

FINANCE

Portfolio Holder Statement Update September 2011

1 Since April, what have the measures in the Portfolio Holder Statement been telling you about how things are going in service?

The established measures within Revenues and Benefits confirm that turnaround time for processing documents is in line that expected following the bills being despatched in March. Processing times were highest in May which also reflected the bank holidays.

Council tax collection is still high. However, business rates is struggling. From the shared services for Business rates with Stratford, we know that their collection here is also down. There are many external factors that may influence this, notably the state of the economy, both nationally and locally.

2 Which measures have been of particular interest or concern during the period since April and what have you learnt about your systems from these measures?

New measures have been put in place to monitor the number of new suppliers being set up on the creditors system. With greater scrutiny of new suppliers, this has encouraged officers to make improved usage of existing suppliers and contractors, with few new suppliers now needing to be created. This is also reflected in the measure for the number of invoices which appears to be following a downward trend.

3 What have you done to date as a result of learning from these measures?

The measure for the number of sundry debtor invoices being raised has not revealed an identifiable trend as yet. Work continues to be on-going with service areas that raise a large number of invoices to seek to combine bills (eg leasehold properties – service charge/ground rent invoices), and to encourage prepayment for services and to assess customers past payment history.

All the measures are being discussed in team meetings and one to ones, along with sharing other performance information with staff. Work is being continuing to be prioritised to ensure the new initiatives coming out of the service plan is carried out alongside on-going key functions.

4 What has been the impact of what you have done to date?

2010/11 Statements of Accounts completed successfully in line with IFRS requirements, with much work being done ahead of most other local authorities.

5 What else do you plan to do as a result of learning from these measures?

Continue work on the two main system thinking projects (financial management and transactional review). A further review is scheduled to commence looking at debt recovery as part of the Financial Inclusion Project.

6 Of your key projects (as identified in your portfolio holder statement) how many are on track and how many are not? Of those that are not on track please indicate which milestones have been changed and what the revised dates are.

Project	Progress	Original milestones	Revised milestones
Financial Management (Systems Thinking Initiative)	Most strands progressing, although work is very time consuming, and has had to be done alongside other unanticipated priorities.	Review of Code of Financial Practice originally scheduled for September 2011	March 2011
Transactional Review (Systems Thinking Initiative)	Most strands progressing, although work is very time consuming and dependant on officers in other service areas.		
Insurance renewals 2012 preparation	On track		
Local Authority Mortgage Guarantee Scheme - Prepare Business Case	Discussed with Executive Members June, on hold pending further information		
IFRS – prepare 2010/11 accounts	On track		
Members Remuneration Panel	Progressing, some delay due to elections	August Executive Report	December
Procurement – progress in line with action plan and to make financial savings	On track		
Revenues/Benefits Management Structure and Benefits Fraud Administration Review	Progressing	Report to Employment Committee August	Report to Employment Committee September
HRA Self financing	Progressing in line with Plan reported to Member Board established following June report to Executive.		
Financial training – members	On track		
Introduce E- billing for council tax and nndr	On track		
Review of	Some slippage due to	August Executive	September

Project	Progress	Original milestones	Revised milestones
Equipment Renewal Schedule	other competing priorities	Report	r

7 Does your Service Area Plan/Portfolio Holder Statement need to be amended? If so, please describe the changes.

With the recent Government Consultation Papers issued on Council Tax Rebates and Business Rates Retention, both due to be implemented April 2013, the Service Plan should reflect the work that will be required on these initiatives over the next 18 months. This year this will include reports to the Executive in October on the Consultation and subsequent consideration of the issues as more detailed information becomes available.