



**Corporate Services Policy and
Performance Board**

**Tuesday, 5 June 2007 6.30 p.m.
Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David WR'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe (Vice- Chairman)	Labour
Councillor John Bradshaw	Conservative
Councillor Bob Bryant	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Mark Dennett	Labour
Councillor Susan Edge	Labour
Councillor Christopher Inch	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Kath Loftus	Labour
Councillor Paul Nolan	Labour
Councillor Ulfar Norddahl	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Kevan Wainwright	Labour

*Please contact Gill Ferguson on 0151 471 7395 or e-mail
gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Tuesday, 4 September 2007*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. MINUTES	
2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
<p>Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any personal or personal and prejudicial interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached and (subject to certain exceptions in the Code of Conduct for Members) to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on the item.</p>	
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In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 5th June 2007
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Public Question Time
WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 33 (5).

1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(11) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be submitted by 4.00 pm on the day prior to the meeting. At any meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chairperson will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note that public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 5th June 2007
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Executive Board and Executive Sub Minutes
WARD(s): Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Minutes relating to the Corporate Portfolio which have been considered by the Executive Board and Executive Sub since the last meeting of this Board are attached at Appendix 1 (link) for information.
- 1.2 The Minutes are submitted to update the Policy and Performance Board of decisions taken in their area.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the Minutes be noted.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

None.

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

Executive Board – 22nd February 2007

EXB85 BUDGET 2007/08

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Financial Services outlining the budget, capital programme and council tax for 2007/08 to be recommended to Council.

It was noted that, since the report had been written and circulated, the Police Authority and Fire Authority had set their precepts at an increase of 6.9% and 1.5% respectively. Members were advised that, at this level, there was a risk that the Police Authority would be capped. If this happened, there would be implications for the Council, as the billing authority, in terms of any re-billing required.

The Corporate Services Portfolio Holder thanked those officers and Councillors involved in producing what was considered to be an excellent budget, particularly in light of the tough Local Government Finance Settlement received.

In addition, the Board gave consideration to the motion, referred to it by Council the previous evening under Standing Order No. 6(4), outlining proposed amendments to the budget by the Liberal Democrat Group.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A, which includes setting the budget at £95.041m and the Band D Council Tax for Halton (before Parish, Police and Fire precepts) of £1,043.45; and
- (2) the mover and seconder of the Motion submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group to Full Council on 21st March 2007, and referred to the Executive Board under Standing Order No. 6(4), be afforded the opportunity by Full Council to resubmit the Motion as an amendment to the substantive Budget Motion.

JOINT CORPORATE SERVICES AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIOS

EXB86 FLEXIBLE WORKING

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive outlining the work of the North West Flexible Working Group.

It was noted that the need for the Group had been identified out of the “Home-working in England’s Northwest” project supported by the North West Development Agency. The Group

was chaired by Peter Connor from BT and the Chief Executive had been asked to represent Local Authority interests on the Group. The mission and targeted outcomes of the Group were outlined for the Board's consideration.

It was noted that Halton had a number of flexible working pilots operating at present, which were regularly monitored and evaluated. In addition, a "Home/Work Balance" Officer Group was also exploring how best to maximise flexible working to enhance service quality and efficiency whilst at the same time improving terms and conditions for employees. It was requested that any proposed pilot be reported to the Board prior to implementation.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the proposed actions outlined in the report be approved; and
- (3) Halton develop a programme of flexible working as an exemplar for local government best practice.

Chief Executive

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB87 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT DELIVERY PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive proposing updates for each of the Action Plans, produced to deliver Halton's Local Area Agreement, and requesting approval of the funding allocations contained within them.

It was noted that, since 2002, the Halton Strategic Partnership Board had ensured that there was a Specialist Strategic Partnership (SSP) for each of the five priorities. These SSPs were commissioned to produce the original Strategies and Action Plans, and had now produced updated Action Plans setting out their activities and investment proposals for 2007/08. They set out a programme of activity to deliver the thematic elements of the Community Strategy and, in particular, addressed the key measureable outcomes set out within it.

The Board was advised that the Action Plans utilised Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) and, in the case of the Safer Halton Partnership, Safer and Stronger Communities Fund (SSCF) as well. In addition, the Council had committed a substantial amount of resources through the Priorities Fund (PF). The Council monies were aimed at supporting neighbourhood renewal activity

by match funding initiatives within the Action Plans.

Details were outlined for the Board's consideration and it was noted that the Action Plans had been endorsed by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the five Action Plans accompanying the report be approved;
- (2) the allocation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Safer and Stronger Communities Fund, referred to in this report and contained in the Action Plans endorsed by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board, be approved;
- (3) the allocation of the Council's Priority Funds referred to in this report, including that contained in the Action Plans, be approved; and
- (4) delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council to approve amendments to the Actions Plans as necessary.

Chief Executive

QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

EXB89 DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE PLANS 2007-10 (KEY DECISION)

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding the Council's Departmental Service Plans for 2007-2010.

It was noted that Departmental Service Plans sat within an established planning framework and were central to the Council's performance management arrangements. They provided a clear statement on what individual services were planning to achieve and showed how this contributed to the corporate priorities of the Council. They were an essential tool for making key decisions about future service provision and the level of resources required.

The Board was advised that there had been no significant amendments to the layout of plans from the previous year. However, following the development of the Corporate Plan 2006-2011 and the introduction of Key Areas of Focus for each of the Council's Priority areas, the service objectives section of service plans had been revised in order to show more clearly how departmental activities were related to Corporate Priorities.

Members noted that the definitive set of 2007-08 Best Value Performance Indicators had yet to be confirmed by the Department of Communities and Local Government; once this information had been published, any changes that were necessary as a result would be incorporated. In addition, a Budgetary Statement would be inserted into plans following the approval of the budget by full Council in March.

A number of questions were raised by the Environment, Leisure and Sport Portfolio Holder: the Board was requested to direct any further queries in respect of the Plans direct to the Chief Executive.

Reason for Decision

Departmental Service Plans were central to the Council's performance management arrangements. As such, it was necessary for them to be approved before the start of the new financial year.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

1st April 2007.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) this set of advanced draft Service Plans be received; and
- (2) full Council be requested to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to make any final amendments and adjustments that may be required, and to approve the final service plans.

Chief Executive

Executive Board 29th March 2007

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB97 ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding the Annual Audit and Inspection letter prepared by the Council's Audit Commission Relationship Manager and the District Auditor, Julian Farmer.

The letter provided an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, drawing on the findings and conclusions from the Audit of the Council and inspections that had been undertaken in the last year. It also drew from wider

analysis of the Council's performance and its improvement over the last year as measured through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Framework.

Mr. Farmer attended the meeting and addressed the Board on the overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, outlining actions considered necessary to be taken by the Council if it was to maintain its 'Four Star' rating. In particular, Mr. Farmer commented on the public's satisfaction in the performance of the Council, which had been shown to be increasing.

Members commented on the excellent report stating that this was a credit to everyone at the Council, but in particular the Operational Director – Financial Services and his team.

In addition, comments were made about the following issues:

- difficulties in partnership and multi-agency working where it was not always possible to influence partners' actions to the same extent as could be done internally;
- the Council had now reached Level 2 in the Equality Standards; and
- the Council had recently taken measures in respect of unauthorised absences and permanent exclusions which had already borne fruit.

The Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy confirmed that the actions required in the letter would be cross-checked against the Authority's Improvement Plans to ensure these points were being addressed.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Letter be received.

EXB98 GAMBLING ACT 2005 - DELEGATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy outlining a recommendation that authority should be delegated to the Regulatory Committee to set fees under Section 212 of the Gambling Act 2005.

It was advised that, on 22nd January 2007, the Regulatory Committee had received a report on the Gambling Act 2005 which dealt with matters relating to powers and duties. The report had detailed the matters which the legislation reserved exclusively, either for full Council or for the Regulatory Committee. Section 212 of the Gambling Act 2005 enabled Councils to set fee levels

in limited circumstances. This function had to be exercised by full Council unless the Council delegated the powers to the Regulatory Committee in accordance with Section 154 of the Gambling Act 2005.

The Regulatory Committee had therefore resolved that the Executive Board be requested to recommend this amendment to full Council.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Regulatory Committee its power to set fees under Section 212 Gambling Act 2005 in accordance with Section 154 Gambling Act 2005.

Strategic Director -
Corporate and
Policy

EXB99 CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE POST OFFICE NETWORK

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding a consultation document that had been issued by the Department of Trade and Industry on the future of the Post Office Network, and outlining the response of the Chief Executive to that consultation document.

It was noted that the Chief Executive had highlighted two particular concerns from Halton’s perspective:

- (1) the proposal to change the walking distance criteria for post offices in deprived urban areas from half a mile to one mile; and
- (2) the proposal to provide support for outreach services in “small remote communities”.

The Chief Executive’s letter outlined the importance of the Post Office to community life in areas like Halton and the potential impact of any reductions in service that may take place.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the action of the Chief Executive be endorsed; and
- (2) further reports be brought to the Executive Board as and when more detailed proposals are produced by the Department for Trade and Industry.

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EUROPEAN AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO

EXB107 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy requesting that the Board review the

Corporate Risk Register in line with the Council's Strategic Risk Management Framework.

It was advised that there was no proposal to add any new risks to the register at the present time.

RESOLVED: That the revised Corporate Risk Register, attached as Appendix A to the report, be approved.

NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB108 PARTNERSHIPS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy outlining the recommendations of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board (PPB) meeting of 9th January 2007 in relation to partnerships.

The Corporate Services PPB had noted that it was necessary to ensure that:

- partnership work was properly directed and overseen by the Council;
- resources invested in partnership working were properly managed;
- arrangements were in place to ensure propriety and probity in partnership working; and
- partnership working delivered value for money in terms of outcomes.

It was advised that a register had been established, which was still in its formative stages but would develop to be a more comprehensive record of partnership working over time.

Following consideration of this report, the Corporate Services PPB had made a number of recommendations to the Executive Board, which the Board now duly considered.

In moving the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Management and Development thanked the Corporate Services PPB for its work in this area.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the definition of Partnership be agreed as follows:

Partnership - a joint working arrangement where the partners:

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Policy

- are otherwise independent bodies;
 - agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal; and
 - and to achieve it, create an organisational structure or process, an agreed programme, and share information, risks and rewards”;
- (2) a register of all partnerships of which the Council is a member be created and kept by the Council Solicitor including the information as outlined in the report;
 - (3) all new partnerships created or joined by the Council be notified to the Council Solicitor by the officer with responsibility for the partnership;
 - (4) the governance of partnership checklist be formally endorsed;
 - (5) the issues set out in the checklist be properly considered and addressed before a decision is taken to form or enter into a new partnership;
 - (6) annual progress reports be presented by each partnership in the register to the appropriate PPB;
 - (7) the Corporate Services PPB review the Partnership Register and Partnership arrangements on an annual basis to make sure that they are working effectively; and
 - (8) as the process with regards to partnerships is developed, additional reports be brought to the Corporate Services PPB.

Executive Board Sub Committee - 8th February 2007
CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES72 COMMISSIONING OF PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANT SERVICES

The Sub Committee considered a request to waive Standing Orders relating to Contracts to allow for the Commissioning of Professional Consultant Services through the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) Buying Solutions Framework Agreements for Property and Construction Services. The OGC was an independent office of the Treasury, it was launched in April 2000 following the Gershon Review, as a One Stop Shop central procurement organisation.

OGC Buying Solutions was dedicated to providing procurement services mainly to assist the public sector in achieving greater efficiency and value for money. All OGC Buying Solutions framework agreements were fully compliant

with EU and public sector procurement regulations and incorporated best practice principles, thus they provided a simplified pre-tendered call-off facility at highly competitive rates.

It was intended to “call-off” professional consultant services from these framework agreements, initially to work on capital projects, but with the intention of widening this out in the future to work on any project where necessary.

The Sub Committee noted that the existing framework agreement for consultant services had been extended to its final end date of 31st March 2008. This decision was made by the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy, in conjunction with the Executive Board Member for Corporate Services, in accordance with Minute No. ES27 (Executive Board Sub-Committee 4th March 2003).

It was agreed however, that the commissioning of consultants to work on capital projects should be excluded from the future workload of this agreement. As the level of spend on capital works in the future was uncertain, it was not appropriate at this stage to enter into another long-term agreement for the provision of consultant services. The setting up of any framework agreement would also take a considerable amount of time and cost, as EU regulations would need to be complied with.

The use of the OGC framework agreements as recommended would negate the need for a bespoke agreement and not the authority considerable expense. The arrangement would also allow the Council to use a variety of consultants across a range of projects.

RESOLVED: That a waiver of Standing Orders 2.1 – 2.6, 2.8 – 2.14, 3.1 – 3.7 and 4.1 be granted in order to allow for the procurement of professional consultant services through the OGC buying solutions framework agreement for construction and property professional services.

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ES73 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

Under the provisions of Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the authority was allowed to grant discretionary rate relief to organisations who were either a charity or a non profit-making organisation.

The Sub-Committee considered a report which set out details of two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief from:

- (i) Addaction, Ashley House, Victoria Road, Widnes WA8 7RP
- (ii) Halton Disability Services, 87 Albert Road Widnes.

RESOLVED: That

(1) under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, discretionary rate relief be granted to the following organisation at the percentage indicated, for the period 1st April 2006 or the commencement of liability, whichever is the later, to 31st March 2009:

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Policy

Halton Disability Services 20%

(2) under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, the following application for discretionary rate relief be refused:

Addaction 20%

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES74 APPOINTMENT OF LEGAL ADVISORS FOR MERSEY GATEWAY

The Sub-Committee considered a report which outlined a review of the options for securing the continuity of the highest quality of legal advice for the Mersey Gateway Project as the project moves forward through the planning and procurement process.

RESOLVED: That the Council appoint DLA Piper on the terms submitted in their recent proposal.

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Executive Board Sub Committee – 22nd February 2007

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

N.B Councillor Wharton Declared A Personal And Prejudicial Interest In The Item Below As His Son Plays For Hale Fc.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS IN THE CHAIR

ES83 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

Under the provisions of Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the authority is allowed to grant

discretionary rate relief to organisations who are either a charity or a non-profit making organisation.

The Sub-Committee considered a report which set out details of an application for discretionary non-domestic rate relief for Hale Juniors Football Club, Hale Park, Hale.

RESOLVED: That

(1) under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, discretionary rate relief be granted to the following organisation at the percentage indicated, for the period 1st April 2006 or the commencement of liability, whichever is the later, between 31st March 2009:

Hale Juniors Football Club	100%
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COUNCILLOR WHARTON IN THE CHAIR

ES84 3RD QUARTER TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Sub-Committee considered a report which reviewed activities and treasury management for 3rd Quarter of 2006/07.

It was noted that all policy guidelines including the prudential indicators had been complied with.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ES85 2006/07 QUARTER 3 SPENDING

The Sub-Committee considered a report which summarised the overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31st December 2006.

In overall terms, revenue expenditure at the end of the 3rd Quarter was around £1.97m below the budget profile. However, as the profile was only a guide to spending patterns, it did indicate in overall terms, that spending would be within budget. Within the overall position, there were some significant variances and details of these were outlined in the report.

With regard to capital, it was reported that spending to the 31st December 2006 totalled £13.5m which represented only 42% of the total programme of £32.4m. In particular, within major projects, the Widnes Waterfront, 3MG, and Castlefields Projects were significantly below their capital programme allocations, however, these were complex multi-funded projects, which made them particularly challenging to deliver. Although spending was

likely to be significantly higher in the remainder of the financial year, it was important that project managers maintained pressure to keep projects and spending on schedule and in particular to ensure that all external funding was maximised.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ES86 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

In view of the nature of the business to be transacted, it was:

RESOLVED: That under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied that in all of the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information the press and the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES88 APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR/DEPUTY MAYOR 2007/08

The Sub-Committee was requested to recommend to the Council the appointment of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee recommend to Council:

Council Solicitor

(1) that Councillor M. Hodgkinson be appointed as the Mayor for the 2007/08 Municipal Year; and

(2) that Councillor A. Cole be appointed as the Deputy Mayor for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

Executive Board Sub Committee - 15th March 2007

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES98 TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2007/8

The Sub-Committee considered the Council's Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2007/08.

The Strategy covers the Treasury limits in force which

would limit the Treasury risk and activities of the Council, prudential indicators, the current treasury position, the borrowing requirement, prospects for interest rates, the borrowing strategy, debt rescheduling, the investment strategy, and any extraordinary treasury issues.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to approve the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy.

Strategic Director
Corporate and
Policy

ES99 LOCAL LAND CHARGES – FEES 2007/2008

The Sub-Committee considered a report which sought approval for a new scale of fees for Local Land Charge Searches effective from 1st April 2006.

The LLC1 fee was set by central government but with effect from 1st April 2007 that power was devolved to Councils. The detailed guidance from Central Government outlining the basis for setting charges was still awaited. However, it was known that the charges for the LLC1 had to be set so as to cover costs rather than to generate income.

It was reported that the Council needed to respond to the new freedom to set the LLC1 fee and it was proposed to reduce the CON29 fee to £118.00 and increase the LLC1 fee to £26.00. Approval for a new maximum charge was also sought.

RESOLVED: That effective from 1st April 2007:

(1) taking account of the new discretion in relation to LLC1 charge the fees for Local Land Charges searches be set as follows:

Council Solicitor

LLC1:	£26.00 (currently £6.00);
CON29:	£118.00 (currently £134.00);
Part II Optional Inquiries:	£12.00 (no change);
Additional Inquiries:	£26.00 (no change) and equivalent increases

(2) new maximum charge of £2,500 (£1500 since 2001);

(3) the Council Solicitor, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, be authorised to review and amend the above charges in light of detailed Government guidance when issued; and

(4) the Council Solicitor, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, be authorised to review and amend the Common Land Search Fee in light of detailed Government guidance when

issued.

ES100 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

Under the provisions of Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the authority was allowed to grant Discretionary Non Domestic Rate Relief to organisations who are either a charity or a non-profit making organisation.

The Sub-Committee considered a report which set out details of an application for Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief for University of Liverpool, Building 2, Daresbury Innovation Centre, Daresbury. An additional letter on behalf of the Daresbury Innovation Centre was circulated to Members for consideration.

RESOLVED: That under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, the following applications for discretionary rate relief be refused:

University of Liverpool 20%.

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ES101 ST BEDES INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS

The Sub-Committee considered a report which proposed to regularise the situation in relation to the St. Bede' Infant and Junior School Playing Fields presently used by both schools to ensure they become school playing fields.

By formalising the arrangement, the schools would be able to attract funding to utilise the land more for the benefit of all pupils on both sites.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the playing fields be designated as school playing fields and are used by both schools;
- (2) the Archdiocese of Liverpool will become responsible for all maintenance, fencing and any planning consents required for the school use; and
- (3) the land will remain in the Council's ownership.

Strategic Director
Corporate and
Policy

ES103 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Committee was advised that a matter had arisen which required immediate attention by the Committee because in this case a decision was required before the date of the next meeting (Minute 104 refers), therefore pursuant to Section 100 B (4) and 100 E Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman ruled that the item be considered as a matter of urgency.

CORPORATE PORTFOLIO

ES104 BRINDLEY MOUND

The Sub-Committee was advised on 6 tenders received for the removal of the Brindley Mound and for the construction of the retaining wall.

The work was expected to commence mid-April 2007 and would be a 10-week contract.

RESOLVED: That approval be given to appoint D. Morgan as the preferred contractor for the removal of the Brindley Mound and for the construction of the retaining wall.

Executive Board Sub Committee – 29th March 2007

Strategic Director
Corporate and
Policy

CORPORATE SERVICE PORTFOLIO

ES109 DISPOSAL OF ETHEL HANLEY CARE HOME,
CORONATION DRIVE, WIDNES

The Sub-Committee considered a report which sought approval to dispose of the Ethel Hanley Care Home.

The Council currently owned the freehold interest of the premises, which were recently occupied by CLC Care Services Group by way of an internal repairing and insuring fees at a rental of £35,500 per annum. The Lease contained a flexible break option in favour of the tenant to enable the lease to be terminated, which they exercised on 13th November 2006.

There was a risk that the reserve price would not be achieved at the auction, in which case the property would remain unsold. However, potential purchasers of such property were more likely to be regular auction goers and this method of sale was likely to maximise the capital receipt for the Council.

RESOLVED: That

(1) approval be given to the Operational Director Property Services, in consultation with relevant portfolio holder, to determine the basis for disposal and to dispose of the property by auction; and

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(2) approval be granted to the Operational Director Property Services, in consultation with relevant portfolio holder, to accept the highest offer with details being reported to the Sub-Committee at the earliest opportunity

ES110 DISPOSAL OF THE COMMUNITY CENTRE - 9/11 LUGSDALE ROAD, WIDNES

The Sub-Committee considered a report which sought approval to dispose of the Community Centre, 9/11 Lugsdale Road, Widnes.

The Council currently owned the freehold interest of the premises, which was currently occupied by Social Services as an Operational Building. Operations from Lugsdale Road transferred to Midwood House, on 23rd March 2007, which would save the Council £25,000 per annum in running costs.

It was noted that when disposing of a site by auction, there was a risk that it may not reach the reserve price in which case the property would not be sold. However, the auction market was quite popular at this moment in time and it was therefore considered that this risk was minimal.

RESOLVED: That

(1) approval be given to the Operational Director Property Services, in consultation with relevant portfolio holder, to determine the basis for disposal and to dispose of the property at auction; and

Strategic Director
Corporate and
Policy

(2) approval be granted to the Operational Director Property Services, in consultation with relevant portfolio holder, to accept the highest offer with the details being reported to the Sub-Committee at the earliest opportunity.

REPORT TO: Corporate Services PPB
DATE: 5 June 2007
REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive
SUBJECT: Performance Management Reports for 2006/07
WARDS: Boroughwide

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of the 4th quarter year-end performance management reports on progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/comparisons, factors affecting the services etc. for:

- Exchequer & Customer Services
- Financial Services
- ICT Services
- Legal Services
- Personnel Services
- Policy and Performance
- Property Services
- Stadium & Hospitality

2. RECOMMENDED: That the Policy and Performance Board

- 1) Receive the 4th quarter year-end performance management reports;**
- 2) Consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and**
- 3) Highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Policy and Performance Board.**

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The departmental service plans provide a clear statement on what the services are planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. The service plans are central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board has a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.
- 3.2 The quarterly reports are on the Information Bulletin to reduce the amount of paperwork sent out with the agendas and to allow Members access to the reports as soon as they have become available.

It also provides Members with an opportunity to give advance notice of any questions, points or requests for further information that will be raised to ensure the appropriate Officers are available at the PPB meeting.

4. POLICY AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

5. RISK ANALYSIS

5.1 Not applicable.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

6.1 Not applicable.

7. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTIONS 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy

SERVICE: Exchequer and Customer Services

PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31 March 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Exchequer and Customer Services Department fourth quarter period up to year-end 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period, which will be made available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Revenues and Benefits - NVQ Assessment Centre

Following the successful application and roll out of the IRRV NVQ Level 3 in Housing Benefit and Local Taxation, the Division has recently applied, and been successful, in gaining Direct Claim Status. This means that the Division cannot only assess NVQ but can now also claim for unit certification without the need for a check by the External Verifier.

The Division started out with 18 members of staff starting the course just over a year ago. To date four of those staff who started the course have withdrawn three of these cases are due to staff leaving the Division. Of the remaining current candidates over three quarters are on schedule to complete the qualification by July 2007.

The Division was approached at the end of 2006 from a number of Cheshire authorities about the possibility of carry out the NVQ for their staff. Following a series of meetings the Division drew up a number of options that could be offered. The two LAs interested, Chester and Macclesfield, confirmed that they would like to go ahead with the 'middle of the range' option, which was costed at £1282 per candidate. For this cost the LAs would receive a workshop/ training session for each unit, one to one access to assessors for their candidates, full assessment and IV work as well as regular feedback on candidate progress.

At the last meeting Chester confirmed that they had two candidates whilst Macclesfield confirmed three candidates. It was agreed that an induction day would be held in July for the new candidates with an expected qualification period of 12 months.

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

There are no emerging issues to report.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES



With the exception of achieving 100% compliance with Department of Work and Pensions standards all key objectives for the service have been delivered as planned. Additional details are provided within Appendix 1.

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES



Two of the remaining three objectives for the service have been completed as planned. Electronic invoice processing has been delayed due to emerging technical difficulties. Additional commentary is provided within Appendix 2.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

There are no issues relating to service review to be reported at year-end.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



It was inevitable that the implementation of a new revenue and benefits system would have a negative impact on performance throughout the year and targets were adjusted accordingly.

Although there has been some deterioration in performance the careful management of the situation has meant that comparably we are still achieving top quartile performance across the board. Additional details for all key performance indicators are provided within Appendix 3.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	3		3		0		0
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All remaining performance indicators for the service have achieved target and additional information is provided within Appendix 4.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA Targets related to the service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

None of the Key Service Objectives for this service were assessed as having associated High Risk, there is no progress to report.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS





During 2006 / 07 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against any actions identified during that assessment with associated High priority, is to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

No actions have been identified as high priority for the service.




10.0 APPENDICES

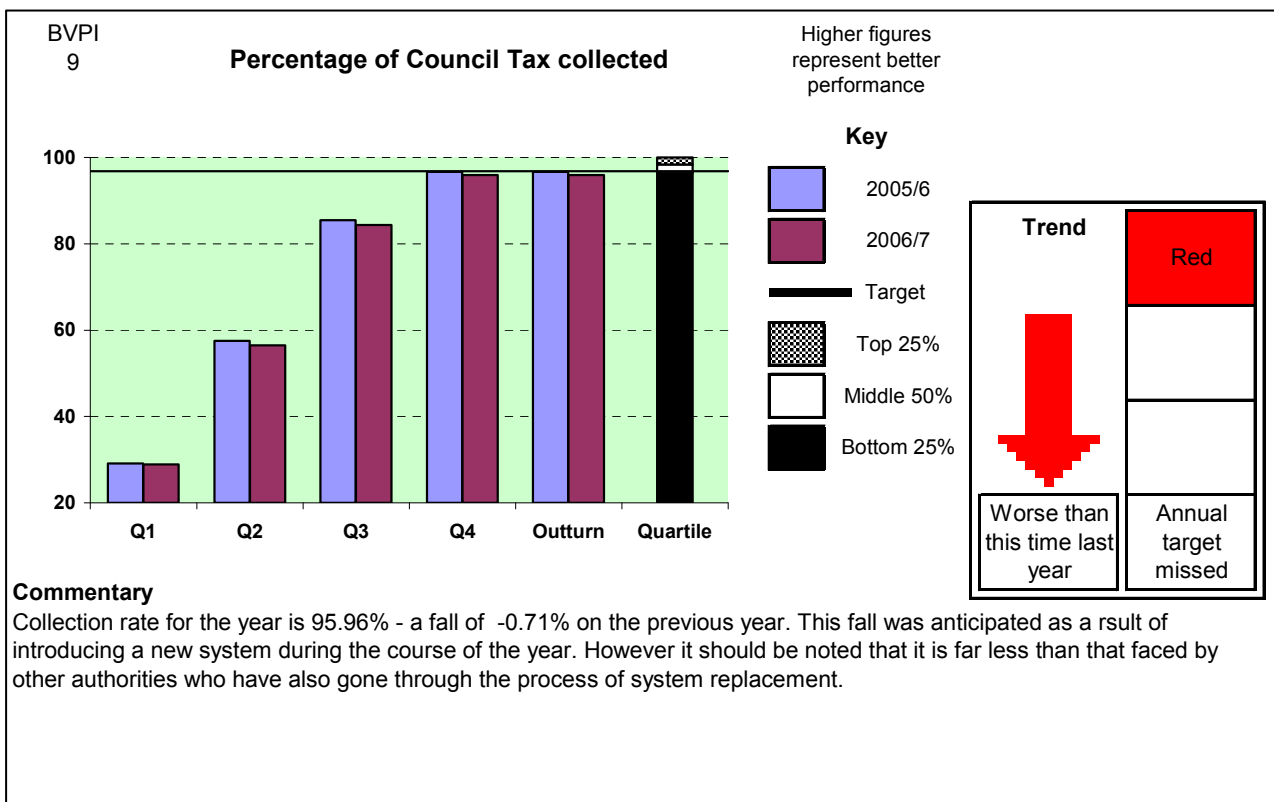
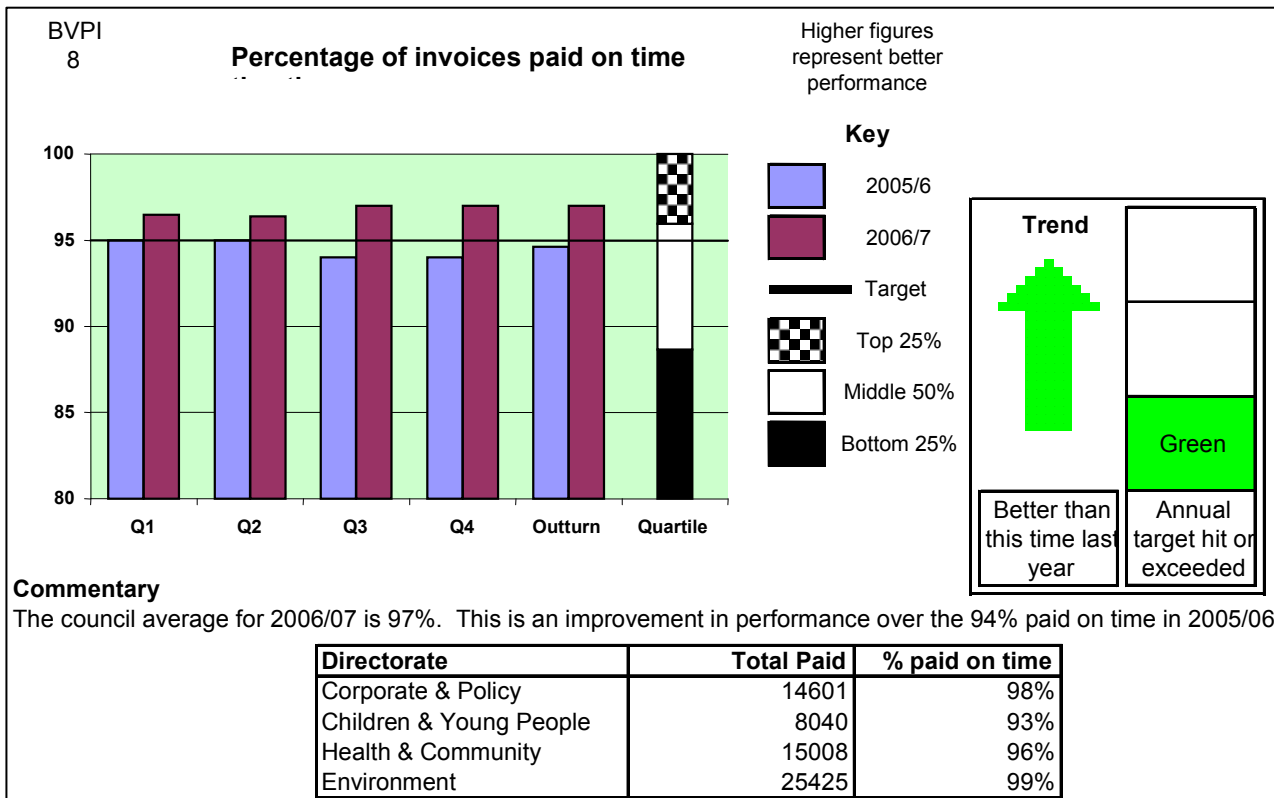
- Appendix 1 - Progress against Key Objectives/ Milestones
- Appendix 2 - Progress against Other Objectives/ Milestones
- Appendix 3 - Progress against Key Performance Indicators
- Appendix 4 - Progress against Other Performance Indicators
- Appendix 5 - Use of traffic light symbols

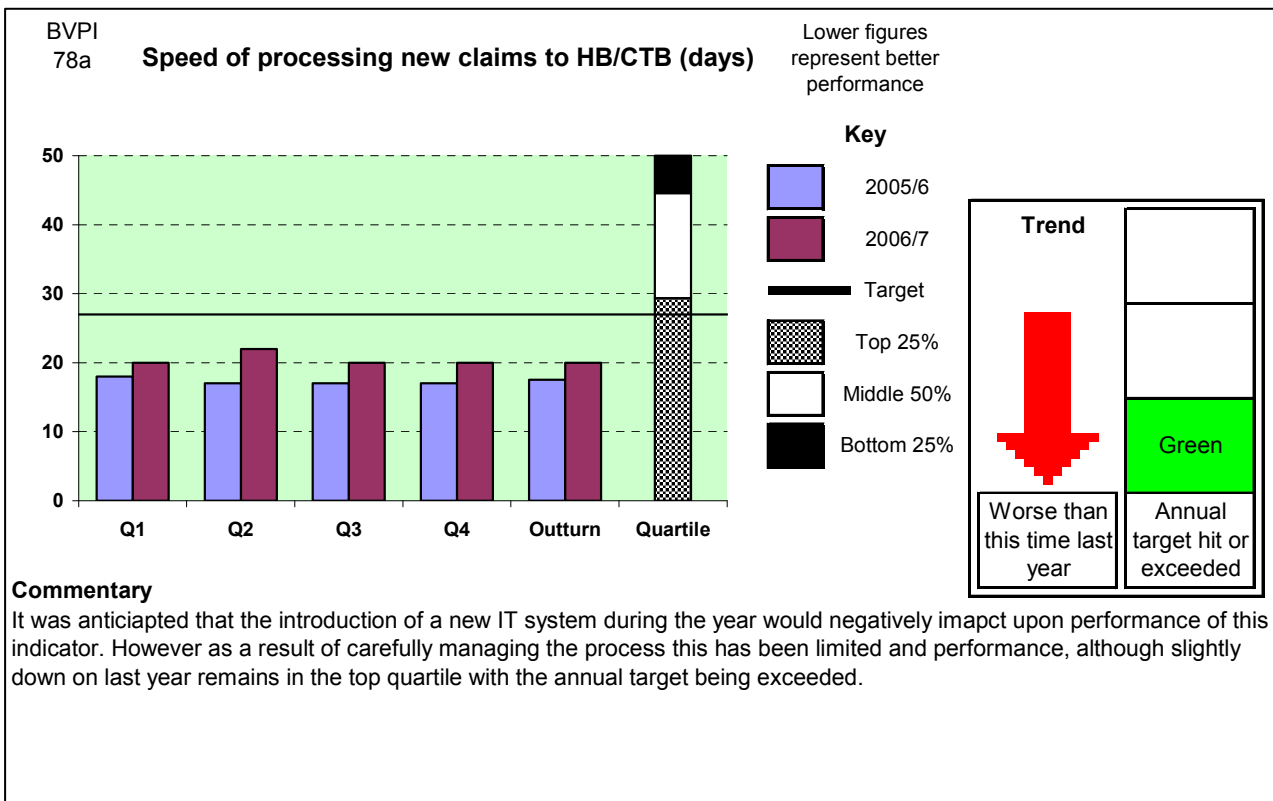
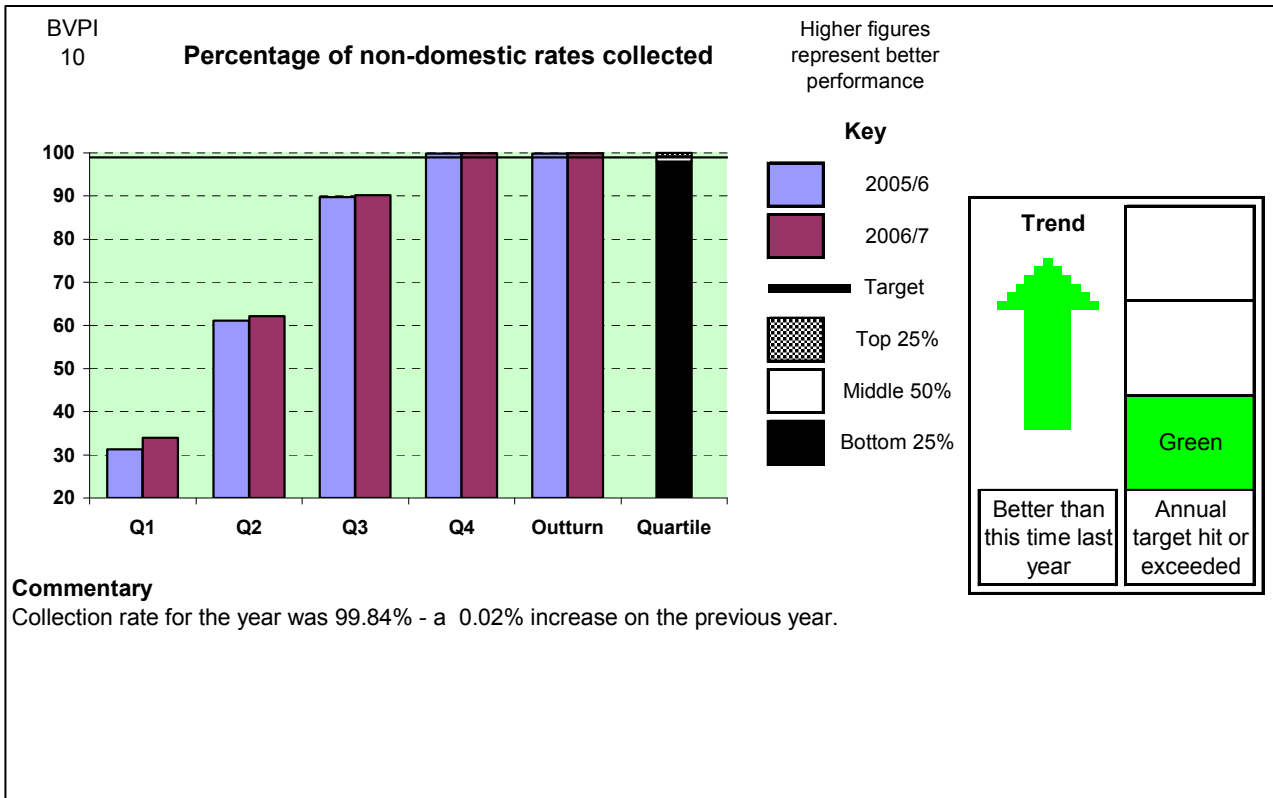
Progress against 'key' objectives

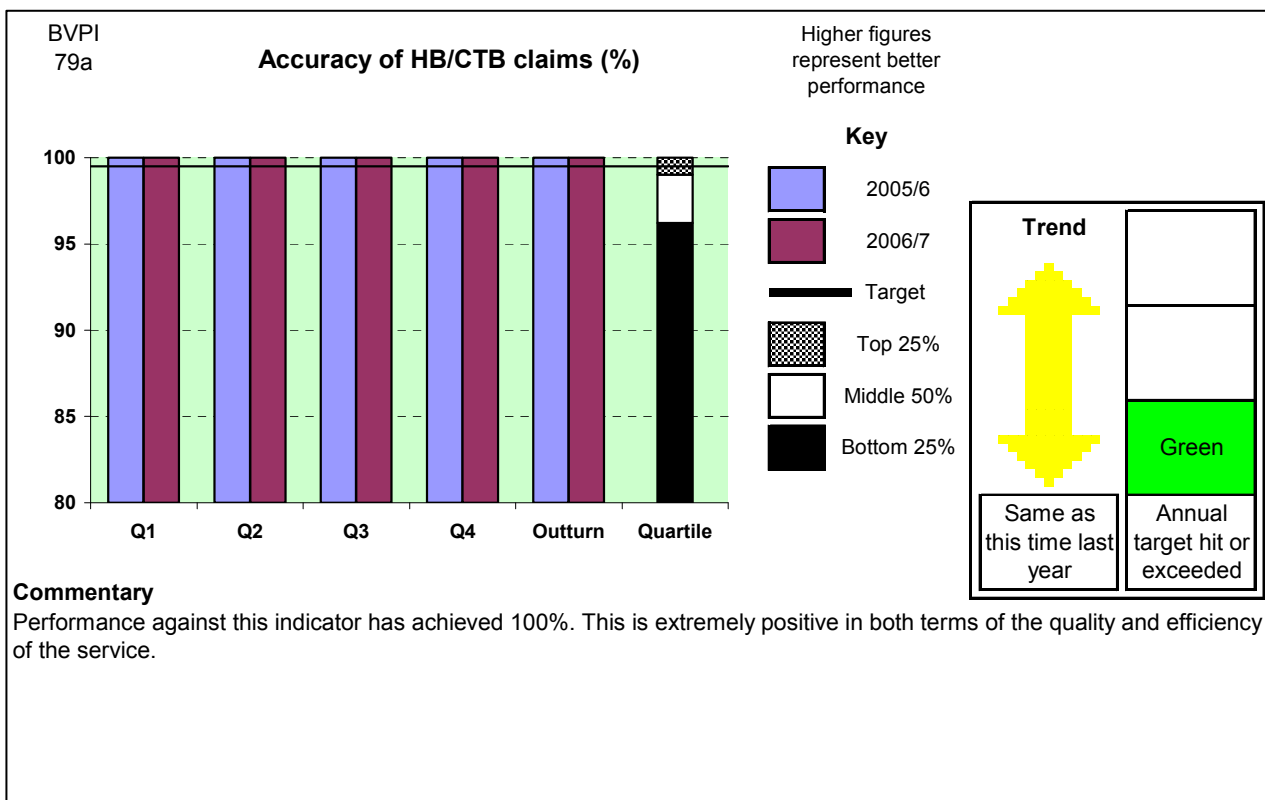
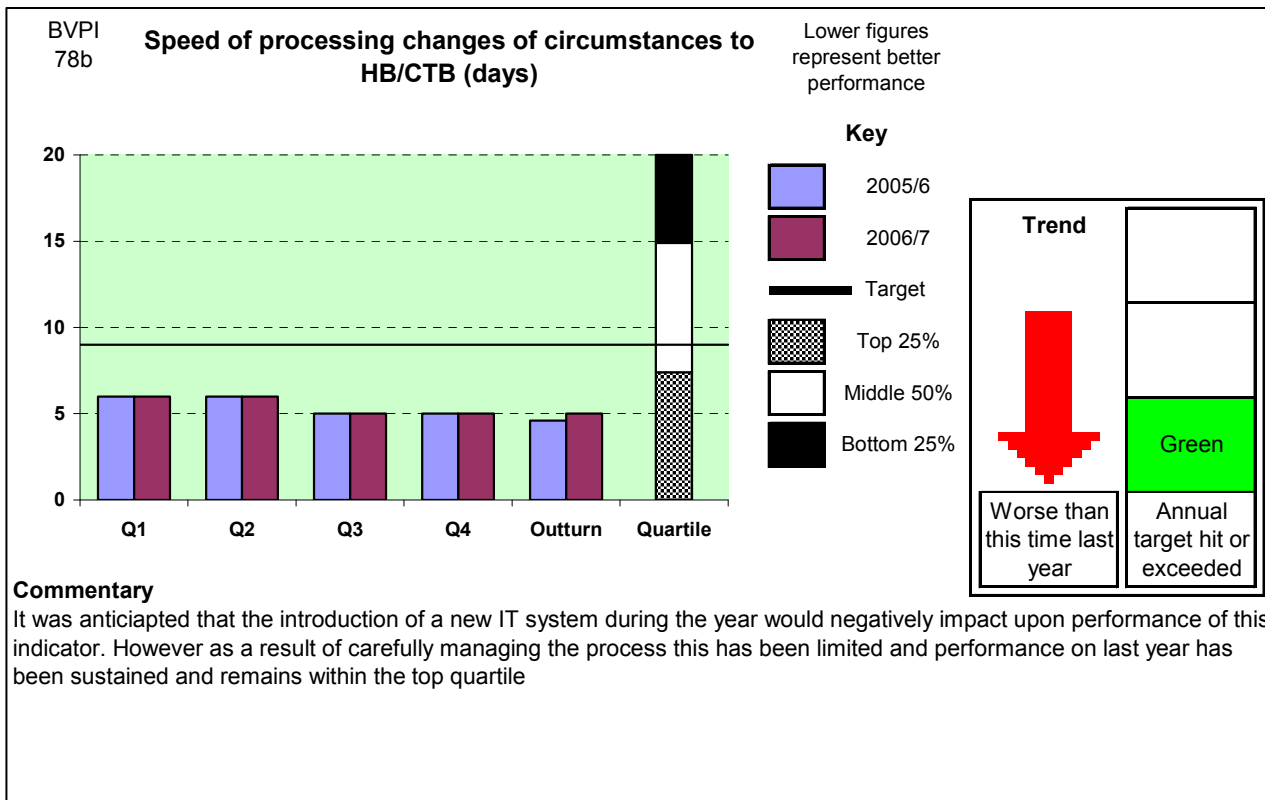
Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
ECS O1 / SA	Provide locally accessible services by continuing the roll-out of the Halton Direct Link (one stop shop) facilities & further develop the 24/7 Contact Centre	Runcorn Old Town HDL operational Summer 06 Second Widnes HDL Autumn 2006		The extension of the HDL facilities within the borough has further enhanced the accessibility of services and the customer experience.
ECS O2 / SA	Ensure the ongoing provision of the Housing & Council Tax Benefits service by implementing a new software system.	Staff training, data migration and system testing complete July 2006. System fully operational August 2006		New software system has been introduced with the minimum of disruption to the service and with only a marginal adverse affect upon the levels of performance
ECS O3	Improve operational effectiveness and efficiency by implementing and integrated HR / Payroll software solution	Payroll fully operational Dec 2006		Payroll Module implemented and became operational as planned
ECS O4	Improve service quality by continuing the on-going assessment of the benefits section against the DWP Performance Standards.	100 % compliance by March 2006		Whilst the service specific elements of the standards are fully compliant there remain a number of wider organisational aspects, which are now being considered, that would need to be addressed to achieve full compliance.

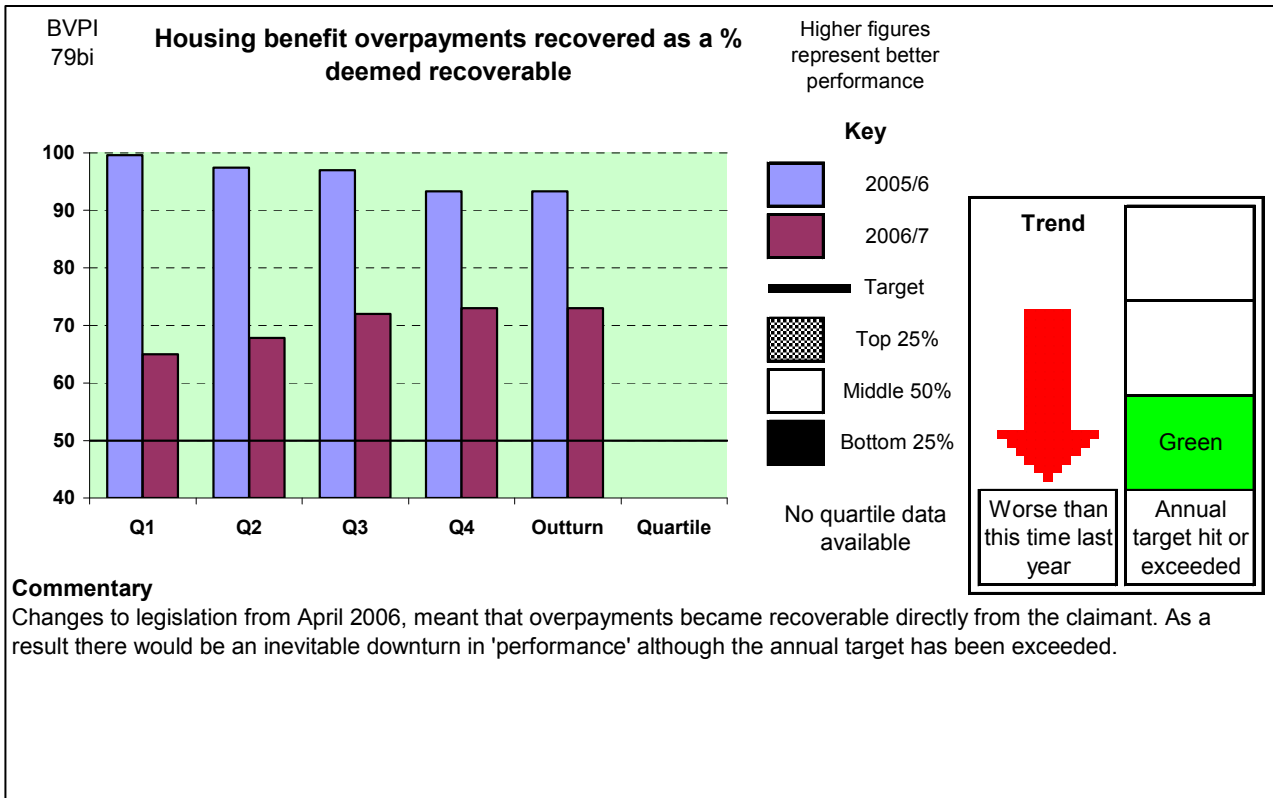
Progress against 'other' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
ECS O5	Improve operational efficiency in the payment of invoices by reducing the purchase to pay cycle through the introduction of electronic service processing.	Pilot in Children & Young Peoples Directorate August 2006 Complete pilot evaluation December 2006 Roll out across directorates March 2007		Following the emergence of unforeseen technical problems that now need to be resolved the roll out of electronic service processing has been delayed. It is anticipated that the scanning of invoices will be introduced during the summer months.
ECS O6	Improve the operational efficiency of Housing / Council Tax Benefit claims processing by investigating further opportunities to exploit new technologies.	Evaluate potential benefits of introducing automated data processing December 2006 Implement (if desirable) by March 2007		The evaluation of software was completed as planned. However there were a number of concerns regarding the capabilities of the product. The software suppliers are now undertaking further work to remedy these inadequacies but any implementation will only occur once the software has been determined to be fit for purpose.
ECS O7	Improve communication with suppliers and the general public, by establishing Procurement WebPages on the Council's website.	Establish web page and publish Procurement Strategy Spring 2006		Web page and Procurement Strategy completed with the result that existing and potential suppliers now have ready access to relevant information.











Progress against 'other' performance indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 04 / 05	Target 05 / 06	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
ECSLI 1 / SA	Percentage of Fairer Charges assessments completed within 10 days of referral.	-	75%	98%		Annual target has been exceeded with almost all assessments being completed within 10 days.
BVPI 79	b(ii). HB recovered as a % of debt outstanding.	72.43%	40%	73%		The 05/06 target for this indicator was set at a level to reflect changes in legislation (as described within Key Performance Indicators). However a sustained focus has resulted in an improved level of performance over that achieved in 2004 / 05
	b(iii). HB written off as a % debt outstanding.	1.93%	4%	2.21%		

Explanation of the use of Traffic Light Symbols

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>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>highly unlikely 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>

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy
SERVICE: Financial Services
PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31 March 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Financial Services Department fourth quarter period up to year-end 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period, which will be made available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The overall result of the Council's 2006 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was announced on 22nd February 2007, with the Council retaining its rating of 4 Star and Improving Well. Within the assessment, Use of Resources again received an overall score of 3 out of 4 and performing well. Improvements were made such that Halton now scores 3 out of 4 in each of the five categories within the assessment. Halton received the 5th highest score of all Unitary councils and the 6th highest score of all North West councils.

The Council's 2007/08 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax were approved by Full Council on 7th March 2007.

The report of the Lyons Inquiry into Local Government was published on 22nd March 2007. Ministers have indicated that they will respond as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Work will continue to lobby where appropriate through Sigoma and the networks of North West councils.



As reported previously work continues to support the financial aspects of the partnership with Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority for the procurement of waste treatment and disposal facilities, and with the development of the Mersey Gateway.

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

The Council's Annual Efficiency Statement will be submitted to DCLG during April 2007, setting out the strategy, key actions and expected efficiency gains for 2007/08.

Preparation of the Council's 2006/07 year-end accounts has commenced, which involves significant planning in order to achieve the tight statutory deadlines.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	3		3		0		0
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All three of the key objectives / milestones for the Service have been achieved and additional details are provided within Appendix 1.

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	4		4		0		0
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All four of the remaining objectives / milestones for the Service have been achieved and additional details are provided within Appendix 2.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

Following the CPA Use of Resources assessment, an action plan was developed and is currently being used as the basis for continued advancement and improvement across the Service.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	2		2		0		0
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Both of the key performance indicators for the Service have been achieved and additional details are provided within Appendix 3.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	6		5		0		1
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Five of the remaining performance indicators for the Service have been achieved, whilst return on investments are marginally short of the target. Additional details are provided in Appendix 4.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA Targets related to the service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

None of the Key Service Objectives for this service were assessed as having associated High Risk, there is no progress to report.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS




During 2006/07 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against any actions identified during that assessment with associated High priority, is to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

No actions have been identified as high priority for the service.





10.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Progress against Key Objectives/ Milestones
 Appendix 2 - Progress against Other Objectives/ Milestones
 Appendix 3 - Progress against Key Performance Indicators
 Appendix 4 - Progress against Other Performance Indicators
 Appendix 5 - Use of Traffic Light symbols



Progress against 'key' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
FS O1	Setting the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and recommend Council Tax	Report Medium Term Financial Forecast to Executive Board November 2006 Report to Council in March 2007		The Medium Term Financial Forecast was reported to Executive Board on 2 nd November 2006. The Revenue Budget, Council Tax and Capital Programme were approved by Council on 7 th March 2007.
FS O2	To effect financial prudence by assisting managers to control their budgets by monitoring spending and providing financial reports	Provide monthly financial reports to budget holders within 10 days of month-end , (currently 15 days) Provide financial monitoring reports to Operational Directors for inclusion in Quarterly Service Performance Monitoring reports Provide quarterly monitoring reports on the overall budget to Executive Board Sub committee.		Monthly reports all issued on schedule. Quarterly reports provided on schedule to Operational Directors. All reports provided as planned with the Q3 position being reported to Executive Board Sub Committee on 22 nd February 2007.
FS O3	In order to improve service delivery identify efficiency gains in response to the Gershon review	Prepare the Annual Efficiency Statement by June 2006		The Annual Efficiency Statements were submitted to the Dept for Communities and Local Government on schedule.







Progress against other objectives / milestones

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
FS O4	Provide for public accountability by reporting the Council's stewardship of public funds and its financial performance in the use of resources by Preparing the final accounts as required by statute and in accordance with latest accounting standards.	Report draft Abstract by 30 June 2006 Publish the Abstract of Accounts by 30 Sept 2006		The Abstract of Accounts was published by 30 th September 2006.
FS O5	Make best use of cash resources available to the Council, and fulfil statutory requirement, by setting and monitoring Treasury Management policy	Establish Policy by 31st March 2007 Monitoring reports to Executive Board Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis		The 2007/08 Treasury Management Policy was approved by Executive Board Sub-Committee on 15 th March 2007. All reports provided as planned with Quarter 3 being reported to Executive Board Sub Committee on 22 nd February 2007.
FS O6	Ensure that capital programme is affordable, prudent and sustainable by setting and monitoring Prudential Borrowing Indicators	Report to Council in March 2006 Monitoring report to the Executive Board Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis		Prudential Indicators for 2006/07 were approved by Full Council on 1 st March 2006. All reports provided as planned with Quarter 3 being reported to Executive Board Sub Committee on 22 nd February 2007.
FS O7	Ensure internal control and probity by setting the Audit Plan and providing monitoring reports on progress.	Report to Executive Board Sub May 2006 Report progress to the Executive Board Sub-Committee twice a year.		The Business Efficiency Board approved the 2006/7 Internal Audit Plan on 7 June 2006. Progress reported as planned in November 06 and February 07.

Progress against 'key' Performance Indicators



Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
FSLI 1 / SA 4	Receive an unqualified audit opinion on the accounts.	Yes	Yes	Yes		The Audit Commission provided an unqualified audit opinion as part of their Annual Governance report to Executive Board on 21 st September 2006.
FSLI 3 / SA 4	Complete at least 90% of the Audit Plan	93	90	91%		Annual target has been marginally exceeded.

Progress against other Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
FSLI 2 / SA 4	Receive positive comments from the District Auditor relating to the financial standing of the Council and the systems of internal financial control.	Yes	Yes	Yes		The Audit Commission was complimentary regarding the Council's financial standing and systems of internal control, in their Annual Governance report presented to Executive Board on 21 st September 2006.
FSLI 4 / SA 6	Maintain the Use of Resources scores achieved in the CPA last year.	3 out of 4	3 out of 4	3 out of 4		The Audit Commission have again given the Council an overall score of 3 out of 4 and performing well, in respect of the 2006 CPA Use of Resources assessment.
FSLI 5 / SA 1	Achieve investment returns for the year higher than benchmark	4.87	4.85	4.80		The overall investment rate achieved for the year is marginally below the benchmark rate. This results from having made some longer-term fixed rate investments in early 2006/07, in order to secure the Council's position as the market expected rates to fall. However, they subsequently rose due to various negative economic factors, which the market had not anticipated.
FSLI 6 / SA 3	Issue 75% of draft audit reports within 15 working days of completing the audit fieldwork. ^{NB}	77%	75%	80%		Target achieved.
FSLI 7 / SA 3	Maintain a high degree of user satisfaction survey in Internal Audit ^{NB}	100 %	100 %	100%		All satisfaction surveys received to date have shown audit clients to be satisfied with the quality of service provided.
FSLI 8 / SA 1	Maintain the number of schools buying back financial services.	48	48	48		All existing SLA schools bought back from Financial Services for 2006/07

Explanation of the use of Traffic Light symbols

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>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>highly unlikely 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>

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy
SERVICE: I.C.T. Services
PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31 March 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the I.C.T. Services Department fourth quarter period up to year-end 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period, which will be made available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

2006/2007 was a very positive year in terms of achievement for the department with a number of major directorate software solutions being successfully implemented.

Linked to the sustainability of the directorate developments work continues within the considerable 2 year programme of redevelopment covering the often hidden from view base infrastructure, supporting the Halton technology user. Considerable resource, investment and effort is still focused upon replacing the internal network, server consolidation and the full replacement of associated control systems and related hardware packages.

The replacement of the ageing and unreliable email system was successfully completed at the end of this quarter with the authority now operating under a single email solution rather than the multiple systems previously.

A number of new support solutions have also been successfully introduced to manage and control the use and security of the intranet and e-mail systems.

The redevelopment of the Halton CRM solution, which has received wide acclaim and will result in substantial annual savings in the region of £100,00, has been an outstanding success for the authority with new developments now underway.

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

2007/2008 will be the second year of the back to basics redevelopment of the core services the department offers and manages.

During the course of the year, and in consultation with the Union and in line with the Job Evaluation process, a number of arrangements were introduced in relation to the improved deployment of staff. It is envisaged that these revised working arrangements will be concluded within the first quarter of 07 / 08.

Key technical developments will be focused upon the changes required to the desktop solutions within the authority as the systems in place are now approaching end of life at 5 years old. This will include the evaluation and potential redevelopment of the storage solutions that support technologies such as Citrix and the replacement of PC's and Laptop's. It also has to be understood that Citrix is not a single solution for want of a simple description what it represents is a front end to a complex array of systems that supply and control data, software packages, as well as network solutions across both the web and the internal network. This overall package has saved the authority a considerable capital and revenue investment over its life and supported the authority very well over the last 5 years but with the increasing requirement from the directorates and the software suppliers the support services that sit behind such a solution need to be evaluated and upgraded in line with the demand. This will be a key programme for 2007.

Again consolidation and standardisation will be the watch word for both our software and hardware developments allowing a stable platform for array of huge directorate projects that will be starting over the coming year such as the full replacement of the social care software solution and a large number of similar developments within the education fields, all impacting upon the direction and requirements for the corporate ICT strategy and support solutions that will be needed.

The on going development of the CRM is moving on at a pace and a number of working pilots to develop information management solutions that include workflow and document imaging systems that will also be of a corporate benefit are underway within the planning and education areas. Plans to start to roll out the CRM as a desktop solution for all will also be initiated and small pilots developed to prove concepts and requirements for its wider use are planned.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	7		6		0		1
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Key objectives largely remain on track with the exception of changes to the requirements for the information management programme. Details of progress against all key objectives are included within Appendix 1

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES



All of the remaining objectives for the service have been achieved and additional information is provided within Appendix 2..

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

There are no issues relating to service review to report at present.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



All key performance indicators have exceeded targeted levels and additional information is provided within Appendix 3.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Two of the remaining indicators for the service have failed to achieve target and these relate to days for completion of thin client devices and PC's. Additional details are provided within Appendix 4.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA Targets related to the service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

None of the Key Service Objectives for this service were assessed as having associated High Risk, there is no progress to report.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS







During 2006/07 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against any actions identified during that assessment with associated High priority, is to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

No actions have been identified as high priority for the service.


10.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Progress against Key Objectives/ Milestones
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Appendix 5 - Use of traffic light symbols






Progress against 'key' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
ICT O1 / SA1	Improve the resilience, control and flexibility of the Council's desktop environment through a new desktop infrastructure based on Citrix 'thin client'.	Implement Year 3 proposals by Mar 2007		Year 3 proposals have been implemented with plans and the capital bid for further work approved.
ICT O2 / SA4	Satisfy the business needs of the Council's Revenues Division through the acquisition and implementation of a replacement Revenues and Benefits system	Implement phase 1 of the system by June 2006		The initial installation and testing is now complete. Work will now commence for the additional departmental requirement and software modules.
ICT O3 / SA4	Satisfy the enhanced business needs of the Council's HR service through the implementation an upgrade to the Councils Human Resources system to provide enhanced functionality and support improved methods of working	Implement Phase 2 of system by Mar 2007		Phase 2 is now complete with plans now being developed to install further enhancements and changes to the solution.
ICT O4 / SA3	Support the Council's e-Procurement Strategy through the implementation of a range of new facilities including Web services, e-procurement, document management, and business process workflow.	Implement improved business workflow processes by Mar 2007		A number of improved business workflow processes have been implemented, as planned and further work will roll forward in line with demand.
ICT O5 / SA3	In accordance with Council's approved strategy review the information and system requirements of the proposals under "The Children's Act" and develop a strategy and implementation plan	Implement agreed proposals by Mar 2007		The software solution requested by the client is in place and awaiting plans for further developments.
ICT O6 / SA4	In conjunction with Social Services and Education review the information and system requirements of the proposals under "The Children's Act" and develop a strategy and implementation plan	Produce initial proposals and implementation plan by June 2006		Planning has taken place with both the software supplier and the directorate. Awaiting formal analysis of requirement and solution required together with funding for Carefirst 6.



APPENDIX ONE – PROGRESS AGAINST 'KEY' OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
ICT 07 / SA8	Develop an Information Management Strategy to improve the efficiency of service processes, improve access to information, reduce accommodation costs and support the Council's modernisation programme.	Develop, and implement Phase 1 projects as per agreed Strategy by Mar 2007		The development of the information strategy has extended beyond the original timeframe. This is primarily due to the need to integrate the strategy with the emerging development of the in-house CRM system. Work continues to move forward with the strategy now being at the draft stage.




Progress against 'other' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
ICT O8 / SA1	To support the Council's growing need for remote access develop its ICT facilities to enable home and mobile working and support the concept of integrated service operation and delivery with partner organisations	Develop and implement Phase 2 by Mar 2007		This phase of the requirement complete again this area is an ongoing programme of change. Pilots for Home Working, Citrix Secure Gateway, and e-mail via the web and mobile device now in place.
ICT O9 / SA3	Provide better management and control of the Council's ICT investments through the implementation of a corporate hardware and software asset management system	Implement Phase 1 of agreed Strategy by Mar 2007		New process' are in place to continually monitor and manage both software and hardware assets.
ICT O10 / SA6	In accordance with the Council's IEG5 statement develop an Information Management Strategy in line with a formal ICT Strategy to improve the efficiency of both internal and external service processes, improve access to information, reduce accommodation costs and support the Council's modernisation programme.	Develop, and implement Phase 1 projects as per agreed Strategy by Mar 2007		The IEG process is now at an end all targets were exceeded. As commented earlier the information strategy is now part of an integrated development along with the in-house CRM system.
ICT O11 / SA6	Review the provision of ICT training and make recommendations as to what options for improvements are available.	Implement agreed actions by Mar 2007		Although a review has taken place implementation can only occur following the finalisation of the departmental restructure and Job Evaluation process, both of which should be concluded during Q1 of 07 / 08.
ICT O12 / SA7	Complete the development and implementation of the Halton Direct Link system.	Complete the development of Phase 3 – an Interactive website by July 2006		Complete. The Halton system is now live, and developments underway to move the solution forward in line with the authorities requirement.

APPENDIX TWO – PROGRESS AGAINST 'OTHER' OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES


Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
ICT O13 / SA7	Develop and implement the Social Services Electronic Forms initiative in line with Social services Business Process Engineering	Complete Phase 2 development and implementation by Jan 2007		Solution in place and plans required for the maintenance and further development of this in house solution.
ICT O14 / SA8	Subject to resource availability and prioritisation, plan, develop and implement the initiatives identified in the Service Plans submitted by Directorates.	Complete development of 2006-07 ICT work program by Mar 2007		Due to ever changing demands this objective does not relate to every one of the hundreds of pieces of work planned for the year but is more intended to provide an overall picture of progress. In this respect the significant proportion of work that was planned has been completed

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
<u>ITCLI 1 / SA3</u>	Average availability of the Council's operational servers (%).	99.96	99.00	99.59		Performance has been sustained and the annual target has been exceeded.
<u>ITCLI 2 / SA3</u>	Average availability of the Councils WAN infrastructure (%).	99.40	99.00	99.27		This statistic reflects the considerable amount of work that has taken place with a high level of performance being sustained
<u>ITCLI 4 / SA3</u>	% Of all responsive repairs completed within 2 working days (%).	88.00	75.00	87.00		The target for the year was exceeded In line with the ICT strategy. The new financial year will bring with it a full review of the current helpdesk facility and its operational procedures.



Progress against 'other' performance indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
ITCLI 3 / SA3	% Of all calls received that were resolved at the Help Desk.	45 %	55	66		Annual target has been exceeded with a significant number of calls now being resolved at the help desk.
ITCLI 5 / SA3	School Support SLA: % of calls responded to within <u>agreed</u> target					
	Priority 1	98 %	85	100		Progress has achieved target for each of the four elements of this indicator with the Service Level Agreement targets for priority three being exceeded.
	Priority 2	99 %	90	100		
	Priority 3	98 %	95	98		
	Priority 4	99 %	100	100		
ITCLI 6 / SA3	Member Support: % of calls responded to within 1 working day*.	99	95	99		Levels of performance have been sustained with the annual target being exceeded.
ITCL1 7 / SA3**	E-mail accounts set-up within 3 working days of receipt (%).	95	77	100		Levels of performance have been sustained with annual target being exceeded.
ITCL1 8 / SA3**	Average number of days from order to completion of a new PC	24	11	17		Target missed due to the new developments associated with the corporate role out of XP and the new versions of Office 2003 although year-on-year improvement has been achieved..
ITCL1 8a / SA3**	Average days from delivery to completion of a new PC	4	6	6		Progress presently on track exceeding SLA targets.
ITCL1 9 / SA3**	Average number of days from order to completion of a thin client device	9	9	6		Targets exceeded. Targets will be reviewed for the new financial year.

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
ITCL1 9a / SA3**	Average number days from delivery to completion of a thin client device	3	3	5		Target missed due to the scale of the citrix shell replacement programme which replaces old Citrix devices with new windows terminals.

Explanation of the use of Traffic Light Symbols

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>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>highly unlikely 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>

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate & Policy
SERVICE: Legal and Member Services
PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31 March 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Legal and Member Services Department fourth quarter period up to year-end 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period, which will be made available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

This period has seen the departure of the Council Solicitor to another authority. Coupled with the retirement of staff, including one of the Group Solicitors, and the arrival of an Interim Head of Legal Services, the key task has been to maintain stability within the organisation in the run up to the arrival of the new Operational Director – Legal and H.R. at the beginning of August

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

As well as the change that will arise as a result of that appointment, change is present in a number of areas.

A new Code of Member Conduct will have to be adopted by the Council as a result of a national revision of the terms of the model code. Adapting to this change will involve a significant degree of Member training.

Decisions will soon be required on the joint initiative being pursued with Sefton MBC for the procurement and implementation of a legal case management system designed to improve efficiency in workflow and time management.

The introduction of Home Information Packs is likely to see a short term rise in the number of Local Searches being received while the transition to this new conveyancing regime takes place. A review of the Council's practices with personal searches may also be necessary.

The impending creation of new Parish Councils for Halebank and Sandymoor in May 2008 will require action to be taken to build capacity in those areas to ensure a smooth implementation of the new governance arrangements for those areas.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	6		4		0		2
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Whilst the majority of key objectives have been achieved plans to deliver an external foundation degree for Elected Members, and to secure Charter Mark for legal services have not progressed as anticipated. Additional commentary is provided within Appendix 1.

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	3		2		0		1
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Only one of the remaining objectives has not proceeded as planned and this results from the present financial constraints. Further commentary is provided within Appendix 2.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

Both Lexcel and ISO Accreditation have been retained and renewed by the department during the course of the year. Additionally the Department has coped well with internal changes that have occurred during the latter half of the year and has managed to attain the majority of the targets and achieve the majority of objectives that were planned.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	6		5		0		1
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Details of progress concerning Key Performance Indicators, which with the exception of the attainment of the Equality Standard, has been largely on track, are included within Appendix 3

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	13		12		0		1
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Only one of the remaining indicators for the service has not progressed as planned and this relates to the average time taken to complete conveyancing transactions. Further commentary is provided within Appendix 4.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA Targets related to the service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

None of the Key Service Objectives for this service were assessed as having associated High Risk, there is no progress to report.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS







During 2006/07 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against any actions identified during that assessment with associated High priority, is to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

No actions have been identified as high priority for the service.




10.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Progress against Key Objectives/ Milestones
Appendix 2 - Progress against Other Objectives/ Milestones
Appendix 3 - Progress against Key Performance Indicators
Appendix 4 - Progress against Other Performance Indicators
Appendix 5 - Traffic Light Symbols







Progress against 'key' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
LMS O1 / SA 1, 2, 3, 6 & 7	To develop, implement and maintain quality systems to ensure the achievement of service objectives	Secure renewal of Lexcel Accreditation December 2006 Retain ISO Accreditation Twice Yearly Reviews Obtain Charter Mark for Licensing April 2006	  	<p>Lexcel Accreditation was renewed in January 2007 without difficulty</p> <p>Similarly ISO Accreditation was retained without any problem identified</p> <p>This has not been achieved due to limited opportunities to draw on the experience of the very small number of authorities who have gained this recognition</p>
LMS O2 / SA4 & 5	Introduce foundation degree in Community Governance for Members (via Salford University)	First course run Autumn 2006		Salford University will not be providing this degree course. Work is continuing on a foundation degree with the North West Improvement Network and the Improvement and Development Agency. A bid has been submitted for a member development gateway to provide a one stop shop for elected member development activities
LMS O3/ SA5	Develop Accessibility Checklist/Guidelines for meeting rooms to ensure equality of access to Council Meetings	Introduce checklist for meetings from June 2006		Accessibility checklist has been developed and implemented as planned
LMS O4 / SA2	Introduce system for monitoring social identity of Applicants for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire licences	Introduce Monitoring		Monitoring introduced as planned








Progress against 'other' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
LMS O5/ SA5	Keep Constitution under Annual Review	Annual Review - May 2006		Review undertaken at Annual Council May 2006
LMS O6 / SA7	To exploit the potential of IT in the delivery of services.	E-licensing system reviewed Dec 2006 Introduce document Imaging within Mailroom Services March 2007	 	Review undertaken and necessary changes introduced December 2006 An unsuccessful bid for funding has prevented this from being pursued

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
BVPI 2a	The level of Equality standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms	2	3	2		The Corporate Equality and Diversity Group has been reconvened to drive this forward with a view to improving the standard rating during 2007 – 08.
BVPI 2b	The duty to report Race Equality (Does the authority have a Race Equality scheme in place (%))	58	63	63		Progress against this performance indicator has proceed as planned and target will be reviewed for 2007 – 08.
BVPI 179	Percentage of Standard Searches carried out in 10 working days	100 %	100%	100		The highest level of performance has been maintained throughout the year.
<u>LMSLI 2</u> / SA 4	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans	32	30	42		The target was met in Quarter 2. The number of Elected Members with Development Plans has increased notably during the course of the year and clearly indicates a high level of Member commitment.
<u>LMSLI 5</u> / SA 3	Payments received on debts with Legal as a proportion of debts referred to Legal ^{NB}	51 %	70%	93%		This is the culmination of continued improvement throughout the year
<u>LMSLI 14</u> / SA 1,2,3,4,5 6	Customer Satisfaction with Legal Services (revised indicator) - Average rating on a scale of 0-10	95 %	72%	93%		For the second year running high levels of satisfaction have been achieved.



Other Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
LMSLI 1 / SA	Proportion of working days lost to sickness absence	2.7 %	4.5%	3.4%		Although the level of sickness has been slightly higher than that of 2005 – 06, variance for this year is not considered excessive and falls within the annual target.
LMSLI 3 / SA 4	Percentage of Members attending at least one organised Training Event	96 %	100%	100%		Achievement of this target is a heartening demonstration of Elected Member commitment to training
LMSLI 4 / SA 3	Value of Debt with Legal for Recovery	1,433,805	N/A	1,313,280		This mirrors the improvement in the percentage of referred debt collected
LMSLI 6 / SA2	Time Taken to process Hackney Carriage Vehicle Licences (from receipt to issue/refusal) in working days	15	16	10		This represents a significant improvement on the previous year and efforts will be made to sustain this over 2007 - 08
LMSLI 7 / SA 2	Time Taken to process Private Hire Vehicle Licences (from receipt to issue/refusal) in working days ^{NB}	8	9	8		Performance exceeds target and has progressed as planned.
LMSLI 8/ SA 2	Time taken to process new Single Status Drivers Licences (from receipt to issue/refusal) in working days	45	50	38		Performance exceeds target and is a considerable improvement on last year. This improvement results from the implementation of revised working systems.
LMSLI 9 / SA 2	Time taken to process Single Status Drivers Licence renewals (from receipt to issue/refusal) in working days ^{NB}	27	30	29		Although meeting the target, there has been a slight dip compared to last year although this is considered to be within acceptable variances

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
LMSLI 10 / SA1	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of instructions (working days)	7	10	8		Refer comment above
LMSLI 11 / SA 1	Percentage of Prosecutions Resulting In convictions	75 %	N/a	94		A significant increase year on year.
LMSLI 12 / SA 4	Average Time Taken to Complete Conveyancing Transactions	492	220	265		Although the performance is slightly short of the annual target considerable improvement has been secured. It is anticipated that the present level of performance can be sustained as some older cases are completed.
LMSLI 13 / SA 1	Average Time Taken to Complete Child Care Cases (calendar days) ^{NB}	209	210	191		Performance exceeds target and is a notable improvement on last year
LMSL 15 / SA 5	Members of Public attending Council Meetings (Council, PPBs, Exec Board, Exec Board Sub, Area Forums)	820	350	621		Although comfortably meeting the target, there has been a notable reduction compared to last year. However it has to be remembered that the nature of agendas can determine levels of public interest and the corresponding fluctuations in attendances at meetings.
LMSLI 16 / SA 5	No. of Questions asked by Members of the Public at Council Meetings (Council, PPBs, Exec Board, Exec Board Sub, Area Forums)	159	100	107		Although meeting the target, there has been a notable reduction compared to last year. Again the number of questions can be affected by the extent of public interest generated by the topic under discussion.

Application of Traffic Light Symbols

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>	Indicates that the <u>target is on course to be achieved</u> .
<u>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>highly unlikely or certain that the objective will not be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	Indicates that the <u>target will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate & Policy

SERVICE: Personnel and Organisational Development

PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31 March 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Personnel Services Department fourth quarter period up to year-end 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period, which will be made available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The Council's Pay and Grading Review remains on schedule. All job evaluations were completed by the end of March 2007 as required. Details of an Appeals Process, a Pay to Points line and protection arrangements have been agreed with Trade Unions. Letters informing staff of the outcomes of the evaluations will be sent to staff in May 2007 with the effective date for implementation being backdated to 1st April.

The implementation of the Trent HR/Payroll IT system has continued and remains on schedule. All payrolls (including some outside payrolls such as Halton College) have now been successfully moved to Trent and the system is functioning well. Other modules of the system e.g. sickness, Training and Health and Safety will be implemented over the next few months.

Due to changes in discrimination and employment legislation together with Government changes to Pension Regulations, it has been necessary to negotiate a new Retirement Policy with Trade Unions and also revise the Council's At Risk Policy. The Appointment Committee adopted the new Retirement Policy during March 2007.

The Appointment Panel met in January to interview candidates for the vacant post of Strategic Director - Children and Young People. Gerald Meehan, who currently works at Wigan MBC, was offered and accepted the position and will commence employment in May 2007.

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

National negotiators from the Employers side and Trade Unions have been unable to reach agreement on the 2007/08 Pay Award. There appears to be a substantial gap between the two sides and it is likely that resolution will take many months.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES



Work against key objectives has progressed on schedule with all being achieved as planned. Additional details are provided within Appendix 1.

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES



With the exception of the gathering and analysis of data relating to staff loss the remaining objectives for the service have been achieved. Additional details are provided within Appendix 2.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

Currently there are no issues to be reported relating to Service Review for this service.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Information concerning key performance indicators is not yet available as BVPI outturns are presently being calculated.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	5		5		0		0
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The remaining performance indicators for the service have all achieved target and additional details are provided within Appendix 4.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA Targets related to the service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

None of the Key Service Objectives for this service were assessed as having associated High Risk, there is no progress to report.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS

During 2006/07 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against any actions identified during that assessment with associated High priority, is to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.


No actions have been identified as high priority for the service.


10.0 APPENDICES

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





Progress against 'key' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
PS O1	To ensure the Council is provided with up-to-date workforce information and can respond to the requirement for Statutory statistical information e.g. BVPI's, DfES returns.	<p>Implementation of new Trent HR/Payroll IT system HR Aug 2006 Payroll Dec 06</p> <p>Develop management information reporting capacity and systems December 2006 onwards</p>		<p>All HR and payrolls successfully implemented on the Trent IT system.</p> <p>Additional modules, such as training and Health & Safety will be implemented during the course of 2007.</p> <p>Development of management information systems progressing as more personal information being input to the new system.</p> <p>Payroll and Personnel staff now working jointly on the system. Restructure of both areas to be considered later in 2007.</p>
PS O2	To ensure the Council's strategic approach to the management of Human Resources is reviewed and consistent with best practice and reflects a modern, excellent authority.	Devise, develop and produce a new 3-year Human Resources Strategy. March 2007		New draft strategy developed Reporting to Management Team and Corporate PPB for comments, which has been slightly delayed, will be undertaken in the coming weeks.



Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
PS O3	Ensure the Personnel related actions of the Workforce Development Plan are implemented in line with the action plan.	<p>Undertake a review of the Council's Employee Benefits system to (potentially) introduce more flexibility and thereby aid recruitment and retention of staff April 2006</p> <p>Undertake project to assess feasibility of introducing Succession Planning June 2006</p> <p>Review Retirement Policy in the light of new Age Discrimination legislation December 2006</p>		<p>As planned a review of employee benefits is being undertaken by the Council's Work-life Balance Group.</p> <p>Succession Planning has been actively undertaken by Council directorates and has resulted in budgetary savings for 2007/08 as a result of workforce planning.</p> <p>The Council's Retirement and At Risk policies have been revised in conjunction with Trade Unions.</p>

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
PS O4	To ensure that the Council rewards staff in accordance with Equal Pay legislation through a modern pay and grading system	Continue process of Job Evaluation throughout the Council. Establish in conjunction with the Trade Unions an Appeal Process against outcomes. April 2006 onwards		<p>All posts have been evaluated and staff will be informed of the outcomes during May 2007.</p> <p>Appeals against the outcomes will take place as required during the remainder of the year.</p>

Progress against 'other' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
PS O5	Ensure a pro-active approach on the part of Council managers to the health, safety and welfare of employees.	Implement action plan in conjunction with Departments. Undertake a full review of the Management of Sickness Absence Policy and procedures in conjunction with Trade Unions. April 2006 onwards		Policy and procedures reviewed and revised and training for managers being "rolled out" across directorates.
PS O6	Increase the capacity of the Council to identify and understand the reasons for staff loss.	Undertake analysis of data and report to Management Team July 2006		This objective has not been achieved. Despite a number of requests for the relevant information it has not been possible to obtain sufficient data to allow a meaningful analysis to be undertaken.
PS O7	Undertake skills audit to determine identified need in relation to future Training and Development and Workforce Planning activity.	Carry out evaluation of Project Management training programme July 2006		Extensive training has now been provided across the organisation and evaluation concludes a corporate approach to project management has become embedded.
PS O9	Ensure that all Council employees have the opportunity to maximise their potential as an employee.	Review the possibilities and practicalities of introducing Basic Skills/Skills for Life training.		The Corporate Staff Development Group has undertaken the review and will lead on the provision of suitable training for staff during 2007/08.

APPENDIX TWO – PROGRESS AGAINST 'OTHER' PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Personnel Services)

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
		Sept 2006		
PS O10	Ensure that Council managers are properly equipped and trained to carry out their managerial role	Continue roll out of senior management MSc in Management course. Continue roll out of ILM4 training course April 2006 onwards		Both courses continue to be oversubscribed. ILM courses available to staff through in-house provision to be further extended to ILM 2 during 2007. MSc course now in third year.
PS O11	Ensure that the Council is provided with up-to-date workforce information to assist in decision-making.	Provide for Management Team quarterly sickness absence monitoring reports April 2006 onwards		Quarterly reports now being made to Strategic Directors on directorate absence.

Progress against Key Performance Indicators



Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
BVPI 11	The percentage of top 5% of earners that are:- a) Women b) From black and ethnic minority communities c) Have a disability	39.64 2.86 3.16	42 3.0 3.2			Annual Best Value Performance outturns for 2006 – 07 are presently in the process of calculation. Information will be reported as soon as possible.
BVPI 12	The number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness	9.4 ^E	11.0			
BVPI 14	Early retirements (excluding ill-health) as a percentage of the total workforce.	0.33	0.3			
BVPI 15	% of employees retiring on grounds of ill-health as a percentage of total workforce	0.20	0.2			
BVPI 16a	No of staff declaring that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act as a % of the total workforce	0.72	1.2			
BVPI 17a	Minority Ethnic community staff as % of total workforce.	1.91	2.0			

Progress against 'other' performance indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
PS LI 1	Percentage of requests for advertisements received by Tuesday noon in any week will be advertised internally by Friday of the same week and if required by Friday of the following week in external newspapers etc.	100 %	100 %	100%		Performance levels have been maintained throughout the course of the year with annual target being achieved.
PS LI 2	Percentage of applications received in the division for any post acknowledged within one day	100 %	100 %	100%		Refer comment above
PS LI 3	Percentage of candidates attending interview who are unsuccessful informed within five working days.	100 %	100 %	100%		Refer comment above
PS LI 4	Percentage of enquiries for work answered in writing within one week.	100 %	100 %	100%		Refer comment above
PS LI 5	Percentage of requests to amend the establishment received from Operational Directors considered by the Executive Board member for Corporate Services on two specific days in the same month if received 10 days prior to these days (second and last Wednesday of each month).	100 %	100 %	100%		Refer comment above

Explanation of the use of Traffic Light Symbols

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>	Indicates that the <u>target is on course to be achieved</u> .
<u>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>highly unlikely or certain that the objective will not be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	Indicates that the <u>target will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy
SERVICE: Policy and Performance
PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31st March 2007.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Policy and Performance Department fourth quarter period up to year-end 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period, which will be made available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Halton's Local Area Agreement, (LAA), was signed off by Ministers at the beginning of April 2007 following lengthy negotiations with government office coordinated by the Strategic Policy and Partnerships division. This will become increasingly important as we move towards the new performance framework outline in the 2006 local government white paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities".

The Audit Commission has published a consultation on the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) to be introduced in 2009, and on the transitional arrangements for CPA over its final 2 years.

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

The European Commission has suspended ERDF payments to the UK government because it is not satisfied with the audit arrangements that the government has put in place. The Government is revising its systems, and this has resulted in an intensification of the requirements placed upon the Council as an accountable body, applied retrospectively. This is generating a significant amount of extra work for the external funding section, and it has been necessary to draft in resources from elsewhere in the department to support this work.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	20		18		0		2
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All of the key objectives for the service have achieved with the exception of two issues relating to communications. Further details are provided within Appendix 1.

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	7		6		0		1
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One of the remaining objectives, relating to the establishment of an economic desk, for the service has not progressed as planned. Additional information is provided within Appendix 2.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

Following an Audit Commission review of the Council's arrangements to ensure the quality of its performance data, an action plan was agreed in January 2007.

During the course of the autumn 2006 the authority undertook a General Best Value Performance Indicator Satisfaction Survey, as required every 3 years, which sought residents satisfaction regarding areas of corporate health, environment and waste, transport, and cultural and recreational services.

The headline statistics of the survey results show that,

- Almost half (47%) of indicators are now within the top quartile range of performance as compared to 29% in 2003.
- 84 % of indicators now fall within top and upper median quartiles, with 16% falling within lower median and bottom quartiles. This compares to 58% and 42% respectively in 2003.
- Overall satisfaction with the Council increased, despite a decline nationally, and moved into a level of performance within the top 25% of all authorities.
- Satisfaction with library users who found the book that they wanted, and those that found the information they wanted moved from a 2003 bottom quartile position to top quartile.
- Satisfaction with complaints handling has decreased slightly ahead of the national rate of decline.

- Satisfaction with museums and galleries, and theatres and concert halls, remains relatively low, although being located between the major cities of Liverpool and Manchester may be an influencing factor.

A detailed analysis of the full survey results is now underway and it is planned to build a series of workshops during the autumn to further explore and exploit the opportunities to sustain and enhance public satisfaction with services. This work will assist the authority meeting the challenges, as outlined within the recent Government white paper, of addressing the public decline in satisfaction with local services.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Satisfaction with the overall communications of the Council failed to achieve the annual target and additional commentary regarding the three key performance indicators for the service is provided within Appendix 3.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



With the exception of the proportion of days lost due to sickness the remaining indicators for the service have all achieved or exceeded target. Additional information is provided within Appendix 4.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA Targets related to the service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

None of the Key Service Objectives for this service were assessed as having associated High Risk, there is no progress to report.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS








During 2006/07 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against any actions identified during that assessment with associated High priority, is to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.








No actions have been identified as high priority for the service.







10.0 APPENDICES

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








Progress against 'key' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress Quarter 4	Commentary
PP O1	Improve the effectiveness of the support intelligence and advice provided to the Council and its partners to review policy, resource planning, service delivery and performance.	<p>Monitor performance against Community Strategy targets and review plans June 2006</p> <p>Review and evaluate the service planning process and make recommendations for improvement by 31 August 2006</p> <p>Establish a Halton Data Observatory Sept 2006</p> <p>Review Community Engagement Strategy and agree Annual Action Plan March 2007</p> <p>Produce Local Area Agreement draft for negotiation of with Government Office North West by October 2006</p> <p>Develop local area based management arrangements – local delivery plan for 3 pilot areas March 2007.</p> <p>Examine long-term governance and financing of LSP and produce options report Sept 2006</p>	      	<p>All SLAs actioned by 22 June deadline, and action plans adopted by LSP for all five priorities.</p> <p>Review and evaluation undertaken as planned and revised Service Planning Guidance issued in November 2006.</p> <p>Completed on time and now being populated with local data.</p> <p>Practitioners group operational and has adopted action plan, which formed key part of Audit Inspection of this function.</p> <p>Draft LAA produced by partners and submitted to GONW by 30 September deadline. Final version signed off by Minister March 2007 on schedule.</p> <p>Development plan produced, borough-wide board operational, and composition of 3 local boards agreed following election of community reps. Team in place and communication plan in place.</p> <p>Informal on-to-one discussions with all LSP partners to test views and report presented to Board. Issue now forms part of LSP Impact assessment and development plan for 2008.</p>

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress Quarter 4	Commentary
PP O2	Improve the quality and effectiveness of the Council's internal communication with staff and external communication at a local, regional and national level	<p>Review and update Corporate Communications Strategy by December 2006</p> <p>Review and update supporting strategies by December 2006</p> <p>Complete Phase 1 of 3 of redevelopment of intranet by December 2006</p> <p><i>Develop programme for determining external satisfaction with communications by December 2006</i></p> <p><i>Complete internal communications survey February 2007</i></p> <p>Set up a Youth Panel to improve consultation with Young People March 2007</p> <p><i>Produce Risk & Emergency Planning Communications Strategy October 2006</i></p>	      	<p>Whilst there has been some slippage in the delivery of this objective the review has now taken place and the draft Communication Strategy is nearing completion.</p> <p>Press & PR, Marketing, Internal Communications and Digital Communication plans completed as part of divisional/service planning process.</p> <p>First phase of the redevelopment of the intranet has now been completed on schedule.</p> <p>This work forms part of the review and update of the Corporate Communications Strategy as detailed above.</p> <p>Survey has been completed and the results are presently being compiled and analysed with additional information being provided in due course.</p> <p>Youth panel has been transformed into on-line surveys for young people. Called HYPE (Halton Young Persons Engagement) it has been developed in conjunction with the Youth Service, Young Persons and Schools, and is now up and running.</p> <p>Achieved. This activity has now also been progressed and a stakeholder questionnaire will be circulated during January 07.</p>




Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress Quarter 4	Commentary
PP O3	Improve the effectiveness of the service improvement, overview and scrutiny corporate framework for the Council to deliver efficient, effective and high quality services through a programme of continuous improvement.	Implement the annual service / business review and improvement programme by March 2007		This is presently being developed and delivered through the work of the Efficiency Board.
PP O3 cont'd	Improve the effectiveness of the service improvement, overview and scrutiny corporate framework for the Council to deliver efficient, effective and high quality services through a programme of continuous improvement.	Support the smooth introduction of reconfigured committee / PPB arrangements and related revisions to the Council's constitution September 2006		Transition now complete and arrangements will be subject to periodic review.
		Review directorates Business Continuity arrangements July 2006		As reported previously in Quarter 2 progress has proceeded as planned.
PP O4	Achieve real net growth through external funding channels to increase the Council's capacity to deliver on Halton's strategic priorities	Bidtrack software implemented across all Council Departments June 2006		Software implemented as planned and now in use across all departments allowing greater co-ordination of the bidding process.
		Project evaluation toolkit developed December 2006		Work was delayed by 1 month but this has now been completed
		Local enterprise growth initiative submitted September 2006		Bid unsuccessful and we are now awaiting guidance on future rounds.

Progress against 'other' objectives








Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress Quarter 4	Commentary
PP O5	Work with PPB's to develop and review policy proposals and hold the Executive to account	Agree 06 / 07 work programmes for each PPB by 30 June 2006		Work programmes agreed. Focus of Lead Officers now on delivery/completion of Topic work.
PP O6	Improve the support to Members to review and scrutinise the performance of the Council.	Deliver Performance Management Training to PPB Members by March 2007		Two training sessions were delivered, and were well received, by Members during November 2006 and February 2007.
PP O7	Increase the capability and state of readiness of the Council to plan and respond to major emergencies and incidents that could affect local people and the core services delivered by the Council.	Deliver Risk and Emergency Planning Training by March 2007		Seminar held on 18 October 2006.
		Complete the programme for Business Continuity Planning in Directorates, Businesses & Voluntary Agencies October 2006		Training has been provided as planned.
		Test BCM plans by October 2006		Situational testing occurred during the severe weather conditions of January this year. Consideration is now being given, and funding approval being sought, to implement a more systematic approach to testing through the use of consultants.
		Promote BCM to business in Halton May 2006		BCM has been actively promoted to local business within the borough as planned.
PP O8	Raise the international profile of Halton by strengthening town-twinning links and increasing the community's understanding of other nations and cultures	Establish a programme with current twin-towns to develop co-operation on economic affairs by September 2006		Progress against this objective has not progressed as originally planned due to : A rethink of strategy in relation to the Tongling desk in light of changes within Merseyside. A recent change of Bürgermeister and Lord Mayor in Marzahn-Hellersdorf and Usti nad Labem respectively, and a deep national recession in Leiria in Portugal.







APPENDIX TWO – PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES (Policy and Performance)

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4	Progress	Commentary
PPLI 1.	Proportion of BVPI Targets achieved	62.4	65.0	N/a	Refer comment	Final outturns for 06 / 07 are presently being calculated. If possible information will be provided to May PPB, or alternatively at first quarter 2007 / 08
PPLI 6	Proportion of floor targets with positive direction of travel	93 %	94 %	98%		Annual performance review for 2006/07 shows more positive progress. Trajectory on virtually all floor targets is positive. Data observatory is operational which will enable a more dynamic monitoring system.
PPLI 12	Proportion of Objective 2 Action Plan ERDF outputs achieved	45 %	70%	67%		Note figures relate to the period up to December 2006. (Claims are made quarterly in arrears) and annual target will be met.
BVPI 3*	The percentage of citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by their authority	55.4% (2003)	N/a	58.00	Refer comment	It is encouraging that overall satisfaction has increased and we are now within the top quartile range of performance. Additionally increased levels of satisfaction have been achieved locally whereas nationally public satisfaction with 'overall service' provided is in decline.
PPLI 20	Overall satisfaction with communications of the Council	56.5% (2003)	60%	48%		Respondents to the 2006 survey were less satisfied with the information that the Council provided than in 2003. National trends and comparisons are not yet available but satisfaction in Haton is greater than the Greater Manchester average of 40%. A fuller report will be made available as the national data becomes available.

Progress against 'other' Performance Indicators



Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4	Progress	Commentary
PPLI 2*	% Change in number of BVPI's in top quartile as compared to 04/05 baseline NB: A plus (+) % represents GOOD performance	-4.73%	To be confirmed	Not yet available	Refer comment	Final outturns for 06 / 07 are presently being calculated. If possible information will be provided to May PPB, or alternatively at first quarter 2007 / 08
PPLI 3*	% Change in number of BVPI's in bottom quartile as compared to 04 / 05 baseline NB: A minus (-)% represents GOOD performance.	+2.17%	To be confirmed	Not yet available	Refer comment	Refer comment above.
PPLI 4	NRF Spend	100 %	100 %	100%		Final quarter returns show both spend (£6.1M cumulative) and outputs to be in line with forecast.
PPLI 5	NRF Outputs achieved	89 %	95 %	95%		NRF Outputs achieved is in line with annual target.
PPLI 7	Proportion of departments with up to date Business Continuity Plans	100%	100%	100 %		All departments have up to date Business Continuity Plans
PPLI 8	Proportion of departments with up to date Risk Registers	100%	100%	100 %		All departments have up to date Risk registers.
PPLI 9	Number of accidents resulting in injuries to staff	76	69	64		Annual target has been exceeded, with markedly fewer accidents than last year, demonstrating the value of current health and safety training provision.
PPLI 10	No of first responders attending emergency planning training exercises	New for 2006 / 7	100%	100 %		All first responders attended programmed emergencies planning exercises during the course of the year.
PPLI 11	Proportion of Objective 2 Action Plan ERDF committed	76 %	90%	96%		The remaining 4% of ERDF is dependant upon one outstanding project being approved.

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4	Progress	Commentary
PPLI 13	Proportion of invoices paid within 30 days	90 %	92 %	94 %		Annual target has been exceeded and work will continue to secure further improvement during the course of the next financial year.
PPLI 14	Proportion of working days lost due to sickness absence (%)	2.85	3.0	3.6		Sickness levels are slightly higher than targeted for the year, although the degree of variance is considered to be within acceptable levels.
PPLI 15	The level of potential improvements identified and proposed by service/business improvement review teams.	N/a	Baseline to be confirmed	N/A	Refer comment	In light of the development of an Efficiency Strategy, and the work of the Business Efficiency Board, this indicator is now the subject of review and refinement.
PPLI 16	Press releases per annum	477	500	594		The number of press releases during the year considerably exceeded the annual target.
PPLI 17	Local Media take up	67 %	70 %	78%		Annual target has been exceeded.
PPLI 18	Value of external funding bids supported (£ 000,s)	467	210	930,711		One significant bid for Hale Park Restoration (£670,000), which had not been anticipated in our estimates for 06/07, was successful in quarter 4.
BVPI 4*	The percentage of those making complaints satisfied with the handling of those complaints	32.9% (2003)	N/a	31.00	Refer comment	Satisfaction with complaints handling has declined slightly from 2003 levels. However this is in line with the national average for single and upper tier authorities that stands at 32 %.
PPLI 19	Proportion of internal customers who were satisfied or fairly satisfied with the services provided by the department	60 %	65 %	N/A	Refer comment	Due to a number of internal changes it has been necessary to reschedule the survey for 2007 – 08.
PPLI 21	Satisfaction with internal communications of the Council	71 %	75 %	78.9%		Annual target has been exceeded with a significant number of staff being satisfied with arrangements for effective internal communications.

APPENDIX FOUR– PROGRESS AGAINST ‘OTHER’ PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (Policy and Performance)

Application of Traffic Lights

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>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>

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate and Policy

SERVICE: Property Services

PERIOD: Quarter 4 to period end 31 March 2007

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This monitoring report covers the Property Services Department fourth quarter period up to year-end 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period , which will be available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The Council's Accommodation Strategy, recently approved by Executive Board, will provide a corporate framework in which consideration can be given to future accommodation requirements as they arise over the medium to longer-term. The adoption of the Strategy will be complimented by more immediate shorter-term work such as the re-modelling of Runcorn Town Hall.

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

As reported previously there are major challenges ahead for the department.

In addition to the considerable resources required in managing staff relocation and service continuity, in conjunction with office refurbishment and alternate use, there will be demands as a result of ongoing projects such as 3MG, the Widnes Waterfront and Canal Quarter Developments and the Mersey Gateway and the resulting Compulsory Purchase Order requirements. Investigations are currently underway as to how resources can be most affectively managed in meeting these demands.

4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES



All key objectives for the service have been achieved and additional details are provided within Appendix 1.

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES



Both of the remaining objectives for the service have been achieved and additional information is provided within Appendix 2.

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW

There are no issues relating to Service Review to be reported for the Department.

6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Performance for both of the key performance indicators for the service has achieved targeted levels and additional information is provided within Appendix 2.

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS



Five of the eight remaining performance indicators for the service have failed to achieve target. These relate mainly to market occupancy and additional details are provided within Appendix 3.

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no LPSA Targets related to the service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

None of the Key Service Objectives for this service were assessed as having associated High Risk, there is no progress to report.

9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS






During 2006/07 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against any actions identified during that assessment with associated High priority, is to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

No actions have been identified as high priority for the service.



10.0 APPENDICES

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



Progress against 'key' objectives

Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
PYS O1	Fulfil requirements of asbestos Audits and Management Regulations	Confirm 100% compliance		100% compliance has been achieved to date. System improvements are presently being considered to meet the changing demands of Health & Safety requirements as we move into next year.
PYS O2	DDA Works Corporate (Non Schools) subject to funding (currently £200k per annum)	Complete 40% of Priority 2 works		Completed and ongoing as part of 5 year programme
PYS O3	Review of Property Condition Surveys 4 year cycle for schools and 5 year for other property	40 per annum		42 surveys have been completed during the course of this year. During the course of next year, as a result of capacity constraints, full surveys will be replaced by an annual risk-based inspection programme.
PYS O4	Review of Property Assets for potential disposal	Annual review to produce disposal programme		Disposals for this year have been identified to maximise asset utilisation and sales are proceeding as planned
PYS O6	Reduce backlog of maintenance on property portfolio (currently £ 5.1M)	£ 5 M		Progress is as planned and maintenance backlog continues to recede.





Progress against 'other' objectives





Service Plan Ref.	Objective	Key Milestone	Progress year-end	Commentary
PYS O7	Energy Management (subject to staff availability)	Subject to funding implement further energy saving measures		Energy improvements are now an integral feature of all significant maintenance and refurbishment programmes and work is being undertaken with the Carbon Trust in relation to emission management.
PYS O8	Review Value Of Property Assets for Councils accounts	Annual Review of Value		Review of value completed as planned and submitted for Council's annual accounts

Progress against Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
BVPI 156	The percentage of Authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to disabled people	50 %	55%	55%		DDA works contributing to achieving targets
PYSLI 1	% Of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days	100 %	100 %	100 %		Annual 100% target has been maintained for second year running.



Progress against 'other' performance indicators

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
PYSLI 2	Cost Performance on projects over £50k (Contract Let to Practical Completion) (within 5% of the allotted cost) % (excluding Client changes)	86 %	90%	90%		90 % of all projects were completed within target criteria, which represent a slight improvement over last year.
PYSLI 3	Occupancy of Industrial Units %	81 %	85%	78%		Runcorn units proving difficult to let and continuing bankruptcies continue to influence results. However present occupancy levels are sustaining the financial viability of this area of our work and discussions are underway with other unit owners on the Astmoor estate to identify and exploit any potential opportunities to increase occupancy levels.
PYSLI 4	% of rent collected as % of rent due (Excluding bankruptcies and the like)	New for 06/07	96%	93%		A number of bankruptcies and trading downturns during the course of the year have negatively impacted upon performance. We will continue to work with tenants facing financial difficulties from an early stage to try to alleviate difficulties by having realistic arrangements in place for the payment of rent.
PYSLI 5	Occupancy of Market (Widnes) %	89 %	92%	82%		The declining occupancy of the outside market has had a negative impact upon overall occupancy levels. This situation is one that will be monitored and considered in the context of future town centre promotional activity.

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4 year-end	Progress	Commentary
PYSLI 6	% of rent collected as % of rent due	New 06/07	98%	99%		The ambitious 98% target has been exceeded. Whilst performance this year represents a significant achievement it has to be remembered that the collection of 100% of any form of outstanding debt is unlikely and that acceptable variances are the norm in such circumstances.
PYSLI 7	Occupancy of Market (Runcorn) %	70 %	90%	70%		Whilst the ambitious target of 90% has not been achieved occupancy rates have remained static in relation to last year. There has been a slight upturn in occupancy during the last quarter and the ongoing situation will be subject to periodic review as we move through 2007 / 08.
PYSLI 8	% of rent collected as % of rent due	New 06/07	92%	95%		Performance has exceeded target for the year. Whilst there are inescapable links between trading activity and the ability for traders to meet their rental payments collection levels have remained high and this reflects the proactive approach by the authority of ongoing dialogue and early resolution interventions.
PYSLI 10	Time performance on projects over £ 50 K (Contract let to practical completion within a margin of 5% - excluding Client changes)	71%	80%	73%		Although this years performance did not achieve target there was some marginal improvement over last year. Of the 6 projects that did not achieve time performance 3 were delayed by statutory authorities, 2 by unforeseen works, and 1 by contractor delays.

Explanation of the use of Traffic Light Symbols

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>	Indicates that the <u>target is on course to be achieved</u> .
<u>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that it is <u>highly unlikely or certain that the objective will not be achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	Indicates that the <u>target will not be achieved</u> unless there is an intervention or remedial action taken.

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT

DIRECTORATE: Corporate & Policy
SERVICE: Stadium & Hospitality
PERIOD: Quarter 4 2006/07

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This quarterly monitoring report covers the Stadium & Hospitality Department for the period 1 January 2007 to 31 March 2007. It describes key developments and progress against all objectives and performance indicators for the service.

Given that there are a considerable number of year-end transactions still to take place a Financial Statement for the period, which will be made available in due course, has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment.

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

2.0 KEY DEVELOPMENTS

SCHOOL MEALS

The present trading statements are a concern, in that a direct comparison with cash income to the same period last year has seen a reduction of over £240,000.

The deficit reported at period 3 has continued, despite efforts from the Catering Management Team and school based staff to encourage more pupils to take a lunchtime meal.

A number of initiatives are in place to encourage schools to introduce pre-school breakfasts, mid-morning breaks and "other catering".

APSE have commissioned a National survey to ascertain the full impact on Local Authorities of the reduction in pupils staying for a school lunch coupled with the increased food costs, once these findings are made public they will form part of future PMR for this Division.

It has become very clear that a significant decrease in meal numbers nationally has resulted since the introduction of the healthier menus.

Fixed costs are proving difficult to reduce beyond a minimum level to

maintain a safe service, the workload of the catering staff has actually increased with the introduction of more “home-made” dishes.

Halton SMS promote and advertise the healthier menus by distributing leaflets on a termly basis to all users and non-users of the service.

Halton has one of the highest school meal charges in the Northwest and any significant increase would almost certainly have a further detrimental effect on the number of pupils staying for a school lunch.

An initiative being introduced by Halton’s Revenues and Benefits will see the simplification of registering for free school meals; this could have a significant positive impact on the number of pupils who would be eligible for a “free school meal”.

The School Meals Management are to actively promote school produced pack lunches, with a view that these new customers can then be persuaded to change to a hot meal later in the year.

CIVIC CATERING

Despite removing the hot meal provision at both RTH and LHL this service will not operate within budget.

Rationalisation plans have been suggested that would result in significant savings.

An additional “one off” redundancy cost has also had an adverse effect on this areas trading statement.

The cost of all “other catering” was increased as from February 1st.

Further tariff prices are to be introduced from April 1st on all products, including vending and trolley items.

A further review of tariff prices and “other catering” charges is planned for June.

THE STADIUM

Sponsorship

No formal offer of sponsorship either for the whole Stadium or for part of the Stadium has yet been sourced; this lack of sponsorship will have a detrimental effect on the year-end trading statement.

A formal sponsorship pack (copies on request) is now available and it is planned that over 150 opportunity packs will be distributed and follow-up calls made within the next three months.

Following the failure of Widnes Vikings to gain promotion to Super League the interest in Executive Suites has also declined.

We are looking to use the positive Everton experience to create a wider audience interest in the Stadium.

Everton FC have been very pleased with the facilities and playing surface and are already suggesting that the optional two-year extension will be signed up sooner rather than later.

Everton are to play Liverpool in the Liverpool Senior Cup, this match will take place at the Stadium before the end of April.

Energy Costs

Due to the excessive increase in energy costs the Stadium budget for energy will be overspent at year-end. Management at the Stadium are working closely with Property Services to find cost-effective energy saving schemes.

The recently commissioned energy audit highlighted a number of areas that could help reduce the cost of energy at the Stadium; the company are to carry out staff energy awareness training within the next six weeks.

3.0 EMERGING ISSUES

School Meals

There has yet been no upward movement in the number of pupils taking a school lunch, if the present trends continue then the service will continue to operate at a level that was not budgeted for when setting the budget for 07 – 08 and beyond.

The Stadium

As with School Meals no budget provision has been made for the increased energy costs or Stadium Sponsorship.

Both will have a negative effect on the trading account for 07/08.

The Stadium has recently achieved the Greater Merseyside Food Charter award, an initiative aimed at improving the quality of food options available at the Stadium.

A formal presentation will take place in the next few weeks.

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4.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	4		4		0		0
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(Appendix 1)

4.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES / MILESTONES

Total	2		2		0		0
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(Appendix 2)

5.0 SERVICE REVIEW


There have been no service reviews this quarter.
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6.0 PROGRESS AGAINST KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	7		4		0		3
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(Appendix 3)

6.1 PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Total	8		5		0		3
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(Appendix 4)

7.0 PROGRESS AGAINST LPSA TARGETS

There are no current LPSA targets for this service.

8.0 RISK CONTROL MEASURES

During the production of the 2006-09 Service Plan, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives.

Where a Key Service Objective has been assessed and found to have associated 'High' risk, progress against the application of risk treatment measures is to be monitored, and reported in the quarterly monitoring report in quarters 2 and 4.

At year-end, all relevant risk treatment measures have been implemented for key service objectives that were initially assessed as high risk in the Directorate Risk Register.



9.0 PROGRESS AGAINST HIGH PRIORITY EQUALITY ACTIONS

During 2005/06 the service was required to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment. Progress against actions identified through that assessment, with associated High priority are to be reported in the quarterly monitoring report.



There are no High priority equality actions for this service; there is no progress to report.



10.0 APPENDICES

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

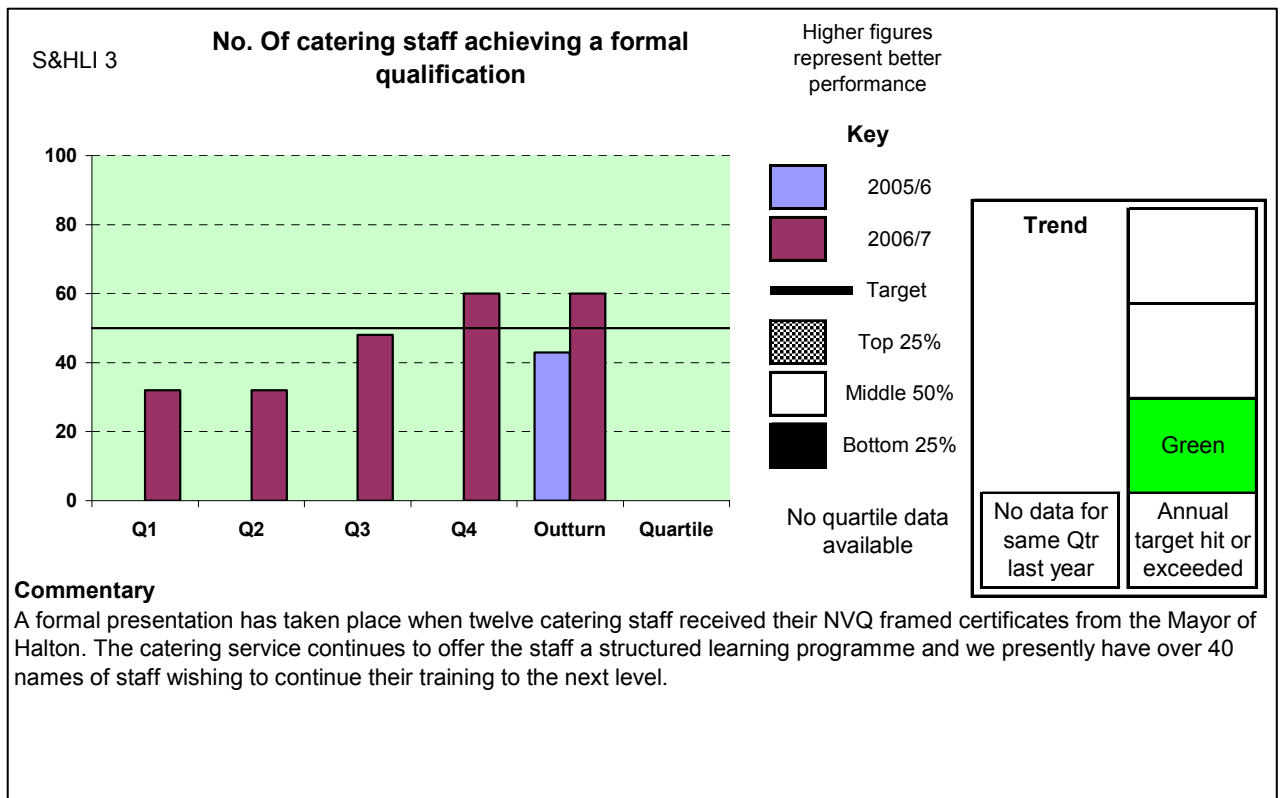
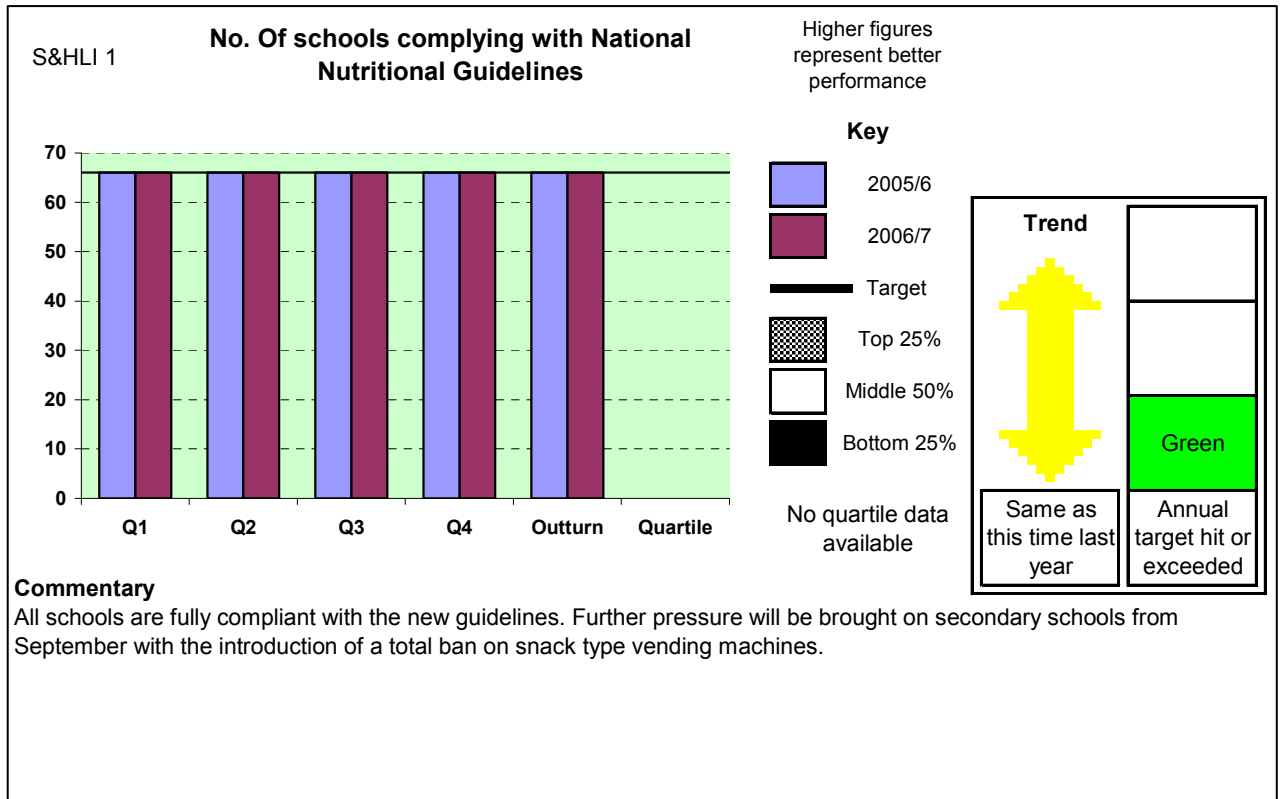
Service Plan Ref.	Objective	2006/07 Key Milestone	Progress to date	Commentary
01	Increase the community usage of the stadium.	<p>Research and develop opportunities for partnership working locally by Sept 06</p> <p>Develop community plan for all Stadium market areas by July 06</p> <p>Develop a targeted promotion of IT suite to local volunteer groups, not for profit and public sector organisations by April 06</p>		<p>A number of quality community programmes now exist:- Table Tennis – adult and junior sessions, Senior Citizens sequence dancing, Toddler play groups, Crucial Crew, Boxing Club, Everton Summer School, Bingo, Darts, Dominoes etc.</p> <p>Completed.</p> <p>Promotional program developed. Currently work is underway with HBC IT department to promote the use of the IT Suite, through Vikings in the Community – to offer IT training to disadvantaged groups.</p>
02	Promote and increase the usage of the Halton Leisure Card scheme.	<p>Develop list of targeted local volunteer, not for profit and public sector organisations to encourage uptake by disadvantaged groups April 06</p> <p>Target local colleges and 6th Forms to encourage take up by young people Sept 06</p> <p>Develop marketing campaign April 06</p>		<p>Refer to community engagement in commentary for SPR 01 above. The facilities at the Stadium are priced at a level that takes in to account the disadvantaged groups within the area, emphasis is placed on the promotion of the Halton Leisure Card.</p> <p>A visit has been made to all sites Riverside College Halton. A number of “Splash” initiatives are planned that will specifically target the under 16’s.</p> <p>Completed.</p>

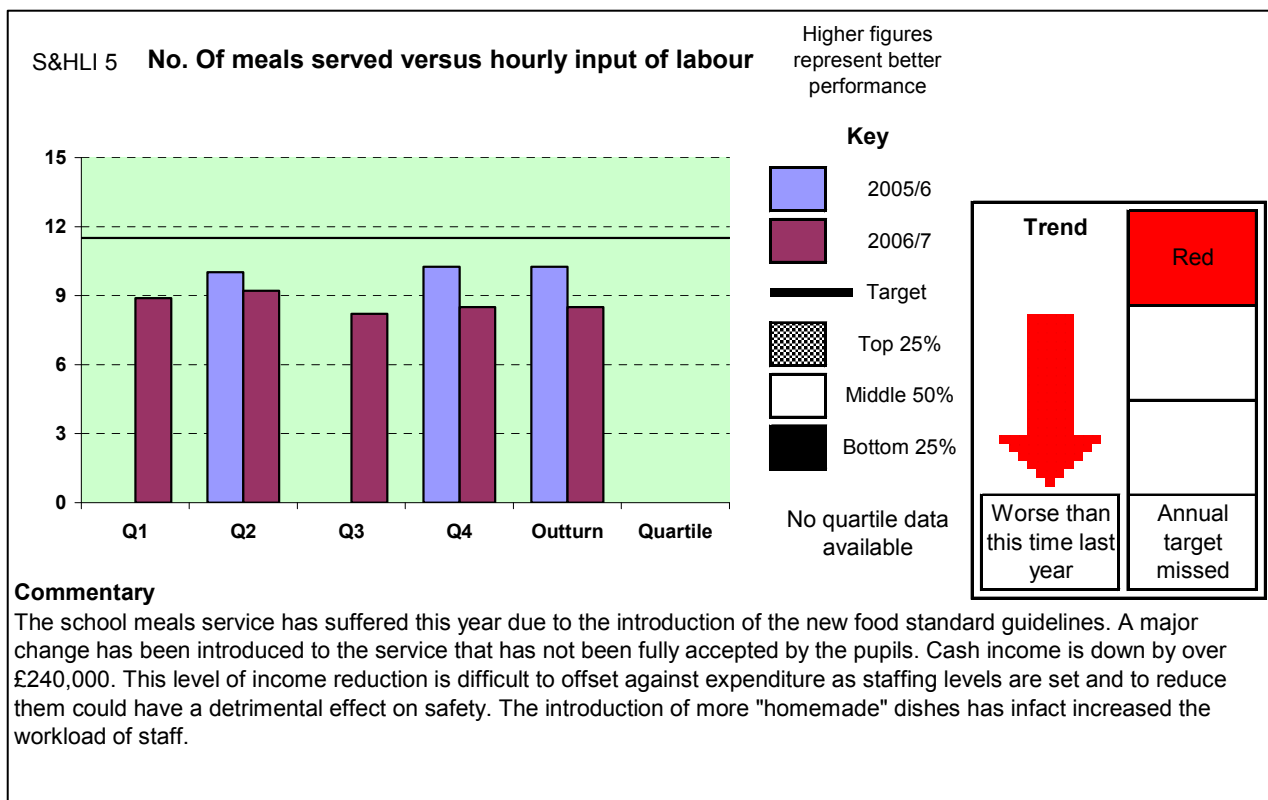
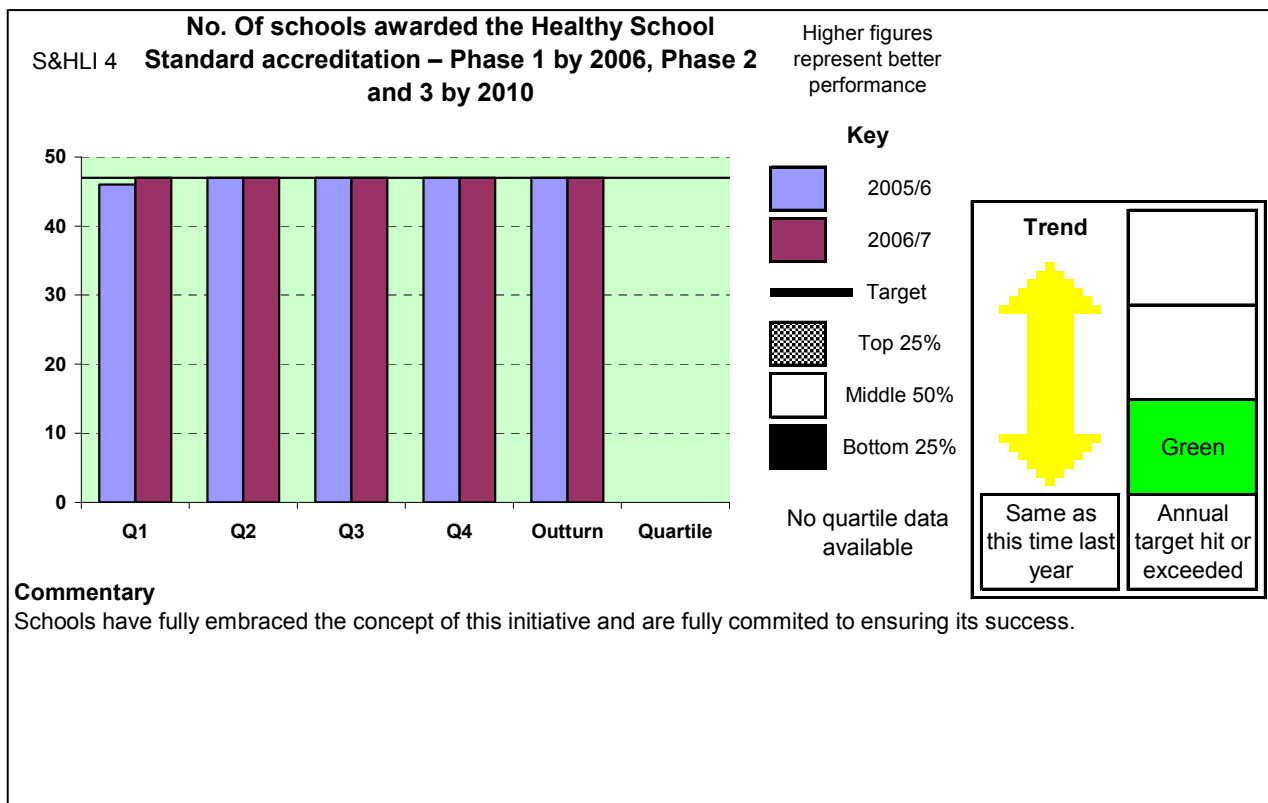
**APPENDIX ONE – PROGRESS AGAINST KEY OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES
Stadium & Hospitality**

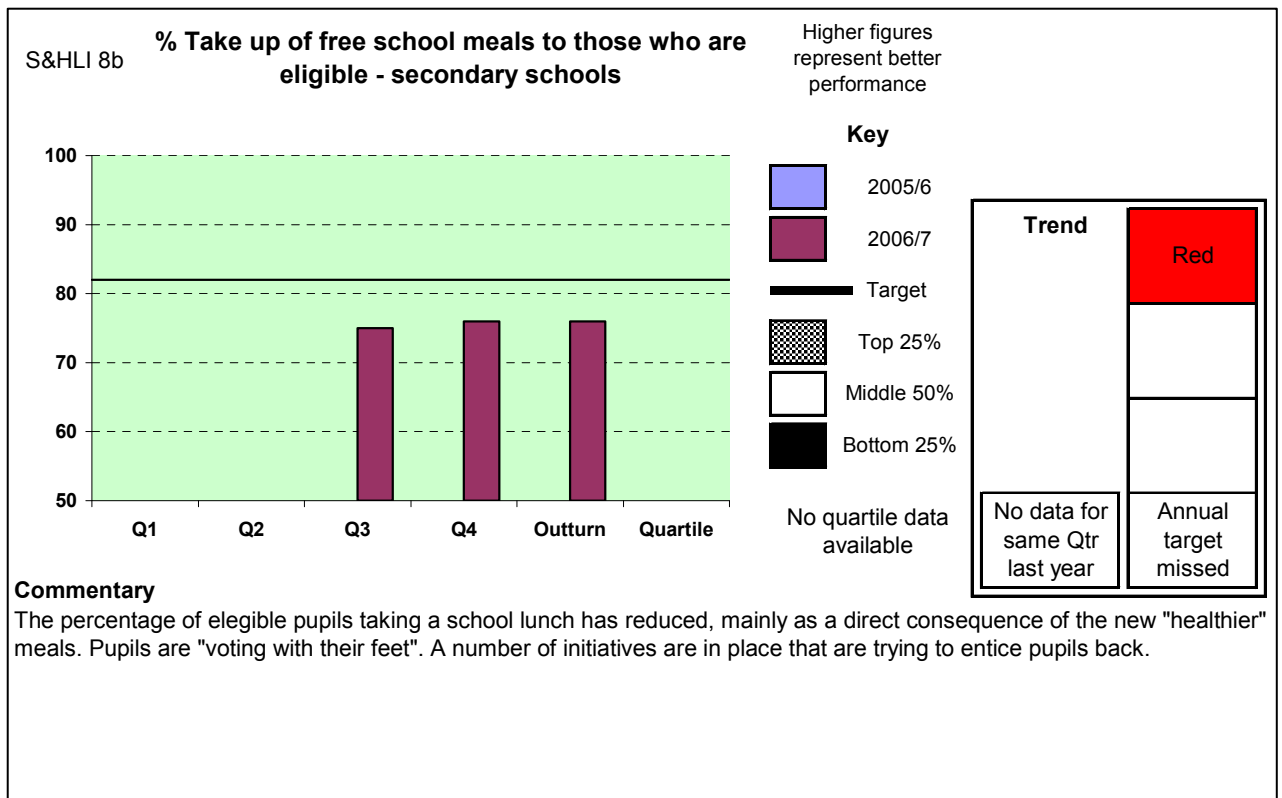
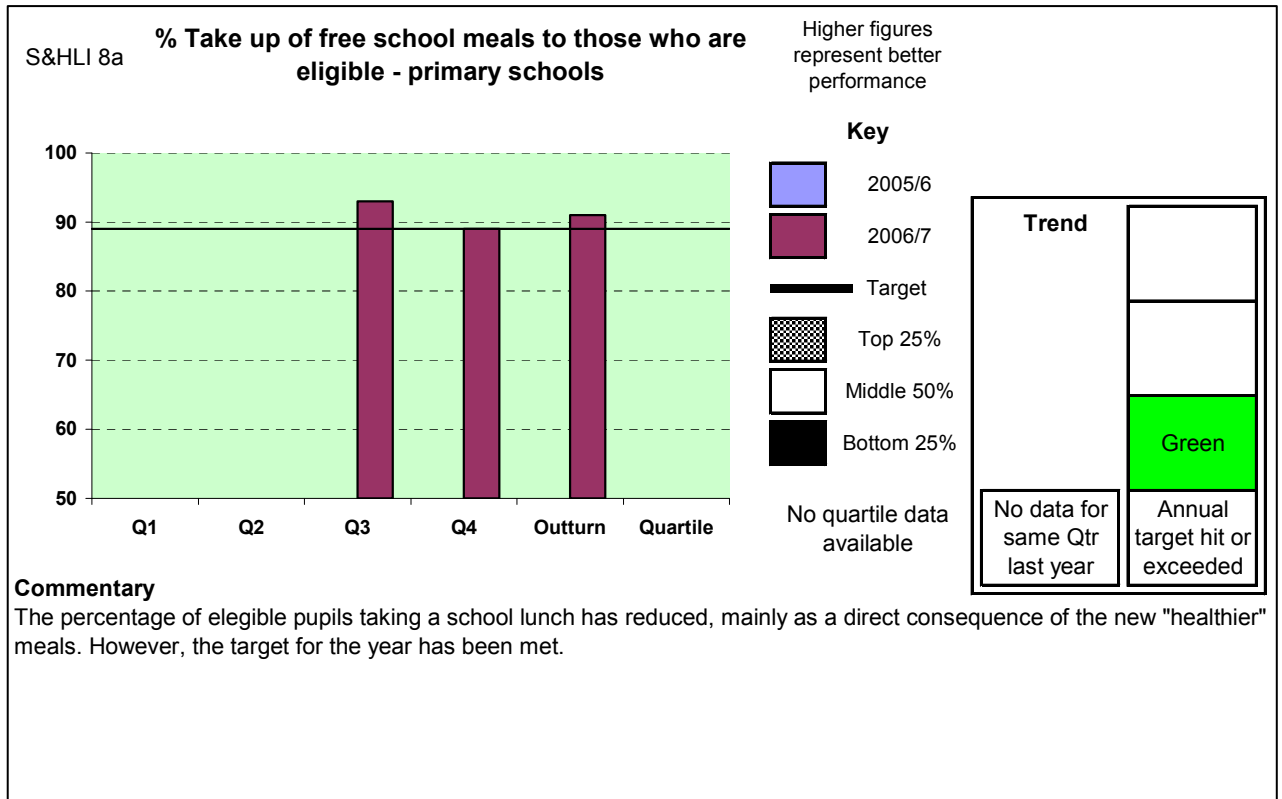
Service Plan Ref.	Objective	2006/07 Key Milestone	Progress to date	Commentary
03	Increase the Stadium turnover (£).	<p>Research and develop a customer database April 06</p> <p>Develop annual plans and programmes of events, for market areas April 06.</p> <p>Promote programmes using marketing mix Sept 06.</p> <p>Research and develop generic survey for ongoing evaluation (used for post events, competitions and customer retention exercises), ongoing</p>		<p>A comprehensive customer database is now in place, it will enable a more direct and specific approach to be taken for direct mailing etc.</p> <p>Completed. Detailed "What's On" published every 6 months.</p> <p>Complete and ongoing.</p> <p>A customer comments evaluation questionnaire is now in operation.</p>
04	Increase the numbers registering for free school meals.	Establish a cross department group to develop a plan to increase registration for school meals Sept 06.		<p>A number of meetings have now taken place. It is being proposed that the free school meal entitlement will be included on other benefit forms, a suitable date for the introduction of this process is presently being discussed.</p> <p>It is estimated that over 1,400 pupils eligible for free schools are not registering.</p>

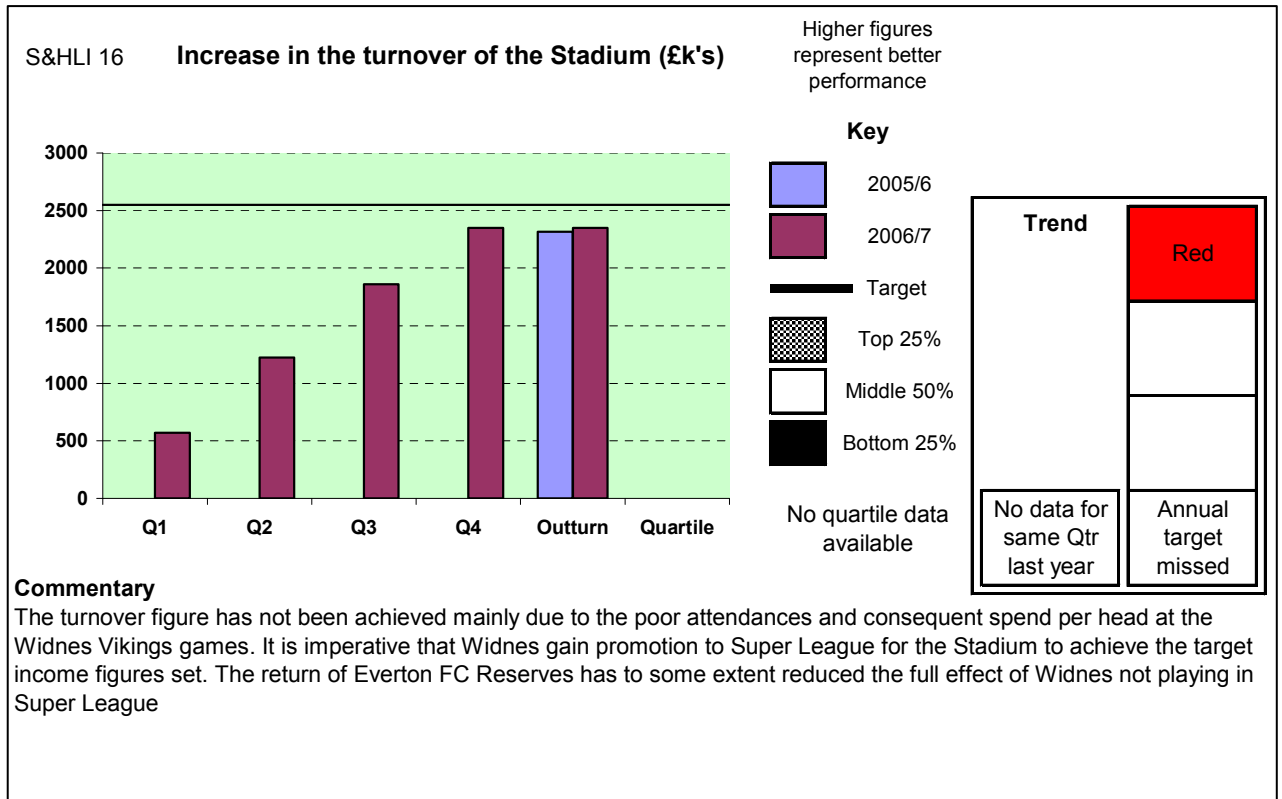
Service Plan Ref.	Objective	2006/07 Key Milestone	Progress to date	Commentary
05	Promote initiatives, which will increase the uptake of free school meals.	<p>Review and report previous years initiatives Aug 06.</p> <p>Roll out successful initiatives and develop new initiatives for trial March 07.</p>		<p>Completed.</p> <p>A number of initiatives are presently in place, the latest is the introduction of a "state of the art" swipe card system at Wade Deacon High School. Current discussion with Internet Service Provider regarding internet based payment system for school meals and trips.</p>
06	Develop and introduce new revenue streams for the Stadium.	Introduce 2 new revenue streams by year-end.		The return of Everton FC Reserves has increased revenue as has the introduction of an ATM machine, holistic medicine salon and dedicated biking studio.

**APPENDIX TWO – PROGRESS AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES/ MILESTONES
Stadium & Hospitality**














Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4	Progress	Commentary
Service Delivery						
LI 02	Number of, (a) Healthy food initiatives (b) Schools	5 60	5 66	6/7 66	 	There is excellent progress being made on all healthy food initiatives, schools, parents and Governors are generally supporting the new initiatives, however they are not proving overly popular with the pupils.
LI 06	% Of children's intake of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day	56	65	67		
LI 07	% Of healthier menu items in Council canteens	62	80	65		All staff restaurants offer a considerable choice of fruit and vegetables. A number of theme days have been introduced in an attempt to both increase customers and introduce new product lines. However, efforts to improve this area of provision have to be tempered by the need to meet demand for other less healthier items and so maintain levels of income.
LI 10	Number of people accessing stadium facilities (1,000's)	556	543	561		The target figure for this year had been reduced to reflect the significant decrease in attendances at the Widnes Vikings home matches. The introduction of Everton Reserves playing at the Stadium has increased user numbers beyond last years actual.

Ref	Indicator	Actual 05 / 06	Target 06 / 07	Quarter 4	Progress	Commentary
LI 11	Increase in the uptake of the Halton Leisure Card	72	100	155		A recent marketing campaign, which has included a leaflet drop has seen a marked increase in the number of customers registering and using the Halton Leisure Card.
Fair Access						
LI 14	Increase in the registration for free school meals	N/a	N/a - A baseline to be established.	71%	N/a	Significant progress made. A baseline has now been established, and a cross functional working group are formulating plans to improve registration.
Cost & Efficiency						
LI 15	Unit cost per visit to the fitness centre	1.29	1.23	1.27		Due to additional hours worked by staff to compensate for the long-term sickness of a key member of the Management Team, the unit cost per visit has not been achieved.
LI 17	Total cost per school meal	1.67	1.70	1.86		The reduced cash income and reduced number of pupils staying for a school lunch has resulted in a significant overspend on this budget.

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 has been achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	<p>Indicates that the annual 06/07 target <u>has been achieved</u> or exceeded</p>
<u>Red</u>	 <p>Indicates that that the <u>objective has not been achieved</u> within the appropriate timeframe.</p>	<p>Indicates that the annual 06/07 target <u>has not been achieved.</u></p>

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 5th June 2005

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Annual Report 2006/07

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To receive the Annual Report of the Corporate Service Policy and Performance Board for 2006/07 (attached), to comment in respect of the same, and to make any changes considered appropriate.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be approved.

3.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage

4.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage

5.0 RISK ANALYSIS

N/A

6.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

N/A

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Overview and Scrutiny Toolkit	2nd Floor Municipal Building	A Villiers



Chairman
Councillor
Gilligan

ANNUAL REPORT CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

“ I would like to thank the members of the Board for their hard work over the last year. The Board has been very effective in reviewing some key areas, and its recommendation on pension policy and partnership governance were accepted by the Executive Board. An in-depth review of Area Forums is also nearing completion .”

Councillor Gilligan

Chairman, Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Gilligan (Chairman), Lowe (Vice-Chair); Blackmore, Bradshaw, Dennett, Edge, C.Inch, Loftus, Nolan, Norddahl and Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, Personnel, IT and E-Government, Property, Committee and Member Services, Risk Management and Emergency Planning, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Registration Service, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Equalities (Employment Aspects), Corporate Complaints Procedure and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the reporting departments namely, Policy and Performance, Legal and Member Services, Finance, Exchequer and Customer Services (Revenues), Property Services, Personnel, and IT.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

Area Forums & Community Engagement

As it is responsible for monitoring the activities of Area Forums, the Board was keen to review progress after almost 5 years of their operation. A Topic Group was established to look at how the Area Forums are working, to identify good practice within Halton and in other local authorities, and to consider the implications of emerging national policy. The group commissioned surveys and focus groups of residents who attend forums, and those that do not. It also interviewed partners, council officers, met with a selection of elected members from all 7 forums, and visited two other local authorities.

The Board's recommendations will be finalised early in the 2007/08 municipal year.

Partnership Working

During the year the Board assisted with the creation of a Partnership register, establishing some criteria for determining when it is appropriate for the Council to become involved in partnerships and to invest staff time or other resources in that partnership, whilst ensuring that arrangements for governance and accountability are in place in the partnerships with which the Council is involved. Consequently, the Board made the following recommendations which were agreed by the Executive Board on 29th March 2007:

- (1) the definition of partnership as set out above be agreed;
- (2) a register of all partnerships of which the Council is a member is created and kept by the Council's Solicitor including the information as outlined in the report;
- (3) all new partnerships created or joined by the Council were notified to the Council Solicitor by the Officer with responsibility for the partnership;
- (4) the governance of partnership checklist is formally endorsed;
- (5) the issues set out in the checklist are properly considered and addressed before a decision is taken to form or enter into a new partnership;
- (6) annual progress reports are presented by each partnership in the register to the appropriate PPB;
- (7) the Corporate Services PPB reviews the partnership register and partnership arrangements on an annual basis to make sure that they are working effectively; and
- (8) as the process with regard to partnerships is developed, additional reports be brought to the Board.

Equalities

As the Board with responsibility for Personnel and Staffing matters the Board considered the forthcoming changes in legislation in relation to age, disability and gender:

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Board requested the Executive Board "to consider whether the Council should set a default retirement age in the light of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006". The Executive Board adopted a no default retirement age policy on 16 November 2006.

Halton Direct Link

During the previous municipal year 2005/06 the Board had commissioned a major review of the operation. The findings of the review undertaken by SOCITM highlighted future opportunities for delivering further services through HDL.

The Board recommended that the developments outlined be investigated and a programme of work developed to deliver the outcomes of these investigations. It was also agreed that a timetable for business process reviews be drawn up, and progress be reported back to the Board quarterly.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

During the year the Board has focused a significant amount of effort on monitoring the performance of its reporting departments. Among the performance issues overseen by the Board during the year are:

- the Halton Stadium Annual Business Plan
- the successful implementation of the new payroll system Trent
- the completion of the Accommodation strategy
- the commencement of a review of the Council's training provision

Services monitored by the Board have successfully received Municipal Journal and APSE awards and been "highly commended" at the Local Government Chronicle awards.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2007/08) it will carry out full reviews of the following areas:

- Learning from Complaints
- Development of Web Based Service Delivery
- Disabled Access to Council buildings
- Performance Management

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact please contact Committee Services in the first instance, telephone 0151 4242061 extension 1125 or email Lynn.Caims@Halton.gov.uk

REPORT TO: Corporate Services PPB

DATE: 5 June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director Policy & Performance

SUBJECT: Work Programme 2007-08

WARDS: Borough-wide

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To confirm the work programme for 2007/08 and agree topic briefs.

2. RECOMMENDED That:

- (1) the work programme proposed at the meeting of the Board on 27 February 2007 is confirmed;**
- (2) the membership of the Topic Teams is confirmed; and**
- (3) the Topic Briefs attached to this report are considered and approved.**

3. BACKGROUND

At its last meeting the Board agreed the following work programme:

Topic	Lead Officer	Lead Member	Membership
Learning from Complaints	Rob Mackenzie	Cllr Lowe	Councillors: Norrdahl, Bradshaw Wainwright, Edge, Gilligan
Development of Web Based Service Delivery	S Riley/R Dart	Cllr Blackmore	Cllrs Wainwright and Gilligan
Disabled access to Council Buildings and Services	J Goacher	Cllr Loftus	Cllrs Wainwright & Gilligan
Performance Management	R Mackenzie	Cllr C Inch	Councillors Wainwright, Gilligan, Nolan, Blackmore, Dennett

Draft topic briefs for learning for complaints, disabled access and Performance Management are attached. A topic brief for the development of web-based service delivery will follow shortly.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None at this stage

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

There is a risk that the work programme is not completed on time, or does not deliver the expected outcomes. This will be mitigated by agreeing a clear topic brief, developing a project plan, and making progress reports to the board in accordance with the Council's Scrutiny Toolkit.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

All reviews will include consideration of equality and diversity issues. The review of disabled access will help to improve equality of access to Council buildings and services..

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Scrutiny Toolkit	2nd floor, Municipal Building	Alex Villiers

Topic Brief

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

Member lead: Councillor A Lowe

Officer Lead: R. MacKenzie Tel: ext. 1016

Planned start/end dates May 07 – Nov 07

Target PPB meeting 8/1/08

Topic description and scope

There are two strands to this Scrutiny topic. The first strand is to explore how to improve outcomes for complainants and as part of this, how to improve their satisfaction with the way the Council deals with and responds to complaints. Part of this process will include consulting with complainants and meeting with service managers and frontline staff.

The second strand is to use the information gained from complaints to continuously improve service delivery as a result of listening to our customers. This will involve reviewing the current systems in place throughout the organisation and researching examples of best practice through the IDEA and other local authorities.

Why this topic was chosen

The Council receives many compliments and complaints about its services. However, the 2006 Best Value User Satisfaction Survey found that 22% of respondents had made a complaint to the Council in the last 12 months of which only 31% were satisfied or very satisfied with the way that the Council had handled their complaints. This satisfaction level was below the average for all local authorities and was lower than Halton's satisfaction level in the previous survey in 2003.

However the User Satisfaction Survey does not define "complaint". Therefore it is likely that residents take a very broad view of what they would regard as a complaint. The main areas of complaint listed in the BV survey were dirty streets/fly tipping/litter (12%), yobs and anti-social behaviour (11%), poor service of roads/pavements (10%), and grass/hedges cutting/overgrown trees (10%). Many of these may have been treated as "service requests" rather than complaints.

The first response to complaints comes from the relevant service department and, as indicated above, these may be classed as service requests rather than complaints. Individual service departments have their own ways of responding and there is no consistent approach across the Council. This means that there is no assurance for senior management or members that service requests or complaints are analysed and the findings used to change the way in which services are delivered.

Only if the complainant remains dissatisfied and complains again does the complaint find its way into the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The number of complaints received by the Corporate Complaints Procedure is very low, averaging approximately 55 per year, and it is felt that this does not represent an accurate picture of residents' dissatisfaction with the standard of service provided by the Council. Since its introduction in 1993 the Corporate Complaints Procedure has been updated on several occasions to reflect best practice. However following the development of new customer access channels such as Halton Direct Link and the Contact Centre it seems logical to take a holistic view when reviewing the Council's approach to complaint handling. It is felt that there is a particular opportunity to use the data recorded by Halton Direct Link to improve organisational learning with regard to service delivery.

Key outputs and outcomes sought

1. A system that brings together and reports on the compliments and complaints patterns, draws inferences, and responds with SMART actions. Where such systems already exist at departmental level (e.g. social care) there is no need to duplicate these systems.
2. For the Council to adopt a consistent approach to responding to customer complaints and requests in terms of speed and quality of reply, irrespective of the customer access channel they are received through. It is anticipated that this will lead to improved customer satisfaction which will be assessed by the next Best Value User Satisfaction Survey due to be undertaken in 2009.

Which of Halton's 6 strategic priorities this topic addresses and the key objectives and improvement targets it will help to achieve

The scrutiny topic relates to the strategic priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery. In particular:

- B To deliver services in a fair, equal, accessible way to all residents.
- E To improve continuously the quality and efficiency of services.

Therefore by improving the Council's approach to complaint handling and using the information to improve service delivery, this should have a positive impact on Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery.

Nature of expected / desired PPB input

The review will:

- audit the current position across the Council
- look at good practice elsewhere for example the IDEA and benchmark against other local authorities
- consult with complainants
- review the scope for analysing the pattern of complaints as a tool to improve services
- consult members about what management information they wish to receive put together proposals for change

This work will be conducted through a working group of the PPB. The Board itself will agree the brief, and receive a final report and recommendations for consideration. If the recommendations are agreed by the Executive Board, the PPB will monitor progress.

Preferred mode of operation

The review will be conducted by a small topic group of members and officers.

Media/communication implications

Improvements in complaint handling should minimise the risk of the Council failing to resolve complaints, which in turn should reduce the likelihood of complaints being reported in the local media. Similarly, by using the information provided by complaints, the Council should be able to improve its quality of service to its customers and therefore this should result in an increase of positive media communications and a reduction of negative media communications.

Agreed and signed by:

PPB Chair

Officer

Date:.....

Date:.....

Topic Brief

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

Lead member: Councillor C Inch

Lead officer: R MacKenzie Tel: ext 1016

Planned start/end dates: June 2007/Nov 2007

Target PPB meeting 8/1/08.

Topic description and scope

Performance Management has been defined as "what an organisation does to realise its aspirations". The purpose of this topic is to review and further develop members' role in Performance Management. It will look at the planning process, performance reporting, and review and improvement. It will consider the role of Policy and Performance Board members, and Executive Board members.

Why this topic was chosen

The current performance management framework was introduced in 2004, and has been incrementally improved ever since. The evidence of performance improvement over the last few years suggests that the current arrangements have served the council well. Nevertheless, given the changes to the national performance framework contained in the recent white paper and bill, and what we have learned since the current system was introduced, it is timely to review our processes.

Key outputs and outcomes sought

Confidence that we have a performance management system that will continue to drive improvement and enable the Council to achieve its objectives, and satisfaction amongst members with the performance framework.

Which of Halton's 5 strategic priorities this topic addresses and the key objectives and improvement targets it will help to achieve

The topic addresses Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery (priority 6 in the Corporate Plan), and in particular the key objectives C and E, to translate vision and priorities into action and delivery, and to improve continuously the quality of services. Area of focus 33 in the plan is "Ensuring that we are properly structured and fit for purpose, and that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate information".

Nature of expected/desired PPB input

The review will look at current practice, seek the views of other members on improvements, and look at recommendations from bodies such as the IDeA, and good practice in other authorities. The topic group will receive reports, conduct group discussions, and will present draft recommendations to the PPB for comment.

Preferred mode of operation

The method of operation will be a working group, supported by research and interviews.

Media/communication implications

This is primarily an internal process, so there are no media implications for the review itself. Any changes agreed to the current framework will require careful internal communication. It is expected that the government will shortly issue guidance on publicising performance data to the local community in an accessible way, and this will have implications for communications.

Agreed and signed by:

PPB Chair

Officer

Date:.....

Date:.....

TOPIC BRIEF TEMPLATE (Part I)

TOPIC TITLE

DDA The next steps

**PPB(s) responsible: C & P..... Officer Lead: J
Goacher..... Tel.....**

Planned start/end dates...May 2007/March 2008

Target PPB meeting

Topic description and scope

The 1996 Disability Discrimination Act 1996, which was to be implemented in 2004, placed a duty on Employers to make Buildings accessible for both staff and visitors. The Council undertook a DDA audit of all its buildings to establish the needs for compliance.

The Council is in the process of completing: 1. Its legal obligation, to eliminate a barrier to the provision of, or hazard to access to and use of the building by disabled visitors or staff. 2. Implementing as soon as possible improvements to access.

The Council should now consider what if anything it should do now beyond that already being completed. The DDA act has further priorities which suggest works to be undertaken when major refurbishment works are undertaken, works to be undertaken when major maintenance is undertaken, works to suit individual members of staff when they are employed.

The audits addressed the building for their primary function what should now be examined is any secondary functions that the buildings perform (Temporary polling stations and the like)

Why this topic was chosen

The topic was chosen to consider whether the Council is adequately fulfilling its responsibilities under requirements of the DDA legislation

Key outputs and outcomes sought

To ensure HBC is able to say to all its residents and employees that it is acting reasonably to meet their needs

Which of Halton's 5 strategic priorities this topic addresses and the key objectives and improvement targets it will help to achieve

A safer Halton, Key Objective C. Creating and sustaining better neighbourhoods that are well designed, built and maintained and valued by the people who use them.

A Healthy Halton Key Objective E. Removing the barriers for disabled people ensuring ready access to a wide range of social, community and housing services, and cultural and sporting activities that enhance their quality of life. Halton's Urban renewal, Key Objective D. To ensure that Halton's designs in and maintains high levels of accessibility to places and spaces Children & Young People in Halton, All Key objectives by providing access to facilities to enable Children and young people to achieve their maximum potential. Employment Learning & Skills in Halton, All Key Objectives. In providing access to employment opportunity. Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery, Key Objective B. Delivery of services in a fair, equal, accessible way to all residents.

Nature of expected/desired PPB input

To look at the additional future works and consider whether they offer value for money

Preferred mode of operation

By way of looking at a sample of Reports and discussion with the current occupants/users of the building

Media/communication implications

None at this stage

Agreed and signed by:

PPB Chair

Officer

Date:.....

Date:.....

REPORT TO: Corporate Services PPB

DATE: 5th June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Corporate & Policy

SUBJECT: Review of Area Forums

WARDS: Borough-wide

1. **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

This report and its appendix summarises the evidence collected during a review of Area Forums in Halton, and presents the recommendations of the Topic Group.

2. **RECOMMENDED That:**

- (1) The Board considers and comments upon the report of the Topic Group and its recommendations;**
- (2) Executive Board be requested to approve the recommendations set out in Section 5 of the report (subject to any amendments arising from (a) above);**
- (3) A further report be submitted to this Board summarising the response of Executive Board; and**
- (4) Subject to the decision of Executive Board, regular progress reports be made to this Policy and Performance Board.**

3. **BACKGROUND**

A Topic Group of Board Members has conducted a review of Area Forums, involving surveys, focus groups, interviews and visits to other local authorities. The review looked at how Forums have evolved in Halton, and has identified recommendations for further improvement.

The report of the Topic Group is attached (Appendix 1) and the recommendations are set out in Section 5.

4. **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Notes and reports of surveys, focus groups and interviews	2 nd Floor Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Rob Mackenzie
Local Government White Paper	2 nd Floor Municipal Building Kingsway Widnes	Rob Mackenzie

CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY & PERFORMANCE BOARD

REVIEW OF AREA FORUMS

Area Forum Topic Group - May 2007

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CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY & PERFORMANCE BOARD REVIEW OF AREA FORUMS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of a Review of Area Forums.

Area Forums were introduced across the whole Borough in 2002 to improve local decision making by bringing consideration of local issues as close to the community as possible, by working in partnership with others to tackle difficult issues, and to consult people at local level as part of the process of engaging people in local democracy.

The review examined how the practice of Area Forums has evolved, and identified options for further development. It looked at the role and purpose of Forums, their governance arrangements, how the seven Forums currently operate and what lessons can be drawn from what works.

The recommendations are intended to improve the ability of Forums to engage at local level with residents, and should increase resident satisfaction with opportunities to influence and participate in local decisions.

2. STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The report which follows sets out the national and local policy context for Area Forums, and summarises the evidence collected by the Topic Group from surveys and meetings with residents, officers, elected members and partners, and by visiting other local authorities. The last section draws conclusions and makes recommendations for improving the operation of Forums.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1. National Policy

The Local Government White Paper and the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill, are built on the assumption that public services needed to be made more personal and so community engagement at the neighbourhood level is paramount. There are to be new powers:

- the Community Call for Action enabling Councillors to refer local issues to the Executive Board or Policy & Performance Boards
- greater focus on citizen engagement through a revised Best Value duty and refocused performance framework
- simpler processes for the formation of town or Parish Councils (and a presumption in favour of their establishment where communities request them)

And there is encouragement:

- to adopt neighbourhood charters
- to develop neighbourhood management
- to transfer redundant assets eg (buildings) to the community

One key feature of the White Paper and Bill is that there is no “one size fits all” prescription for neighbourhood working.

The White Paper and Bill place great emphasis on the role of the Local Strategic Partnership and on Local Area Agreements and on the importance of looking at all public services in an area rather than working silos.

This changing national picture is also influencing other public agencies in Halton. For example, there is a commitment to introduce neighbourhood policing across the whole country by April 2008. The health sector is also being encouraged to engage more locally, particularly in those neighbourhoods with the worst health inequalities.

3.2. Local Policy

The Council and the Halton Strategic Partnership Board have recognised through the Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy the need to look at the experience of our residents at neighbourhood level, and to close the gap between the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and the rest. This is reflected in the targets we have agreed with Government in the Local Area Agreement. In order to deliver on this commitment, pilot neighbourhood management arrangements have been established with Government funding in these areas. It is hoped to learn from the pilots with a view to extending successful approaches across the Borough.

Service delivery is already devolved at a local level in some areas. For example, Streetscene, Community Development, and the Youth Service are delivered on an Area Forum basis. Neighbourhood Policing is also based around Area Forum boundaries. Services to Children & Young People, delivered through Halton’s 0-19 Children’s Centres, are being organised around Children & Young People Area Networks (CYPANs) which loosely reflect Area Forum boundaries over much of Halton.

3.3. Issues Arising

- a. Does the geography of our Area Forums reflect recognisable neighbourhoods? Are they a suitable basis for neighbourhood working? For example, are Beechwood and Hallwood Park part of what residents would recognise as the same neighbourhood? Likewise Halton View and Upton Rocks.
- b. How do Area Forums fit in with the three neighbourhood management pilots?
- c. How does the Council wish to respond to Government expectations of greater engagement with services at neighbourhood level?

4. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

The Topic Group had collected evidence from a variety of sources.

- i. Elected Members (group discussion)
- ii. Support Officers (group discussion)
- iii. Partners and Council Service Leads (interviews)
- iv. Halton 2000 survey
- v. Focus groups drawn from attenders and non attenders at Area Forums
- vi. Discussions and a questionnaire at the January cycle of Area Forum meetings
- vii. Study visits to Knowsley and Tameside

Detailed records from all these sources are available on request. A brief summary of the main findings in each case is set out below:

4.1. **Elected Members**

Each Area Forum was invited to nominate at least one member to attend a meeting with the Topic Group. In all, 13 members were present.

It was apparent from the discussion that current practice varies quite widely between different forums. This was a surprise to some members who only had experience of their own forum. Views as to the success of current arrangements and the scope for improvement varied considerably. Some members clearly feel that what is already in place is working well and should not be tampered with. Others saw room for further improvement.

There was general agreement on a number of points:

- a. Area Forums provide an opportunity to listen to residents, to inform residents, and to use the Area Forum budget to fix local problems.
- b. There was support for increasing the involvement of partners, and for using forums to hold them to account on local matters. However, the experience of working with the Police had taken time to settle down.
- c. In the conduct of meetings and the decisions on funding allocation, the role of democratically accountable elected members was crucial.
- d. Attendance at meetings was variable from forum to forum and according to current local issues. They should be publicised more effectively, and meetings should be made interesting with a limit on the number and length of presentations.
- e. The timing and location of meetings could never meet the preferences of all residents.
- f. Youth involvement was important but there was no single view on the best way of facilitating it.
- g. The length of time between meetings creates a lack of continuity which is accentuated in those forums where venues rotate around the wards.

4.2. **Support Officers**

Each Forum is supported by a Senior Manager (usually an Operational Director). There is also an Area Forum Co-ordinator who helps all seven forums by progress chasing individual projects and keeping overall track of expenditure commitments. Legal and Member Services organise and service Forum meetings and pre-agenda meetings.

The Topic Group Chair led a discussion with four of the Lead Officers and the Area Forum Co-ordinator. The key conclusions of this group were:

- a. **Attendance** - generally felt to be poor. Mainly the same faces at every meeting. The exception is when there are controversial single issues typically based around planning or licensing applications. Given the generally low levels of attendance do Area Forums represent value for money?

- b. **Purpose** - Area Forums are:
- an opportunity for residents to become engaged
 - a way for members to hear community opinion
 - a way for the community to access funding
 - a way of providing information to the community
- c. **Allocation of funding** - some Panels tend to work on a first come first served basis rather than using objective criteria to prioritise bids. A significant proportion of funding proposals come from officers or members either directly or indirectly via members of the public. It is perceived that not many come fresh from the floor. More encouragement could be given to requests from the wider community. The decision making around funding may not always appear transparent to residents as decisions are often made by members outside the public forum meeting.
- d. **Timing and location** - Area Forum meetings are held at 7.00pm. Whilst this benefits those who work, (including elected members) it disadvantages those reliant on public transport and those who are reluctant to go out after dark. Some venues are difficult to find and some are remote. Town centre locations might be more accessible.
- e. **Frequency** - the frequency of Area Forum meetings could be seen as a measure of how important or not they are viewed by the Council.
- f. **Format** - the formality of the meetings discourage participation. However, a more informal drop-in approach could lead to them becoming extended members' surgeries.
- g. **Geography** - Area Forums cover wide and diverse areas. However, working at a more local level, for example, ward panels, was viewed as unworkable in terms of the staff resources that would be required to administer and support them.
- h. **Partner involvement** - increasing the attendance of partners especially the Police but also the Primary Care Trust and registered Social Landlords, would strengthen Panels.
- i. **Residents involvement** - including residents on the Panels would demonstrate the commitment and facilitate a more joined up community focused approach.
- j. **Presentations** - more thought is required to localise the content of presentations to make them area specific and to pitch them appropriately to the audience. If questions and local nuts and bolts issues were dealt with first on the agenda, and presentations dealt with later, it might emphasise the priorities of the Area Forum and increase a sense of local empowerment. There was concern that at some venues, it is difficult to see or hear presentations. Better use of IT and possibly a portable PA system might help to address this.
- k. **Publicity** - Forums need to be better publicised. Suggestions include sending out details of spend and achievement with Council Tax bills, publicising spend and achievements on the Council website, and badging Area Forum funded projects for example with signs or plaques to promote the work of the Area Forum.

4.3. **Partners and Service Leads**

Three members of the Topic Group met a number of partners and Council Officers individually or in small groups as part of an "enquiry day". This included representatives from the Police, Fire Service, PCT, Halton Voluntary Action Together, Cosmopolitan

Housing, Four Estates Ltd (a community group), the Council's Transport and Waste Management Services, and a group of young people.

In summary, the key points raised were:

a. Role of Forums

- Engagement, joint problem solving, for residents to influence service delivery (eg a Streetscene, CSOs) to initiate local projects, and to harvest ideas from residents.
- Consultation at local level about local and Borough wide plans
- To inform residents about services and about decisions
- To allocate Area Forum funds

b. Partners and Links

- Young people were keen to develop the links between Area Forums and Area Youth Forums
- Service providers acknowledged the opportunity to use Area Forums for specific consultations rather than organising separate events (for example quality corridors)
- One consultee was concerned about combining Police meetings with Area Forums but combined Police and RSL surgeries were suggested as an alternative.

Generally, partners were very positive about reducing the number of different forums by combining meetings (eg Police and registered social landlords). Partners with no area arrangements of their own see the potential to use Area Forums (Primary Care Trust, Fire & Rescue Service).

c. Attendance and Operational Arrangements

This generated the most comment.

- Attendance levels were considered to be poor (frequently mentioned, but not all Forums and not every meeting). The overwhelming view was that to secure better attendance, residents need to feel that they have influence over decisions. It was noted that Area Forums are just one method of engagement, and we can gather local opinion by other means (surveys, using frontline staff etc). Not all residents want to engage, and of those that do, not all want to go to meetings. Therefore, low attendance is not necessarily a problem provided there are alternative methods of engagement in place.
- Setting agendas - it is important to get the right balance between giving information and listening to residents. It should be easy for residents to put items forward for the agenda. We should involve partners in agenda setting and put on joint presentations (for example anti-social behaviour). Questions should be allowed without prior notice, provided that it is understood that there may not be an instant answer on the night.
- Young people - consideration needs to be given to different ways of involving young people of meetings and outside meetings in other settings. We could give the Youth Forums an agenda slot on every Area Forum meeting. It would help to give

maximum advance notice of agenda items to allow issues to be taken to the Youth Forum first so that their representatives at the Area Forum can come with a considered view (the same comment was made about community groups).

- Feedback - it is important to inform the community about what the Forum is doing. Options include:
 - regular progress reports on projects for example by the website
 - an annual newsletter from each Forum focussing on its achievements
 - local leafleting or publicity in the vicinity of particular projects as they are carried out.
 - Promotion of meetings - more needs to be done for example including a schedule of meetings in the refuse collection calendar (but there is a timing problem with this); use schools to publicise meetings to young people and their parents.

Time and place - the benefits of local -v- central venues and day time -v- evening meetings were discussed without any clear consensus emerging. It was suggested that an annual day long event be held every year for each Forum to identify the priorities for that area for the coming year.

- Frequency - more meetings were suggested enabling more than one meeting to be held in each ward every year (for those forums that rotate venues).
- Layout - the top table format was commented on. Suggestions included a circular format or members sitting with residents. Refreshments such as tea and coffee would make for a more friendly and flexible approach.
- Facilities - need to ensure that Powerpoint is available when needed and adult sized chairs in schools would be appreciated.

d. Governance and Funding

There are variations in practice between Forums as to how decisions are made on funding allocations. It was suggested that in all cases proposals should be put to a Forum for comment before being approved by Members, and that all decisions should be publicly reported and progress tracked. The potential for devolving budgets was discussed with Officers, but there was some concern that it might result in areas of greatest need (in a technical sense such as areas with the most clapped out street lighting) would not get the funding they required. Administration of these budgets by seven different Area Forums would require increased technical support.

4.4. Halton 2000 Survey

Halton 2000 is a Citizens Panel which is surveyed on a range of topics four times a year. In January 2007, questions were put to the Panel about Area Forums. The key results were as follows:

- i. Awareness - could be better
 - of 1,367 responses, 52% were not aware of Area Forums

- 84% had never seen any publicity for Area Forums.
 - The preferred method to receive information about Area Forum meetings was by leaflets delivered to the household (58%). The next most popular methods of receiving information were notices or adverts in local papers (44%) and information in the Council magazine (26%).
- ii. Willingness to attend - 61% of respondents said that they would attend an Area Forum to discuss issues or raise a question.
- iii. Reasons for attending - for those who had attended an Area Forum, the main reason was to find out about what is going on in their area (62%). A further 20% had wanted to raise a particular issue.
- iv. Reasons for not attending - of those aware of Forums but who have not attended, the main reasons given were:
- not knowing when/where the meetings are held (27%)
 - not knowing enough about them (27%)
 - times are inconvenient (27%)
- v. Preferred topics. The following topics are those which residents would like to raise or that might encourage them to attend an Area Forum meeting.

Topic	% Interested
▪ To find out about long term plans for the area	63%
▪ To find out more about the reasons behind decisions affecting the area	54%
▪ To raise specific problems such as fly tipping or anti-social behaviour	44%
▪ To be involved in making decisions	40%
▪ To meet other agencies such as the Police or Health Service	39%
▪ To raise issues about the way that money is spent in the area	36%
▪ To raise issues about the level and quality of Council services	35%
▪ To work with people in the area to make it a better place to live	34%
▪ To meet my local Councillor and let him/her know about my views	29%

note: % adds up to more than 100% - respondents were allowed to select more than one answer

- vi. Timing - most people (68%) would prefer evening meetings.
- vii. Location - most people (61%) would prefer the meeting to be held within the Area Forum area rather than centrally
- viii. Mode of travel - most people prefer to meetings by car (57%). Of the rest, 30% would prefer to walk and 11% to use public transport.

As a baseline for measuring the future success of Area Forums, when asked, 51% agreed that they could influence decisions in their area and 65% agreed that by working together, people in their neighbourhood could influence decisions affecting the neighbourhood.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this survey are that we should:

- Improve publicity about where and when meetings take place and what they are about.

- Ensure that the agendas include topics important to residents
- Continue to hold meetings in the evening in the Area Forum areas

4.5. **Focus Group of Non-Attendees**

A focus group was held in January 2007 for residents who had not attended an Area Panel. Participants were drawn from the Halton 2000 Panel and the focus group was conducted by Merseyside Information Service to ensure independence from the Council. The key findings were:

- i. **Awareness** - only one of the participants knew anything about Area Forums. On hearing about them, others were keen to go and see what forums were like.
- ii. **Improving attendance**
 - No one time suited all participants and 7.00pm was as good a time as any
 - length of the meeting was not a strong factor in determining attendance
 - improved publicity via newspaper adverts would be seen as adequate by many, but for those who do not read the local paper a leaflet would be preferred
 - knowing what is on the agenda beforehand would help participants to decide whether to attend or not
 - preferred location for meetings would be in the Area Forum area
 - there were mixed views on frequency of meetings: some felt quarterly was enough others said monthly would give more choice of attending
 - a large meeting was seen as intimidating by some and therefore they would like the opportunity to express opinions in writing or in smaller discussion groups
 - seeing positive action taken as a result of discussion at the forum would encourage future attendance
 - topics that participants would find interesting ranged from the lack of local shops through to transport. They recognised that Area Forums can only deal with local issues but could also act as the first step in bringing wider issues to the attention of the relevant department or organisation.
 - Decision making - the role of Area Forums in making decisions was seen as limited because Forums only represent the views of a minority
 - Information - respondents would like feedback on progress with issues raised at the forums, and for dates to be set for outcomes, and for the publication of minutes.

4.6. **Focus Group of Area Forum attendees**

A focus group of people who had attended meetings was drawn from the Council's Area Forum contact list, and conducted by Merseyside Information Service to ensure independence.

- i. **General** - Area Forums were regarded as "very good" and provided a means of two way communication and an opportunity to air complaints, to receive information and explanation of decisions.
- ii. **Presentations** - there was a mixed view on presentations made to Area Forums ranging from "spot on" to suggestions that they should be shorter, made relevant to the local area, and the presenters should avoid the use of jargon.
- iii. **The agenda** - there was a desire that participants should be able to contribute to the setting of the agenda for example by asking at the end of the evening what issues those attending would like to see on the next forum agenda. To improve accountability, contact details of Council Officers attending the meeting should be included on the agenda. Agendas should be simplified into questions from the floor, items with information that is presentations and feedback or progress reports. Participants in the focus group would like feedback on progress between meetings. It was suggested as a minimum that the minutes could be mailed out in between meetings rather than waiting for the agenda of the next meeting to go out.
- iv. **Asking questions** - there were mixed views about the process of submitting questions: some were pleased with the results others were not. Participants would like to be able to ask cold questions on the night.
- v. **Area Forum budgets** - the Area Forum budgets are viewed positively by those who are aware of them.
- vi. **Decision making** - the focus group participants recognised that Area Forums can only deal with matters over which Council members have powers, but do expect that issues that the Council cannot deal with should be passed on to the relevant body rather than simply saying it is nothing to do with us.

It was suggested that a system for monitoring progress on items not fully dealt with at a previous meeting should be introduced. Some participants in the focus group did not view forums as being primarily for decision making but mainly for information and to make recommendations. Litter, traffic, parking, youth, vandalism, and nuisance were seen as areas upon which Area Forums might make decisions.

- vii. **Use of Halton Direct Link** - it was felt that if Halton Direct Link receives several complaints or questions about a particular issue in an area, this could be fed through to the Forum for consideration as part of the agenda.
- viii. **Influencing Service Delivery** - as a means of influencing service delivery, forums can highlight failures, and can publicise good work as a positive way of promoting forums and influencing service delivery.
- ix. **The conduct of meetings** - there were mixed views about chairing meetings. One suggested that a lay person should chair the meeting, others like having the same Chairman at every meeting and some preferred the Chairmanship to rotate. Some participants in the focus group referred to issues that are raised at Forums but not taken up by the Forum and they felt that the decision whether or not to pursue a matter should

be for the whole forum not just for the members. Participants would like an open Any Other Business item at the end of the agenda. Comments were made that seating arrangements with a top table was not felt to be conducive to participation in the meeting.

- x. **Encouraging participation** - suggestions for encouraging attendance and participation included:
- improved marketing
 - more frequent Area Forums (every two months)
 - no change to time or venue
 - arrange for a bus to pick up residents on the night of the forums
 - encourage all age groups to attend

4.7. **Survey at Area Forum Meetings**

The review of Area Forums was included on the agenda of all seven forums in January 2007, and questionnaires were distributed to all attendees. In total, 49 questionnaires were returned, of which 38 came from just three forums, so the results must be treated with care. The key findings were:

- the majority (82%) attended to find out what was going on in the area
- the preferred method of finding out about forums was by direct mailshot (55%) followed by information in the Council magazine (43%), leaflets to the household (41%) or email shots (37%)
- the vast majority preferred an evening meeting on a weekday (95%) within the Area Forum area
- respondents were very willing to travel one or two miles (92%) and 57% would travel up to five miles to attend a meeting
- the majority (70%) would travel by car and 23% on foot
- of nine suggested topics or issues, seven were of interest to at least 2/3 of respondents suggesting that there is no one topic of greater importance
- the majority (84%) felt forums should have a budget
- asked for one suggestion as to how forums could be improved, a range of answers were given. These included:
 - better publicity marketing (13)
 - fewer/shorter presentations (4)
 - more information about how the budget is spent, and more say in budget decisions (3)
 - involve more young people (1)
 - less formal layout, facilitate discussion between people who attend (2)
 - consult on what should be discussed/last agenda item to be suggestions for the agenda for the next meeting (2)
 - better sound/microphones and AV equipment (2)
 - time limit for questions (1)

- other comments were:
 - could meetings be rotated to Appleton and Riverside
 - have public questions first instead of last
 - Police, Housing and Youth Service to be invited to attend

There were also many positive comments supporting the concept and the current arrangements

4.8. **Study Visit to Tameside MBC**

Tameside is a Beacon Authority for “getting closer to communities”. It has nine district assemblies based on old townships such as Ashton and Hyde, with delegated budgets for local roads, footpaths, street lights, parks, gardens, open spaces, street cleansing, play provision, youth services and certain community safety initiatives. District assemblies consist of all Ward Councillors, a standing Chair and Vice Chair. They are supported by an advisory group of residents, businesses, and young people elected by local secondary schools. The Advisory Group sits with Councillors at the public assembly meetings and they also meet with them outside these formal meetings, but have no voting rights. The Police, town patrollers (Wardens) and Fire Service all attend the meetings. The PCT does not regularly attend but the health sector has made presentations on specific issues.

The Assemblies concentrate on “cleaner, greener, safer issues” but do have wider responsibilities based on the key core priorities. Each Assembly has a town plan. The Droylesden Plan for example has action plans for the environment, community safety, local liaison, and young people with two lead members for each priority theme.

The nine Assemblies are supported by three full time, Township Managers each of whom has secretarial, administrative and project management support. Each assembly has a nominated Democratic Services officer, and named contacts in key services (eg engineering, youth services).

Each Assembly has its own style, the common features on all of the agendas are:

- i. a town scene report describing what has happened in the locality since the last meeting
- ii. a “What’s On” report highlighting future events
- iii. agenda slots for the Police, Wardens and Fire Service and
- iv. an open question session

Meetings are widely publicised by poster campaigns, street banners in the week before the event, press notices, website, and Council Newspaper.

4.9. **Study Visit to Knowsley MBC**

Knowsley used to have Area Public Forums very similar to Halton’s. However, over the last 12 months, these forums have been replaced by “Concept Knowsley” which is based on a Neighbourhood Management approach. Areas are managed by Area Partnership Boards and services are restructuring around devolved delivery. Area Partnership Boards are constituted like a mini LSP with representatives from key partner agencies, resident representatives, a business representative, and one Councillor for each ward, giving overall

board membership of between 12 and 15. The Area Public Forums only meet now if commissioned by the Area Partnership Board to consult on a particular topical theme.

The six Area Partnership Boards are supported by six Area Relationship Directors and small area based teams. The area based teams comprise of an Environmental Manager, a half time Communications Officer, two Partnership Engagement Officers, a Neighbourhood Warden Manager and 12 Wardens, a Highways Inspector for one day a week, a hot desk to the Police and Social Care. Each Partnership communicates monthly through a newsletter.

The initial area of focus for the Partnerships has been Streetscene and environmental issues. Area Partnership Boards have no budgets of their own.

5. CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

There is government encouragement to develop neighbourhood engagement, and neighbourhood management. Area Forums may not provide the best geography for that, but have the advantage of being established, and service delivery has been designed around them. Three strategic options are available:

Option 1 - map out neighbourhoods which residents would identify with and reconfigure Area Forums onto these boundaries. This could lead to a large number of smaller forums. It would only be worth doing if we could resource it and had a clear vision of how to operate on a neighbourhood basis.

Option 2 - move towards a neighbourhood management model in each Area Forum area, with a Partnership Board replacing the Area Forum. Forums could be convened as a consultation mechanism for the Partnership Board. This approach would imply significant investment and the reconfiguration of services (the Concept Knowsley model).

Option 3 - retain current Forum arrangements, but develop their role to increase participation by residents and partners.

Given our current arrangements, it would make most sense to follow Option 3 for the time being. Once the three Neighbourhood Management pilots have become established and some lessons begin to emerge, we could then evaluate whether there were any improvements which could be rolled out across the whole Borough.

The remainder of this section is based on Option 3 - that is improving current Forum arrangements.

5.1. The Role of Area Forums

In the course of its research, no single view of the purpose of Area Forums emerged. It is important that residents know what to expect, and that Officers and Members are clear about the purpose of Forums.

It is **recommended** that

- i. *the following Statement of Purpose be agreed for Area Forums, and that this statement be incorporated into the Constitution, displayed at meetings, and publicised through other appropriate means:*

“the role and purpose of the Area Forum is:

- *to listen to the concerns and problems of residents and to engage in joint problem solving*
- *to inform residents about what is going on in their area, and about decisions of the Council and its partners*
- *to enable residents to influence the planning and delivery of services*
- *to commission improvements using the Area Forum budget.*

5.2. Involvement of Partners

In discussion with partners, some expressed willingness to become more involved in Area Forums. Some partners hold their own local meetings (for example residents forums organised by landlords, PADS and CAMS organised by the Police). There has been mixed experience of linking Area Forums to PADS and the Cheshire Constabulary are in the process of reviewing their approach to neighbourhood Working.

It is **recommended** that the Borough Council:

- i. formally invites the Police, Fire Service, registered social landlords, and Youth Service to attend Area Forum meetings regularly*
- ii. provides space on the agenda for updates from each of the key partners subject to advance notice being given of issues that they wish to cover*
- iii. regularly invites partners to put forward suggestions for future agenda items*

and that:

- iv. members and the lead officer from each Forum identify meetings organised by other partners in their area and explore the scope for combined meetings, but the joint meetings with the Police be not pursued at this stage pending their review of their own neighbourhood arrangements.*

5.3. Involving Young People

With the support of the Youth Service, Youth Area Forums have been established mirroring the Council's Area Forums. Two representatives from the Youth Forum attend Area Forum meetings. The extent and manner in which they are encouraged to contribute varies from Forum to Forum. It is important that the voice of young people is heard at Forum meetings.

It is **recommended** that:

- i. the attendance and participation of Youth Forum representatives at all Area Forum meetings be welcomed and encouraged*
- ii. that once a year, a joint meeting of the Area Forum and the Youth Forum be held*
- iii. the Youth Forum to be invited to put forward items for inclusion in future forum agendas*

5.4. Governance

Area Forums are established in the Council's constitution (Article 11 2006/07). Their activities are reported to Corporate Services Policy & Performance Board to provide

accountability. However, there is a lack of clarity about how decisions are made (particularly with respect to Area Forum expenditure). To clarify this, it is **recommended that**

- i. the Constitution be amended to clarify that whilst Area Forums are not decision making bodies, the Lead Officer has delegated authority to authorise expenditure of Area Forum funds in consultation with Members.*

Practice varies between Forums as to where and when funding commitments are made, and how such decisions are publicised. Whilst it is appropriate for Forums to adopt their own way of working, in order to ensure transparency, it is **recommended** for the avoidance of doubt that:

- ii. any decisions made outside of a public meeting of the Forum about the allocation of forum funds should be reported to the next public meeting*

It is important that if members are unable to resolve issues raised at an Area Forum, they can, when it is a matter of sufficient significance, refer it to Executive Board or the appropriate Policy & Performance Board. This clarifies current custom and practice. It is **recommended that**

- iii. the Constitution be amended to make it clear that Area Forums may refer matters of significance which they are unable to resolve to the Executive Board or to the appropriate Policy & Performance Board.*

5.5. Neighbourhood Charters

The Topic Group considered the merit of producing area plans as seen in Tameside. Area Renewal Plans were produced in Halton in 2003, but it proved difficult to encourage “bottom up” engagement from residents. Given the resources required to do this properly, the Group concluded it was not appropriate at this stage to revive this process. However, some value was seen in producing a Neighbourhood Charter setting out what levels of service residents could expect in each Area Forum area. It is **recommended that**:

- i. the production of Neighbourhood Charters be investigated and a further report made to Corporate Services Policy & Performance Board about the feasibility of this proposal.*

5.6. Frequency of Meetings

Area Forums currently meet three times a year. For Forums which rotate meetings around wards, this typically means one meeting in each venue per year. The gaps between meetings generate discontinuity. It was felt desirable to increase the frequency of meetings. However, the Topic Group is aware of the already heavy workload of members, and so it is **recommended that**:

- i. the frequency of Area Forum meetings be increased to four a year from the 2008/09 municipal year, including joint meeting with the Area Youth Forum.*

5.7. Area Forum Budgets

The Area Forums have a total budget of £600,000 per year, divided between the Forums on a per capita basis. Of this total, £300,000 is funded by the Council, and £300k is contributed by the Halton Strategic Partnership from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). The Government’s commitment to NRF ends in March 2008 resulting in a potential 50% reduction in funding to Area Forums. The Topic Group felt that the Area Forum funding is a valuable tool for forums to address local problems, and **recommends**:

- i. that consideration be given in the 2008/08 budget to replacing any loss of NRF from the Council's own resources.*

5.8. Time and Place of Meetings

The review clearly revealed that there is no time of day which suits everyone. Overall, there is a clear preference for continuing with the current practice of evening meetings. However, this does present difficulties for some groups of residents (for example, the elderly and those reliant on public transport). To help residents to access meetings, a dial-a-ride service could be provided, although costs would have to be met from Area Forum budgets. It is also possible to engage with groups of residents who find it hard to attend forum meetings by other means. It is **recommended** that:

- i. the normal time for forum meetings continues to be 7.00pm*
- ii. the cost and effectiveness of a dial-a-ride service to transport residents to meetings be investigated*
- iii. the existing practice of some forums in holding additional meetings with particular sections of the community at suitable venues and times be commended to all Forums*

The location of meetings was also covered in the review. Some Forums hold all meetings in one place, other rotate around venues in different wards. During the review, the option to use a central venue more easily reached by public transport was investigated. There is a clear preference that Forum meetings should take place in the area, and it is **recommended** that:

- iv. no change be made to the current choice of venues*

5.9. Format and conduct of meetings

Whilst each Area Forum has its own style, the majority adopt a "top table" layout with some or all of the elected members sitting at a table facing the audience. Meetings tend to be conducted in a formal manner. Some Forums only take questions submitted in advance. The general feedback from residents during the review was that this could be a little intimidating and a more informal approach would be preferred. In some venues, it can be difficult to hear what is said. As each venue is different, it is not appropriate to be prescriptive, but the following approach is **recommended**:

- i. a less formal room layout be adopted with as few barriers as possible between residents and Councillors*
- ii. partners and youth representatives be invited to sit with Councillors*
- iii. where necessary, microphones and amplification should be provided*
- iv. questions can be accepted on the night up to the start of the meeting, provided that they are in writing with the questioner's name and address provided*
- v. where feasible, tea and coffee should be provided to help to create a more relaxed atmosphere*

5.10. Agenda Setting

The agenda for meetings clearly influences attendance, and the effectiveness of the Forum. Residents would like the opportunity to influence agendas, and would like updates on progress from earlier meetings. They would also be interested to hear from partner organisations. It is **recommended** that every agenda should include:

- i. feedback on progress with items raised at the last meeting and on progress with projects funded by the Forum*
- ii. updates from key partners (eg Police and Fire Service) on their activities in the area*
- iii. an opportunity for the Youth Forum to bring items to the Area Forum*
- iv. an opportunity for the residents to put forward suggested items for the next meeting*

To assist with public understanding of proceedings, and to emphasise the importance of resident's contributions it is **recommended** that:

- v. agendas be split into:*
 - questions from residents*
 - items and presentations for information*
 - feedback and progress reports*
- vi. that wherever possible the residents questions be considered as the first item on the agenda, with a time limit*

There was a mixed response to the practice of formal presentations to Forums, but the consensus was to keep them brief and to the (local) point. It is **recommended** that:

- vii. presentations be kept brief (normally not more than 10 minutes) and made relevant to the particular Area being addressed.*

Area Forums vary considerably in length. In the interest of maximising attendance and participation, the aim should be to avoid running on too late. It is **recommended**:

- viii. that meetings should finish by 9.00pm*

It has been suggested that if there is a pattern of service requests or complaints in an area, this might be included on the Forum's agenda. It is **recommended** that

- ix. the possibility of identifying particular local issues being dealt with by Halton Direct Link be investigated*

5.11. Publicity and Promotion

One of the most frequently raised issues during the review was the lack of public awareness of Forums. It is vital that this is addressed so that residents can at least choose whether to attend or not. Some promotional activities will have resource implications, and funding will need to be provided from the Area Forum budgets. It is **recommended** that

- i. a Communications Strategy be developed for Area Forums to include:*

- *promotion of Forums in Inside Halton and the Council website*
 - *publicity for the achievements of Area Forums*
 - *a leaflet distributed to all households in each Forum area once a year with an annual report and calendar of future meetings*
 - *the use of press releases and paid for advertisements*
 - *suitable acknowledgement by projects funded by the Area Forum (“badging”)*
 - *promoting the involvement of young people in conjunction with the Youth Forum, possibly through schools*
 - *the use of other Council publications such as the Council Tax leaflet and the refuse collection calendar*
 - *the use of prepaid envelopes to encourage questions and funding suggestions to be returned*
- ii. the random mail out of agendas to 45 residents adopted by Appleton, Kingsway and Riverside Area Forum be trialled with other Forums and the results monitored*
- iii. feedback on progress be available to residents between meetings via the website and the early production and circulation of minutes*
- iv. scope for joint promotion with partners (and joint funding) be investigated*

5.12. **Information About Council Services**

One of the main reasons given for attending Area Forums is to “find out what is going on in my area”. It is therefore **recommended** that:

- i. a selection of leaflets about forthcoming activities and key Council services be displayed at Forum meetings*

5.13. **Support Arrangements**

The current support arrangements for the Area Forums consists of the Committee and Member Services section (meeting arrangements, agendas and minutes), Area Forum Project Co-ordinator (progressing projects funded by Area Forums) and a lead officer (normally a Strategic Director). This thin spread of resources results in a tendency to be reactive rather than proactive. Given the current budget constraints it is unrealistic to recommend additional dedicated support (comparable to Tameside’s three full time township managers). Nevertheless, we could probably make better use of the resources that we already deploy at Area Forum level. It is therefore **recommended** that:

- i. a “virtual team” be created for each Forum of area based officers, chaired by the lead officer. The team would comprise the Youth Worker, Community Development Officer, Streetscene Manager, Police Sergeant, Children’s Centre Manager and RSL representative(s) where relevant it would meet at least quarterly to identify and deal with issues and problems, and come forward with advice and suggestions for members*

- ii. *the “virtual team” should be encouraged to attend the Forum meetings (if they do not already) to support members and improve visibility to residents*

5.14. **How will we know if it works?**

We need to be able to judge the success (or otherwise) of these changes. The most obvious measure is attendance and the numbers of questions asked. However, there are two weaknesses in this.

- i. There are many reasons why residents may not attend, not everyone wants to go to a public meeting, and there are other ways of engaging with the Council.
- ii. Attendance on its own is not sufficient to say we are successful - residents must feel it was a worthwhile experience.

Other indicators we could use are the extent to which residents believe they can influence decisions, and satisfaction with opportunities for local participation in decisions.

We could also survey the satisfaction of the residents attending the meetings.

As part of the development of these proposals, a clear set of measures and baselines needs to be established and members might like to consider setting targets.

It is **recommended** that

- i. *a performance framework be brought back to Corporate Service Policy & Performance Board for approval.*

TOPIC GROUP FORUM MEMBERS

Cllr Bob Gilligan (Chair)

Cllr Alan Lowe

Cllr Chris Inch

Cllr Paul Nolan

Cllr Mark Dennett

Cllr Sue Blackmore

Advisors

Rob Mackenzie

Ian Grady

TOPIC BRIEF

Topic Title:	Area Forums
PPB Responsible:	Corporate Services
Officer Lead:	Rob Mackenzie
Start/end:	September 06 – February 07

Description and scope

Area Forums were introduced across the whole Borough four years ago. They work towards improving local decision-making by bringing the consideration of local issues as close to the community as possible, working in partnership with others to tackle difficult issues; and, to consult people at a local level, as part of the process of engaging people in local democracy. This topic would examine how the practice of Forums has evolved and identify options and recommendations for further development. It will also consider the impact of relevant proposals in the local government white paper to be published in the autumn.

The review will address the following issues:

1. Role and Purpose:

- What are Area Forums for?
- What are the implications of the Local Government White Paper for Area Forums
- What is the relationship of forums to the emerging neighbourhood management arrangements?
- How do area forums link in to other engagement arrangements e.g Youth Forums, PADs, Older Persons Engagement Network

2. Governance:

- How do Area Forums feed into and influence the policy and decision making processes of the Council (PPBs, Executive Board) and partners?
- What is the process for allocating and reporting the allocation of Area Forum funds

3. How do the 7 area forums currently operate, and what lessons can we draw about what works?

- Time and place of meeting
- Publicity and communication
- Agenda setting
- Format and conduct of meeting
- How are decisions made?
- Support arrangements
- Resident involvement, including specific groups like young people and older people
- Partner involvement

Why chosen

After 4 years it is timely to review progress, particularly in the light of the forthcoming Local Government White Paper and the emerging policy context for local governance.

Outputs/outcomes

A set of recommendations on strengthening the role of Forums may be expected, with a view to strengthening the community leadership role of members and enhancing community engagement with the Council..

Strategic Priorities

Community leadership and good governance is one of the underpinning principles of the Council's Corporate Plan. As such it contributes to all strategic priorities and the achievement of the Councils vision for Halton

PPB Input/Mode of operation

Member Task Group to examine current practice and issues from across the borough. Receive evidence from members, officers, partners and residents on current practice; emerging neighbourhood management arrangements and policy development from Government expected in the White Paper in the autumn; and, look at examples of best practice from outside the borough. Scrutiny by full Board at February meeting. .

Agreed and signed by: -

PPB Chair Officer

Date Date

ACTION PLAN - TO FOLLOW

REPORT TO: Corporate Services PPB

DATE: 5th June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Council-wide Training Provision

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide further information to Members on the arrangements that currently operate in relation to the provision of training activity within the Council.
- 1.2 The Board is asked whether, based on this further information, they wish to make any recommendations in relation to future provision.

2.0 It is RECOMMENDED that the Board considers whether it wishes to make any further recommendations in the light of the information provided in this report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Board had been provided at previous meetings with information on the nature and type of training provided to Council staff and Members. Training was currently provided from within three Directorates, namely:

Corporate and Policy	–	Corporate Training activity for all Directorates
Health and Community	–	Specialist training activity to support Directorate operations
Children and Young People	–	Specialist training activity to support Directorate operations

- 3.2 The Board recognised the importance to the Council of having staff who were appropriately trained and the positive impact that had on the provision of services. The Council had gained a number of accreditations across all training provision which recognised the quality of the training being provided. The Board was satisfied from the information provided that there was no duplication taking place in actual training provision, but questioned the need to have three separate training sections carrying out the administrative functions in organising training activity, which, by and large, would be of a similar nature irrespective of the type of training being provided.

- 3.3 The Board asked that the potential strengths and weaknesses of bringing these activities together be identified. These are identified below:

Advantages of bringing activity together

- Potential increase in capacity to cover for vacancies, sickness and leave;
- Potential efficiency savings – cashable and non-cashable;
- Greater range of professionals working together, therefore wider skills/knowledge base;
- Brings the management of the Authority training provision together under one management structure;
- Provides the opportunity to integrate policies and procedures and develop a single overarching training plan for the Council.
- Will ensure maximum effective use of training facilities within the Authority.

Disadvantages

- Potential loss of focus on statutory requirements for training for certain staff groupings;
- Potential loss of alignment with strategic operational plans for specific service areas;
- Dilution of specialist knowledge of particular training needs/requirements for staff groups with the risk of staff not being appropriately trained/supported;
- Potential loss of specialisms and associated training programmes.

- 3.4 The Board had also asked for information on the administration costs of providing this training in each of the settings. Separating these out from the overall training budgets is not as straightforward as it at first appears, as the division of activity between staff is not always clear cut.

- 3.5 The figures below may provide some assistance to Members, however in many ways will not provide conclusive evidence that bringing these activities together will be beneficial from a pure financial viewpoint.

- 3.6 The total staffing costs of the Corporate Training function are £188,330, of which £41,833 can be identified as administrative. The

rest is utilised in the actual provision of training activity. This equates to 22% of the staffing budget.

3.7 Using that as a baseline, it would be assumed that similar figures would be involved in the other two areas. Giving a figure of around £150,000.

3.8 As mentioned earlier, making conclusions simply from these figures is difficult. Staff involved in administrative are also involved in the training itself. The Board may, however, wish to make a recommendation in order to provide guidance as to how to progress this issue further in the light of the information available.

3.9 The Board also asked what the implications were for the Council of the ending of the National Training Strategy Grant (NTS) on 31st March 2008. The NTS grant makes up nearly half of the overall Training Budget allocated to both the Health and Community and Children and Young People's Directorates. If the Grant ends, then this will mean a potential reduction in the level of services provided by the Training Team to operational staff. This could result, in some circumstances, with the Directorates not having an appropriately trained workforce and potentially not complying with national minimum standards. This issue is being closely monitored.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 It is vital that the Council has appropriately trained staff to meet both statutory requirements and service standards.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 If these activities were to be brought together, a clear transition plan would be required to ensure continuity and statutory compliance.

7.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 5th June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Industrial Estates Performance Report

WARDS: Castlefields, Daresbury, Riverside, Ditton

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To advise on the performance of the Council's industrial estate

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report is noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Council's industrial estate comprises 69 units across 5 estates, with a total asset value of £7.3m. As at 31st March 2007 the units were 81% let producing a monthly income of £56,701. Over the preceding 12 month period occupancy averaged at 78% and the actual income received was £539,064. This gives an overall return of 7%. At this general level the income is greater than could be achieved from the financial markets, and therefore any disposal will have a detrimental effect on the Council's revenue income.

3.2 The breakdown per estate is as shown in the appendix.

3.3 Seymour Court, Runcorn – All units are now occupied or under offer. It is anticipated that the estate will be fully occupied by September 2007. The anticipated return for this estate for 2007/08 is 10%.

3.4 Dewar Court, Runcorn – This is an unpopular estate, but with no specific reason, it could be due to its proximity to the Mersey Gateway. Occupancy is currently at 77%, with another unit due to become vacant next month. Occupancy therefore appears to be on a slight downward trend, such that it is unlikely that the 8% return will continue to be achieved this financial year.

Astmoor Industrial Estate as a whole is struggling and the Council's Economic Development Unit are setting up a working party to investigate the causes, and identify possible solutions. Property Services are represented on this working party. Disposal of the Estate has been considered, however the level of voids does not make this a viable option and it could be argued that with the current level of voids the Asset Value is slightly high. In the light of the above it is

recommended that the estate be retained pending the findings of the Astmoor Working Party.

- 3.5 St. Michaels Industrial Estate (including Marshgate), Widnes – All units are tenanted or under offer and it is hoped that 100% occupancy will be achieved by the end of the calendar year. These estates achieve attractive returns and should therefore be retained.
- 3.6 Black Cat Industrial Estate, Widnes – This estate comprises 8 yards and is now fully occupied. Whilst there have been expression of interest in the site from adjoining owners to create a development site, it is recommended that the estate is retained for inclusion in a future phase of the Widnes Town Centre Redevelopment.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Sale of any of the estates, whilst giving a capital receipt, will significantly reduce revenue income.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Resource Implications – The balance of capital income v revenue income. The loss of the units would have an impact on staff resource allocation.
- 5.2 Sustainability – The sale of the units could result in the sites being redeveloped for a use other than industrial with the potential loss of needed employment opportunities.
- 5.3 Legal Implications – Retention (Leases) or disposal (Conveyances) of the units will required legal documentation

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 The Industrial Estate market can be volatile with bankruptcies occurring at any time, with the subsequent loss of income.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 The retention of the Industrial Estates provides and maintains local employment opportunities as mentioned in the sustainability implications.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Leases to individual units	Municipal Building	Mandy Catterall
Performance Indicators	Municipal Building	Mandy Catterall

Estate	Units	Occupation as at 31/03/07	Rental Income per month	Maximum Rental Value per month on 100% Occupancy	Income 06/07	Capital Value	% Return on Capital Value	% Void 01/04/06 - 31/03/07
Seymour Court	15	80%	£ 29,856.00	£ 35,446.00	£ 224,106.00	£ 3,863,300.00	6%	24%
Dewar Court	21	76%	£ 8,871.00	£ 12,712.00	£ 100,105.00	£ 1,217,800.00	8%	30%
St Michaels	18	78%	£ 11,498.00	£ 16,000.00	£ 149,470.00	£ 1,607,300.00	9%	15%
Marshgate	7	100%	£ 4,536.00	£ 4,563.00	£ 44,906.00	£ 460,900.00	10%	18
Black Cat	8	87%	£ 1,940.00	£ 2,160.00	£ 20,477.00	£ 183,500.00	11%	23
Overall	69	81%	£ 56,701.00	£ 70,881.00	£ 539,064.00	£ 7,332,800.00	7%	22%

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 5th June 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy

SUBJECT: Facilities Let to Community Organisations

WARDS: Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To inform the Board of the number and nature of Community Lettings in Halton Borough Council property.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 At its last meeting on 27th February 2007, in considering the third quarter performance report on Property Services, the Board asked for information to be provided at a subsequent meeting on the buildings leased to voluntary organisations. The Board asked also for information on their location, the type of organisation, and the rent charged.

3.2 Appendix 1 to the report provides that information.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The report provides information requested by the Board. There are no direct policy implications.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The properties leased and the activities that go on within them provide support to a wide variety of community-based projects within the Borough.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Small community groups work within extremely tight financial arrangements, particularly when trying to identify core funding. Much of this funding is of a short-term nature. There is a continual pressure in ensuring the buildings are kept to an acceptable standard.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 Many of the groups support a wide range of people from all sections of the Halton community.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Leases for existing properties	Municipal Building	Mandy Catterall

APPENDIX 1

Community Building	Lease Terms	Management
Parsonage Road Community Mobile	Let to West Bank Community Forum. Annual licence wef 2003 at nil rent.	Land only.
Halton Village Youth Club (Formerly Bluebell Lodge)	Existing lease at £50 per annum rent.	Inherited from CNT via Cheshire County.
Halton Village Hall	Let to Paul Adams (cycle museum). £600 pa. Tenancy at will.	Rent account up to date.
Weston Scouts, Former British Legion, Weston Road	Let to Weston Scouts. 21 years wef 01/04/95. £558 pa, 5 yearly reviews.	
Castle Road Scout Hut	28 years wef 01/10/75. £25.00 pa.	Currently issues with regard to Panorama Hotel and access. Once resolved lease renewal negotiations can commence.
Acorn Nursery	Let to Astmoor Community Project. £1 pa (ACP funded refurbishment). 25 years wef 12/03/01	Used as community nursery.
Old Police Station, Runcorn	Let to Halton Community Partnership Trust. £1 pa (HCPT funded refurbishment). 21 years wef 01/06/98	Property sub –let on short term agreements to a number of voluntary organisations.
Churchill Hall	Let to TH Brown Charity Trust. £1pa. 21 years wef 2000.	Service provided by a Community Group to supplement Health and Community activities.
Russell Road Youth Centre	Let to Cheshire & Wirral Federation of Youth Clubs Trustee Company Limited. 30 years wef 02/03/87 at peppercorn rent.	Land only