



## Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Date**            **Wednesday 20 April 2016**  
**Time**            **9.30 am**  
**Venue**          **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham**

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### Business

#### Part A

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

1. Apologies.
2. Substitute Members.
3. Minutes of the meeting held on: (Pages 1 - 12)
  - (i) 26 January 2016
  - (ii) 19 February 2016 – Special Joint meeting with Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
4. Declarations of Interest, if any.
5. Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 4 - 2015/16 (Pages 13 - 16)  
Report of the Head of Legal & Democratic Services.
6. Quarter 3 2015/16 Performance Management Report (Pages 17 - 34)  
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
7. Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions 2015/16 - Quarter 3 (Pages 35 - 50)
8. Quarter 3 Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2015/16 (Pages 51 - 64)
  - (i) Resources – Report of the Corporate Director Resources.
  - (ii) Assistant Chief Executive – Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.
9. Council Plan 2016-2019 Refresh of the Work Programme for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee (Pages 65 - 76)  
Report of the Assistant Chief Executive.

10. CRM Light Touch Review - Verbal Update.
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  
12 April 2016

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

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

Councillors J Alvey, B Armstrong, J Armstrong, L Armstrong, H Bennett, G Bleasdale, J Carr, P Crathorne, J Hillary, E Huntington, N Martin, J Rowlandson, A Shield, P Stradling, L Taylor, A Turner, M Wilkes, S Wilson and R Young

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**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE ISSUES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of **Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 26 January 2016 at 9.30 am**

**Present:**

**Councillor J Lethbridge (Chairman)**

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors E Adam, B Armstrong, J Armstrong, L Armstrong, H Bennett, G Bleasdale, J Carr, P Crathorne, E Huntington, N Martin, A Shield, P Stradling, L Taylor, M Wilkes, S Wilson and R Young

**Also Present:**

Councillors R Bell, S Forster, B Graham, M Nicholls

**1 Apologies for Absence.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Alvey, K Henig, A Hopgood and C Potts.

**2 Substitute Members.**

There were no substitute Members.

**3 Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2015 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

**Matters Arising from the Minutes**

**Q1 2015/16 Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions (including LGO reporting) - minute numbered 7 refers**

The Head of Planning and Performance referred to comments made by Councillor Wilkes regarding the publication of Local Government Ombudsman decisions and financial settlements. Members were informed that the format of the report had been amended to include additional details in respect of LGO complaints and decisions.

Comments had been made by Councillor Martin on page 5 of the minutes regarding the way in which information was shared on the Council's website, in relation to contaminated waste and recyclable materials. Feedback had been received from the Service that images

and words were more user-friendly than presenting the information in numbers. Information leaflets were produced for residents which could be shared with the Committee.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest.**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **5 Report on the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 - Quarter 3 2015/16**

The Committee received a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which informed Members of the Council's use of powers under the Regulation and Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 October 2015 until 31 December 2015 (Quarter 3) to ensure that it was being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remained fit for purpose (for copy see file of Minutes).

#### **Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

#### **6 Medium Term Financial Plan (6) 2016/17-2019/20 and 2016/17 Budget Update**

The Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director, Resources and the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on the development of the 2016/2017 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20 (MTFP(6)) that took into account forecasts from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Spending Review published on 25 November 2015. The Committee also received a second report on the MTFP(6) 2016/17 to 2019/20 and the 2016/17 Budget following the Government's Local Government Finance Settlement announcement on 17 December 2015 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Finance – Corporate Finance provided a summary of the key messages from each report. In relation to the Local Government Finance Settlement he advised that the Government had taken steps to ensure that the financial settlement was fairer and overall the settlement was slightly better than forecast. However, total clarity would not be available until all specific grant allocations were received. The Council would continue to face significant challenges.

Members were invited to ask questions in relation to the first report.

Councillor R Bell in referring to paragraphs 44 and 45 in the report asked about the Government's consultation on changes to the local government finance system to pave the way for implementation of 100% business rate retention scheme. He asked if the Government was committed in principle to equalisation.

The Head of Finance explained that the 100% business rate retention scheme would be allied with a review of how local authorities were financed and the Government would transfer new responsibilities to local government. Where the business rates baseline exceeded an authority's funding baseline, that authority paid the difference to Central Government. This was then used to pay for a 'top-up' for authorities whose funding baseline was less than its business rates baseline. Durham was a 'top-up' authority. There

was a clear expectation that this arrangement would continue and Durham would receive the 'top-up' even if the Revenue Support Grant was phased out.

He expected that the majority of the income from business rates would be directed into the local economy. It was not known whether there would be any further adjustment when the proposals were implemented. He anticipated that this would be a contentious area for local authorities.

Councillor R Bell considered that it would be useful to receive an update on the consultation in due course.

Councillor J Armstrong commented that the Committee's role was to provide advice to Cabinet on the MTFP and the budget. However at this late stage no decisions had been announced on some grants, including Public Health, Better Care Fund and New Homes Bonus, and in view of the timescales the Committee had no time to properly scrutinise, and was being reactive when it should be proactive. He felt that the lateness of the settlement was not good enough and there was a need to keep pushing for clarity. The Member also referred to the proposals to give local authorities the flexibility to increase council tax by a further 2% to raise additional income for Adult Social Care which he considered to be unacceptable. Residents would see this as being levied by the Council and not Central Government. He believed that the proposed new formula was aimed at shifting funding from deprived areas to wealthier local authority areas where health statistics showed that residents lived longer and would therefore be in greater need of social care.

The Head of Finance confirmed that details of the specific grant settlements, including the Public Health Grant had not yet been received. The Council was pushing DCLG for a decision and would continue to do so.

Councillor Armstrong continued that the Local Government Association and the CC Network were pushing for decisions to be made in a more timely manner in future.

Councillor Wilkes referred Members to the savings proposals for 2016/17 and 2017/18 detailed in Appendix 3 of the report and considered that the Committee should be provided with details of how the savings would be achieved for each of the areas listed. Gateshead Borough Council provided this information and he recommended that in future an information sheet be included in the report for each of the savings proposed in individual service areas which would enable Members to question and challenge budget proposals.

Councillor Armstrong made the point that this information was reported to the Scrutiny Sub-Committees.

Councillor Stradling stated that it was difficult to forecast in year 1 of the MTFP what savings would be required in subsequent years without the prescribed settlement being known.

Councillor Martin advised that at budget setting time it was clear that all savings had been identified for the following year based on estimates. If the settlement was less than expected those savings were still required to be made. Officers were working months in advance to identify savings, even if the specific detail was not finalised. For example next

year there would be a review of back office functions yet at no point had scrutiny members been asked to consider this in advance.

Councillor Lethbridge in noting the points made by Councillors Martin and Wilkes was of the view that Members were not in a position to examine the proposals when grant settlements were not known.

Councillor Stradling agreed that at times Members could benefit from more information, and that without it there was no opportunity to challenge. He further commented that it was testament to Officers that the Council was successfully managing the budgets within the constraints it faced.

In agreeing with the comments made by Councillor Armstrong that the Committee was being reactive, Councillor Shield was of the view that Members should have access to the level of detail that Gateshead Council provided to enable Members to effectively challenge budget proposals.

A number of questions were asked by Members in relation to the second report.

Following information presented on the new methodology which would mean a fairer approach to cuts, Members commented positively on this change but wanted to know what would happen if all settlement information hadn't been confirmed by the final Cabinet report. The Head of Finance confirmed that if necessary addendums could be issued.

Following questions from Councillor Martin about the flexibility given to local authorities to increase Council Tax by an additional 2% the Head of Finance confirmed that the additional income generated must be spent on Adult Social Care. Section 151 Officers had been asked to demonstrate that spend on Adult Social Care would be lower without the 2% increase. Councillor Martin considered that there was a risk that if the Council pursued this option, existing users may expect to see an increase/improvement in the service they already received.

Councillor Wilkes reiterated the comments he had made in respect of the first report and that for 2016/2017 there had been no challenges to the budget proposals. Therefore it was not possible to know what these savings would mean for residents in reality. The Member suggested that a recommendation be made to Cabinet that a single page budget sheet explaining savings proposed in 2017/2018 be presented for consideration by the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its September 2016 meeting. This would allow the Committee to more effectively challenge budget proposals in advance. The Member was informed that this may not be practical in view of the timescales for budget setting and he therefore asked that the information be received in sufficient time to allow the Committee to scrutinise proposals.

The Member also expressed concern at proposals to reduce each AAP budget by £20k. With £220m in reserves and a whole raft of savings identified which may be achieved earlier, he asked if the proposed savings to the AAP budgets could be delayed a further year.

The views of Councillor Wilkes were shared by Councillor Martin and their comments were noted.

The Head of Planning and Performance advised that the final budget report would be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 12 February 2016 to which all Members of this Committee would be invited. The views of Members had been noted and a summary of the headline issues raised by the Committee would be presented to Cabinet.

**Resolved:**

That the comments of scrutiny be formulated into a response and forwarded to Cabinet.

**7 Quarter 2 2015/16 Performance Management Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which presented progress against the Council's corporate basket of indicators, Council Plan and service plan actions, and reported upon other performance issues for the second quarter of the 2015/2016 financial year, covering the period July to September 2015 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager highlighted key achievements in the quarter. Performance in respect of the payment of invoices exceeded the 92% target in the quarter and for nine of the last ten successive months. Other key achievements included that 99% of customers were seen at Customer Access Points within the 15 minute target, call handling and council tax collection had improved, and for the first time the target for employee appraisals had been met.

The quarter had seen slippage in processing of housing benefit and council tax reduction claims, and sickness absence levels remained a challenge.

Councillor Martin congratulated Officers with regard to performance in respect of the payment of invoices.

Councillor Wilkes referred to page 82 of the papers and the proportion of households in fuel poverty. He stated that there were a number of charities who offered assistance to residents suffering fuel poverty and asked if the Council liaised with those organisations. The Head of Planning and Performance advised that she would refer the Councillor's comments to the Fuel Poverty Working Group.

With regard to the slippage in performance in respect of processing housing benefit claims, Councillor Wilkes referred to savings proposed in RES19 on page 56 of the papers. If the proposed savings included a reduction in staffing levels he was concerned that performance would continue to slip.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained the reasons for the underperformance. He advised that the Team had been affected by the implementation of the Welfare Assistance Service and the introduction of the Universal Credit Scheme. A number of officers had left the Authority but 7 new members of staff had now received training. The situation was improving and he was confident that the annual target would be met.

Councillor Wilkes noted that discretionary housing payments had reduced significantly and asked if this was due to changes in welfare assistance.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager advised that these were entirely separate schemes. The Team was trying to establish the reasons why fewer people were coming forward to claim discretionary housing payments and was looking at ways of raising awareness.

Councillor Wilkes asked if Members could be provided with the level of funding the Council received in respect of the Welfare Assistance Scheme against the total paid to customers on an annual basis.

By way of information the Customer Relations Policy and Performance Manager advised of a new scheme which made funding available in the private rented sector through the County Durham Central Heating Fund to upgrade heating systems. The Team was informing customers of the scheme.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

**8 Review of the Council Plan and Service Plans**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided an update on progress regarding the development of the Altogether Better Section of the Council Plan 2016-2019 including the draft aims and objectives contained within the Plan and the proposed performance indicator set to measure the Council's success (for copy see file of Minutes).

Members were asked to comment on the draft objectives and outcomes, and performance indicators in relation to the Altogether Better Council theme.

In presenting the report the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager advised of three indicators to be removed from the basket of indicators, of one new indicator relating to the average time taken to answer a telephone call, and of new indicators that were being considered in relation to attendance management to reflect positive attendance.

There were no comments from Members at the meeting and the Head of Planning and Performance asked Members to forward any comments which they may have after the meeting to the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Manager.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

**9 Customer Feedback : Complaints Compliments and Suggestions 2015/16 - Quarter 2**

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services which presented performance and learning outcomes in relation to Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions report for Quarter 2 2015/2016 (for copy see file of Minutes).



The Customer Relations, Policy and Performance Manager informed Members that the report was now presented in a new format which provided a stronger focus on high level strategic messages and learning outcomes.

With regard to complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Councillor Wilkes referred to paragraph 44 in the report and the complaint in respect of the Planning Service about how the Council dealt with a planning application for the construction of a new school. He asked if the action taken following the decision of maladministration was the response of the Ombudsman or the Council's interpretation of the decision. He was familiar with the complaint and considered that injustice had been caused.

The Manager confirmed that the information in the report reflected the decision of the Ombudsman. The LGO strictly applied its own definition of injustice to every case it considered. In this case the LGO identified some fault but had determined that injustice had not been caused.

Members suggested that in future reports should specify that the action to be taken following an Ombudsman decision was the formal response of the LGO.

**RESOLVED:**

That the content of the report be noted.

**10 Quarter 2 Revenue and Capital Outturn 2015/16**

The Committee considered two reports, the first of the Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) and the second of the Corporate Director, Resources which provided details of the forecast outturn budget position highlighting major variances in comparison with the budget based on the position at the end of September 2015 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Wilkes referred to the underspends of £990k in the revenue budget in the Resources grouping at Quarter 2, and £237k in the ACE grouping in the same quarter. He reiterated his comments about the proposed reductions in AAP budgets for next year and suggested that that part of the total underspend in these service groupings could be utilised to avoid budget cuts to AAPs.

By way of information Members were advised the savings target for 2016/2017 in the Resources service grouping was £1.5m and the underspend was as a result of the early achievement of those savings.

**Resolved:**

That the content of the report be noted.

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## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

At a Meeting of **Overview and Scrutiny Management Board** held in Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham on **Friday 19 February 2016 at 11.30 am**

### **Present:**

**Councillor J Armstrong (Chairman)**

### **Members of the Committee:**

Councillors P Stradling, E Adam, R Bell, H Bennett, R Crute, B Graham, J Hillary, J Lethbridge, T Nearney, C Potts, L Pounder, J Robinson, A Shield, M Simmons, J Turnbull, S Wilson, J Alvey, G Bleasdale, J Carr, E Huntington, N Martin, L Taylor, M Wilkes, R Young, J Shuttleworth and G Holland

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, D Boyes, K Corrigan, S Forster, K Henig, P Lawton, M Nicholls, W Stelling, Mr R Patel, B Armstrong, L Armstrong, P Crathorne, J Rowlandson and A Turner

### **2 Substitute Members**

Councillor G Holland for Councillor A Hopgood

### **3 Declarations of interest, if any**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **4 Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 to 2019/20 (MTFP 6) and 2016/17 Budget**

The Board and Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive which informed members of the Cabinet report (17 February 2016) that provided comprehensive financial information to enable Cabinet to agree a 2016/17 balanced revenue budget, an outline Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP 6) for 2016/17 to 2019/20 and a fully funded capital programme for recommendation to the County Council meeting on 24 February 2016 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chairman referred to a request from Councillor M Wilkes asking if the Committee would consider an additional paper at the start of the meeting on his suggested proposals on savings within the budget report. The Chairman advised that this additional paper could not be considered, but that this information would be passed to the Cabinet portfolio holder following the meeting.

The Head of Corporate Finance advised that following the late settlement from government, Public Health funding had been cut by 15% over the next four years and that confirmation for some of the Capital Allocations had not been received, plus £230k had been lost from Schools Capital Maintenance Funding. Members were informed that local government were taking the brunt of austerity cuts with every other government

department protected. Members were advised that the Department of Communities and Local Government faced funding cuts of 56% over the next four years whilst the average reduction for all other 'unprotected' government departments was 6%.

The Head of Corporate Finance continued to provide a summary and highlighted key issues within the report relating to:

- Forecast savings for the next four years – reduced from £124m to £104m
- Transitional Funding – Durham would not receive any additional funding
- Specific Grants – additional reductions over the next four years
- Consultations
- Scrutiny Committee Feedback
- MTFP Strategy and Developments
- Revenue Budget and Base Budget Pressures
- Financial Reserves
- Capital Schemes

He concluded that the County Council would face difficult decisions in relation to savings targets, as government grants continued to reduce, therefore reducing the budget. He added that details were included within the report for each service grouping.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Corporate Finance for a detailed and informative report.

Councillor J Robinson referred to paragraph 10 of the report in relation to the Public Health cuts and said that this had been a focus for the Adults, Wellbeing and Health Overview and Scrutiny meetings recently. As Chairman of the Committee, he expressed great concerns about the additional savings on top of the £6m this financial year. He advised that this had been raised as a concern at the Regional Health Scrutiny Committee. Members also expressed concern about the proposals moving funding from the north to the south of the country. The Head of Corporate Finance said that it was unsure what would happen with funding for Public Health after 2018 but that the County Council would utilise reserves from the Budget Support Reserve and the 2015/16 Collection Fund surplus to cover the shortfall of savings for frontline services.

Councillor J Lethbridge commented that he was concerned about fairness and the additional funding targeted at Shire County Councils. The spending power per dwelling was unfair for Durham due to rurality, unemployment and poverty in certain areas of the County.

In response to a question from Councillor Wilkes regarding the level reserves from 2011/12 to 2016/17 the Head of Corporate Finance explained that reserve levels had increased and this provided the Council with greater flexibility. When asked why the report did not reflect this information, Councillor Wilkes was advised that reserve levels were reported in forecast of Outturn report and that this was not a Budget setting issue.

Referring to the tables of savings targets, Councillor Wilkes asked that more detail was given about the implications for services. He suggested that Scrutiny receive detailed information for each target in advance of the 2017/18 budget proposals. The Chairman referred to paragraph 71 of the report where he had asked for further details in relation to savings at an earlier stage to Scrutiny.

Councillor N Martin had compared the December Cabinet report to this latest report and could find no difference in the savings and that all other plans for spending were exactly the same. He said that the additional 2% adult social care precept was not being used to deliver additional services but appeared to be being used to cover the £4m pressure in the budget to cover the National Living Wage. He asked to what extent were the Council expected to deliver new additional services and stated that Members should be made aware of this. The Head of Corporate Finance advised that the government had stipulated that local authorities should utilise the additional sums raised by the 2% adult social care precept to assist in financing additional budget pressures in this service area. In Durham adult social care is facing additional budget pressures of circa £10m in 2016/17 mainly as a result of the impact of the introduction of the National Living Wage. On that basis the additional £3.9m raised via the 2% adult social care precept would be utilised to support this significant budget pressure. Councillor Martin re-iterated his point that nothing had changed within the reports and was advised by the Head of Corporate Finance that it should be noted that the additional income from the 2% adult social care precept was not included in the previous financial models as Cabinet had not agreed at that point to utilise this flexibility.

Moving on to the reserves, Councillor Martin referred to page 77 of the report that outlined the budget summary and said that there had been no estimate in the Cabinet or County Council papers for the level of reserves as they stand at 31 March. He appreciated that estimates were given in November for the position at the end of September, and asked if they were still the same. The Head of Corporate Finance advised that the policy in relation to the level of General Reserves was included in the budget report and that earmarked reserves would be utilised for specific activities identified. The reserves level position reported to Cabinet in the Forecast of Outturn report for March is expected to be slightly higher.

Commenting on the level of earmarked reserves, the Head of Corporate Finance assured the Committee that they could trust the figures within the report. He further advised Members that they had the opportunity to query figures at Scrutiny meetings on a regular basis. The Chairman added that having the level of reserves we did put us in the favourable position we were in today, compared to some local authorities.

Councillor Wilkes was critical of the reserves figures and as the figures kept increasing, he did not feel that this was an adequate use of resources. He asked how much higher the figures would be if they were expected to be slightly higher. The Head of Corporate Finance said that he would share the figures from the draft March Cabinet report.

Referring to the earlier information received from Councillor Wilkes with suggested proposals on the budget, the Chairman agreed that these would be passed to the portfolio holder and leader following the meeting.

**Resolved:**

- i) That the comments on the Cabinet report of 17 February 2016 be noted, prior to full Council on 24 February 2016.
- ii) That the Chairman of OSMB is charged with reporting the final scrutiny response to Council.

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**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**20 April 2016**

**Report on the Council's use of powers  
under the Regulation of Investigatory  
Powers Act 2000 – Quarter 4 - 2015/16**



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

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform members about the Council's use of powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 ('RIPA') during the period 1 January 2016 until 31 March 2016 (Quarter 4) to ensure that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

**Background**

2. As members are aware, the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) enables local authorities to carry out certain types of surveillance activity provided that specified procedures are followed. The Local Authority is able to rely upon the information obtained from those surveillance activities within court proceedings.
3. This report gives details of RIPA applications that have been authorised during the period 1 January 2016 until 31 March 2016 and the outcomes following surveillance.

**Quarter 4 Activity**

4. During Quarter 4 there were 2 new RIPA Directed Surveillance authorisations which related to operations conducted by Trading Standards regarding sales of illicit tobacco from a residential premises and test purchases at premises where complaints had been received regarding underage sales of tobacco.
5. There were 2 new Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) authorisations which related to operations conducted by Trading

Standards regarding sales of illicit tobacco from a residential premises and where a Directed Surveillance authorisation was also in force.

6. During the reporting quarter there has been 1 Communications Data application for subscriber information for mobile telephone numbers, which relates to an investigation conducted by Trading Standards relating to the sale of vehicles with mileage discrepancies.
7. All authorisations were approved by the Magistrate and there were no difficulties or issues raised by the Magistrate in approving the applications.
8. The Council's Senior Responsible Officer is satisfied that the Council's use of its powers under RIPA during Quarter 4 is consistent with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

#### **Outcomes following surveillance**

9. Investigations remain ongoing in relation to all of the operations.

#### **Recommendations and Reasons**

10. It is recommended that members receive the quarterly report on the Council's use of RIPA for the period 1 January 2016 to 31 March 2016 and resolve that it is being used consistently with the Council's policy and that the policy remains fit for purpose.

#### **Background Papers**

None

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**Contact: Clare Burrows**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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**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 2016****Quarter Three 2015/16  
Performance Management Report**

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

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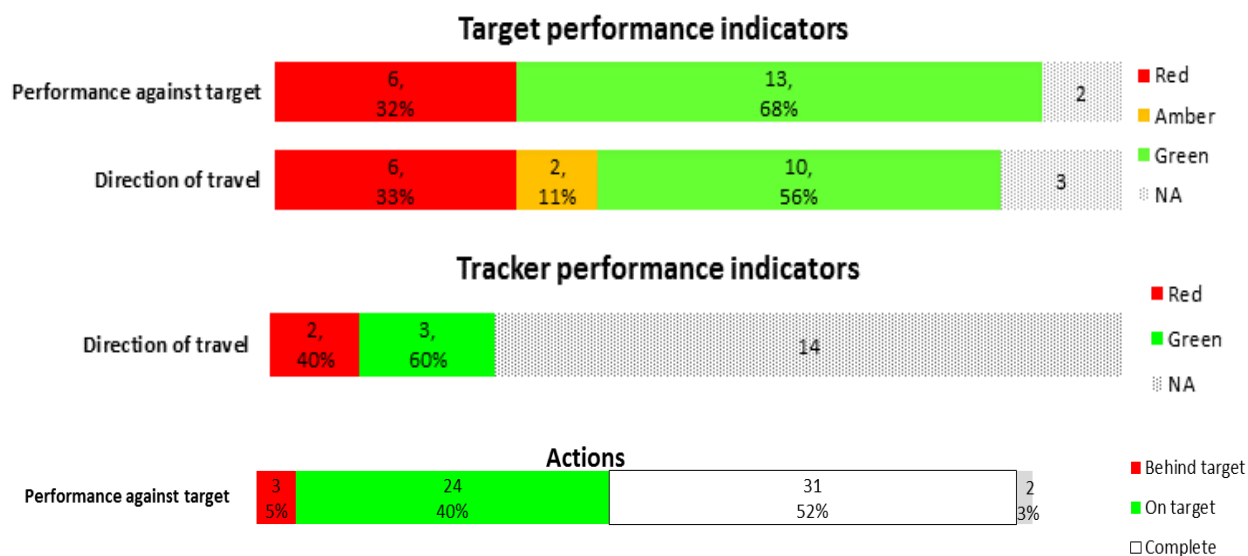
**Purpose of the Report**

1. To present progress against the council's corporate basket of performance indicators (PIs), Council Plan and service plan actions and report other performance issues for the third quarter of the 2015/16 financial year, covering the period October to December 2015.

**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 set of performance indicators are presented in Appendix 4.
4. The corporate performance indicator guide provides full details of indicator definitions and data sources for the 2015/16 corporate indicator set. This is available to view either internally from the intranet (at Councillors useful links) or can be requested from the Corporate Planning and Performance Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk).
5. The response to the query regarding the Welfare Assistance Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments grants and spend incurred/forecast that was raised at the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016 is presented in Appendix 5.

## Altogether Better Council: Overview



## Council Performance

### 6. Key achievements this quarter include:

- a. In 2015, 93% of telephone calls were answered within three minutes, exceeding the target of 80%. Performance is in line with the same period last year (94%). Over one million calls were received during the 12 months ending December 2015 (Appendix 4, Chart 1), 6% of these were abandoned, better than the target of 12% and in line with the same period last year (5%).
- b. Footfall in our customer access points (CAPs) has fallen significantly from 237,373 during 2014 to 187,956 during 2015 (Appendix 4, Chart 2). This reduction has been aided by the appointments system for benefits and council tax, which is reducing repeat visits as customers at the time of booking the appointment are informed of the documentation they need to bring with them. This is in spite of more than 5,000 enquiries and requests for Lumiere tickets at the CAPs. 99% of customers were seen within 15 minutes in 2015, exceeding the 95% target.
- c. Processing performance for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claims is on track to achieve the annual targets after reporting a slight dip at quarter two.
  - i. Processing times for new Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims stand at 19.16 days and 19.33 days respectively at quarter three which have improved from last quarter and is on track to achieve the annual target of 22 days. During quarter three, 2,856 new HB claims and 3,244 new CTR claims were processed, a slight decrease from the previous quarter (Appendix 4, Charts 3 and 4).
  - ii. Processing times for change of circumstances (HB and CTR) stand at 9.92 days and 9.72 days respectively at quarter three. Although both are slightly outside of the quarter target (9.33 days), the service is on track to achieve the annual target of 10 days. During quarter three 26,868 change of circumstances for HB claims and 28,315 change of

circumstances for CTR claims were processed, a slight reduction from previous quarter (Appendix 4, Chart 5 and 6).

- d. During quarter three 2015/16, 95.2% of supplier invoices were paid within 30 days, continuing to exceed the 92% target and improving 5% on the same period last year (90.7%). A total of 95,047 supplier invoices were processed this quarter, a 13.3% increase on the previous quarter (83,871).

A major software upgrade went live in December with minimal impact on performance. The upgrade brings enhanced system functionality, including optical character recognition to automate the processing of invoices and detailed management information dashboards. The service will continue to work with software suppliers to further improve automation of processes.

- e. Between April and December 2015, 84.5% council tax was collected, exceeding the 83% target and improving from the same period last year (82.9%). It is expected that the planned recovery schedule will maintain the continuous improvement and meet or potentially exceed the 96.2% annual target.

Over the same period, 82.9% business rates were collected, exceeding the 81.7% target and improving from the same period last year (81.6%). The council is on course to achieve the 96.7% annual target due the tightening of the 2015/16 recovery schedule and a concerted effort has been made to contact the large ratepayers in arrears to ensure payment is received promptly.

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

- a. The employee appraisal rate was 83.7% in the 12 months to December 2015, a deterioration of 5% on the previous quarter (88.2%) and outside the quarter three target which has increased this period from 87.5% to 90%.

Automated prompts and Head of Service monthly summaries are provided to managers to assist in actively managing appraisal performance. Human Resources (HR) service links are working closely with Service Management Teams to increase the number of appraisals undertaken. HR reporting has also been developed within Oracle Business Intelligence to provide managers with information to support the administration and performance management of the performance appraisal scheme. These reports were rolled out in December 2015 and are available to all Tier 1-4 managers providing them with access to real time information to help manage appraisal activity for their areas (s) of responsibility. An internal audit commenced in January 2016 which will assist in identifying required improvements to the performance appraisal process.

- b. Sickness absence levels continue to be challenging. In the year to 31 December 2015, the average days' sickness per full time equivalent (FTE) excluding school based employees was 12.13 days, and 9.71 days including school based employees, which although is slightly better than at quarter two (12.35 and 9.85 days respectively), is higher than acceptable and considerably worse than the targets set of 11.5 days and 8.5 days respectively.

During the rolling year to December 2015, 48% of posts (excluding school based employees) had no sickness absence which is an improvement on quarter two (45%) and the same time last year (47%).

Following agreement of the Attendance Management Scrutiny review at the end of this quarter, HR Officers continue to work with managers to ensure compliance with the Sickness Absence Management Policy and are actively managing sickness absence. Hotspot areas have been identified where the level of sickness absence may necessitate more detailed work to bring about the required improvement to performance.

- c. The percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within 20 days was 77% this quarter, a deterioration of five percentage points from the previous quarter (82%) and below the national target of 85%. The number of FOI/EIR requests was 291 this quarter, an increase from 256 in quarter three 2014/15 but a decrease from 322 in the previous quarter (see Appendix 4, Chart 7).
8. Key Council Plan actions which have not achieved target in this theme are as follows:
- a. Developing a community led support network for community buildings has been delayed from November 2015 to April 2016 because of the need to include the outcomes of a survey which was completed in December. The first network meeting will be held in February 2016. At this meeting, social enterprises will help to shape the future network.
  - b. Improving information governance by developing Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and Information Asset Owner roles has been delayed from November 2015 to April 2016. The SIRO has been agreed as the Assistant Chief Executive. Further work is required to fully roll out Information Asset Owners.
  - c. Mapping our information assets to identify asset owners and the risk associated with those assets has been delayed from October 2015 to May 2016. This work has been partly complete, but further work is required to get a full corporate picture.
  - d. Improving customer services through embedding the new HR Service structure by developing workstream action plans in relation to accommodation. This was due to be completed by March 2016, however the action is proposed to be deleted as a result of HR disaggregation; in which service improvement actions will be re-drafted at team planning level.
  - e. Identifying opportunities to create a Talent Management Framework for the council in order to identify high potential individuals utilising in-house development and project based learning to develop a skills and succession framework for the council. This action was due to be completed by March 2016 and is proposed to be deleted as a revised action has been incorporated in the updated Organisational Development Strategy Action Plan.
9. 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. If we were to fail to comply with Central Government's Public Services Network Code of Connection (PSN CoCo) criteria for our computer applications, this would put some of our core business processes at risk, such as revenues and benefits, which rely on secure transfer of personal data. The Government set criteria for the PSN CoCo compliance has changed again, one of the requirements being the need to submit a risk register, which is being compiled for submission in June 2016.

## Recommendations and Reasons

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

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**Tel:** 03000 268071 **E-Mail** [jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk](mailto:jenny.haworth@durham.gov.uk)

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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

**Staffing** - Performance against a number of relevant corporate health Performance Indicators (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



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

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

### Performance Indicators:

#### Direction of travel

Latest reported data have improved from comparable period

**GREEN**

Latest reported data remain in line with comparable period

**AMBER**

Latest reported data have deteriorated from comparable period

**RED**

#### Performance against target

Performance better than target

Getting there - performance approaching target (within 2%)

Performance >2% behind target

### Actions:

**WHITE**

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

**GREEN**

Action on track to be achieved by the deadline

**RED**

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

### Benchmarking:

**GREEN**

Performance better than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available

**AMBER**

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

**RED**

Performance worse than other authorities based on latest benchmarking information available

### Nearest Neighbour Benchmarking:

The nearest neighbour model was developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), one of the professional accountancy bodies in the UK. CIPFA has produced a list of 15 local authorities which Durham is statistically close to when you look at a number of characteristics. The 15 authorities that are in the nearest statistical neighbours group for Durham using the CIPFA model are: Barnsley, Wakefield, Doncaster, Rotherham, Wigan, Kirklees, St Helens, Calderdale, Dudley, Northumberland, Tameside, Sheffield, Gateshead, Stockton-on-Tees and Stoke-on-Trent.

We also use other neighbour groups to compare our performance. More detail of these can be requested from the Corporate Planning and Performance Team at [performance@durham.gov.uk](mailto:performance@durham.gov.uk).

## Appendix 3: Summary of Key Performance Indicators

Page 24  
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	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
<b>Altogether Better Council</b>											
56	NS20	Percentage of abandoned calls	6	Jan - Dec 2015	12	GREEN	5	RED			
57	NS22	Percentage of telephone calls answered within three minutes	93	Jan - Dec 2015	80	GREEN	94	RED			
58	NS24	Percentage of customers seen within 15 minutes at a customer access point	99	Jan - Dec 2015	95	GREEN	NA	NA			
59	NS25	Percentage of customers with an appointment at a customer access point who are seen on time	Indicator under development	NA	95	NA	NA	NA			
60	RES/038	Percentage all ICT service desk incidents resolved on time	94	Oct - Dec 2015	90	GREEN	94	AMBER			
61	RES/NI/181a1	Average time taken to process new housing benefit claims (days)	19.16	Oct - Dec 2015	21.00	GREEN	19.64	GREEN	23.00 Not comparable	25.00** Not comparable	Jul - Sep 2015
62	RES/NI/181a2	Average time taken to process new council tax reduction claims (days)	19.33	Oct - Dec 2015	21.00	GREEN	20.90	GREEN			
63	RES/NI/181b1	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for housing benefit claims (days)	9.92	Oct - Dec 2015	9.33	RED	9.47	RED	10.00 Not comparable	11.00** Not comparable	Jul - Sep 2015

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
64	RES/NI/181b2	Average time taken to process change of circumstances for council tax reduction claims (days)	9.72	Oct - Dec 2015	9.33	RED	9.2	RED			
65	RES/001	Savings delivered against the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) (£ million)	14.6	As at Dec 2015	16.3	<a href="#">Not comparable</a> [7]	22	NA			
66	RES/002	Percentage of council tax collected in-year	84.47	Apr - Dec 2015	83.00	GREEN	82.94	GREEN	97.00 Not comparable	95.89* Not comparable	2014/15
67	RES/003	Percentage of business rates collected in-year	82.95	Apr - Dec 2015	81.70	GREEN	81.63	GREEN	98.11 Not comparable	98* Not comparable	2014/15
68	RES/129	Percentage of council tax recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.06	Oct - Dec 2015	98.50	GREEN	99.07	AMBER			
69	RES/130	Percentage of business rates recovered for all years excluding the current year	99.5	Oct - Dec 2015	98.50	GREEN	99.18	GREEN			
70	REDPI49b	Total of income and savings from solar installations on council owned buildings (£)	261,210	2014/15	242,000	GREEN	214,000	GREEN			
71	REDPI68	Average asset rating of Display Energy Certificates in county council buildings	96.0	Oct - Dec 2015	97.0	GREEN	99.1	GREEN			
		Percentage of undisputed	95.2	Oct - Dec	92.0	GREEN	90.7	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
	010	invoices paid within 30 days to our suppliers		2015							
73	ACE006	Percentage of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests responded to within statutory deadlines	77	Oct - Dec 2015	85	RED	74	GREEN			
74	RES/LPI/012	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services including school staff	9.71	Jan - Dec 2015	8.50	RED	9.31	RED			
75	RES/LPI/012a	Days / shifts lost to sickness absence – all services excluding school staff	12.13	Jan - Dec 2015	11.50	RED	11.97	RED			
76	RES/011	Percentage of performance appraisals completed in current post in rolling year period (excluding schools)	83.75	Jan - Dec 2015	90.00	RED	81.72	GREEN			

[\[7\] Annual target](#)

**Table 2: Key Tracker Indicators**

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
<b>Altogether Better Council</b>											
172	NS43a	Number of customer contacts - face to face	187,956	Jan - Dec 2015	185,581	Not comparable [2]	237,373	Not comparable [2]			
173	NS43b	Number of customer contacts -telephone	1,015,211	Jan - Dec 2015	1,004,224	NA	956,196	NA			
174	NS43c	Number of customer contacts - web forms	18,000	Oct - Dec 2015	15,935	NA	17,387	NA			
175	NS43d	Number of customer contacts - emails	48,661	Apr - Dec 2015	33,170	NA [2]	NA	NA [2]			
176	RES/013	Staff aged under 25 as a percentage of post count	5.69	As at Dec 2015	5.06	NA	5.59	NA			
177	RES/014	Staff aged over 50 as a percentage of post count	39.89	As at Dec 2015	40.16	NA	38.42	NA			
178	RES/LPI /011a	Women in the top five percent of earners	52.54	As at Dec 2015	52.72	NA	52.32	NA			
179	RES/LPI /011bi	Black and minority ethnic (BME) as a percentage of post count	1.57	As at Dec 2015	1.54	NA	1.50	NA			
180	RES/LPI /011ci	Staff with a recorded disability as a percentage of post count	2.75	As at Dec 2015	2.82	NA	2.73	NA			
181	RES028	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by social sector size criteria	464,294.50	Apr - Dec 2015	286,199.40	NA	826,664.92	NA			

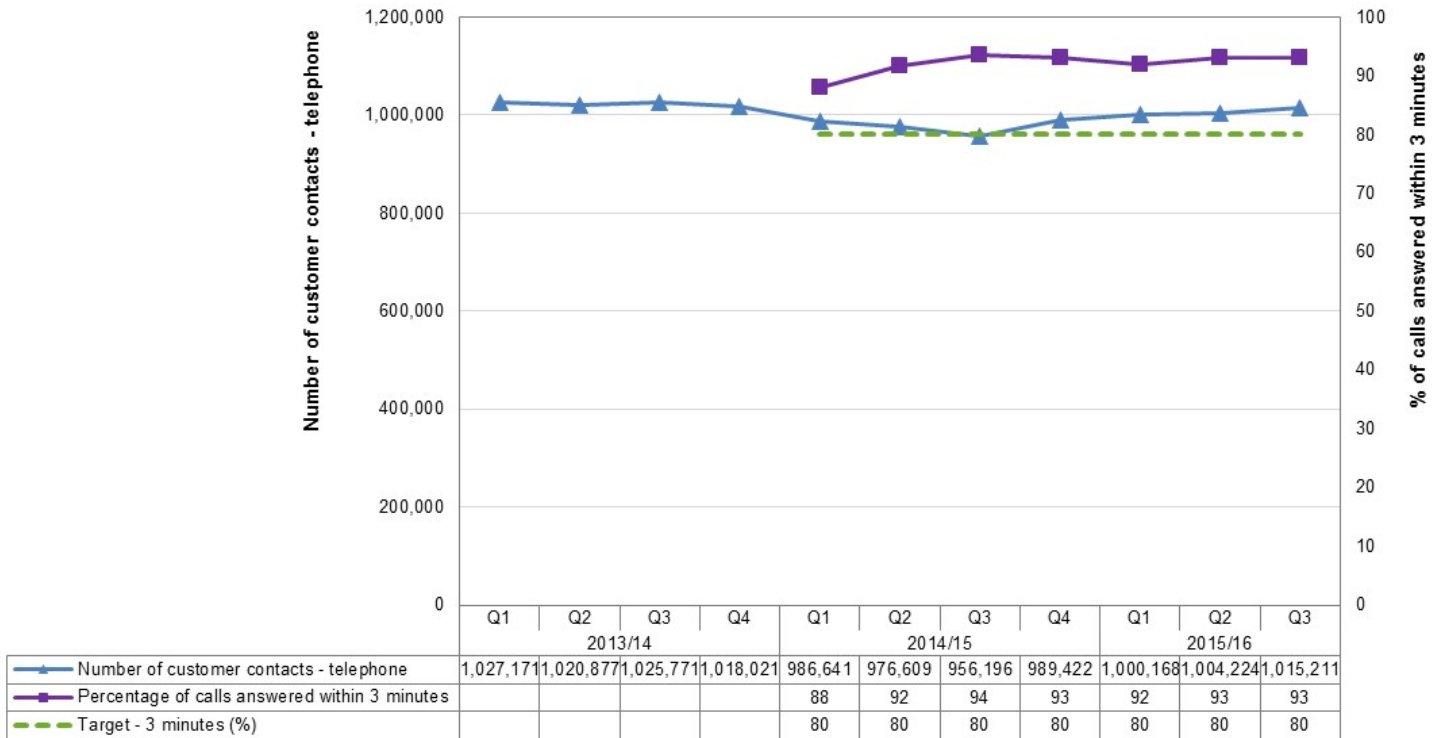
Page Ref	PI ref	Description	Latest data	Period covered	Previous period data	Performance compared to previous period	Data 12 months earlier	Performance compared to 12 months earlier	National figure	*North East figure **Nearest statistical neighbour figure	Period covered
182	RES029	Discretionary Housing Payments - value (£) for customers affected by local housing allowance reforms	108,986.47	Apr - Dec 2015	75,008.48	NA	115,379.00	NA			
183	ACE016	Percentage of children in poverty (quarterly proxy measure) <b>(Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)</b>	22.3	As at Aug 2015	22.5	GREEN	23.0	GREEN	16.1	22.9*	As at Aug 2015
184	ACE017	Percentage of children in poverty (national annual measure) <b>(Also in Altogether Better for Children and Young People)</b>	22.5	2013	22.6	GREEN	22.6	GREEN	18.6	23.3*	2013
185	ACE019a	Proportion of households in fuel poverty (low income/high cost rule)	11.5	2013	11.4	RED	11.4	RED	10.4	11.8*	2013
186	RES/034b	Staff - total headcount (excluding schools)	8,564	As at Dec 2015	8,569	NA	9,068	NA			
187	RES/035b	Staff - total full time equivalent (excluding schools)	7,057	As at Dec 2015	7,086	NA	7,465	NA			
188	RES/020	Percentage of time lost to sickness in rolling year (excluding schools)	4.8	Jan - Dec 2015	4.88	GREEN	4.73	RED			
189	RES/052	Percentage of posts with no absence in rolling year (excluding schools)	47.89	Jan - Dec 2015	45.22	GREEN	46.66	GREEN			

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
190	RES/036	Number of RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) incidents reported to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)	10	Oct - Dec 2015	12	N/A	11	NA			

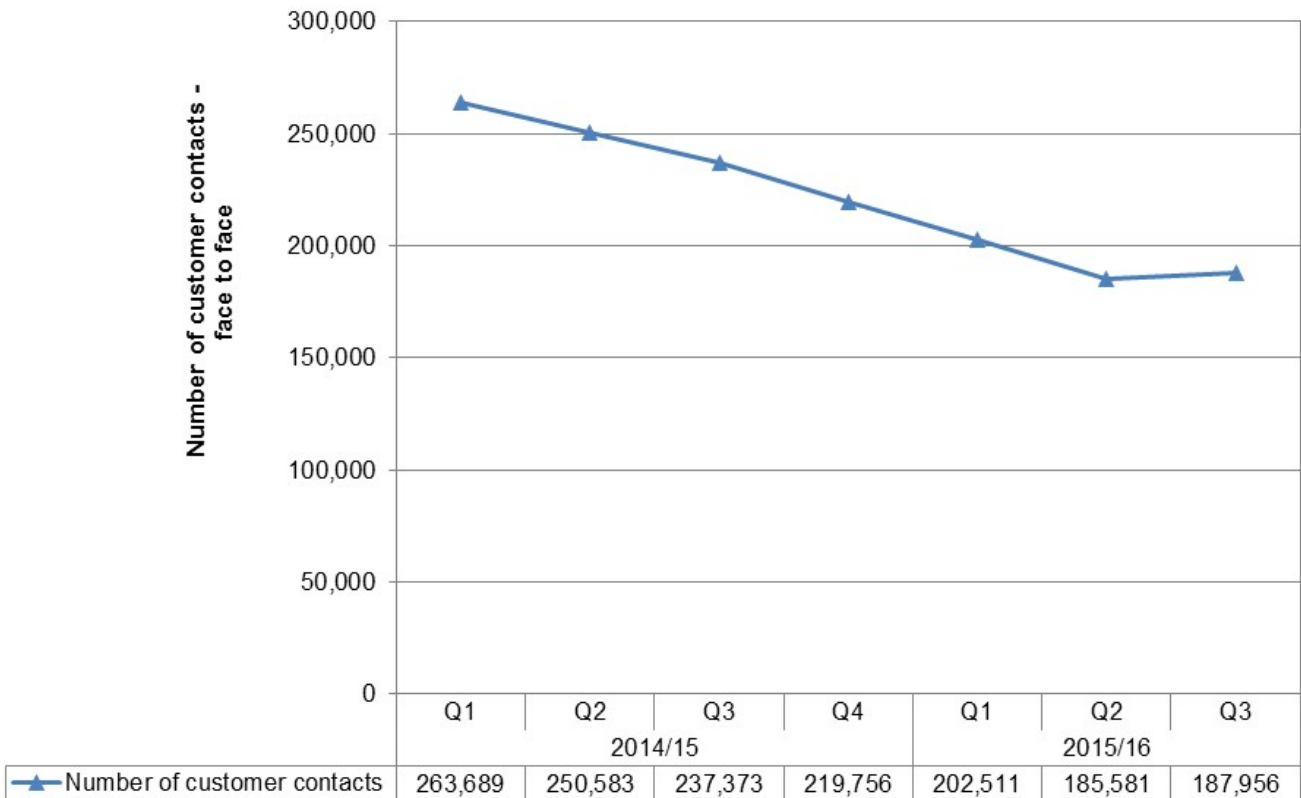
[\[2\] Due to changes to the definition data are not comparable/available](#)

## Appendix 4: Volume Measures

### Chart 1 – Telephone calls

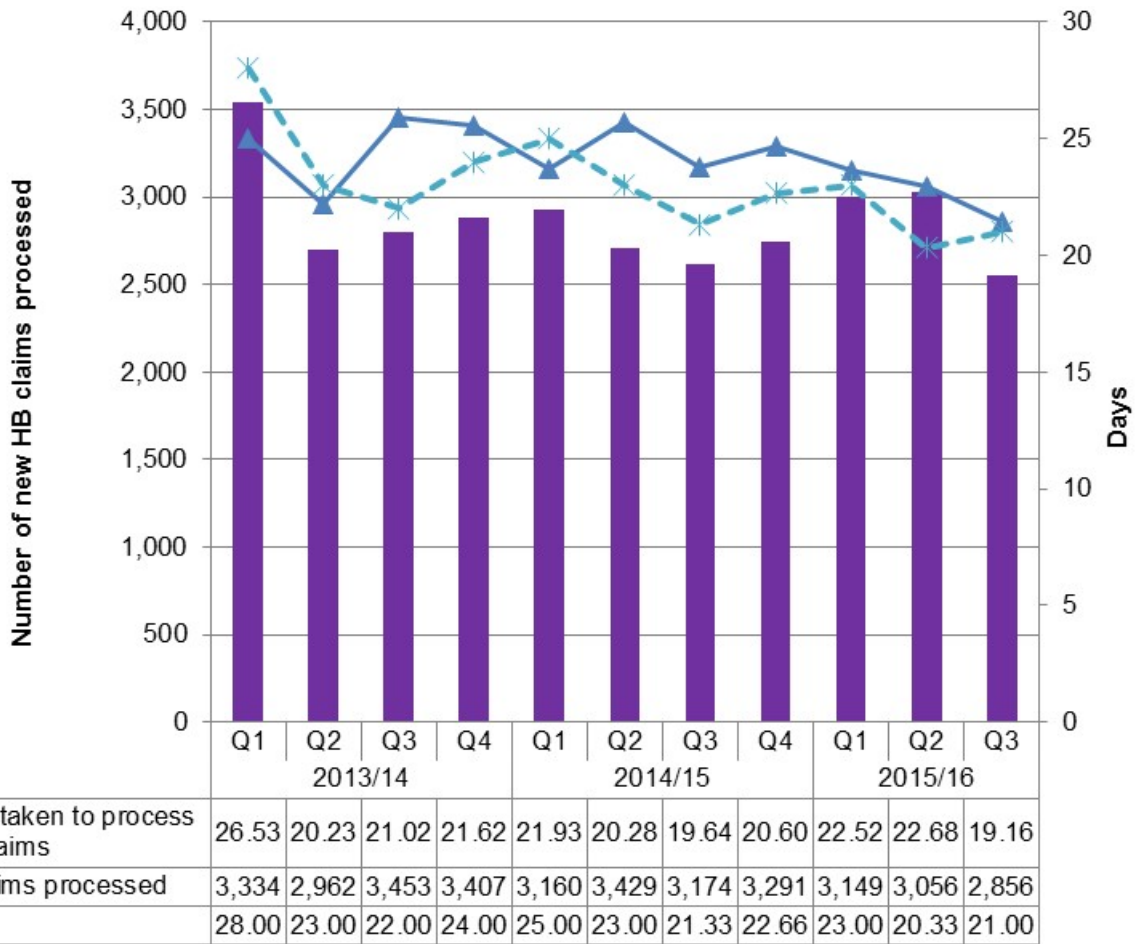


### Chart 2 – Face to face contacts

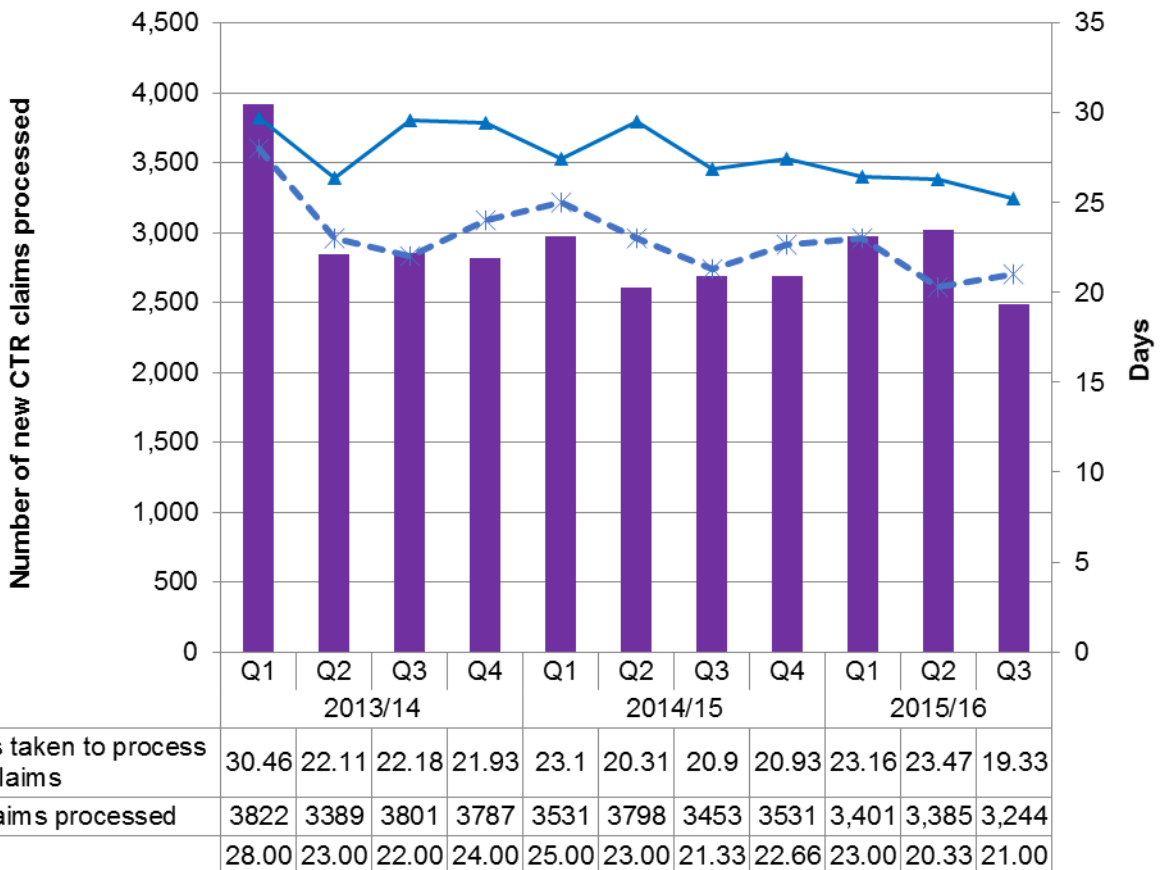




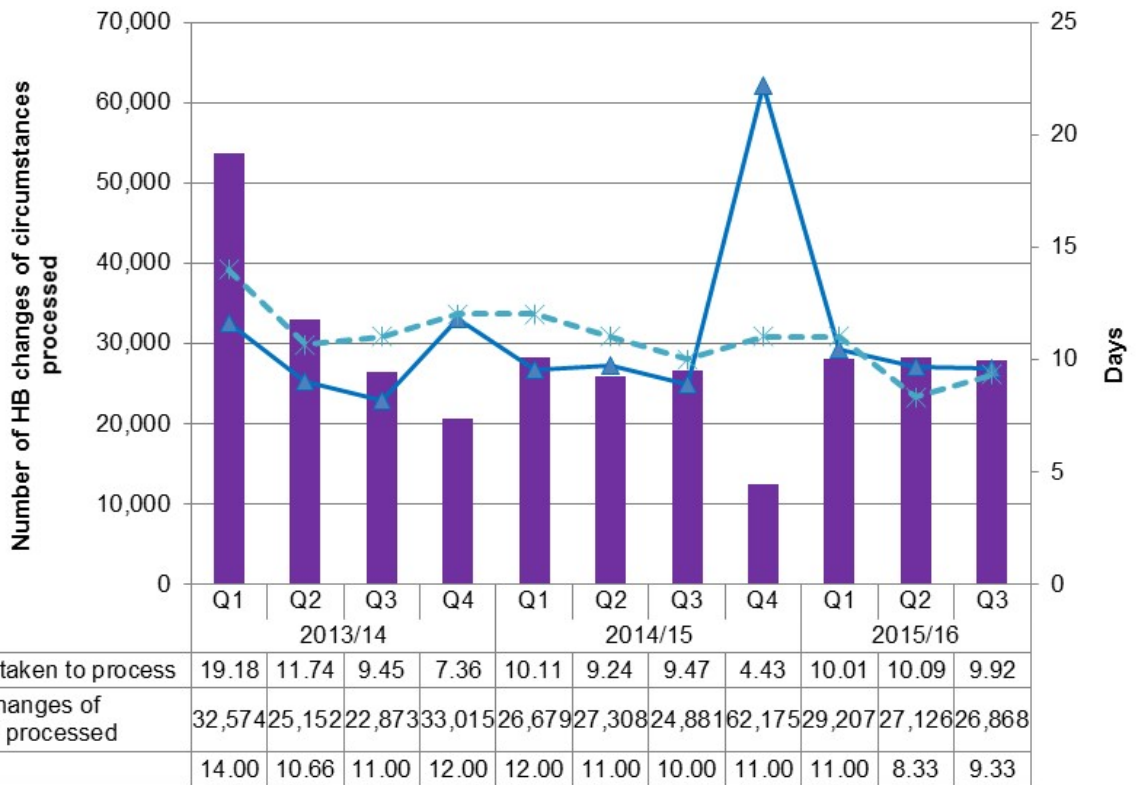
**Chart 3 – Housing Benefits – new claims**



**Chart 4 - Council Tax Reduction – new claims**

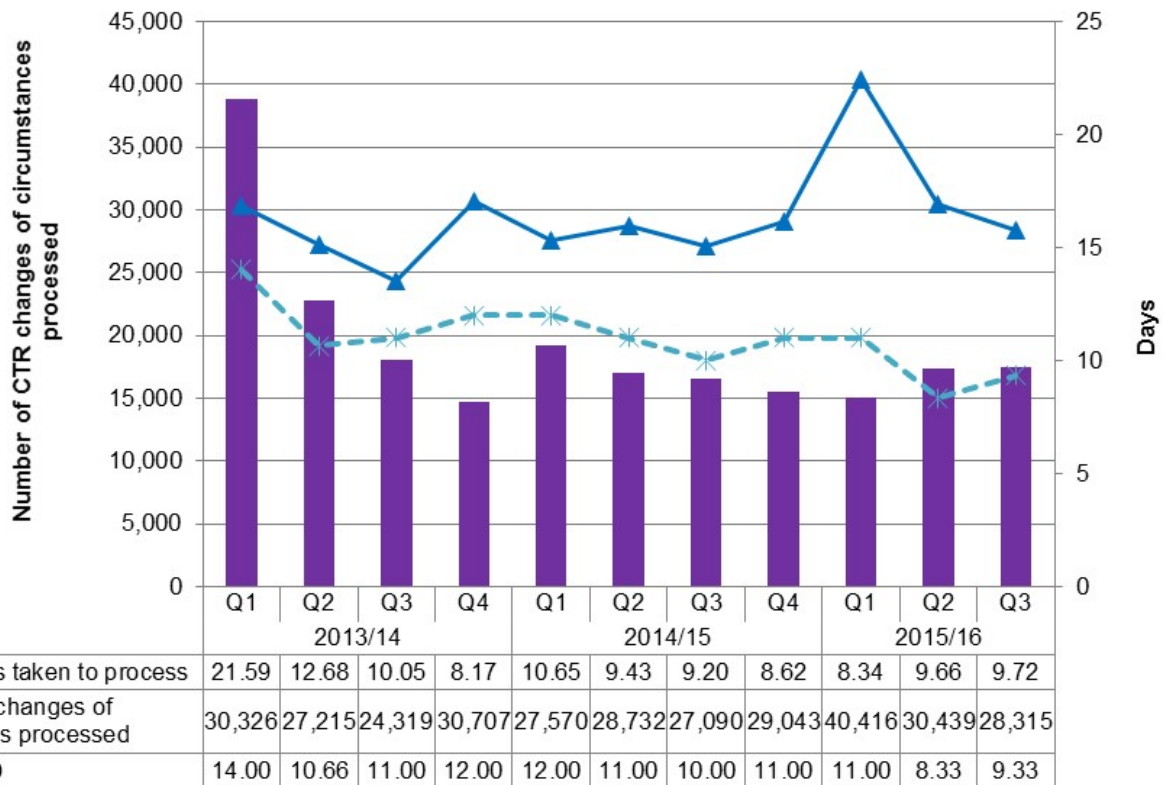


**Chart 5 - Housing Benefits – changes of circumstances**



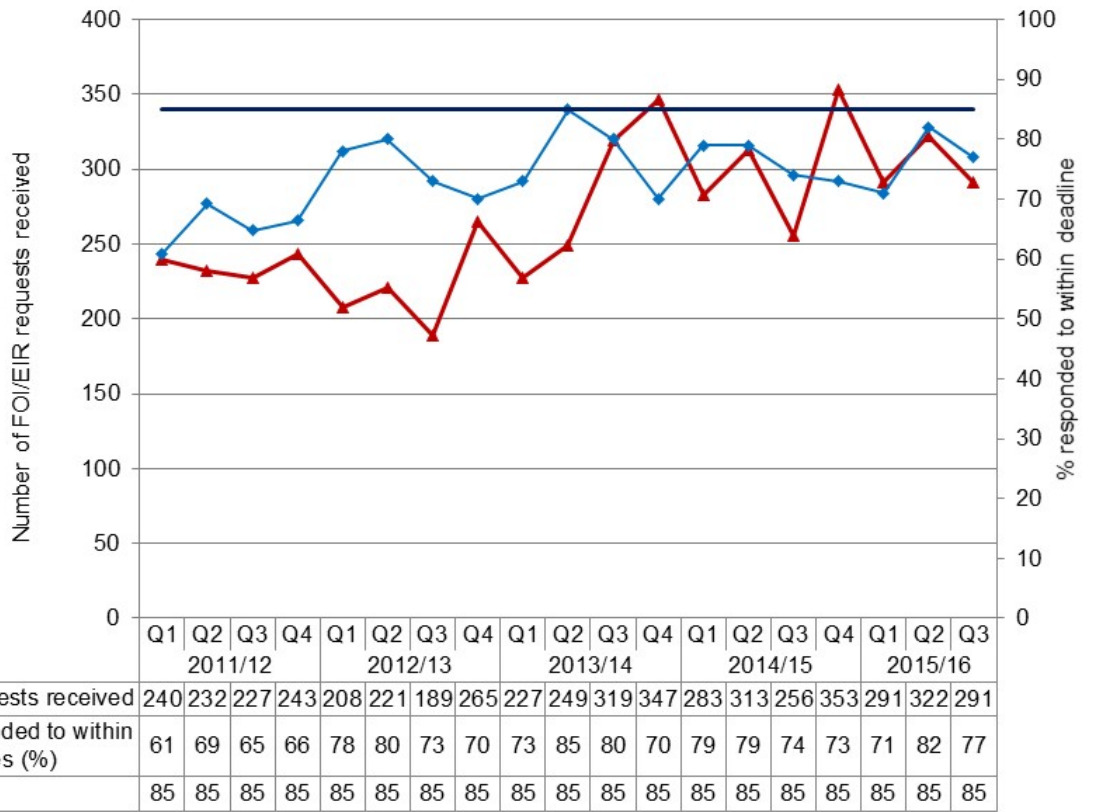
The way in which the change of circumstance is processed changed in quarter one 2015/16, which means that some multi-changes are now counted more than once where previously it would have been counted as just one change. Volume data for 2015/16 is therefore not comparable with previous data.

**Chart 6 - Council Tax Reduction – changes of circumstances**



The way in which the change of circumstance is processed changed in quarter one 2015/16, which means that some multi-changes are now counted more than once where previously it would have been counted as just one change. Volume data for 2015/16 is therefore not comparable with previous data.

**Chart 7 - Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests**



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**Appendix 5: Welfare Assistance Scheme and Discretionary Housing Payments**

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	2014/15			2015/16		
	Grant Received	Spend Incurred	(Under) / Over	Grant Received	Spend Forecast	(Under) / Over
Discretionary Housing Payments	1,096,133	1,146,867	50,734	981,783	981,783	-
Welfare Assistance Scheme	1,900,416	1,311,767	(588,649)	1,000,000	743,000	(257,000)

Any underspend is held in a specific Earmarked Reserve set aside to fund Welfare Reform initiatives.

**Corporate Issues Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**



**20 April 2016**

**Customer Feedback : Complaints  
Compliments and Suggestions  
2015/16 – Quarter 3**

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**Report of Oliver Sherratt, Interim Corporate Director for  
Neighbourhood Services**

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**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To present to Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee (CIOSC) the Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions report for Quarter 3 2015/16 (Full report attached at Appendix 2).

**Background**

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

**Quarter 3 2015/16**

- 3 The full report at appendix 2 provides details in relation to both the statutory and corporate complaints, compliments and suggestions received during the third quarter of 2015/16 and the learning outcomes which are built into service improvement as a result of the investigations into them.
- 4 The report also includes an overview of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

**Recommendations**

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

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

Financial settlements relating to LGO decisions are included in the report

### **Staffing**

Where there is an issue regarding a complaint in relation to staff misconduct or behaviour, this is handled in accordance with the appropriate HR policies

### **Risk**

Not applicable

### **Equality and Diversity**

Customer feedback data is monitored in relation to equality and diversity

### **Accommodation**

Not applicable

### **Crime and Disorder**

Not applicable

### **Human Rights**

Not applicable

### **Consultation**

Not applicable

### **Procurement**

Not applicable

### **Disability Discrimination Act**

Customer feedback data is monitored in relation to disability

### **Legal Implications**

Legal support is provided in appropriate cases

Putting our  
customers first

Customer Feedback Report

Complaints,  
compliments and  
suggestions

Quarter 3  
2015/16

*Altogether better*

## Background information

1. Customer feedback is a valuable tool. It not only helps us understand what is important to service users and what we are doing well, it can also indicate widespread issues and offer us the opportunity to put things right and improve our services.
2. This report provides a breakdown of all complaints, compliments and suggestions received by the Council during quarter 3, 15/16 (1 October 2015 to 31 December 2015). It summarises the Council's performance in dealing with complaints, explores the themes across customer feedback and identifies the action we will take to not only put things right for an individual but to improve wider service provision. The report also includes an overview of complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).
3. Two types of complaint are included within this document. Statutory complaints which arise from our duties as a local social services authority and corporate complaints which cover all other complaints. As each complaint type is subject to its own processes and policy, they are reported separately.
4. The new process for handling corporate complaints was fully implemented in September 2015 following a programme of training and system development to enable better capture of information and a more streamlined approach. Services are now wholly dealing with complaints in the first instance, completing the initial service review and, as far as possible, contacting customers by telephone to ensure a more personal approach.
5. Should the customer remain dissatisfied with the service response to a corporate complaint, the complaint can be forwarded to the new Customer Feedback Team, set up within Customer Services to undergo independent review. The Customer Feedback Team is also working more closely with services to identify trends and opportunities for service improvement; capturing learning outcomes more effectively. Independent review of statutory complaints is arranged by the Complaints Team within Children and Adults Services, who commission independent investigators in line with the statutory regulations.

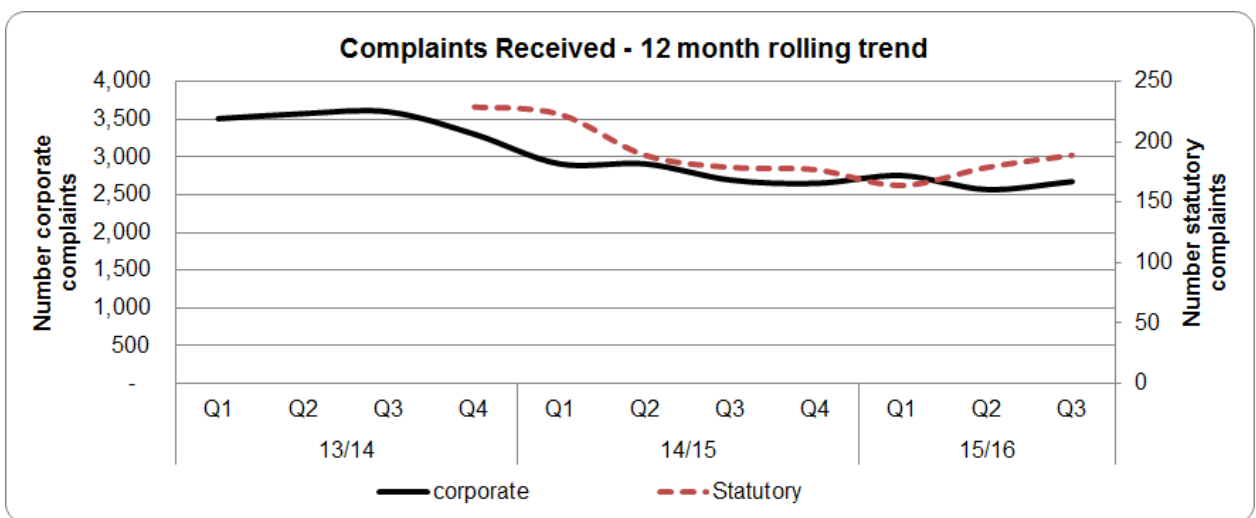


## Summary

6. During quarter 3, we received 641 complaints, 43 statutory complaints and 598 corporate complaints.

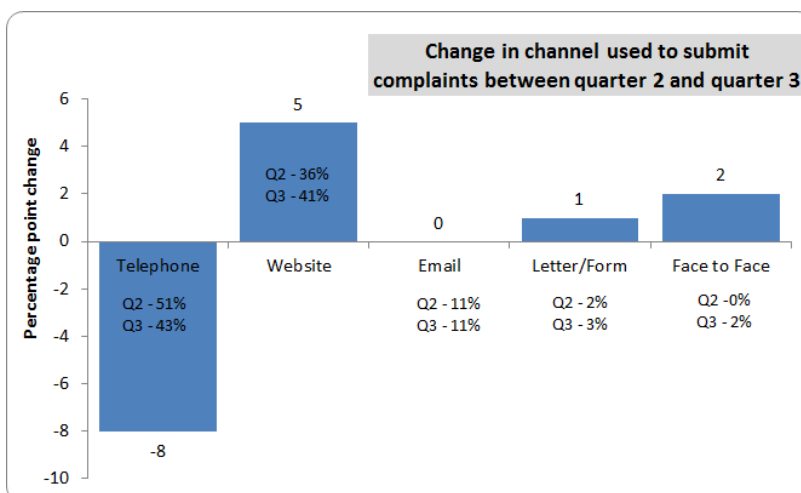
	During Q3	Change since				
		Q2		Q3 last year		
number received	641	↓ -17%	-131	↑ 22%	115	
- Statutory complaints	43	↓ -23%	-13	↑ 30%	10	
- corporate complaints	598	↓ -16%	-118	↑ 21%	105	

7. For the last 2 years, the number of complaints received has been showing a downward trend. However, this has recently reversed slightly, as shown in the graph below.



8. The upward movement of corporate complaints is mainly attributable to 2 events during quarter 3; the period of heavy snowfall toward the end of December which led to a surge of complaints in relation to snow clearance and gritting, and the traffic census during November which resulted in complaints focussing on lack of notification and delays. If these complaints were to be removed from the overall count, the downward trend experienced over the last 2 years would be seen to continue.

9. Analysis has been carried out to identify the channels used to report complaints during quarter 3. In relation to corporate complaints there has been a shift from telephone to website, as shown in the graph below:



10. Process improvements continue to positively impact the way our corporate complaints are handled. The average time for services to close a complaint has reduced by 2 days and the number handled within their agreed timescale has increased by 47%. 100% of independent investigations are being handled within the agreed timescale and the average days to close has reduced by 27 days.
11. All statutory complaints received during quarter 3 were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt and 79% were resolved within the relevant statutory timescale, which although lower than quarter 2 (81%), is equal to quarter 3 last year.
12. Of the complaints handled during quarter 3, approximately half were upheld (partially or fully).

	During Q3	Change since	
		Q2	Q3 last year
% upheld (fully or part)	50%	Up from 49%	Up from 47%
- Statutory complaints	42%	Up from 38%	Down from 54%
- corporate complaints	52%	Up from 50%	Up from 46%

13. Following investigation by service areas, 46 complainants remained dissatisfied and requested their complaint progress to independent review. Investigations have been completed into 35 complaints; these were all corporate complaints and 23% (8) were upheld (partly or fully). Independent review is continuing into the remaining 11 complaints, of which 4 are statutory.
14. During quarter 3, the Local Government Ombudsman delivered decisions into 27 matters. Of the 8 subject to full investigation, 3 were upheld.
15. In addition to complaints, we also received 368 compliments and 270 suggestions during quarter 3.

## Statutory Complaints

16. During quarter 3, we received 43 statutory complaints, 65% related to Children’s Services and the remaining 35% to Adult Services.

### Children’s Services

17. 28 statutory complaints were received by Children’s Services during quarter 3, an 18% decrease (6 fewer) compared to quarter 2 and a 40% increase (8 more) on the same period last year. All 28 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt.

18. 2 of the 28 complaints progressed directly to independent review, along with 2 complaints from previous quarters; all four are in the process of being investigated.
19. Of the 26 complaints investigated by the service area, 85% were resolved during the quarter. Of the 22 resolved complaints, 16 were resolved within the prescribed timescale of 20 working days and 6 were not. Investigations into the remaining 4 complaints are continuing, all within target timescale.
20. Of the 22 resolved complaints, 13 (59%) were not upheld, 4 were upheld (18%) and 5 partly upheld (23%).
21. 5 complaints were declined during quarter 3; two complaints about the same case were declined on the grounds that the case was in care proceedings and the issues needed to be raised within the court process, one because the case was subject to private law proceedings, one because the issues needed to be pursued through a legal process, and one due to the complainants stating their intention to take the Council to court; this is in line with statutory regulations.
22. A number of actions were taken in response to complaints, including;
  - Reviewing the procedures for allegations against foster carers, in liaison with Durham Local Safeguarding Children Board.
  - Reviewing the procedures relating to the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

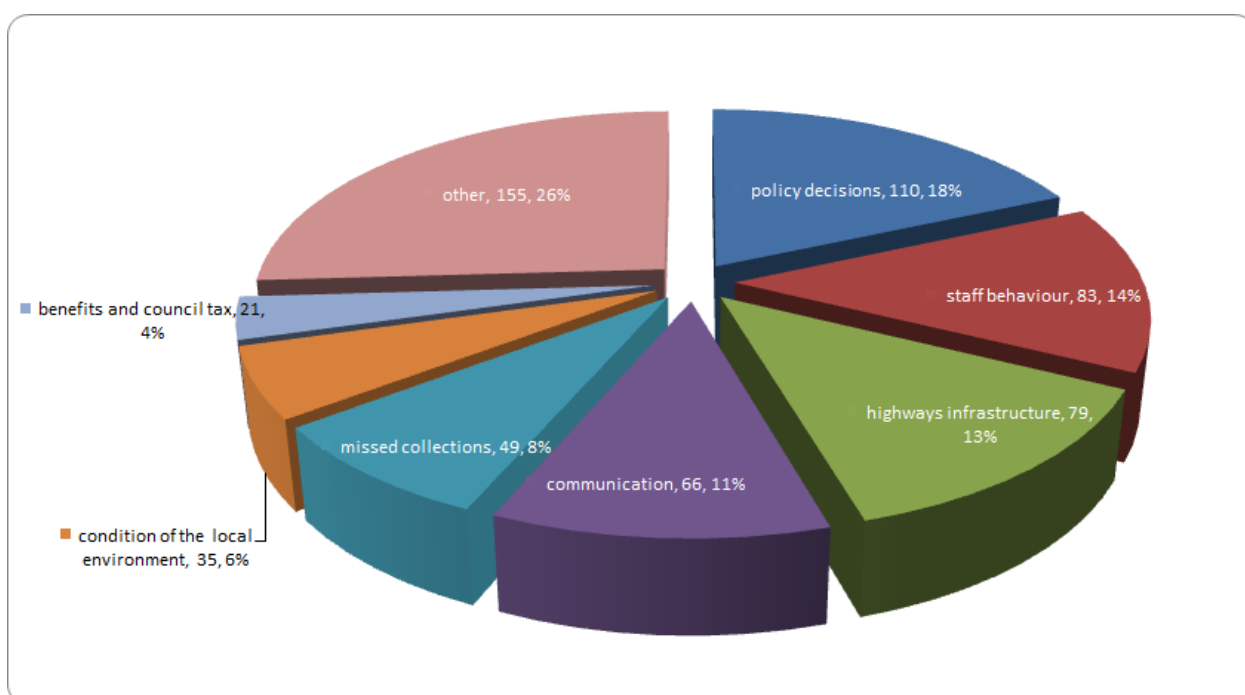
### **Adult Care Services**

23. 15 statutory complaints were received by Adult Services during quarter 3, a 32% decrease (7 fewer) compared to quarter 2 and a 15% increase (2 more) on the same period last year. All 15 complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt.
24. Of the 15 complaints investigated by the service area, 73% were resolved during the quarter. Of the 11 resolved complaints, 10 were resolved within the agreed timescale. Investigations are continuing into the remaining 4 complaints.
25. Of the 11 resolved complaints, 3 (27%) were not upheld, 5 were upheld (45%) and 3 partly upheld (27%).
26. 5 complaints were declined during quarter 3: two complaints on the basis that they were outside the one year timeframe, one because it concerned a report for court and should have been raised through the legal process, one because it related directly to a care home and the contract between the Council and the care home states that the home must investigate the complaint in the first instance, one because the complainant did not have the service user's authorisation to make the complaint.

27. A number of actions were taken in response to complaints received during quarter 3, including;
- Reviewing the best interest procedures and process for involving an Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA).
  - Carrying out a re-assessment and changing a care package as a result.

## Corporate Complaints

28. Analysis of the 598 corporate complaints received during quarter 3 has highlighted 7 key topics which collectively make up 74% of all complaints received.



### Actions linked to our policies and procedures

29. Our service provision is reflected in our policies and procedures, and during quarter 3 we received 110 complaints as a direct consequence of carrying out actions in line with those policies and procedures. This equates to 18% of the total received.
30. 75 of these complaints (68%) related to our refuse and recycling policies, mostly from residents unhappy that their household recycling bins had not been emptied or had been removed due to contamination (35 complaints). Complaints were also received following refusal of refunds for special collections (5 complaints), non-collection of side waste (5 complaints) and charging for replacement bins (5 complaints). We also received complaints from 22 residents who felt October was too early to end the Garden Waste Collection Scheme; following this, and other feedback, the scheme has been extended for 2016.

31. The Street Lighting Energy Reduction Project (SLERP) to upgrade more than 55,000 street lights with the latest Light Emitting Diode (LED) light fittings is continuing and almost 30,000 lights have been completed to date. The new lights concentrate light on the road and footpath areas and reduce light pollution to surrounding areas. During quarter 3, 13 residents complained about the SLERP as they were unhappy that light is not covering as wide an area as previously and felt that this change will lead to more crime. A recent study has shown there is no evidence of any link between reduced street lighting and increased crime or road traffic collisions at night, which is in line with previous work commissioned by the Department of Transport.
32. Our planning department received 9 complaints relating to their policies and procedures during quarter 3, mainly due to disagreements as to how planning applications should be dealt with and the amount of support that should be provided.
33. In October 2015, Cabinet agreed a new approach to the way in which the DLI collection is displayed, stored and made available to the public. There will be a range of exhibitions in the city, the first opening at Palace Green Library in July 2016, and we will work with schools to educate about the DLI regiment. However, the existing DLI museum will be closed. During quarter 3, 5 objections to this approach were received through the complaints system.
34. Our policy is that all unoccupied properties are subject to 100% of council tax for the first 2 years and up to 150% of council tax after 2 years. 2 residents complained about this policy during quarter 3. In addition there were 3 complaints about the housing benefit regulations and 2 complaints about the enforcement regulations.

### **Staff Behaviour**

35. 83 complaints were received in relation to the behaviour of our staff, 14% of all complaints received during quarter 3. 73 related to directly employed DCC staff and the remaining 10 related to staff employed by our contractors.
36. The most frequent cause for complaint (46 instances) was the attitude of our staff, most of which was general unhelpfulness but a small number related to staff being rude, abusive or swearing. 4 complaints concerned staff driving (3 speeding and 1 using a mobile phone whilst driving) and 1 objected to inappropriate staff parking. The Council expects the highest standards from all employees and deals with any alleged shortcomings through our HR policies and procedures. All complaints relating to non-DCC employees are passed to the appropriate contractor to be dealt with under their procedures. The contractor feeds back the results of their investigations to DCC.
37. 26 complaints were received about the actions of our refuse and recycling crews, 17 residents objected that bins were not being returned to their collection point, 7 complained crews did not clear up dropped refuse / recycling from roads and pavements as they completed their collection rounds and 2 were unhappy crews did not close gates.

38. In addition, we received 11 complaints alleging damage caused by our highway maintenance (4), refuse and recycling (4) and Clean and Green (3) teams.

### **Highways infrastructure**

39. During quarter 3, 79 complaints (13% of all complaints received during quarter 3) were received in relation to our highways infrastructure. 77% (61 complaints) related to highway maintenance and 23% (18 complaints) to street lighting.
40. Almost 40% of highway infrastructure complaints (24) were as a result of residents believing that we were taking too long to repair faults / complete schemes, 21 were unhappy with our winter maintenance service following the heavy snowfall at the end of December, 6 complaints related to the condition of our footpaths and the remaining 10 were based on a number of disparate reasons, for example, highway obstruction, drainage work, road safety.

### **Communication**

41. 66 complaints were received in relation to communication, 11% of all complaints received during quarter 3. The reasons for complaint were lack of communication (39) and being given insufficient, inaccurate or unclear information (27).
42. Most complaints citing 'lack of communication' related to temporary traffic management measures, e.g. road closures, lane restrictions, traffic lights, which the complainant felt had not been communicated. Across the County, at any point in time, there are between 150 and 200 traffic management systems in place, one quarter of which the Council will be directly responsible for, the remainder being the responsibility of utility companies, house builders or other private companies. As a minimum and as far as we are able, we ensure the information is included on our website. Depending on the size and duration of a scheme / road closure, we also communicate any disruption or diversion through a mix of channels, including social media, press releases, leaflets, posters, electronic Variable Message Signage (static and mobile), traffic management / on street signage.
43. 13 complaints were received following the Traffic Census carried out in November to gather more data for the County Durham Plan. All complainants were unhappy about the lack of communication highlighting this was to take place and by the delays caused to travellers through Durham. Unfortunately, it was not possible to forewarn that this was to take place in case residents changed their routes to avoid the census which would reduce the validity of the data.
44. 27 residents complained our communications were insufficient, inaccurate or unclear.
- 7 related to benefit notification letters which residents felt were difficult to understand. We appreciate that these letters can be complex and although the information is

prescribed by legislation, we are reviewing the notification letters to make them easier to understand whilst ensuring we meet legislative requirements.

- 6 complaints related to being given incorrect or unclear information at the initial point of contact. When considering the volume of complaints it is important to take into account the size of service provision as during quarter 3 our customer services team dealt with more than 300,000 enquiries. To ensure all staff have access to the latest training materials and are kept up to date with legislative and process changes, regular liaison meetings are held between Revenues and Benefits and Customer Services.
- During quarter 3, we concluded our e-bill take up campaign which encourages Direct Debit payers to move to paperless bills. We received several complaints that the wording in the take up letter suggested this was mandatory. These comments have been acknowledged and will be considered when determining the wording of future canvass letters.
- A complaint was received which highlighted that the public transport map was showing incorrect information. This has now been corrected.

### **Missed Refuse and Recycling Collections**

45. 49 complaints, 8% of the total received, related to missed collections; 30 kerbside refuse and recycling, 15 garden waste and 4 bulky collections. This is fewer than both quarter 1 (-60%) and the same period last year (-16%). When considering the number of complaints it is important to note that, during quarter 3, our crews completed more than 3.2 million refuse and recycling collections, 400,000 garden waste collections and 8,000 bulky collections.

### **Condition of the local environment**

46. During quarter 3, our Clean and Green Service received 35 complaints (accounting for 6% of all complaints). The majority (13) related to environmental issues including fly-tipping, litter and dog fouling, and most involved residents highlighting an issue rather than complaining about our processes. 10 complaints related to grounds maintenance, the main theme being grass cutting including not clearing away grass cuttings as well as requests to cut back overgrown vegetation / trees.

### **Benefits and Council Tax**

47. 21 complaints, 4% of the total received, related to incorrect decisions made on benefit claims or inconsistencies in data recorded within our benefits and council tax systems. The administration of council tax, housing benefit and council tax reduction is complex, subject to frequent change and highly regulated. More than 67,000 new claims and

changes of circumstances, as well as 48,000 work items, are processed each quarter. Occasionally there are omissions which impact the calculation of claims. To mitigate the risk of error and ensure information is as accurate as possible, employees undergo a robust training programme, receive regular updates and are subject to a robust quality assurance process. In addition, we work closely with software suppliers to seek opportunities to automate processes to further minimise the risk of error.

48. The remaining 26% of corporate complaints related to a wide variety of issues received in smaller volumes.

### Corporate complaints subjected to independent review

49. During quarter 3, 42 complaints were subjected to independent review by the Customer Feedback Team and of the 35 fully investigated, 23% (8) were upheld (partially or fully). A summary of the upheld complaints are set out in the following table;

Complaint	Learning outcome / action to be taken
Bin causing an obstruction due to not being returned to its collection point (upheld)	Service standard fell short of requirements. Action has been taken to remedy the issues and will be monitored in the future
Ongoing issue of bin not being emptied properly and lid left open so bin collects water (upheld)	Service standard fell short of requirements. Action has been taken to remedy the issues and will be monitored in the future
Delays in receiving garden waste bin (upheld)	Service standard fell short of requirements. Action has been taken to remedy the issue.
Crews not clearing up broken glass (upheld)	Service standard fell short of requirements. Crews reminded that spillages must be cleaned up
Was not informed that a charge to collect garden waste was in place (partially upheld)	The correct procedure was not followed. Action has been taken to remedy the issue
Delay in responding to complaint (partially upheld)	The correct procedure was not followed. Action has been taken to remedy the issue
Issues arising from a competition we hosted on behalf of a third party (partially upheld)	Social media team has amended their procedures when a third party is involved
Staff behaviour (partially upheld)	Service standard fell short of requirements. Action is being taken through our HR policies and procedures.



## Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

50. During quarter 3, the LGO delivered decisions in relation to 27 complaints, 8 of which had been subject to full investigation.
51. Of those 19 matters not subject to full investigation, conclusions were reached based on details supplied by complainants and supplemented in some instances with contextual information from Council officers. The 19 investigations related to a number of service areas including planning, adult care, and children’s services. 5 were found to be outside the LGO’s jurisdiction, 9 were no fault by the council and 5 were reported prematurely to the LGO so were referred back to the council to deal with under our complaints procedure.
52. The LGO also delivered decisions on 8 matters which had been subject to full investigation. In 5 of these cases the LGO found no fault on the part of the Council and 3 complaints were upheld as detailed in the table below;

Service	Complaint	Decision	Action to be taken
Land Purchase	Council’s failure to rent an area of land, billing in error for rent and failure to properly investigate	Maladministration and Injustice	Financial settlement of £100 and an apology
Adult care	Failure to respond adequately to concerns about a care provider and failure to meet needs in a care home	Maladministration no Injustice	Council had already taken action to remedy the issues before the LGO’s decision and to the LGO’s satisfaction
Children’s Services	Failure to follow proper procedures before arranging a Child Protection Conference, then failure to deal appropriately with their complaints and provide adequate remedy	Maladministration and Injustice	Council made a time and trouble payment of £350 and agreed to place a statement on file outlining the key failings in the child protection inquiry

## Suggestions

53. We believe suggestions are essential to the ongoing development and improvement of our services, and carefully consider all received.
54. During quarter 3, we received 255 suggestions, which is significantly higher than the usual quarterly average of 80. Almost 70% of the 255, and the cause of the increase, suggested that the garden waste scheme be extended into November. This has been considered by the service area and the scheme has been extended to 17 collections from 2016. The remaining 83 suggestions covered a wide range of topics.

55. There were a number of suggestions relating to communicating via our website, for example, adding the option of a 'nothing has changed' button when renewing blue badges, allowing the congestion charge to be paid via our website, reporting envirocrime using interactive maps. The possibility of implementing all of these suggestions is being investigated as part of a wider programme linked to the development of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In response to a suggestion, we have looked into increasing the volume of our automated messages but it is currently not possible at the moment.
56. One resident suggested that improvements should be made to Millennium Place which coincides with the commissioning of an urban design study which could bring changes to this area following the Council's accommodation review and the marketing of the buildings around the area.
57. Suggestions are frequently received suggesting changes to our road system. However, if implemented, many would have knock on effects to the traffic flows elsewhere. For example, during quarter 3, one suggestion was to introduce a right only turn at traffic lights in Chester-le-Street. Although there is logic to this suggestion, making such a change would slow down rush hour traffic. Another suggestion was to remove parking charges at Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre and although this was also considered, we were unable to implement as the charges not only discourage long stay parking by commuters but also cover the cost of the car park which otherwise would need to be paid by the taxpayer.
58. There were a number of suggestions relating to our Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), including a suggestion to e-mail waste permits so they are received quickly and postage costs are saved. The foil hologram on the current waste permit prevents photocopies being used fraudulently but we are considering electronic permits with unique barcodes that could be scanned at HWRCs. There was also a suggestion specific to Potterhouse Lane HWRC, proposing that during periods of temporary closure a container is placed at the gates as a legitimate means of waste disposal. However, this was not possible as there is insufficient space for a container and for cars to pull over and residents to get out safely.
59. It was also suggested to repeat our wildflower planting scheme during 2016. The 2016 programme will include the seven sites planted in 2015; Chester-le-Street Riverside, West Auckland Bypass, Town Recreation Ground, Bishop Auckland, Pity Me roundabout (A167), Sniperley Park roundabout, Sniperley roundabout (A167) and Wykes Close, Sedgefield (in partnership with Sedgefield in Bloom), in addition to 10 additional meadows. Sites across the county are currently being assessed to be sown during 2016.

## Compliments

60. We also receive many positive comments about our staff and the services we provide, and we believe that understanding what is working well and appreciated is as important as knowing what is not working as well.
61. During quarter 3, we received 368 compliments, 98 in relation to social services and 270 in relation to other services. These compliments recognise not only the motivation, dedication and hard-work of our staff but also the high standard and value of the services we provide. The majority of the compliments (83%) related to satisfaction with service provision but 63 compliments conveyed thanks to specific individuals. As far as we are able, we have passed these thanks onto the individual concerned.
62. The new Customer Feedback Team is currently working with services to determine how compliments and suggestions can be better used to influence our learning, service improvement and organisational development plans. Information on the outcome of this work will be provided in a future report.

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**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

20 April 2016



**Resources – Quarter 3 (December 2015): Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2015/16**

**Report of 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 2015.

**Background**

2. County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2015/16 at its meeting on 25 February 2015. These budgets have subsequently been revised to account for grant additions/reductions, corporate savings/adjustments, budget transfers between service groupings and budget profiling between years. This report covers the financial position for the following major accounts maintained by the Resources service grouping:

- *Revenue Budget - £17.967 million (original £15.855 million)*
- *Capital Programme – £13.909 million (original £13.422 million)*

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

- Funding for HR Recruitment Function from CAS +£9,000
- ICT costs funded from New Burdens CAS grant +£20,000
- Transfer to Corporate Contingency - Energy Costs -£1,000
- Transfer from Corporate Contingency – Carbon Reduction Commitment +£16,000
- Direct Revenue funding of ICT Capital Investment in year -£270,000
- Transfer of Tribal Software from CAS +£50,000
- Transfer of Adults Financial Services Team +£1.347,000
- Corporate Saving – Car Allowances +£45,000
- Contribution from MTFP ER/VR Reserve +£396,000
- Net contribution to/from specific reserves used to support service expenditure +£547,000
- Transfer from Neighbourhoods – Depot Storage +£6,000
- Transfer to ACE – Performance Function -£29,000
- Adjustment to Marriage License Income -£25,000

The revised General Fund Budget now stands at £17.967 million.

4. The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2015/16 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

5. The service is reporting a cash limit variance (underspend) of **£1,442,000** against a revised budget of **£17.967 million**. This compares with an underspend of £990,000 that was 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)

Category	Annual Budget	Year To Date Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Employees	41,315	31,540	40,962	(353)	(360)	(713)
Premises	5,788	162	5,767	(21)	0	(20)
Transport	1,049	523	756	(292)	(1)	(293)
Supplies and Services	15,948	12,542	16,121	173	7	180
Agency & Contracted	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third Party Payments	19	(20)	19	0	0	0
Central Support and Capital	10,065	616	10,069	4	0	4
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>74,184</b>	<b>45,363</b>	<b>73,695</b>	<b>(489)</b>	<b>(353)</b>	<b>(842)</b>
<b>Income</b>	<b>(55,960)</b>	<b>(18,650)</b>	<b>(57,033)</b>	<b>(1,073)</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>(600)</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>18,224</b>	<b>26,713</b>	<b>16,662</b>	<b>(1,562)</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>(1,442)</b>
HB Transfer payments	190,359	136,796	186,920	(3,439)	0	(3,439)
HB Central Support and Capital	400	0	400	0	0	0
HB Income	(191,017)	(1,669)	(187,578)	3,439	0	3,439
<b>HB Net Expenditure</b>	<b>(258)</b>	<b>135,127</b>	<b>(258)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Net Expenditure</b>	<b>17,967</b>	<b>161,840</b>	<b>16,404</b>	<b>(1,562)</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>(1,442)</b>

## By Head of Service (£000's)

Head of Service	Annual Budget	Year To Date Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Central Establishment Recharges	(15,442)	11	(15,442)	0	0	0
Corporate Finance	2,373	2,893	2,292	(81)	(31)	(112)
Financial Services	9,482	8,199	9,244	(238)	(14)	(252)
Human Resources	2,629	1,952	2,687	57	(75)	(17)
I.C.T. Services	9,542	6,614	9,276	(266)	(52)	(319)
Internal Audit and Insurance	1,379	986	1,286	(93)	(50)	(143)
Legal & Democratic Services	8,036	5,934	7,152	(885)	383	(502)
Management/ Performance	224	123	167	(57)	(40)	(97)
<b>Net Expenditure Excl HB</b>	<b>18,224</b>	<b>26,713</b>	<b>16,662</b>	<b>(1,562)</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>(1,442)</b>
Housing Benefit	(258)	135,127	(258)	0	0	0
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>17,967</b>	<b>161,840</b>	<b>16,404</b>	<b>(1,562)</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>(1,442)</b>

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	Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's	Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's
Central Establishment Recharges	Central Establishment Recharges			0
Corporate Finance	Management	£46,000 underbudget against employees £4,000 underbudget on supplies and services	(50)	
	Financial Systems	£67,000 under budget on pay as a result of holding a vacancy £4,000 underbudget on supplies and services	(71)	
	Procurement	£13,000 underbudget on employees due to restructure £1,000 overbudget on transport £9,000 underbudget on supplies and services £32,000 overachieved income	(53)	
	Pensions	£18,000 overbudget on employees £10,000 overbudget on supplies and services	28	
	Strategic Finance	£7,000 overbudget on employees £25,000 overbudget on supplies and services £2,000 underachieved income	34	(112)
Financial Services	Management	£41,000 managed underbudget for employees and £17,000 supplies reflecting early achievement of 2016/17 MTFP savings	(58)	

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's	Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's
	Operations & Data	£6,000 underbudget on employees £2,000 overbudget on supplies and services £18,000 overachieved income	(22)	
	Financial Assessments (CAS)	£25,000 managed underbudget for employees £16,000 underbudget on transport £32,000 over budget on supplies and services £38,000 over recovery of income	(47)	
	Financial Management	£46,000 underbudget on employees due to early MTFP savings £1,000 underbudget on transport £8,000 under budget on supplies and services £71,000 over recovery of SLA income	(126)	
	Revenues and Benefits	£70,000 under budget on employees. £103,000 under budget on transport. £257,000 over budget on supplies £64,000 overbudget on work packages. £148,000 over recovery of grant income	0	
				(252)
Human Resources	Occupational Health	£15,000 overbudget on employees £1,000 over budget on transport £9,000 underbudget on supplies and services £38,000 overachieved income	(31)	
	Health and Safety	£3,000 under budget on employees £6,000 overbudget on transport £5,000 overbudget on supplies and services £30,000 overachieved income	(22)	
	Human Resources	£13,000 under budget on employees £5,000 underbudget on supplies and services £59,000 underachieved income	36	
				(17)
ICT	ICT Services	£58,000 underbudget on employees £261,000 underbudget on supplies and services	(319)	(319)
Internal Audit and Risk	Insurance and Risk	£7,000 over budget on employees (fully staffed) £2,000 overbudget on supplies and services £14,000 over recovery of SLA income	(5)	
	Internal Audit	£77,000 underbudget on employees through close management and control of vacancies £4,000 underbudget on staff mileage £11,000 underbudget on supplies and services £40,000 over recovery of income from DCLG Grant	(132)	



Head of Service	Service Area	Description	Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's	Year End (Under) / overbudget £000's
	Corporate Fraud	£6,000 underbudget on employees £3,000 underbudget on staff travel £5,000 over budget on supplies and services £2,000 unbudgeted income	(6)	(143)
Legal and Democratic Services	Corporate and Democratic Core	£43,000 underbudget on employees £22,000 underbudget on transport £69,000 underbudget on supplies and services £6,000 over achieved income	(140)	(502)
	Democratic Services	£10,000 underbudget on employees £21,000 underbudget on premises £3,000 underbudget on transport £38,000 overbudget on supplies and services £60,000 overachieved income	(56)	
	Legal Services	£33,000 identified MTFP savings £238,000 underbudget on employees due to restructure for MTFP savings £66,000 underbudget on supplies and services £31,000 underachieved income	(306)	
Service Management	Service Management	Unbudgeted SLA income		(97)
Benefits Payments and Subsidy	Benefits	No variance		0
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>(1,442)</b>

8. In summary, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit. It should also be noted that the estimated outturn position incorporates the net MTFP savings required in 2015/16 which amount to £1.646 million and early achievement of a number of MTFP savings in 2016/17.

### Capital Programme

9. The Resources capital programme currently comprises 22 schemes, 20 of which are managed within ICT.
10. The original Resources capital programme was £13.423 million and this has been revised for additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget profiling. The revised budget now stands at £11.616 million
11. A summary of the financial performance to the end of December 2015 is shown below.

Service	Original Annual Budget 2015/16 £'000	Revised Annual Budget 2015/16 £'000	Profiled Budget £'000	Actual Spend to 31 December £'000	Remaining Budget £'000
ICT	13,257	11,406	8,408	6,263	5,143
Legal and Democratic	100	40	28	0	40
Human Resources	65	170	128	74	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,422</b>	<b>11,616</b>	<b>8,564</b>	<b>6,337</b>	<b>5,279</b>

12. The revised Resources capital budget is £11.616 million with a total expenditure to 31 December 2015 of £6.337 million (54.6%). The profiled budget for this period is £8.564 million, therefore spend is below profiled / expected spend in the year to date. A full breakdown of schemes and actual expenditure to 31 December 2015 is given in **Appendix 2**.
13. 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:

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

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

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

### **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 2015/16

	Revised Annual Budget 2015/16 £000	Profiled Budget 2015/16 £000	Actual Spend 31/12/15 £000	Remaining Budget £000
Big Data	20	15	1	19
Broadband / Digital Durham	8,761	6,463	5,054	3,707
Code of Connection Compliance	10	8	-	10
Corporate Mail Fulfilment	67	47	-	67
Dark Fibre installations and Circuit/Microwave Upgrades	451	338	339	112
Homeworking	120	53	113	7
Learning Gateway	74	55	-	74
Mobile Device Management	165	124	-	165
Ongoing Server replacement	201	151	35	166
Replacement of Desktop ICT Equipment	1,008	756	825	183
Sharepoint Architecture	50	38	-	50
Tanfield Datacentre Core Switching Replacement	64	48	-	64
Tanfield Datacentre LAN Switching Replacement	265	199	(190)	455
Applications and Development	25	19	-	25
Wireless Network Replacement	125	94	86	39
<b>ICT Services Include Design and Print Total</b>	<b>11,406</b>	<b>8,408</b>	<b>6,263</b>	<b>5,143</b>
RES Electronic Voting Equipment	40	28	-	40
<b>Legal and Democratic Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>40</b>
Civica Pension Fund Administration System	170	128	74	96
<b>Corporate Finance Total</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>11,616</b>	<b>8,564</b>	<b>6,337</b>	<b>5,279</b>

# Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

20 April 2016

## Assistant Chief Executives – Quarter 3 December 2015: Forecast of Revenue and Capital Outturn 2015/16



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

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#### 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 2015.

#### Background

2. County Council approved the Revenue and Capital budgets for 2015/16 at its meeting on 25 February 2015. 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 - £9.522million (original £10.163 million)
- ACE Capital Programme – £5.354million (original £3.776 million)

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

- Energy Reduction -£1,000
- Car Mileage outside cash limit +£4,000
- Creation of Transformation Challenge Reserve -£1.123 million
- Use of AAP Reserve +£342,000
- Use of Modern Ways of Working Reserve +£35,000
- Use of Customer Focus Reserve +£2,000
- Use of Disabled Go Reserve +£8,000
- To Transformation Challenge Reserve -£22,000
- To Flood Coordinator Reserve -£88,000
- Use of Modern Ways of Working Reserve +£11,000
- Use of AAP Reserve +£147,000
- Use of Community Reserve +£15,000
- Budget Transfer Performance +29,000

The revised General Fund Budget now stands at £9.522 million.

4. The summary financial statements contained in the report cover the financial year 2015/16 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 under budget of **£222,000** against a revised budget of **£9.522 million**. This compares to an under budget of £237,000 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 (£'000s)

£'000	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
<b>Employees</b>	6,639	5,050	6,631	-8	0	<b>-8</b>
<b>Premises</b>	247	108	260	13	0	<b>13</b>
<b>Transport</b>	48	32	46	-2	0	<b>-2</b>
<b>Supplies and Services</b>	1,656	969	1,755	99	-230	<b>-131</b>
<b>Agency and Contracted</b>	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Transfer Payments</b>	2,380	1,615	2,345	-35	35	<b>0</b>
<b>Central Costs</b>	2,239	86	2,239	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>GROSS EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>13,209</b>	<b>7,860</b>	<b>13,276</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>-195</b>	<b>-128</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>-3,687</b>	<b>-2,137</b>	<b>-3,768</b>	<b>-81</b>	<b>-13</b>	<b>-94</b>
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>9,522</b>	<b>5,723</b>	<b>9,508</b>	<b>-14</b>	<b>-208</b>	<b>-222</b>

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

Head of Service Grouping	Annual Budget	YTD Actual	Forecast Outturn	Variance	Items Outside Cash Limit	Cash Limit Variance
Partnership and Community Engagement	7,099	3,974	7,338	239	-268	-29
Planning and Performance	1,535	1,115	1,506	-29	0	-29
Policy and Communications	1,464	634	1,240	-224	60	-164
Central	-576	0	-576	0	0	0
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>9,522</b>	<b>5,723</b>	<b>9,508</b>	<b>-14</b>	<b>-208</b>	<b>-222</b>

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

Head of Service	Service Area	Description	(Under) / overbudget £'000s
Partnership and Community Engagement (PACE)	Area Action Partnerships, Community Buildings, PACE	£4,000 managed under budget on employees. £25,000 managed under budget on a range of supplies and services.	(29)
Planning and Performance	Planning, Performance, Overview and Scrutiny, County Records	£16,000 managed under budget on employees. £10,000 managed under budget on supplies and services. £3,000 over recovery of income.	(29)
Policy and Communications	Policy, Communications Public relations, CCU and Programme Office	£82,000 managed under budget on employees. £79,000 under budget on a range of supplies and services. £3,000 over recovery of income.	(164)
Central	Central Costs	No material variances.	0
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>(222)</b>

8. In summary, the service grouping is on track to maintain spending within its cash limit. It should also be noted that the estimated outturn position incorporates the MTFP savings required in 2015/16 which amount to £278,000.

## Members Neighbourhoods Revenue Budget

9. Each elected member receives an annual allocation of £20,000; £6,000 revenue and £14,000 capital. The revenue budget allocation for the current year is £0.756 million. Previous years unspent allocations totalling £1.159 million are held in an earmarked reserve. At present £0.840 million of the total budget allocation of £1.915 million has been either spent or committed.
10. The members Initiative Fund Element of this budget equates to £252,000 based on £2,000 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 £120,000; £96,000 revenue and £24,000 capital. The revenue budget allocation for the current year is £1.344 million to develop projects to meet the agreed AAP priorities. Previous years unspent allocations totalling £2.417 million are held in an earmarked reserve. At this stage in the year a total of £2.358 million has either been committed or spent.

## Capital Programme

12. The ACE capital programme comprises four main 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 2014/15. This increased the 2015/16 budget to £3.776 million. Further reports to the MOWG in 2015/16 detailed further revisions, for grant additions/reductions, budget transfers and budget reprofiling into later years. The revised budget now stands at **£3.991 million**.
14. Summary financial performance to the end of December is shown below.

Service	Original Annual Budget 2015/16 £000	Revised Annual Budget 2015/16 £000	Actual Spend to 31 December £000	Remaining Budget £000
Assets in the Community	1,163	777	315	462
Area Action Partnership	336	409	180	229
Members Neighbourhoods	1,764	2,805	591	2,214
Community Facilities Crook	513	0	4	(4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,776</b>	<b>3,991</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>2,901</b>

15. Officers continue to carefully monitor capital expenditure on a monthly basis. £1.090 million of actual expenditure has been incurred to date. This is 27% 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 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

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**Contact: Azhar Rafiq Tel: 03000 263 480**

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Finance**

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

### **Staffing**

None.

### **Risk**

None.

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

None.

### **Accommodation**

None.

### **Crime and disorder**

None.

### **Human rights**

None.

### **Consultation**

None.

### **Procurement**

None.

### **Disability Issues**

None.

### **Legal Implications**

None.

**Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee****20 April 2016****Council Plan 2016-2019 - Refresh of the Work Programme for the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee**

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

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**Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members with information contained within the Council Plan 2016-2019, 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 2015-16 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 relating to performance concerns.

**Council Plan 2016- 2019**

4. The Council Plan is the overarching high level plan for the County Council, which covers a three 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 effects of poverty and Welfare Reform
- Effective use of resources
  - A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities
  - Making the best use of our assets and managing information
  - 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 2015/16, 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)*
- Attendance Management  
*(Objective: Support our people through change: Employee and member wellbeing ABC 10)*
- Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS)  
*(Objective: Putting the Customer First – A range of access routes to services ABC 1; Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2)*

#### **Areas of Overview Activity**

- Fairness of Local Government Funding  
*(Objective: Effective use of resources – A balanced three year financial plan that reflects council priorities ABC 7)*
- 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 and member wellbeing ABC 10)*
- Customer Feedback: Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Reports  
*(Objective: Putting the Customer First – Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2; People are treated fairly and differences respected ABC 3)*
- CAS Service Statutory Annual Representations Report  
*(Objective: Putting the customer first – Responsive and customer focused services ABC 2; People are treated fairly and differences respected ABC 3 )*

### **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 2016 - 2019 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:**

- A range of access routes – the ongoing review of the Customer Relationship Management System (CRMS) will ensure functionality of the system for both Members and customers, including more online options and self-service facilities.
- Responsive and customer focused services - Customer feedback - 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 overall MTFP planning process including equalities impact assessment.
- ICT Strategy 2016/19 – annual update.

## **Working with our communities:**

Support the Durham Ask Programme - to transform the delivery of services through supporting organisations interested in running local facilities. In 2015-16 DCC received £1.4million from the Government's Transformation Challenge Award fund to help achieve the Durham Ask ambition.

- CIOSC received regular County Durham Partnership updates.
- Responding to the effects of poverty and welfare reform – review the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme – CIOSC already monitor performance quarterly, but may wish to consider this review in relation to their 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.

- The Council will produce a rolling four year financial plan - CIOSC lead scrutiny on 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.
- The Office Accommodation Programme – making sure it is supported by more modern ways of working, such as mobile working. Asset Management is one of the CIOSC areas of responsibility,
- Ensure that the highest standards of Information Governance are being adhered to including in relation to personal data and public access to information. CIOSC receive updates on FOI performance.
- Move towards a digital service for archives and the records office.
- Review our Council Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy – CIOSC generally consider any refresh of key corporate plans linked to the scrutiny of the MTFP.

## **Support our people through organisational change:**

- CIOSC have had input into the health, safety and wellbeing of employees in the review of Attendance Management. This provided recommendations and input into DCC's Attendance Management policy.
- Deliver training to the new Councillors following the 2017 elections – scrutiny have involvement in the induction programme for new Members.

## 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 2016-2017 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 2016-2017, reflecting on the current work programme detailed in paragraph 7.
11. Members will receive a further report at the Corporate Issues Scrutiny Committee on 11 July 2015 confirming/agreeing the Committee's work programme for 2016-2017 based on today's discussion and agreement.

## Recommendations

12. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information contained in the Council Plan 2016-2019, Altogether Better Council theme (copy attached at Appendix 2).
13. That the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee refreshes the work programme for 2016 - 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 11 July 2016 receives a further report detailing the Committee's work programme for 2016 - 2017.

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## Appendix 1: Implications

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

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

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

**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

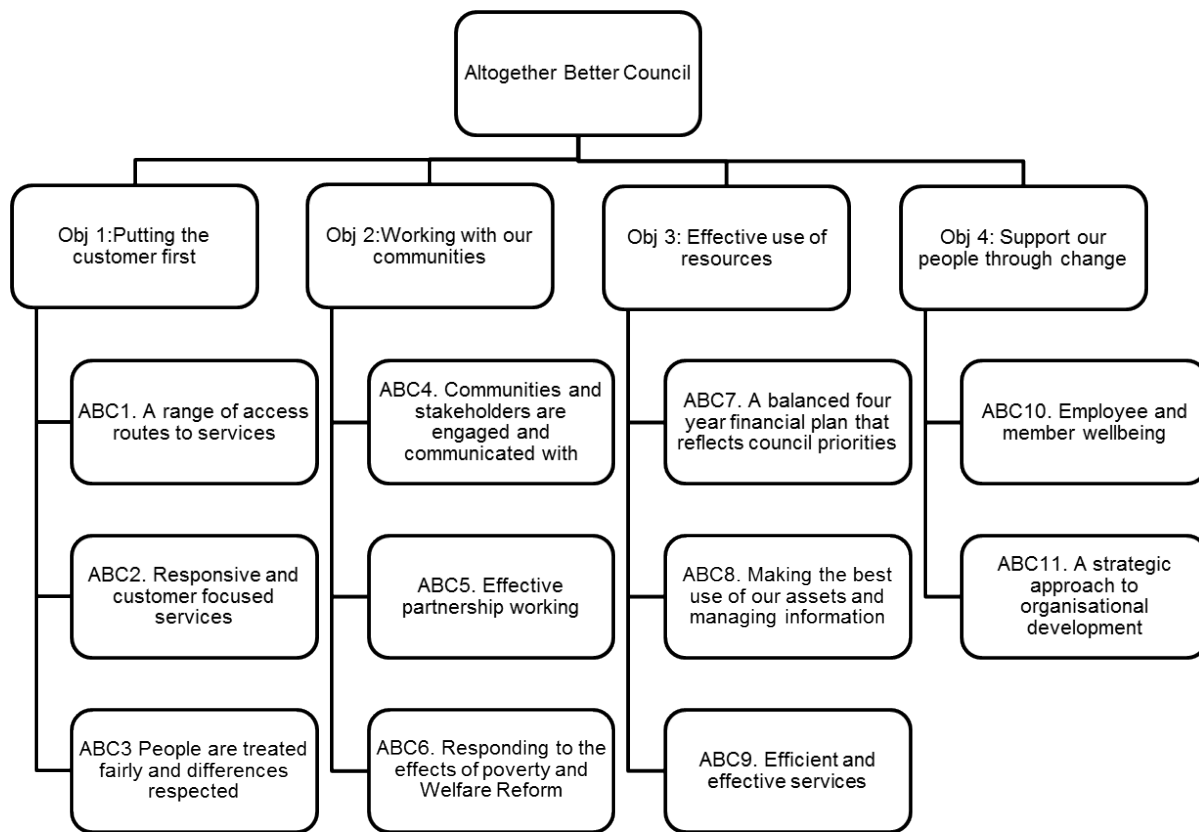
Procurement - None

**Disability Issues** – None

**Legal Implications** - None



**ALTOGETHER BETTER COUNCIL**



## Priority Theme **Altogether Better Council**

The Altogether Better Council theme is about how we manage our organisation internally. Like much of the public sector, Durham County Council faces two competing problems of rising demand for many of its services but also reducing resources available to help deliver them. The future for local government therefore involves investigating new ways to manage demand such as 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 arrangements. It is therefore important that we have strategies in place to make sure that our organisation develops and that this transformation is made smoothly.

### Achievements 2015-2016

- Delivered £153.2 million of financial savings since the beginning of austerity.
- A new website which is quicker and easier to use was launched last year which is also better to use with tablets and mobile phones.
- Procurement of new customer system to more effectively track and manage communications with and improve the customer experience.
- Improved our customer complaints process to respond to complaints more quickly and efficiently.
- More self-serve facilities have been introduced which allow people to access services through our website on a 24/7 basis.
- Managed a successful Parliamentary election in May 2015.
- Received £1.4 million from the Government's Transformation Challenge Award fund to help achieve the Durham Ask ambition. This is an exciting opportunity we are offering to local communities to take over the management and delivery of council services and facilities by transferring assets to local community control.

- Secured £90,000 of 'Delivering Differently' funding to work with town and parish councils on clean and green services.
- Nearly 11,000 residents and businesses have registered to access and manage their council tax, business rates or housing benefits payment accounts online.
- Community Buildings Strategy, one of the biggest and most ambitious asset transfer programmes in the UK:
  - 97 centres have been maintained for community use through this initiative
  - shortlisted for two 2016 LGC Awards
  - Local management groups have already accessed £639,000 external funding not available to the council and have bid for a further £5.2 million



# Priority Theme **Altogether Better Council**

## Issues to address

- The county has a very diverse mix of types of community ranging from some of the most sparsely populated rural areas in the country through to the larger towns and Durham city, each area with its own needs and aspirations (Figure BC1).
- The council will need to make a further £104 million savings between 2016/17 and 2019/20 bringing total savings required since the beginning of austerity to almost £258 million.
- To achieve this savings target will require further downsizing of our workforce. We also have an ageing profile of employees (Figure BC2).
- Around 95,000 households are affected by changes to the benefits system introduced by the Welfare Reform Act.
- 46% of the county population live in areas with high levels of income deprivation. 22.5% of children live in low income families<sup>1</sup> in County Durham and it is estimated that around 11.5% of households in the county are in fuel poverty<sup>2</sup>.
- The council decided in principle to free up regeneration opportunities at Aykley Heads and facilitate job creation. Work is underway to explore the potential opportunities, including how we can work differently in a more modern workplace.

Figure BC1.

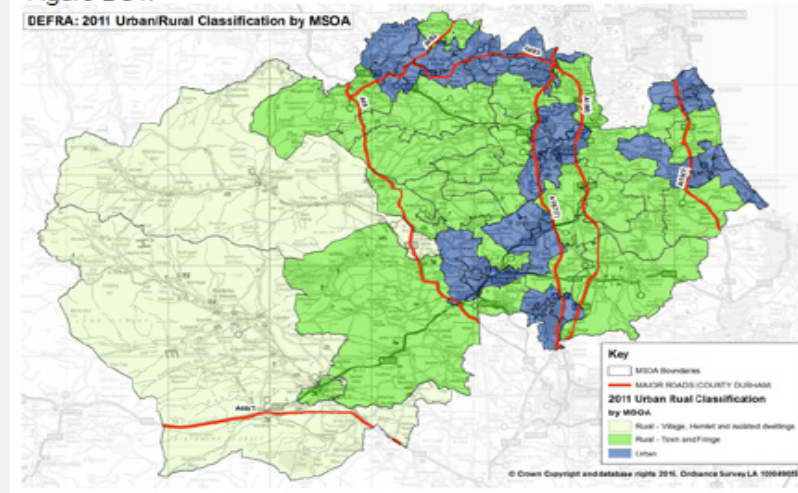
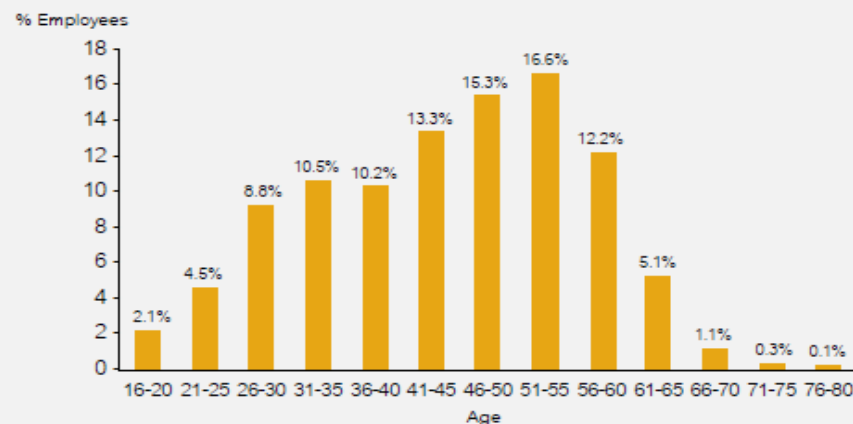


Figure BC2.

**Durham County Council Employees - Age profile at 31 March 2015**

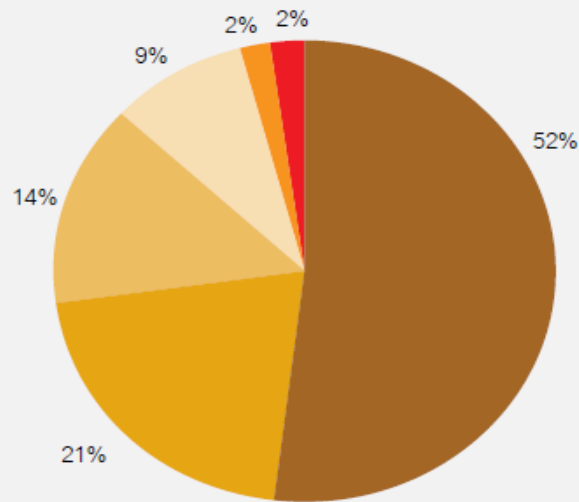


<sup>1</sup> Proportion of children living in families wither in receipt of out-of-work benefits or in receipt of tax credits with a reported income of less than 60 per cent of the national median income  
<sup>2</sup> Households that require fuel costs that are above average (national median level) and were they to spend that amount, would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

# Key Facts and Figures

Figure BC2.

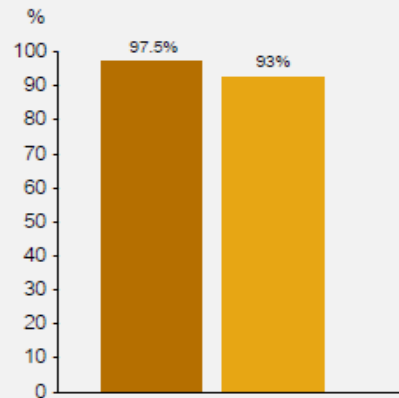
Financing of 2015/16 gross expenditure budget of £862 million



	£million	
Service Income	450	52%
Council tax	185.8	21%
Business Rate Retention	120.1	14%
Revenue Support Grant	77.1	9%
Other Grants	15.7	2%
Use of One Off Funds	13.9	2%

Figure BC3.

Customer Services response times 2014 -2015



Telephone calls answered within 3 minutes	97.5%
Customers seen within 15 minutes at a Customer Access Point	93%



**219,756**

face to face customer contacts at our Customer Access Points 2014/15

**989,422**

telephone customer contact 2014-2015\*

**16,886**

web forms submitted for any service area 2014-2015

**49,827**

e-mails from customers 2014-2015

**240,317**

domestic chargeable properties in County Durham with a gross Council Tax liability of £280 million and 85% of these are in Bands A to C

**101**

employers and

**18,011**

members contributed to the council's pension fund at the end of 2014/15

\* for agreed telephone lines

# Moving Forward - Key Areas of Focus for 2016-2019





## Moving Forward - Key Areas of Focus for 2016-2019

Objective 1 <b>Putting the customer first</b>	Objective 2 <b>Working with our communities</b>	Objective 3 <b>Effective use of resources</b>	Objective 4 <b>Support our people through change</b>
<p><b>A range of access routes</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce more self-service facilities</li> <li>• Introduce more online options for customers.</li> <li>• Make our website easier to use and develop it further.</li> <li>• Use social media more widely.</li> </ul> <p><b>Responsive and customer focused services</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear on how you can expect services to be delivered and by when.</li> <li>• Take your views into account when you give us feedback on your experience.</li> <li>• Gather information on your needs to improve the way we deliver services</li> <li>• Ensure our communications are as clear as they can be; ensuring forms and letters are easy to read.</li> </ul> <p><b>People are treated fairly and differences respected</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treat people fairly by making sure any changes to council policies and the way we do things are properly assessed.</li> <li>• Publish how we use the information we gather about equality to help us make decisions, provide services and employ people.</li> <li>• Work with partners to support the UK's response to the Syrian refugee crisis</li> <li>• Run a referendum on whether or not to remain a member of the European Union.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commemorate World War 1 by placing paving stones for Victoria Cross winners in County Durham.</li> <li>• Support organisations interesting in running local facilities and services through the Durham ASK programme.</li> </ul> <p><b>Effective partnership working</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh our Sustainable Community Strategy.</li> <li>• Continue to maintain our 14 Area Action partnerships to involve local communities in influencing priorities and decision making.</li> <li>• Review our County Durham Partnership arrangements to improve outcomes for our communities.</li> <li>• Provide welfare rights advice as part of the County Durham partnership.</li> </ul> <p><b>Responding to the effects of poverty and welfare reform</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to respond to the effects of poverty in county durham, including child poverty.</li> <li>• Review the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, which helps you pay council tax if you're on a low income.</li> <li>• Tackle challenges that the welfare reform changes may give our communities through AAPs by working with partners to look at supporting people into employment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>A balanced four year financial plan that reflects council priorities</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a four year financial plan to include council priorities, government funding reductions and budget pressures and the savings we are require to make.</li> <li>• Carry out robust assurance and monitoring on our detailed savings plans.</li> </ul> <p><b>Making the best use of our assets and managing information</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with our office accommodation programme and make sure it is supported by more modern ways of working such as mobile working.</li> <li>• Make sure we have high standards of information governance through data protection and transparency to keep your data safe and ensure public access to information.</li> <li>• Modernise our archives and record office services to move towards a digital service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Efficient and effective services</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve monitoring of performance arrangements to ensure clear progress reporting and high quality information</li> <li>• Review our Council Plan and Sustainable Community Strategy.</li> <li>• Continue to undertake programme and project management of the MTFP and key corporate projects.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Employee and member wellbeing</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake a programme of employee engagement.</li> <li>• Ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our employees through our policies, practices and systems.</li> <li>• Review the Local Government Pension Fund in line with national guidance.</li> </ul> <p><b>A strategic approach to organisational development</b> We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure our organisational development strategy supports our office accommodation plans and modern ways of working, taking advantage of emerging technology.</li> <li>• Identify critical roles and occupational groups and put plans in place to make sure that we have more opportunity to recruit in these areas.</li> <li>• Deliver training to the new Councillors following the 2017 elections.</li> </ul>