

Service Area Plan 2020/21

Part 1 - Service Information/links to policy

Part 2 – Managing Service Delivery

Part 3 – Managing and Improving People

Part 4 – Budget

Part 5 – Managing Planned Changes/Projects

Service Area :	Finance
Service Area Manager:	Mike Snow – Head of Finance
Deputy Chief Executive:	Andrew Jones
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Richard Hales

1 Purpose of the Services Provided

- To seek to ensure that the Council's finances are well managed, in accordance with best practice whilst ensuring best value and value for money is always obtained.
- To ensure that suppliers can do business with the Council and be able to tender fairly on an equal basis along with all other prospective businesses.
- To provide sound and understandable financial advice and a responsive support service to enable members and officers to make the right decisions and to ensure the Council's services are properly managed.
- To seek to provide assurance that all risks are being properly managed and controls are in place.
- To provide the right benefits that claimants are due at the right time.

1.1 Linkages to Fit For the Future Strategy

External	Direct	Indirect
Service (Green, Clean and Safe)		Finance provides the funds to provide services, and seeks to ensure that funds are correctly used, whilst presenting value for money.
People (Health, Homes and Communities)	Benefits service assists tenants afford their homes, by awarding housing benefits and council tax reduction. Administration of the discretionary housing payments scheme for claimants receiving housing benefit to prevent homelessness. RUCIS grants.	
Money (Infrastructure, Enterprise and Employment)	Benefits and Procurement assist in providing funding which will circulate in the local economy. Using our discretionary powers in Business Rates enables businesses to get assistance by way of discounts	Procurement joined Better Business for all group (BBFA) to support local businesses in procuring council contracts to help build the local economy

Internal	Direct	Indirect
Service (Maintain or Improve services)	Customer services telephones and face to face are aiming to encourage and support customers to self serve in line with the digital by default policy.	The Audit and Risk service provides an assurance framework to ensure all resources are correctly deployed, whilst providing value for money. The Procurement service provides a contract management framework to ensure contracts achieve value for money and best performance.
People (Effective Staff)	Procurement are partnering with other services to empower them to carry out best procurement practices effectively.	

Money (Firm Financial Footing over long term)	Ensuring the Council's finances are on a firm footing is a key priority for Finance.	
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	Direct	Indirect
All Themes	The support services within Finance (Accountancy, Audit/Risk, Procurement, FSTeam), and Council Tax/Business Rates directly and indirectly contribute to all the themes by providing finance and support services for the Council's services.	

2 Managing Service Delivery

2.1 Service Overview

(NB – Specify main aspects of service delivery during the year)

	Service Being Delivered	Priorities (with Justification)	Service Demand	
Accountancy	Budget/Council Tax Setting	Ensure council tax and budget setting complies with legislation, meets Council priorities and is within available resources.	Statutory Requirement	
	Budget Review	To monitor income and expenditure on an on-going basis and assess implications for medium term financial strategy, reporting regularly to SMT and members.	11 Budget Review Reports to SMT, 6 Reports to Executive	
	Final Accounts	Ensure annual accounts closed down correctly and promptly. Production of Annual Statement of Accounts within statutory deadlines. Liaison with external auditors.	Statutory Requirement	
	Treasury Management	Manage the Council's investments to minimise risk whilst securing the optimum return. Manage the		£99m investment peak as at

	Service Being Delivered	Priorities (with Justification)	Service Demand	
		Council's cashflow and borrowing. Funding the Council's Capital Programme.		January 2020
	Financial advice	Advise officers and members of the financial implications of proposed actions and decisions and provide appropriate challenge.		
	Financial Planning	Forecast the Council's income and expenditure for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and HRA Business Plan.		
	Parish/town council support	Arrange payments to parish/town council in respect of precepts.		
Audit & Risk	Internal Audit	Provision of comprehensive internal audit service for management in line with the Internal Audit Strategic Plan.	Statutory requirement.	Approx.39 audits completed p.a.
	Risk Management	Promote and advise on good risk management across the authority.	Statutory requirement. Effective corporate governance.	
	Insurances	Ensure that the Council is appropriately insured in the provision of its services and manage any resulting claims.	Effective corporate governance.	
	Investigations	Undertake ad-hoc internal investigations on behalf of management.	Effective corporate governance.	
	Fraud investigation	Undertake investigations into fraud against the council in respect of services such as council tax, business rates, house lettings. Promotion of fraud awareness.		

	Service Being Delivered	Priorities (with Justification)	Service Demand	
Benefits & customer Services	Housing Benefits	Assessment and payment of claims for housing benefit in line with DWP scheme.	Changes processed p.a New claims determined p.a	22,385 492
	Council Tax Reduction	Assessment of council tax reduction claims in line with Council's scheme. Including administering discretionary housing payments to housing benefit and universal credit customers.	Changes processed p.a New claims determined p.a	13,607 2,039
	Customer Service Team	Take Revenues, Benefits and Switchboard telephone calls	Service calls pa Switchboard calls	35,000 10,000
	Reception/One Stop Shops	To work with WCC to ensure customers can obtain the services they need efficiently and effectively as possible.	No of face to face enquiries pa	50,000
Exchequer	Collection of Council Tax	Maintenance of council tax records, award of reliefs, calculation of tax due, billing and recovery thereof.	Council tax payers Reliefs & discounts	65,494 22,500
	Collection of Business Rates	Maintenance of business rates records, award of reliefs, calculation of rates due, billing and recovery thereof.	Business Rate payers Reliefs & discounts	5,400 3,500
	Recovery of CT, BR and Benefit overpayments	Take appropriate action to recover sums due to the Council, including use of magistrates courts.	Summonses Reminder notices Collectible per annum	6,000 27,500 £200m
	Payment of suppliers	Arrange payment to suppliers for goods ordered.	Transactions Paid to suppliers	8,000 £60m
	Recovery of sundry debts	Raise sundry debt accounts for sums due to the Council, and recovery thereof.	Transactions Collected pa	11,000 £10m

	Service Being Delivered	Priorities (with Justification)	Service Demand	
	Rural and Urban Capital Initiatives Scheme	Manage the Council's RUCI scheme, making recommendations to Executive on grant awards, payment and monitoring of awards agreed.	Budget Applications per annum	£150,000 10
Procurement	Manage corporate procurement	Review and develop the Council's approach to procurement, management of the Council's Procurement Strategy and completion of the Procurement Action Plan.		
	Maintain contracts registers	Work with officers across the Council to ensure that the Council's contract register is correct, is duly published, and contracts within the register are appropriately managed.	Contracts on Contracts Register	250
	Lead/advise on procurement and tenders	Advise and assist officers in the procurement of goods and services in line with the Council's Code of Procurement Practice and EU Regulations.	Number of procurement activities undertaken	28 awarded; 33 live; 26 future planned

2.2 Measures

Customer Measures – those important to the people/organisations who use our services

Note: these measures should be used on a daily, weekly or monthly basis to identify the impact of interventions in the system and to plan future interventions. Interventions may be very small adjustments to resources, or may involve transformational change

	Qtr. 1	2	3	4
Average number of days from receipt of all information to determine new benefit/reduction claims.				
Average number of days from receipt of all information to determine changes to benefit/reduction claims.				

Prompt payment of invoices within agreed payment terms				
Unqualified audit statement on Statement of Accounts				
Timely and informed Budget and Financial Forecasts				
Number of Benefits/Revenues calls to Customer Service Centre.				
Efficient & timely CTax processing (Age of oldest item) - Days				
Number of CTax correspondence awaiting processing				
Efficient & timely NNDR processing (Age of oldest item) - Days				
Number of formal legal challenges received and upheld against the total number of tenders				
Number of local suppliers actively registered on CSWJETS E Portal				
Percentage of suppliers on a procured contract where annual spend is greater than £5,000. Prior year figures to be reported.				
Operational Measures – other (non customer) measures essential to ensure that “purpose” can be achieved.				
Note: <u>this section will not be used by most service areas</u> as their Customer Measures are expected to be sufficient. However, there may be cases where an operational measure is required to ensure the smooth running of a service area.				
	Qtr. 1	2	3	4
Sundry Debt balance outstanding over 90 days				
Numbers of transactions – orders, creditor invoices, sundry debtor invoices				
Value cashable and non-cashable fraud savings detected.				
Council tax collection rate				
NNDR collection rate				
Number of new Council tax dwellings from April 2020				
Business Rate Growth (Rateable Value)				

Completion of Internal Audit Plan (percentage variation to profiled plan)				
No of Outstanding appeals (Business Rates)				
% of collaborative contracts				
Number of Approved Exemptions per quarter				

2.3 Managing Risk

Risk	Planned Actions during year	Comments
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular budget monitoring 	
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of corporate procurement Continue provision of Procurement training. Attendance of key officers at in-house training. Maintenance of Finance and Council Contract Register 	
Contract Management	Attendance of appropriate officers on Introduction to Procurement and Contract Management training.	
Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audits of various Finance functions scheduled for year in accordance with Internal Audit Plan. External Audit of Statement of Accounts and grant claims. 	
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risks reviewed at management team meeting and on on-going basis Quarterly risk register review with portfolio holder. Risk Management Action plan being formulated for 2020/21. 	
Service Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions arising out of Annual Service Assurance Statement include: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update of Business Continuity Plan 	
Corporate Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of H&S Assessments. 	
Service Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WDC/WCC Procurement Partnership. Shared Services for Business Rates and Fraud Investigation. 	

Part 3 – Managing and Improving People

3.1 Staff Resource

There are currently 81 FTE posts in the department.

3.2 Workforce Planning

Category	Sponsor	Activity	Budget Impact	Impact on other Service Areas	Milestones
1. Workforce Planning	Head of Service and Divisional Managers	Encourage training, coaching, mentoring etc of staff; assist them to maximise their potential and roles within the organisation.		Support from HR	On-going
	Divisional Managers	Employment of apprentices.	Funded from corporate budget, Levy and existing pay budgets.	Support from HR	Appointment and subsequent completion of apprenticeship.
2. Skills, Training, Competency Needs	Head of Service and Divisional Managers	Formal staff training / professional qualifications to encourage them to maximise their potential.	Cost of professional training courses.	Support from HR	Staff commencing formal training. Staff completing formal training.
	Divisional Managers	On-going CPD training for staff.	Met out of existing budgets.		On-going, March 2021

Category	Sponsor	Activity	Budget Impact	Impact on other Service Areas	Milestones
3. Service Changes					
	Benefits and Customer Services Manager	Review OSS/Front Line staff and interaction with Customer Service Team and Back Office.		Potentially all service areas.	Completion March 2021
4. Determining the need for additional resource					
	Senior Procurement Business Partner	Review Procurement resources to ensure procurement actions progress to ensure that the Council fulfils its commitment to become net-zero carbon including contracted services.		Potentially all service areas.	Council Tax Referendum May 2020, subsequent Executive report.

Part 4 BUDGET – Main budgetary pressures and changes

Activity	Budgetary Impact	2020/21	2021/22	2021/22
Cost of new Financial Management System	Funded from 2020/21 New Homes Bonus	£600,000		

Part 5 – Managing Planned Changes, Major Work streams and Projects

Change/Project	Sponsor/Lead Officer	Budget Impact	Impact on other Services	Milestones	Date
New Financial Management System	Andrew Jones	£600k agreed in 2020/21	All service areas are stakeholders who will need to be consulted and involved throughout the process.	Contract Award Project Plan	May 2020 June 2020
Customer Service Team – review telephony enhancements to improve customer service.	Benefits and Customer Services Manager	Potential request for Service Transformation Reserve funding		Reduction in calls received.	March 2021
Universal Credit – monitor the effects of new claims going DWP.	Benefits and Customer Services Manager		Monitor changes in customer contacts. Work with Housing Service as necessary.	Awaiting date of migration of existing working age claims to DWP as part of UC.	March 2021
Customer service team face to face. Review service delivery, promotion of self-serve.	Benefits and Customer Services Manager	TBC		Initial review layout of reception. Changes to working arrangements in place.	June 2020 March 2021
Review potential alternative E-forms to streamline Council Tax	Benefits and Customer Services Manager	Upfront cost, licence costs, potential	Impact on Benefits and Exchequer Teams	Initial feasibility	July 2020

Change/Project	Sponsor/Lead Officer	Budget Impact	Impact on other Services	Milestones	Date
Reduction and other processes.		processing savings.			
Re-procurement of E-Procurement System	Senior Procurement Business Partner with other CWJETS partners	TBC	All	Pre-market engagement	July 2020
Production of Sustainable Procurement Strategy and update supporting policies.	Senior Procurement Business Partner	TBC	All		March 2021
Council Tax "Self Serve" (Open Channel) module, rolled out for use by customers via "Open Portal".	Exchequer Manager			Open Channel enabled for all forms, soft launch. Open Channel publicised to customers.	July 2020 Oct 2020
Review Revenues/Benefits System contract.	Exchequer Manager		Housing, Finance	New contract in place for current provider.	Through out 2020 Before contract end in Jun 2021
Production of audited 2019/20 Accounts inc improved electronic WPs, planning for 2020/21 closedown.	Strategic Finance Manager		All services contribute to the closure process and need to adhere to deadlines.	Audited Accounts published. Plan and preparation for 2020/21 Closure.	31 July 2020 31 March 2021.