


## Finance Service Plan 2012/13

<b>Service:</b>	<b>Head of Service:</b>	<b>Graeme Clark</b>	
<b>Finance</b>	<b>Strategic Director:</b>	<b>Paul Wenham</b>	
	<b>Portfolio Holder(s):</b>	<b>Cllr Mike Band (Finance)</b>	

### 1. Introduction / Overview

The Finance service is divided into two main sections:

The Financial Services section provides a wide range of accountancy and exchequer services to internal and external customers. The key objectives for the service are:

- To ensure robust and effective management of Waverley's financial resources with clear and transparent reporting of the Council's accounts and transactions
- To give clear advice to Members, staff and other organisations to support sound decision making and prudent financial management
- To manage all of the Council's incoming and outgoing financial transactions in accordance with good practice and Waverley's policy and control framework

The Revenues and Benefits section is responsible for the collection of council tax and business rates, the payment of housing and council tax benefit and the prevention and detection of council tax or benefit fraud. The key objectives for the service are:

- to provide a cost-effective revenue service that achieves the maximum collection rate possible for the Council Tax and Business Rates due from residents and businesses in the Borough
- to maximise our customers' entitlement to benefit to help them meet their housing costs and to make payments quickly and accurately
- to protect the public purse by providing an effective fraud investigation service that both detects and helps to prevent fraud.

We are committed to providing a high performing customer focussed service that offers value for money to the Council and its residents.

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### 2. Focus for the coming year – Action Plan.

Desired outcome / Objective		Increase the efficiency of receiving and processing customer payments to Waverley, balancing the need for cost-effectiveness, accessibility and value for money.				
Ref	Action(s)	Timescales / Deadlines	Lead Officer	Resource Implications	EqIA Needed? (Y/N/Done)	Success Criteria/Measures
<b>F/01</b>	Review cash receipting system including card payment handling arrangements	Dec 2012 investigate joint procurement of handling system	Karen Booker		No needed	Efficiency gains – less time monitoring Aim for 10% reduction in transaction costs
<b>F/02</b>	Target cheque payers with follow-up letter	June 2012	Simon Piper/Sarah Barber	Minor printing cost	Needed before action	Aim for 20% reduction in cheque payers overall by April 2013 (Assess the impact of the Credit Union once implemented)

Desired outcome / Objective		Achieve 'best in County' collection rates for all main income sources to achieve maximum value for money				
Ref	Action(s)	Timescales / Deadlines	Lead Officer	Resource Implications	EqIA Needed? (Y/N/Done)	Success Criteria/Measures
<b>F/03</b>	Issue accurate demands in March for 1 <sup>st</sup> April instalment	31 March 2012	Simon Piper	Whole team	No	Exceed 99% collection for council tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NDR) in 2012/13
<b>F/04</b>	Review all council tax discounts	Single Person Discount (SPD) Sept 2012	Simon Piper	£2k printing costs Should generate additional revenue	Needed	Reduce SPD by 4% over the year by identifying and cancelling ineligible discounts

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<b>F/05</b>	Review all special payment arrangements (SPAs)	April 2012 then quarterly	Simon Piper			All SPAs meet agreed criteria
<b>F/06</b>	Review sundry debts and write offs including housing benefit overpayments	Reduce overall outstanding debt by 10% by 31-3-13	Karen Booker	None	No	Reduce overall outstanding debt by 10% by 31-3-12  Service managers more accountable for debts in their areas
<b>F/07</b>	Review revenues function in the light of the new staff structure to ensure improved focus on customer service and recovery process	Workflow monitoring	Graeme Clark	None Training from IT in CIVICA workflow	No	Improved collection and prevent correspondence backlogs

Desired outcome / Objective		Ensure that all of Waverley's residents that are eligible for housing or council tax benefit are assessed and paid quickly and accurately				
Ref	Action(s)	Timescales / Deadlines	Lead Officer	Resource Implications	EqIA Needed? (Y/N/Done)	Success Criteria/Measures
<b>F/08</b>	Continue to grow the counter service to increase the proportion of claims assessed in person.  Improve the use of on-line benefit form facility	On-going	Nicky Harvey	None – further training will help improve accuracy	Y	Aim to process 70% of all claims and change of circumstances over the counter by 31 March 2013
<b>F/09</b>	Monitor the consistent achievement of <10 day processing and take any corrective action necessary	31 March 2013	Nicky Harvey		N	Speed of processing less than 10 days each month in 2012/13

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<b>F/10</b>	Monitor customer satisfaction levels with the benefits service	On-going	Nicky Harvey	New Govt. changes may impact on customer response to service	No	Achieve 90% customer satisfaction with counter service
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Desired outcome / Objective		Support the delivery of Waverley's corporate objectives with superb strategic financial management				
Ref	Action(s)	Timescales / Deadlines	Lead Officer	Resource Implications	EqIA Needed? (Y/N/None)	Success Criteria/Measures
<b>F/11</b>	Ensure that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) presents a sustainable and robust plan for Waverley's financial resources, anticipating the impact of future financial pressures and recognising the desire to deliver corporate plan priorities and improve services in accordance with customers' needs. Mid-year review to Members	30 Sept 2012	Graeme Clark	None	Done for Budget process in 2012/13	Pressures and sensitivities modelled for next 5 years to support medium-term planning
<b>F/12</b>	Review adequacy of budget monitoring arrangements to ensure Waverley can respond effectively to unexpected issues	30 June 2012	Brian Long	None	No	Achieve full delivery of capital programme with at least 90% spend against latest approved budget No material over/under spending on all revenue budgets Reduced staff time

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<b>F/13</b>	Support the successful operation of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business plan through excellent financial and treasury management	On-going	Glennis Pope	None provided that the team makes an appointment into vacant post	No	HRA surplus in 2012/13 is at least 95% of the amount projected in the Business Plan  Net interest is within the budget figures
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Desired outcome / Objective		Implement new local Council Tax Support Scheme which delivers the best outcome for the Council and its residents (which replaces the national council tax benefit system from 1 April 2013)				
Ref	Action(s)	Timescales / Deadlines	Lead Officer	Resource Implications	EqIA Needed? (Y/N/Done)	Success Criteria/Measures
<b>F/14</b>	Develop scheme for new council tax support system once detailed guidance is produced following the Welfare Reform Act becoming legislation.	Scheme needs to be developed and consulted on by Autumn 2012 and in place by Jan 2013	Graeme Clark	Will be significant but grant reduction and impact of scheme options not known at this stage	Yes – will need to be done as scheme is developed	Scheme in place that balances the needs of claimants with the Council's need to achieve savings and balance its budget.
<b>F/15</b>	Ensure that staff, Members and customers are kept informed	On going	Graeme Clark	None	Needed	Project Plan by 30 April 2012

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Desired outcome / Objective		Maximise the opportunities from new funding framework – retained Business rates, New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure Levy				
Ref	Action(s)	Timescales / Deadlines	Lead Officer	Resource Implications	EqlA Needed? (Y/N/Done)	Success Criteria/Measures
<b>F/16</b>	Ensure that funding mechanism is understood and the impact on Waverley calculated and embedded in the Financial Strategy projections	Finance Bill due for enactment in Spring 2012 following which time guidance should be published	Graeme Clark	Unknown currently but figures should be announced later in 2012	No	Impact of changes are anticipated and plans are in place to manage risks and opportunities
<b>F/17</b>	Ensure that Members and Senior Managers are aware of the new funding framework and are working towards maximising the income for Waverley	On going once details are known	Graeme Clark	None	No	Income exceeds projected levels  Members are well informed when making budget decisions

Desired outcome / Objective		Implement highly effective project plan for the transformation of benefits to Universal Credit				
Ref	Action(s)	Timescales / Deadlines	Lead Officer	Resource Implications	EqlA Needed? (Y/N/Done)	Success Criteria/Measures
<b>F/18</b>	Ensure project plan is established which balances the needs of staff, the Council and claimants during and following the transition period	UC introduced Nov 2013 with full transfer by March 2015	Nicky Harvey	Unknown currently but government admin grant will be reduced and pressure to shrink costs	Needed when more details of the proposals are known	Staff are informed and feel supported Customers have the necessary information Members are aware of implications Project Plan by Oct 2012

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<b>3. Equalities &amp; Diversity Checklist – Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs)</b>			
Which EQIAs have been completed for your service since the last Service Plan?	No additional EQIAs have been necessary since the last service plan with the exception of the overarching assessment of any equalities issues included in the budget proposals.		
Please list all actions identified in these EqIAs :	n/a		
Service EqIA last reviewed:	Jan 2011	Next review due:	Jan 2013

<b>4. Staff Involvement Checklist</b>	
Is there evidence of staff involvement in process?	Team leaders have been involved in setting actions and success measures

<b>5. Using Complaints for Service Improvement</b>	
Have you improved service delivery as a result of complaints received?	<p>Improved processes in the recovery function to ensure effective communication with bailiffs.</p> <p>Improved use of the website for information about the recovery process and how payments are treated.</p> <p>Improved monitoring of correspondence and workflow to ensure that unreasonable time delays do not occur in the handling of correspondence.</p>