

Council Performance & Budget Summary

September 2013

The monthly performance summary outlines trends in information the Council uses to monitor and manage service delivery. Where relevant, it includes performance against targets set for the relevant period.

Overview

G	Budget – on target
G	Performance Indicators
G	Progress against priorities

Appendices

- A. Benefits Service
- B. Significant Planning Matters
- C. Business Friendly Procurement and Services Action Plan update
- D. Supporting Young People update
- E. Thameslink Franchise – progress update

Commentary

The table below is provided for indicators where there has been significant change in performance and provides more detailed explanation for the performance levels and any action the Council is taking to improve performance where it is off track.

	Measure	Comments
R	Days to process Council Tax/Housing Benefit new claims and changes	The section is working to reduce the backlog, however as these are processed this adversely influences the average time taken to process claims. The backlog is reducing and the time to process has reduced from 28.03 days to 22.81 days. Appendix A gives more details on recent performance.
R	Average time to re let dwellings (excluding sheltered and temporary accommodation changes) (Days)	There have been a high number of refusals in the last month which has impacted on the void turnaround time. 19 properties were let in September with 11 of these being out of target. Some of these properties took up to 5 or 6 offers to be accepted which increased the average.
R	% of rent loss due to voids	The rent loss due to voids has increased due to the increased void turnaround time. The increase hasn't been as marked as the increase in turnaround time this month because this figure is calculated over a rolling (April to March) year whereas the turnaround time is a monthly snapshot.

	Measure	Comments
R	Number of households in temporary accommodation	This is the highest number in temporary accommodation for 6 months and reflects the general upward trend. We have experienced a number of issues in moving people on from temporary accommodation. However a number of families have been rehoused over the last week and we currently have 10 voids. The revised Allocations Policy should also assist in helping to move households more quickly through temporary accommodation.
R	% of households with missed waste collections	There is a slight improvement in the number of missed collections - 0.15% compared to 0.17% last month. However it is worse than September 2012 (0.09%). This is a consequence of introducing the new recycling service, as both residents and the crews adjust to the new procedures. Now that the roll out of the scheme is complete the number of missed bins is expected to reduce. This issue was discussed at a meeting with the contractor (Amey) on 30 September, including the impact of their increased use of agency holiday cover over summer. Amey's senior management will be investigating how to help the local team to address this, so that the pattern is not repeated in future years. The contractors returned to collect all missed waste within a day of being advised of a missed collection.
R	Total number of visits to arts and entertainments venues	It is difficult to compare visits to arts and entertainment venues year on year as this depends on whether they manage to secure popular touring acts or not. Efforts are made to secure the top acts every year, but are hampered by the size of the venue and competition from venues in surrounding areas. Specific reasons for the decline in visits in 2013 compared to 2012 include the quality of shows available and cancellations (we lost 3 shows in 2013 – The BNBF, Sad Café & Brainiac).
R	% of invalid planning applications received	The Council's website contains a lot of information regarding the validation process, however it is accepted that this is not always easy for all customers to access and understand. We are looking, as part of our Business Friendly project, at reviewing this information to make it easier for customers to understand what they need to submit for planning applications to be valid. Ultimately, if the applicant fails to comply with the legislation requirements and we cannot determine the application based on the information submitted, then an application will be invalid. However we are seeking to reduce the incidences where this happens.

	Measure	Comments
A	Number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence per full time equivalent employee (days)	<p>There were 2.06 working days lost per employee in quarter 2 of 2012/13, so there is a decrease in sickness absence of 17% between Quarter 2 of 2013/14 and Quarter 2 of 2012/13.</p> <p>Likewise, although absence has increased by 23% between Quarters 1 and 2 of 2013/14, this is compared to an increase of 62% between Quarters 1 and 2 of 2012/13.</p> <p>In order to continue the improvement of sickness absence levels, workshops have recently been held with staff on attendance management. Their feedback is being used to revise the Council's Attendance Management Policy and identify ways to support managers as well as ensuring they are more accountable in managing sickness absence in their areas.</p>
G	Total number of visits to sport and leisure centres	The significant increase in leisure centre usage for this quarter compared to last year is mainly due to the varied and popular programmes at the new Westminster Lodge including health and fitness programmes, swim schools and general public swim. There was also high usage of the toddler splash park compared to last year.
G	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks)	Although the number of households in temporary accommodation remains high (as detailed above), the average length of stay is at its lowest figure for 13 months.
G	Visits to Tourist Information Centre and www.enjoystalbans.com	The figure of 28,663 is the second highest over the last 13 month period. This is made up of 10,061 visits to the TIC (compared to 10,149 in Sept 2012) and 18,602 visits to the Enjoy St Albans website (compared to 2,815 in Sept 2012).

Key

The performance information is colour coded associated to the target or trend. For indicators with a target – Green is where a target is achieved, Amber is up to 10% worse than target and Red is worse than 10% from target. For indicators with trend analysis – Green highlights best performance and Red the worst performance.

Update on Police co-location in the civic offices.

Property officers from the Council and Police are discussing draft Heads of Terms, with a view to a proposal going to the Police and Crime Commissioner for decision later in October. An update will be provided at the Cabinet meeting.

Zero Hours Contracts

At September Full Council, members asked to be kept informed via the monthly Cabinet performance report of progress towards identifying the use of Zero Hours contracts by the Councils Contractors. We now have the response from the remaining two contractors:

The Councils cleaning contractor for the Civic offices - Evergreen The Cleaning Company Limited has confirmed that they do not use Zero Hours contracts.

The Councils leisure contractor SLM – everyone active, has confirmed that they do not use Zero Hours contracts.

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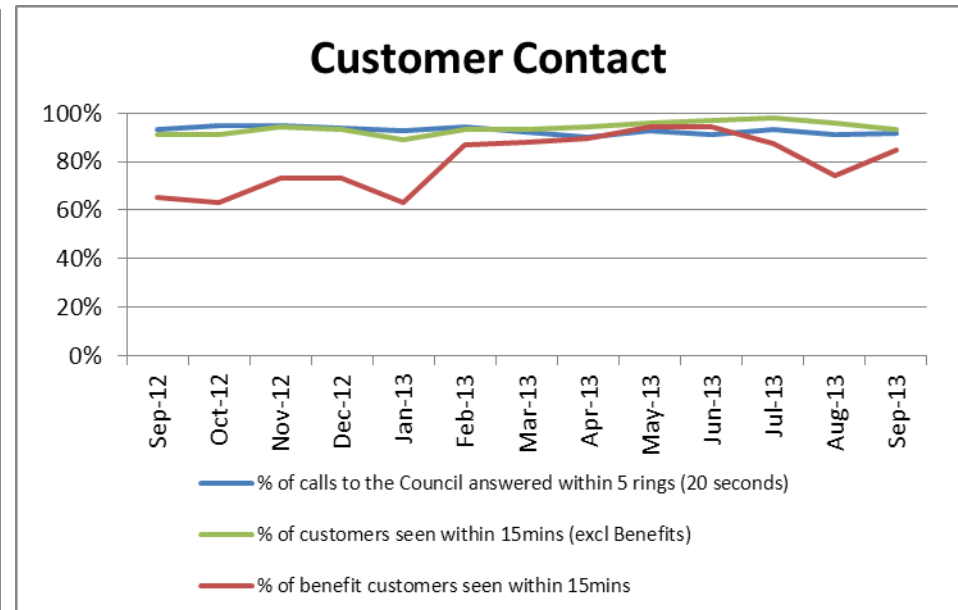
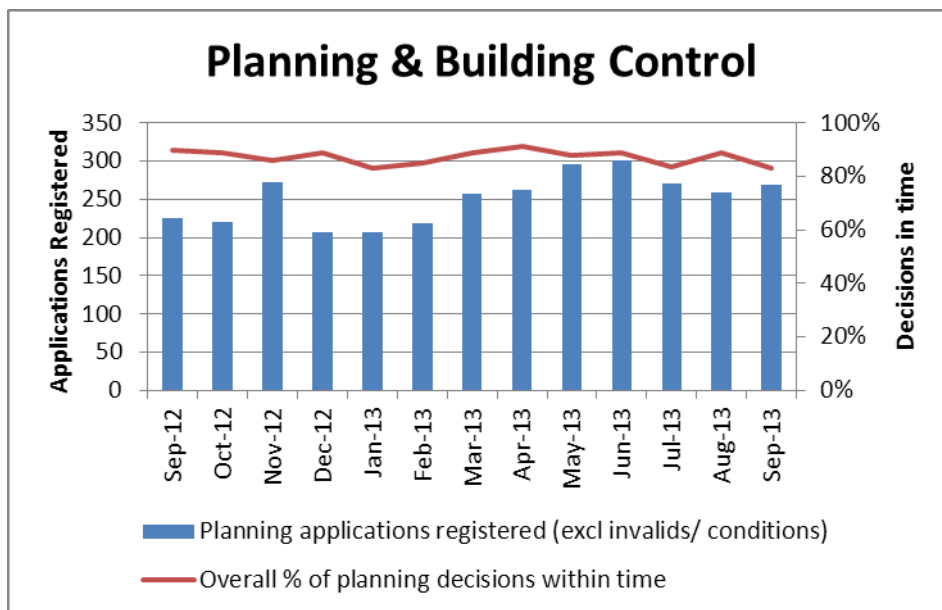
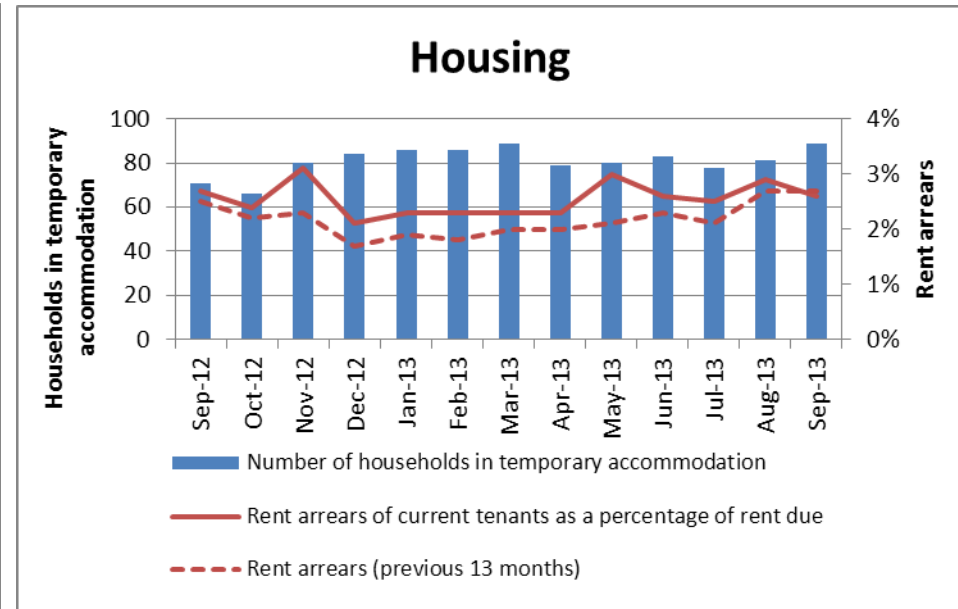
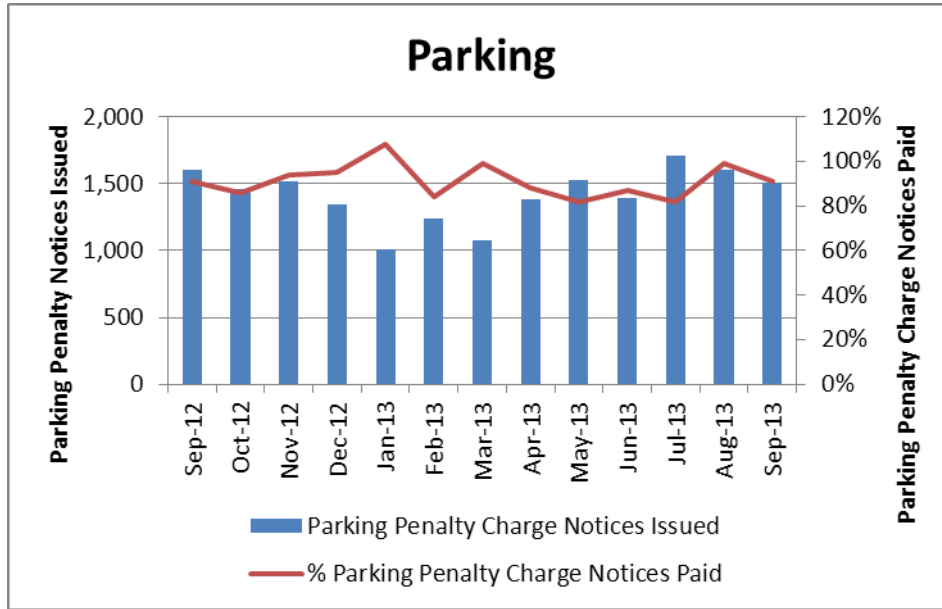
	Bigger or Smaller is Better	Sep-12	Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	TARGET	
Finance	Forecast budget variance at the year end (General fund for year in question)	Smaller	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.75%	0.0%	-1.0%	-2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	-1.6%	-1.0%	-0.9%	0.0%	0%
Housing	Average time to re let dwellings (excluding sheltered and temporary accommodation changes) (Days)	Smaller	12.8	15.1	18	15	28	23	18	20	21.3	24.5	16.9	17.5	24.8	21
	% of rent loss due to voids	Smaller	1.38%	1.30%	1.38%	1.38%	1.44%	1.42%	1.39%	1.59%	1.55%	1.53%	1.53%	1.53%	1.55%	Trend
	Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due (targets updated for 2013-14)	Smaller	2.7%	2.4%	3.1%	2.1%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	3.0%	2.6%	2.5%	2.9%	2.6%	2.9%^
	Number of households in temporary accommodation	Smaller	71	66	80	84	86	86	89	79	80	83	78	81	89	Trend
	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks)	Smaller	17.3	18	17.4	17	18.5	17.4	17.6	18.9	16.0	17	17	17.1	15.6	Trend
	% of repairs completed on time	Bigger	99.5%	98.3%	98.6%	98%	99%	98%	98%	99%	99.8%	99%	99.2%	99.2%	99%	98%
	Housing repairs satisfaction	Bigger	99.7%	97.8%	99.3%	98%	98%	99%	99%	99.8%	99.3%	99.5%	99.4%	97.8%	97.9%	90%
	Number of Benefit Applications	Smaller	255	312	269	357	251	326	293	263	241	300	272	275	203	Trend
	Days to process Council Tax/Housing Benefit new claims and changes	Smaller	18.32	15.81	27.51	25.42	20.47	19.87	24.2	34.57	32.14	36.45	25.53	28.03	22.81	14
	% of benefit customers seen within 15mins	Bigger	65%	63%	73%	73%	63%	87%	88%	89%	94%	94%	88%	74%	85%	70%
Planning & Building Control	All planning applications received		249	254	303	250	236	272	272	330	240	360	317	259	261	
	Planning applications registered (excl invalids/ conditions)		226	220	272	206	206	219	257	263	296	300	270	258	269	
	Overall % of planning decisions within time	Bigger	90%	89%	86%	89%	83%	85%	89%	91%	88%	89%	84%	89%	83%	75%
Regulatory	Parking Penalty Charge Notices Issued	Smaller	1,601	1,455	1,522	1,347	1,008	1,238	1,079	1,380	1,530	1,395	1,710	1,607	1,507	Trend
	% Parking Penalty Charge Notices Paid	Bigger	91%	86%	94%	95%	108%	84%	99%	88%	82%	87%	82%	99%	91%	70%
Community Services	Graffiti and Fly-tipping Calls	Smaller	42	32	28	25	27	27	31	33	20	23	22	26	26	Trend
	% of households with missed waste collections	Smaller	0.09%	0.12%	0.09%	0.09%	0.03%	0.09%	0.12%	0.09%	0.09%	0.14%	0.15%	0.17%	0.15%	Trend
	Visits to Tourist Information Centre and www.enjoustalbins.com	Bigger	12,964	12,560	13,281	8,857	12,012	11,457	14,128	14,804	16,617	21,032	25,546	35,212	28,663	Year-on-year Trend
	Museums Visits	Bigger	10,036	15,784	10,371	7,218	9,223	12,968	13,148	12,317	12,494	18,798	19,129	16,600	16,645	Year-on-year Trend
Customer Services	% of calls to the Council answered within 5 rings (20 seconds)	Bigger	93.3%	94.6%	94.7%	93.6%	92.7%	94.5%	92.2%	90.2%	92.6%	91.2%	93.2%	91.2%	91.4% *	80%
	% of customers seen within 15mins (excl Benefits)	Bigger	91%	91%	94%	93%	89%	93%	93%	94%	96%	97%	98%	96%	93% *	80%
External	Claimant Count (% Proportion of Population)	Smaller	1.8%	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	Trend
	New Jobs (New and Unfilled Vacancies until Dec 2012)	Bigger	935	808	797	994	668	883	724	934	1,213	1,654	1,688	1,429	1,346	Trend
	All Crime (in month)	Smaller	430	479	441	383	435	411	380	483	427	453	477	470	438	Trend
	Anti-Social Behaviour Incidents (in month)	Smaller	295	266	250	219	270	217	206	231	219	227	296	260	203	Trend

^ seasonal target
 * telephone data reported is only up to 24 Sept as the new telephony system went live on 25 Sept.
 Normal monthly reporting will resume for October

Performance Summary September 2013

Council Performance & Budget Summary

September 2013



Performance Summary September 2013

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Quarter 2 2013-14 (July to September)



	Bigger or Smaller is Better	Quarter 2 2012-13	Quarter 3 2012-13	Quarter 4 2012-13	Quarter 1 2013-14	Quarter 2 2013-14
Housing						
Total affordable housing	Bigger	6	30	25	57	17
Planning and BC						
% of invalid applications received	Smaller	3.29%	5.69%	3.58%	5.48%	5.8%
Affordable housing through the planning process	Bigger	0	38	44	8	68
Finance						
Percentage of council tax collected of that collectable in the year	Bigger	58.45%	87.16%	98.71%	30.43%	58.49%
Percentage of business rates of that collectable in the year	Bigger	59.33%	87.31%	98.87%	32.52%	61.00%
Environment						
Recycling Rate	Bigger	51.8%	51%	45%	54%	55%*
Kg per household of residual waste	Smaller	107.12	102.53	113.39	111.50	94.48*
Total number of visits to arts and entertainments venues	Bigger	36,430	66,008	62,413	44,003	32,852
Total number of visits to sport and leisure centres	Bigger	233,780	223,364	283,465	267,028	323,577
Website						
Website Visits	Bigger	272,368	250,455	251,612	249,521	247,917
Human Resources						
Headcount Actuals		387 (374 permanent / 13 fixed term) 329.64 FTE	385 (374 permanent / 11 fixed term) 329.19 FTE	397 (377 permanent / 17 fixed term) 338.5 FTE	393 (374 permanent / 19 fixed term) 336.12 FTE	390 (378 permanent / 12 fixed term) 334.59 FTE
Agency and Casual Workers (covering vacancies or helping with added workloads)		30	32	35	37	39
Number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence per full time equivalent employee (days)	Smaller	2.06	2.15	1.67	1.39	1.71
External						
Vacant Unit (St Albans City Centre)	Smaller	7.78%	7.38%	9.32%	9.11%	8.32%

Performance Summary Quarter 2 2013-14

* estimated figure

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Quarter 2 2013-14 (July to September)



Portfolio	Q1 2013/14 (Apr to Jun)	Priority Project	Q2 2013/14 (Jul to Sept)	Progress	Quarter 3 milestones (October to December)
Housing	G	Develop affordable housing on garage sites	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 July 2013 – Cabinet appointed Housing Association to develop garage sites at Offas Way in Wheathampstead, and Alexander Road, Cotlandswick and Telford Road in London Colney • Started works at Housden Close/ Beech Crescent garage sites in Wheathampstead following agreement by Thames Water for diversion • Telford Road site approved at planning referral 29/8/13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation to be carried out with Ward Councillors and local residents re 3 garage sites at Batchwood. • Submit Planning Applications

Progress against priorities Quarter 2 2013-14

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Quarter 2 2013-14 (July to September)



Portfolio	Q1 2013/14 (Apr to Jun)	Priority Project	Q2 2013/14 (Jul to Sept)	Progress	Quarter 3 milestones (October to December)
	G	Implement the sheltered housing redevelopment programme	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leacroft, Harpenden building work began (to last until end of April 2014) The Grange, Colney Heath building work began (to last until end of April 2014)-site manager on site from 9/9/13 Planning permission granted for redevelopment of Victor Smith Court, Bricket Wood 29/8/13 Caroline Sharpe, Marshalswick, St Albans - asbestos removal taking place - building work began (to last until end of September 2014) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victor Smith Court building to transfer to North Herts homes. Awaiting project plan.
Community Engagement and Localism	G	Christmas Market 2013	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of contractor Planning application submitted Marketing plans prepared Initial tranche of traders recruited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver market Opening event

Progress against priorities Quarter 2 2013-14

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Quarter 2 2013-14 (July to September)



Portfolio	Q1 2013/14 (Apr to Jun)	Priority Project	Q2 2013/14 (Jul to Sept)	Progress	Quarter 3 milestones (October to December)
	G	Implementing the visitor strategy	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor Economy Advisory Board (VEAB) met Branding workshop held 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop St Albans brand – brief expected October 2013 Agree on chair of VEAB by December 2013 Rephase work for 2014 as agreed by VEAB
	G	Develop a car parking strategy and review of the car parking contract	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented Cashless Parking Car Parking Contract extensions agreed by Cabinet (July) Consultation on draft Car Parking Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalisation of Car Parking contract extensions Circulate 2nd draft of Strategy Report and receive feedback from Cabinet
	G	Redbourn Youth Cafe	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise awareness of the youth café to increase numbers of young people attending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of attendance and evaluation with Young People in October
Environment	G	Implement specific proposals to accelerate recycling to and beyond 60%	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed roll out of new recycling system Procurement and supply of food waste kitchen caddies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement communications plan to respond to issues raised by residents Review the changes and find best way to introduce to flats

Progress against priorities Quarter 2 2013-14

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Quarter 2 2013-14 (July to September)



Portfolio	Q1 2013/14 (Apr to Jun)	Priority Project	Q2 2013/14 (Jul to Sept)	Progress	Quarter 3 milestones (October to December)
	R	Have completed the Verulamium Park cycle paths	A	<u>East- West path</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top surface dressing for East-West cycle path completed • Excess aggregates swept from path and any defects remedied <u>North-South path</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prices received for proposed modification works to the humps in the North-South cycle path • Safety auditor report completed and reviewed 	<u>North-South path</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of humps scheduled for 1 December
Resources	G	Work Environment Programme (better working environment, improved technology and create the space for a ground floor tenants)	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolio Holder decision to proceed • Meeting room alterations made • Contractor procurement • Purchased new furniture • Decant begun • Telephony changes introduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit out for first phase to be completed in October 2013 • Works to all office areas to be completed by December 2013 • New eating and meeting area on the ground floor to be commenced mid December 2013 • Agreement of proposals for police co-location

Progress against priorities Quarter 2 2013-14

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Quarter 2 2013-14 (July to September)



Portfolio	Q1 2013/14 (Apr to Jun)	Priority Project	Q2 2013/14 (Jul to Sept)	Progress	Quarter 3 milestones (October to December)
Sports, Leisure and Heritage	G	Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Car park in operation Tile works completed All works completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete snags and defects by November 2013
	G	Completion of Batchwood Leisure Centre	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of Bowls and Golf Pavilions and hand over to clubs Project plan completed Works started on main site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval of development plan by LTA Board
	G	New museum and gallery	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted new Heritage Lottery Fund bid Agreed for British Museum to re-develop and fit out Verulamium museum shop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision on HLF bid Develop a fundraising strategy Open Museum shop
	R	Cotlandswick leisure facility	A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet agreed way forward for Cotlandswick In principle agreement obtained to transfer planning application, drawings and architect to Wilmott Dixon (WD) Received cost information and Project Order Information from WD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full timetable and programme developed and consulted on with ward members and London Colney Parish Council

Progress against priorities Quarter 2 2013-14

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Quarter 2 2013-14 (July to September)



Portfolio	Q1 2013/14 (Apr to Jun)	Priority Project	Q2 2013/14 (Jul to Sept)	Progress	Quarter 3 milestones (October to December)
Planning and Conservation	G	Progress the Strategic Local Plan	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress with independent studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report from all three studies received and reported to Planning Policy Committee
	G	City centre regeneration (City Centre Opportunity Site – 'CCOS')	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Viability testing draft report received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify preferred redevelopment approach by December 2013 Next steps to be determined by landowners
	G	Regeneration of Drovers Way area	G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified basis for development strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify Drovers Way redevelopment approach and procurement process by April 2014

Progress against priorities Quarter 2 2013-14

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Appendix A: Benefits Service

Date From	Date To	Caseload (Including new claims)				Active/ awaiting			New claims					Backlog [^]		
		Brought forward	Incoming including new claims	Completed	Carried forward	Active claimant caseload	Active DWP Matching Workload (Atlas)	Awaiting customer response	Brought forward	New claims received	New claims processed	New claims (Sent for customer action)	Carried forward	Tray Active	Awaiting response from customer	Comments
08-Jul-13	14-Jul-13	3,317	954	889	3,382	1,903	1,115	364	319	56	45	52	330	935	198	ATLAS automation switched on in full (testing continues)
15-Jul-13	21-Jul-13	3,382	704	795	3,291	1,895	1,035	360	330	37	40	31	327	983	172	
22-Jul-13	28-Jul-13	3,291	993	1,143	3,141	1,994	826	321	327	45	61	25	311	2,677	315	
29-Jul-13	04-Aug-13	3,141	770	1,153	2,758	1,898	359	501	311	40	51	56	300	1,044	163	
05-Aug-13	11-Aug-13	2,758	732	894	2,596	1,929	296	371	300	42	42	32	300	1,126	114	
12-Aug-13	18-Aug-13	2,596	1,176	1,080	2,692	1,975	270	447	300	44	33	39	311	1,332	151	
19-Aug-13	25-Aug-13	2,692	849	757	2,784	2,058	258	468	311	49	35	39	325	1,400	187	
26-Aug-13	01-Sep-13	2,784	754	914	2,624	1,873	262	489	325	21	39	26	307	1,429	175	
02-Sep-13	08-Sep-13	2,624	974	922	2,676	1,938	249	489	307	44	54	39	297	1,314	219	
09-Sep-13	15-Sep-13	2,676	691	852	2,515	1,805	228	482	297	30	49	46	278	1,120	199	
16-Sep-13	22-Sep-13	2,515	821	741	2,595	1,871	214	510	278	71	76	54	273	1,043	259	
23-Sep-13	29-Sep-13	2,595	932	1,090	2,437	1,636	192	609	273	59	74	74	258	900	261	
30-Sep-13	06-Oct-13	2,437	687	993	2,131	1,417	90	624	258	35	45	62	248	723	308	

[^] The backlog contains cases which are at least 30 days old and have not yet been processed

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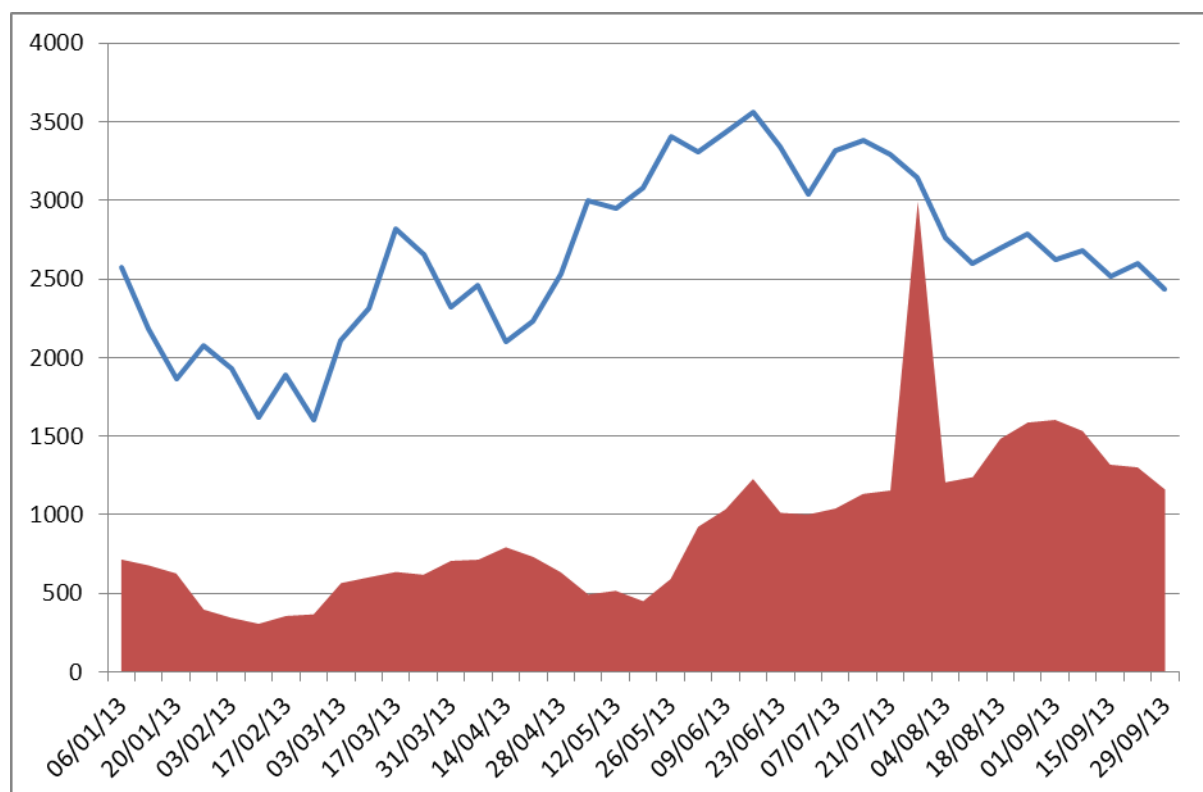
Appendix A: Benefits Service

The Principal Benefit Officer has now taken up his post. The new management team's priorities are clearing the backlog, identifying training needs and reviewing processes to ensure that work is being dealt with efficiently and effectively. The post of Quality Officer has now been offered, so the process of filling vacancies is continuing. We are using temporary staff to cover the 3 vacant assessment officer posts.

The latest performance figures show an improving situation with the outstanding caseload reducing from 2,624 items as at 1st September to 2,437 items as at 29th September. The pressure on the benefit section continues. The incoming caseload averaged 819.4 items per week for the period April to September 2013. This compares to an average of 632.4 incoming items per week for the period April to September 2012. Year on year there has been an increase in the average of incoming items per week of 187 items. Over the last financial year the average number of incoming items per week was 695.

There are 1,408 items of outstanding caseload relating to changes in circumstances of which 309 are awaiting information from customers and 258 (74 awaiting information from customers) are new claims. Of the outstanding caseload of 2437 items, 1,161 items are over 30 days old with 261 of these awaiting a response from customers before the claim can be completed.

Caseload



Red area - over 30 days old

Blue line - total caseload

Strategic Local Plan

Work is progressing to timetable on the Green Belt Reviews and Study of Housing Need. The first of the consultants formal reports (the Green Belt Review Stage 1) is now available on the Council's website. It was taken to Planning Policy Committee (PPC) 7 October where the consultants presented their findings.

The consultants will now complete a more detailed independent study of potential housing locations in areas identified for further assessment in their first report. That second study, which the Council expects to receive in December, will also be published on our website. It is due to be discussed by the Planning Policy Committee at its December meeting.

The Housing Needs Study will be published and considered by PPC in November.

Sewell Park (Hunston)

St Albans City and District Council has been given leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal against a High Court Judgment dated 5 September 2013 quashing a planning inspector's decision. Expedition has been granted to enable the appeal to be heard before Christmas.

The case refers to an appeal by Hunston Properties Ltd on housing development in the Green Belt to the rear of 112-156B Harpenden Road, St Albans. The application is for 116 dwellings, a 72 bed care home, a new road access, two tennis courts and open space.

Hunston Properties Ltd (Hunston) had previously applied to the High Court for an order quashing a decision of a Planning Inspector. The Inspector had dismissed Hunston's appeal against the Council's refusal to grant outline planning permission for the site.

Railfreight

The Council will be considering its response to the Secretary of State's final decision on the SRFI as soon as it is issued. This follows a recent decision where St Albans City and District Council was refused permission on 30 August to proceed with its current Judicial Review application.

The Council was previously seeking to challenge a decision by the Secretary of State (on 14 December 2012) not to re-open the planning inquiry into the proposed Radlett Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) in Park Street and conjoin it with an inquiry into an alternative site near Slough.

Oaklands College, Smallford

A new planning application from Oaklands College has been received and the validation process is currently underway. Two public exhibitions were previously held on schemes for additional education facilities and residential development (approx 350).

Former HSBC Centre, Bricket Wood

A planning application has been registered for residential development comprising 175 dwellings (5/2013/2119).

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Appendix B: Significant Planning Matters



Lea Industrial Estate, Batford, Harpenden

A public exhibition has been held for redevelopment of site to provide mix of offices (approx 2,000m²) and residential development (approx 70). A planning application is expected.

Ridgeview, London Colney

Planning application (5/2013/0011) for retail development is still under consideration and will be reported to Planning Referrals Committee in due course.

Harpenden Primary Free School

The planning agreement is now completed and a conditional permission was issued on 2 October.

Harpenden Station Car Park

A meeting is being set up with Ward Councillors and other interested parties to discuss proposals to increase parking at the station.

Harpenden Secondary School

HCC Cabinet recently authorised acquisition of up to 15.04 hectares (37.16 acres) of land at Lower Luton Road, Harpenden, for enabling the future provision of an additional 6 to 8 forms of entry secondary school (or alternatively an all through school).

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Appendix C: Business Friendly Procurement and Services

Action Plan update



The Council has developed a plan to make it easier for businesses to compete for Council business and to use our services. This is the result of two corporate priority projects for 2013/14. These are:

- Develop a more business friendly Council; and
- Explore ways to give more opportunities for local business in Council procurement, if necessary using the Sustainable Communities Act to ask for a change in the law. To report to Cabinet by November 2013.

As reported in the performance report to September Cabinet, this plan has been shaped by feedback from a survey to Chamber of Commerce members during summer. This has helped us to prioritise which actions are most important to business and to identify further ideas to explore. Local Services and Internal Performance scrutiny committees in September were also asked for their views to help finalise the plan.

Below are the highlights of what we will deliver during 2013/14 in the final plan. The full plan is available in the background papers to this report.

Business friendly procurement – making it easier for small businesses to compete for Council business

Making it easier to find out about opportunities

- Making the procurement webpages of our website simpler and easier to use
- Announcing procurement opportunities through the Chamber of Commerce and other business networks
- Publishing a list of contracts coming up on our website
- Producing a regular business e-newsletter which includes forthcoming opportunities
- Extending the use of the County Council's *Supply Hertfordshire* procurement portal to smaller contracts

Helping businesses compete for Council work

- Researching options for a supplier toolkit guide specifically for small and medium enterprises

Using our purchasing to support local business - These require legal and finance expertise and input. The following are examples of some of the areas businesses have said are their highest priorities and that we will explore:

- Amending contract regulations so that when asking for quotations, one of these must be a local or third sector supplier/provider
- Raising the threshold so that smaller contracts do not have to go through formal tendering
- Enforcing standard payment terms, but with a flexible approach e.g. prompt payments to small suppliers, offering prompt payment discounts
- Recognising that social value can be a part of the value for money of a bid

Business friendly services – making it easier for businesses to use Council services

- Improving our business letters, forms and webpages
- Providing more opportunities to feedback to us through our website
- Producing a business e-newsletter of key information including events and council news
- Rolling out an electronic document management system to make it easier for agents and architects to submit and complete planning applications online
- Annual external quality check of the building control service to make sure it is meeting the needs of customers
- Developing a planning pre-application service with clear charges and outlining what you get for this
- Introducing one point of contact for building control and development management (development team approach)
- Developing and implementing a planning improvement delivery plan
- Developing a code of practice on A boards and banners to better balance the needs of business and a tidy environment
- Inviting a food business to talk to the regulatory services team about what it's like to be on the receiving end of their services
- Introducing a newsletter for taxi drivers and one for food businesses

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Appendix D: Supporting Young People update



The Council is committed to supporting young people across the district. We work in partnership with local youth organisations to deliver a range of targeted initiatives. The information below gives an outline of some of our work in supporting young people.

Youth Action Group

Partnership working is integral to our approach and through the local Youth Action Group (YAG) we bring together a core group of organisations that are supporting young people. The YAG aims to target gaps in provision, share resources and avoid duplication. This year the YAG has four focus areas:

- An interactive directory promoting youth provision
- A co-ordinated approach to youth volunteering and youth unemployment initiatives
- A programme of events to give young people a voice i.e. Local Democracy week.
- A 'Summer Sounds' music event for young people in 2014, including a programme of preceding mobile DJ/music workshops around the district.

Involvement in Local Democracy

We have strong network of youth councils in the district. The youth councils run in St Albans, Harpenden and Redbourn and are coordinated by Youth Connexions. In addition, we have a youth forum which brings together young people from a variety of backgrounds to give a more representative voice of young people. This includes younger people from our BME communities.

Each October we deliver and support a range of projects in line with Local Democracy week. This year these events include:

- *Question Panel* events at Verulam School, Townsend School, Sandringham School and St Albans Girls School. Students can quiz District Councillors on national and local issues.
- A Democracy event at St Albans Market. 'A' level Citizenship Students from Oaklands College will invite people to raise issues and to have their say on topics such as affordable housing and transport.
- A *Meet the Mayor* competition for primary schools. Pupils are being invited to illustrate what they would do if they are Mayor for the day. The winner will get to meet the Mayor in her parlour for tea and be able to dress up in the mayoral robes.
- *Any Questions* style event in the Council Chamber at the Civic Centre, St Albans at 7pm on Wednesday 6 November. A panel made up of councillors and representatives from all age groups will be answering questions from the audience. It will be recorded live by Radio Verulam. Topics to be discussed include affordable housing, transport, car parks and access to local facilities, availability of social activities and information provision. The topics came out of a workshop for older and younger people held at the Council earlier in the year.

Informal places to hang out

The Council is committed to working with local groups to support the development of informal places for young people to hang out. This area of works centres on the introduction of youth cafes and our mobile youth shelter.

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Appendix D: Supporting Young People update



Youth Cafés provide a safe place for young people to relax with friends. In June 2013 we formally opened the Redbourn Youth Café which is delivered in partnership with Redbourn Recreation Centre. We are now working with the St Albans & District Faith and Culture Network to establish a youth café in Cunningham.

The mobile youth shelter project provides a facility for young people to sit, talk and socialise under cover. The shelter will be trialled in a number of community spaces around the district, through consultation with community groups, including Parish and Town Councils. Usage is monitored and feedback is gained from local residents in order to determine whether a permanent shelter is appropriate.

The mobile youth shelter is currently installed in Wheathampstead, next to the East Lane car park. The shelter's current home was chosen by young people from the Wheathampstead area following a local consultation. This involved Wheathampstead Parish Council, Youth Connexions, Wheathampstead Youth Forum and the local police. The Parish Council funded the ground preparations ahead of the installation of the temporary shelter.

The shelter will remain in place until early 2014. During this time, local residents are invited to give their views on the shelter by taking part in an [online survey](#). Feedback from the survey will help the Council and local groups to decide whether there is a need for a permanent shelter in Wheathampstead. After the trial in Wheathampstead, the shelter will be moved to London Colney.

Voluntary & Community Sector funding

The Council has recently distributed £108k through its Community Grants Fund. Of this £108k, £32k was allocated to specific youth projects. These projects include:

- **Home Truths** - Education sessions for 12-21 year olds to help prevent homelessness. The project will give an improved knowledge of where to access help if problems arise.
- **The Base London Colney** - New 12 week counselling sessions for vulnerable young people aged 11-19, living in/around London Colney.
- **2:67 Project** - Youth group resource boxes and training for individuals delivering youth activities.

In addition to the projects above, the Council supports the Onside youth diversionary project through the Voluntary & Community Sector Fund. The Onside project delivers football activities in targeted areas across the district.

For more information on our work in supporting young people, please contact Carl Cheevers on 01727 819268 or at carl.cheevers@stalbans.gov.uk

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Appendix E: Thameslink franchise – progress update



The Thameslink service is a key economic driver for St Albans City and District and has significant bearing on the quality of life of residents, businesses and visitors. There are approximately three million passenger departures from St Albans City station per annum and 1.5 million from Harpenden station.

In light of this, in early 2012 the Council's Local Services Scrutiny Committee set up a task and finish group. This informed the Council's response to the consultation on the combined Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise. Our response was submitted on 23 August 2012.

In late August 2012 issues were identified with the award of the West Coast line franchise, leading to the suspension of the competition for the award of the new Thameslink franchise in September 2012.

The process for the award of this franchise has recently been restarted with the Invitation to Tender (ITT) being issued to the existing 5 bidders on 27 September. An analysis of the ITT has been undertaken to assess whether issues highlighted in our consultation response were taken into account.

In general, the issues raised do seem to have been taken into account, with specific examples given below;

1. St Albans District and City Council has called for a significant proportion of the income for the new franchise holder, Network Rail and their respective senior staff to be linked to a measure of overall passenger satisfaction with the service.

A provision similar to this is included in the Invitation to Tender (ITT), which states:

The Franchise Agreement (also) provides for an **incentive regime** in which **payments are made by the Department to the Franchisee for exceeding the benchmark trajectory that is specified for the Passenger Experience Metric** (Passenger Experience metric is a weighted sum of a number of indicators of passenger satisfaction) **or by the Franchisee to the Department for failing to achieve that trajectory.**

The more the Metric exceeds (or falls short of) the benchmark, the greater the payment. Where performance falls below the floor trajectory specified for the Metric overall, or for any individual NPS or QuEST indicator, on a sustained basis (defined in the Franchise Agreement), the Franchisee must put in place measures to bring it back to the benchmark.

2. Another key concern is that bidders for the new franchise develop a comprehensive approach to communicate effectively with passengers during times of disruption to the service. This includes communicating to passengers alternative travel arrangements as part of an integrated transport system.

Provision for this has also been included in the ITT which states that a franchisee must:

provide appropriate journey information to all customers, taking account of the varying needs of different user groups (including, for example, people with disabilities and those without access to the internet), including by:

- providing clear, accurate information to customers before they begin their journeys, to help them plan their journeys effectively and to **provide information about planned and unplanned disruption**;
- **providing accurate and helpful information at stations and on trains, as a matter of routine and especially during times of planned or unplanned disruption**, including **information about disruption on connecting rail services and other connecting modes** (including LUL, bus and other local transport services); and
- **enhancing the quality of information provided at times of disruption**, consistent with ATOC's "Approved Code of Practice: Passenger Information during Disruption".

The Department also requires a Franchisee who will **participate in cross-industry initiatives to enable customers to make informed travel choices at times of disruption**.

3. The Council has also called for any franchisee holder to be able to meet any future additional passenger numbers, without detrimentally affecting existing passengers and existing improvement proposals at both Gatwick and Luton Airports.

The ITT clearly makes reference to this stating **the franchise will also provide and enhance direct rail links to Gatwick and Luton airports**.

4. A further concern of St Albans City and District Council is that high levels of fare increases are avoided.

The ITT states that bidders must propose to the Department a plan that at a minimum, will **avoid the holders of existing (FCC Only) season tickets commuting on the Brighton Mainline facing hardship due to unexpectedly sharp or unreasonable fare increases in the early years of the franchise**.

5. St Albans City and District Council also calls for any franchisee to extend the off-peak pricing period after 4pm. The Council notes that afternoon peak fares were introduced as a temporary measure but are still in force and this practice should be discontinued.

The ITT states that bidders should also consider whether the **evening peak restriction on northbound passengers leaving London terminals on the Thameslink route could be discontinued or modified**.

6. St Albans City and District Council also calls for measures to seek to encourage modal shift away from car journeys to/from both stations in the District, with public transport, walking and cycling to be actively encouraged.

In pursuit of this aim St Albans City and District Council calls for the Franchisee to specifically ensure accessibility for passengers with mobility problems, including nearby parking and ensure additional cycle parking at the station.

Council Performance & Budget Summary

Appendix E: Thameslink franchise – progress update



The ITT can be seen as including provision that reflect St Albans City and District Councils aim, by stating the DfT requires a Franchisee who will improve the door-to-door journey experience and **encourage the use of public transport, walking and cycling**, and implement initiatives to meet relevant NPS and QuEST benchmark trajectories, including by:

- **Providing sufficient suitable parking for disabled people**, having regard to the “Accessible Train and Station Design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice”
- **Providing safe and secure parking facilities for cyclists at stations**, having regard to the ‘Cycle-Rail Toolkit’ published by ATOC;
- **Providing suitable walking routes to the station with appropriate lighting and signage**; and
- **Providing clear, accurate signposting and information about onward travel options, including bus and other public transport, cycling and walking options.**

7. St Albans City and District Council notes that reducing CO2 emissions is an important issue and would welcome a strong environmental focus being placed on bidders.

The ITT can be seen to reflect the Council’s call for an environmental focus. It states that the Department requires **a Franchisee who will set targets for improvement in energy efficiency, carbon footprint, and waste and water usage** in the manner specified in the Franchise Agreement and who can:

- **Achieve reductions in carbon emissions** from rail traction, non-traction operations and the business as a whole (recognising and responding to the challenges of a growing franchise);
- **Improve energy efficiency** for traction and non-traction energy use; and **reduce the environmental impacts arising from the consumption of resources and waste management**, including reductions in water use and reductions in total waste to landfill.