



Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| Date: | Tuesday, 12 July 2011 |
| Time: | 6.15 pm |
| Venue: | Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall |

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SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

9. **BENEFITS ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 1 - 10)**

10. **CUSTOMER SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 11 - 32)**

17. **THE PEOPLE STRATEGY 2010 - 2013: 2010/2011 ACHIEVEMENTS
(Pages 33 - 38)**

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JULY 2011

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| SUBJECT: | HOUSING & COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11 |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | ALL |
| REPORT OF: | <i>DIRECTOR OF FINANCE</i> |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | <i>COUNCILLOR STEVE FOULKES</i> |
| KEY DECISION? | NO |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates Members on developments within the Benefits Service over the last year.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. That the report be noted.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members are aware of the work being undertaken within Housing and Council Tax Benefits.

4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Traditionally the Benefits Service has administered approximately 37,000 live claims for Housing Benefits and Council Tax Benefits (HB/CTB). However in line with the economic recession the significant shift in claimant activity, previously reported, continues, resulting in a steadily increasing caseload. The total live claim count at May 2011 was 41,244 compared to a count of 39,332 for May 2009.
- 4.2 The cost of the service in terms of the payment of benefits and administration has increased. Payments made in respect of 2009/2010 totalled £151,636,296. Payments for 2010/2011 totalled £156,326,042 against an initial estimate of £154,979,207. For 2011/2012 the basis for the final payment estimate differs slightly given the April 2011 Local Housing Allowance (LHA) changes and associated Transitional Protection which is likely to inflate total spend. For this reason provision has been made within the estimates submitted to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for payments of £162,509,131. This is consistent with the increased cost of LHA compared to the original Housing Benefit schemes.

4.3 The year on year reduction in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administration grant has been negated, annually, to some extent by the additional grant released in respect of 'recession funding' in recognition of the additional workload driven by the recession. For 2010/2011 the service received £3,303,437 by way of administration grant funding with an additional £113,000 in respect of continued economic downturn impacts. The DWP has advised that additional payment will again be made in respect of 2011/12. Funding beyond 2011/12 is linked to the administration position of HB/CTB services and Universal Credit.

4.4 With a current live caseload of 41,244 claims, compared to 39,332 two years ago the volumes in terms of claims, changes of circumstances and other work/post received are proportionally higher. The workload and administration is also impacted upon by the volumes of 'intentions to claim' and defective claims received, which are not reflected in the increasing live caseload but nevertheless draw on resources. These issues are reflective of the current economic climate.

2010/11

New claims received and total determined – 24,526 (from 20,656)

Change of Circumstances received and actioned – 160,826 (from 114,668)

Post received totalled 297,566 (from 202,615)

4.5 The administrative operation of benefits requires close liaison with other Departments, particularly Adult Social Services, Corporate Services (Housing Options Team) and Legal Services together with a range of third sector partner organisations, Government agencies, including the DWP and the Pension Service, the Police, and landlords from both the social and private sector. The services of the Post Office have also been engaged.

4.6 Strong links in terms of historic and effective working relationships with other local authorities such as the Wirral hosted Merseyside Benefits Forum continue to inform and assist, together with a more recent engagement with Cheshire West and Chester Council. This is expected to develop over coming months, to mutual benefit as managers mirror the long established practices of the Merseyside group. The service continues to produce benefits literature on behalf of two Merseyside consortium members. The service is supported by the customer service staff through the network of One Stop Shops and the Call Centre. Additionally, Benefits visiting staff equipped with mobile technology support service delivery, ensuring accessibility to those who are unable to visit the offices or otherwise avail themselves of the service, whilst e-access channels are continually under development to ensure that all access channels are available and optimised through a rolling programme of development.

PERFORMANCE

- 4.7 Given the ongoing increase in service demand and customer expectation, together with the significant preparation required for the live implementation of the April 2011 LHA changes, the ability to respond to customer need has been excellent with processing times and 'work on the shelf' being consistently reflective of this. This is despite the Voluntary Severance and EVR process which began to impact in terms of resource reduction from December 2010. During 2010/2011 Wirral commenced working with the DWP Performance Development Team (PDT) to further smarten working practices in accordance with "Lean" principles. This is one of the measures employed to mitigate the risk to the service through loss of resources.
- 4.8 Key activity areas for the service comprise claims processing and administering the many changes that occur during the life of a claim, including the increasingly significant Discretionary Housing Payment Fund, the Appeals administrative process and, to ensure minimal income loss, the robust recovery of overpaid HB. These core functions parallel optimising benefit take-up and maximisation for those already claiming, support the anti – poverty work, and secure the gateway to benefit by minimising the risk of loss through fraud and error.
- 4.9 Historically the service area has been closely scrutinised by the Audit Commission through a number of national best value performance indicators. As reported in June 2010, the DWP embarked on a review of these measures. In October 2010 they announced an intention to introduce new measures effectively from April 2011. Since that time the DWP has advised a need to delay the review and the service continues to report at a national level against one key national indicator (NI):-
- NI 181 – 'Right time indicator' (new claims and change in circumstances) – 2010/11 – estimated out turn (to be confirmed by DWP) 12 days (target 16 days)
- 4.10 In considering performance outcomes it is important to acknowledge the need for high levels of accuracy, not only to ensure the right benefit is paid to the right people but also to ensure loss through any subsidy grant adjustments is minimal. Robust performance monitoring procedures focus closely on accuracy and quality. A current average of over 96% accuracy for 2010/2011 has been recorded which exceeds historical national standards.
- 4.11 Grant loss through the annual grant claim audit has been reduced year on year with amounts foregone through identified error now negligible. For 2009/10, the most recently concluded claim, only £637 was recovered through the DWP 'claw back' process, against a £151,000,000 claim.

- 4.12 Whilst the DWP continues with an apparent 'light touch' in terms of national indicator requirements, performance management within the service remains strong and includes continued adoption of the former key BVPI's for local management and administration monitoring purposes together with the monitoring work and associated evaluation undertaken by service managers and the Quality Assurance team. Performance monitoring and service development work is also supported by the annual round of Internal Audit inspections.
- 4.13 It is crucial that Wirral continues to dedicate sufficient skilled resources to the prevention and detection of fraud. The Benefits Investigation Team is now well established and works closely with local partner agencies such as the DWP and the Police. In doing so many positive outcomes have been secured, with several high profile and high value fraudulent claims being exposed and appropriate sanctions successfully administered.
- 4.14 Such is the wider interest in this area of the service that a Wirral case featured on national television in early 2011. The BBC programme 'Saints and Scroungers' broadcast the case of a Wirral man who wrongly claimed in excess of £118,000 in benefits, the prosecution resulting in a prison sentence.
- 4.15 During 2010/11 the Fraud Investigation Team:
- considered 1859 referrals (2,178 during 2009/10)
 - investigated 755 cases (789 during 2009/10)
 - administered 111 sanctions including 30 successful prosecutions (158 sanctions and 19 prosecutions in 2009/10)
- 4.16 During 2010/2011 the team focused on higher level fraud which led to more complex investigations and resulted in an increase in the level of prosecution cases. The amount of fraud overpayments raised in 2010/2011 equated to £192,390.25. Data received from the Audit Commission in January 2011, which continues to be worked on has to date resulted in an additional 187 cases being identified for investigation with a corresponding total of £48,732.95 overpaid benefit cumulatively accruing to date. As such, whilst the overall number of sanctions secured is lower, the cases concerned in the majority of instances were of a higher value in terms of benefit fraudulently claimed and significantly more time consuming to investigate. In essence the 'intention' to deceive has been more sophisticated and/or over a longer duration.

- 4.17 Other key service areas which support the overall claims administration processes include the Appeals and Debt Recovery Teams, the Supported Accommodation Team and Revenues and Benefits Training and Development Team, the Quality Assurance Team and Income (Subsidy/Grant) Maximisation Team. A Landlord Liaison Team has been established for several years offering a dedicated service to both private sector and social sector landlords. Relationships with landlords are excellent linked to the development of this team. Landlords routinely cite the Wirral Benefits Service as the best on Merseyside, significantly commenting upon the level of engagement with officers. These areas continue to develop in terms of good practice and procedures in response to service need. During 2010/11 it is significant to note the continually expanding need for management information.
- 4.18 Take-up and benefit maximisation work continues, this being supplemented by careful administration of the Discretionary Housing Payment Fund. In turn this work continues to support the wider Financial Inclusion programme and additionally complements the work of other agencies offering short and longer term financial respite.
- 4.19 The need for customer and stakeholder awareness of the welfare reform programme and the more immediate and important changes likely to affect them with the introduction of the April 2011 LHA changes, was widely publicised during 2010/11, through all channels and with officers attending stakeholder events such as the Private Landlord Forum, the now annual, Merseyside Landlord Expo event and Homelessness Forums. HB/CTB is consistently of significant and increasing interest at such events.
- 4.20 Data Sharing increasingly plays a role across the service, and it is noticeable that requests through the Merseyside Police 'PACT' team and the Border Agency are increasing. Such engagement requires diligence and strict control together with a clear understanding of data sharing protocol. The Benefits Fraud Investigation Team processes all such requests for the Division. Work with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) in active support of their Operation Goldmine which seeks to identify those at most risk of harm through fire also continues as does work with the Pension Service to ensure that those who are not claiming are given the opportunity.
- 4.21 The future of the service directly corresponds to the planned national reform of benefits and introduction of Universal Credit. In the immediate and shorter/mid term the April 2011 changes to LHA and those planned for 2012/13 will influence practices and procedures. The customer and stakeholder response is difficult to gauge or quantify as the true impact of the changes is masked by the current Transitional Protection scheme.
- 4.22 On 16 March 2011 (minute 138) I reported the detail of the current and short term changes, together with an overview of the longer term reform to this Committee.

4.23 During 2010/11 the service continued to develop and expand in several areas, embarking on new and potentially diverse initiatives including:-

- Collaborative Working – The benefits processing resilience initiative established together with Knowsley Council continued to be developed in a live environment during 2010/11 with pleasing results in terms of IT and staff aptitude to undertaking the working practices of the another local authority.
- Post Office Payout – In January 2011 payment of LHA, for those claimants who do not have and cannot secure a bank account was enabled through the Post Office Payout scheme. Wirral is the first Benefits Service to use the scheme and by doing so should ensure that some of the most vulnerable claimant groups realise their full benefit entitlement. This engagement also further reduced the need to produce cheques which had to be reintroduced in order to pay those claimants without a bank account under LHA and where it was not appropriate to pay the landlord directly. I reported this to Cabinet on 3 February 2011 (minute 309)
- 'Lean' review of the Benefits Service – for several months, in collaboration with the DWP Performance Development Team, a dedicated group of officers has been involved in a comprehensive review of working practices. Through eradication of any unnecessary processes, maximisation of front of house resources, improved use of IT and refined procedures it is anticipated that customer experience will be further enhanced, the service better able to demonstrate value for money and all important service continuity, despite significant resource loss delivered through the EVR/ Severance programme.
- Benefits Project – With direct links to the Lean review project, the service is scheduled to deliver significant revenue budget savings. Over a three year period £2.4m will be realised. This project forms part of the Strategic Change Programme.
- Education Welfare Benefits – Free School Meals Service (FSM) – As part of the reconciliation of financial assessment areas and in response to the loss of dedicated resources through the EVR/Severance process, officers, in conjunction with the Customer Service Development Team, embarked on a review of the FSM service. The project concluded with the live transfer of the process into the core benefits processing system, Capita Academy at the end of June 2011. The administration of the scheme will run alongside the administration of HB/CTB/LHA and over the coming months will be further enhanced and developed as 'self service' is introduced and management information is used increasingly to inform and assist the schools administration and budgetary process. Targeted take –up initiatives will feature consistently to ensure that all those who are entitled to this service benefit at the earliest possible opportunity.

- LHA reform and April 2011 changes – final legislative detail and core guidance was not made available by the DWP until late in the year. Just weeks before the changes became effective a Transitional Protection Scheme was announced. As such the lead in and preparation for such a significant change process was both ambiguous and difficult to address. Officers worked hard with systems, process reviews and stakeholders to ensure a smooth transition and, significantly, a transparent process, particularly focusing on raising awareness amongst those who have or will be negatively affected by the changes to entitlement. This continues as the reform process is in essence incremental as a result of two recently agreed national reviews.
- Discretionary Housing Payments - Linking to the April 2011 and longer term reform, this is under scrutiny to ensure, as far as is it reasonably possible to do so, that it is used to support those most in need and who are hardest hit by the change regime. It is expected that pressure will increase on the fund as shortfalls between liability and entitlement increase, or claimants are otherwise affected by the economic position. The decisions of officers are therefore likely to be under significant scrutiny.
- Fast Track - There was a re-launch of the original 'speed claim' service. Take-up has increased incrementally and for those who are able to provide all the necessary evidence and information together with their initial claim it is proving to be a good customer service product. Landlords are particularly supportive as they play an important role in encouraging tenants to take ownership of their claim in return for an enhanced level of service.
- One Strike - 2010/11 brought about the introduction of the DWP 'One Strike' penalty which results in a four week, 20% reduction to ongoing HB/CTB where the claim is not passported. Ultimately it is expected that every sanctionable, standard claim will result in a one strike penalty. My Investigation officers instruct the DWP where they believe it is appropriate for such action to be given further consideration.
- Tell us Once - The service is linked to the bereavement reporting process meaning that such a significant and difficult change does not need to be reported to the Authority or other agencies more than once. This sits within the overall local service administration ethos of, where at all possible, reducing duplication in customer contact.

- 4.24 The Service has not recruited since the Kick-Start programme during 2008/2009 as the previously planned programme of recruitment for 2009/2010 did not go ahead. Whilst exercises and projects are in place, such as the Lean review coupled with close monitoring of progress continuing to help ensure focus of existing resources, these all serve to help mitigate risk to the service through increasing workloads, and changes in demand on the service.
- 4.25 An initial re-organisation has been concluded and a full review, which will result in an element of restructure and some changes to job roles will shortly commence. It is anticipated that further reviews will be required in response to the ongoing wider reform.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

- 4.26 As ever, claims in respect of Supported Accommodation schemes present significant challenges in terms of legislation and of delivering the service to the satisfaction of claimants, landlords and other stakeholders. Significantly, these claims present officers with both challenges and concerns, primarily around high levels of rent and potential financial impact on the Authority through consequential loss of grant subsidy. Officers have a duty to ensure that those who are the most vulnerable in terms of claimant group are not disadvantaged and are supported appropriately through the HB/LHA scheme. As such, close liaison with colleagues in Adult Social Services, Legal Services and Housing is paramount if the scheme is to be administered, for this client group, on a fair and equitable basis and to bring each case to an acceptable conclusion.

BEST USE OF RESOURCES AND INSPECTION

- 4.27 Managers monitor service delivery, ensuring that staff are equipped to offer the best standard of service delivery through a rolling programme of quality assurance checks and individual staff development strategies. The Wirral Benefits Service does this well but given the pressure from the Government and the increased service demands I have taken steps to ensure that this key management area is robust and fully explored in terms of improvement opportunities.
- 4.28 It is unlikely that the service will be selected for a Key Lines of Enquiry Inspection. The DWP has announced the Local Authorities to be inspected and it is not viewed likely that in the near future the service will be reviewed by the Performance Development Team in their revised inspectorate/support capacity as the DWP has suggested that poorer performing services will be selected in the first instance.

JOB CENTRE PLUS REFORM

- 4.29 Close working with Job Centre Plus is intrinsic to successful service delivery. Regrettably, as previously reported the national restructure of Job Centre Plus has caused problems both regionally and locally. Effectively a re-launch of the Regional Operational Boards has shown limited substantive improvement. However, locally on Wirral excellent joint working is seen by DWP alongside Customer Services with Authority presence at a number of DWP sites and DWP work at a number of One Stop Shops.

5. RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 If the benefits service fails to deliver the required standard of service then the impact will be both on those reliant on these income related benefits as well as impacting on the private and registered social landlord sector in the Borough. Equally, as the benefits service is a statutory service, failure to properly or satisfactorily deliver would also of course have the potential for wider implications.

6. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 None within the context of this report.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation work is undertaken directly by the Housing and Council Tax Benefits staff with a number of key stakeholders such as registered social landlords, private sector landlords as well as with voluntary and community groups in respect of take up work and the impact of benefit changes. This also links to the work undertaken within the customer access strategy.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 9.1 There are none arising out of this report. The changes in grant levels are detailed in the report for information. Any additional staffing requirements will be reported to Employment and Appointments Committee.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required specifically as part of this report. It is appropriate to note that all new initiatives, projects/pilots and any significant change in procedure are equality impact assessed in accordance with corporate requirements.

12. CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None.

13. PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 None.

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FNCE/159/11

APPENDICES

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| Council Excellence | 8 July 2010 |
| Council Excellence | 16 September 2009 |

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JULY 2011

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| SUBJECT: | CUSTOMER SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2010-11 |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | <i>ALL</i> |
| REPORT OF: | <i>DIRECTOR OF FINANCE</i> |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | <i>COUNCILLOR JEAN STAPLETON</i> |
| KEY DECISION? | NO |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the Customer Services Annual Report for 2010-11. Customer Services is at core of the Council priorities as outlined in the corporate plan. The work of the Customer Services Teams is to implement the customer access strategy. Financial savings may be achieved by more services being available online and by the rationalisation/merger of services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That Members are aware of the work being undertaken within Customer Services.

4. BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Customer Services Teams support officers by working to ensure that the main access channels, the Call Centre, the One Stop Shops and the web, provide up to date responsive advice with an ability to resolve many enquiries at first point of contact. In November 2010 the Library Service joined the Finance Department and its role will be key in extending and improving customer services both in that service and in the help it can give to services throughout the Authority and to other organisations as part of a fully co-ordinated customer contact service.

- 4.2 The Customer Services Teams now consist of staff who work in the Call Centre, Libraries and One Stop Shops, the web services manager and the Customer Service Development Team (CSDT). CSDT work with the contact points and departments to help ensure that services are delivered in an efficient and responsive manner. CSDT also looks at the feedback received from customers and uses it to improve and develop services where appropriate. The role of all staff is to reach out to those people who do not access our services and to work together with communities to ensure customer need is met.

LIBRARIES AND ONE STOP SHOP SHOPS MERGER

- 4.3. Staff within the Library and One Stop Shop service are working towards achieving the Council Minute (248) 9 December 2010; *'Cabinet instructs the Director of Finance to bring forward and implement proposals to integrate the One Stop Shop service within Libraries including the co – location of facilities where practicable. Libraries and One Stop Shops are to be managed as one seamless information service with staff interchangeable between both functions.'*
- 4.4. A new staffing structure is being developed and is subject to consultation with staff representatives. The restructure includes the creation of generic customer service assistants who combine the Library assistant and One Stop Shop reception roles. The rest of the staff in both the Library and One Stop Shop areas will support this generic work. Many will have the ability to provide a comprehensive response across a wide range of enquiries although there will remain a number of key specialist posts in both services.
- 4.5. The service will be delivered in as open an environment as possible with single counters wherever possible with space for private discussions with customers where needed, as is the traditional model for one stop shops. This change will not diminish the specialist Library and One Stop services. Cross skill training of both Library and One Stop Shop work is crucial and dedicated training staff will deliver a training programme to ensure this.
- 4.6. This is a significant change for both services but should be successful. We will pilot the merged services at two sites - Eastham and Heswall. This will give us an opportunity to ensure we have the correct staffing levels and that the staff are supported by the right systems to deliver information and advice across these two services. We may trial different opening hours, which we believe will be more responsive to customer demand. Overall there will be an increase in Library opening hours. We will learn from the pilot sites, evaluate the service provided, and amend as required for roll out to other Libraries and One Stop Shops.

- 4.7. The Council has approved capital funding for development of merged facilities at both Rock Ferry and Bebington. Work at Rock Ferry will result in one entrance opening into an integrated facility. The building works at Bebington will be more extensive, but will result in a co-located service. Once the pilots are evaluated a roll out programme will be delivered across the Library and One Stop Shop network.
- 4.8. CSDT is working closely with the Library service to look at how they can support staff to deliver services with the reduction in staffing numbers, advances in technology and building restructuring. Their work includes:
- Web development - the Library website will now be part of the Council website, developed in such a style to ensure no loss of access
 - Reference Library - staff are being supported to allow this specialist area to be widened and increase accessibility whilst also considering which areas can be cross supported with the Archive Service
 - Bibliographical service - the staff here are working with customer services development team to review and streamline processes.
- 4.9. The co-location of Libraries and One Stop Shops will improve accessibility to all Council services for customers, with the provision of both services in one facility. It offers savings in terms of building rationalisation. There will be opportunities throughout the structure for staff from both Libraries and One Stop Shops to learn more skills for career development. Crucially there will be no detriment to the current provision of the Library service and range of Library activities. Likewise within the One Stop Shops, the restructure is planned to deliver an enhancement to current provision.

CALL CENTRE AND ONE STOP SHOP PERFORMANCE

- 4.10. The Call Centre and One Stop Shops continue to monitor performance and key element's of this information are detailed below.

- a. Call Centre Performance:

| Total Calls offered: | | Percentage of calls handled: (Target 95% not to fall below 90%) | |
|----------------------|---------|--|-----|
| 2009/10 | 813,837 | 2009/10 | 92% |
| 2010/11 | 796,372 | 2010/11 | 95% |

| Emails received | |
|-----------------|--------|
| 2009/10 | 11,123 |
| 2010/11 | 11,801 |

The Call Centre has taken responsibility for handling calls for a number of new services in 2010-11. These include Sports and Leisure Centre bookings, Parks and Countryside enquiries and initial enquiries from customers interested in becoming Foster Carers. The Sports and Leisure centre enquiries have generated a significant number of additional calls with 50,294 being handled between September 2010 and May 2011. Short term call handling support has also been provided by the Call Centre to assist Electoral Registration during the Local and General Elections in April/May 2010 and the Pension Fund, following the issue of the annual pension statements in December 2010.

The 2010/11 figure for calls handled shows an improvement of 2.9% in comparison to 2009/10.

Performance was again affected this year during the period of adverse weather conditions in December 2010 and January 2011. This prompted a surge of calls from customers enquiring about refuse/recycling collections and highway maintenance issues. The increase in calls was managed by providing updated information to the customer via the telephony messaging facility and the website. Our generically trained staff also assisted with call handling in this service area when required.

The workforce management system implemented within the Call Centre in September 2009 has contributed to the improvement in the percentage of calls handled and allowed the effective management of the staff resources.

b. One Stop Shops performance:

April 2010 to June 2010.

| One Stop Shop | Total Customers | Total Enquiries | Average Waiting Time (minutes) |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Bebington | 4022 | 4844 | 6.5 |
| Birkenhead (Conway) | 17452 | 20681 | 10 |
| Bromborough | 465 | 633 | 1 |
| Eastham | 2313 | 2850 | 4.2 |
| Heswall | 2273 | 2633 | 4.7 |
| Hoylake | 134 | 154 | 1 |
| Liscard | 2681 | 3046 | 13 |
| Moreton | 6303 | 7530 | 5.1 |
| New Brighton | 1956 | 2051 | 13 |
| Rock Ferry | 6544 | 7235 | 3 |
| Seacombe | 6697 | 7467 | 7.3 |
| Upton | 367 | 495 | 1 |
| West Kirby | 3146 | 3488 | 1.3 |
| Totals | 54353 | 63107 | |

July 2010 to September 2010

| One Stop Shop | Total Customers | Total Enquiries | Average Waiting Time (minutes) |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Bebington | 4112 | 4858 | 5.5 |
| Birkenhead (Conway) | 18743 | 22079 | 10 |
| Bromborough | 466 | 610 | 1 |
| Eastham | 2236 | 2741 | 3.6 |
| Heswall | 2339 | 2763 | 4.1 |
| Hoylake | 134 | 150 | 1 |
| Liscard | 2896 | 3295 | 10 |
| Moreton | 6438 | 8107 | 2.8 |
| New Brighton | 1715 | 1790 | 10 |
| Rock Ferry | 7413 | 8308 | 3 |
| Seacombe | 6764 | 7694 | 8.3 |
| Upton | 346 | 474 | 1 |
| West Kirby | 3137 | 3472 | 1.5 |
| Totals | 56739 | 66341 | |

October 2010 to December 2010

| One Stop Shop | Total Customers | Total Enquiries | Average Waiting Time (minutes) |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Bebington | 3426 | 4058 | 6.5 |
| Birkenhead (Conway) | 15960 | 18525 | 11 |
| Bromborough | 419 | 561 | 1 |
| Eastham | 1983 | 2410 | 3.8 |
| Heswall | 2150 | 2480 | 5.6 |
| Hoylake | 137 | 166 | 1 |
| Liscard | 2623 | 3039 | 11.2 |
| Moreton | 5526 | 8268 | 3 |
| New Brighton | 1490 | 1585 | 11.2 |
| Rock Ferry | 6575 | 7060 | 3.1 |
| Seacombe | 6265 | 6796 | 6.7 |
| Upton | 336 | 513 | 1 |
| West Kirby | 2997 | 3272 | 1.7 |
| Totals | 49887 | 58733 | |

January 2011 to March 2011

| One Stop Shop | Total Customers | Total Enquiries | Average Waiting Time (minutes) |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Bebington | 3614 | 4414 | 6.6 |
| Birkenhead (Conway) | 16715 | 19890 | 11 |
| Bromborough | 440 | 557 | 1 |
| Eastham | 2188 | 2629 | 4.3 |
| Heswall | 2013 | 2340 | 4.5 |
| Hoylake | 77 | 86 | 1 |
| Liscard | 2970 | 3449 | 15.1 |
| Moreton | 5858 | 7553 | 4.4 |
| New Brighton | 1868 | 1951 | 15.1 |
| Rock Ferry | 7415 | 8244 | 3.3 |
| Seacombe | 6943 | 7979 | 10.7 |
| Upton | 335 | 444 | 1 |
| West Kirby | 2690 | 3048 | 1.3 |
| Totals | 53126 | 62584 | |

Below is information on the first two months performance in 2011/12

April 2011 to May 2011

| One Stop Shop | Total Customers | Total Enquiries | Average Waiting Time (minutes) |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Bebington | 2296 | 2807 | 8.3 |
| Birkenhead (Conway) | 10905 | 13335 | 10.4 |
| Bromborough | 231 | 307 | 1 |
| Eastham | 1557 | 1893 | 5.3 |
| Heswall | 1417 | 1662 | 5.2 |
| Hoylake | 57 | 66 | 1 |
| Liscard | 1583 | 1964 | 13 |
| Moreton | 3587 | 4589 | 4.4 |
| New Brighton | 1127 | 1371 | 1.5 |
| Rock Ferry | 4348 | 5059 | 4 |
| Seacombe | 4765 | 5767 | 8 |
| Upton | 243 | 322 | 1 |
| West Kirby | 1726 | 2037 | 1.5 |
| Totals | 33842 | 41179 | |

The top ten customer requests at One Stop Shops

| Service Area | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | +/- % |
|--|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Housing Benefit | 92,777 | 89,345 | -3.7% |
| Wirral Homes | 33,107 | 38,336 | +15.8% |
| Council Tax | 39,134 | 32,577 | - 20% |
| Adult Social Services | 21,646 | 22,356 | + 3.2% |
| Children and Young People | 11,464 | 11,486 | - |
| Wirral Partnership Homes | 10,083 | 8,817 | -14.4% |
| Consumer Advice, Environmental Health, Pest Control, Licensing | 7,823 | 7,770 | - 0.6% |
| Technical Services | 8,164 | 7,929 | - 2.88% |
| Homeless | 5,728 | 7,328 | + 27.6% |
| Non Council Enquiries | 14,567 | 14,851 | + 1.95% |

Resolution rates within the One Stop Shops

| Service Area | 2009/10 | 2010/11 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Housing Benefit | 73.1% | 76.2% |
| Council Tax | 87.4% | 88.5% |
| Children and Young People | 99.1% | 99% |
| Adult Social Services | 98.0% | 98.7% |
| Wirral Homes | 98.3% | 97.8% |
| Wirral Partnership Homes | 96.6% | 98.6% |
| Consumer Advice, Environmental Health, Pest Control, Licensing | 96.0% | 98.1% |

WEB

- 4.11. The current website was launched on 18 May 2010 to a very positive response, and since that date we have experienced an 18.5% increase in visitors to the site from the previous year, which has exceeded our target increase of 10%. Most recent visitor figures (May 2011) indicate that we attract over 158,000 visitors per month generating up to 755,000 hits.
- 4.12. The site is being continuously developed, most of which is in response to the daily feedback we receive from our customers who have embraced the “rate this page” facility with enthusiasm.
- 4.13. In the 2011 SOCITM Better Connected report, Wirral maintained a two star website in a review that is acknowledged as being more demanding year on year. Many positive things were mentioned in this report plus a number of recommendations around the transactional elements of the site. A number of these have already been put in place and the next to be addressed is the redesign of the homepage to increase the “push” of customers to online services which should be live by the end of summer 2011.

- 4.14. In line with the ambition to consult more with customers and have more transparent processes, an E-petitions system has been launched. This service is still in the early stages but a number of petitions have already been submitted and in some cases attracted a strong following.
- 4.15. Teen Wirral (www.teenwirral.com), the new website for 13 to 19 year olds was launched at the end of summer 2010 and contains information about activities and advice for young people. Evidence shows that how young people spend their leisure-time really matters, and taking part in constructive leisure-time activities through teenage years has a number of benefits. It can help to improve attitudes to school; build social, emotional and communication skills; help young people avoid taking risks such as experimenting with drugs or becoming involved in gangs; and improve their confidence and self-esteem. Local authorities have a duty to publicise positive activities, and a website is the most relevant way of communicating with young people.
- 4.16. A new Intranet homepage has been developed in the highly regarded, and increasingly used, opensource free software Drupal. This helps to improve communication to staff and has also put a template in place for further information areas such as information security, training and development. This homepage and use of Drupal will pave the way for integrations into Electronic Document Management Systems and a new integrated intranet.
- 4.17. The Web Manager was invited by SOCITM to present the use of Drupal Opensource software to Bath and North East Somerset Council. Drupal is now the SOCITM web creation software of choice and a number of councils have developed sites with the software. Thus far five councils have been in touch with Wirral for best practice advice.
- 4.18. The Library website will be integrated into the Council website by the end of July 2011; a new design has been put in place that will also be adopted across the rest of the website. This design is felt to be eye catching and intuitive with a far greater emphasis on self service and online tools.
- 4.19. A number of future developments are being assessed for suitability such as the use of mobile Apps to give greater and more efficient access to services. Video could provide an alternative way for advice and information to be distributed in a clearer and more accessible manner, with greater analysis of how successful a customer's journey has been through the web site, and an emphasis on guiding the customer to the correct online service as efficiently as possible. The Intranet and Extranet will be developed in future strategies and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) will have a greater part to play in identifying what services and amenities are available to customers within their local area.

Online Forms

- 4.20 As part of our ongoing commitment to producing a 24 x 7 self serve portal, we have developed over 20 forms that integrate seamlessly into the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). These forms have been thoroughly tested and have seen positive take up with customers. A development programme is in place which is used to select the next batch of forms for development, batches being selected based upon complexity and potential volume of usage.
- 4.21 An “online forms” product has also been procured that is hosted by the Customer Services Development Team. This product allows rapid production of the simpler forms in conjunction with the business owner and is also used to “pilot” forms before they are handed over to IT Services for development into CRM integrated forms.
- 4.22. As more forms come online, feedback builds up to enable the forms to be fine tuned to ensure the customer finds them easy and straight forward to complete.
- 4.23 The online forms that currently integrate into CRM can be tracked by the customer. The customer can track their service request via the web to see if their enquiry is still being progressed (Open) or completed (Closed).

Customer Service Toolkit

- 4.24. A Customer Services Toolkit (CST) has been developed that sits on the Intranet and allows front of house staff to view procedures that cover the vast majority of questions that they are asked by customers.
- 4.25. This has been met with great enthusiasm by the staff and has been an invaluable training tool allowing consistency within communications and training procedures.
- 4.26. The CST receives continuous feedback via a “rate this page” mechanism, which allows staff to leave comments on each webpage which the training staff can then act upon to improve the service.
- 4.27 Work is continuing on the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) and other component parts which make up the customer tracking system to improve the look, feel and functionality so that it is more user friendly.

- 4.28 Customer Services, the Web Manager and IT Services are working to develop and test on-line forms which will integrate to the Oracle CRM system. The integrated on-line forms allow customers to log a request for a service on the website which will automatically generate the correct tasks. Some of the services are delivered by external contractors, but the Council maintains a view of the requests being logged. These on-line forms are primarily in the Streetscene areas, but use is being extended.
- 4.29 We have worked closely with a specialist contractor to further develop the CRM functionality which has successfully streamlined the delivery of responses to replacement bin requests. This has allowed us to replace over 27 different system processes with just one, This change reduced expenditure by £75,000 whilst also reducing training requirements, the potential for errors, and allowed more effective charging for replacement bins.

Streetscene

- 4.30 Work has continued to move all Streetscene services to a consistent delivery using the CRM. Statistical reports were also developed to enable Managers to monitor the performance within their areas against their targets.
- 4.31 The Highways Maintenance functionality and reports were amended in CRM to reflect Colas requirements and to allow effective monitoring of the contract.
- 4.32 The CRM was developed to support the transfer of parks and open spaces to the Department of Technical Services so that customer contact data could be captured to inform the development of the contract.

Projects in other Service Areas

- 4.33 The CRM was developed to support the Dog Fouling taskforce initiative. A web form was developed for customers to report Dog Fouling issues. The web form integrates directly into the CRM.
- 4.34. The Housing Options service was reviewed, re-engineered and scripted for delivery by customer service advisors. The service is now delivered in all One Stop Shops and only emergency cases are referred directly to specialists in the service area. Text messages are used to remind customers of their appointments.
- 4.35. In September 2010 all telephone calls relating to leisure services were transferred to the Call Centre which now handles leisure bookings and general enquiries relating to leisure services.

- 4.36. Due to significant staffing reductions in the Business Rates Section, the service has been reviewed to determine which customer contacts can be handled by the Call Centre. Accounts Receivable staff numbers have also been reduced as part of the EVR/Severance scheme, and therefore the service has been re-designed for delivery by customer service advisors in the Call Centre.
- 4.37 Cabinet on 14 October 2010 (minute 182) '*agreed the transfer of the management of the financial functions in respect of Accountancy, Purchasing and Contracts and Income*'. Following the transfer of the Personal Finance Unit from DASS into the Finance Department in March 2011, processes have been reviewed and a specification developed to implement a document management system, which will facilitate service delivery by Call Centre and One Stop Shop staff.
- 4.38 Work has taken place with the Change Programme Team on the fostering campaign with the customer services development team developing an on-line form to allow expressions of interest to be registered on-line, as well as via the Call Centre and One Stop Shops. This also provides statistical data for the service area and for Press & PR.
- 4.39 We have seen an increased number of service areas requesting statistical information with regard to customer contacts, for example, expressions of interest in the Home Insulation Campaign.
- 4.40 Business analysis has been carried out, options put forward and recommendations provided in Housing Benefit Overpayments, Licensing and Freedom of Information requests. We have also supported staff from Corporate Services in the development of a Financial Inclusion Strategy and Plan.
- 4.41 Channel migration forms part of the customer access work programme with a focus on developing and promoting lower cost access channels capable of supporting transactional self-service where appropriate.

PCIDSS Compliance

- 4.42 The Payment Card Industry, Data Security Standards (PCIDSS) has established a single set of standards which are designed to protect against payment card fraud or identity theft. These requirements state that no sensitive authentication data may be stored once a transaction has been authorised. This directive applies to all call centres which use call recording equipment.
- 4.43 As a result of this, the Finance Department has reviewed the procedures currently in place when taking debit / credit card payments for Council services. In order to ensure compliance, I commissioned a PCI consultant who identified that the current call recording technology used within the Call Centre would be non compliant.

- 4.44 As a result, new software has been purchased which omits the recording of the customer's financial details whilst still recording a call. This allows call recording to be maintained whilst excluding data that is non-compliant.

Digital Signage-Customer Information Plasma Screens

- 4.45 In line with Cabinet minute 327 (21 February 2011) we are currently extending the network of Customer Information screens. All One Stop Shops are already equipped to deliver electronic customer information quickly and efficiently via a network of information screens. The system is centrally co-ordinated through the marketing team and delivers a range of national and local content specifically selected to be of value to our customers. The extension programme will see all Wirral Libraries equipped with the system, greatly increasing our ability to communicate with the public and improving customer outcomes as a result. It is anticipated that the programme will be completed by the end July 2011.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

- 4.46 In the coming months the customer services development team will be focussing on the Library and One Stop Shop integration, with a view to creating efficiencies and enhancing the services available. Future developments will also focus upon:
- The key focus for future service delivery supported by the CRM will be adopting a 'citizen-centric' approach which will enable a complete view of a customer's interactions with the Council over the range of disparate services offered
 - As informed by the Customer Access Strategy (CAS), channel of choice will be offered with an increasing emphasis on the web channel
 - Also in line with the CAS, moving more services to customer access channels supported by the CRM
 - Cabinet on 23 June 2011 agreed to migrate to a later release of the Oracle CRM to maximise available functionality and minimise support costs
 - The intention is to make the CRM supported processes for mediated service (i.e. Call Centre and One Stop Shops) and self-service (i.e. web) as similar as possible for consistent delivery and increased use of self-service
 - Options for service efficiencies using the proven CRM template for mobile working to be explored, supporting agile working
 - Greater use of other tools, as part of a wider service delivery system such as text messaging and on-line forms packages to be considered wherever feasible and proven via a business case

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

- 4.47 Significant work has been carried out in the area of customer insight, using customer feedback from a range of sources and initiatives to inform future service delivery. An action plan has been put together drawing on feedback garnered from Focus Groups/ Forums, Wirral's Future exercise, a mystery shopping exercise and analysis of customer feedback and complaints.
- 4.48. Work is on-going to ensure a consistent approach towards collecting customer feedback and engaging with our customers across Council services:
- Capturing Area Forum feedback in CRM
 - Review of key performance indicators to ensure relevance to the corporate plan
 - Presentation of customer feedback analysis within an updated corporate reporting template
 - Collation of wider customer feedback through all channels (including social networking) to ensure consistency of response and review for organisational learning
- 4.49 Customer Services were involved in the Wirral's Future on street consultation exercise. This was a useful exercise to improve visibility of Council officers to members of the public and to gain some customer feedback on Council services.
- 4.50 The Wirral's Future – your road and neighbourhood survey was dispatched with 144,500 Council Tax bills to all Wirral households in March 2011. There was a focus on Streetscene-related services (93% of all responses received) but the opportunity was also offered for wider comments on Council service provision and encouraging separate expressions of interest in volunteering opportunities such as becoming a school governor. The majority of responses (99%) have been collated in the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- 4.51 Between March 2011 and April 2011 a total of 3123 service requests were raised in CRM, with volumes reducing significantly thereafter (3392 in total). Analysis of the contacts received is summarised as follows:
- Service requests raised related to 51 different service areas, mainly across Streetscene-related provision
 - 18% road defects (e.g. pot holes; manhole covers; subsidence; condition of surface)
 - 13% = pavement defect (e.g. damaged kerbs; raised flags; uneven surface) & dog fouling (e.g. removal or reporting dog owner)

- 7% customer feedback (e.g. complaints; compliments and suggestions across Council services)
- 5% = traffic conditions (e.g. parking; road widening; general traffic issues), street cleansing (e.g. cleansing schedules; broken glass; spillage; litter), parks and countryside (e.g. anti-social behaviour; fly-tipping; grass cutting; litter)
- 4% street lighting (e.g. damage; relocation;)
- By most popular ward:
 - 9% Heswall;
 - = 7% West Kirby and Thurstaston / Bebington;
 - 6.5% Hoylake and Meols;
 - 6% Wallasey;
 - = 5.5% Clatterbridge / Oxton
- 88% of requests received were resolved by the end of May 2011

Mystery Shopping

- 4.52 Mystery Shopping provides a key element of our programme for ongoing improvement. A Mystery Shopping exercise was undertaken from December 2010 to February 2011. Services were assessed on over 60 criteria including quality of service provided, response times and internal and external building maintenance.
- 4.53 The Call Centre and One Stop Shop service was generally rated as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Staff were viewed as friendly and polite, and willing to go the extra step to provide great service. Where knowledge of specific areas was lacking it was found that there was generally good use of the Council website to provide information. Where the posting out of documentation was requested, all relevant documents were received within five working days, and adequate information explaining how to complete them was supplied.
- 4.54 The Library service was rated as either 'Good' or 'Average'. While the resources offered by each Library in terms of book stock and IT vary greatly depending on the size of the Library, overall staff knowledge of services requires some development.

4.55 A number of areas for staff development included:

- More signposting of the Council website as the first port of call for information enquiries and for downloading documents.
- Timescales need to be provided wherever possible and explanations of 'what happens next'.
- Further promotion of other services that might remove the need for customers to repeat visit.

4.56 Key environmental concerns included:

- The external condition of Library buildings was often poor, with a lack of street signage.
- Quiet study areas could often be small and in some cases untidy.
- Leaflet racks were often untidy.
- Accessibility was poor in places, with the smaller Libraries in particular, not offering easy access for disabled users.

Complaints

4.57 Customer feedback incorporates corporate/statutory complaints, Councillor/MP contacts, Ombudsman enquiries and compliments received. The focus for customer feedback is to 'put things right and learn from it' which recognises that complaints specifically should not be dealt with in isolation and instead should be used to inform future improved service delivery.

4.58 During the year there were 6,485 customer feedback contacts recorded, received via e-mail (37%); web (23%), letter (22%); telephone (14%) and in person (4%).

4.59 Feedback was split as follows: councillor/MP contacts (64%); corporate complaints (19%); compliments (11%); statutory complaints (5%) and ombudsman contacts (1%).

4.60 Technical Services experienced the most complaints (54%) with the service delivery issues caused by the adverse weather conditions in December 2010 January 2011 again dominating volumes, a repeat of 2009/10. The Finance Department (18%) and DASS (17%) were the next largest contributors.

4.61 There was a 9% decrease in corporate complaints from the previous year. Overall, 92% of all corporate complaints closed were within the 15 working days target (against 90% in 2009/10 and 87% for 2008/09).

4.62 As a proportion of total corporate complaints received, 8% of complainants expressed dissatisfaction with stage 1 resolution and raised either stage 2 or stage 3 complaints.

- 4.63 Technical Services again dominated the Councillor/MP contact received by the Council, with 82% of total contacts recorded (75% in 2009/10).
- 4.64 In terms of overall response times the average was 14 working days to respond to corporate/statutory complaints, ranging from an average of 9 working days within Technical Services to 31 working days for DASS. Corporately, an average of 6 working days was taken to respond to Councillor/MP contacts (ranging from 5 working days in Technical Services to 25 working days in DASS), which represents no change from 2009/10. Ombudsman contacts were resolved on average within 14 calendar days (ranging from an average of 7 calendar days within Technical Services to 21 calendar days in DASS), compared to a corporate average of 22.7 calendar days in 2009/10.
- 4.65 A total of 345 changes to process/procedure or improvements were made to service delivery as a result of customer feedback received. As a direct result of complaints received, 20% were identified as resulting in some positive change with DASS (44%) and Technical Services (18%) particularly successful at identifying organisational learning.

ASSESSMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES WORK

Customer Service Excellence

- 4.66 The Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Division was assessed against the criteria for the Customer Service Excellence Standard (previously Chartermark) in February 2011. Following this assessment, the Standard was awarded.
- 4.67 The process required the Division to undertake a self assessment against five specific criteria, and compile evidence to support it. In addition, a site visit by the assessor took place in February 2011. Within the final report, the assessor highlights a number of areas of good practice. These include ongoing improvements to the website, the 'Tell Us Once' initiative, partnership working within the One Stop Shops, and implementation of the apprenticeship scheme within customer services, giving staff the opportunity to develop their skills.
- 4.68 In addition, the development of the online Customer Services Toolkit to assist staff in delivering consistent service to the customer and aid communication was highlighted as praiseworthy, as it involved staff views with regard to its content

JOINT WORKING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS & AGENCIES

- 4.69 One Stop Shops continue to work with a considerable number of agencies and organisations. The up to date range of surgeries is available on www.wirral.gov.uk. Working more closely with the Library service will enhance and align partnership work across the Borough.

4.70 Her Majesty's Revenues & Customs (HMRC) is now relocated within the Birkenhead One Stop Shop where they offer face to face service. This is maximising the use of premises, retaining HMRC presence in the Borough and improving access for HMRC customers.

Tell Us Once

4.71 In the spring of 2010 we successfully bid to become a pilot Authority for a new 'Tell Us Once' service being launched by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The service is aimed at customers registering a death, and allows them to notify a number of Local Authority and Government departments of the death whilst verifying that a death certificate has been issued.

4.72 Working with the DWP, Registrars, customer services, and IT staff, have developed a process for collating and transferring required information. The service has been very well received and customer services have had very positive feedback. As a pilot Authority we have also supported regional conferences and hosted regional workshops.

CASHIERS

4.73 Cashiers are based at the Birkenhead One Stop Shop and remain consistently busy; since January 2010 we have processed an increased amount of cash and cheque payments from over 200 internal Wirral establishments.

4.74 All Income now reaches the Financial systems within 3 days, previously the average time for money to be received in the Financial systems was 21 days.

4.75 Amounts received from Wirral Establishments from April 2010 – March 2011 are as follows:

| | Cash Items | Cash Income | Cheque Items | Cheque Income |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| April 09 – March 10 | 2,165 | £1,170,751 | 34,127 | £4,431,840 |
| April 10 - March 11 | 7,867 | £4,473,241 | 31,217 | £4,444,617 |

- 4.76 Cashiers process payments from the One Stop Shops Drop in Boxes within a one day time limit. An overall increase in Income has been received from this source. Amounts received from Drop in Boxes from April 2010 – March 2011 are as follows:

| | Cash | Cheques |
|---------------------|---------|---------------|
| April 09 – March 10 | £102.00 | £2,472,970.00 |
| April 10 – March 11 | £74.00 | £2,622,395.00 |

- 4.77 The counter facility has also seen an overall increase in income and continues to remain consistently busy. The post facility has seen an overall decrease in both income and receipts however duties have increased due to banking of Establishment money.

- 4.78 Amounts from Counter and Postal Income are as follows:

| | Counter receipts | Income | Post receipts | Income |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| April 09 – March 10 | 113,591 | £19,357,035 | 26,722 | £28,108,110 |
| April 10 - March 11 | 109,876 | £24,120,334 | 23,656 | £19,780,033 |

- 4.79 The total income processed through Cashiers is:
 April 09 – March 10 - £47,040,895
 April 10 – March 11 - £43,900,367

- 4.80 Both the G4S Cash collection service and NatWest Banking Services continue to run successfully.

STUDENT SUPPORT

- 4.81 The work of the Student Support Team transferred to the Student Loans Company in February 2011. Staff who worked within this Team were either successfully redeployed or partook of the voluntary severance scheme.

BENCHMARKING

- 4.82 The Call Centre is a member of 'Call North West', a support organisation for Contact Centres across various service sectors based in the North West. Staff from the Call Centre attend good practice meetings which allow open discussion and the opportunity to network with both public and private sector organisations. This has led to beneficial relationships being formed with organisations that face similar issues. Examples of good practice discussed at the forums have been implemented within the Call Centre as new initiatives are developed.
- 4.83 The One Stop Shops are a member of the National One-Stop Shop Benchmarking Group which has been working together since 1999. The group was set up to share knowledge and good practice with colleagues from other local authority One Stop Shops. The Group regularly collects benchmarking data and customer satisfaction levels across member authorities. This enables members to compare their performance with other one-stop shops and allows members to consider adopting the already tried and tested methods of others. The information collected can also be a valuable source of data for use in service reviews and improved service delivery.
- 4.84 Wirral shares with the other authorities the One Stop Shop Customer Satisfaction Statistics. In 2010 this was 95% which compared well to the other 24 members. No Metropolitan Authority recorded a higher return.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- 4.85 In 2010, the Council embarked on a partnership with Wirral Metropolitan College to increase the number of apprenticeships within Wirral Council. This included encouraging current employees to increase their skills, knowledge and qualifications through the opportunity to convert to the apprenticeship framework. Customer Services took an active part in this initiative, and following a series of briefing sessions, 12 customer service advisers enrolled on the scheme. The participants are studying for the NVQ level 3 Diploma in Customer Service and also undertake functional skills study in Mathematics and English. A number of units requiring completion are mandatory but staff also had the opportunity to select optional units. Successful completion of the programme equates to 2 'A' level qualifications.
- 4.86 Senior advisers within the Call Centre are given the opportunity to meet on a regular basis to discuss their role, working practices, and also to highlight improvements or opportunities for change. Meetings are structured and minutes taken with each participant chairing the meeting on a rota basis. This process benefits both the staff concerned in that they can make a positive contribution to the working environment and develop their meeting and negotiation skills and also the management team in that procedural issues can be improved upon speedily, when raised.

- 4.87 Customer Service Advisers in the Information and Advice team within the Call Centre all attended work shadowing sessions at the Leisure Centres following the transfer of telephone enquiries to the Call Centre in September 2010. This exercise has proved to be useful to staff, as they are able to understand the Leisure centre role more clearly.

CONCLUSIONS

- 4.88 Customer services remains central to the business of the Council. The merger of the Libraries and One Stop Shop services will provide improved efficiencies for customers and the Council.
- 4.89 The customer service teams continue to drive service delivery via the most efficient, cost saving access channel. They are however mindful of the need to support the right of customers to access Council services through a variety of means.
- 4.90 Customer feedback and knowledge of how and where our customers live, along with the reasons why some groups do not access services is intrinsic in all the work we do.

5. RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 If Customer Services fail to deliver the required standard of service then the impact will be significant on those reliant on these services as well as impacting on the services themselves in higher cost and less efficiency. Equally, as the Library service is a Statutory Service, failure to properly or satisfactorily deliver would have the potential for wider implications the Authority.

6. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 None within the context of this report.

CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation work undertaken is set out in the report detailing our work with services within and external to the Council and the external bodies, organisations and groups we work with.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 8.1 These groups are consulted as part of the wider Customer Focus work as well as the linkages with the Customer Access Strategy.

9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required specifically as part of this report although one has been developed for the updated Customer Access Strategy and also for the One Stop Shops and the Call Centre.

12. CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None.

13 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None.

FNCE/160/11

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APPENDICES

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY

| Council Meeting | Date |
|--|----------------|
| Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee | 8 July 2010 |

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

12 JULY 2011

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| SUBJECT: | THE PEOPLE STRATEGY 2010-2013: 2010-2011 ACHIEVEMENTS |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | ALL |
| REPORT OF: | DIRECTOR OF HR, LAW AND ASSET MANAGEMENT |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | COUNCILLOR ADRIAN JONES |
| KEY DECISION? | NO |

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the People Strategy achievements for 2010-2011 (Appendix One).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The People Strategy was agreed by Cabinet on 18 March 2010 and by Employment and Appointments Committee on 17 June 2010. The aim of the People Strategy is to ensure that Wirral Council has an effective and productive workforce to meet its current and future objectives.
- 2.2 The principles of the People Strategy are that people who are well led, healthy, motivated and developed, are more likely to deliver effectively.

3. KEY ISSUES

3.1 People Strategy Themes

The Council's strategic people issues are being addresses through focusing our attention and prioritising action within 5 key themes:

1. *Developing and delivering leadership*
2. *Developing our organisation, communication and culture*
3. *Developing skills, capability and capacity to deliver performance*
4. *Delivering performance through an effective management framework and efficient processes*
5. *Delivering our role as a good employer*

The People Strategy themes will be reviewed as part of the 2011-2012 Implementation Plan.

3.2 People Strategy Implementation Plan 2010-2011

3.2.1 The People Strategy is being delivered through the implementation plan 2010-2011. The achievements for 2010-2011 are detailed at Appendix One.

3.3 People Strategy Implementation Plan 2011-2012

3.3.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2011-2014, agreed by Cabinet on 17 March 2011, identified four key themes. Under the fourth theme: "Your Council", the implementation and delivery of the People Strategy is identified as a key objective in ensuring a well led, skilled, committed and flexible workforce.

3.3.2 The People Strategy implementation plan will be reviewed for 2011-2012 and will be presented to the Employment and Appointments Committee in September 2011 for consideration.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 The People Strategy is delivered within existing resources.

5. Staffing implications

5.1 There are no staffing implications

6. Equal opportunities implications

6.1 The specific activities within the People Strategy are included in the ongoing programme of equality impact assessment

7. Community safety implications

7.1 There are no community safety implications.

8. Local Agenda 21 implications

8.1 There are no Local Agenda 21 implications.

9. Planning implications

9.1 There are no planning implications.

10. Anti-poverty implications

10.1 There are no anti-poverty implications.

11. Social inclusion implications

11.1 The people strategy implementation plan identify how projects and activities are directly or indirectly tackling inequalities in Wirral, and outcomes will be monitored.

12. Local Member Support implications

12.1 There are no local Member support implications

13. Background Papers

13.1 There are no background papers for this report

14. Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- i. Note the People Strategy achievements for 2010-2011.

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APPENDICES:

Appendix One: People Strategy Achievements 2010-2011

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|--|-------------------------|
| Employment and Appointments Committee | 23 November 2010 |
| Employment and Appointments Committee | 17 June 2010 |
| Cabinet | 18 March 2010 |

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People Strategy Achievements 2010-2011

People Strategy Themes

Theme 1: Developing and delivering leadership

- i) New Communications Strategy which includes:
 - i. One Brief: communication document which is cascaded throughout the organisation and provide an opportunity for employees to give feedback to The Chief Executive, The Executive Team and Senior Managers.
 - ii. One Council
 - iii. New Senior Manager briefings led by the Chief Executive.
- ii) Proposed Corporate and Leadership behaviours with a proposal for a new performance appraisal process which will include Corporate Values and Behaviours and leadership expectations.
- iii) Updated Leadership Development Programme which includes:
 - i. MBA in Leadership
 - ii. Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) qualifications
 - iii. New Skills for Wirral Managers: a suite of learning and development courses accessible to all managers.

Theme 2: Developing our organisation, communication and culture

- i) New Coaching Programme which is part of an award-winning Coaching Academy programme across Merseyside.
- ii) New Mentoring Programme which is part of the Merseyside Mentoring Scheme.
- iii) New Change Management Training which is targeted to meet the different needs of managers and employees. 366 attendees in 2010-2011.

Theme 3: Developing skills, capability and capacity to deliver performance

- i) New training programmes to respond to the needs of the Strategic Change Programme, including project management and change management.
- ii) Development of a shared virtual space for on-line training: E-nable. On-line courses include Attendance Management, Data protection, Introduction for Local Government and Stress-Buster.
- iii) Development and implementation of a Multi-agency Safeguarding Training Plan.

- iv) One learning and development programme across the Council which has led to a more efficient and effective service.

Theme 4: Delivering performance through an effective management framework and efficient processes

- i) A number of key policies have been updated and agreed including:
 - i. Redeployment and Redundancy (11 November 2010)
 - ii. Restructuring Policy (11 November 2010)
 - iii. Fixed Term Contract (11 November 2010)
 - iv. Transitional Pay Policy (11 November 2010)
 - v. Changes to the Policy on Discretionary Severance Payments (11 November 2010)
 - vi. Safer Recruitment and Employment Policy (23 November 2010)
 - vii. Attendance Management (23 March 2011)
 - viii. Agile Working Policy (27 January 2011)
- ii) Roll out of Selfserve system as part of the Transforming Business Support project introduced to streamline administrative processes across the Council.

Theme 5: Delivering our role as a good employer

- i) New health and well-being strategy including:
 - i. Fit for Wirral framework
 - ii. Workplace Well Being Charter
 - iii. Ongoing health and well being events
- ii) Completed Early Voluntary Retirement/Voluntary Severance exercise with a comprehensive support programme, including a helpdesk, a skills programme, significant redeployment, and change management training and support.
- iii) Improved Apprenticeship Programme, including an increase in the number of Apprentices from 12 to 74 in 2010-2011. The Council received a North West special recognition award to recognise its significant contribution to developing and growing Apprenticeships in the region.
- iv) Established Graduate Programme, developed to provide additional resource in key priority areas across the Council.
- v) Programme of work placement opportunities across the Council.