

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Revenues and Benefits Performance Update

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 11 December 2012

Cabinet Member: Councillor Lowry

CMT Member: Adam Broome (Director for Corporate Services)

Author: Martine Collins (Strategic Manager Revs and Benefits)

Contact: Tel: 01752 304118
email: martine.collins@plymouth.gov.uk

Ref:

Key Decision: No

Part: 1

Purpose of the report:

To provide Cabinet with an update on the performance of the Revenues and Benefits service.

Corporate Plan 2012-2015:

The Revenues and Benefits service significantly contributes to the Inequalities Agenda ensuring that the most vulnerable residents of Plymouth receive the appropriate benefit entitlement. Also strong links into Value for Communities.

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

The Revenues and Benefits service undertook a major restructure in 2011/12 which reduced overall funding by c.£1m and fundamentally changed working practices. The Council administers housing benefit subsidy of c.£100m per annum.

Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:

- An effective Revenues and Benefits service helps address inequalities through ensuring that vulnerable residents receive appropriate benefit entitlement.
 - The service undertakes annual benefit take up campaigns which are targeted to areas of greatest need.
-

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

Cabinet are asked to note the progress made by the service since the implementation of a new structure in November 2011.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

The restructure of the Revenues and Benefits service was undertaken in response to benchmarking information which demonstrated that the service was performing below standard and above cost.

Background papers:

Quarterly Performance and Finance Reports

Numerous background papers in relation to the Revenues and Benefits and Customer Service restructure

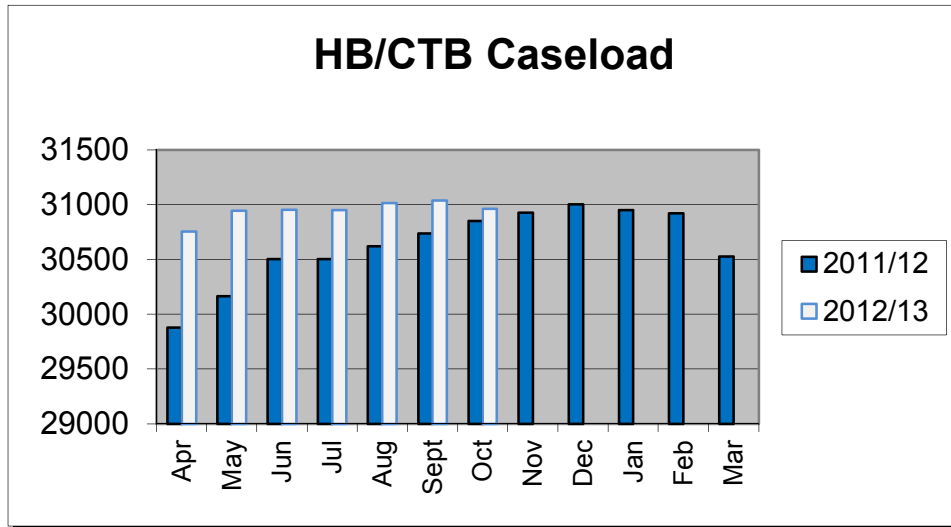
Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group regarding restructure

Sign off:

Fin	MC121 3.017	Leg	lt 16175	HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Malcolm Coe											
Have you consulted the Cabinet Member(s) named on the report? Yes											

Housing Benefit

Number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claimants

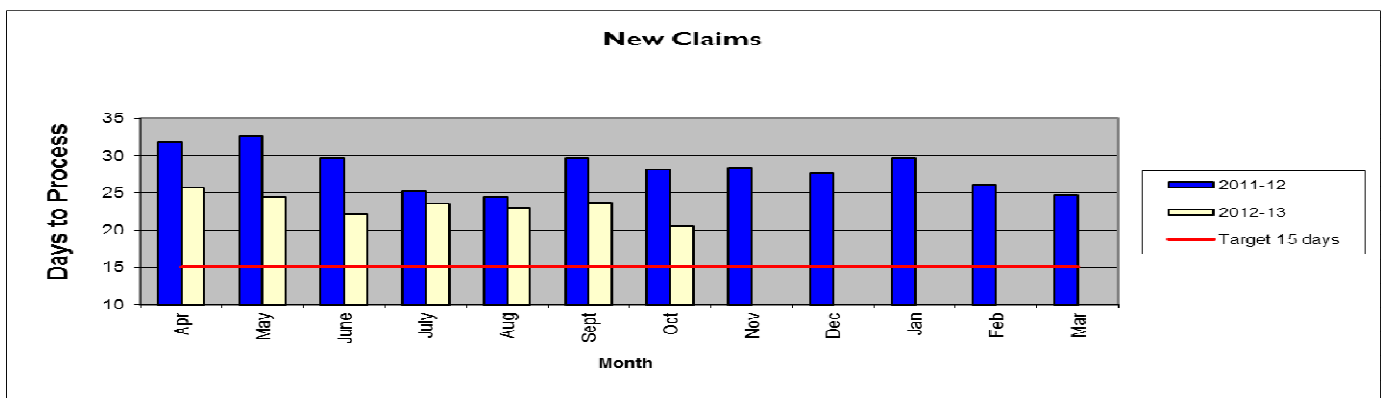


	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2012/13	30754	30945	30953	30952	31015	31040	30,982					
2011/12	29879	30165	30505	30504	30621	30737	30853	30929	31004	30952	30923	30528

Caseload figures dropped slightly during October however the average caseload per Plymouth City Council FTE staff member is still more than 1,000 which is above average compared with other Councils.

Processing of New Claims

■ Target 15 days - October 20.51 days



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2012	25.62	24.49	22.09	23.54	23.05	23.73	20.51	21	20	22	20	18
2011	31.74	32.70	29.74	25.19	24.47	29.70	28.13	27.71	27.71	29.77	26.05	24.68



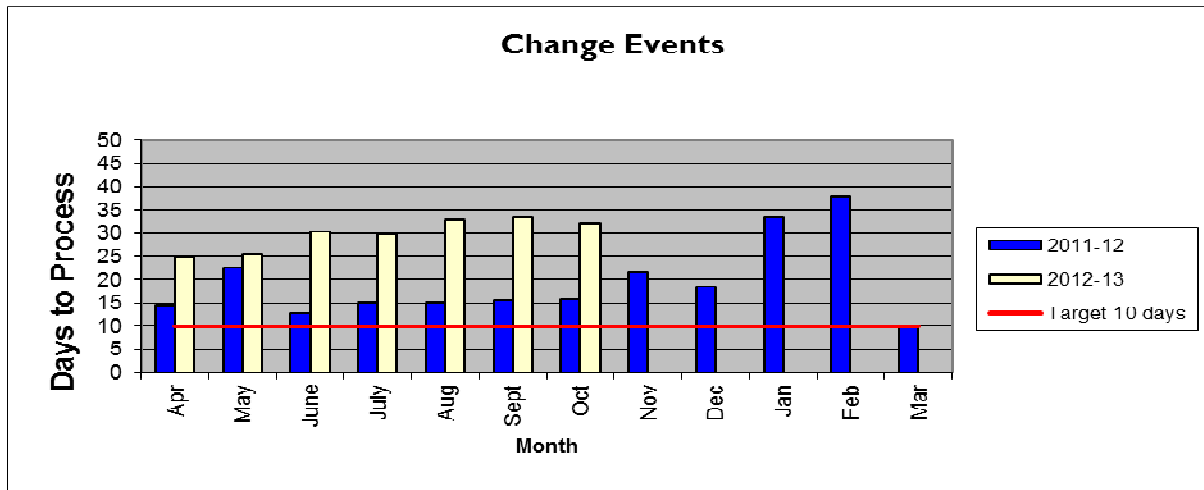
Forecast Processing Times

Significant improvement has been made with our October 2012 performance of 20.51 days being better than all Council average. This is a major step forward compared to the historical, (bottom quartile), performance of 30 days that we were achieving prior to the restructure.

Change Events



Target 10 days - October 31.89 days



	<u>Apr</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>Jun</u>	<u>Jul</u>	<u>Aug</u>	<u>Sept</u>	<u>Oct</u>	<u>Nov</u>	<u>Dec</u>	<u>Jan</u>	<u>Feb</u>	<u>Mar</u>
2012	25.05	25.41	30.23	29.73	33.08	33.86	31.89	26	24	22	19	15
2011	14.58	22.57	12.94	12.12	15.15	15.62	15.73	18.34	18.34	33.36	37.82	25



Forecast Processing Times

As expected processing times for October have started to improve as we continue to work through the issues with the DWP ATLAS files. The service undertook a major office reorganisation in the month which will better equip staff to work more flexibly and better respond to customer demand.

We are confident that we will continue to see improved processing times as the oldest work is cleared by a dedicated team set up to clear the backlog of ATLAS files. Initiatives such as late night working (midnight) which were held in October, and will be held again during November, continues to clear the oldest work, however this concentrated effort does impact on processing times in the short term.

Issues surrounding the DWP's ATLAS files are an on-going national issue with processing times for 'changes in circumstances' significantly increasing, (in the short term), across a number of authorities with many now reporting backlogs of between 6 to 8 weeks.

Collection Rates

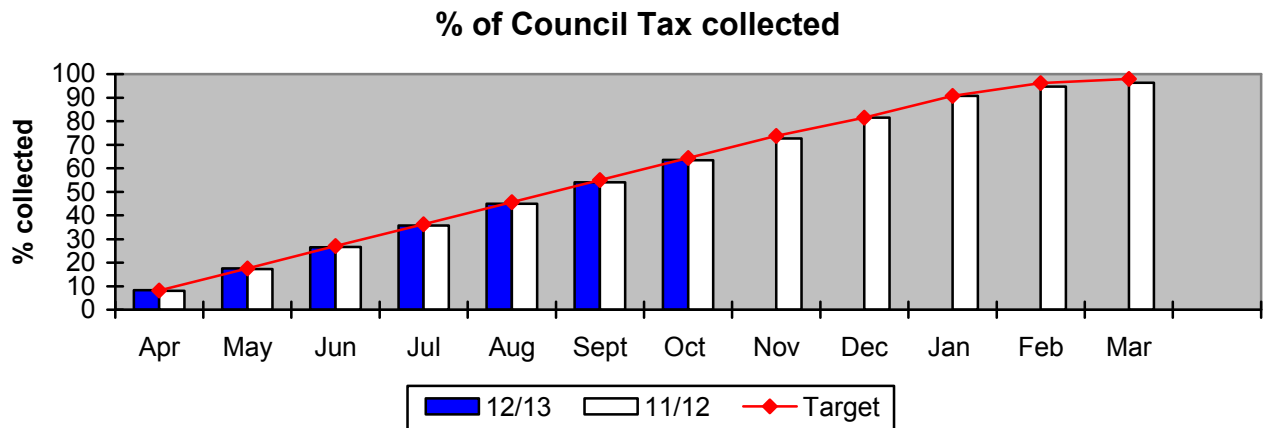
Council Tax

- Net Collectable Debt 2012/13 £93,653m
- Collection Target 2012/13 98.00%



Monthly Target = 64.34%
Collection Rate = 63.60%

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
12/13 (%)	8.25	17.53	26.53	35.70	44.95	54.07	63.60	72.72	81.68	90.91	94.93	96.6%
11/12 (%)	8.07	17.31	26.62	35.61	44.85	54.04	63.34	72.60	81.54	90.71	94.68	96.30
Target (%)	8.22	17.61	27.06	36.19	45.57	54.90	64.34	73.74	81.54	90.71	96.24	98.00



Council Tax collection has continued to improve at 63.60% for October against a collection of 63.34% for the same point last year. However, we are marginally short of the in-year collection target that we have set.

We continue to telephone customers falling into arrears promote payment and avoid recovery action. This is reducing the number of summons being issued and securing payments which would otherwise go through the recovery cycle.

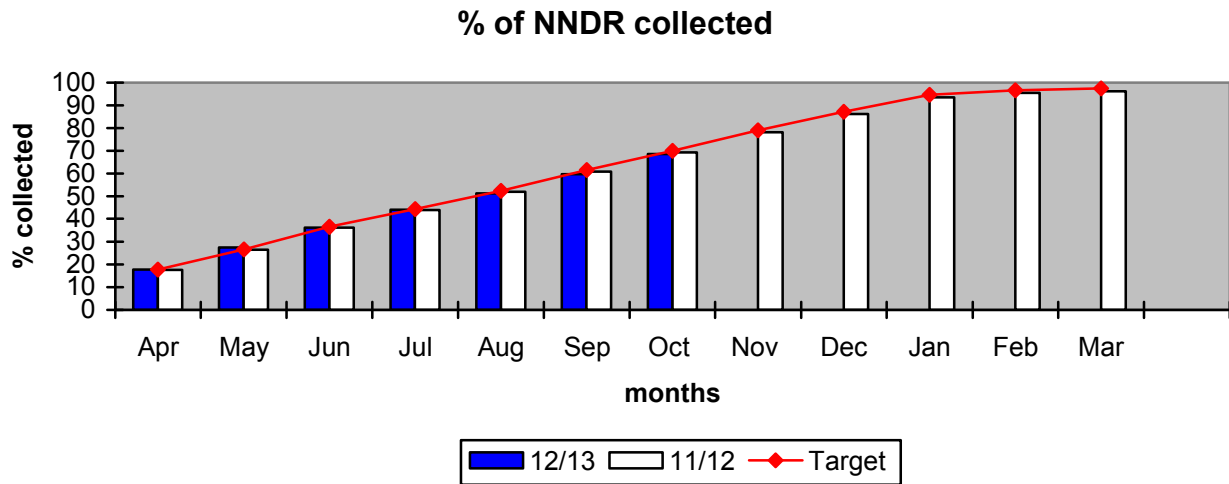
National Non Domestic Rates

- Net Collectable Debt 2012/13 £88,024m
- Collection Target 2012/13 96.90%

Monthly Target = 69.73% £61,262,292
 Collection Rate = 68.48% £60,168,116

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
12/13 (%)	17.82	27.46	36.11	43.95	51.20	59.66	68.48	77.92	86.13	95.42	95.75	96.63
11/12 (%)	17.63	26.48	36.17	43.80	51.84	60.85	69.23	78.14	86.19	93.52	95.49	96.21
Target (%)	17.74	26.69	36.48	44.22	52.28	61.31	69.73	78.66	86.73	94.09	96.08	96.90

NOTE: Target of 96.90% is a revision from 97.50% after taking into account the business rates deferral scheme where businesses can defer payment of their rates for 2 years.



Collection of business rates is under target by 0.71% against the same point last year; however this position has improved on September where collection was 1.21% below the same point last year.

Proactive recovery work and a revised recovery timetable have meant that we are able to target outstanding rates more effectively.

A reduction in the collection of business rates is common across a number of authorities as the economic climate continues to be a challenge, but we continue to focus on proactive recovery to improve the situation.