

LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Performance & Finance Select Committee 22nd June 2005

Report from the Director of Finance

For information

Wards affected:
ALL

Report Title: Revenue and Benefits Performance

Forward Plan ref: N/A

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines performance in relation to Council tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits. Performance is shown as at 31 March 2005 and 31 May 2005 where the latter figures were available at the time of writing this report.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee are asked to note Capita's Council Tax collection performance against contractual targets for 2005/06 and to consider whether the draft Council Tax improvement plan attached as Appendix A provides sufficient reassurance that all contractual targets for 2005/06 will be achieved.
- 2.2 The Committee are asked to note the improvements achieved in Business Rates and Council Tax collection in 2004/05 which exceeded contractual targets.
- 2.3 The Committee are asked to note the plans in place to maintain a 3 score for CPA (Benefits) and the need to prioritise new applications and appeals.
- 2.4 The Committee are asked to note the early outcomes of the implementations of the Verification Framework which is resulting in a higher level of Overpayment creation.

3.0 Detail

Capita's performance

3.1 Performance for the 2004/05 has generally been good although further work is still required to be able to understand peaks and troughs in Council tax collection during the financial year. At the end of the 2004/05 year the Council tax collection had exceeded the contractual target of 93% for 2004/05, by 0.41%, giving a total of 93.41% collected including recovered summons costs of approximately £500,000. It should be noted that this is the highest level of in year collection in Brent since the commencement of Council Tax. This represents an increase of 2.44% when compared with the previous year's performance. Performance for 03/04 was however disappointing at 93.5%, at 31st March 2005 which is below the target of 95%. Pre contract Council Tax arrears collection exceeded the target set for 2004/05 by £750,000 and NNDR collection for 2004/05 exceeded the contractual target of 96.2%, with 97.8% achieved. IT performance has been stable. Overall we are pleased with the improvements to performance in this the first full year of the contract and will continue to work closely with Capita to ensure that improvements are sustained.

3.2 Council Tax Collection for 2004/05 and 2005/06

In 2005/06 Capita are contractually required to achieve an in year collection rate of 93.5% and a target of 95.5% for the 2004/05 arrears.

In year collection will be monitored throughout the year on a monthly basis against two main indicators. These are a monthly comparison of in year collection against the same point in time last year and Capita's own monthly collection forecast aimed at achieving contractual targets by 31 March 2006.

Table 1 below shows monthly collection this year to date and compares that with monthly collection in 2003/04 and 2004/05.

Table 1: In Year Collection % to Date compared to previous years

Collection – Council Tax												
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2003/04 Actual	23.35	29.02	34.84	40.47	46.53	52.98	60.14	66.54	72.98	79.54	85.39	90.97
2004/05 Actual	13.77	22.01	29.9	37.42	44.79	52.66	60.15	67.59	74.92	81.53	87.3	93.41
2005/06 Actual	14.11	22.6										
Variance on 04/05	0.34	0.59										

This is the second year since the cessation of the prompt payment discount, however the number of accounts paid up front for the full year continues to remain high. 5,595 accounts paid in full to a value of £5.1m this equates to 5.7% of the council tax to be collected. In April 2004, 6694 Council Tax Payers paid their full year's Council Tax in April representing 7.7% of the total debt collected in April 2004.

Table 3a: Actual Collection for 2004/05 as a % of amount to be collected.

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
2004/05 collection in 2004/05	13.77	22.01	29.9	37.42	44.79	52.66	60.15	67.59	74.92	81.53	87.3	93.41
Collection in 2005/06	93.01	93.00										

Collection of arrears for 2003/04 is an area where improvement is required. Actions outlined in previous committee report have been undertaken including a bankruptcy campaign and letters to payers outlining the actions that will be taken against them for non payment including committal to prison. Other methods of recovery will continue to be explored with Capita.

The target for pre contract arrears collection is £500,000 collected during the year 2004/05 and £500,000 during the 2005/06 year to a cumulative total of £4m. At the 31st March 2005 £1,193,180 had been collected in the 2004/05 year (cumulative) £4,251,445m. This means that performance now exceeds contractual targets for 2004/05 and 2005/06. The client team will continue to work with Capita to ensure that collection for these years continues to be a priority.

3.4 NNDR Performance

2004/05 Collection

For NNDR (Business Rates) the collection target was 96.2% for 2004/05.

The NNDR in year collection rate at 31 March 2005 was 97.8% which is 1.6% above target and 1.41% up compared to the same time last year. This is very good performance and the highest level of in year NNDR Collection in Brent since 1990, when NNDR was introduced.

Table 4: NNDR collection 2004/05

Collection Profiles – NNDR %												
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2003/04 Actual	N/A	17.73	26.28	37.47	46.48	56.75	65.79	73.96	84.03	92.58	94.98	96.39
2004/05 Target	8.50	17.80	26.30	37.50	46.50	56.80	65.80	74.00	84.10	93.00	95.00	96.20
2004/05 Actual	9.66	19.01	28.46	33.33	48.85	58.59	68.03	77.54	87.36	95.35	96.67	97.8
Variance on 03/04	N/A	1.28	2.18	0.86	2.37	1.84	2.24	3.58	3.33	2.77	1.69	1.41

NNDR collection performance for 2005/06 in the months of May and June is good, exceeding the previous year's performance and the profile targets. For 2005/06 the NNDR target in year collection rate is 96.4%.

Table 5: NNDR collection 2005/06

Collection Profiles – NNDR %												
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
2004/05 Actual	9.66	19.01	28.46	38.33	48.85	58.59	68.03	77.54	87.36	95.35	96.67	97.8
2005/06 Target	9.25	18.5	28	37.5	47.5	57	66.5	76	85.5	93.5	95	96.4
Actual 2005/06	10.57	19.75										
Variance on 04/05	0.91	0.74										
Variance on target	1.32	1.25										

Although 96.4% is the target for 2005/06, the deduction and incentive scheme is based on collection compared to payments that have to be paid into the National Pool.

3.5 Annual Service Plan 2005/06

The annual service plan is attached as appendix A. This draft plan sets out the monthly profile for in year Council tax collection 2005/06, the actions that will be undertaken to achieve the in year target of 93.5% and the actions that will be undertaken to address performance for 2003/04 collection. Planned actions include a DD take up campaign and the use of bankruptcy as a method of obtaining funds from non payers.

3.6 Capita IT Provision against contractual requirements

The provision of IT was relatively good in the year 2004/05 compared to 2003/04 when there were significant problems in the early stages of the contract. 2004/05 shows 99.98% network availability overall for the period March 04 to March 05. Viewstar availability was 99.93% and the NNDR system at 99.96%. The I World system (Benefit and Council Tax processing), had 99.54% availability. For the same period 92% of calls to the Capita help desk were answered within 30 seconds.

Performance in 2005/06 is being closely monitored as there were 2 days loss of the IWorld system in April. This loss was related to the capacity of the Unix Box, which has become increasingly stressed as new developments and upgrades have been implemented. A health check has been carried by SX3, the system supplier and the costs of the recommendations are currently being investigated.

3.7 Viewstar replacement project

This project relates to the replacement of the existing Document Imaging and Workflow system (Viewstar) currently in use by the service. Good progress has been made on the replacement project, with an expected live date of August 2005. User acceptance testing of the first cut of the new software has commenced.

Once the first phase of the system has been installed, work will commence on Phase 2 which will include more sophisticated work flow and work load management

3.8 Best Value Performance Indicators

A comparison across the London Authorities shows Brent has moved up 3 places to 26th out of 33 but is still in lower quartile performance for Council Tax. For NNDR Brent has moved up 4 to 25th out of 33 places which resulted in a move from the lower to the 3rd quartile. This comparison is only across London Authorities and when the national comparison is available it is expected that Brent will remain in the lower quartile for both areas but with an improved league position.

3.9 Annual Billing and Year end arrangements

The annual billing project has been successfully completed. 104,500 Council Tax bills for the 2005/06 year were posted between the 15th and 23rd March 2005. The number of bills returned stating that the occupant has 'gone away' has significantly reduced to 213 compared to 856 in 04/05. This indicates that the quality of information on the database has improved. The increase contact from customers was managed well with support from Capita and additional temporary staff. 7,800 NNDR bills were sent to businesses within Brent.

3.10 Small Business Rate Relief

Changes to NNDR in the 2005/06 year include the introduction of small business rate relief. Small businesses with properties that have a rateable value less than £21,000 will be entitled to some relief however this will have to be applied for on an annual basis. There are 7,800 NNDR payers in Brent. 3,300 application forms were sent to businesses that could potentially be eligible, in advance of annual billing. 1,800 applications have been returned; of those 1,141 are entitled to small business rate relief. These have all been processed. Details of small business rate relief was also included with all 2005/06 annual bills.

3.11 NNDR Revaluation

The 2005 re-evaluation of NNDR properties was undertaken by the Valuation office. A national transitional relief scheme was implemented with the revaluation to ensure that Businesses did not experience extreme increases or to their bills. The change to rateable values has also meant the introduction transitional relief for NNDR. This will be phased out over a 4 year period. There will be a re-evaluation of Council Tax properties that will come into effect in 2007.

3.12 Complaints

The following table details the volumes of complaints received processed on time and upheld for Council Tax and NNDR.

Table 6: Complaints Details

	January			February			March		
	Recd	Response on time	% Upheld	Recd	Response on time	% Upheld	Recd	Response on time	% Upheld
Stage 1	38	93%	22%	36	92%	11%	45	97.4%	34.3%
Stage 2	2	100%	14%	3	100%	0%	8	66.7%	50%
Stage 3	2	33%	33%	2	20%	0%	2	66.7%	33.3%
LGO		N/A	N/A	1	100%	0%	0	N/A	N/A
Total	42			42			55		

Table 6a: Council Tax Details

	April		
	Recd	Response on time	% Upheld
Stage 1	34	95.6%	45%
Stage 2	8	100%	60%
Stage 3	3	50%	50%
LGO	1	100%	NA
Total	46		

Response times are measured against the number of complaints due in the month, not the number received. It will include complaints received in the previous month but due in the following month. In the same way some of complaints received in the month are not due until the next month. The targets for complaint responses are: 15 working days at Stage 1, 20 working days at Stage 2 and 30 working days at Stage 3. Good progress has been made in responding to complaints within the target timescales. At stage 1; 95% of complaints were responded to on time between January and March, this compares to 92% in the previous 3 months. The percentage upheld at Stage 2 has also reduced when compared with the previous 3 months. Work will continue to improve this while reducing the number of complaints that escalate to Stage 2 and are classified as justified at that Stage. Work will also continue to ensure that the lessons learnt are included in policies and procedures.

3.13 Housing Benefit Performance

The Department for Work and Pensions have introduced a new Performance Framework for the Benefits service, which was finalised in March 2005 and took effect from 1 April 2005. This is a streamlined version of the previous Framework and is the basis for self - assessment for determining the CPA score. The new Framework is aimed at defining levels of performance within the Benefits service and is more out-come driven than the previous Framework. Under the new Framework and CPA regime we have had to refocus our priorities in workload management.

3.14 In overall terms the Benefit service performance has remained stable throughout the year and has achieved improvements in accordance with plans. The exception to this is performance in relation to the processing of change in circumstances, where Regulation changes have impacted greatly on our ability to achieve published targets. Not

withstanding this, improvements have been made and mechanisms have been put in place to minimise overpayments caused by delay in processing these. Improvements to the service have been reflected in lower levels of complaints and customer enquiries and an ability to devote much more attention to the quality of processing. The stability of the service has also enabled us to firmly commit to implementing the Verification Framework with plans now well progressed towards achieving compliance on 2 modules by mid August.

3.15 **Workload Management**

Since the last report to this Committee we have largely maintained workloads at around 5,000 items outstanding. This represents approximately 10 days processing work. Table 6 below details the total volume of claims awaiting action by work type and length of time outstanding.

- 3.16 As a result of the need to place a far greater priority on new claims processing and appeals, this has meant that the processing of change in circumstances has been given a lower priority. The table below thus shows an increase in the number of changes of circumstances outstanding since November 2004 and a decrease in new applications outstanding. We are aiming to reduce the number of change in circumstances outstanding during quarter two of the current financial year and have mechanisms in place to suspend benefit payments when a reported change in circumstance is likely to reduce the level of entitlement in payment. This will ensure that overpayments do not accrue whilst the change of circumstance is awaiting reassessment but does mean that we have to endeavour to process them as quickly as possible to prevent hardship to the customer.
- 3.17 Changes to the definition of 'change in circumstances' have meant that this is now the area of work with the highest incoming volume. It is important that we keep up to date with this, as there are a greater number of claims affected. Subsidy penalties for overpayments caused by error and delay by the Council are also an important driver in maintaining good performance on changes in circumstances. Whilst new applications will continue to take a higher priority, we do need to balance this against the needs of our wider customer base.

Table 7: Age Profile of Work Outstanding

Month	New claims	Cancellations	Change in circs	Appeal	Other	Total items of work
January 2005	None	None	2	1	110	113
February 2005	None	None	None	None	40	40
March 2005	None	None	290	None	46	336
April 2005	11	2	1,545	2	106	1,666
May 2005	95	5	1,470	2	225	1,797
June 2005	181	26	879	12	112	1,210
Total	287	33	4,184	17	639	5,164

Best Value Performance Indicators

Table 8 below shows performance against Best Value Performance Indicators for the 2003/04 and the first three quarters of this year.

BVPI	2003/4 Performance	2004/5 Target	2004/5 Q1 (April – June)	2004/5 Q2 (July-Sept)	Quarter 3 2004/5 (Oct-Dec)	Quarter 4 2004/5 (Jan – March)
Average days to process new claims	56 days	50 days	52 days	47 days	48 days	45 days
Average days to process a change in circumstances	34 days	15 days	20.87 days	22.12 days	22 days	21 days
Percentage of claims processed accurately	97%	97%	99%	98%	98%	98%

3.18 We have continued to make good progress on reducing processing times for new claims and reduced this to below our target of 50 days for 2004/5. Our target for 2005/6 is 36 days and this is also part of the Local Public Service Agreement. We have made a number of procedural changes to enable us to meet the 2005/6 targets. This performance compares with the London average performance for quarter 2 of 51.5 days, the outer London average of 48 days, the inner average of 61 days and the national average of 45 days.

3.19 We have also made reasonable progress on the change of circumstances indicator (21 days) but have not achieved our target of 15 days. Changes to the criteria for this indicator have led to the Association of London Government (ALG) requesting a revision of the current Performance Framework standard of 9 days. We had previously set a target of 9 days but this will be subject to review based

on the new standard and an evaluation of what can realistically be achieved given the new criteria. It has been difficult to judge what a realistic target is, as our computer software has only been capable of measuring against the new criteria since mid January 2005 and we need more time to analyse performance. This performance compares with the London average of 19.3 days for quarter 2, the outer London average of 19 days, the inner London average of 20 days and the national average of 13.2 days.

3.20 We have continued to achieve a high level of performance for the accuracy of claims processing indicator.

3.21 **Benefits Complaints**

Table 8 below shows the volumes of complaints received, the percentage, which have been responded to on time and the percentage of complaints upheld. Reduction in the overall level of work outstanding has had the positive impact of reducing the level of complaints received. We have also made improvements in the timeliness of responding to complaints and the level of complaints upheld at stage 2 and 3. There has been much greater consistency in performance over the last three months.

Table 9: Analysis of Complaints Benefits-

Received	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04	Nov 04	Dec 04	Jan 05	Feb 05	Mar 05	April 05
Stage 1	74	47	70	75	41	39	32	48	44	38	60	40	51
Stage 2	11	16	22	13	10	9	9	1	4	3	9	7	8
Stage 3	4	7	3	3	3	3	0	2	0	3	0	1	2
Ombudsman	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
Total	89	70	95	91	54	52	42	51	49	45	69	48	61
Response on Time	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04						
Stage 1	11%	34%	68%	69%	76%	50%	91%	97	96	100	97.5	91.3%	91%
Stage 2	28%	69%	100%	96%	83%	90%	55%	71	100	100	88	100%	100%
Stage 3	80%	100%	60%	0%	0%	25%	0%	0	50	25	0	N/A	100%
Ombudsman	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	N/A	100%	N/A	100	100	100	0	N/A	NA
Upheld	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04						
Stage 1	72%	76%	61%	52%	51%	36%	35%	31	47	63.3	63.9	61.9%	83%
Stage 2	79%	94%	67%	36%	83%	70%	73%	100	50	66.7	25	80%	86%
Stage 3	60%	60%	80%	100%	33%	50%	0%	50	50	25	0	N/A	0%
Ombudsman	0%	N/A	N/A	0%	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	N/A	N/a	NA

3.22 **Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)**

The Benefits service is a discrete element within the overall corporate assessment for CPA purposes. The assessment is based on compliance with Performance Framework. The scoring for the service is dependent upon the level of compliance an Authority can demonstrate with these standards. As detailed in paragraph 3.14 above, a new Framework has been introduced with effect from 1 April 2005. The new Framework replaces 850 measures with 19 "Performance Measures", which are hard outcome based measures (of which 12 are scored for CPA purposes). These are also 65 "Enablers" which are largely policies and procedures, which enable the delivery of outcomes. We are required to self assess against the Performance Measures and Enablers and the level of performance and compliance are formulated to determine the overall CPA score for Benefits. The Benefits service needs to retain a score of 3 in order for the Council to achieve the overall aim of Excellence this year. The new regime for Benefits has made this very difficult but achievable with a re-focus on priorities. We are currently completing our self-assessment and validating the data in relation to the 12 Performance Measures, which impact on the CPA score. We will be finalising our self- assessment in early July 2005 and the self-assessment must be submitted to the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate by 15 July 2005.

3.23 **Verification Framework**

At the last Committee it was reported that we were planning to implement two modules from the Verification Framework (Reviews and Visits) by August 2005 and that we would consider implementing the final module (New Claims) by the summer of 2006. Our plans for implementation of the Reviews and Visits modules have been brought forward due to the requirements of the Performance Framework and the consequences for our CPA rating if we delay. We have received the set up funding from DWP and have developed a project plan. We have appointed a Visiting Team Manager and Deputy Team Manager. We have also procured some part time consultancy and we have recruited some temporary specialist Visiting staff. We are liaising with the Community Safety Team and carrying out a risk assessment on the visiting work, which is a completely new aspect of our service. We will be training all staff carrying out visits in relation to ensuring their own safety and that of our customers, many of whom will be vulnerable.

3.24 We have briefed staff and stakeholders widely and have drafted procedures. We have been consulting internal and external stakeholders on procedures and other aspects of implementation as the Verification Framework represents a major change to the way that we work and the experience of claiming Benefit will change for customers and may impact on our stakeholders. The key changes will be that we will be increasing the levels of evidence needed to pay Benefit and proactively encouraging customers to report changes in circumstances. Our visiting work and increased work on matching discrepancies between DWP data and data we hold for Housing and

Council Tax Benefit purposes have already resulted in an increase in overpayments being created as we are discovering that a high proportion of customers we make contact with have had unreported changes in circumstances resulting in reduced Benefit levels.

3.25 A major part of the project involves the development of wireless technology and we have placed an order for the relevant hardware and software. The wireless devices will enable Customers to complete an electronic form and assessors to process entitlement in the Customer's home. A claim from a customer's home will reap major efficiency for the service.

3.26 We have started to cost model for the implementation of the new claims module. DWP have indicated that set up funding will only be available until March 2006 and it is therefore important that a decision is made on whether or not to pursue implementation of this module whilst Central Government funding is available.

3.27 **Local Housing Allowance**

The DWP are currently piloting a new scheme known as Local Housing Allowance. The initial pathfinder commenced in February 2004 and consisted of nine Authorities including one London Authority. The key aspects of the new scheme are to pay Benefit directly to customers rather than landlords unless it is proven that the customer is vulnerable and to set flat rates for rent levels dependent on the size of a property and the family membership rather than the current system of the Rent Officer carrying out individual assessments of market rent based on the size of the property and family but also on location and the specific quality of the accommodation. The DWP have produced a baseline report for the pathfinder and a report on the early findings.

3.28 In advance of full evaluation a further group of Authorities have been asked to volunteer to pilot and those accepted include another London Authority. The current pathfinder and pilot relate to the private sector only but DWP have expressed their intention to pilot the scheme in the social sector also. The scope of the pilot is being developed for consultation.

3.29 The DWP have indicated that they wish to frame the scheme into legislation and roll out nationally for Private Tenants by March 2008. There have been some internal discussion regarding this and the current view is that Brent would not volunteer to pilot this scheme due the potential impact on customers and landlords and because of the pace of change planned within the service over the next two years.

3.30 **Counter callers**

The table 10 below details the number of callers being received at Brent House enquiry counter and customer waiting times.

Table 10: Details of callers to the counter service-

Counter	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04	Nov-04	Dec-04	Jan-05	Feb-05	Mar-05
Total seen	5798	4645	5386	4710	4210	4379	4052	4234	4401	4638	4649	5339
Number seen within 30 minutes	4084	3253	3492	3464	3427	2798	3019	3201	3465	3466	3468	3907
% seen in 30 minutes	70.4%	70.0%	64.8%	73.5%	81.4%	63.9%	74.5%	75.6%	74.7%	74.73%	74.6%	73.18%
Average wait time (mins)	74.6%	50.6	44.9	32.1	25.0	41.0	29.0	29.0	28	38.2	35.9	48.25

A total of 56004 customers were seen during 2004/05, 40885 were seen within 30 minutes.

The aggressive recovery strategy for Council Tax means that there will be continued pressure on customer service, which can lead to long waiting times. Increased volumes of callers during January and February 2005 have lengthened the waiting times.

Table 10a: Details of callers to the counter service – 2005/06

Counter	Apr-05	May-05 Up to 23/5/05
Total seen	5393	1946
Number seen within 30 minutes	4682	1313
% seen in 30 minutes	86.8%	67.47
Average wait time (mins)	23.23 mins	30.22 mins

Table 11

Call Centre (Benefits Line)		
	Apr-05	May-05
Answered	7514	6610
Abandoned	1346	1542
% of calls answered in 15 seconds	31.40%	16.90%
% of calls answered in 5 minutes	70.40%	66.6
% abandoned	15.20%	18.90%
Average time to answer (secs)	14	178
Average call duration (secs)	275	425
Call Centre (Council Tax Line)		
Answered	11614	9261
Abandoned	2613	2668
% of calls answered in 15 seconds	31.30%	11.80%
% of calls answered in 5 minutes	67.70%	65.50%
% abandoned	18.40%	22.40%
Average time to answer (secs)	132	183
Average call duration (secs)	379	341

3.31 Housing Benefit Overpayments

The target for this financial year is to recover £2.75M in contrast to the £3.3 million achieved during 2004/05. The reduction to targets reflect the fact that the value of historical debt has been significantly reduced. Table 12 below gives a breakdown of overpayments recovered in the current financial year.

Table 12: Overpayment Recovery –

	2004 / 05	End May 2005	End May 2004
Recovery from Ongoing Housing Benefit	£1.376M	£236,537	£244,388
Composite Recovery (* See below)	£598,936	£82,906	£10,095
Cash Recovery (Invoice)	£1.335M	£207,347	£194,936
Total Recovery	£3.311M	£523,790	£449,419

(*) Composite recovery is the recovery of a Housing Benefit Overpayment owed by a landlord from the ongoing benefit of another of their tenants

- 3.32 Additional resource was recruited to the Overpayments Team in 2004/05 to focus on recovery and good results have been achieved. We are planning to retain this resource during 2005/06 as long as this remains financially beneficial in terms of recovery performance.

During 05/06 we are continuing to focus on Composite Recovery whilst commencing County Court action, expanding our Collection Agency pilot, and taking steps to minimising the incidence of Overpayments.

- 3.34 Performance measurement of Overpayments in terms of BVPIs has changed this year in that we are measured both on our recovery performance against current year debt, but also against arrears. We intend to carry out some benchmarking against other authorities. It will mean that careful consideration will need to be given to the management of bad debt.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Any failure to maximise collection of Council Tax and NNDR will impact on the Council's cash flow and budgetary provision for future years.
- 4.2 Effective management of benefits workload has a direct impact on the overall finances of the Council. Prompt assessment of claims enables us to maximise subsidy through the provision of up to date and accurate management information provided to the Department for Work and Pensions. Similarly the prompt action on overpayment work and accuracy of payments enables us to avoid subsidy penalties. Effective workload management has a direct impact on council tax and rent recovery.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct diversity implications arising from this report.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 There are no direct staffing implications arising from this report.

Background Papers

Contact Officers

Margaret Read
Head of Revenues and Benefits
Paula Buckley Head of Client
Jenny Dunne Head of Benefits