

FINANCE

Portfolio Holder Statement Update June 2012

1. What have the measures in the Portfolio Holder Statement been telling you about how things are going in service during 2011/12?

The collection rates for the year were:-

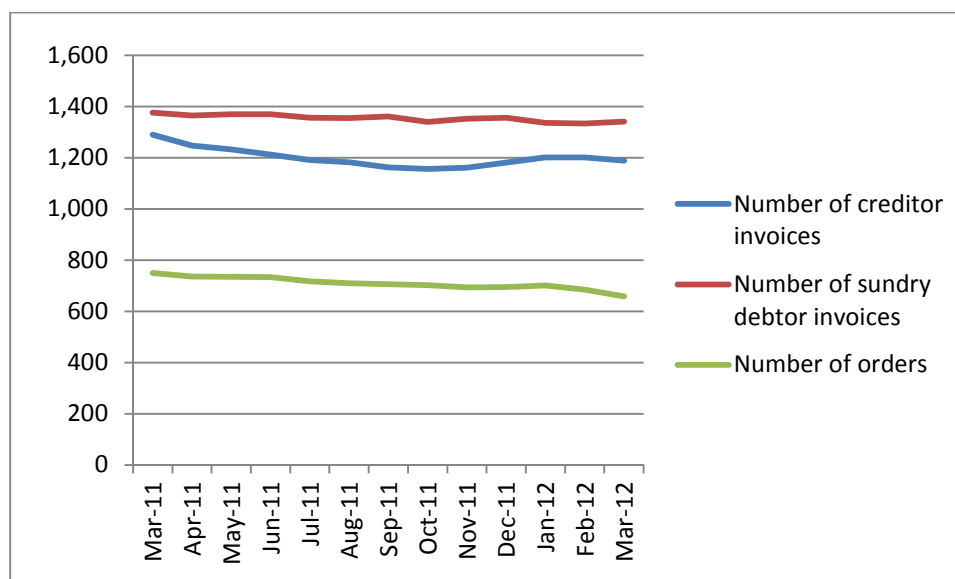
Council Tax 98.9% (98.6% for 2010/2011)

Business Rates 98.5% (98.8% for 2010/2011)

For council tax this is the highest figure on record. These are the highest collection rates across the county, and in the top 10% nationally. Whilst business rates is a decrease this reflects that it has been a difficult year for businesses and many have closed down resulting in a vast increase in write offs compared to last year. In addition the Government terminated their temporary amnesty on empty property rates for many businesses and consequently this has created an extra and difficult charge to collect.

2. Which measures have been of particular interest or concern during the period and what have you learnt about your systems from these measures? Please attach the final version of your SAP customer & operational measures for the year.

The measures in respect of numbers of creditor invoices, orders raised and debtor invoices have all shown downward trends. This is depicted in the attached chart below (based on rolling 12 month average).



Whilst there may be many influences on these figures, both internal and external, the overall trend does confirm that practices across the Council are improving and becoming more embedded. Accordingly, this confirms that the work by the officers in Finance working with other officers to reduce transactions and improve processing is proving successful.

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

Benefits processing time is subject to peaks (post billing) and troughs (pre billing). In line with the measures, staff resources are used to target potential back logs in processing time. The starting point when counting the number of days to process work items is from the date of the first customer contact. Often the work item cannot be processed because the customer has not provided all of the information and evidence to enable processing on day 1. However the department constantly reviews working practices in line with systems thinking to eliminate waste and reduce the number of customer contacts. The department has fulfilled its commitment in 100% of cases to provide a 3 day turnaround for customers who make a new claim and provide the supporting evidence to process immediately. During the year 27% of new claims were processed under the 3 day claim guarantee and work is ongoing to encourage more customers to use this service. The processing of "change of circumstances whilst the customer is in the office" continues to receive excellent feedback and enables the capturing of future changes affecting Benefit which also helps to reduce the no of customer contacts. The reduction in processing times towards the latter part of the year reflects the ongoing work and helps to reinforce the message that systems think is a continuous process.

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

2010/11 Statements of Accounts were completed successfully in line with IFRS requirements, with much work being done ahead of most other local authorities. An unqualified opinion was awarded by the external auditors, with them being complimentary of the work undertaken in producing the accounts.

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

The Financial Management system intervention is not able to be easily measured as objectively. However, the work here has presented improvements in processing. For 2012/13, significant changes have been put in place for how budgets are reviewed throughout the year. This should reduce waste and ensure that the all budget review work does add value.

6. Of your key projects (as identified in your portfolio holder statement) how many were completed and how many are not? Of those that were not completed please indicate what the revised dates are.

Project	Progress	Original milestones	Revised milestones
Financial Management (Systems Thinking Initiative)	Work progressed throughout year. Review of Code of Financial Practice agreed to follow on from this work, hence the need for it to be carried out in 2012/13.	Review of Code of Financial Practice	Summer 2012
Transactional Review (Systems Thinking Initiative)	Officers from Finance worked with other departments throughout year. Overall the data shows there have been downward trends in the numbers of orders, creditor invoices and	On-going	On-going

Project	Progress	Original milestones	Revised milestones
	debtor invoices.		
Insurance renewals 2012 preparation	2011 insurance renewed, preparation for 2012 tender work going to plan.	Autumn 2012 Renewal	
Local Authority Mortgage Guarantee Scheme - Prepare Business Case	Discussed with Executive Members June, subsequent discussions with a local building society. Further discussions scheduled with Sector.		Subject to outcome of Sector meeting in May.
IFRS – prepare 2010/11 accounts	Accounts prepared in line with IFRS and duly received unqualified audit opinion.	Completed	
Members Remuneration Panel	Reported to Executive and Council in February 2012.	August Executive Report	Reported to February 2012 Executive.
Procurement – progress in line with action plan and to make financial savings	On track. Monitored by procurement champions. Annual report to Finance and Audit Scrutiny Committee June 2012.	On-going	On-going
Revenues/Benefits Management Structure and Benefits Fraud Administration Review	Completed	Report to Employment Committee August 2011	Reported to Employment Committee September 2011
HRA Self financing	Completed. Business Plan agreed by members, and £136m debt taken on from PWLB to pay central government.	Completed	
Financial training – members	Training provided on finance, budgets, procurement, risk management and internal audit.		
Introduce E- billing for council tax and nndr	Completed. Approximately 700 e-bills initially issued March 2012 with prospect of increasing in the future.		
Review of Equipment Renewal Schedule	Reported to Executive, schedule continues to be monitored.	August Executive Report	September

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

Plan as presented to April 2012 Executive, no changes proposed.