

2004/05 Business Plan

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

1. Brief Description of the Service and its Purpose

The Finance Department provides financial, administrative, IT and revenue services to the Council. The department has four main functional groups with the following responsibilities:

- Accountancy - production of statutory final accounts, budget preparation, provision of budgetary control information, maintenance of financial systems, provision of financial advice to departments, treasury management, tax, printing, graphics and word processing.
- Revenues & Exchequer - collection of local taxes, benefits administration, payment of staff and suppliers, cashiering service and collection of sundry debts due to the Council.
- Client & Support Services - IT contract monitoring, e-government development, internal audit, telecommunications, facilities management of office buildings, filing & mail, central supplies ordering and insurance.
- Customer Service Centre – customer contact via telephone, email and personal enquiries.

2. Links between services and the Council's strategic priorities

	Strategic priority	Departmental responsibility
1	Homes and environment	Accountancy, Client & Support Services, Exchequer Services, Local Taxes Services
2	Green agenda	Accountancy, Benefits Services, Client & Support Services, Exchequer Services, Local Taxes Services
3	Social inclusion	Accountancy, Benefits Services, Client & Support Services, Customer Service Centre, Exchequer Services, Local Taxes Services

	Strategic priority	Departmental responsibility
4	Customer service	Accountancy, Benefits Services, Client & Support Services, Customer Service Centre, Exchequer Services, Local Taxes Services
5	Economic prosperity	Accountancy, Client & Support Services, Exchequer Services, Local Taxes Services
6	Cultural and leisure opportunity	Accountancy, Client & Support Services, Customer Service Centre, Exchequer Services, Local Taxes Services

3. Summary of Core Activities for 2004/05

- Continuing to provide high quality accounting, budgeting and financial advisory services.
- Managing the Council's financial systems and treasury management and taxation facilities.
- Providing cost effective design, print and word processing services.
- Administering Housing and Council Tax Benefits; investigating fraudulent benefit claims.
- Billing and recovery of Council Tax and Business Rates.
- Providing payroll, car fleet management, cashiering, debt collection and supplier payment services.
- Dealing with telephone, email and personal enquiries from customers other than those directed specifically to professional areas.
- Continue to ensure that the Council's ICT provider delivers the service as contractually required.
- To provide an independent appraisal function of Council activities through the provision of an Internal Audit service.
- To ensure that the telecommunications system meets service requirements.
- To make the best use of office accommodation and maintain the standard of that accommodation, meeting Health and Safety requirements.
- To ensure that all Council assets and resources that have been specifically identified are adequately covered by insurance arrangements, and in doing so that a full risk analysis process has been undertaken for which a facilitation service can be provided.

4. Proposed Developments and Improvements of the Service 2004 to 2009

	Proposed Development/Improvement	In Response To	Anticipated Outcome	Contribution to Corporate Objectives
2004/05	Customer Service Centre	Customer Service	50% of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact	To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do
2005/06	Customer Service Centre	Customer Service	65% of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact	To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do
2006/07	Customer Service Centre	Customer Service	80% of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact	To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do
2007/08	Customer Service Centre	Customer Service	80% of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact	To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do
2004/05	Implementation of the DWP Performance Standards within the Benefits Service	Customer Service	90% compliance	To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do
2005/06	Implementation of the DWP Performance Standards within the Benefits Service	Customer Service	95% compliance	To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do
2006/07	Implementation of the DWP Performance Standards within the Benefits Service	Customer Service	99% compliance	To provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do

5.

Service Priorities for 2004/05

	Theme; Corporate Aim/Objective	Linked To	Activity	Objective(s)/Targets/PIs	Anticipated Outcome	Budget/ FTEs
1.		Financial Strategy	Comprehensive spending review	Completed by August in advance of the budget process	Robust mechanism for identifying key priorities	Current staff resources within Finance and other departments
2.		Financial Strategy	Protocol for setting budget	Agreement by Cabinet in September	Robust mechanism for budget process	Current staff resources
3.		Financial Strategy	Medium term service and financial plan	First stage completed by June; interim stages completed in line with budget timetable; final stage by end of budget process in February	Financial implications of key priorities reflected in medium term plan	Current staff resources within Finance and other departments
4.		Financial Strategy	Improve Council Tax collection rate	Achieve a Council Tax collection rate of 98.1%	More efficient revenue collection	Current staff resources
5.		Financial Strategy	Improve Business Rates collection rate	Achieve a Business Rates collection rate of 98.4%	More efficient revenue collection	Current staff resources

	Theme; Corporate Aim/Objective	Linked To	Activity	Objective(s)/Targets/PIs	Anticipated Outcome	Budget/ FTEs
6.		Risk Strategy (when in place)	Risk management	Strategy and action plan agreed by Cabinet and Principal Scrutiny Committee by May	Build a risk management approach that is an integral part of performance management	Current staff resources within Finance and other departments
7.		Legislative requirement	Earlier closing of the statutory accounts to meet shorter Government target times.	Final statutory accounts produced and agreed by August	Accounts to be signed off without qualification	Current staff resources
8.	Customer service	Customer Care Charter Establish a dedicated customer service unit	Introduction of Customer Service Centre	50% of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact	Improved customer service	£150,000 revenue £703,000 capital
9.	Customer Service	Customer Care Charter	Customer care strategy and action plan	Strategy agreed by July. Further objectives to follow from action plan.	Improved customer service	Current staff resources
10.	Customer Service	DWP Performance Standards and Best Value Performance Plan	Implementation of the DWP Performance Standards within the Benefits Service	90% compliance	Improved customer service	Current staff resources
11.	Customer Service	DWP Performance Standards and Best Value Performance Plan	Processing new benefit claims	Average 36 days	Improved customer service	Current staff resources

	Theme; Corporate Aim/Objective	Linked To	Activity	Objective(s)/Targets/PIs	Anticipated Outcome	Budget/ FTEs
12.	Customer Service	DWP Performance Standards and Best Value Performance Plan	Processing benefit changes of circumstance	Average 13 days	Improved customer service	Current staff resources
13.	Customer Service	DWP Performance Standards and Best Value Performance Plan	Benefit cases processed correctly	98%	Improved customer service	Current staff resources
14.	Customer Service	Best Value Performance Plan	Payment of invoices	100% within 30 days	Improved customer service	Current staff resources within Finance and other departments
15.	Equalities	Equality and Diversity Policy	Service reviews (exc Internal Audit and Accountancy)	Service reviews completed for all areas (except Internal Audit and Accountancy)	Improved customer care	Current staff resources and corporate training budget

	Theme; Corporate Aim/Objective	Linked To	Activity	Objective(s)/Targets/PIs	Anticipated Outcome	Budget/ FTEs
16.	Electronic Government	Implementing Electronic Government (return 3) Make our services more readily available through the Internet	Increase the availability of online service access	BVPI 157 – electronic transactions 80%	Improve service availability & meet Government targets	Current staff resources within Finance and other departments. Government grant of £350,000; ICT Reserve and other capital and revenue funds.
17.	Electronic Government	Implementing Electronic Government (return 3) Make our services more readily available through the Internet	Continue implementation of corporate document management system	Additional 102 licences to be purchased. Interim stages to be completed in line with corporate timetable	Improved efficiency in document processing	£175,000 capital & revenue
18.	Electronic Government	Implementing Electronic Government Make our services more readily available through the Internet	Submission of successful IEG4 statement	Secure Government grant of £150,000 for 2005/06	Improved financial position	Current staff resources within Finance and other departments

Resource Implications

The Director of Finance and the Section Heads will undertake the majority of key priorities identified in 2004/05. Budget growth proposals have been put forward and approved for the implementation of the Customer Service Centre.

2003/04 Revised			Service Activity	2004/05 Estimate			FTEs	Notes
Exp. £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's		Exp. £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's		
110	110	0	Director of Finance	112	112	0	1.0	
453	453	0	Accountancy	480	480	0	8.31	
129	129	0	Audit	134	134	0	3.33	
158	158	0	Client	187	187	0)	
330	330	0	Revenues Support	344	344	0)	6.0
1,352	1,352	0	Information Technology	1,605	1,605	0)	
1,366	1,366	0	Accommodation, facilities, telephones	1,430	1,430	0	4.0	
291	291	0	Filing, mail, reception	306	306	0	10.0	
698	698	0	Design, print, WP	714	714	0	11.54	
118	0	118	Pensions added years	122	0	122	0	
213	0	213	Corporate Finance	197	0	197	0	
4	0	4	Treasury Management	4	0	4	0.5	
159	0	159	Audit Commission fees	112	0	112	0	
30	0	30	Banking costs	30	0	30	0	
32	0	32	Corporate subscriptions	33	0	33	0	
0	20	(20)	Miscellaneous income	0	18	(18)	0	

2003/04 Revised			Service Activity	2004/05 Estimate			FTEs	Notes
Exp. £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's		Exp. £000's	Income £000's	Net £000's		
		49	Address Management			51	1.0	
		641	Council Tax			684)		
		484	Council Tax Benefits			397)		
		589	Housing Benefits			453)	51.97	
		109	NNDR			117)		
705	705	0	Exchequer Services	730	730	0)		
		2,386	Total			2,182		

7.

Key Performance Indicators

A range of indicators is used to measure the performance of the services provided by the Finance Department, some of these are local indicators and some are statutory Best Value indicators. Particular attention is drawn to the following performance indicators:

Performance Indicator	Purpose	Reporting Officer	Achieved 2002/03	Estimate 2003/04	Target 2003/04	Target 2004/05	Target 2005/06
BV8	Invoices paid on time	Head of Revenues	88.2%	91%	100%	100%	100%
BV9	Council Tax collected	Head of Revenues	98.0%	98%	98%	98.1%	98.2%
BV10	Business Rates collected	Head of Revenues	97.8%	98.4%	98.4%	98.6%	98.8%
BV78A	Average time to process new claims	Head of Revenues	35.9 days	38	38	36	35
BV79B	Average time to process benefit change of circumstances	Head of Revenues	17 days	16	15	13	11
BV79A	Benefit cases processed correctly	Head of Revenues	97.6%	96.3%	98%	98%	98.5%
BVPI 157	Electronic transactions	Assistant Director of Finance (Support Services)	67%	75%	75%	80%	100%

8.

Proposals for Public Consultation

Planned Research or Consultation	Completion date	Purpose	Use of Feedback	Outcome
Council Tax payers	Sept 2004	Identify customer satisfaction levels	Service improvements	Improved customer service
E-Government consultation	June 2004	Inform the Council's e-government strategy	To inform the Council's e-government programme and the IEG submission	An e-government programme that balances customers' views with Government requirements and local objectives

9. Risk Management

Risk/Opportunity element	Area of risk	Action required
Loss of premises	Provision of services	Development of Corporate Risk Register and Strategy (Assistant Director of Finance (Support Services))
Loss of people	Provision of services	Business Continuity Plans to be developed for all services when Corporate Risk Register and Strategy finalised (all service heads)
Loss of systems	Provision of services	Disaster Recovery Plan – Corporate (Assistant Director of Finance (Support Services)) Disaster Recovery Plan – Sx3 Revenues & Benefits system (Head of Revenues)
Tax payer revolt	Reduced collection rates and associated financial impact	Vigorous recovery action (Head of Revenues)
Customer Service Centre	Appointment of new staff and movement of existing staff Introduction of new systems Budget overspends	Sound project management (Director of Finance)