	<p>Performance and Finance Select Committee 14th July 2008</p> <p>Report from the Directors of Finance and Corporate Resources and Policy and Regeneration</p>
For Action	Wards Affected: ALL
<p>Report Title: Performance and Finance Review - Quarter 4 and Outturn 2007/2008</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(F&CR 07/08 37)</i></p>	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises Brent Council's spending, activity and performance in the 2007-08 financial year and highlights key issues and solutions to them. It takes a corporate overview of financial and service performance. It is set out in terms of the main budgets and provides a general overview and analysis of high risk areas. The report is accompanied by appendices providing budget, activity and performance data for each service area, ring fenced budgets and the capital programme. Vital signs trend data and graphs are also provided.

2.0 Recommendations

The Executive is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the council's spending, activity and performance in financial year 2007/2008.
- 2.2 Agree the use of £188k of balances brought forward from 2007/08 to be used to supplement Neighbourhood Working budgets within wards for amounts that remained unspent in 2007/08 (paragraph 5.6).
- 2.3 Note progress on resolving outstanding issues on continuing care funding with the PCT (paragraph 5.8).
- 2.4 Agree the virements listed in paragraph 5.9 and Appendix E.
- 2.5 Agree directors should review spending, activity and performance in 2007/08 and ensure measures are taken, in consultation with relevant portfolio holders, to ensure good performance/budget management in 2008/09.

3.0 Background

3.1 Prior to 2007/08, the council carried out financial, activity and performance monitoring separately. We have now brought together the monitoring information in a single report. This report reflects performance over the first whole year of his revised approach.

3.2 The success of the council is ultimately measured by the delivery of the priorities within the Corporate Strategy. That is principally determined by the council's overall strategic planning framework and reviewed through the annual report to Council in November on progress against the Corporate Strategy and the Annual Review published in late summer. Regular Performance and Finance Review reports allow members to ensure that council finances and performance remain on track to help achieve these priorities. This end-of-year report enables members to review performance over the whole year.

3.3 The new approach to monitoring and reporting reflects other changes in the council's approach in recent years, including strengthening the link between the Corporate Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, active performance monitoring and management, a greater focus on outcomes as part of capital programme monitoring, and bringing together financial and performance monitoring of partnership activity through the Local Area Agreement. It provides more clarity about the relationship between spending, performance and activity – for example the impact of rises in the number of children in different forms of care on the children's service provision and budget – and provides a basis for assessing the potential impact of future decisions. It also provides a more holistic view of the council's spending and activity by bringing together revenue and capital, the General Fund, Dedicated Schools Budget and Housing Revenue Account budgets, and council and partnership activity and performance in one report.

3.4 Appendices included in this report are as follows:

Appendix A	General Fund services – Financial, activity and performance monitoring information for each of the council's main service areas:
- A1	- Children and Families
- A2	- Environment and Culture
- A3	- Housing and Community Care
- A4	- Corporate Centre
Appendix B	Capital programme
- B1	- Children and Families
- B2	- Environment and Culture
- B3	- Housing and Community Care
- B4	- Corporate Centre
Appendix C	Housing Revenue Account
Appendix D	Local Area Agreement
Appendix E	Budget virements for 2008/09
Appendix F	Vital Signs – high and medium risk performance

3.5 Supplementary documentation circulated to members includes the Local Area Agreement (LAA) annual report.

4.0 Corporate context

4.1 The long term objectives for Brent were agreed by the council in the Corporate Strategy which sets out the main aims of making Brent a great place, a borough of opportunity and one community. The themes reflect the broad approach in our inter-agency Community Strategy for 2006-10 and also the results of local polling about residents' concerns. These aims need to be achieved within the context of a reduction in real terms in government grant, members' ambitions to keep council tax increases low, and significant budget pressures resulting from, amongst other things, demographic pressures, the increasing costs of waste disposal and increased cost of continuing care.

5.0 Overall financial position

General Fund revenue budget

5.1 The 2008/09 budget report to Full Council on 3rd March 2008 and the 3rd quarter Performance and Finance Review report to the Executive on 18th March 2008 included projections of the outturn for 2007/08. The accounts for 2007/08 have now been closed and were approved at General Purposes Committee on 26th June 2008. The accounts are however subject to audit and the position may change between now and completion of the audit at the end of September.

5.2 Table 1 below summarises the pre-audit revenue outturn for 2007/08 and shows the movement since projected outturn was reported as part of the 2008/09 budget report based on quarter 3 monitoring information. Overall General Fund balances were £9.055m at 31st March 2008, which is a £450k improvement against the outturn forecast at Quarter 3.

Table 1 – 2007/08 revenue outturn

	Latest Budget £'000	Outturn £'000	Variance £'000	M'ment since Q3 £'000
Children and Families	48,902	49,261	(359)	543
Environment and Culture	46,819	46,405	414	59
Housing & Community Care:				
o housing and customer services	17,990	17,708	282	57
o adult social care	75,418	79,410	(3,992)	(697)
F&CR/Central Units	22,024	20,322	1,702	509
Service Area Total	211,153	213,106	(1,953)	471
Central items	33,379	30,636	2,743	(21)
Total council budget	244,532	243,742	790	450
Application of balances	(1,642)	(1,642)	0	0
Total council budget/forecast after application of balances	242,890	242,100	790	450

Balances brought forward from 2006/07	9,124	9,907	783	0
2007/08 underspend	0	790	790	450
Contribution from balances	(1,642)	(1,642)	0	0
Total balances forecast at 31st March 2008	7,482	9,055	1,573	450

5.3 The main movements in service area spending since the forecast outturn was reported are as follows:

- the Children and Families outturn was £543k better than forecast principally as a result of application of grants to spending within the service;
- the corporate units' outturn was £509k better than forecast principally as a result of better than forecast housing benefit subsidy outturn;
- the Adult Social Care outturn was £697k worse than forecast principally because of increases in the provision needed for bad debts.

Spending on Environment and Culture and Housing and Customer Services was broadly in line with forecast levels.

5.4 Spending on central items was also broadly in line with forecast outturn. However this masked some significant movements between items. In particular net debt charges/interest receipts were £1.1m less than forecast largely because a contingency for adjustments between the General Fund and HRA was not required. In addition, there were reductions in the amount required for the remuneration strategy and for property maintenance/Civic

Centre development, and slippage in spending on Neighbourhood Working. These under-spends were used to fund one-off items agreed as part of the budget strategy including meeting the cost of payments to the Pension Fund for early retirements as a one-off lump sum, making provision for one-off costs associated with the Local Development Framework consultation, and setting up a reserve for invest to save measures as part of the improvement and efficiency programme.

- 5.5 The council's 2008/09 budget includes use of balances brought forward of £1.105m. The improved outturn for 2007/08, with balances carried forward at 1st April 2008 of £9.055m rather than the £8.605m forecast after quarter 3, means that forecast balances at 31st March 2009 are now £7.950m compared to £7.5m when the 2008/09 budget was set. This is at the upper end of the £7.5m to £8m target range for balances.
- 5.6 Given uncertainties about the budget – and in particular the continuing challenges within Adult Social Care – it is considered that some additional cushion on balances is required. However, one of the areas where the budget underspent in 2007/08 was Neighbourhood Working. Support for the programme was only fully in place near the end of 2007 and wards were included in the programme on a phased basis. As a result £188k of funds allocated to wards remained unspent at the end of the year. Most of the unspent funds - £164k – had been allocated to identified purposes. Members are asked to agree allocation of balances to meet the full £188k which remained unspent and that this is added to wards' 2008/09 allocations. If members agree this, overall council balances forecast for 31st March 2009 would be £7.762m.
- 5.7 The budget monitoring position covering the first quarter of 2008/09 will be reported to the Executive in September. Risks to the 2008/09 budget were set out in the 2008/09 budget report, with the largest single risk being Adult Social Care because of pressure from continuing care cases and risks associated with delivery of savings as part of the Adult Social Care transformation programme. The increase in the Adult Social Care overspend in 2007/08 from that forecast at Quarter 3 reinforces the need to manage this risk. Measures are in place to ensure robust monitoring of the budget. All the budgets have been reviewed in preparation for 2008/09 and zero based using client numbers, the cost of services and income from clients. Financial activity will be closely monitored during 2008/09 by monthly budget monitoring. Monitoring is reviewed by senior managers and appropriate action taken. The amount of information provided to senior managers has been increased and will include client numbers and monthly spending profiles.
- 5.8 Resolution of most outstanding issues with the PCT should remove the uncertainty that the dispute with the PCT caused in 2007/08 and should help ensure robust monitoring. As part of this resolution of the issues, a reserve of £1.4m was set up as part of the council's 2007/08 accounts. This will be available for use on projects jointly agreed by the council and the PCT.

- 5.9 There are a number of budget virements in 2008/09 that members are being asked to agree. These are included in Appendix E and are as follows:
- A £354k virement is required from the levy budget within central items to Environment and Culture. £216k of this is to fund increases in Section 52(9) charges for waste disposed of on top of the amount paid for through the West London Waste Authority levy. The balance of £138k is required because removal of the capital element of the Waste Performance and Efficiency grant means that it is no longer possible to capitalise waste contract costs. The contingency left within the levies budget for further increases in Section 52(9) charges, after this adjustment, is £76k. Current monitoring indicates that waste tonnages have stabilised and levels of waste will continue to be monitored closely.
 - Two virements are required as a result of late notification of additional Area Based Grant to the authority. £137k has been added for Young Peoples Substance Misuse and 205k for Preventing Violent Extremism. These need to be vired to Children & Families and Human Resources & Diversity respectively.
 - It is proposed that £745k currently held within service area budgets for pensions enhancements (added years) is vired into central items. This is because both best value accounting requirements and removal of the option to grant added years mean it is no longer necessary to charge these costs to General Fund services. Charges will continue to be made to trading accounts, the HRA and the Schools Budget.
 - A virement of £385k is required from the Housing and Customer Services IT budget to Adult Social Care to reflect changes in the recharging of IT costs within Housing and Community Care.
 - The central efficiency target includes £270k related to improved cash flow improvements on council tax collection, national non-domestic rate collection and recovery of VAT. These increase interest on council balances and therefore a £270k virement is proposed from interest receipts toward the efficiency target.

Schools Budget

- 5.10 The Schools Budget consists of a central element which funds a restricted range of education services provided on an authority wide basis and the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) which is delegated to each school based on their budget share. The spending is funded from a ring-fenced Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).
- 5.11 In 2007/08, the council received £173.9m of DSG of which £156.0m was distributed to schools through the ISB and £17.9m was used for central expenditure. During the year, schools spent £151.3m of the DSG allocated to them and the remainder of £4.7m has been added to school balances which have increased from £9.0m at 31st March 2007 to £13.7m at 31st March 2008. The central element of the Schools Budget underspent by £0.9m primarily because levels of additional Special Education Needs spending were not as

high as expected. Underspends on the central element are held in an earmarked DSG reserve which now stands at £1.1m.

Housing revenue account

- 5.12 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ringfenced account containing the income and expenditure relating to the council's landlord duties for approximately 9,500 dwellings.
- 5.13 The HRA outturn for 2007-08 shows a £2.5m surplus, which exceeds the budgeted surplus of £0.6m by £1.9m. The reasons for the additional surplus include an underspend of £1.3m on repairs expenditure (due to delays in planned electrical work and scheduling of works on decent homes), additional income of £250k on HRA commercial properties, and an underspend of £350k on management costs.

Capital programme

- 5.14 Total spending on the capital programme in 2007/08 was £83.822m, made up of £72.878m on the General Fund and £11.004m on the Housing Revenue Account. Changes between the forecast outturn and actual outturn are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - Changes between forecast and actual capital outturn

	£'000
Spending	
Forecast spending outturn – March 2008	103,799
<i>Add items not included in the forecast outturn</i>	
Capitalisation of Revenue Spend in General Fund	5,623
Capitalisation of Revenue Spend in HRA	1,104
Additional Central Items	1,450
South Kilburn – Granville New Homes	556
Spending Funded from Additional External Grant	1,505
Spending Funded from Additional External Contributions	1,476
School Loans Schemes	1,159
Other Amendments	256
Sub-total	116,928
Less:	
Amounts carried forward to 2007/08 – General Fund	(20,702)
HRA	(12,344)
Total spending	83,882
Less:	
Total resources	(83,882)
Amount Carried Forward	0

- 5.15 As can be seen from Table 2, capital expenditure commitments of £33.046m have been carried forward from 2007/08 to 2008/09. Table 3 below sets out the main commitments.

Table 3 - Analysis of capital expenditure carried forward to 2008/09

	£'000
<u>Grants carried forward:</u>	
- Children's Centres Sure Start Grant	2,818
- Schools Devolved Formula Grant	2,281
- Big Lottery Fund (NOF Works)	10
- Specialist Schools Grant	118
- Transport for London	7
- Additional Grant Notifications (Ringfenced)	665
- Private Sector Renewal Grant/Disabled Facilities Grant	978
- New Social Housing Units	435
- Local Area Agreements	1,962
<u>Wembley Regeneration Land Claims:</u>	
- Estate Access Corridor	2,940
- Stadium Access Corridor	1,155
<u>HRA Items:</u>	
- HRA ALMO Works	7,650
- Major Repairs Allowance	4,694
Section 106 Agreements	1,629
Re-phased Schemes	5,704
Expenditure Carried Forward to 2008/09	33,046

5.16 Table 4 below details movement in resources available to fund the 2007/08 capital programme compared to the position reported in March 2008.

Table 4 - Changes between forecast and actual capital resources in 2007/08

	£'000
Resources	
Forecast Total Resources – March 2008	103,799
<i>Add items not included in the forecast outturn</i>	
Revenue contributions from General Fund	6,416
Revenue contributions from HRA	1,104
Additional external grant	1,773
Additional contributions	1,715
Additional Prudential Borrowing for School Loan Schemes	1,159
Movement in Unsupported Borrowing	1,363
Sub-total	117,329
<i>Less:</i>	
Amounts carried forward to 2007/08 – General Fund	(27,202)
HRA	(5,844)
Other Amendments	(401)
Total Resources	83,822

5.17 The first quarter monitoring for 2008/09 will be included in the Performance and Finance Review report to the Executive in September. This will include changes to the 2008/09 to 2011/12 programme to reflect slippage from 2007/08. The major pressure on the capital programme remains the schools' capital programme. To help address these pressures the council bid to be included in an earlier wave of the Building Schools for the Future programme but has been informed that it is not one of the eight authorities which were successful (out of over 30 authorities which bid to be included). The council will be resubmitting a bid to be included in the next wave from 1st April 2009. A report will be submitted to the Executive in the autumn outlining approaches to developing a schools' programme over a longer period than the current four year capital programme which will build in the various demands on the programme and potential funding sources. In the meantime, the potential for urgent work to school roofs at Kingsbury Green and Grove Park schools has been identified. Officers are currently in the process of establishing the extent of the work required and a timescale for completing it. Any costs that need to be incurred will be reported to a future meeting of the Executive together with measures for funding them.

Prudential Indicators


5.18 Prudential indicators were introduced as part of the prudential borrowing regime introduced as part of the Local Government Act 2003. The arrangements are aimed at ensuring authorities exercise their borrowing powers responsibly, with capital expenditure plans that are affordable, external borrowing that is prudent and sustainable, and treasury management decisions taken in accordance with good professional practice. Prudential limits are set as part of the budget process, monitored during the year, and actual performance reported at outturn.

5.19 The Executive will receive the Treasury Management annual report in August and this will include the final outturn on prudential indicators. The report will also be considered at Full Council in September.

6.0 Overall performance position

Corporate Strategy

6.1 Overall the council has made good progress towards delivering the key objectives in the Corporate Strategy in financial year 2007/2008 with the majority of Vital Signs indicators considered critical to the success of the council performing broadly in line with target. 72.7% are currently on target (green star) or just below target (blue circle) and 27.2% are well below target (red triangle).

Overall Council Performance				
				

	Low risk	Medium risk	High risk	No data
Percentage Quarter 1 PIs	45%	17%	21%	17%
Percentage Quarter 2 PIs	48%	18%	32%	2%
Percentage Quarter 3 PIs	50%	13%	35%	2%
Percentage Quarter 4 PIs	50%	19%	29%	2%
Outturn	52.7%	20%	27.2%	0%

More detailed trend data and comments on these indicators are available in appendix F.

- 6.2 The key risks to achieving the objectives outlined in the corporate strategy this year included: an overspend in children's social care, cost shunting from the Primary Care Trust to adult social care, the lack of school places and progress under the new waste contract. At the end of the year there continue to be overspends in both adults and children's social care. Transformation programmes are in place to continue to address this. Progress has been made in providing more school places with longer term plans going to executive this summer. Provisional survey figures at the end of the year show that the cleanliness of the borough has improved under the new waste contract. However improvements in the recycling rate and levels of graffiti will be sought in 2008/09. This report sets out the measures that have been put in place to respond to poor progress towards the corporate objectives.
- 6.3 Officers will be monitoring and managing performance and will report any further action required to members as appropriate. The Executive is asked to agree:
- that all directors ensure that underperformance is tackled and measures are taken, in consultation with relevant portfolio holders, to achieve this

Local Area Agreement

- 6.4 Brent Council and Partners have completed the second year of the stretch targets. Performance against all but one stretch target is going well, and we are hopeful of obtaining the majority of the performance reward grant available to Brent. Excluding the smoking cessation stretch target, Brent is confident of achieving £8,615,779.
- 6.5 Some of the previous areas of risk have been resolved:
- *The employment of disadvantaged groups stretch target*
Agreement has been reached with Government Office which allows us to classify clients at Brent in2 Work according to their worst disadvantage. This has meant that people from a BME community, who also experience other disadvantages (for example are a lone parent, or have no qualifications), can now be classified under the disadvantaged group rather than the BME group. As a result Brent is now on course to achieve the target.
 - *Proportion of land assessed as having unacceptable levels of litter and detritus*

The new contract is now working well, and the third survey of the year found that 17% of land surveyed had unacceptable levels of litter and detritus, which was good enough to ensure that the target was met for 2007/08. The target for 2008/09 is 19%, so if this level of performance is maintained Brent should achieve the target.

6.6 There are still some areas of risk which remain:

- *The proportion of adults participating in sport and physical activity for thirty minutes three times a week*

We have had no new survey information available since the baseline was set in 2006/07. Sport England who is responsible for the survey is carrying out an interim survey at the moment, which will give us some idea of how we are performing towards the target. Early national results suggest that more people are exercising, and we hope that Brent is a part of this trend. Results of the interim survey will be available by the end of 2008, and the next survey will begin soon after with the final results available by the end of 2009.

- *Smoking cessation*

The PCT have invested significant funds into restarting the smoking cessation service, and are hoping to be able to achieve at least part of the target. This would mean that some of the performance reward grant might be gained, possibly £459,043.80. The service resumed in quarter four of 2007/08, and some new performance was achieved, and many of their former partners are keen to resume the scheme. The target will be challenging, but we are hopeful that the service will be successful.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

6.7 Brent retained three stars in the assessment of financial year 2007/08, released in February 2008. The Audit Commission have confirmed the CPA framework for 2008. The Vital Signs indicators which will impact on the final CPA score in 2008 are: the number of active library borrowers, numbers of library visits and street cleanliness.

6.8 The council is now preparing for the new regime which will replace CPA, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). A new set of national indicators is being put in place now ready for CAA. 35 of the national indicators will be the focus of the Local Area Agreement. These indicators will feature in the quarterly Performance and Finance Review reports for 2008/09.

Specific Performance Issues

Youth

6.9 This year the council has improved early excellence, increasing the number of 13-19 year olds contacting the youth service, reducing the percentage of 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training and providing a number of parenting courses. There has also been an improvement in the number of young people visiting council sports facilities.

Schools

- 6.10 The council still has high numbers of children waiting for school places, although fewer than last year. The underlying problem is a shortage of places in schools; a situation experienced by a number of neighbouring boroughs, where schools are almost at capacity. Brent has set out a strategy to deal with this involving expansion of existing provision and work to build new schools in the borough. Progress has been made with some permanent expansion complete. There has also been temporary expansion in some schools with consultation underway on whether to make this permanent. The Building Schools for the Future report is going to Executive in May to address this issue.

Children's Social Care

- 6.11 Work overseen by the Children's Social Care Transformation Board to both improve the health and well-being of children by providing help when they need it and reduce projected overspends is showing improvement in some areas of performance and cost. Three critical indicators have performed poorly this quarter, 'the number of re-registrations on the child protection register', 'the percentage of looked after children adopted' and 'the average number of children placed with in house foster carers.' However performance for the whole year has seen only one of these indicators meet their annual target. Overall, re-registrations on the child protection register and the number of children placed with in-house foster carers have not performed well this year.

Special Educational Needs

- 6.12 The council has struggled to prepare statements of educational needs within 18 weeks, including those affected by exceptions to the rule. The main reasons for this include length of time needed to liaise with Health Services, additional reports being required and pupils changing schools. We are working with NHS managers through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board to speed up medical reports.

Adult Social Care

- 6.13 The adult care transformation programme is working to improve health and well being performance and to mitigate the risk to the council's budget from the current overspend. In the final quarter we have met or are close to achieving our targets for all our social care critical indicators.

Settled homes

- 6.14 At the end of the year a 12.5% reduction of families in temporary accommodation was achieved, only 25 households short of achieving the 13% end of year target. The target was not met mainly because of the increase in homeless acceptances during the year, the difficulties of devising a workable scheme for temporary accommodation conversions to settled accommodation, and the low cost home ownerships target not being met. A slippage in meeting the target for direct lettings into the private sector also contributed. Overall, the end of the year figure is very positive, it is a reduction on the figure in quarter three and the overall trend in the use of temporary accommodation is downwards.

- 6.15 Housing did not return to occupation or demolish the target number of non local authority owned vacant dwellings. This was expected and new initiatives are being put in place to increase the performance. These initiatives will include a review of the existing private sector procurement processes and structures, setting up a unified team to increase the efficiency of the procurement function and a positive marketing campaign.

Cleanliness – litter, graffiti, fly posting

- 6.16 We have made Brent a cleaner place. The new waste contract has now been in operation for a year. A number of critical indicator results are reported in July, November and March following surveys of cleanliness by ENCAMS. This quarter we can provide the provisional figures for the year. These provisional results show the amount of litter and detritus in Brent's streets has improved with only 17% of relevant land and highways being assessed as below an acceptable level. In addition the level of fly posting has been improving over the last six months. The work to improve performance is reflected in an excellent final survey score. The levels of graffiti present in our streets are affected by crime waves and gangs competing to tag the borough. More emphasis is being put on preventative work to bring this issue under control through the new graffiti project board.

Recycling

- 6.17 Poor performance for the combined dry recycling and composting this year was due to an increase in contamination of the organic waste collected for composting. This led to loads being rejected and the material being sent to land fill. More dry recycling material was collected this year; but this improved performance was not enough to balance out the poor composting performance. To address the issue an officer has the specific task of identifying contamination before loads are rejected in 2008/09.

Library visits and active borrowers

- 6.18 There are still too few library visits and active borrowers in Brent. The number of library visits has been affected by the late opening of Kingsbury Library Plus. This factor has had an impact on the number of active borrowers, but the identified need for new stock to attract more borrowers is a key factor. New library stock which entered the libraries at the end of the year is intended to help further in reaching these targets in 2008/09. In addition the rise in the number of borrowers at Kingsbury Library Plus since its opening will be positive for performance in the year ahead.

Employment

- 6.19 In making Brent a borough of opportunity, we are ensuring opportunities for employment are taken up. This year, more jobs than planned were filled by people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and disadvantaged communities.

Revenues and Benefits

- 6.20 Revenues and Benefits achieved three stars for their block of the 2007 CPA score. This good performance is reflected in the Vital Signs for this service.

The service has achieved average processing times for change of circumstances that are well below the target for the year. They have surpassed the target for new claims and have collected 95% of council ahead of the 94% target.

Human Resources

- 6.21 Sickness levels (excluding schools) in Brent have risen this year as compared to last year when they were marginally below target. A review of the sickness policy and a workshop for managers has been put in place to ensure that the rise in sickness does not continue.

Complaints

- 6.22 This year has seen a concerted effort to improve complaint response times and limit escalation from stage 1 to stage 2 complaints. At the end of the year all areas of the council are close to or meeting targets to limit escalation from stage 1 to stage 2 of the complaints process. However poor response times in Children and Families and Environment and Culture highlighted in quarter 1, remain at the end of the year. Children and Families has shown continuous improvement throughout the year in trying to reach this target. Some social care teams are using complaint meetings to discuss issues with the complainant before responding and most team managers in Social Care have now received complaints training. Environment and Culture have had fluctuating levels of performance throughout the year and have a lower percentage of stage 1 complaints answered in time in quarter 4 than in quarter 1. This performance is not evident in all units of Environment and Culture and the service area is now working to address this.

7.0 Financial implications

- 7.1 These are set out in the body of the report

8.0 Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

9.0 Diversity implications

- 9.1 This report has been subject to screening by officers and there are no direct diversity implications.

10.0 Background documents

- 10.1 Corporate Strategy 2006/10
Community Strategy 2006/10
Budget Report 2007/08
Budget Report 2008/09
Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08

11.0 Contact officers

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