County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2014/15 at its meeting on 26 February 2014. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers between service groupings and budget reprofiling between years. This report covers the financial position for the following major accounts maintained by the ACE service grouping:
 - ACE Revenue Budget - £11.251m (original £10.200m)
 - ACE Capital Programme – £3.742m (original £3.472m)
3. The original ACE General Fund budget has been revised to incorporate a number of budget adjustments as follows:
 - Purchase of annual leave adjustment -£15k
 - Adjustment for staff not in pension fund -£20k
 - Reduction in car mileage budget -£5k
 - Use of strategic reserve to meet redundancy +£56k
 - Use of modern ways of working reserve +£50k
 - Pay protection outside cash limit +£7k
 - Minor budget adjustment from Resources +£4k
 - Corporate subscription to LGC +£5k
 - Use of customer focus reserve +£36k
 - Use of disable go reserve +£8k
 - Use of AAP reserve +£478k
 - Pay award +£46k
 - Capital charges budget adjustment +£401k

The revised General Fund Budget now stands at £11.251m.

4. The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2014/15 and show:-
- The approved annual budget;
 - The actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
 - The variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
 - For the ACE revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

Revenue - General Fund Services

5. The service is reporting a cash limit underspend of **£0.130m** against a revised budget of **£11.251m**. This compares with the cash limit underspend of **£0.080m** as at Quarter 2.
6. The tables below compare the actual expenditure with the budget. The first table is analysed by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense), and the second by Head of Service.

Subjective Analysis

£'000	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Employees	6,678	5,129	6,693	15	0	15
Premises	301	191	307	6	0	6
Transport	50	38	58	8	0	8
Supplies and Services	1,800	988	1,703	(97)	11	(86)
Agency and Contracted	0	0	0	0	0	0
Transfer Payments	2,355	1,667	2,442	87	(83)	4
Central Costs	2,372	93	2,379	7	0	7
GROSS EXPENDITURE	13,556	8,106	13,582	26	(72)	(46)
INCOME	(2,305)	(836)	(2,839)	(534)	450	(84)
NET EXPENDITURE	11,251	7,270	10,743	(508)	378	(130)

Analysis by Head of Service

Head of Service Grouping	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Partnership and Community Engagement	7,207	4,553	6,919	(288)	367	79
Planning and Performance	1,510	1,193	1,439	(71)	0	(71)
Policy and Communications	2,323	1,524	2,174	(149)	11	(138)
Central	211	0	211	0	0	0
NET EXPENDITURE	11,251	7,270	10,743	(508)	378	(130)

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

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Forecast Year End (Under) / overspend £'000
Partnership and Community Engagement (PACE)	Area Action Partnerships, Community Buildings, PACE	£96k managed over budget on employees (fully staffed). £11 over budget on car allowances. £15k managed under budget on a range of supplies and services. £13k over recovery of income.	79
Planning and Performance	Planning, Performance, Overview and Scrutiny, County Records	£7k managed over budget on employees. £78k managed under budget on supplies and services.	(71)
Policy and Communications	Policy, Communication, Public Relations, CCU and Programme Office	£92k managed under budget on employees. £28k under budget on a range of supplies and services. £18k additional income generated through advertising.	(138)
Central	Central Costs	No variances	0
TOTAL			(130)

8. In summary, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit. It should also be noted that the estimated outturn position incorporates the MTFP savings required in 2014/15 which amount to £0.410m.

Members Neighbourhoods Revenue Budget

9. Each elected member receives an annual allocation of £20k; £6k revenue and £14k capital. The revenue budget allocation for the current year is £0.756m. Previous years unspent allocations totalling £0.979m are held in an earmarked reserve. At present £0.753m of the total budget allocation of £1.735m has been either spent or committed.
10. The members Initiative Fund Element of this budget equates to £252k based on £2k per elected member. At this stage of the year it is expected that this will be fully expended.

AAP Area Budgets

11. Each of the 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAP) has an annual allocation of £120k; £96k revenue and £24k capital. The revenue budget allocation for the current year is £1.344m to develop projects to meet the agreed AAP priorities. Previous years unspent allocations totalling £2.235m are held in an earmarked reserve. At this stage in the year a total of £2.075m has either been committed or spent.

Capital Programme

12. The ACE capital programme comprises four schemes, Assets in the Community, Area Action Partnerships Capital, Members Neighbourhoods Capital and Community Facilities in Crook.
13. The Assistant Chief Executive capital programme was revised at Outturn for budget rephased from 2013/14. This increased the 2014/15 budget to £3.472m. Further reports to the MOWG in 2014/15 detailed further revisions, for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget reprofiling into later years including the Community Facilities in Crook budget. The revised budget now stands at **£3.742m**.
14. Summary financial performance to the end of December is shown below.

Service	Original Annual Budget 2014/15 £000	Revised Annual Budget 2014/15 £000	Actual Spend to 31 December £000	Remaining Budget £000
Assets in the Community	871	950	379	571
Area Action Partnership	336	299	75	224
Members Neighbourhoods	1,764	2,493	525	1,968
Community Facilities Crook	501	0	0	0
Total	3,472	3,742	979	2,763

15. Officers continue to carefully monitor capital expenditure on a monthly basis. £979k of actual expenditure has been incurred to date. This is 26% of the total estimated spend in the year.
16. At year end the actual outturn performance will be compared against the revised budgets and service and project managers will need to account for any budget variance.

Recommendations:

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

Contact: Azhar Rafiq – Finance Manager

Tel: 03000 263 480

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

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

Staffing

None.

Risk

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Accommodation

None.

Crime and disorder

None.

Human rights

None.

Consultation

None.

Procurement

None.

Disability Issues

None.

Legal Implications

Non

20 April 2015



**Resources – Quarter 3: Forecast of
Revenue and Capital Outturn 2014/15**

Report of Don McLure, Corporate Director Resources

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide details of the forecast outturn budget position for the Resources service grouping highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position to the end of December 2014.

Background

2. County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2014/15 at its meeting on 26 February 2014. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers between service groupings and budget reprofiling between years. This report covers the financial position for the following major accounts maintained by the Resources service grouping:

- *Revenue Budget - £16.898m (original £18.371m)*
- *Capital Programme – £8.434m (original £8.799m)*

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

- Purchase of annual leave by staff -£96k (Corporate Saving)
- Reduction in car mileage allowance -£53k (Corporate Saving)
- Reduction in pensions budgets for staff not in pension scheme -£164k (Corporate Saving)
- Transfer of Direct Revenue Financing (DRF) Contribution for ICT Capital Scheme -£3k
- Reduction in Pension Deficit from Welfare Rights budget transfer -£4k
- Use of System Development Reserve +£340k
- Use of Revenues and Benefits Reserve +£200k
- Use of Discretionary Housing Payment Reserve +£91k
- Use of ICT Reserve +£50k
- Contribution to Welfare Reforms Reserve -£145k
- Contribution to Housing Benefit Subsidy Reserve -£39K
- Contribution to Welfare Rights Macmillan Grants Reserve -£22k
- Use of MTFP Redundancy Reserve +£396k
- Contribution from Cash Limit: Digital Durham +£65k
- Items Outside of Cash Limit: Coroners Costs +£215k
- E-Learning - License Costs from Corporate Contingency +£18k
- Miscellaneous Adjustments to ACE -£5k
- Local Government Chronicle Subscription to ACE -£1k

- Items outside of Cash Limit - Welfare Assistance +£130k
- Items outside of Cash Limit - DHP -£130k
- Corporate MTFP Redundancy Reserve +£31k
- E-Learning (from Cash Limit) +£24k
- Legal System Costs (from Cash Limit) +£32k
- Use of Welfare Rights Reserve +£21k
- Contribution to HR Reserve -£65k
- Contribution to Welfare Reforms New Burdens Reserve -£21k
- Use of ICT Telephony Reserve +£3k
- Pay award +£315k
- Staff transfer from Registrars to Neighbourhoods(part year) -£9k
- Staff transfer to Revenues from CAS(part year) +£6k
- Capital charges adjustment -£2,687k
- Garden Waste – electronic payments +£34k

The revised General Fund Budget now stands at £16.898m.

4. The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2014/15 and show: -
 - The approved annual budget;
 - The actual income and expenditure as recorded in the Council's financial management system;
 - The variance between the annual budget and the forecast outturn;
 - For the Resources revenue budget, adjustments for items outside of the cash limit to take into account such items as redundancies met from the strategic reserve, capital charges not controlled by services and use of / or contributions to earmarked reserves.

Revenue - General Fund Services

5. The service is reporting a cash limit underspend of **£1.438m** (excluding Centrally Administered Costs) against a revised budget of **£16.898m**. This compares with the cash limit underspend of **£1.161m** reported at Quarter 2.
6. The tables below compare the actual expenditure with the budget. The first table is analysed by Subjective Analysis (i.e. type of expense), and the second by Head of Service.

Subjective Analysis (£000's)

	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Employees	40,540	30,485	40,190	(350)	(367)	(717)
Premises	6,583	129	6,586	3	0	3
Transport	1,018	622	862	(157)	0	(157)
Supplies and Services	18,526	15,084	19,212	687	(44)	643
Agency & Contracted	3,940	3,263	3,416	(524)	515	(9)
Transfer Payments	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central Costs	9,520	587	9,013	(467)	513	46
Gross Expenditure	80,127	50,170	79,319	(808)	617	(191)
Income	(62,971)	(21,166)	(64,762)	(1,791)	496	(1,295)
Net Expenditure	17,156	29,004	14,557	(2,599)	1,113	(1,486)
HB Transfer payments	190,695	143,321	190,603	(91)	91	0
HB Central Costs	217	0	217	0	0	0
HB Income	(191,170)	(2,175)	(191,170)	0	0	0
HB Net Expenditure	(258)	141,146	(350)	(91)	91	0
Total Net Expenditure	16,898	170,150	14,207	(2,690)	1,204	(1,486)
Excluding Centrally Administered Costs						(1,438)

Analysis by Head of Service (£000's)

	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Centrally Administered Costs	3,698	3,007	3,134	(563)	515	(48)
Central Estab. Recharges	(18,387)	0	(18,686)	(298)	298	0
Corporate Finance	2,495	3,007	2,198	(297)	0	(297)
Financial Services	6,554	6,125	5,384	(1,169)	769	(400)
Human Resources	5,966	4,480	6,463	497	(651)	(154)
ICT Services	8,370	6,716	8,173	(197)	185	(12)
Internal Audit and Insurance	1,704	1,248	1,617	(87)	0	(87)
Legal & Democratic Services	6,366	4,197	5,975	(391)	(3)	(395)
Service Management	390	223	296	(94)	0	(94)
Net Expenditure Excl HB	17,156	29,004	14,557	(2,599)	1,113	(1,486)
Housing Benefit	(258)	141,146	(350)	(91)	91	0
NET EXPENDITURE	16,898	170,150	14,207	(2,690)	1,204	(1,486)
Excluding Centrally Administered Costs						(1,438)

7. The table below provides a brief commentary on the variances against the revised budget analysed by Head of Service. The table identifies variances in the core budget only and excludes items outside of the cash limit (e.g. redundancy costs) and technical accounting adjustments (e.g. capital charges):

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's
Centrally Administered Costs (C.A.C.)	C.A.C.	£49k overbudget on expenses associated with raising loans.	(48)	
	Welfare Assistance	Underbudget on bank charges £40k, audit fees £42k and subscriptions £16k. £645k underbudget on Welfare Assistance Scheme, £39k to fund overbudget on DHP in Housing Benefits and £606k to the Welfare Assistance Reserve.	0	(48)
Corporate Finance	Management	£165k managed underbudget against employees reflecting early achievement of 15/16 MTFP savings £27k underbudget on supplies and services available for 15/16 savings	(192)	
	Financial Systems	£55k underbudget on pay as a result of holding a vacancy £4k underbudget on supplies and services	(59)	
	Procurement	£26k overbudget on employees as a result of being fully staffed and agency. £53k additional income, majority from £31k SLA's including Academies	(27)	
	Strategic Finance	£4k overbudget on employees £19k managed over budget on supplies and services £42k over recovery of income for VAT work	(19)	(297)
Financial Services	Management	£256k managed underbudget for employees reflecting early achievement of 2015/16 MTFP savings	(256)	
	Financial Management	£18k underbudget on employees principally on training £65k managed underbudget against supplies and services £61k additional SLA income	(144)	
	Revenues and Benefits	£56k managed underbudget on employees from staff turnover £53k underbudget on car allowances £118k overbudget on work packages. £9k underbudget minor variances	0	(400)
Human Resources	Occupational Health	£22k underachieved income due to loss of CCG income £1k minor various overspends on Supplies and Services	23	
	Health and Safety	£4k minor variance	4	
	Pensions	£68k underbudget on employees due to restructure £5k overbudget minor variances	(63)	
	Human Resources	£175k underbudget on employees due to restructure £38k overbudget on dealing with Equal Pay cases £29k overbudget on Computing (Software and Support) £10k underbudget minor variances	(118)	(154)

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's	Forecast Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's
ICT	ICT Services	£131k underbudget on employees £100k underbudget on transport £51k overbudget on supplies and services £89k underachieved on income £76k overbudget on the Digital Durham project that is managed within ICT £3k overbudget minor variances	(12)	(12)
Internal Audit and Risk	Insurance and Risk	£5k overbudget on employees (fully staffed so no turnover savings)	5	(87)
	Internal Audit	£92 underbudget on employees through close management and control of vacancies and secondments £2k over budget minor variances	(90)	
	Corporate Fraud	£11k overbudget on employees (fully staffed) £13k underbudget on staff travel and supplies and services	(2)	
Legal and Democratic Services	Corporate and Democratic Core	£28k underbudget on employees £43k underbudget on supplies and services - future MTFP savings £7k overbudget on minor variances	(64)	(395)
	Democratic Services	£49k underbudget on employees £98k overachieved Income - Registrars £59k underbudget on Democratic Services supplies and services £22k overbudget on Elections supplies and services	(184)	
	Legal Services	£92k underbudget - early achievement of MTFP Savings 2015-16 £68k underbudget on employees £13k overbudget minor variances	(147)	
Service Management	Service Management	£94k income from SLA with Northumberland for ICT / Legal and HR support	(94)	(94)
Benefits Payments and Subsidy	Benefits	£39k overbudget on DHP to be met from under budget on Welfare Assistance Scheme to leave zero balance.		0
Central Establishment Recharges	Central Establishment Recharges			0
TOTAL				(1,486)
Excluding Centrally Administered Costs				(1,438)

9. In summary, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit. It should also be noted that the estimated outturn position incorporates the net MTFP savings required in 2014/15 which amount to £2.535m, after use of £0.358m of cash limit reserves (budgeted in 2014/15 – to delay / defer MTFP savings).

Capital Programme

14. The Resources capital programme comprises 19 schemes, 18 of which are managed within ICT.
15. The original Resources capital programme was £8.799m and this has been revised for additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget reprofiling. The revised budget now stands at £7.178m.

16. Summary financial performance to the end of December 2014 is shown below.

Service	Original Annual Budget 2014/15 £'000	Revised Annual Budget 2014/15 £'000	Profiled Budget £'000	Actual Spend to 31 December 2014 £'000	Remaining Budget £'000
ICT	8,799	6,845	4,454	4,329	2,516
Human Resources	0	333	197	213	120
Total	8,799	7,178	4,651	4,542	2,636

17. The revised Resources capital budget is £7.178m with a total expenditure to 31 December 2014 of £4.542m (63%). The profiled budget for this period is £4.651m, therefore spend is broadly in line with the profiled / expected spend in year. A full breakdown of schemes and actual expenditure to 31 December 2014 is given in Appendix 2.
18. At year end the actual outturn performance will be compared against the revised budgets and at that time service and project managers will need to account for any budget variance.

Recommendations:

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

Contact: Azhar Rafiq Tel: 03000 263 480

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

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

Staffing

None.

Risk

None.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Accommodation

None.

Crime and disorder

None.

Human rights

None.

Consultation

None.

Procurement

None.

Disability Issues

None.

Legal Implications

None.

Appendix 2: Resources Capital Programme 2014/15

Scheme	Revised Budget 2014/15	Profiled Budget	Actuals to 31/12/14	Remaining Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Desktop Replacement	1,119	783	971	148
Dark Fibre Networking	54	38	26	28
GIS Architecture	71	50	71	0
Infrastructure Environment Monitoring	107	75	107	0
NHS Datacentres	3	2	0	3
Digital Durham	4,574	2,858	2,621	1,953
Tanfield Datacentre LAN Switching Replacement	17	13	0	17
Tanfield Datacentre Core Switching Replacement	9	6	9	0
Ongoing Server Replacement	129	90	76	53
Councillor Replacement of ICT Equipment	1	1	1	0
Homeworking	89	67	6	83
Public Internet Access Portal	37	26	0	37
Dark Fibre Installations and Circuit/ Microwave Upgrades	315	221	221	94
ICT Business Continuity	176	123	144	32
Langley Park Institute Internet Provision	1	1	0	1
Desktop Mailing Solution	100	70	59	41
Payment Card Industry (PCI) Code of Compliance	43	30	17	26
ICT Total	6,845	4,454	4,329	2,516
Civica Pension Fund Administration System	333	197	213	120
Human Resources Total	333	197	213	120
Resources Capital Programme Total	7,178	4,651	4,542	2,636

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 April 2015



Council Plan 2015-2018 - Refresh of the Work Programme for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members with information contained within the Council Plan 2015-2018, relevant to the work of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This allows the opportunity for members to refresh the Committee Work Programme to reflect the 4 objectives and associated outcomes and action areas identified within the Council Plan for the Council's Altogether Better Council priority theme.

Background

2. The current Overview and Scrutiny Committees work programmes focus on the priority areas identified within the context of the Council Plan, Cabinet's Notice of Key Decisions, Sustainable Community Strategy, Partnership plans and strategies, performance and budgetary control data and changes in Government legislation.
3. In relation to the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee, Members will recall that the Work Programme for 2014-15 agreed to focus on the Medium Term Financial Plan. Further areas of focus for the Committee were added to reflect changing Government policy and at the request of Members related to performance concerns.

Council Plan 2015- 2018

4. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council, which covers a four year period and is updated on an annual basis. The plan sets out the corporate priorities for improvement in delivering the long term goals in the Sustainable Community Strategy (2014-2030). Attached at Appendix 2 is the Altogether Better Council section of the Council Plan for members' consideration.
5. The Council's Altogether Better Council priority theme links to the work of the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee containing the enablers that allow the council to effectively manage change and deliver improvement across the other themes within the Council Plan. It is imperative that delivery is made against these objectives which are increasingly important in times of significant change.
6. To help improve the performance of the Council, there are 4 objectives for an Altogether Better Council, underpinned by 11 outcomes:

- Putting the customer first:
 - A range of access routes to services
 - Responsive and customer focused services
 - People are treated fairly and differences respected.
- Working with our communities:
 - Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with
 - Effective partnership working
 - Responding to Welfare Reform and the effects of poverty.
- Effective use of resources
 - A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities
 - Council assets are optimised and information managed
 - Efficient and effective services.
- Support our people through change:
 - Employee and member well-being
 - A strategic approach to organisational development.

Current Work Programme

7. During 2014/15, Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee has undertaken budgetary and performance monitoring, in-depth Scrutiny Reviews, and overview presentations in relation to the following areas:

In depth Scrutiny Reviews

- Budget and MTFP process
(Objective: Effective use of resources: A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7)
- Customer First Strategy
(Objective: Putting the Customer First – A range of access routes to services ABC 1; Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2; People are treated fairly and differences respect ABC 3)

Areas of Overview Activity

- Fairness of Local Government Funding
(Objective: Effective use of resources – Council assets are optimised and information managed ABC 8)
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
(Objective – Effective use of resources)
- Overview of Creditor Payment Performance (via performance reports)
(Objective: Effective use of resources – Efficient and effective services ABC 9)
- Overview of Sickness Absence Performance (via performance reports)
(Objective: Support our people through change – Employee wellbeing ABC 10)

- Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Reports
(Objective: *Putting the Customer First – People are treated fairly and differences respected ABC 2*)
- CAS Service Statutory Annual Representations Report
(Objective: *Putting the customer first – Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2*)
- ICT Strategy 2013/16
(Objective: *Putting the customer first – A range of access routes to services ABC 1*)

Budgetary and performance monitoring

- Quarterly budgetary monitoring for ACE and Resources.
(Objective: *Effective use of resources - A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7*)
- Quarterly performance monitoring for Altogether Better Council theme.
(Objective: *Effective use of resources – Efficient and effective services ABC 9*)

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

8. Having considered the Altogether Better Council section of the Council Plan for 2015 - 2018 it is suggested that the following action areas could be considered in the update of the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee work programme (where they already link to the current work programme this is highlighted):

Putting the customer first:

- Customer First Strategy, including delivery of an easier to use website providing more self-service and online facilities, using social media more widely - update could link to the systematic review of the Customer First Strategy
- Use customer feedback to inform learning and improve services – CIOSC receives quarterly Customer Feedback reports, and the annual CAS Representations report.
- Treat people fairly through ensuring that any changes to the way we do things are properly assessed (equality and diversity) – CIOSC has input into the MTFP and savings planning process.

Working with our communities:

- During 2015/16 the Council will undertake a full review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme. CIOSC already monitor performance quarterly, but may wish to consider this review in relation to their work programme.
- Develop the Durham Ask programme to transform the delivery of services through supporting organisations interested in running local facilities. CIOSC already have community asset transfer on its work programme.

Effective use of resources. It is imperative that we utilise all available resources both efficiently and effectively; this is especially the case when faced with unprecedented reductions in government funding requiring us to deliver savings of £225m between 2011 and 2018.

- The Council will produce a rolling three year financial plan - CIOSC lead scrutiny of the financial plan every year.
- Robust assurance of detailed saving plans - regular delivery updates on the Medium Term Financial Plan are presented to CIOSC. In addition quarterly corporate performance reports are also presented. These are rolling items on the CIOSC work programme.
- Phase 2 of our Office Accommodation Project. Asset Management is one of the CIOSC areas of responsibility, so the committee may wish to consider this project.
- Ensure that the highest standards of Information Governance are being adhered to including in relation to personal data and publication of information. CIOSC receive updates on FOI performance.
- Regular updates on the ICT Strategy are presented to CIOSC and this is a rolling item on the CIOSC work programme.

Support our people through organisational change:

- Organisational Development Strategy. CIOSC will input into the theme of health, safety and wellbeing with a review of sickness absence and provide recommendations on the policy.
- Learning and talent development activities – CIOSC may wish to consider this area in relation to their work programme.
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Strategy and associated action plan – CIOSC may wish to consider this area in relation to their work programme.

Next Steps

9. The current Committee work programme was devised for a two year period, and therefore this provides the ideal opportunity for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee to consider refreshing its work programme for 2015-2017 within the context of the Council Plan.

10. The Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the appropriate section from the Council Plan, Appendix 2 (copy attached) to inform the Committee work programme for 2015-2017, reflecting on the current work programme detailed in paragraph 7.
11. Members will receive a further report at the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2015 confirming/agreeing the Committee's work programme for 2015-2017 based on today's discussion and agreement.

Recommendations

12. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the information contained in the Council Plan 2015-2018, Altogether Better Council theme (copy attached at Appendix 2).
13. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee refreshes the work programme for 2015 - 2017 by discussing and considering those actions identified under the Altogether Better Council priority theme of the Council Plan, as in paragraph 8.
14. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 July 2015 receives a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2015 - 2017.

Contact:	Jenny Haworth	Tel:	03000 268071
Author:	Emma Dunnill	Tel:	03000 260456

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

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

Equality and diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty - The cumulative impact of all savings proposals in total has also been presented to Council and will be updated as savings proposals are further developed. In addition a full impact assessment has previously been undertaken for the Council Plan. The Council Plan includes specific issues relating to equality and aim to improve the equality of life for those with protected characteristics. The Plan has been influenced by consultation and monitoring to include equality issues. There is no evidence of negative impact for particular groups.

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

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

Human rights – None

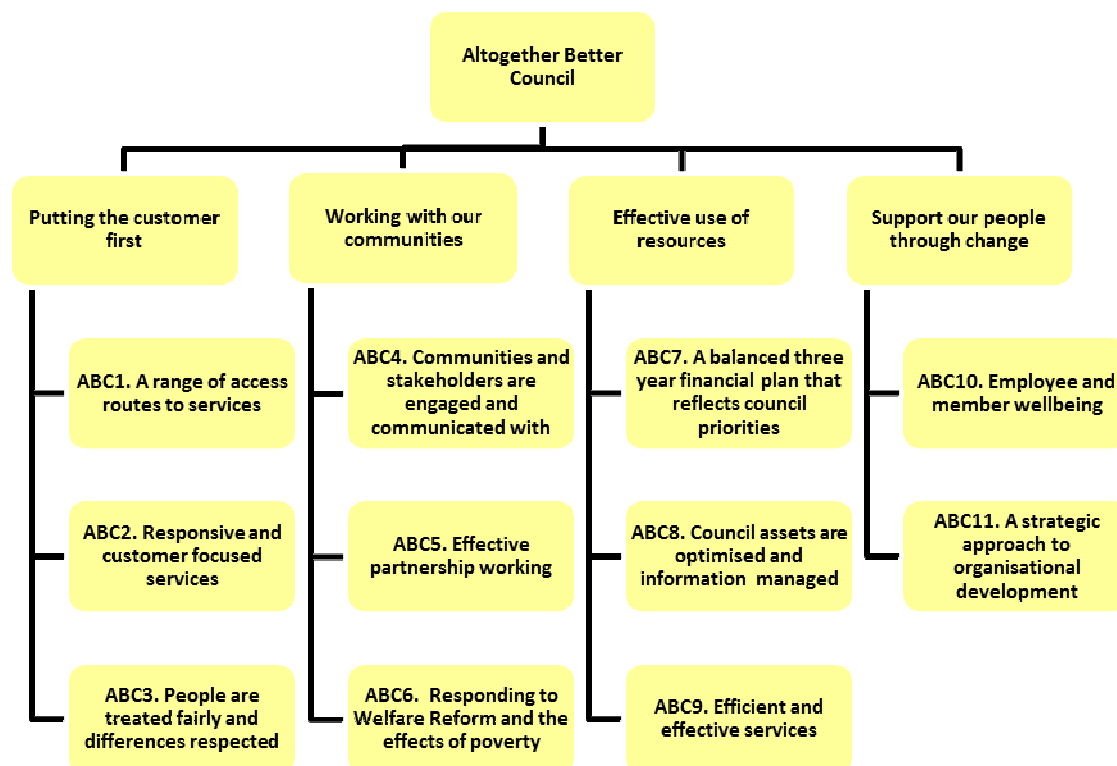
Consultation - Council and partnership priorities have been developed following an analysis of available consultation data including an extensive consultation programme carried out as part of the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy and this has been reaffirmed by subsequent consultation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

Procurement - None

Disability Issues – None

Legal Implications - None

Altogether Better Council



Our Vision

Like much of the public sector, Durham County Council faces the dichotomy of rising demand for many of its services and reducing resources available to help deliver them. The future for local government therefore involves investigating new ways to manage demand such as reducing avoidable contact, providing self-service options for some of our simpler services and looking at new models of service delivery, often together with our communities. We also owe it to our taxpayers to ensure that our services are operating as efficiently as possible and that both our service performance and finances are effectively managed. The local authority of tomorrow is likely to look very different to our current setup. It is therefore important that we have a strategy in place to make sure that our organisation develops and that the transformation is made smoothly.

1. Putting the customer first

Technology is changing the way people interact and our customers are demanding faster, easier contact at a time and place that is convenient to them. Our **Customer First Strategy** sets out how we will meet this demand, putting the 'customer first' and providing cost effective services. The Customer First Strategy has three main outcomes.

- We will provide a range of effective and easy to use ways in which our customers can deal with us. A number of projects are being implemented to achieve this, including; **making our website easier to use, providing more self-service** and online facilities, using social media more widely, and **making better use of our buildings**. We will also ensure **our customers receive the right information**,

advice and support at their first point of contact, and that their information is held securely.

- It is important that we provide responsive and customer focussed services by **communicating clearly to our customers how and when services will be delivered**, and keeping them informed of progress. Our staff will be kept informed of customer needs through a programme of customer care training, which will improve the standard of customer interactions.
- We need to **use customer feedback to inform learning and improve services**. We will always take customer views into account before changing any aspect of our services, and following any change we will monitor its impact. We will continue to use feedback to shape service provision and let our customers know the difference it has made through the 'you said, we did' approach. We will also acknowledge where we have got it wrong and be clear on what we will do to put it right.
- We will treat people fairly through ensuring that any changes to council policies and the way that we do things is **properly assessed** to ensure that certain groups of people are not disproportionately affected by any changes.
- Another area of relevant council activity, putting the County's residents at the centre over the duration of this plan, will be the effective and efficient delivery of all **elections** in compliance with the Electoral Commission's performance standards, beginning with the Parliamentary General Election in May 2015.

2. Working with our communities

We have a reputation for working with its communities. We have carried out extensive consultation work on changes to our budgets with members of the public. Our 14 Area Action Partnerships are real catalysts for change in our local communities. We have introduced innovative participatory budgeting in our localities and have worked with a range of partners in ensuring that public services in County Durham are joined up.

- We will work with communities to commemorate the massive role that the people of County Durham played in **World War One** throughout the centenary of the conflict.
- We will develop the **Durham Ask** programme to transform the delivery of services through supporting organisations interested in running local facilities.
- As part of our work with communities and stakeholders, during 2015/16 we will undertake a full **review of the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme**, originally agreed following extensive consultation and adopted from April 2013.
- We recognise the powerful role that partners in the voluntary and community sector can play in the delivery of local services to residents. We will work with Durham Community Action to deliver a **Centre for Volunteering and Social Enterprise** to help strengthen the capacity of this sector in the future.

- We will continue to manage changes introduced by the **Welfare Reform Act 2012** such as the proposed rollout of Universal Credit. We will also ensure that our policies take into account the effects of **poverty** on our residents.

3. Effective use of resources

It is imperative that we utilise all available resources both efficiently and effectively; this is especially the case when faced with unprecedented reductions in government funding requiring us to deliver savings of £225m between 2011 and 2018.

- To plan effectively over the medium term, we will produce a **rolling three-year financial plan** which reflects council priorities and feedback from budget consultation processes, forecasts government funding reductions and budget pressures, and identifies the savings required to ensure we can annually set a balanced budget.
- Detailed plans to meet the required individual savings will continue to be subject to the robust assurance process currently in place to ensure that all savings are achieved, and **managers will be supported** throughout this complex process of significant and ongoing organisational change, whilst managing budgets within cash limits.
- Phase II of our **Office Accommodation Project (OAP2)**, with its focus on identifying alternative office accommodation to County Hall as an enabler for the future redevelopment of the Aykley Heads campus as a strategic employment site, will continue over the duration of this plan and beyond.
- Underpinning this work on office accommodation are the delivery of our **ICT Strategy** and the Organisational Development Strategy, which together set out to link our future accommodation plans, to the development and design of Human Resource processes, whilst taking full advantage of emerging ICT technologies.
- With a view to releasing efficiencies, developing capacity and knowledge through the reduction of overheads, removing duplication of activity, management and support costs, and the sharing of specialist knowledge and skills, we will explore opportunities to **work collaboratively with external organisations**.
- We will ensure that the highest standards of **information governance** are being adhered to through our practices and procurement arrangements to ensure that personal data is adequately protected and also that we are being open and transparent in the publication of information.

4. Support our people through change

In the current climate we need to look at very different approaches to how services are delivered and ensure that the workforce is able to contribute by being enabled to be creative and flexible, and possess the right skills to respond positively in a changing environment.

- Our **Organisational Development Strategy** outlines our approach that connects people management and development with organisational improvements. The strategy includes an action plan which focuses on four overlapping themes that provide a coherent approach to improvement: a flexible workforce and workplace; employee engagement; leadership, learning and talent development; and health, safety and wellbeing.
- We need leaders and managers that can effectively empower, engage and motivate the workforce to deliver 'optimum' service delivery at a time of significant austerity. The **Durham Manager** programme has been designed to meet the development needs of our managers, in alignment with our corporate culture, values and priorities. Going forward we will continue to evaluate and develop the programme to support managers and meet the changing needs of the organisation.
- Effective learning and talent development activities will also be provided and utilised including extending learning and development through coaching, mentoring, **e-learning**, and working in partnership with other organisations. In line with our aspiration to achieve optimum individual and organisational performance, we will improve the level and quality of employee performance appraisals undertaken across the council.
- Establishing a flexible workforce and workplace will enable us to adapt to changing business needs, and enable individuals to embrace broader roles within the council, be resilient in a consistently changing environment and be equipped with the right skills to deliver our aims and objectives. To this end, the **Office Accommodation Programme II (OAP2)** will involve linking the development of Human Resources policy and processes with future workplace accommodation plans.
- Our **Health, Safety and Wellbeing** Strategy and associated action plan identifies how we implement the Health and Safety Policy in terms of practical solutions while enabling key strategic objectives to be identified and delivered. The health and safety team work with senior officers to ensure that visible and effective leadership guidance and advice is in place to enable informed health and safety decisions.
- We will explore opportunities to improve **efficiency and effectiveness** through exploring opportunities to collaborate with other organisations in the provision of local services. We will continue to monitor our performance and tackle areas that are underperforming.

Summary

<p>Going Well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Managers utilising 'Business Intelligence' tool to enhance access to budget information • The ongoing development and delivery of our Medium Term Financial Plan and monitoring of MTFP savings • The external audit VfM conclusion identified that we have robust arrangements in place to secure financial resilience • Our innovative triage process for handling enquiries from residents affected by the Government's welfare reforms is helping people to stay in their home, improve their financial situation and find work 	<p>Look Out For:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2015 Parliamentary Elections • Improved pathways and joint working between various agencies involved in the provision of Advice Services through the Advice in County Durham Partnership • Promotion of take-up for online access to Council Tax accounts, Business Rates benefits and e-billing, e-reminder and SMS texting
<p>Cause for Concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcome of the Local Government Finance Settlements for 2015/16 • A reduction in organisational capacity and a potential skills gap as a consequence of down-sizing • Re-aligning systems and processes to accommodate the switch in banker in 2015/16 	<p>Did you know?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Pension Fund has 109 employers who contribute to the fund in addition to the Council and the fund is currently valued at £2.1 billion • There are 238,000 domestic chargeable properties in County Durham, with a gross Council Tax liability of £306m and 85% of these are in Bands A to C • There are an estimated 70,000 claims for Council Tax Reduction each year, with £53m of support being provided. 54% of all claimants are of working age and of these 10,000 are in work claimants

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Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 April 2015



Sickness Absence Management Policy – Proposed Corporate Issues OSC Review

Report of Lorraine O'Donnell, Assistant Chief Executive

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider the establishment of a Corporate Issues Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to review the current sickness absence management policy and agree that proposed Terms of Reference for the Review will be taken to the Task and Finish Group.

Background

2. At the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 27th March 2014, during consideration of the Quarter 3 Performance Management report, reference was made to performance in respect to of sickness absence targets not being met within Durham County Council. At this time questions were raised regarding the sickness absence management policy, the process or recording and managing sickness absence, the role of line managers in reducing sickness levels and the training available to staff. There was also interest in the link between appraisal completion and absence levels.
3. The Committee resolved that once the Committee's work on the Medium Term Financial Plan and budget was concluded a working group be developed to examine the sickness absence policy and recommendations be brought back to a future meeting of the committee.

Task and Finish Group

4. The review proposes to comment on the current policies and management processes and seek ways to improve sickness absence management performance and reduce absence levels.
5. To achieve this, the Working Group will:-
 - receive an overview of the current policies and procedures including the role of occupational health;
 - Examine statistics relating to attendance management across the Council to gain an insight into trends and opportunities for improvement;
 - consider examples of best practice and research in respect of sickness absence management, and
 - receive information on staff, manager and Trade Union opinions and experiences of the sickness policy and management.

6. Following the review, a report and recommendations will be considered by Corporate Issues OSC on 28 September 2015.
7. Draft terms of reference for the review will be submitted to the Task and Finish Group for consideration and agreement.

Recommendations and reasons

8. The Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:-
 - (i) consider the proposed Sickness Absence Review and, subject to comment from members agree to the proposed review:
 - (ii) appoint up to ten representatives to serve on the working group.

Background papers:

Corporate Issues OSC – Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January and 27 March 2015.

Contact: Jenny Haworth Tel: 03000 268071
E-Mail: jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None

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

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