

**FINANCE
DEPARTMENT**

PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

APRIL - JULY 2006

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1. OUR OUTCOMES IN RESPECT OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN AND IMPROVEMENT AGENDA

The Finance Department plays a key role in supporting the functions of all the other services provided by the Council. Clearly the work the Department undertakes with residents of the Borough with Housing matters fits within the corporate “**Meeting the housing needs of Wirral**”. It is, however, difficult to identify the Finance Department’s contribution to any other service led corporate objectives; its main impact is in the area of “**continuously improving services**”. During the past quarter the Divisions of the Department have undertaken the following key activities:

Accountancy

Financial planning and monitoring

- Report to Executive Board on 6 April 2006 set out the monitoring and planning timetable for 2006/07 and the requirements in respect of reporting upon finance and service delivery performance.

1Business

- During late March a number of sessions were held with senior staff and budget-holders that covered the changeover period and an overview of the 1Business system. The detailed training on the Financial System took place in June.

Year-end accounts

- The task of completing the 2005/06 accounts by the 30 June target date was a challenge. The final report went to the new Audit and Risk Management Committee on 29 June 2006. This was ahead of the statutory 30 June deadline. It included the Statement of Accounts 2005/06 and a series of reports presenting the financial highlights. The annual audit and the findings of the District Auditor, together with any changes to the accounts, must be agreed by Committee before 30 September. The accuracy and quality of both the information and supporting documentation inform the Use of Resources judgement within the CPA.

Audit

- An Audit and Risk Management Committee has been established to provide independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management and control framework, independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance and to oversee the financial reporting process. Internal Audit report to this Committee on a quarterly basis regarding the outcome of work undertaken in these areas.
- To ensure that the Authority complies with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 Wirral's Statement on Internal Control (SIC) for 2005/06 identifies that the processes and systems in operation ensure that a true and fair opinion of the control environment at WMBC is presented and evidenced. The Statement was presented to Members in June 2006.
- The Annual Internal Audit Report for 2005/06 was presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee in June 2006. The report identifies all of the activities that the Section has involved itself with during the year and provides opinion on the effectiveness of systems of control in operation throughout the Council.

- An audit has recently been instigated to evaluate the effectiveness of the Council's ICT Strategy and how it complies with current best professional practice. Reports will be produced in due course identifying any actions required to improve existing arrangements.
- Other audits carried out include a review of the controls in operation over a number of core systems ie Housing Benefits and Creditors, and reports are being prepared for managers identifying findings and possible areas for development or improvement. Other audits covered Risk Management Framework, Conveyancing and Adult Social Services - Complaints Process

Merseyside Pension Fund

- The Fund has been responding to Consultation on amendments to the Local Government Pensions Scheme as well as implementing revised regulations.
- A revised format website was launched from 9 March 2006.
- The value of the Fund is influenced by the stock market but recently value has been in the region of £4bn. This represented a positive annual investment return of 22.9% against the Fund's benchmark of 21.9%.

Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services

System Update

- The contract has been signed with Academy/Capita and within this significant savings have been identified for support and maintenance of the system without affecting customer service standards. The project team began training on 3 April and will continue until go live in November

Council Tax Collection

- Our collection rate of 97.4%. Main billing went well and Wirral now has 73% of its Council Tax payers on Direct Debit (84,500).

Housing Benefit

- Overall our annual performance indicators look very good and reflect the hard work of staff throughout the division to ensure this good return - particularly on the time taken to process claims.

Call Centre

- Was hit by increased numbers (at one point to 400 a day from 60 per week) of callers to Streetscene on the move to a free ERIC service (removal of bulky waste items).
- Coverage for queries regarding Open Golf Championship at the Royal Liverpool Golf Course 20/23 July went smoothly.

Support Services

- Job evaluation interviews continue and the computer versions are to be completed on the first tranche of staff involved in the benchmark exercise.
- Freedom of Information requests continued to be high in this period.
- The work on the lower floor of the Cheshire Lines Building for the Records Management facility is progressing very well and a Records Manager has recently been appointed.
- Corporate Procurement Unit was heavily involved in the Streetscene project. A total of four compliant bids were returned, which were evaluated and reported to Cabinet which on the 8 May 2006 awarded the contract to Biffa Waste Services.

- A corporate cross council programme of risk management training for all managers was organised and co-ordinated by Departmental Training Co-ordinators. These sessions are one day long and run from 4 May through until the end of November. All members of DMT have attended and they are specifically intended for Managers involved in Service planning and delivery.
- The Central Payments Team (CPT) has been established to receive and pay all invoices for the Council. Several new members of staff have transferred in from other departments to support the new team.
- The division has been active with the invitation to tender for the Occupational Health Service.
- Working with Central HR to promote and provide the new child care benefits scheme.

WITS

- E-mail and Firewall: have contracted for out of hours firewall support.
- Telephone Calls: Further to the Cabinet report of 16 March, the Head of Legal and Member Services has signed contracts with BT, via the OGC, for the carriage of outgoing telephone calls and provision of telephone lines for the next twelve months.
- WITS is working with the Corporate Procurement Unit on tenders for telecoms services which should realise further savings from April 2007.
- SOCITM (Society of IT Management) survey on Customer Satisfaction in respect of IT services across the Council has been undertaken. Results will be known in August.

2. EXTERNAL CHALLENGE AND INSPECTIONS

Audit Commission

The Accounts of the Council were closedown within the revised timetable and completed by 30 June 2006. At this stage the Audit Commission is completing its assessment of the accounts

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

The audit commission forms a judgement on the council's ability to secure economy, effectiveness and efficiency. This is often referred to as the value for money judgement. This judgement is made on the basis of twelve criteria including **Use of resources**. This assessment looks at five themes: financial reporting, financial management, financial standing, internal control and value for money. The value for money element contributes to 8 of the 12 criteria for the value for money judgement. As a 2* authority the council is not required to undertake a new self-assessment, however there is a requirement to update the existing assessment. This is currently being completed.

3. REVIEW OF RISKS AND CONTINGENCIES

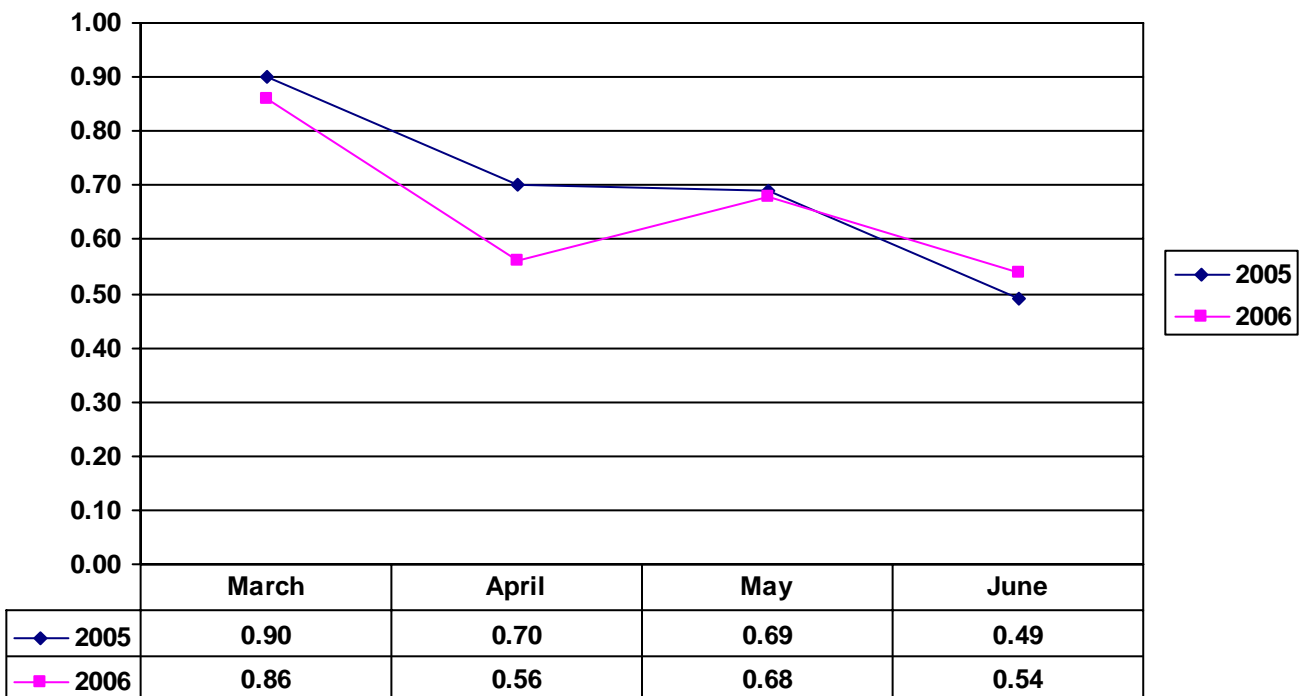
The Department takes a pro active approach to managing risk and keeps a departmental risk register outlining risks, control measures as well as risk scores. The departmental management team identified the following issues and managed their impact on achieving departmental objectives during this period:

- ❖ Implementation of the 1Business programme
- ❖ Development of key IT systems, such as Revenues and Benefits
- ❖ Extra activity at the Call Centre due to change in contractor for the waste collection service and the Open Golf Championship

4. MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES, IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The number of day's sickness is calculated by taking the total number of day's sickness during the month divided by the number of staff employed during that month. The chart below depicts the average for March, April, May and June for both 2005 and 2006.

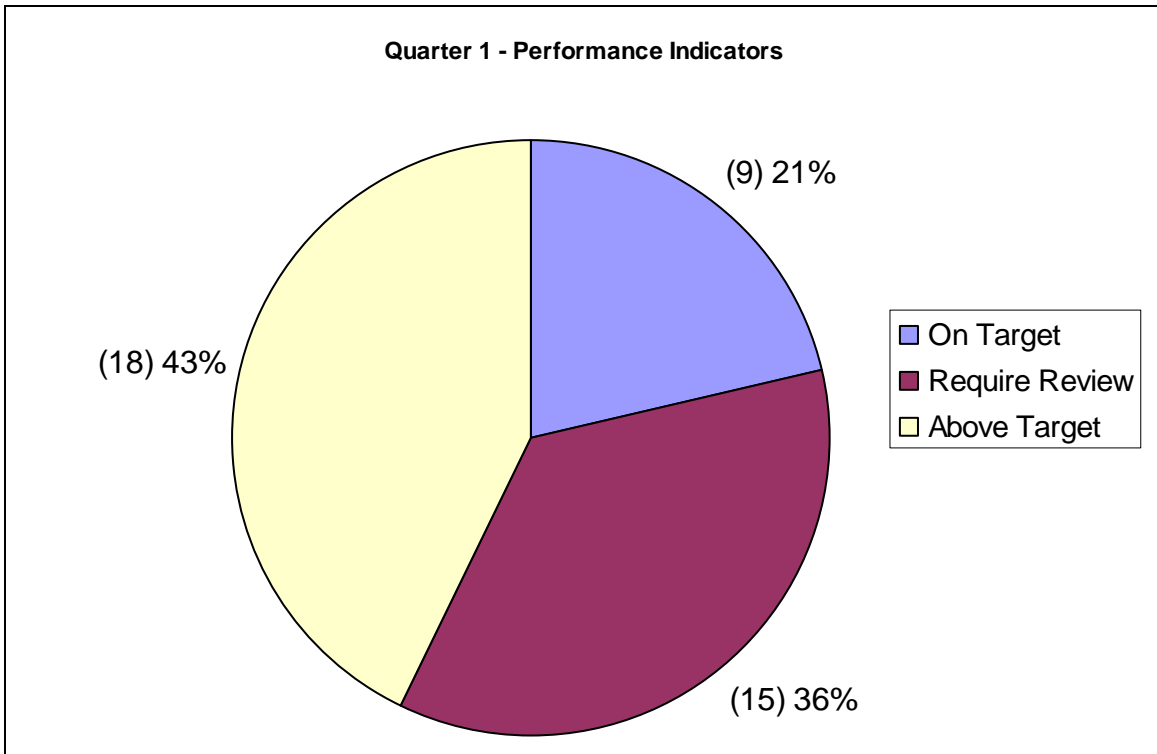
Average Number of Days Sickness per staff member



5. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

There are 42 best value performance indicators, corporate plan and local indicators for the finance department. These are currently being assessed to ascertain their validity and usefulness. Due to the nature of some of the performance measures it is not possible to report on all indicators on a quarterly basis. Those that do lend themselves to quarterly reporting are listed in the annex to this appendix.

The chart below depicts the number of indicators that are considered to be above or on target. The remainder are the subject of management action to review and alleviate any identified issues.



6. SUMMARY OF NEXT QUARTERS ACTIVITIES

The focus for the next quarter will be to:

- ensure that financial aspects of the 1Business programme are implemented to maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
- respond to Central Government’s consultation and the significant changes in the Local Government Pension Scheme arrangements
- respond to issues raised by the District Auditor in the review of the 2005/06 statement of accounts
- complete the relevant elements of the job evaluation project.
- implement the Revenues and Benefits IT system
- review the performance management and reporting arrangements in line with corporate guidelines

**Best Value, Departmental and Local Performance Indicators for Finance Department
2006/07 for Quarter 1**

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE: CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING OUR SERVICES

PI Number	Title	2005/2006 Actual	2006/2007 Target	2006/2007 Estimate 1st Quarter	Comments / Reason for Deterioration
BVPI 9	% of Council Tax collected	97.4 %	97.7 %	29.96 %	29.27 Target
BVPI 10	The % of non-domestic rates due for the financial year which were received by the authority.	96.55 %	98.2 %	31.19 %	
DEPARTMENT 2000	% of new claims processed within 14 days	89.98 %	90 %	95.42 %	
DEPARTMENT 2017	% of new claims paid within 14 days in quarter 1 and thereafter 7 days	93.20 %	91 %	96.18 %	
DEPARTMENT 2018	Reply to correspondence within 10 working days of receipt	100%	100 %	100 %	
DEPARTMENT 2019	Percentage of District Valuer Alterations actioned within 15 days	96%	96 %	100 %	
DEPARTMENT 2021	Percentage of invoice requests actioned within 5 days	100%	100 %	100 %	
DEPARTMENT 2024	Percentage of discrepancies on cashiers totals to within £2.00 per day	96 %	98 %	98 %	
DEPARTMENT 2026	Photocopying is delivered to customer requirements	95 %	97 %	97 %	
DEPARTMENT 2027	Printing is delivered to customers requirements	90 %	75 %	95 %	
DEPARTMENT 2030	Problem free days/application/month	22	22	22	no of available days in month
DEPARTMENT 2031	Respond to operational problems within timescales defined in SLAs	94%	94 %	94 %	
DEPARTMENT 2032	Resolve operational problems within timescales defined in SLAs	94%	94 %	91 %	
DEPARTMENT 2033	Complete minor infrastructure projects within agreed timescale and costs	95%	95 %	100 %	
DEPARTMENT 2034	To ensure that 90% of the audit plan is completed by year end	84	95	84	
DEPARTMENT 2035	All Audit reports are issued within 14 working days of the audit	100 %	100 %	100 %	
DEPARTMENT 2036	Responses to audit customer surveys receive good or better ratings	100 %	100 %	100 %	
DEPARTMENT 2037	Pay retirement benefits within 7 working days of receipt of all relevant information	96%	96 %	94 %	
DEPARTMENT 2038	Notify preserved benefit details within 22 working days of receipt of all relevant information	96%	96 %	90 %	
DEPARTMENT 2039	Complete transfer values out within 7 working days of receipt of all relevant information	96%	96 %	98 %	

DEPARTMENT 2040	Complete payment of refunds of contributions within 7 working days of receipt of all information	96%	96 %	100 %	
DEPARTMENT 2042	The percentage of contributions collected by the 19th of the month	97.56 %	98.2 %	95.63 %	
DEPARTMENT 2043	Internal investment trades settled on time	95.08 %	97.5 %	80 %	There were five purchases in June, including one property purchase. Four settled on time, one settled a day late due to a market shortage.
LOCAL 2010a	Improving Customer Services: Achievement of service standards in customer services strategy/pledge: Face to Face - % of appointments at OSS kept	100 %	100 %	100 %	
LOCAL 2010b	% of people waited under 15 minutes to be seen by an adviser	90.8 %	87 %	94.7 %	on target
LOCAL 2010c	% of people who felt that they were dealt with in a positive and in a welcoming manner	99.29 %	99.30 %	99 %	Achieved
LOCAL 2010d	% of customer interview times within 20 mins at One Stop Shop	82.6 %	81 %	80.1 %	On Target
LOCAL 2010e	% of Council Tax queries resolved at One Stop Shop	85.3 %	86 %	80.9 %	
LOCAL 2010f	% of Housing Benefit queries resolved at One Stop Shop	60.8 %	65 %	56.3 %	On going training
LOCAL 2010g	% of Regeneration queries resolved at One Stop Shop	95.6 %	97.5 %	100 %	on target
LOCAL 2010h	% of Social Service queries resolved at One Stop Shop	97.5 %	98 %	98.1 %	Achieved
LOCAL 2010i	% of Wirral Homes queries resolved at One Stop Shop	95.6 %	96 %	95.7 %	On target
LOCAL 2016a	% of calls answered through the call centre (Social Services Central Advice + Duty Team, Street Scene, Information + Advice Team)	90.3 %	95 %	81.8 %	The Streetscene team commenced support with calls relating to the golf Open championship on 15/6/06.
LOCAL 2016b	Average speed of answering telephone calls to call centre (seconds) (Social Services Central Advice + Duty Team, Street Scene, Information + Advice Team)	28.6	28	39	
LOCAL 2016d	% of calls answered through call centre (Revenues + Benefits)	77 %	95 %	65.3 %	Answer rates have improved slightly but call volumes are being affected by work outstanding in the Revenues and Benefits teams which results in the Call Centre receiving a higher number of repeat callers
LOCAL 2016e	Average speed of answering telephone calls to call centre (seconds) (Revenues + Benefits)	71	30	153	
LOCAL 2016f	Average call handling time in minutes (Social services advice and duty team, Streetscene, Information and advice team)	6.52	6.4	6.25	Call duration has increased with regard to the Information and Advice team this month which reflects the increase in the requests for Pest Control appointments (seasonal)
LOCAL 2016g	Average call handling times - minutes (Revenues and Benefits)	8.30	8.00	9.18	

CORPORATE OBJECTIVE: MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF WIRRAL

PI Number	Title	2005/2006 Actual	2006/2007 Target	2006/2007 Estimate 1st Quarter	Comments / Reason for Deterioration
BVPI 78a	Speed of processing: Average time for processing new claims.	25.1	25	24.20	
BVPI 78b	Speed of processing: Average time for processing notifications of changes of circumstance.	8.97	10	10.64	
BVPI 79a	Accuracy of processing: % of cases for which the calculation of the amount of benefit due was correct on the basis of the information available for the decision for a sample of cases checked post-decision	97.60 %	98 %	96.8 %	
BVPI 79b(i)	The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments (HB) recovered during the period being reported on as a percentage of all HB deemed recoverable overpayments during that period	64.22 %	65 %	68.8 %	
BVPI 79b(ii)	HB overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period	25.18 %	30 %	7.41 %	
BVPI 79b(iii)	Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the period, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period	11.21 %	5 %	21.6 %	