

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy Directorate
SERVICE: Exchequer and Customer Services
PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31st March 2009.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Exchequer and Customer Services fourth quarter period up to year end 31 March 2009. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment. The final 2008/09 Financial statements for the Department will be prepared and made available via the Council's Intranet once the Council's year-end accounts have been finalised. A notice will be provided within the Members' Weekly Bulletin as soon as they are available.

The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress is explained within Appendix 5.

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Revenues & Benefits

- **Customer Service Excellence Accreditation.** An initial self assessment has been completed by HDL and Revenues & Benefits against the CSE Standards. This self assessment will be discussed with the company recently appointed to carry out the accreditation inspection. During the first quarter of 2009/10 the two Sections will start to collate the agreed supporting evidence. Further work after this will be required to meet those areas of the CSE Standards which the Sections have identified as not currently meeting the CSE requirements.
- Introduction of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) From October 2008 this new allowance replaced Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support. Monitoring results have shown a much slower transition onto ESA than first anticipated, leading to a lower level impact for staff and systems. This however needs to continue to be closely monitored during 2009/10 as more customers move onto this new benefit.

- **Welfare Benefits** In the financial year 2008/09, the activities of the Welfare Rights Service brought nearly £2.5m of benefit income directly into the pockets of Halton residents (17.3% increase on 2007/08). Almost £1m of this was Disability Living Allowance (34% increase). The team undertakes representation work at benefit appeals and the demand for this skilled service and the numbers of clients represented has increased from 97 (2006/7), 106 (2007/08) to 115 (2008/09). The team maintains an 80% success rate at these hearings. Money Advice work undertaken by the unit has increased by 73% in the last financial year.
- **Benefits Express** The Benefit Express has been a major asset to the Borough for a number of years but it is soon to be rebranded as the Halton Advice Bus to reflect its wider use by partner agencies.

Customer Services

- **National Indicator 14 (NI14).** This indicator came in to force on the 1st October 2008 and records avoidable contact from the Council's customers. The indicator measures the 'Avoidable Contact' to the Council across all channels. The HDL system has already been amended to record Avoidable Contact but other areas of the Council also have a responsibility to measure their Avoidable Contacts.

HDL has modified its system to record not only the number of avoidable contacts but also the reason this will allow Directorates to understand the issues and put in place effective remedies. The total measured contacts across the Council in this period were 98,641 contacts of which 12,235 were deemed to be avoidable (12.4%).

- **HDL Statistics**

This table summarises the enquiries by type, made through the Contact Centre and the One Stop Shops in 2008/9

Service Area	Total	%
Benefits	15,767	24.59%
Council Tax	13,897	21.68%
Neighbourhood	6,798	10.60%
Social Services	3,729	5.82%
Transportation	2,952	4.60%
Health & Community	2,214	3.45%
Environmental	2,074	3.24%
Misc Services	2,043	3.19%
Support Services	1,972	3.08%
Highways	1,698	2.65%
HHT Out of hours service	3,281	5.12%
Emergency Duty Team	1,176	1.83%
Switchboard Enquiries	1,056	1.65%
Personnel	999	1.56%
Revenues	803	1.25%
Registrar	787	1.23%
Education	661	1.03%
Legal and Licensing	529	0.83%
Children's Duty Team	437	0.68%
Planning	385	0.60%
Corporate	327	0.51%
Tourist Information	264	0.41%
Property Services	173	0.27%
External Agencies	88	0.14%
	64,110	100.00%

Procurement & Finance Support

- **Improved Payment Terms for SMEs** Performance on payments to Small & Medium Enterprises (SME's) has increased from 44% paid on time at the end of December 2008 to 62% at the end of March 2009. Electronic scanning and matching of all appropriate invoices is in place for the central invoice processing function, in Corporate and Policy, Health and Community and Environment. Children and Young Peoples Directorate are part way through implementation.

- **Electronic solutions** A Project Implementation workshop has been undertaken for the Electronic Contracting System. Training dates are scheduled for May 2009. A cross directorate group has been identified to implement 4 modules -Electronic Request for Quotes-Contract Advertising/OJEU Advertising and Electronic Tendering. These will go live in the target groups by 31st July.
- **Multifunctional Devices (MFD's)** The roll out of the MFD implementation program will continue into the new year.
- **Reducing Transactions** The number of purchase card transactions has been increased to produce lower processing costs for the Council and better cash flow and lower collection costs, for our suppliers. Embedded Purchase cards are used for purchases of foods for school meals, hotel accommodation and the purchase of second hand books. There were 6555 transactions made via the purchase card amounting to £864,500 during 2008-9.
- **IDEA Marketplace** Two new corporate suppliers Alexandra, and Monks and Crane have added their catalogues to be accessible through our electronic marketplace.
- **Agresso Procurement Training** Training sessions have been delivered to 450 Agresso users to refresh their skills and demonstrate best practice and how to get the most from the system. We incorporated some basic procurement training into the sessions to underline the close links between procurement and our purchasing system.
- **Procurement Savings.** The table below shows the savings to date achieved through the introduction of corporate contracts across the Council. Two new contracts have been entered into since December 08 with Alexandra for uniform clothing, and Frozen Foods from Brakes under a new framework agreement. Projected savings for the financial year were forecast to be in the region of £300k. The table demonstrates savings in excess of anticipations. These have been brought about by strict adherence to good procurement methods, restricting access to non contract suppliers, joining framework agreements which provide greater financial savings and by working with non procurement personnel in service areas to help them understand how to apply procurement best practice.

Contract	YTD Contract Savings £
Agency Workers	174,086
Rail Tickets	21,494
Post	68,858
Stationery	17,048
Stationery –change from branded to own brand products	31,774
Office Furniture	31,653
PPE - Personal Protective Equipment New Contract commences January 09	-53
Professional Uniform and Clothing	2,584
Civic Newspaper	11,692
In-Touch Magazine	1,856
MFD's	13,796
MFD's - Toner Savings	73,859
Frozen Foods new Contract	26,143
Total Savings	474,790

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

Procurement & Finance Support

New topics have been identified for action this year

- The Flexible Framework for Sustainable Procurement -this requires a more co-ordinated approach and training for key procurement and contracting staff.
- The Agency Staff Framework Agreement is currently out to tender. Halton have again joined forces with other Merseyside Authorities in order to secure the best possible deal from our supply community.
- A review of the amount spent corporately on external printing and associated work has identified this as an area for improvement. The Procurement Unit is working collaboratively with Public Relations and the Print Unit to identify a better way forward.
- Halton is leading on a framework tender for specialist print paper that will be open to all Merseyside Authorities to join.
- Spend on hygiene services are to be brought together under a Framework Agreement let by Liverpool City Council.

- The Procurement Unit are working with Internal Audit to determine best practice in the procurement of consultancy services.
- The Procurement Unit is investigating the possibility of integrating electronic invoices into the Agresso system from one of our large corporate suppliers. There are initial costs with developing this functionality and an outline business case is being developed.




Customer Services

- **Transfer of Back Office Processes** Work is continually being undertaken to transfer back office functions to the Contact Centre. Queries regarding payments to Creditors will soon be handled by the Contact Centre.
- **Tell Us Once Project** Currently HDL has a process whereby any significant life events e.g. notification of death and Change of Address are disseminated to all appropriate Council Departments. There is a National Project currently being run by DWP as part of the Service Transformation Agreement for multi government agencies e.g. General Register Office, Identity and Passport Service, HMRC, DWP etc to work together and respond in a co-ordinated way (Tell us Once) This programme was lead by DWP and was piloted with some local authorities and agencies and is at the stage where other local authorities are being asked to be included - Customer Services along with the BPR team are currently looking at how Halton can become involved with this project.

Revenues & Benefits

- KLOE/ Audit Commission Inspections. Since the announcement that The Audit Commission has taken over the role of inspecting Benefits services a substantial amount of work has been undertaken to carry out an initial self-assessment against the new requirements. This work is now almost complete with most of the identified minor shortcomings being dealt with. However there do remain a number of more involved requirements that need to be addressed, some of which require corporate involvement. It is planned to present a paper to Management Team on the findings and implications early in the near future.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST SERVICE OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES




Total	9		9		0		0
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All of the objectives for the service are proceeding as planned and additional details are provided within Appendix 1.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW




No service reviews in this period

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	5		3		0		2
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With the exception of payment of invoices and proportion of Council Tax collected, which are only very marginally below their target, all key performance indicators have achieving or exceeding their target at year end, additional details are provided within Appendix 2.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	1		1		0		0
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There are a total of four 'other' indicators, NI 14, NI 180, NI 181 and ECSLI 04. The one indicator for the service that can be reported at year end is ECSLI 04, which has been achieved. The other 3 indicators had no targets as they are new indicators but baseline information has been/is being created, information is provided within Appendix 3.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA targets for this service

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2008-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

No 'high' risk, treatment measures were deemed to be necessary.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS

As a result of undertaking a departmental Equality Impact Assessment no high priority actions were identified for the service for the period 2008 – 2009




10.0 DATA QUALITY

The author provides assurance that the information contained within this report is accurate and valid and that every effort has been made to avoid the omission of data. Where data has been estimated, has been sourced directly from partner or other agencies, or where there are any concerns regarding the limitations of its use this has been clearly annotated.

11.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Progress against Objectives/ Milestones
Appendix 2- Progress against Key Performance Indicators
Appendix 3- Progress against Other Performance Indicators
Appendix 4- Debtor Summary Statistics
Appendix 5- Explanation of traffic light symbols

Progress against service objectives/milestones



Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 4	Commentary
ECS O1	Home working	Continue to roll out to staff where appropriate.		Home working continues to be rolled out across the Division. Staff are still joining the scheme. The pilot has now finished and there are now 32 staff successfully working from home
ECS O2	Business Improvement Districts	Bill properties in BID area		Implemented on time. Business Improvement Districts were introduced in April at Halebank and Astmoor. Collection rates were 97% for Halebank and 96.23% in Astmoor.
ECS O3	Implementation of Local housing allowance	Purchase new system software, install and test Staff training on both system and legislation General awareness for all key stakeholders (RSLs, local landlords, claimants etc.)		Project completed on time.

Progress against service objectives/milestones






Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 4	Commentary
ECS 04	Implementation of Empty Property Relief	<p>Install new software</p> <p>Test and train staff on system and legislation</p> <p>Publicity for scheme to local businesses</p> <p>Bill businesses</p>		This project was successfully implemented on time
ECS 05	Move all staff to new Revenues & Benefits software (Version 6)	<p>Plan of action for transfer</p> <p>Train all new staff on new version of system</p> <p>Assess and monitor impact of new system</p>		Completed. New version of software operational.
ECS 06	Rollout NVQ to Cheshire LAs	<p>Carry out presentations to interested LAs</p> <p>Assess current Halton staff on scheme</p>		Completed. The Division is an accredited NVQ assessment Centre for the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation. The course of study has been offered to staff within the Division. 2008 also saw this being offered to staff from other LAs in Cheshire. Staff from various Las are studying at Halton.
ECS 07	To continue to promote and introduce more effective procurement	Further develop ongoing spend analysis identifying for potential saving		A number of quick wins highlighted and reviewed from the Spend Analysis Report in 06/07 have resulted in a number of Corporate Contracts being implemented. See table in the main body of this report.

APPENDIX ONE – PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES (Exchequer & Customer Services)


Progress against service objectives/milestones

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 4	Commentary
ECS 08	Continue to develop appropriate e-solutions in conjunction with ICT / Directorates to further enhance service delivery through HDL	Review available service options Continue BPR		This is an ongoing project as the teams are continuing to examine service delivery options to free back office resources through business process re-engineering.
ECS 09	Examine implications/implementation of "Government Gateway"	Feb 08 - Undertake risk analysis		<p>Government Connect is a centrally driven common national infrastructure for government that HBC will be connecting into. It will allow the authority to securely share, transfer and receive data.</p> <p>It mandates a set of guidelines that define how we will use, access and store data within HBC. "If" we wish to interact with any Government bodies into the future. A risk analysis has been undertaken and a working party led by IT heading the project. It is anticipated that the Council will be compliant by the end of qtr 1.</p>

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2007/8	Target 08/09	Quarter 4	Progress	Commentary
Corporate Health						
<u>ECSLI 01</u>	The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid in 30 days	96.80	98.00	97.63		Annual corporate performance fell marginally short of target. Final Directorate Performance was as follows: C&YP 91% C&P 98% Environment 99% H&C 99%
<u>ECSLI 02</u> (BVPI 9)	Proportion of Council Tax collected	96.41	96.85	96.77		Fell marginally short of target, probably as a result of the economic downturn. It was nevertheless the highest Council Tax collection rate achieved by Halton
<u>ECSLI 03</u> (BVPI 10)	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	99.93	98.85	99.95		The annual collection rate was marginally higher than the previous year
Service Delivery						
<u>ECSLI 05</u> (BVPI 78a)	Average time for processing new claims (Housing & Council Tax Benefit)	17.77	23 Days	16.16		<i>Performance achieved is better than target and better than last years performance</i>
<u>ECSLI 06</u> (BVPI 78b)	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	3.99	6 Days	5.63		<i>Performance achieved is better than target</i>

Progress against Other Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2007/8	Target 08/09	Quarter 4	Progress	Commentary
Corporate Health						
NI 14	Average number of customer contacts per received customer request.	New for 2008	TBA	Refer comment	N/A	The requirement to report this indicator only commenced on 1st October 2008. We have measured avoidable contact across 98,641 contacts and had 12,235 avoidable contacts giving an output of 12.4%.
NI 180	Changes in HB / CTB entitlements during the year.	New for 2008	TBA	750.9	N/A	New Indicator
NI 181	Time taken to process HB / CTB claims and change events (days)	New for 2008	TBA	8.86	N/A	New indicator
Quality						
ECSLI 04	% Of fairer charging assessments completed within 10 days of referral	100	98.00	100		Performance is ahead of target

Summary of Debtor Statistics



EXCHEQUER AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

Analysis of Outstanding Debts at 31st March 2009

Department / Directorate	Arrears b/f	Raised in Year			Total Debits	Receipts / Refunds in Year		Total Receipts	Manual Adjustments	Other Adjustments	Balance Outstanding
		Debits	Credit Notes	Write- Offs		Payments	Refunds				
Education	522,931	4,499,400	-254,374	-4,174	4,763,783	-4,162,865	10,824	-4,152,041	-11,229	0	600,513
Children & Young People	522,931	4,499,400	-254,374	-4,174	4,763,783	-4,162,865	10,824	-4,152,041	-11,229	0	600,513
Benefits	808,590	373,795	-40,536	-16,135	1,125,713	-185,371	5,227	-180,144	-7,261	-30	938,278
Executives	6,894	235,456	-6,994	-40	235,316	-214,033	0	-214,033	-20	0	21,263
Legal	34,123	23,493	-2,431	-6,797	48,389	-2,390	57	-2,333	-3,101	0	42,955
Resources	722,509	4,417,236	-185,413	-56,934	4,897,398	-3,827,959	8,565	-3,819,394	-136,910	-2,528	938,565
Corporate & Policy	1,572,115	5,049,980	-235,373	-79,906	6,306,815	-4,229,753	13,849	-4,215,904	-147,292	-2,558	1,941,061
Environment	431,177	2,544,790	-111,397	-15,713	2,848,858	-2,306,317	1,859	-2,304,459	-19,162	-318	524,919
Neighbourhood Services	320,647	4,251,801	-168,407	-9,584	4,394,457	-4,021,205	9,376	-4,011,828	-8,446	-239	373,944
Regeneration	-50,000	9,829	0	0	-40,171	-6,369	0	-6,369	50,000	0	3,460
Environment	701,824	6,806,419	-279,803	-25,298	7,203,143	-6,333,890	11,235	-6,322,655	22,392	-557	902,323
Culture & Leisure	195,692	2,098,151	-179,132	-1,036	2,113,676	-1,727,536	55	-1,727,481	-498	0	385,697
Social Care & Housing	336,986	6,266,657	-32,901	-3,476	6,567,266	-5,455,920	1,520	-5,454,400	-1,268	5	1,111,604
Social Services	825,460	4,276,191	-298,833	-15,169	4,787,649	-3,853,807	33,016	-3,820,791	-40,162	-1,450	925,247
Health & Community	1,358,139	12,641,000	-510,865	-19,682	13,468,591	11,037,264	34,592	11,002,672	-41,927	-1,445	2,422,547
Suspense	-15,752	0	0	0	-15,752	-106,832	0	-106,832	131,811	4,095	13,322
Grand Total	4,139,256	28,996,799	1,280,416	-129,059	31,726,580	25,870,605	70,500	25,800,105	-46,245	-464	5,879,766

Explanation of Traffic Light Symbols

The traffic light symbols are used in the following manner:

	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
<u>Green</u>	 Indicates that the <u>objective</u> has been <u>achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that the annual 08/09 <u>target has been achieved</u> or exceeded.
<u>Red</u>	 Indicates that <u>the objective has not been achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.	Indicates that the annual 08/09 <u>target has not been achieved</u>