QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy

SERVICE: Exchequer and Customer Services

PERIOD: Quarter 2 to period end 30th September 2009

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Exchequer and Customer Services first quarter period up to period end 30th September 2009. It describes key developments and progress against <u>all</u> objectives and performance indicators for the service.

The way in which traffic light symbols have been used to reflect progress is explained within Appendix 4

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Revenues

Council Tax:

Collection rate performance continues to improve and currently stands at 57.50% which is the highest 'Quarter 2' collection rate we have achieved in over the last nine years.

This performance also compares well when benchmarked against the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities, (AGMA), with Halton coming 4th out of 14 Authorities.

Business Rates:

Despite the change to Empty Property Rates and, the preparation work that has taken place for the Deferred Payment Scheme, the Business Rates collection rate has also continued to improve. At the end of Quarter 2, the collection rate was 0.13% above the previous year at 60.43%

When compared to the other AGMA LAs, this result represents the 2nd highest collection rate achieved in the benchmarking group.

The Deferred Payment Scheme for Non-Domestic Rates came into force 31st July 2009. It is a complicated scheme allowing ratepayers to defer payment of a percentage of their 2009/10 charge until 2010/11 and 2011/12. Despite software issues and the very tight timescales, the Section has successfully implemented the scheme on time.

Benefits:

DWP continue to have problems calculating and publishing performance against the two national indicators which makes benchmarking very difficult. We do however have some internal systems in place which allow us to monitor the speed of processing new claims and changes in circumstances. The Section is currently processing new claims in average of only 16 days. This comes at a time when the Section has seen an increase in caseload of more than 11%.

The implementation of the In and Out of Work project has been successfully implemented which so far, has had minimal impact in the Service.

Welfare Rights:

The impact of the economic downturn continues to impact on the demand for the income maximisation and debt advice services provided by the Welfare Rights Service. So far this year the Service has generated over £588,000 for Halton residents. This is in addition to representing 46 residents at appeal tribunals to help them reclaim disability benefits that have been refused. There are currently 103 appeal applications in the process of waiting to be heard.

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 role out of the MFD programme will continue into the new year.

Reducing Transactions

We have increased the number of purchase card transactions 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

Projected savings for the financial year were forecast to be in the region of £300k. The table demonstrates savings in excess of this. 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	477,790

<u>Customer Services</u>

HDL Statistics - Qtr 2

QTR Cases	2008	2009
Contact Centre Widnes One Stop Shop	35617 10771	45978 12858
Ditton One Stop Shop	3728 11775	3993 12499
Halton Lea One Stop Shop Runcorn One Stop	5635	6439
Shop	67526	81767

The table above shows the cases dealt with in the Contact Centre and the One Stop Shops. Overall there has been a 21% increase in volume in business conducted compared to the same period last year.

NI 14 Figures

This National Indicator was introduced to reduce avoidable customer contacts. However there is no national standard and the methodology used by individual LAs approach to record cases differ considerably. It is therefore difficult to set targets or indeed measure comparative performance. The results are being used to determine where improvements can be made and staff are currently working with Directorates to determine how to reduce the avoidable contacts in the various service areas. Statistics are monitored and reported quarterly.

Cases	Avoidable Status						
Comico Area	Avaidable	Llaguaidabla	Grand	Deventors			
Service Area	Avoidable	Unavoidable	Total	Percentage			
Benefits	3122	12494	15616	19.99%			
Childrens Duty	30	622	652	4.60%			
Council Tax	3842	11032	14874	25.83%			
EDT	139	1471	1610	8.63%			
Education	102	911	1013	10.07%			
Environmental	451	3421	3872	11.65%			
Health & Community	218	2299	2517	8.66%			
HHT Out Of Hours	131	738	869	15.07%			
HHT Unanswered	128	1383	1511	8.47%			
Highways	260	1081	1341	19.39%			
Landscapes	6	5	11	54.55%			
Legal and Licensing	41	529	570	7.19%			
Planning	70	563	633	11.06%			
Neighbourhood	1107	2596	3703	29.89%			
Social Services	383	4146	4529	8.46%			
Unknown	2955	7445	10400	28.41%			
Youth Service	1	1	2	50.00%			
Grand Total	12986	50737	63723	20.38%			

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

Revenues:

Non Domestic Revaluation

The VOA has been preparing for the 2010 revaluation of all Non-Domestic properties. The draft list was published at the end of September 2009 and the new rateable values will come into effect 1st April 2010. At this stage the Department for Communities and Local Government envisage that many businesses will pay less in rates next year because of the way rates are calculated, this is due to a reduction in the multiplier and transitional arrangements. Work is now underway to carry out the necessary changes in time for April 2010

Benefits:

Increasing caseload

The Benefits' caseload continues to rise and now stands at 16,000. This is an increase of over 1,900 cases since April 2008 (900 of which have been received since April 2009). This total does not include applications that are unsuccessful or withdrawn which equates to a further 1700 cases since April 2009 that the Section has also had to deal with. So far this year the Section has managed to maintain its excellent turnaround times.

However with the introduction of the Child Benefit Disregard scheme and the changes due to come into effect November 2009, there is likely to be a further surge in the number of benefit applications received by the Section in the coming months which may in turn lead to a drop in performance levels.

KLOE (Key Lines of Enquiry).

As reported last quarter there are a number of issues with the new indicators:

- 1. DWP are unable to accurately report performance against these indicators
- 2. Benchmarking against other LAs cannot be effectively undertaken
- 3. Internal estimates cannot be confirmed as reflecting actual performance
- The calculation of NI180 remains flawed in that perceived performance is calculated on the make of caseload rather than actual success of intervention activity

DWP continue to work on the above issues but as things stand, they remain unresolved.

Child Benefit Disregard

From November 2009, Child Benefit will be disregarded for the purposes of the HB CTB calculation. Work is currently underway to make the necessary changes to the Benefits system, reassess all current HB CTB claims as well as trying to reach those potential customers who, given the changes, may now qualify for HB CTB.

In and Out of Work Project

In and Out of Work Project involves Jobcentre plus acting as a single point of contact when people initially claim DWP benefits. In addition they will also collect relevant information to allow a claim to be made for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. Jobcentre plus will pass this information electronically to the council.

Halton successfully went live with this new process on 28th September. Other LAs have reported problems around some of the new procedures and the knock on effect on turnaround times but as yet it is too early for us to measure the impact here at Halton. Daily monitoring and regular evaluation is currently being undertaken

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 is 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.
- Investigating integrating electronic invoices into the Agresso system from a large corporate supplier. There are initial costs with developing this functionality and an outline business case is being developed.

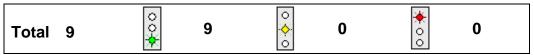
Customer Services

Recyclebank

Halton Direct Link have been working with Waste management on the new Recyclebank Service. Halton is the first authority in the Country to launch this initiative which allows residents of Halton to collect points for materials they recycle and exchange these points for money off goods and services at over 100 local and national shops, restaurants, and leisure and entertainment facilities.

The scheme was launched in September for a pilot area of Halton and during September Halton Direct Link Contact Centre and One Stop Shops dealt with 61 enquiries for this new scheme.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

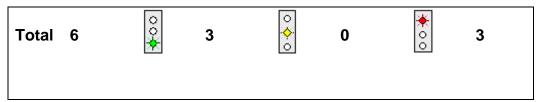


All of the 5 Service Objectives are 'key' and there are a total of 9 'key' milestones under these five objectives. All of the milestones are on track or above target.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

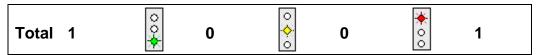
There are no service review issues to report at present.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



The information for 2, NI 180 and NI 181 is not available. Of the remaining indicators 3 are on or above target and remedial action is being considered for the 3 red traffic lights. The details of all the indicators can be found in Appendix 2.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Performance is only slightly below target and no remedial action is required at present.

7.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2009-10 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

8.0 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 2009 – 2010

9.0 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.

10.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Progress against Key Objectives/ Milestones

Appendix 2 - Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Appendix 3 - Progress against Other Performance Indicators

Appendix 4 - Explanation of traffic light symbols

Appendix 5 - Financial Statement

Appendix 6 - Sundry Debtors

Progress against service objectives/milestones

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 2	Commentary
ECS 01	Ensure business continuity and effective service delivery through updating Benefits IT system	Install and test software version 5.14 (Date)	o o →	Project completed successfully
		Install 10g and new server hardware (Date)		
		Evaluate system for functionality and speed and report findings to Operational Director October 2009		
ECS O2	Ensure compliance with new national framework by recording and reporting nationally prescribed performance indicators in line with required timeframe and continue to develop and improve service delivery mechanisms in line with the modernisation agenda	Provide DWP with data Undertake regular performance monitoring (monthly)	oo ∳	Data continues to be sent but problems at the DWP have meant that national comparison data has not yet been made available.
		Carry out self assessment using Audit Commission Key Lines of Enquiry December 2009	oo ∳	Due for completion in December 2009 Report to be sent to Management Team
		HDL & Revenues and Benefits gain accreditation for Customer Service Excellence March 2010	oo. ★	On going - Corporate CSE group established
ECS 03	Continue to identify and exploit the potential for further efficiency gains by enhancing the authority's approach to procurement of goods and services	Continually monitor and an analyse spend and identify areas of potential savings (ongoing)	00 *	This is an ongoing task. See main body of report for savings achieved

Progress against service objectives/milestones

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 2	Commentary
		Develop and introduce a corporate Tendering and Contract Management Tool September 09	oo . ♦	A system has been acquired and is due to go live in August
ECS 04	Continue to investigate and develop sustainable and appropriate e-solutions to further enhance the delivery of services to local residents	Undertake a review of service options and report findings March 2010	oo 	Ongoing
		Continue to investigate opportunities for service remapping March 2010	oo <u></u> *	Ongoing
		Roll out invoice scanning October 2009	oo *	Invoice scanning has now gone live across the Council
ECS 05	Maintain the continuity of service delivery by ensuring that the Council's telephony services are fit for purpose and meet the needs of the Council and its stakeholders	Establish working group and investigate and report upon future options	00 *	Ongoing

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2008/9	Target 09/10	Quarter 2	Progress	Commentary
Corporate F	lealth					
ECSLI 01	The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid in 30 days	97.63	98.00	97.39	* 000	Directorate Performance C&P 97% C&YP 94% H&C 97% Env 98%
ECSLI 02 (BVPI 9)	Proportion of Council Tax collected	96.77	96.00	57.50%	00	Slightly up on the corresponding quarter last year
ECSLI 03 (BVPI 10)	The percentage of Business Rates which should have been received during the year that were received	99.95	97.75	60.43%	○ ○ 	Slightly up on the corresponding quarter last year

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2008/9	Target 09/10	Quarter 2	Progress	Commentary
<u>NI 14</u>	Average number of customer contacts per received customer request.	Refer to comment	18%	20.38%	*00	The requirement to report this indicator only commenced on the 1 st October 2008. Initial measurements showed avoidable contact across 98,641 contacts as 12,235 (12.4%). Measuring has since become more refined and Qtr 2 figures are shown in the main body of the report as 20.38%
<u>NI 180</u>	Changes in HB/CTB entitlements during the year.	750.9	ТВА	N/A	N/A	Targets cannot be set at this time as DWP experiencing difficulty with software suppliers so there is no national data for 2009/2010 available. The DWP supply this figure based on the scans HBC send them. This is still not available from them
<u>NI 181</u>	Time taken to process HB / CTB claims and change events (days)	8.86	ТВА	N/A	N/A	Targets cannot be set at this time as DWP experiencing difficulty with software suppliers so there is no national data for 2009/2010 available. The DWP supply this figure based on the scans HBC send them. This is still not available from them

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2008/9	Target 09/10	Quarter 2	Progress	Commentary
Service Del	ivery		•			
ECSLI 05 (BVPI 78a)	Average time for processing new claims (Housing & Council Tax Benefit)	16.16	20 Days	16.04	oo *	Performance is on target despite an 11.89% increase in caseload
ECSLI 06 (BVPI 78b)	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	5.63	5.5 Days	6.12	*00	Performance is slightly below target. There are a number of vacant posts in the Section which, in addition to the increase in caseload, is impacting on processing times

Progress against Other Performance Indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2008/9	Target 09/10	Quarter 2	Progress	Commentary		
Corporate H	Corporate Health							
Quality								
ECSLI 04	% Of fairer charging assessments completed within 10 days of referral	100	98	79%	* 0 0	Continues to fall further from target. This is due to a shift in priority which has meant Welfare Rights staff have been asked to carry out other functions. Welfare Rights Manager has raised the issue with Social Services		

The traffic light symbols are used in the following manner: **Performance Indicator Objective** Green Indicates that the objective Indicates that the target is is on course to be on course to be achieved. achieved within the appropriate timeframe. Indicates that it is unclear Indicates that it is either Amber at this stage, whether the unclear at this stage or milestone/objective will be too early to state whether achieved within the the target is on course to be achieved. appropriate timeframe. Red Indicates that it is highly Indicates that the target likely or certain that the will not be achieved objective will not be unless there is an achieved within the intervention or remedial appropriate timeframe. action taken.

EXCHEQUER AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

EXCHEQUER AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

Revenue Budget as at 30th September 2009

	Annual Revised Budget £'000	Budget To Date £'000	Actual To Date £'000	Variance To Date (overspend) £'000	Actual Including Committe d Items
Expenditure Employees Premises Supplies & Services Telephone System Costs Insurances Transport Charitable Relief Concessionary Travel Asset Charges Council Tax Benefits Support Services Rent Allowances Non HRA Rebates	6,550 1,461 902 215 529 382 103 1,967 200 10,974 6,562 45,742 77	3,529 1,112 392 107 397 337 0 820 0 10,683 1,656 21,629 38	3,188 1,112 348 80 442 323 0 854 0 10,683 1,656 21,629 31	341 0 44 27 (45) 14 0 (34) 0 0 0	3,189 1,139 516 80 442 323 0 855 0 10,683 1,656 21,629 31
Total Expenditure	75,664	40,700	40,346	354	40,543
Income Sales	-13	-6	-4	(2)	-4
Halton Housing Trust Fees & Charges Support Service Recharges SLA to Schools Insurance Recharges	-19 -56 -8,690 -48 -2,183 -168	0 -4 -2,659 -24 -1,115 0	-10 -20 -2,649 -26 -1,115 -14	10 16 (10) 2 0 14	-10 -20 -2,649 -26 -1,115 -14
NNDR Administration Grant Hsg Ben Administration Grant Concession and Travel Crant	-1,486 -300	-1,053 -239	-1,053 -239	0 0	-1,053 -239
Concessionary Travel Grant Rent Allowances	-45,620 -11,088	-21,637 -4,917	-21,637 -4,917	0	-21,637 -4,917
Council Tax Benefits Grant Other Grants	-53	-26	-35	9	-35

APPENDIX FIVE – FINANCIAL STATEMENT (Exchequer and Customer Services)

Liability Orders	-484	-162	-142	(20)	-142
Non HRA Rent Rebates	-77	-38	-72	34	-72
Total Income	-70,285	-31,880	-31,933	53	-31,933
Net Expenditure	5,379	8,820	8,413	407	8,610

Comments on the above figures:

In overall terms spending is currently below the budget to the end of the first quarter. With regards to expenditure, employee costs are lower than budget due to vacancies within the Housing Benefits section and the Contact Centre.

Local Strategic Partnership expenditure to 30th September 2009

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance to Date
	Daaget	Date	Date	to Date
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Local Strategic Partnership				
Benefits Bus	150	75	50	25
Community Grid	79	39	51	(12)
Net Expenditure	229	114	101	13
-				

Regular monitoring reports are sent to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) in respect of all LSP projects and any areas of concern are dealt with throughout the year by the LSP support team and individual project managers. Some variances against the budget to date are expected, as the LSP have deliberately over-programmed in order to ensure that the full allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund grant is spent during the year.

Sundry Debtors

Analysis of Outstanding Debts 01.10.09

01.10.09											
		Raised in Year				Receipts / Refunds in Year					
	Arrears b/f	Debits	Credit Notes	Write- Offs	Total Debits	Payments	Refunds	Total Receipts	Manual Adjustments	Other Adjustments	Balance Outstanding
Education	600,513	1,356,449	-143,701	0	1,813,261	-1,315,367	300	-1,315,067	-3,485	4,986	499,696
Children & Young People	600,513	1,356,449	-143,701	0	1,813,261	-1,315,367	300	-1,315,067	-3,485	4,986	499,696
Benefits	938,278	197,198	-28,637	0	1,106,839	-89,027	3,733	-85,294	-4,758	5,554	1,022,341
Executives	21,263	8,761	0	0	30,024	-18,975	4,504	-14,471	-4,504	256	11,305
Legal	42,955	3,880	-1,978	-57	44,800	-485	0	-485	-2,115	-7,127	35,072
Resources	938,565	1,774,662	-99,945	-20,000	2,593,282	-1,724,078	11,880	-1,712,198	-33,310	27,032	874,807
Corporate & Policy	1,941,061	1,984,501	-130,559	-20,057	3,774,945	-1,832,566	20,118	-1,812,448	-44,687	25,715	1,943,525
Environment	524,919	1,178,270	-159,146	-1	1,544,042	-1,050,629	2,445	-1,048,184	-2,007	7,165	501,016
Neighbourhood Services	373,944	2,047,309	-204,368	0	2,216,885	-1,775,888	10,289	-1,765,600	64,102	-9,565	505,822
Regeneration	3,460	1,000	0	0	4,460	-4,380	0	-4,380	0	0	80
Environment	902,323	3,226,579	-363,514	-1	3,765,387	-2,830,898	12,734	-2,818,164	62,096	-2,401	1,006,918
Culture & Leisure	385,697	592,744	-32,459	0	945,982	-870,361	56	-870,305	-135	157	75,699
Social Care & Housing	1,111,604	4,272,745	-126,887	-7,591	5,249,871	-3,732,560	5,241	-3,727,319	-4,958	-6,666	1,510,928
Social Services	928,722	1,859,555	-256,383	-67,206	2,464,688	-1,621,904	10,439	-1,611,465	-19,874	133	833,482
Health & Community	2,426,022	6,725,044	-415,729	-74,797	8,660,541	-6,224,825	15,735	-6,209,090	-24,966	-6,376	2,420,109
Suspense	13,322	0	0	0	13,322	-30,952	0	-30,952	5,391	-21,925	-34,163
Grand Total	5,883,242	13,292,572	-1,053,503	-94,855	18,027,456	-12,234,607	48,886	-12,185,721	-5,652	0	5,836,084