

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy Directorate
SERVICE: Exchequer and Customer Services
PERIOD: Quarter 2 to period end 30th September 2008.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Monitoring Report covers the Exchequer and Customer Services second quarter period up to period end 30th September 2008. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Revenues & Benefits

McMillan Trust - A partnership agreement has been drawn up with the PCT and McMillan Trust. This will involve the Macmillan Trust funding two full time Welfare Rights Advisers who will be managed by HBC and located at Catalyst House. Their role will be to provide Welfare Rights advice to cancer sufferers throughout the Borough.

Changes in Benefit rules

From October 2008, the maximum period that Benefit claims can be backdated is reduced from 52 weeks to just 3 months. Halton has historically tried to maximise benefit entitlement as much as possible by backdating claims where appropriate but this change in legislation will clearly have an effect. There is better news for some categories of claimants as there will now be a full disregard of child maintenance in the calculation of benefit entitlement.

Customer Services

National Indicator 14 (NI14). This indicator came in to force on the 1st October 2008 and will have a major impact on HDL Customer Services is a corporate issue and indeed effects many Divisions across the Council including Revenues & Benefit, Waste Management, Planning, Environmental Health etc

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 will also have a responsibility to measure their Avoidable Contacts. Progress will be monitored and reported in the third quarter's report.

Customer Service Excellence Accreditation. As part of the Cabinet Office's Performance Management Framework (PMF) initiative all publicly funded Contact Centres are being requested to become accredited in Customer Excellence. Although work already underway within HDL to become accredited, there is now a Corporate initiative for the Council, as a whole, to gain accreditation. The Council initiative will therefore become the basis for the HDL process.

Procurement Savings. The table below shows the savings to date achieved through the introduction of corporate contracts across the Council. Projected savings for the financial year are forecast to be in the region of £300k.

Contract	YTD Contract Savings £
Agency Workers	50,392
Rail Tickets	10,077
Hotel Accommodation	330
Post	18,979
Stationery	3,162
Office Furniture	16,341
PPE - Personal Protective Equipment	23
Civic Newspaper	11,692
In-Touch Magazine	1,392
MFD's	1,093
MFD's - Toner Savings	10,339
Monthly Savings Value £	123,820

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

Customer Services

Telecommunications.

This was reported in the previous report. The current telephone infrastructure is now some 15+ years old and a program of work is being put together with the objective of ensuring the system is fit for purpose and to examine other new and emerging technologies to see if we can make better use of our telephone and data networks and improve efficiencies whilst delivering cost savings. Work has now started to evaluate options and a visit has already taken place to a neighbouring authority to discuss how they are migrating to a replacement infrastructure.




Short Messaging Service (SMS)

SMS is text messaging. A workstream has been set up to examine how we can utilise this technology across the authority to improve customer service.

Revenues & Benefits

KLOE/ Audit Commission Inspections - The Audit Commission has taken over the role of inspecting Benefits services. This has meant a change in the way in which the Service is measured, monitored and inspected with the introduction of a Benefits KLOE. The new regime is much tougher and requires substantially more work to achieve the same level of standard that would have been achieved under the previous inspection regime. The emphasis has also changed and the Section needs to carry out an extensive initial self- assessment to identify the areas where more work is needed. Although this is an assessment of the Benefits Service it has references and requirements to a number of other areas within the Council that will impact on the assessment and measurement of the Benefits Service.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST SERVICE OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

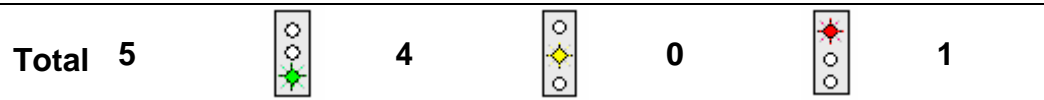
Total	9		9		0		0
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All of the objectives for the service are proceeding as planned and additional details are provided within Appendix 1.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

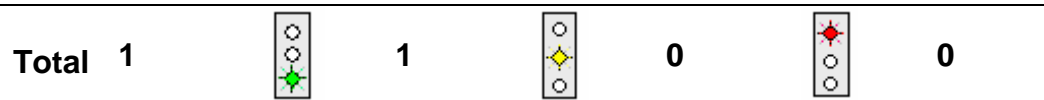
No service reviews in this period

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



With the exception of payment of invoices, which is marginally below the 98% target, all key performance indicators are achieving or exceeding targeted level at half year, additional details are provided within Appendix 2.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS









The one remaining indicator for the service that can be reported at half-year is presently on track and additional details are provided within Appendix 3.

7.0 APPENDICES




Appendix 1 - Progress against Objectives/ Milestones
Appendix 2 - Progress against Key Performance Indicators
Appendix 3 - Progress against 'other' Performance Indicators
Appendix 4 - Financial Statement
Appendix 5 - Debtor Summary Statistics
Appendix 6 - Use of traffic light symbols

Progress against service objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 2	Commentary
ECS 01	Home working	Have staff signed up for scheme by 31 st March 2008		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 23 staff successfully working from home
ECS 02	Business Improvement Districts	Staff training on legislation Purchase and install new BIDS software Staff training on software Bill properties in BID area		Implemented on time. Business Improvement Districts were introduced in April at Halebank and Astmoor. Although payments were due in full at the end of April the collection rate at the 31.07.08 was 81% for Halebank and 69% in Astmoor. Recovery action has commenced.
ECS 03	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.






Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 2	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>		<p>This project was successfully implemented on time for billing in April.</p>
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>		<p>Phase 1 completed although further work is necessary when another module of V6 is released in October.</p>
ECS 06	Rollout NVQ to Cheshire LAs	<p>Carry out presentations to interested LAs</p> <p>Assess current Halton staff on scheme</p>		<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. The Division is to take another cohort of students in September</p>

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


Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone(s)	Progress Quarter 2	Commentary
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. The table shown in the main body of this report shows the saving to date and the projected savings for the year.
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.</p>

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

Progress against Key Performance Indicators.

Ref	Description	Actual 2007/8	Target 08/09	Quarter 2	Progress	Commentary
Corporate Health						
<u>ECSLI 01</u> (BVPI 8)	The percentage of undisputed invoices which were paid in 30 days	96.80	98.00	97.69		Directorate Performance C&YP 93% C&P 98% Environment 98% H&C 99%
<u>ECSLI 02</u> (BVPI 9)	Proportion of Council Tax collected	96.41	96.85	57.11		Qtr 2 shows an increase of 0.50% on the corresponding period last year
<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	60.3		Qtr 2 collection is slightly lower 0.91% than the corresponding period last year. This is due to introduction of the empty rate charge effective from April this year.
Service Delivery						
<u>ECSLI 05</u> (BVPI 78a)	Average time for processing new claims (Housing & Council Tax Benefit)	17.77	23 Days	16.95		Performance is ahead of target
<u>ECSLI 06</u> (BVPI 78b)	Average time for processing notifications of changes in circumstances	3.99	6 Days	5.68		Performance is ahead of target

Progress against other performance indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2007/8	Target 08/09	Quarter 2	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
NI 180	Changes in HB / CTB entitlements during the year.	New for 2008	TBA	1381	N/A	New indicator
NI 181	Time taken to process HB / CTB claims and change events (days)	New for 2008	TBA	10.83	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

Financial Statement

Revenue Budget as at 30th September 2008

	Annual Revised Budget	Budget To Date	Actual To Date	Variance To Date (overspend)	Actual Including Committed Items
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<u>Expenditure</u>					
Employees	5,685	2,835	2,739	96	2,742
Premises	550	93	68	25	85
Supplies & Services	1,001	483	377	106	560
Telephone System Costs	76	38	92	(54)	92
Insurance	1,954	1,723	1,777	(54)	1,777
Transport	103	51	46	5	46
Charitable Relief	103	0	0	0	0
Concessionary Travel	1,975	824	824	0	833
Asset Charges	258	0	0	0	0
Council Tax Benefits	9,430	9,430	9,491	(61)	9,491
Support Services	3,424	0	0	0	0
Non HRA Rebates	168	84	0	84	0
Total Expenditure	24,727	15,561	15,414	147	15,626
<u>Income</u>					
Sales	-12	-6	-61	55	-61
Halton Housing Trust	-19	-9	-6	(3)	-6
Fees & Charges	-2	-1	-5	4	-5
Support Service Recharges	-4,981	0	0	0	0
SLA to Schools	-46	-23	-24	1	-24
Telephone Recharges	-338	0	0	0	0
Insurance Recharges	-2,309	-245	-245	0	-245
NNDR Administration Grant	-169	0	0	0	0
Hsg Ben Administration Grant	-1,479	-739	-742	3	-1,032
Concessionary Travel Grant	-300	-150	-210	60	-210
Council Tax Benefits Grant	-9,249	-4,624	-4,629	5	-4,629
Liability Orders	-574	-279	-206	(73)	-206
Non HRA Rent Rebates	-169	-84	-40	(44)	-40
Total Income	-19,647	-6,160	-6,168	8	-6,458
Net Expenditure	5,080	9,401	9,246	155	9,168

Comments on the above figures:

In overall terms spending is currently below the budget to the end of the second quarter. With regards to expenditure, employee costs are lower than budget due to vacancies within the Housing Benefits section, and it is expected that spending will be below budget at the year end.

EXCHEQUER AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

Local Strategic Partnership expenditure to 30th September 2008

	Annual Budget	Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Variance to Date
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Local Strategic Partnership				
Benefits Bus	150	75	33	42
Net Expenditure	150	75	33	42




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 Working Neighbourhood Fund grant is spent during the year.

Analysis of Outstanding Debts

	Arrears b/f	Raised in Year			Total Debits	Receipts / Refunds		Total Receipts	Manual Adjustments	Other Adjustments	Balance Outstanding
		Debits	Credit Notes	Write- Offs		Payments	Refunds				
Education	522,931	1,963,752	-56,579	-3,882	2,426,223	-2,133,535	10,414	2,123,121	-11,129		291,973
Children & Young People	522,931	1,963,752	-56,579	-3,882	2,426,223	-2,133,535	10,414	2,123,121	-11,129		291,973
Benefits	808,590	140,555	-7,701	-6,516	934,928	-85,172	2,430	-82,741	-3,882		848,304
Executives	6,894	195,671	-6,946	-40	195,579	-185,460		-185,460	0		10,119
Legal	34,123	14,400	-1,407	-3,150	43,966	-990		-990	-1,396		41,580
Resources	722,509	1,838,820	-60,361	17,373	2,483,594	-1,616,552	3,232	1,613,320	-48,076	-272	821,926
Corporate & Policy	1,572,115	2,189,446	-76,416	27,078	3,658,067	-1,888,174	5,662	1,882,512	-53,353	-272	1,721,930
Environment	431,177	1,378,272	-38,783	-6,868	1,763,799	-1,293,063	1,592	1,291,472	-15,801	-318	456,208
Neighbourhood Services Regeneration	320,647 -50,000	2,212,286 3,633	115,528	-7,451	2,409,955 -46,368	-1,502,882 -2,633	5,690	1,497,192 -2,633	-3,311		909,453 -49,000
Environment	701,824	3,594,191	154,310	14,319	4,127,386	-2,798,578	7,282	2,791,296	-19,112	-318	1,316,661
Culture & Leisure	195,692	1,340,329	103,347	-533	1,432,142	-396,092	45	-396,046	-133		1,035,962
Social Care & Housing	336,986	858,781	-3,117	-3,351	1,189,300	-592,019	1,520	-590,499	511	-5	599,308
Social Services	825,460	2,167,610	114,025	-1,844	2,877,200	-1,834,954	14,496	1,820,459	-20,534	-21	1,036,187
Health & Community	1,358,139	4,366,720	220,489	-5,727	5,498,642	-2,823,065	16,061	2,807,004	-20,155	-26	2,671,458
Suspense	-15,752				-15,752	-41,406		-41,406	67,883	380	11,105
Grand Total	4,139,256	12,114,110	507,794	51,006	15,694,566	-9,684,758	39,419	9,645,338	-35,866	-236	6,013,126

APPENDIX FIVE– SUMMARY DEBTOR STATISTICS (Exchequer & Customer Services)

The traffic light symbols are used in the following manner:

	<u>Objective</u>	<u>Performance Indicator</u>
<u>Green</u>	 <p>Indicates that the <u>objective is on course to be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	<p>Indicates that the <u>target is on course to be achieved</u>.</p>
<u>Amber</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>unclear</u> at this stage, due to a lack of information or a key milestone date being missed, <u>whether the objective will be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	<p>Indicates that it is either <u>unclear</u> at this stage or too early to state whether the target is on course to be achieved.</p>
<u>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>highly likely or certain that the objective will not be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	<p>Indicates that the <u>target will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.</p>