

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

3 December 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Finance Service Quarterly Performance Report
For the quarter to September 2008

Report by Depute Chief Executive

Summary

This report provides members with details of Finance Service performance for the quarter to 30 September 2008.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report contains information on the Accounts Commission's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for Finance and Benefits Administration. It compares current year figures with figures for the same quarter of the last financial year, 2007/08.
- 1.2 Where possible, comparison is made to the previous financial year. In general, where the definition has changed, no direct comparison can be made.
- 1.3 The figures shown are for the second quarter covering the months July to September 2008. Reports will continue to be brought to Committee on these Statutory Performance Indicators on a quarterly basis so that trends can be monitored.

2. FINANCE

2.1 Council Tax In Year Collection Rate

Performance at	2007	2008
September 30	55.3%	55.2%

This indicator is a measure of the effectiveness of the Council in collecting current Council Tax due in year.

Current performance shows a 0.1% decrease on the same quarter last year and this reflects the introduction of payment breaks from April 2008. Direct Debit Customers can now take payment breaks in July and August or December and January. This increased flexibility has a minor effect on the payment profile during the year but it is too early to predict the in-year collection rate with any degree of certainty. The changed profile does not suggest lower collections by year end.

Since April 2007, the percentage of Direct Debit payers has risen from 58.9% to 60.2%, an increase of 1.3% (2,831 properties). The facility to pay over 12 months has been a factor in this success. Customers are now able to pay Council Tax by Direct Debit

weekly, fortnightly, quarterly, monthly and annually.

2.2 Payment of Invoices

Performance at	2007	2008
September 30	85.1%	86.2%

This indicator measures the Council's efficiency in paying invoices. It measures the number of invoices paid within 30 calendar days of receipt, as a percentage of all invoices paid.

The results to September 2008 reflect a 1.1% increase from the same period in the previous year and an overall increase of 2.3% from the 2007/08 result of 83.9%.

The Council, in an effort to assist the local economy through the current economic crisis, will look to make payment faster than the current target of 30 days.

An increase in the speed of payment will not present the Council with cash flow difficulties but will have an effect on deposit levels held by the Council and as a consequence reduce the overall amount of interest received.

3. BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

3.1 Paying the right benefit at the right time

Performance in 2008			
June 30	49 days	September 30	54 days

This new indicator measures the average number of days per case to process new Housing Benefit (HB) / Council Tax Benefit (CTB) claims and to administer change events. This indicator will replace the previous "new claims" indicator, which did not take into account the time taken to process changes.

This indicator reflects the Council's ability to process work as quickly as possible to ensure applicants receive their entitlement on time and at the correct rate.

Performance is derived directly by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) through the analysis of data extracts/scans sent electronically to them.

The DWP has not set national targets for 2008/09. Because this is a new indicator and prior year comparisons are not possible, reports during 2008/09 will compare performance levels to previous quarters.

The Highland Council has implemented appropriate measures to improve performance. These include changes in the way work is distributed to staff, and reprioritisation of processing activities by the Operations Team.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the contents of this report.

Signature:

Designation: Depute Chief Executive

Date: 25th November 2008

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