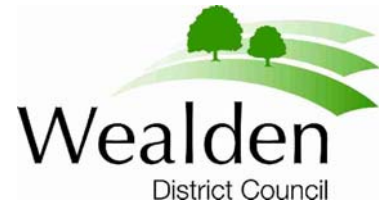


Financial Services Service Plan 2009/10



The role of the service

- Provide a customer focused benefits service that accurately and speedily processes benefit claims, reduces the risk of fraud and error by ensuring the security of the service, identifies and recovers overpayments of benefit and makes customers aware of and assists them to claim the benefits they are entitled to.
- Provide a customer focused local taxation service that quickly and accurately processes customers' local taxation accounts, collects Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates on behalf of other public services, recovers arrears to maximise collection rates, assists local people and businesses to ensure they receive any discounts or relief's they are entitled to.
- Provide a customer focused finance service that supports the Council through high quality, value for money accounting, treasury and exchequer services, collects debts due to the Council quickly, embeds risk management and ensures appropriate risk finance, such as insurance, is in place, ensures the Council makes the best use of its resources and its financial affairs are properly managed.

The service is planning to achieve the following outcomes by March 2012:

- Independent assurance of the quality of our services ensuring that these are in line with the highest standards nationally
- Improved value for money based on the opinions of our customers and when our performance is compared to other local authorities
- Leading our communities in reducing the local impact on the environment
- Value for money efficiency savings year on year
- Working more efficiently, meeting agreed key priorities, and cutting "red tape" wherever possible
- A more efficient service as a consequence of the planned Transformation Programme

What have we achieved in 2008/09?

Corporate Objective 1 : Putting People First

Providing Quality Services
Health, Prosperity and Community Safety

- Secured Charter Mark for the service.
- Reduced child and pensioner poverty through a targeted take-up campaign which enabled Wealden residents to claim an additional £XX,000 to which they were entitled
- Implemented Academy Self-Service to allow Housing and Council Tax Benefit customers, Council Tax payers and Non-Domestic Ratepayers to view their accounts securely on-line
-

Corporate Objective 2 : Pride Of Place

Sustainability
Place Shaping

- Leading our communities in reducing the local impact on the environment through increased take up of direct credit transfer payments, Direct Debit and electronic communications reducing transaction costs and CO2 emissions from postage and paper consumption.
-

Corporate Objective 3 : Purpose Through Partnership

Improving Performance and Efficiency
Strong Community Leadership

- Value for money efficiency savings year on year
- Improved value for money based on the opinions of our customers and when our performance is compared to other local authorities
- Working more efficiently, meeting agreed key priorities, and cutting 'red tape' wherever possible
- Independent assurance of the quality of our services ensuring that these are in line with the highest standards nationally maintained a score of 3 out of 4 for the Managing Money element of the Audit Commission's Use of Resources assessment
- Reviewed fees and charges policy

What we plan to improve

Target for 2011/12	2008/09 Baseline	2009/10 Milestone	2010/11 Milestone
Corporate Objective 1 : Putting People First Providing Quality Services Health, Prosperity and Community Safety			
Work with our partners to reduce child and pensioner poverty by helping customers to claim the benefits that they are entitled to.	£1.0m annualised additional benefit income	£600,000	£600,000
Implement the revaluation of non-domestic properties		Updated property values on system by January 2010	
Corporate Objective 2 : Pride Of Place Sustainability Place Shaping			
Increase take up of direct credit transfer payments, Direct Debit and electronic communications to reduce transaction costs and reduce CO2 emissions from postage and paper consumption	DD= 63% Cheques = 6,500	DD= 65% Cheques = 4,000	DD= 67% Cheques
Build sustainability into the goods and services that we buy	Procurement Task Force Level 1	Procurement Task Force Level 3	
Corporate Objective 3 : Purpose Through Partnership Improving Performance and Efficiency Strong Community Leadership			
Maintain Charter Mark and prepare for move towards Customer Service Excellence			
Deliver 3% cashable efficiency savings year-on-year	£210,000	£240,000	???
Keep council tax increases within a target range of 2 -5% budget projections for 2008-11	4.2%	3.5%	<4%
Implement a new financial system with full e-purchasing and e-sales functionality, asset management, budget management and better reporting facilities and review all financial processes		System selected and new business processes designed	System live
Maintain a score of 3 out of 4 for the Managing Money element of the Audit Commission's Use of Resources assessment	3	3	3
Ensure the smooth transition to International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)		2009/10 restated to IFRS in parallel with UKGAAP accounts, with reconciliation between the two	2010/11 Accounts produced on IFRS basis with clean audit opinion
Make around £525,000 in procurement savings in 2008-11			

Risk

The main risks in delivering the Service Plan centre around the impact of the recession, increasing the number of claimants for benefits, the number of businesses closing reduces the business rates collected and the squeeze on household budgets increase the risk of non-payment of council tax.

The introduction of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and the implementation of a new accounting system are both major projects which will be undertaken by a small team, maintaining staffing levels and minimising absence will be essential to deliver both projects.

Other Considerations

Customer Satisfaction

We will ask our customers about the service they receive and we will use the views of our customers to improve the service we provide. We will regularly measure our customers' satisfaction with our service.

Customer Involvement

We encourage people to take part in the budgeting process, offering their views on the draft budget and taking those views into account when preparing the final budget.

People and organisations receiving services from us or providing goods and services to us will be asked to contribute their ideas on the design of invoices and remittances within the new financial system.

Access to Services

We will make it easier for customers to contact us and to get information about what we do and how we can help them. We will make changes to our website to improve the quality of the information we give. We will work together with organisations that help people whose first language is not English so that we treat everyone equally. We will increase the number of people whose enquiry is dealt with by only one officer when they visit our offices.

Value for Money

We will participate in the Council's "Transformation Programme" to make sure that we provide value for money services. The design of the new financial system will streamline processes by cutting out work that does not give value for money. The new system will give high quality and up to date information. The "Procurement Strategy" will continue to deliver more efficient and cost effective ways for the Council to buy goods and services.

Workforce Priorities

We will make sure that services that deal directly with customers are our priority. People will receive a professional, efficient and polite service.

Learning & Development

We will continue to keep Members up to date on the services provided by the Council. The appraisal system will be used to identify training needs, to set priorities for the year and as a way of improving staff performance. Training will be given on the new financial system. Opportunities will be provided for members of professional bodies to complete "Continuous Professional Development" (CPD).

Equalities and Diversity

Actions plans created from "Equality Impact Assessments" will be implemented.

We will build on our success in helping people to claim benefits to which they are entitled and we will actively seek people who should be claiming benefits.

Sustainability

As part of the implementation of a new financial system we will reduce the number of paper and cheque transactions by using electronic methods of payment and communications.

We will increase the number of customers paying by electronic means, particularly direct debit, and the number of services that can be paid for on-line and over the telephone. We promote payment cards for people who prefer to pay by cash allowing them to make payments at local shops and Post Offices. We will encourage businesses and public sector organisations to pay us by BACS. By doing this, we will reduce the need for us to travel by car and we will use the postal system less.

Rural impact

We will offer more local ways for people to access our services. We will make better use of local information centres, parish council offices and community centres. This will mean fewer people will have to travel to our offices. We already offer a home visiting service for people who need help to complete benefit forms and we are introducing a secure on-line facility for benefit customers and council tax payers to view their account details.

Communication

We will redesign our forms and documents to make sure they are clearer and easier to fill in. We will write in plain English as much as we can. We will ask people who fill in our forms to help us to make them easier to use. We communicate by email and electronically as much as we can.

Health and safety

We will carry out health and safety inspections every three months. We will make sure that money is available so that the Council can meet its health and safety responsibilities.

Standards

We will maintain the service at a level that would keep our "Charter Mark" and a score of 3 for the "Managing Money" section of the Audit Commission's "Use of Resources" assessment. We will implement "International Financial Reporting Standards" (IFRS), produce the Council's annual accounts within the legal time limits and we will receive an unqualified audit opinion.

Resources and budget

Staff Organisation Chart

Budget

2008/09 £(000)		2009/10 £(000)	2010/11 £(000)	2011/12 £(000)
154,000	Corporate Management	164,000	174,000	174,000
360,070	Accountancy Services	372,110	372,110	372,110
261,800	Exchequer Services	255,400	255,400	255,400
936,000	Concessionary Fares	680,000	872,000	1,022,000
(4,820)	NNDR Collection	(10,780)	(10,780)	(10,780)
273,590	Benefits Administration	283,140	283,140	283,140
70,000	Housing Benefits	46,600	46,600	46,600
(102,000)	Council Tax Benefits	(60,830)	(60,830)	(60,830)
14,000	Debt Management	15,000	15,000	15,000
456,680	Council Tax Collection	463,940	463,940	463,940
132,950	Procurement	124,890	124,890	124,890
2,552,270		2,333,470	2,535,470	2,685,470

Performance indicator targets

The National Indicator Set was introduced from 1 April 2008. In 2008/09 we gathered baseline data which has been used to set targets for 2009/10 and beyond.

Accountancy

PI No.	Description	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2010/11 Target
	Member satisfaction with service provided		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Internal customer satisfaction with service provided		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Cost of service as % of organisational running costs		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Cost per staff day		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
WLI FI01	Return on Council investments		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Managing Money Use of Resources Score	3	3	3
	Days sick per FTE		8	7

Exchequer

PI No.	Description	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2010/11 Target
	Customer satisfaction with service provided		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Cost of service as % of the organisation's running costs		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Cost per creditor invoice		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Creditor Days		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Cost per debtor invoice		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Debtor Days		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Cost per insurance claim		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Insurance premia as a percentage of Organisation's running costs		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
WLI F102	Proportion of creditors paid by electronic means		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Proportion of invoices paid within terms		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
WLI F103	Proportion of receipts by electronic means		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Proportion of debt outstanding after 90 days		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	VAT Penalties per year	0	0	0
	CIS Penalties per year	0	0	0
	Days sick per FTE		8	7

Benefits

PI No.	Description	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2010/11 Target
	Customer satisfaction with service provided	86%	88%	89%
NI 180	The number of changes of circumstances which affect customers' HB/CTB benefit entitlement within the year.		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
NI 181	Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
Ex BV 78a	Speed of processing new claim to HB/CTB (in days)		24	24
Ex BV 78b	Speed of processing changes of circumstances to HB/CTB (in days)		11.0	11.0
	Percentage of telephone calls answered within 10 seconds		99%	99%
	Housing Benefit Security - prosecutions / sanctions per thousand caseload		4.0	4.5
WLI FI04	LA Error overpayments as a percentage		0.4	0.4
	Overpayments as a percentage of gross benefit expenditure		<3%	<3%
	Total value of benefits claimed by claimants assisted by Benefits Liaison Officer	£1m	£600k	£600k
	Number cases per FTE Assessment Officer			
	Caseload per Benefit Service FTE			
	Days sick per FTE		8	7

Local Taxation

PI No.	Description	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2010/11 Target
	Customer satisfaction with service provided		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
WLI F105	Council Tax collected in year		98.5%	98.5%
WLI F106	Non-domestic rates collected in year		98.5%	98.5%
WLI F107	Cost of Council Tax collection per domestic household		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
WLI F108	Cost of NNDR collection per non-domestic hereditament		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Cost of enforcement and recovery as a percentage of net debit		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Write offs as percentage of debt outstanding		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
	Proportion of customers paying by direct debit			
	Days sick per FTE		8	7

Procurement

PI No.	Description	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Target	2010/11 Target
	Customer satisfaction with service provided		Subject to 08/09 baseline	Subject to 08/09 baseline
WLI F109	% Procurement savings targets achieved	£366k	£200k	£200k
	Days sick per FTE		8	7

How this Service Plan will be monitored

The Council's performance management framework is critical to monitoring and reporting the achievements of the Service and as a catalyst for improvement when targets are not achieved.

In the same way that targets cascade down to individual appraisals, the achievement of those targets is managed at individual, team or service level. Day to day management is used to identify good performance and also those areas where delivery is slower or below the standard expected. There is an underlying principle of "no surprises".

At the end of each quarter, performance against key targets is collated and reported to a directorate management meeting. Based on the above system, management should already be aware and have taken appropriate action to improve a situation subject to the availability of appropriate resources. This quarterly meeting and information review should allow the Corporate Director to balance the outcomes from each of the service areas for which they are responsible and take appropriate action within their directorate.

A quarterly report is prepared by each directorate which is then collated by the Policy Officer with responsibility for Performance Management. This report then forms an appendix to a Cabinet report, with Portfolio Holders commenting on performance for their respective portfolios and recommending any improvement to Cabinet. The Cabinet report is circulated to all Members. Cabinet recommendations are then implemented by officers.

In the Scrutiny cycle following Cabinet's consideration of performance, the three Scrutiny Committees review the decisions of Cabinet and scrutinise the actions taken to improve performance and whether these have been effective.

At the year end, provisional outturn figures are prepared and considered by Cabinet. These must then undergo a process of data quality checks internally and external validation by the Audit Commission prior to final publication around June 2010.

Other key reference documents for the service

The Council's Finances: [Finance](#)

Benefits: [Benefits](#)

Local Taxation: [Council Tax Business Rates](#)

Procurement:

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