

Departmental Quarterly Monitoring Report

Directorate: Policy and Resources

Department: Legal & Democratic Services

Period: Quarter 4 – 1st January to 31st March 2012

1.0 Introduction

This monitoring report covers Legal and Democratic Services fourth quarter period up to 31st March 2012. 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 has not been included within this report in order to avoid providing information that would be subject to further change and amendment. The final 2011 / 12 financial statements for the Department will be prepared once the Council's year-end accounts have been finalised and made available via the Council's Intranet. A notice will also be provided within the Members' Weekly Bulletin as soon as they are available.

2.0 Key Developments

The Council has again secured Lexcel and ISO accreditation providing the authority with independent assurance of the department's existing professional practice. It is also pleasing, particularly in light of the present operating environment, that the assessors recognised the continued year on year improvement in management practice.

Extensive work by Members and officers on the review of the Constitution led to approval by the Executive Board in March and recommendation to Council in April.

Executive Board have approved detailed proposals for a thorough review of the standards arrangements at the 29th March meeting & recommended then to April Council.

3.0 Emerging Issues

Following protracted efforts by the Legal team, the legal agreement for the final unit at The Hive leisure development has been concluded, with formal signing to take place in early April.

The Elections team are progressing well with arrangements for the local elections taking place on 3rd May 2012.

Plans are also at an advanced stage in relation to the Police Commissioners elections in November 2012, for which the Chief Executive will be the Returning Officer.

Officers are involved with a working group of all Cheshire authorities towards the establishment of a new statutory Crime Panel.



4.0 Service Objectives / milestones

4.1 Progress against 'key' objectives / milestones

Total	2		2		0		0
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Both key objectives/milestones have been delivered as planned and additional details are provided within Appendix 1.


4.2 Progress against 'other' objectives / milestones

Total	11		8		0		3
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A small number of milestones, including press cutting and design and print tenders, have not been delivered as planned. Additional details concerning progress are provided within Appendix 2.




5.0 Performance indicators

5.1 Progress Against 'key' performance indicators

Total	1		0		0		1
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The target for the number of Members with Personal Development Plans has been slightly missed. Additional details are included within Appendix 3.

5.2 Progress Against 'other' performance indicators

Total	11		6		0		5
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A number of measures, primarily relating to civic participation, Conveyancing transactions and completion of child care cases, have failed to achieve target. Additional details are provided within Appendix 4.

6.0 Risk Control Measures

During the development of the 2011 -12 Service activity, the service was required to undertake a risk assessment of all Key Service Objectives. As a result no 'high risk' treatment measures were identified.

7.0 Progress against high priority equality actions

As a result of undertaking a departmental Equality Impact Assessment no high priority actions were identified for the service for the period 2011 – 2012.

8.0 Data quality statement


The author provides assurance that the information contained within this report is accurate and valid and that every effort has been made to avoid the omission of data. Where data has been estimated, has been sourced directly from partner or other agencies, or where there are any concerns regarding the limitations of its use this has been clearly annotated.

9.0 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 1: Progress Against 'key' objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
LD O1	To provide a high quality legal service to the Council and its departments to ensure that the Council is able to deliver its services effectively



Milestones	Progress Q 4	Supporting Commentary
Secure renewal of Lexcel & ISO Accreditation January 2012		Both accreditations have been secured as planned providing the authority with continuing assurance of professional standards of practice.

Ref	Objective
LD O2	To ensure that decision makers are supported through the provision of timely and accurate advice and information and are kept informed of changing legislation and responsibilities

Milestones	Progress Q 4	Supporting Commentary
Review Constitution May 2011		The Constitution was approved by full Council in April 2011. It was further reviewed and amended as intended in July 2011, to take account of changes to the Procurement Standing Orders.










Appendix 2: Progress Against 'other' objectives / milestones

Ref	Objective
LD O3	To provide efficient and effective Democratic Support Services that provides Elected Members, as key decision makers, with the necessary information, support and training opportunities to fulfil their individual potential and management and governance role effectively

Milestones	Progress Q 4	Supporting Commentary
To ensure that all members have been given the opportunity of a having a MAP meeting.		All Members have had the opportunity of a MAP meeting which continue to take place during the course of the year.
To induct all new members – by October 2011		All new Members have been offered a comprehensive Induction Programme. All four days of the Induction have now been held and have been extremely well attended.

Appendix 2: Progress Against 'other' objectives / milestones



Ref	Objective
LD O4	Improve the quality and effectiveness of the Council's communications

Milestones	Progress Q 4	Supporting Commentary
Review implications of new Publicity Code April 2011		The Code was reviewed as planned.
Review and retender press cutting service March 2012		Due to reprioritisation of work programme, this activity will now be completed in December 2012
New Inside Halton contract to take effect April 2011		First edition under new contract was published in March 2011
Review and update print unit pricing policy April 2011		New print policy and pricing structure has been implemented and is being used
Review and update directorate work programmes April 2011		Work programmes updated and agreed as planned.
Customer Satisfaction Survey March 2012		Given reduced capacity during the year and competing work priorities it has not been possible to conduct a formal survey as planned. However a number of informal channels are used for this purpose and no issues concerning satisfaction have become apparent.
Review Design and Print Tender June 2011		A review of this contract was completed and as a result the contract was extended until June 2012. A tender process is now underway, with the new contract to be in place from June 2012.
Internal Communications survey (as part of Staff Survey) October 2011		A staff survey was issued by the Corporate & Organisational Policy Team at the end of June 2011 so no requirement for another survey.
Retender of InTouch Nov 2011		The specification for InTouch was included within a lot to be tendered as part of the corporate design and print contract, thus, removing the need for a separate contract. The current InTouch contract has been extended until June 2012 when the new contract will be implemented.

Appendix 3: Progress Against 'key' performance indicators



Ref	Description	Actual 2010/11	Target 2011/12	Quarter 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
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Corporate Health

<u>LDLI 01</u>	No. Of Members with Personal Development Plans (56 Total)	51 (91%)	56 (100%)	51 (91%)			Although ambitious target has not been achieved all Members were given the opportunity of having a MAP meeting.
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Appendix 3: Progress Against 'key' performance indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2010/11	Target 2011/12	Quarter 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
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Corporate Health							
LDLI 02	% of Members attending at least one organised Training Event	87%	100	93%			Although the target was not been achieved participation is showing a positive trend as compared to 2010 - 11.

Service Delivery							
LDLI 05	Average Time taken to issue prosecutions from receipt of instructions (working days)	17	10	7		N/A	Target achieved
LDLI 06	Average time taken to complete Conveyancing Transactions	488	300	451			Although the target was not been achieved due to a number of long and complex transactions, the average time taken to complete transactions has decreased since this time last year.
LDLI 07	Average time taken to complete Child Care Cases (calendar days)	336	225	400			Child care cases are very sensitive area of work and resultant time scales are not always within the control of the legal staff involved. The Department has noted that it has taken significantly longer for cases to go through the judicial process, and it is not the case that influence of officers can be brought to bear to shorten the process, and of course the priority remains the protection of children.





Appendix 3: Progress Against 'key' performance indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2010/11	Target 2011/12	Quarter 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
Fair Access							
LDLI 08	Members of Public attending Council Meetings (Council, PPBs, Exec Board, Exec Board Sub, Area Forums)	211	600	138			Targets have not been met. Levels of public participation are of course largely determined by subject matter under discussion and not within the control of officers. Figures will be kept under review.
LDLI 09	No. Of Questions asked by Members of the Public at Council Meetings (Council, PPBs, Exec Board, Exec Board Sub, Area Forums)	27	200	20			
LDLI 10	% of Executive Board, Executive Board Sub-Committee and Mersey Gateway Executive Board minutes published within 5 working days after the meeting.	N/A	100	100		N/A	All reports have been published as planned supporting the local transparency agenda.
LDLI 11	% Of those eligible casting a vote in local elections.	60%	30%	34%			This figure is slightly higher than the target but lower than the same period last year. However these figures are not comparable as the election in 2010 was a General rather than local with higher numbers of electors traditionally casting a vote.

Appendix 3: Progress Against 'key' performance indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2010/11	Target 2011/12	Quarter 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
Fair Access continued							
LDLI 12	% Of completed form A's (register of voters) returned	96%	90	98%			The numbers of forms returned is above target and slightly higher than the preceding year, although it would not be possible to attribute the difference to a specific factor.
LDLI 13	% satisfied that Council keeps residents well informed about its services.	N/A	67	NA	Refer to comment	NA	In the absence of a nationally prescribed survey, work is being progressed to establish a more locally focused survey to capture community perceptions and satisfaction levels.
LDLI 14	% who believe internal communications has improved	64.9	65	NA	Refer to comment	NA	The internal communications survey in November 2011 was replaced with a more comprehensive staff survey. This survey did not include the question '% who believe internal communications has improved, therefore it is not possible to provide a figure against this target. The next internal communications survey will take place in November 2012.
LDLI 15	% of people satisfied or more than satisfied with visit to Council Website www.halton.gov.uk	68	85	NA	Refer to comment	NA	This survey was part of a wider contract with SOCITM which has now been terminated and we are exploring other options for measuring satisfaction.

Appendix 3: Progress Against 'key' performance indicators

Ref	Description	Actual 2010/11	Target 2011/12	Quarter 4	Current Progress	Direction of Travel	Supporting Commentary
Fair Access continued							
LDLI 16	% of customers satisfied or very satisfied with the service of the internal print service	N/A	70	100			Above target.
LDLI 17	% take up of press releases	N/A	81	98			Above target
LDLI 18	% satisfaction with Inside Halton	98%	85	NA	Refer to comment	NA	Reported annually via Readers Survey. Results will be reported next quarter.