



Gloucester City Council

Revenues & Benefits

Annual Performance Report

2013 - 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall performance has been very good for 2013/2014.

Performance on processing changes in circumstances for benefit claims was better than the target with an outturn comparable to performance for 2012/2013. Business Rates collection was almost 0.3% above the target. Processing new benefit claims improved significantly being 2 days less than performance in 2012/2013 and equalling the Council's best ever recorded performance.

During the year we sent in excess of 59,000 Council Tax and Business Rates bills and 14,500 benefit notification letters.

The volume of incoming work relating to Council Tax and Business Rates increased by 8.6% in the year and we expect this to continue increasing as new properties are built.

In March we implemented Risk Based Verification, which reduces the amount of information and evidence we need to collect on a significant percentage of benefit claims. We will start to see the benefits of this change particularly when it's integrated with the on-line benefit claim form. This will reduce the burden of providing evidence for customers and help speed up processing in the Customer Service and benefits team which is a good result for both the Council and Civica. Other initiatives completed this year were:

- Providing training for Customer Service and Shop mobility teams to support them when dealing with customers.
- Actively continuing to contribute to the Gloucester Advice Partnership
- Automated more of the reports produced for other service users in order to provide them more quickly
- Assisted the council in the production of a number of key returns for DWP, DCLG & Central government.

The following table provides a summary of our performance in 2013/14 against all Key Performance Indicators.

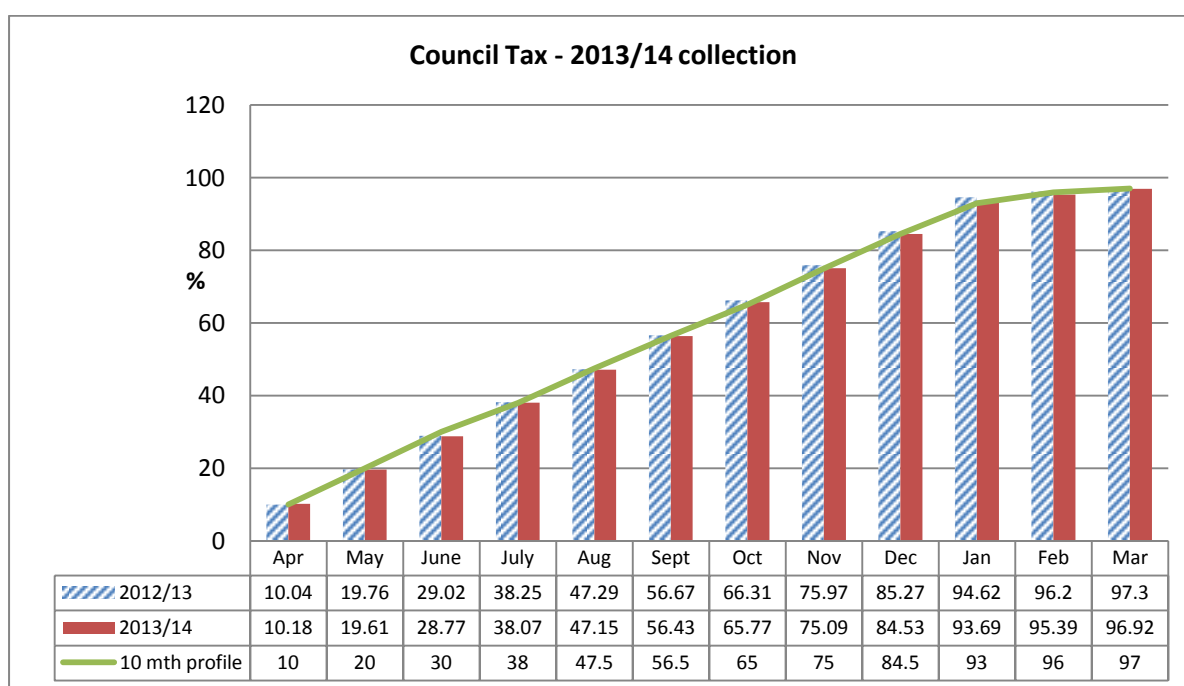
KPI No	KPI Description	Target (Full Year)	Financial Year 2013/14		Financial Year 2012/13	
			Performance	Status	Performance	Status
1	Council Tax Collection (in year)	97%	96.9%	▲	97.4%	▲
2	Council Tax Collection (arrears)	30.00%	33.2%	▲	39.0%	▲
2	Business Rates Collection (in-year)	97.60%	97.9%	▲	97.6%	▲
2	Business Rates Collection (arrears)	35.00%	74.9%	▲	NA	N/A
3	Speed of New Claims Processing	20 days	20.3	▲	23	▲
4	Speed of changes in Circumstances Processing	9 days	7.8	▲	7.0	▲

5	Outstanding Workload (Revenues)	N/A	599	N/A	939	N/A
6	Outstanding Workload (Benefits)	N/A	1544	N/A	3167	N/A
7	Local Authority Error Overpayments	<0.48	0.22%	▲	0.2%	N/A
8	Customer Complaints	N/A	64	N/A	26	N/A

REVENUES PERFORMANCE

Council Tax Collection (in-year) — ‘year to date’ performance

The table below shows collection for 2013/14 in a cumulative format. The outturn for the year is slightly under target by 0.08%. However in light of the changes made to discounts and exemptions as a result of changes in Council policy, which means fewer people get these and we Civica now has to collect more Council Tax; collection for the year has been better than expected.

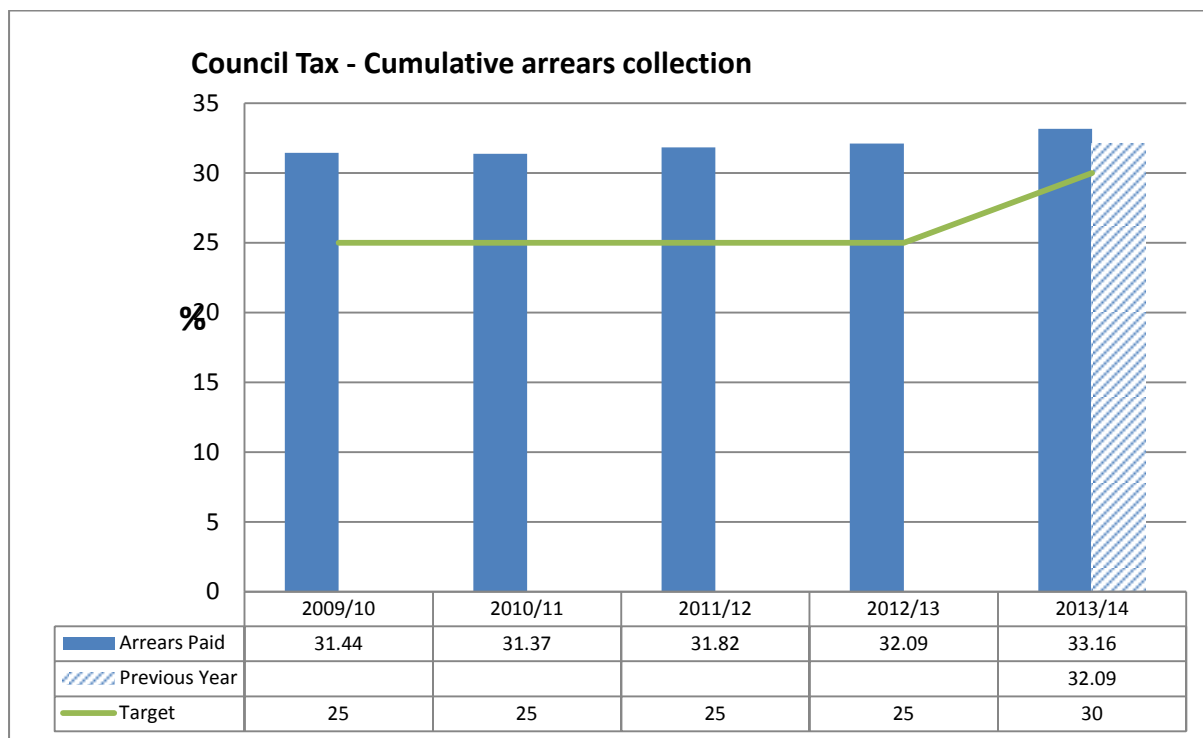


Note:

- i) The above chart shows the percentage cumulative debt
- ii) The net debit for 2013/14 has risen to £51.72m compared to £49.8m in 2012/13

Council Tax Collection (arrears) – ‘year to date’ performance

The total outstanding arrears at the start of 2013/14 were £4.3m. In the year we collected 33.16% (£1.433m) of these arrears. This is 3.16% above the target for the year.

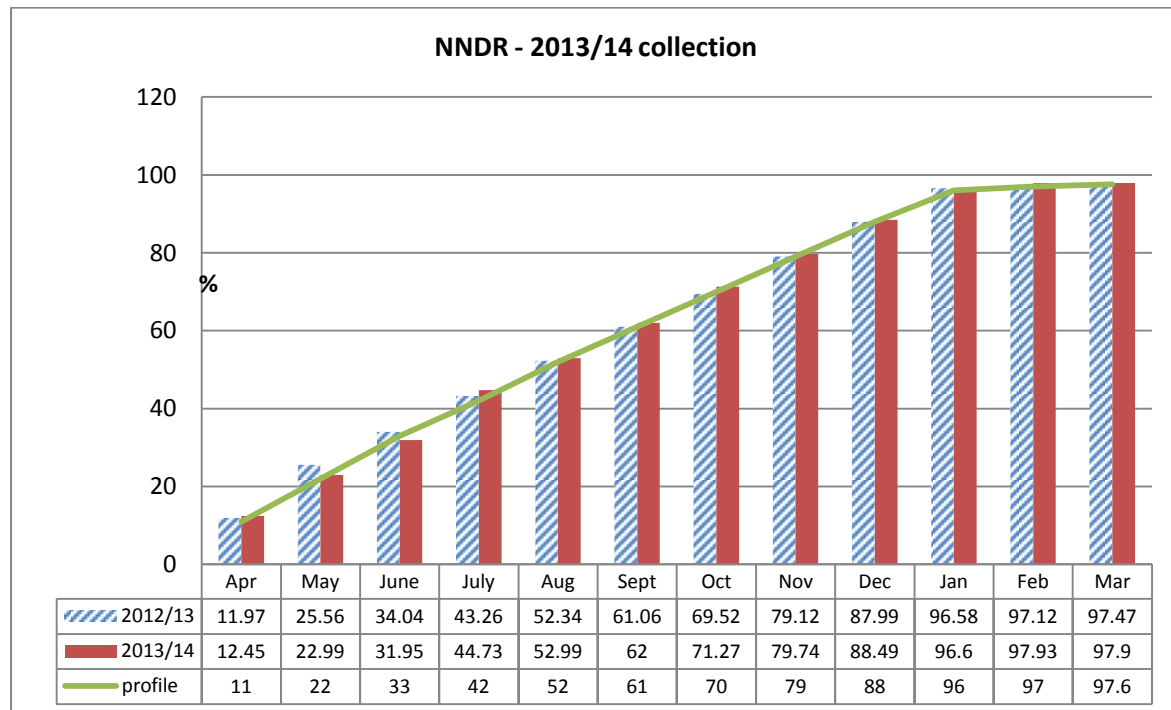


Note: Arrears collection performance is shown against financial target.

NNDR Collection (in-year)

The chart below shows performance this year against 2012/13 performance. The profile shows the target for each month to achieve the annual target.

The annual outturn is 97.9%; this is 0.3% above the target for the year, which given the financial climate is seen as a good result.

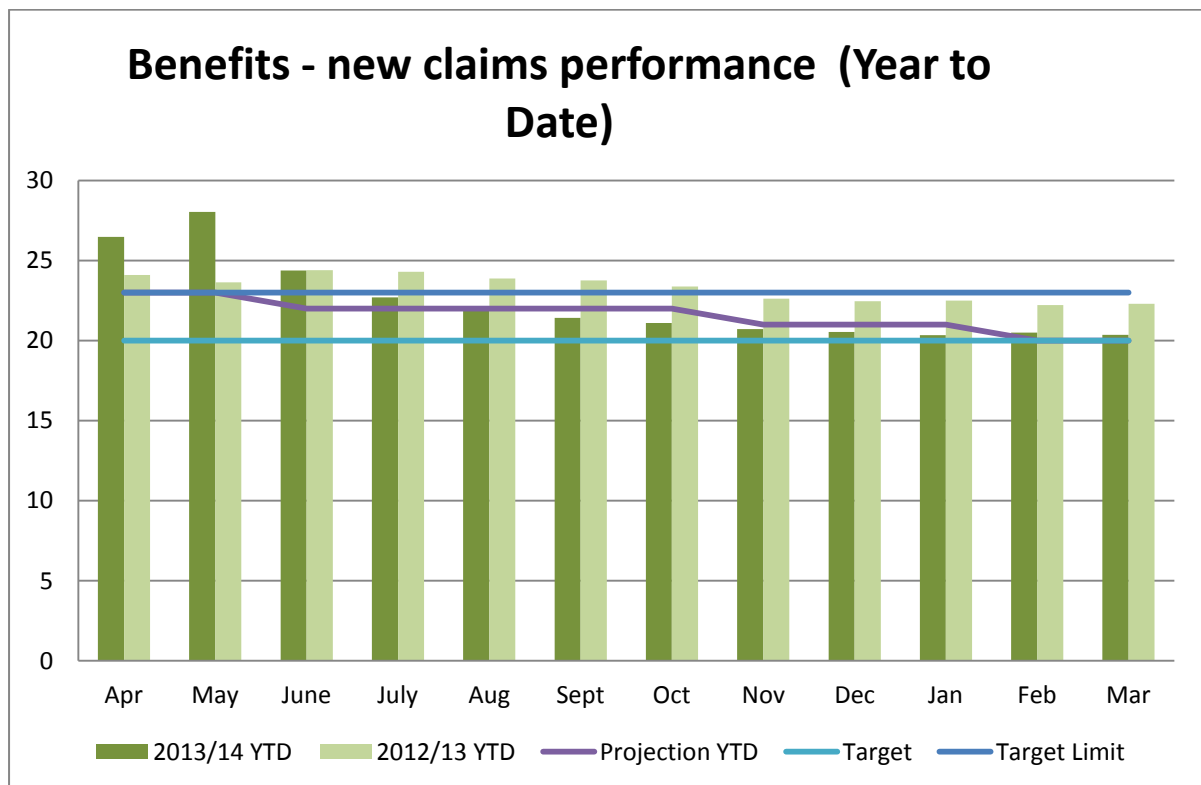


Note: The 2013/14 net debit is £51.6m compared with £50.2m for the preceding year

BENEFITS PERFORMANCE

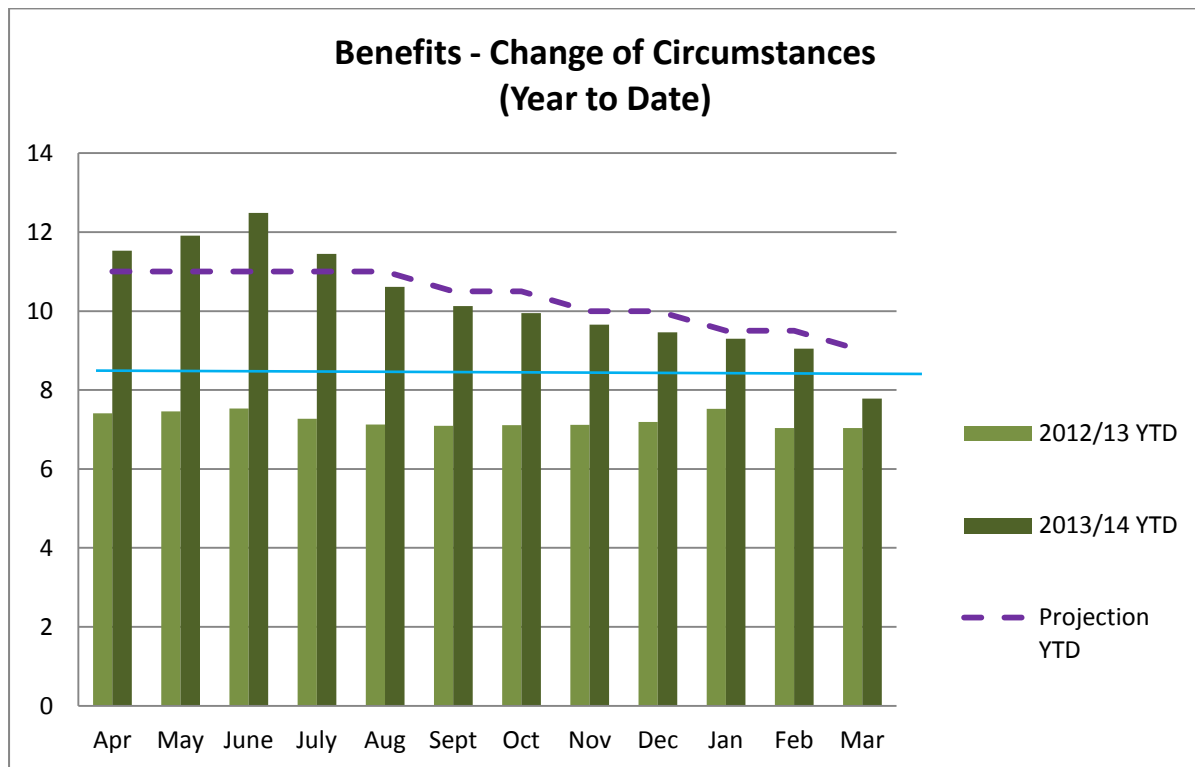
Claims Processing - New Claims

In 2013/14 we processed all new claims for benefit within an average of 20.35 days. This is an improvement of 2 days over 2012/13's performance.



Changes in Circumstances

The average time to process a changes in circumstances reduces significantly in the final months of the year due to the number of rent increases and changes to Pension Credit we process in these months within 1 working day. This means the average time to process changes in circumstances was 7.78 days in 2013/14, which is well within the target of 9 days for the year.



Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs)

The Council continues to see an increase in the number of applications for Discretionary Housing Payment claims as a result of the Government's Welfare Reforms, which include the Spare Room Subsidy and the Benefits Cap. The increase in applications amounts to 128% compared to 2012/13.

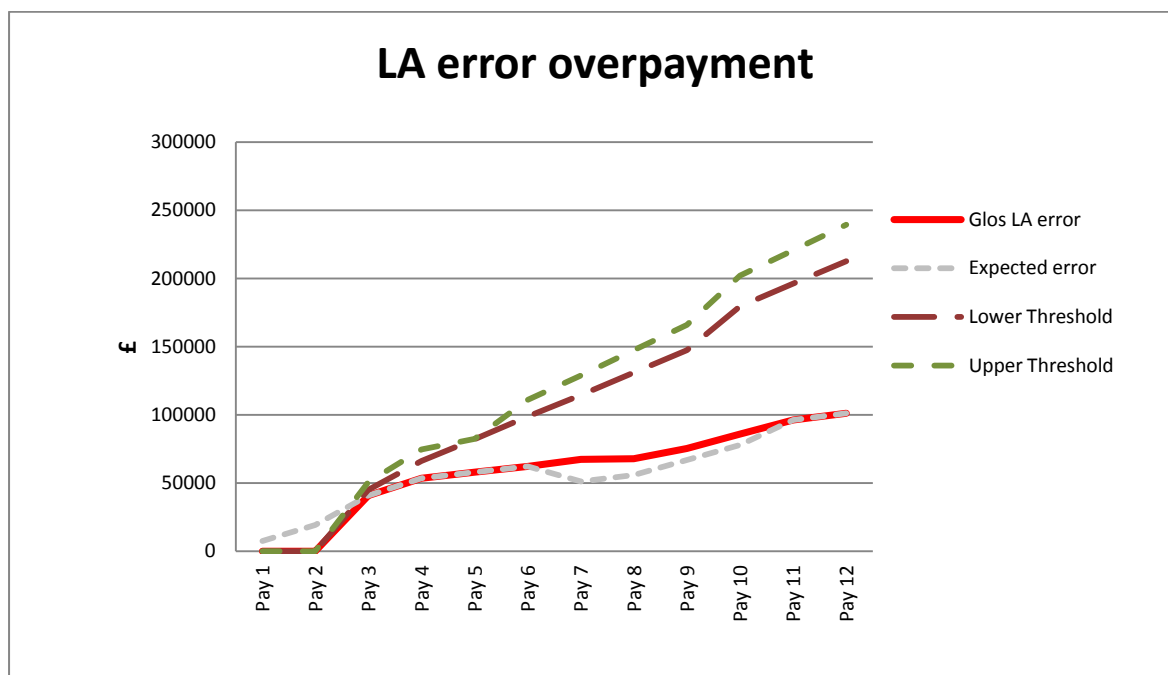
	2011	2012	2013	2014
Jan	6	21	20	67
Feb	12	22	27	72
Mar	23	29	89	69
Apr	19	21	101	
May	16	22	61	
Jun	21	18	42	
July	16	21	63	
August	8	23	56	
Sep	17	19	61	
Oct	24	22	25	
Nov	16	27	63	
Dec	17	16	50	
Total	195	261	596	208

In 2013/14 the following has been paid out or committed:

Paid	£ 113,011.64
Paid via Homeless Team	£ 3,700.00
Committed	£ <u>497.93</u>
Total	£ 117,209.57

LA error overpayments – ‘year to date’ performance

The figure for LA error overpayments for 2013/14 was 0.22% which is well within the lower threshold of 0.48% of benefit expenditure. This demonstrates Civica are minimising overpayments of this nature by processing reported changes of circumstances promptly and keeping assessment errors to a minimum..



Note:

- i) DWP fully fund benefit that has been overpaid due to LA error and delay up to the lower threshold and at 50% between lower and upper threshold. There is no funding for overpaid benefit above the upper level.
- ii) The chart displays performance over 12 four-weekly payment periods rather than calendar month.

Caseload

The following table shows the changes in caseload monthly and since the contract started in October 2011.

Claim Type	Mar-14	Previous month	Monthly variation
No of cases	12514	12544	-0.2
HB cases	9886	9880	0.1
CTB cases	10679	10749	-0.7
Private Tenant cases (a)	4384	4371	0.3
Registered Provider cases (b)	2366	2399	-1.4
Private cases (a+b)	6750	6770	-0.3
Council/rent rebate cases	3136	3110	0.8
Pension age cases	4230	4262	-0.8
Working age cases	8284	8282	0.0
No of HB/CTB claims - total	20565	20629	-0.3

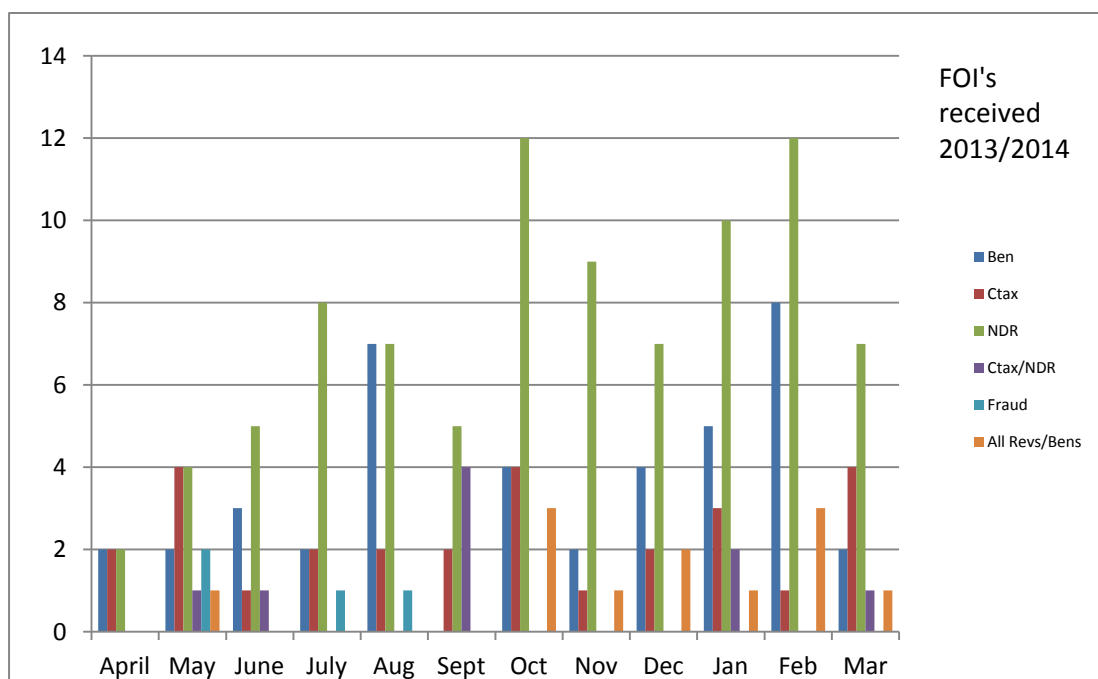
CUSTOMER SERVICES PERFORMANCE

Compliments, Complaints and Freedom of Information Requests (FOI's)

Type	Received in Year
Compliments	6
Complaints	64

There were in total 64 complaints received in 2013/14. Of these 34 were upheld. Of those upheld 10 were as a result of an action by a Civica officer/action and 21 were complaints about being cut off by the Council's telephone system.

The service has received 182 FOI requests for 2013/14, for which the majority are in relation to Business Rates.



SERVICE IMPROVEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The primary focus of activities has been to deliver efficiencies to enable the resourcing of the Severn Service Centre, to improve performance and customer service. Below is a summary projects/initiatives completed in 2013/14.

Projects/initiatives completed in 2013/2014:

- For Open revenues we have tested 6 releases and 18 patches before installing and implementing the software changes and fixes.
- Set up additional payment codes for Licensing on the Council's payment system.
- Started the drop-off mail service for Forest of Dean customers
- In conjunction with the third party supplier of the Council's payment kiosk, upgraded the software to take account of new services, such as Licensing etc.
- Attended workshops run by the Council's Finance contractors to assist in their closing of annual financial accounts.
- Continued to move processes to Civica Automation software including the implementation of the Benefit subsidy module
- We have provided training to the Customer Services team to assist with their service to the customer, and also to Shop Mobility
- Worked with UK Mail to design print programs so that Council Tax bills could be printed and posted off-site.
- Worked with the Council's IT team to re-skin interactive modules (Open Access & Payment System) of the Council's new website
- Set up a cash delivery for the Crematorium Service
- We have calculated various returns the Council has for DWP and DCLG, including Benefits subsidy estimates, and actual; NNDR1, midyear estimate and NNDR3; Council Tax Base and other statistical returns. Whilst the subsidy return for 2012/13 was qualified by KPMG, we have worked with both the client team and KPMG to resolve the matter. This has now been completed.
- We have assisted the Council's Finance team with the testing of an upgrade to Cedar E-Financials and the upgrade of Business Objects software
- To enhance performance all staff now have dual monitors or large PC monitors
- We have included various Council leaflets etc in with our mailings, such as letters with Allotment invoices, Economic Development leaflets with Business Rates bills, election forms with new council tax payer bills
- We continue to contribute to the Gloucestershire Advice Partnership meetings in order to better liaise with advice agencies over service provision.
- Students – we are now receiving quarterly lists of students for Council Tax and Council Tax Support from most of the Gloucestershire colleges, which means that students will no longer be required to supply student certificates.
- The annual billing of Council Tax and Business Rates and the annual benefit calculation for 2014/2015.
- Have implemented Risk Based Verification to provide a better service to the benefit customers, by processing their claims faster and reducing footfall in the Council Reception
- Assisted in the project to renovate the council's reception

- Implemented a new postal address to a PO Box in Pershore, to speed up the receipt of mail from customers.
- Implemented legislation changes such as Benefit Cap, Benefit Under-occupancy, changes to Council Tax discounts and exemptions, Council Tax Support etc.

Projects/initiatives in progress as we move into 2014/15:

- Completion of the implementation of the new on-line benefit claim form.
- Implement the software to automate changes to council tax benefit which have been prompted by a change in council tax liability.
- Risk Based Verification connector to new on-line claim form.
- Resolving the telephone system issues
- Resolve the pdf converter problems on the Sundry Debtors system
- Participate in the upgrade to Images@Work and as a result of this implement Case Manager.
- Analyse the data mismatches identified as part of the Audit Commissions National Fraud Incentive website for data matching between Council Tax and Electoral Register.
- Test systems to support the upgrade to Windows 7
- Continue to monitor the Business Rates appeals, and debt to assist with Business Rates retention and pool monitoring.

Future Known Projects/initiatives:

- Evaluation of Civica's Open Revenues SMS texting and email facilities
- Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/16
- Implement the Council's change of bankers
- Implement the Council's request to withdraw Council cheques from issue.
- Implement changes to Bailiff services
- Evaluate the Sundry Debtors module of E-Financials and Open Revenues
- The implementation of Universal Credit