



Council 28 February 2012

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr David Ray, Performance and Resources Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Democratic Renewal/Member Development;
- Diversity;
- Finance, Resources and Information Technology;
- Health and Safety;
- Human Resources, Risk Management, Training and Organisational Development;
- Internal Audit;
- Legal and Democratic Services; and
- Performance Management and Customer Access.

1. Financial Services

1.1 Delivering a Sustainable Budget: Budget Setting 2012/2013

1.1.1 Work on the Council's 2012/2013 budget has been completed and the resulting Budget and Council Tax report is included on this agenda for consideration by full Council as agenda item 9.

1.2 Investment Activity: 1 April 2011 to 31 January 2012

1.2.1 As at 31 January 2012 interest earned on investments during the first 10 months of the financial year amounted to £485k against a profiled budget for the period of £392k, a budgetary surplus of £93k. This surplus was due primarily to higher than projected cash holdings during the period arising from timing differences between planned and actual capital expenditure and receipts. The average rate of return on investments during this period was 1.46% against the target rate for 2011/2012 of 1.5%.

1.2.2 It is a requirement of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Treasury Management Code that an Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy is approved by Council prior to the beginning of the financial year to which it relates. At its meeting on 27 January 2012, the Treasury Management Sub Committee considered the proposed 2012/2013 Strategy and recommended it for approval (Report C294). This recommendation was subsequently endorsed by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on 30 January and is included within this meeting's agenda within the Schedule of Referrals from Cabinet, agenda item 8, for Council consideration.

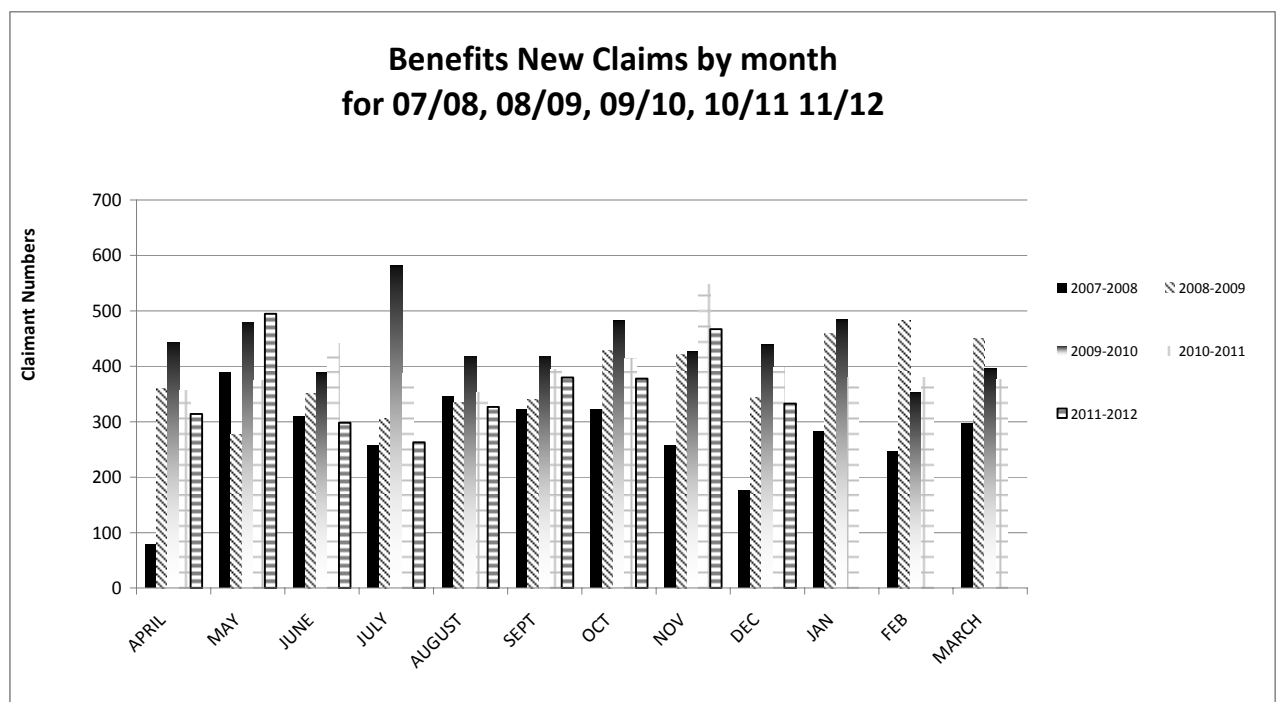
2. Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP)

2.1 The team is working well together and many service improvements are being worked upon and delivered. The ICT platform was migrated in January 2012, with support from the ICT Teams from the Partner Authorities.

2.2 Monthly meetings are being held by the Operational Improvement Board, which is shaping the strategy for the Partnership, including the potential for two further authorities (Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils) to run their services from the ARP ICT platform, with a view to becoming full members of the Partnership at a later date.

2.3 Benefits

2.3.1 As at 31 December 2011, processing of new claims took an average of 12.85 days and changes of circumstances took an average of 5.18 days. While this is still higher than our target of 12 days for processing new claims, there is a positive downward trend. Claimant numbers were as follows:



2.4 Revenues

2.4.1 Collection rates are as follows:

	Collected by 31 December 2011	Target to 31 December 2011	Comparator figure for 2010/2011 to 31 December 2010
Council Tax			
Net liability: £51,792,917.06	87.30%	86.87%	87.61%
NNDR (business rates)			
Net liability: £43,426,248.35	87.18%	87.32%	88.46%

- 2.4.2 Council Tax collection is above target, but is being closely monitored.
- 2.4.3 National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) collection is below target for all ARP authorities. This is due to a number of key factors, such as the general economic decline and changes to the empty rate thresholds for 2011/2012. There is also a lower take up (80% of those eligible) of small business rates relief within the community. Further take up campaigns have been rolled out, and press releases have been issued, which should increase both take up and collection rates.

3. Progress towards achieving a shared service for Internal Audit

- 3.1 Work is progressing well on the preparation of a draft business plan for a shared Internal Audit service with Forest Heath District Council, including consideration of the benefits of achieving a shared service for both authorities. Informal consultation with staff has commenced, with support from Human Resources, with the aim of achieving a shared service in quarter one of 2012/2013. I expect to be able to include further progress in this area in my next Portfolio Holder's Report.

3.2 Statutory Annual Internal Audit Plan

- 3.2.1 Four audit reviews have now been completed since my last Portfolio Holder's Report; Payroll, Contracts Procedures, Registers of Interests, and the Main Accounting System. A summary of the results of the Contracts Procedures audit was reported to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in January 2012, while the remainder of these audits, as well as other audits completed by the financial year end, will be reported to that Committee in summarised form in the Annual Internal Audit Report in April 2012.
- 3.2.2 The Internal Audit team has also completed sixteen follow-up audit reviews so far this financial year, whereby progress is checked on agreed actions.
- 3.2.3 Work is also in progress, and in some cases at an advanced stage, on a number of full audits and follow-up audit reviews including Council Tax, National Non Domestic Rates, Housing Benefits, Accounts Payable, and Accounts Receivable. Again, summarised results of these audits will be presented to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in April 2012.

4. Procurement

- 4.1 In April 2011 the Council, in line with other district and borough councils in Suffolk, implemented the Suffolk Sourcing electronic tendering and contract management system, operated by Suffolk County Council. This system allows for procurement to be undertaken electronically. Using the Suffolk Sourcing electronic tendering and contract management system also enables the Council to undertake joint procurement exercises with other councils in Suffolk. However, the tender thresholds for each authority in Suffolk varied, which meant that collaborative procurement was more difficult than necessary. The Countywide Procurement Steering Group recognised this and agreed to align the tender thresholds for district and borough councils in Suffolk.
- 4.2 Amendments to the thresholds result in a change to the Council's Constitution, and have been considered by the Democratic Renewal Working Party as part of its remit. The Working Party recommendations are included in the Schedule of Referrals, item 8 on this Council Agenda.

5. *West Suffolk ICT Shared Service Infrastructure and Support*

- 5.1 The new West Suffolk ICT Shared Service team is now in place and has been operating as a single team from 1 February 2012.
- 5.2 All appointments have now been made and the new team is headed up by Chris Woodhouse, formerly ICT Manager at the Borough Council. Steve Newey is heading the Business Development team with Wendy Arbon and James Wager leading the Customer Support and Infrastructure Support teams respectively.
- 5.3 The team is working flexibly between Bury St Edmunds and Mildenhall, and will be maintaining a strong presence at both sites.
- 5.4 The coming weeks will be very busy for the new team as it goes through the transition to a single team, but the overriding aim is to provide an excellent quality of service with a strong emphasis on the customer.
- 5.5 Although initially staff from Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds will continue to log calls with their respective help desk, a priority is to establish a single service desk handling service requests from both authorities.
- 5.6 As an enabler for the wider shared service agenda, other key priorities will be geared towards making it easier for all staff to communicate and work together. These will include:-
- (a) making it easier to work flexibly across both sites;
 - (b) joining up telephony;
 - (c) integrating email and calendar systems;
 - (d) shared filestore and folders; and
 - (e) integrated printing.
- 5.7 The uncertainty of the past few months has been difficult for both of the existing teams but we are now moving into a new era. The new team is very much looking forward to the new challenge and working closely with staff across all departments to help them bring their shared services together.

6. *Human Resources and Health and Safety*

6.1 Human Resources

- 6.1.1 We were delighted to formally sign our Apprenticeship Agreement in the presence of regional and national UNISON and TUC colleagues on the 10 February 2012. As an employer we have a strong track record in employing apprentices and this is an important part of our future workforce planning. We have now supported 37 apprenticeships, and 13 former apprentices have secured continued permanent employment with the Borough Council.

6.2 Double Tick Disability Award

- 6.2.1 We first received recognition of our approach to supporting and employing disabled people through the double tick award in 2005. Our accreditation was recently reviewed and we are pleased to say that we have been awarded further accreditation. This recognises our commitment to supporting those with a disability in their employment.

6.2.2 8.1% of the workforce of the Borough Council has a declared disability, which is in the top quartile for the public sector and supports a positive and supportive approach.

6.3 Sickiness absence

6.3.1 Levels of absence continue to be low in comparison with other employers at 7.19 days per full time equivalent. There are currently two cases of long-term absence. The latest Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) Absence Survey 2011 gives an average of 9.1 days per employee for Public Sector Employers.

7. Member Development

7.1 Member Development Charter Action Plan

7.1.1 The final action from the Member Development Charter Action Plan was completed by the Democratic Renewal Working Party on 9 February 2012, when it approved a form which Members attending external development activities could use to produce short synopses of their attendance, including copies of slides/information where possible, which can be fed back to other Members to share the learning.

7.1.2 In future, any Member attending an external development activity, conference etc will be asked to complete one of these forms.

7.2 Remainder of the Member Development Programme 2011/2012 and Training Needs Analysis for the 2012/2013 Programme

7.2.1 Since my last report to you in December 2011, sessions have been held for Members covering Dealing with the Media; Local Government Finance; Modules 3, 4 and 5 of the Development Control training; and a second Sustainable Energy workshop. There has also been training provided for Members and Substitutes of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on recording decisions and running hearings. Development sessions still to come from March to May 2012 are as follows:

Date	Title	Details
Thursday 23 February 2012 5.30pm – 8.30pm Conference Chamber East	Licensing Training	Representations and recording decisions (for Members and Substitutes of Licensing and Regulatory Committee only).
29 March 2012 5pm Room GFR-14	Presentation Skills and Public Speaking	This session will give you the skills you need to be an effective public speaker. This will include structuring, how to deliver your message, how to handle nerves, good openings and closings, pacing and use of humour.
3 April 2012 5pm Committee Room, Forest Heath DC	Development Control – Module 6	This module will be held jointly with Members from Forest Heath District Council, and will cover the importance of design within the planning process.
Thursday 19 April 2012 9.30am – 4.30pm Conference Chamber East	Licensing Training	Licensing update and mock hearing including expedited review (for Members and Substitutes of Licensing and Regulatory Committee only).

<p>24 April 2012 5pm Room GFR-14</p> <p>and</p> <p>29 May 2012 5pm Room GFR-14</p>	<p>Localism, Community Engagement and Ward Issues</p>	<p>With the Localism Bill having been enacted, two sessions will be arranged aimed at providing Members with details of the “strategic” elements of this new legislation, and how it will impact on the Borough Council. We will also explore the support available to Ward Councillors in their role as community leaders. We will discuss examples of “localism”, links to the new Corporate Plan and Vision 3031, and a variety of ways of engaging with your communities.</p> <p>There will also be a session held at Forest Heath District Council on 19 March 2012 from 6.00 – 7.30pm in their Training Room, which St Edmundsbury Members are invited to attend. In return, Forest Heath Members will be invited to attend our session in April.</p>
<p>2 May 2012 5pm Conference Room West</p>	<p>Development Control – Module 7</p>	<p>This module will also be held jointly with Forest Heath Members, and will examine the provisions of the Localism Act and their implications for the planning system, both in terms of the likely changes but also in the form of incentives being offered to local authorities and neighbourhoods.</p>

7.2.2 The Member Development Programme for 2012/2013 will be set following analysis of Training Needs Analysis (TNA) forms to be circulated to Members in March 2012, together with comments on evaluation sheets and corporate, national and local priorities. The Democratic Renewal Working Party will consider the results of the TNA exercise at its meeting on 26 April 2012, and will set the new programme based on those results. I would urge you all to complete the Training Needs Analysis form when you receive it, as only you can tell us what training you feel you need.

7.3 Member Attendance at Training Events

7.3.1 At its meeting on 9 February 2012 the Democratic Renewal Working Party considered some statistics showing the number of development events offered through the Member Development Programme between May 2011 and January 2012, and the number of Members attending each session.

7.3.2 During these eight months, 22 sessions have been offered to Members. The average number of attendees at each session was 13.6 (the highest being 36 Members attending the New Member Induction Sessions and 20 Members attending the introduction to Development Control; the lowest being 9 attendees at Local Government Finance and 8 at Audit and Treasury Management).

7.3.3 The average number of sessions attended by each Member was 6.6 out of 22, ie 30% of sessions attended. Four Members have attended no sessions at all, and eight have attended only one out of 22. The two highest attending Members attended 19 and 21 sessions out of 22.

7.3.4 I would take this opportunity to remind Members of the importance of these sessions, which are commissioned by the Democratic Renewal Working Party based on the evidence of Members’ own assessment of their development needs, as well as evaluation forms completed following sessions, and national and local priorities. They are important updates, which are aimed to give you the skills you need to carry out your role as Borough Councillors, and I would, therefore, urge all Members to attend as many sessions as possible.

8. Customer services

- 8.1 In my last Portfolio Holder report I announced that the Tell Us Once (TuO) service had recently been introduced in Suffolk. TuO enables customers to inform Government, via the Registrar Service, once about a birth or death and for this information to then be shared with their consent across other local and central Government services.
- 8.2 Since it was introduced, I am delighted to say that the service has been taken up very effectively across the county with Registrars offering extended appointments in order for customers to access the TuO service. In St Edmundsbury alone, we have received 230 notifications of either a birth or a death between 8 December 2011 and 27 January 2012. This means that customers did not have to contact the Borough Council, and lots of other agencies, about a birth or bereavement. Services in the Council receive an immediate notification of a birth or death and adjust their records accordingly. The Elections Team, in particular, has seen the benefits of this service and has received the highest number of notifications, 96 up to the end of January 2012. This is a far higher number than the notifications they received via the statutory 'death list'.

9. Performance

- 9.1 In September 2011, the Government published a Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency. The Code sets out key principles for local authorities in creating greater transparency through the publication of public data. The Policy Unit has been working with Officers across the Council to ensure that we meet the requirements of the Code.
- 9.2 The Council publishes a wide range of information, including details of payments over £500 and performance data. The Open Data page on the Council's website <http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/OpenData.cfm> contains details our published information. This page is added to as more information is published.

10. Equality and diversity

- 10.1 The Council has a statutory duty to publish a range of equality information to show how it meets its General Equality duty. Like all public authorities, the Council was required to publish this information by 31 January 2012, and annually thereafter.
- 10.2 The Council's equality information can be found at <http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/EqualityandDiversity.cfm>. The Diversity Group will add to this information throughout the year as more work is undertaken to promote equality and diversity. The Group is also keen to learn best practice from other councils.