

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Revenues and Benefits Performance Update
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 12 February 2013
Cabinet Member: Councillor Lowry
CMT Member: Adam Broome (Director for Corporate Services)
Author: Martine Collins, Strategic Manager Revenues and Benefits
Contact details Tel: 01752 304118
Email: martine.collins@plymouth.gov.uk
Ref:
Key Decision: No
Part: I

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 Council administers housing benefit subsidy of c.£100m per annum.

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

- 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.
-

Equality and Diversity

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

Recommendations and 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 rejected:

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.

Published work / information:**Background papers:**

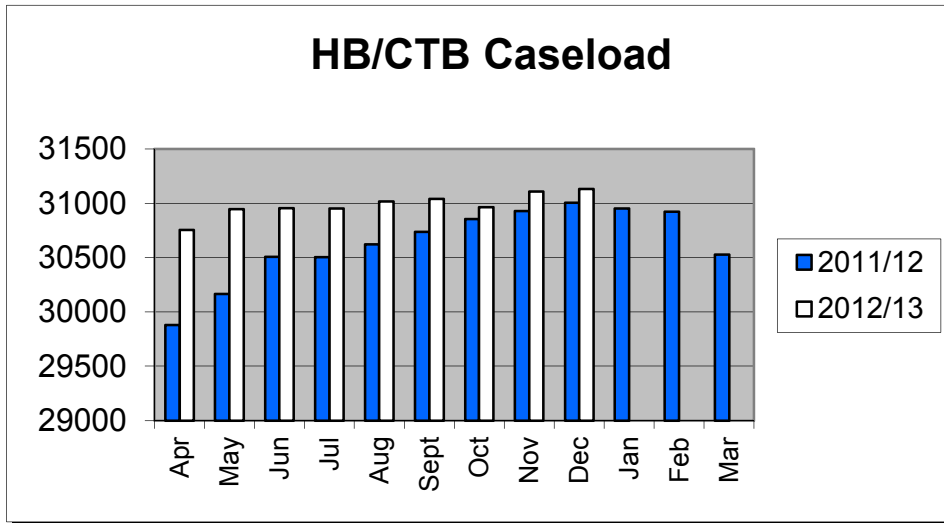
None

Sign off:

Fin	djn12 13.03 4	Leg	TH2 5011 3	Mon Off	TH 25 01 13	HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Malcolm Coe													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

Housing Benefit

Number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claimants

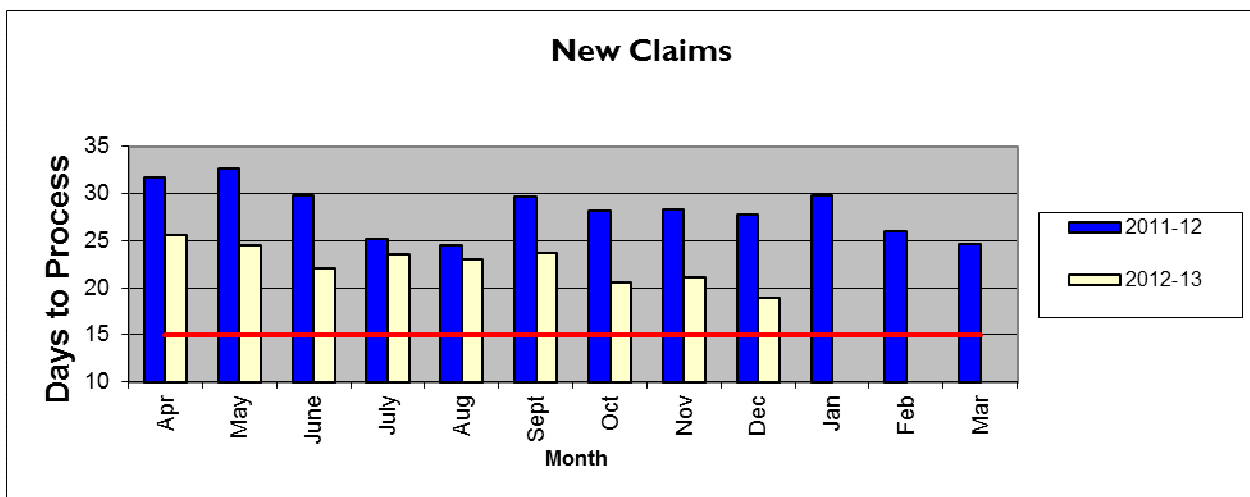


	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2012/13	30754	30945	30953	30952	31015	31040	30,982	31,108	31,130			
2011/12	29879	30165	30505	30504	30621	30737	30853	30929	31004	30952	30923	30528

The number of people in receipt of Housing and Council Tax Benefit increased during December by 0.08%. The average caseload per Plymouth City Council FTE staff member is more than 1,000 which is above average compared with other Councils.

Processing of New Claims

Target 15 days – December 18.94 days



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2012	25.62	24.49	22.09	23.54	23.05	23.73	20.51	21.07	18.94	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

Revised Dec 2012

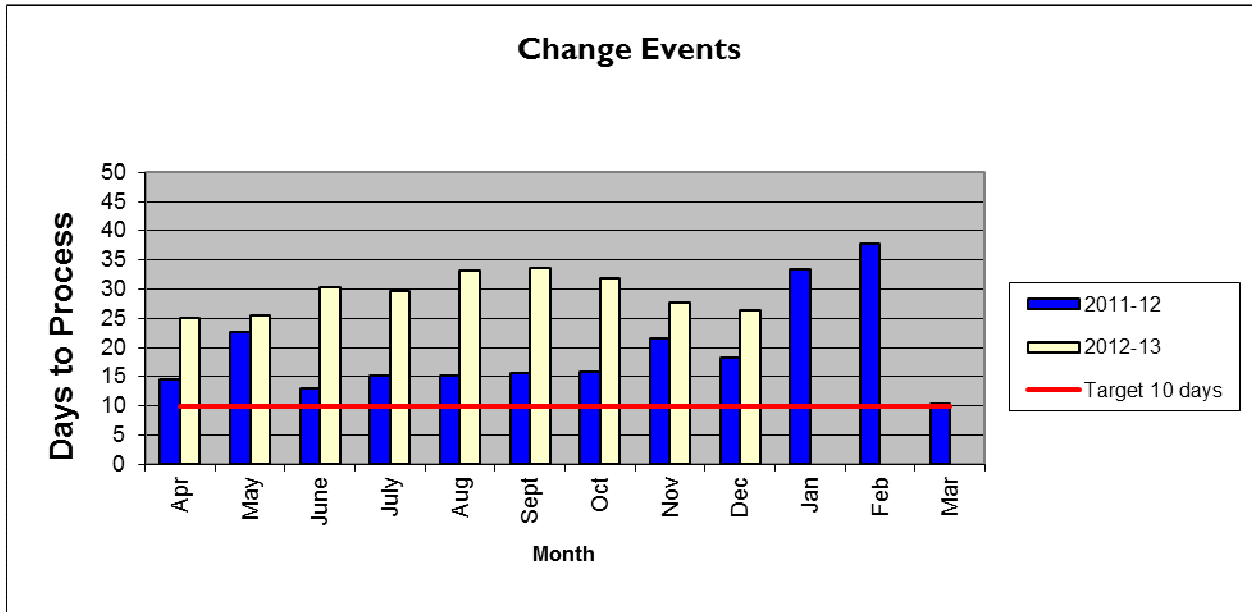
December saw a reduction in the number of days to process new claims. We remain ahead of the all Council average of 24 days and have exceeded our forecast of 20 days.

During January we anticipate a slight increase in processing times due to the impact of Christmas and New Year as profiled, but we expect this to be short term.

During January we will be expanding our trial with new claims and which aims to address customer wait times in the Civic, whilst also improving processing times.

Processing of Change Events

Target 10 days – December 26.36 days



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2012	25.05	25.41	30.23	29.73	33.08	33.86	31.89	27.69	26.36	24	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

December saw a drop in the number of days to process changes as the outstanding ATLAS work continues to be cleared. We expect to be fully up to date with this work by the end of January. This is a considerable achievement given the national problems with ATLAS where some councils are seeing backlogs of up to 10,000 pieces of work and delays of 8 –10 weeks.

With the ATLAS work nearly cleared we will be focussing on the clearance of Electronic Transfer Documents from the DWP which is likely to impact on processing times during January, as will Christmas and New Year, however we expect to see significant improvements in processing times following this.

Collection Rates

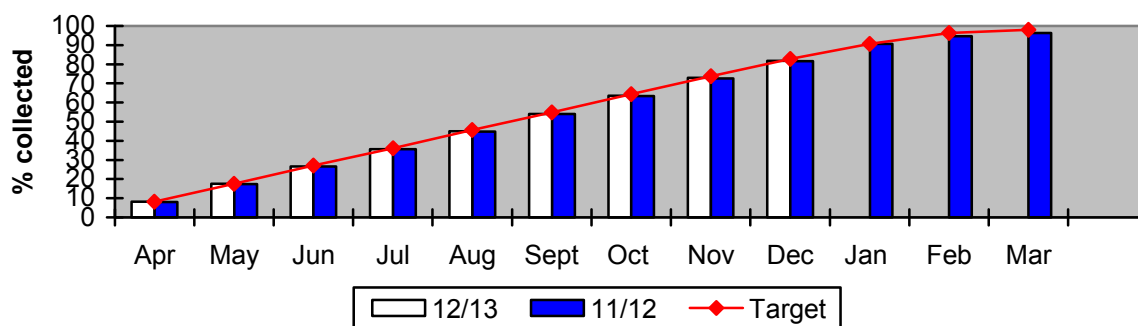
Council Tax

- Net Collectable Debt 2012/13 £93,653m
- Collection Target 2012/13 98 %

Monthly Target = 82.82%	£77,489m
Collection Rate = 81.80%	£76,533m

	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	72.87	81.80	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	82.82	92.15	96.24	98.00

% of Council Tax collected



Council Tax collection has continued to improve at 81.80% for December against a collection of 81.54% for the same point last year. This is slightly higher than our forecast of 81.68%. However, we are short of the in-year collection target that we have set.

We continue to telephone customers falling into arrears to 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

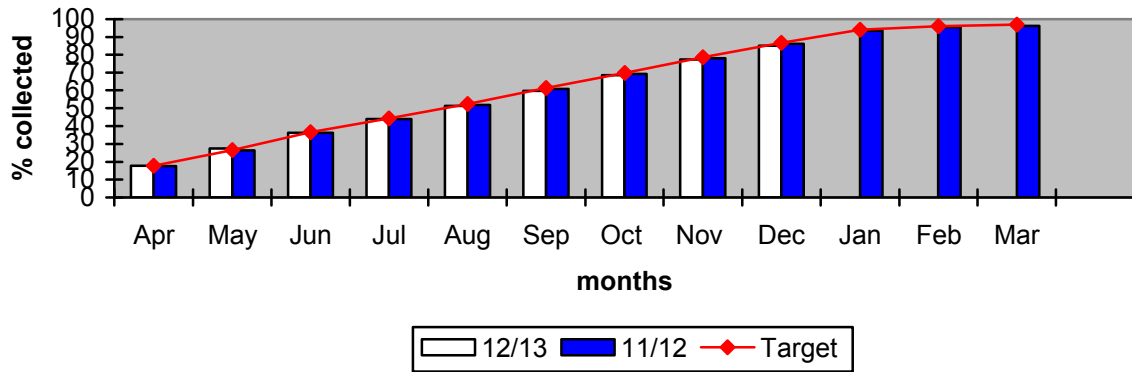
- Net Collectable Debt 2012/13 £88,024m
- Collection Target 2012/13 96.90%

Monthly Target = 86.73%	£75,787m
Collection Rate = 85.20%	£74,296m

	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	77.41	85.20	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.

% of NNDR collected



Collection of business rates continues to be a challenge and is 1.53% below target. Proactive recovery work and a revised recovery timetable has tightened our recovery processes to help improve our position, however we have seen an influx of banding schedules. Resources have been moved into the team during January to bring these up to date which will improve our position.

Many authorities are seeing a reduction in the collection of business rates as the economic climate continues to be a challenge, but we continue to focus on proactive recovery to improve the situation.