

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Revenues and Benefits Performance Update
Committee: Cabinet
Date: 12 March 2013
Cabinet Member: Councillor Lowry
CMT Member: Adam Broome (Director for Corporate Services)
Author: Martine Collins, Strategic Manager Revs and Benefits
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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.
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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:

None

Background papers:

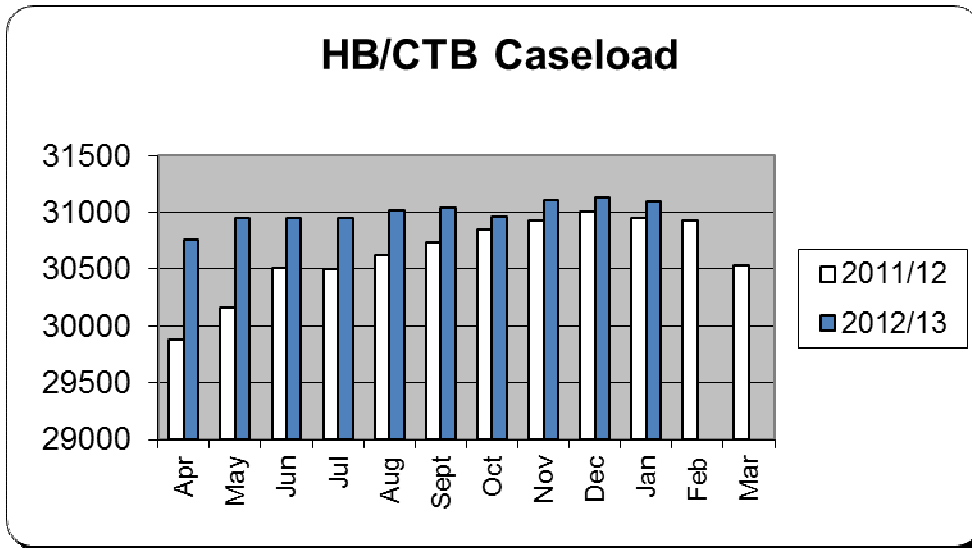
None

Sign off:

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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

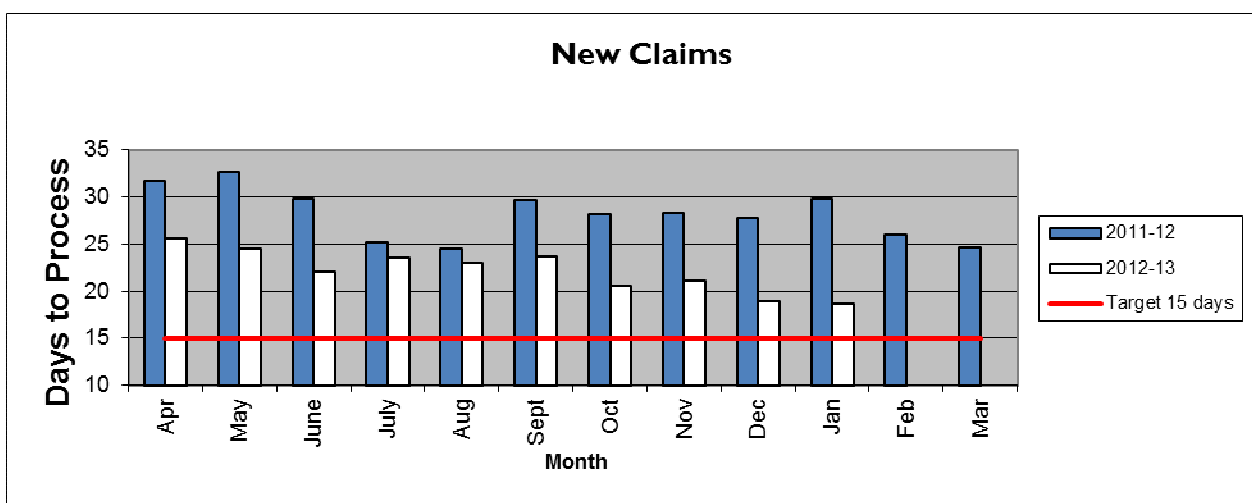


	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2012/13	30754	30945	30953	30952	31015	31040	30,982	31,108	31,130	31,091		
2011/12	29879	30165	30505	30504	30621	30737	30853	30929	31004	30952	30923	30528

The number of people in receipt of Housing and Council Tax Benefit decreased slightly during January by 0.12%. 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 – January 18.59 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	21.07	18.94	18.54	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

January saw a reduction in the number of days to process new claims which exceeded our forecast of 21 days. We remain ahead of the all Council average of 24 days.

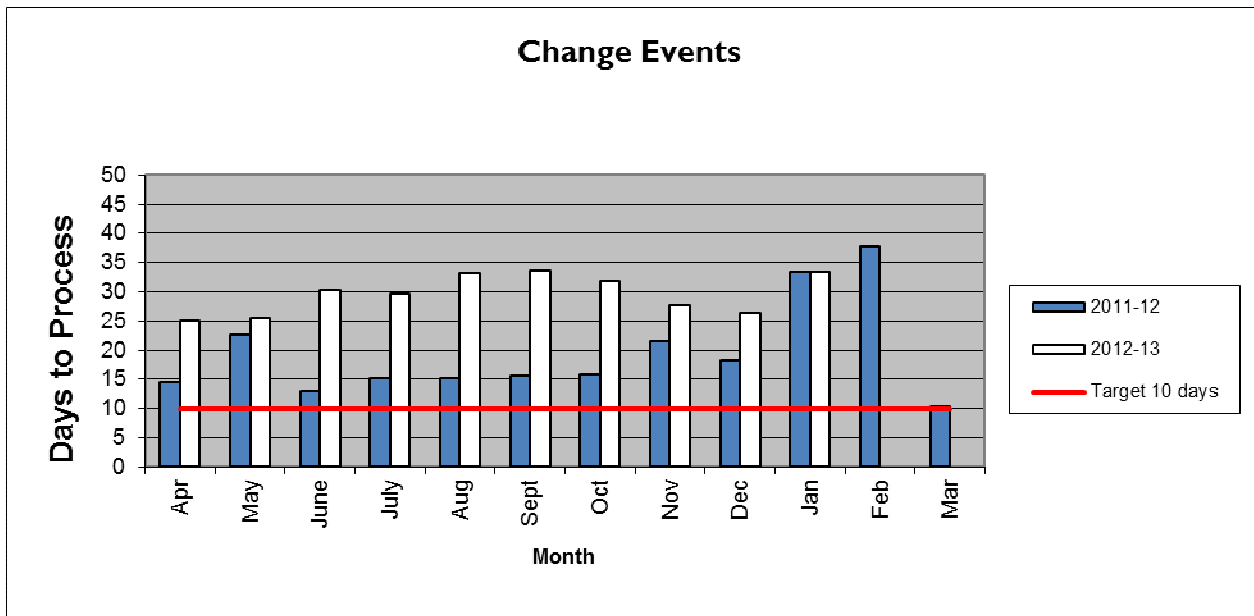
During February/March we anticipate a slight increase in processing times but are working hard to prevent this. Increases however are more likely to be on changes as welfare reform begins to impact.

We have expanded our trial with new claims and will continue this approach as it is having a positive effect on processing times.

Processing of Change Events



Target 10 days – January 33.47 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	27.69	26.36	33.47	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 January saw a drop in the number of days to process changes as the outstanding ATLAS work is finally cleared. Whilst the residue of this work is being cleared at the beginning of February the degree of impact will reduce over the next few weeks. However we are expecting the impact of welfare reform to affect changes processing times between February and March as customer demand increases and therefore will not realise the full benefits associated with clearing ATLAS.

The DWP has been visiting Councils to look at best practice and has said that Plymouth is well ahead of other Academy sites in terms of the way we handle and manage this work. Our best practice is now being shared with other sites. This is a good achievement for the team who have worked hard to clear this work. Whilst it has impacted on processing times more than we would have liked we have nearly cleared all outstanding work and therefore will see significant processing reduce once the welfare reform changes have been introduced.

Collection Rates

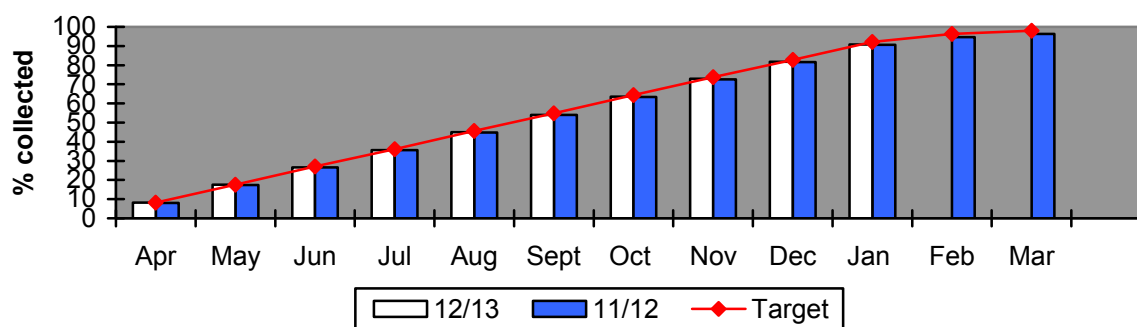
Council Tax

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

	Monthly Target = 92.15%	£86,238m
	Collection Rate = 90.85%	£85,238m

	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	90.85	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 90.85% for January against a collection of 90.71% for the same point last year although our position saw a slight drop on the previous month. This is lower than our forecast of 92.15%.

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.

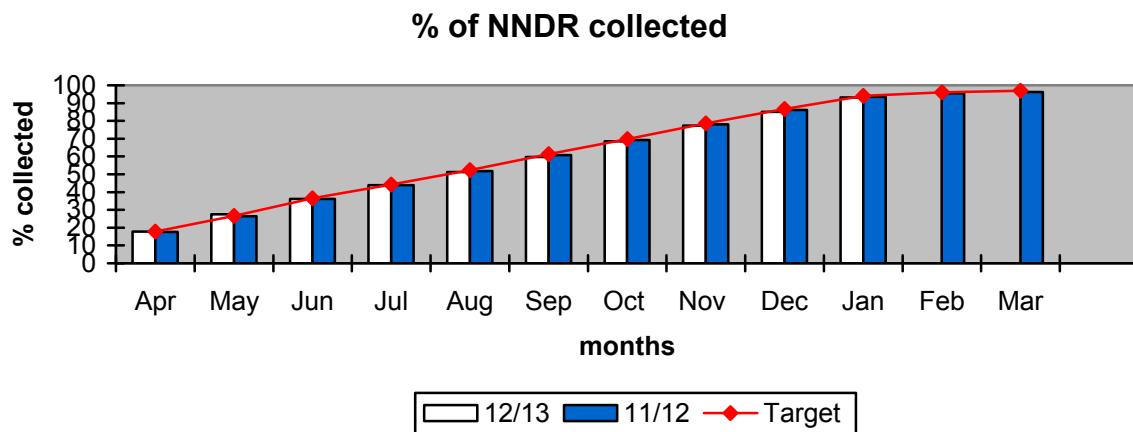
National Non Domestic Rates

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

	Monthly Target = 94.09%	£81,952m
	Collection Rate = 93.15%	£81,132m

	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	93.15	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 has improved during January and is now 0.37% below target. Proactive recovery work and a revised recovery timetable have tightened our recovery processes to help 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.