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**Meeting:** Customer & Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> March 2011  
**Subject:** Quarter 3 Performance Report  
**Report of:** Cllr Richard Stay, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance  
**Summary:** The report highlights the Quarter 3 performance for the Customer & Shared Services Directorate and Corporate Health Indicators for the Council.

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**Advising Officer:** Richard Carr, Chief Executive  
**Contact Officer:** Ian Porter, AD Strategy and Performance  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Council

#### **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

**Council Priorities:**

The Quarterly Performance Report underpins the delivery of the Council's priorities.

**Financial:**

None directly, but there are a number of performance indicators within the corporate suite that have a strong financial link – most notably, the amount of debt outstanding, the percentage of Council Tax collected and invoices paid within 30 days.

**Legal:**

None.

**Risk Management:**

Areas of ongoing underperformance are a risk to both service delivery and the reputation of the Council.

**Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

The corporate performance suite includes indicators on sickness absence within the Council and the number of Carlisle Management Solutions agency staff.

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

This report highlights performance against performance indicators which seek to measure how the Council and its services impact across all communities within Central Bedfordshire, so that specific areas of underperformance can be highlighted for further analysis/drilling down as necessary.

As such it does not include detailed performance information relating to the Council's stated intention to tackle inequalities and deliver services so that people whose circumstances make them vulnerable are not disadvantaged. The interrogation of performance data across vulnerable groups is a legal requirement and is an integral part of the Council's equalities and performance culture which seeks to ensure that, through a programme of ongoing impact assessments, underlying patterns and trends for different sections of the community identify areas whether further action is required to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups.

**Community Safety:**

None.

**Sustainability:**

No direct implications.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):****that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

1. Note the contents of the report, considering the Council's performance position and any associated actions that need to be taken

**Performance Summary**

1. **Corporate Health Performance Indicators**  
Sickness absence across CBC has seen a slight increase in Q3 (at 2.72 days per employee and is slightly higher than the same period last year (2.6 days per employee). Performance for this indicator is heavily influenced by long term absences and consequently has been separated out in this report (45% of current sickness levels are classified as incidents of long-term sickness). Current performance levels should be considered in the context of seasonality (a higher sickness figure in winter is often common) and the staffing changes the organisation is currently facing.
2. Much attention is being paid to this indicator and management action continues to focus on reducing the levels of absence across the organisation.
3. The Council's contract with Carlisle Managed Solutions to provide temporary agency staff is now being carefully monitored to understand where we may be able to reduce the requirements. It is worth noting however, that the largest group of agency workers in the Council continue to be care workers, who fulfil a vital role in covering sickness absence in this service.

4. The number of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days (85%) has seen a slight improvement in performance against Q2, but is still below target at 90%. However, this is slightly up on the same period last year, and a concerted and proactive effort to clear these invoices is now being pursued. This includes enforcement of 'No PO No Pay' from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011, which will reduce the number of invoices that cannot be input to SAP, and the streamlined requisitioning training to improve the monitoring and management of unpaid and blocked invoices.
5. We are continuing to monitor the levels of debt outstanding. The amount of long term debt has reduced in the quarter as a result of focussed management intervention. However, short term debt has risen. Invoices paid within 30 days remains below target. The Council has re-instated the issue of County Court Judgements on those accounts applicable and will identify best practice in the management of outstanding debts.
6. **Customer & Shared Services**  
Council tax collection is a vital indicator for the Council and needs to be very closely monitored given the likely impact of the challenging economic environment on many of our local residents. The percentage of Council Tax collected during Q3 2010/11 is slightly behind that which was collected during Q3 2009/10. However, Q3 saw significant inroads being made in collecting previous years' Council Tax arrears.
7. At the beginning of the financial year the Council tax arrears was £9.47M. By the end of Q3, £3.3M of council tax arrears had been collected of which £787k was collected during Q3. The amount of arrears collected each quarter as a percentage of the total outstanding at the start of each quarter remains broadly similar.
8. This will directly impact on the current year's collection performance as customers previously in arrears begin to catch up with their payments.
9. First point resolution of customer queries has improved slightly in Q3 but still remains significantly off target. It is now possible to identify where specific problems are occurring and target appropriate management action to meet staff training needs or to implement service migration. The introduction of the new golden numbers should further improve performance in Q4.
10. The start of the new performance year saw an increase in the demand on the Housing Benefits service, as a consequence of more customers being entitled to housing benefit. A 12% increase in the number of new claims for housing benefit in Q 1 hampered the work to reduce the backlog of new claims quickly during Q 2. However, the time taken to process new housing benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims and change events is now showing an improving trend.
11. As a result of targeted management action, the backlog, that the increased demand generated has been reduced from 800 in Q 1 to 273 in Q 3, and it is anticipated that the Council's performance in this area will continue to improve. The time taken to process claims has fallen from 54 days at Q 2 to 37 days for Q 3.

## **Conclusion and Next Steps**

9. The Committee considers any issues from this report that could form part of their work programme

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – (Quarter 3 Performance Indicators)

**Background Papers:** (open to public inspection)

Executive 15 March 2011 - (Quarter 3 Performance Report)

**Location of papers:** Priory House, Chicksands