

# Council Performance & Budget Summary

October 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

<b>A</b>	<b>Budget – 0.15% overspend</b>
<b>G</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>

## Appendices

- A. Benefits Service
- B. Significant Planning Matters
- C. Welfare Reform Update
- D. Staff recognition and development update

## Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet notes the Council Performance and Budget Summary (October 2013) and its appendices.
- 1.2 That Cabinet accepts the recommendations noted in the Use of Right to Buy Receipts to repay debt section of this report, namely;

that for Right to Buy proceeds above the amounts assumed in the debt settlement from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) the Council put aside £40k for every unit to be used to repay debt.

and

that this be added as a separate recommendation to the Budget proposal being put to Council in November.

## Commentary

The table overleaf 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.

	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>R</b>	Number of households in temporary accommodation	The number reflects the continuing pressure on temporary accommodation and reflects what is happening nationally. Looking at the Government's statistical release in September 2013 the number of households in temporary accommodation on 30 June 2013 was 56,210. This was 9 per cent higher than a year earlier.
<b>R</b>	Days to process Council Tax/Housing Benefit new claims and changes	The latest performance figures show the backlog is still decreasing and all backlog cases have now been allocated to officers for assessment. The team are aiming to clear the backlog by the end of November, subject to customers' providing the necessary information. The team are keeping pace with on-going work and once the backlog has cleared, all assessment staff will be working on current claims. We are looking to introduce further automation of the Atlas process which will assist in improving performance.
<b>R</b>	Parking Penalty Charge Notices Issued	Parking Services and the contractor NSL Limited have been working closely together to improve the efficiency of the Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) and improve the effectiveness of their 'beats'. As a result the Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) issued increased in October. It should be noted that this is purely due to the non-compliance of motorists when parking within the District.
<b>A</b>	% of calls to the Council answered within 5 rings (20 seconds)	A drop in call performance in the weeks following go-live was expected as part of the implementation of the new telephony system. The majority of technical issues have now been resolved and the team are currently carrying out an organisation-wide quality assurance exercise to implement improved processes and encourage best practice where appropriate. We are also working closely with the supplier to improve the quality and accuracy of performance indicators for future reports.
<b>A</b>	Overall % of planning decisions within time	This dip in performance is caused by the number of out of time applications that went to committee in October. The planning department currently being 2 members of staff down due to vacancies. One member of the department will be moving to a private practice post in December 2013.  Recruitment is taking place to fill 3 permanent planning posts with interviews scheduled week commencing 11 November 2013. Three Agency planners have been on site since the beginning of October and it is planned to extend their contract to the end of March 2014 to enable stability during the recruitment process.
<b>A</b>	Forecast budget variance at the year end	The overspend is caused by lower than budgeted sales and credits for recycling which is offset by underspends across other budgets. The costs of increased recycling are being met now, but the recycling credits are received and accounted in arrears and therefore the full impact of the improved recycling rate will take effect from 2014-15.

	Measure	Comments
<b>G</b>	Visits to Tourist Information Centre and <a href="http://www.enjoystalbands.com">www.enjoystalbands.com</a>	The figure of 30,762 is the second highest over the last 13 month period. This is made up of 8,905 visits to the TIC (compared to 8,504 in Oct 2012) and 21,857 visits to the Enjoy St Albans website (compared to 4,056 in Oct 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.

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## Use of Right to Buy Receipts to repay Debt

At Cabinet on 22 October some members were concerned that Right to Buy (RTB) sales have the effect of increasing the debt burden on other properties remaining in the HRA.

Because the HRA's 30 year business plan makes allowance to repay all of the debt the debt per unit is generally declining over time. Notwithstanding this the Executive Leader has asked officers to propose a clear policy for using part of RTB receipts to repay debt.

It is proposed that for RTB sales above the amounts assumed in the debt settlement the council put aside £40k for every unit sold, to be used to repay debt.

This proposal has been built up on the following basis

- the debt actually varies but the average in arriving at the debt settlement is £36k per unit
- the average sale value with discount in 2013/14 is £140k (it was £115k in 12/13) so there is sufficient cash generated by sales to cover this
- there is no need to set aside money for debt repayment for the RTB sales that the debt settlement had anticipated

The implications of this are

- if cash is used for debt repayment it cannot be used elsewhere (e.g. to support Disabled Facilities Grants if this was required, or grants to Housing Associations). The Council's projected spend through to 2017/18 would not be affected by this.
- one of the uses of the RTB funds is to provide the SADC share of match funding for spending of "new" receipts above the Government assumptions – we are allowed to keep these, as long as it is matched in a 70/30 ratio by other of our funds (i.e. RTBs) or those from a RSL. If the match funds are not available we would have to repay the receipts retained to the Government plus a financial penalty of interest at 4% above base rate, compounded quarterly.

We might not actually use the money to repay debt immediately, but will earmark it – within capital receipts – for debt repayment.

It is therefore recommended

that for Right to Buy proceeds above the amounts assumed in the debt settlement from the DCLG the Council put aside £40k for every unit to be used to repay debt.

and

That this be added as a separate recommendation to the Budget proposal being put to Council in November

## **Work Environment Programme update**

The work environment programme is on track to complete within the agreed timescales and to budget as agreed by Full Council. The HRCSIT team and the LDRS teams have moved and settled into their new locations on the second floor. The next phase of moves commences 14 November with Chief Exec/Policy and Partnerships, Planning and the St Albans Arts Sports and Health (SAASH) teams moving to the newly refurbished area on the first floor.

Heads of Terms have been agreed with the police and they have confirmed their intention to move into the Civic Centre Offices in 2014. The operational details, timescales and the lease will be developed through a joint Council and Police project team. We have agreed with the police that, following the closure of all police front desk services in August, one work stream of this project will focus on what can be provided as part of the co-location project. This work will identify those public enquiries that may be serviced within the police operation, and the possibility of providing some police enquiry services within the Council reception and front desks. This is the model used in Three Rivers District Council. The joint work will also consider what alternative public parking might be provided in the city centre to replace the spaces needed by the police, including exploring how to minimise the under utilisation of parking spaces in the city centre and utilising the Council's spaces on the first and second level of the Bricket Road car park.

The new telephony system that launched 25 September had a few teething issues at the start which have all been resolved and the system is fully operational. The telephony Project Lead and the Customer Relationship Officer have commenced a quality assurance review and have checked the telephony arrangements in Housing Options, Housing Benefits, Housing Repairs, Member Services, Parking Services, Community Protection and the Communications teams. As a result of these reviews improvements made will help customers ringing all areas within the council. Ensuring a member of staff, where possible, answers the phone and voicemail is available in the event a call is not answered. In addition greater monitoring of the telephony system is in place with a weekly update to the senior management team.

Liabilities for 31 Catherine Street (former CVS premises) as a result of co-location ended on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2013. A new tenant was found for the property and CVS surrendered their lease from this date. Provisions in the budget for the potential liabilities are therefore released.

## Residual Waste Analysis

Cabinet asked for some further analysis of the decline in residual waste volumes.

The residual waste analysis for the performance report measures the kg of waste sent to landfill per household and is reported on a quarterly basis.

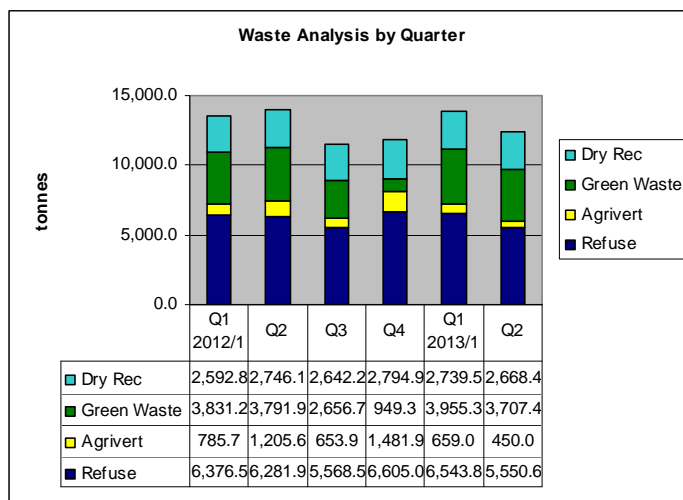


Figure 1. Quarterly performance figures for waste collected

The above graph details the performance figures for the last 5 quarters and shows a decrease in refuse over the last 3 periods.

This graph shows that there are likely to be two reasons for the overall decrease in the volume of residual waste.

The first is that there has been an overall decrease in the total amount of waste collected compared to the same quarter in the previous year. This is because of declining consumption as highlighted by the fact the tonnage collected for all materials were higher in quarter 2 of 2012/13. There has also been a decline in the proportion of material rejected by Agrivert. The rejections remove tonnage from the green waste and assign it to refuse so this creates a double hit to the performance. The work to remove cardboard from green waste is the reason the rejections are decreasing and when the next stage of communications are provided to residents we would expect this figure to continue decreasing.

The second is an increase in recycling, following the changes the Council made to the service. These include the inclusion of additional plastics in the recycling which previously were going to refuse, and the work to increase recycling of food waste. As this is a heavy material it will have a significant impact on performance.

Quarter 2 falls within the middle of the rollout period for the new service so some residents will have begun making the changes, whilst the remainder are still following the old system.

## Attendance Management

In October Cabinet asked for further information in relation to sickness absence, in particular how the Council's performance performed in comparison to the private sector, and the plans in place to improve attendance in the Council.

## National Trends

### Table 1- National Sickness Absence Trends 2012/13

The latest figures are below.

<i>Sector</i>	<i>2011/12</i>	<i>2012/13</i>	<i>% increase (2012 to 2013)</i>
Private Sector Non Manual	6.2 days	8.8 days	+42%
Public Sector Non Manual	7.9 days	10.8 days	+37%
Local Government Average	8.1 days	9.0 days	+11%
St Albans District Council	6.2 days	7.7 days	+24%

After a significant dip last year private sector absence levels are back up to 2010-11 levels. Although public sector absence levels have also increased they are still shy of 2010–11 figures. These trends can be seen to reflect the economic climate as the public sector is still facing a period of considerable uncertainty. Although overall public sector absence levels are still higher than in the private sector, the gap has decreased this year.

Sickness absences at the Council increased in 2012/13 in line with national trends but we continued to be below both our public and private sector comparators (source CIPD report for 2012/13).

### **Table 2 Length of absence as a % of total absence**

There are also figures available for the length of each absence. The figures below show this data .

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Up to 7 days</i>	<i>8 days up to 4 weeks</i>	<i>4 weeks or longer</i>
St Albans District Council	35%	19%	46%
Public Sector	49%	18%	33%
Private Sector	77%	12%	12%

The Council had 46% long term absences of 4 weeks or more or 24 absences. 29% (7) of these were related to Stress/Mental Health issues. Most of the absences were, as might be expected, in our two largest departments - Housing (46%) and Community Services (25%), with the remaining 29% within other areas.

This trend was also reflected in this year's CIPD survey which saw a number of organisations saying they have seen an increase in stress/mental health problems over the past year and significantly more public sector organisations say they have seen an increase than other sectors.

## **Short Term Sickness Absences**

The most common causes of short term absences both at the council and nationally included stomach upsets, flu, colds, ear, nose and throat infections and stress. These were similar to previous years.

## **Management of Absences**

The manager's role is key to setting standards, monitoring progress, making fair decisions and progressing any cases in a timely manner to manage attendance effectively.

Managers conduct Return to Work interviews in all cases of absence and 6 cases which met trigger points or caused concern in other ways were managed formally under the Capability Policy (which aims to provide a fair and consistent process to enable managers to assist employees to improve their performance and carry out their duties at an acceptable level). Most absences resulted in a successful return to work, whilst 2 people were granted ill health retirement based on independent medical advice.

Human Resources actively supported the management of absences using the Attendance Management Policy and the Capability Policy.

We are updating our Attendance Management Policy in line with best practice to adopt a firm, but fair approach to managing absences. The proposed revised policy includes tightened trigger points so that formal action is taken in more cases. The management of absence was an issue raised by staff themselves in the staff survey carried out earlier this year and in August we held a workshop with staff to gain their views. The feedback gained has fed into the changes that have been made to the policy.

The key message is that good attendance is important. The underlying principles of the policy are preventative action and early advice from Occupational Health, promptness in addressing absence issues, fair and consistent application of the procedure, early exploration of the reasons for absences and measures of support, including reasonable adjustments such as phased return to work being explored at an early stage in the process as well as promotion of health and well being.

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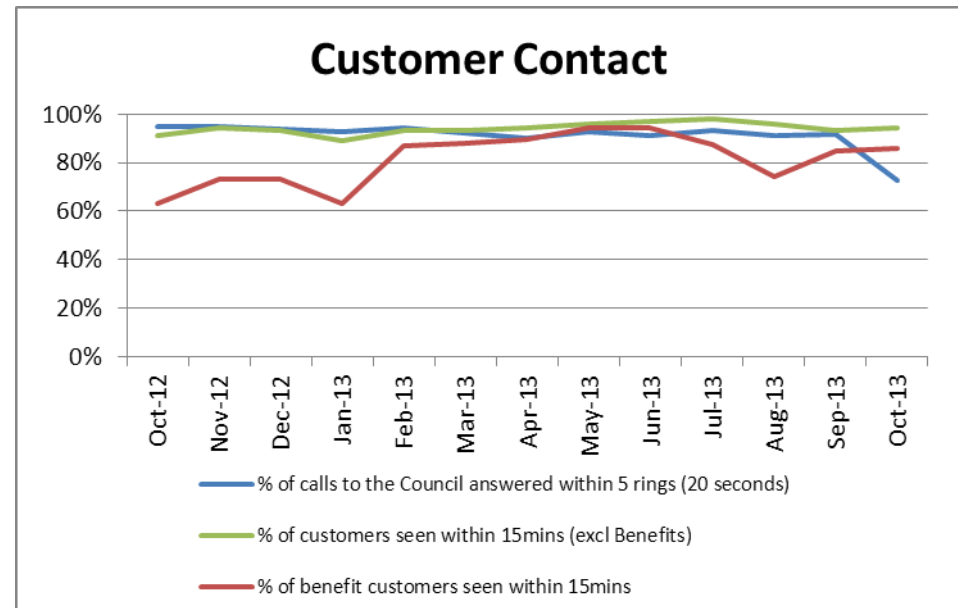
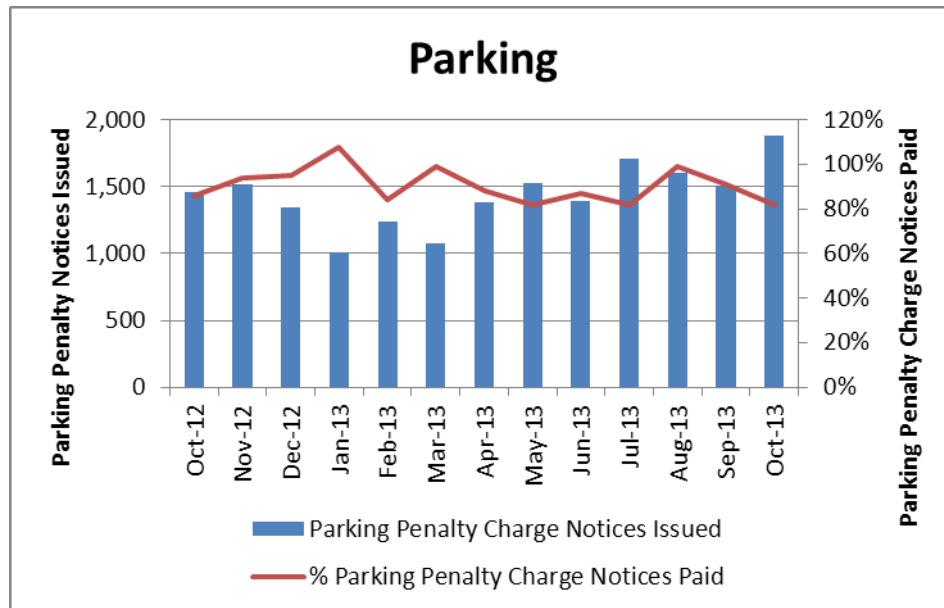
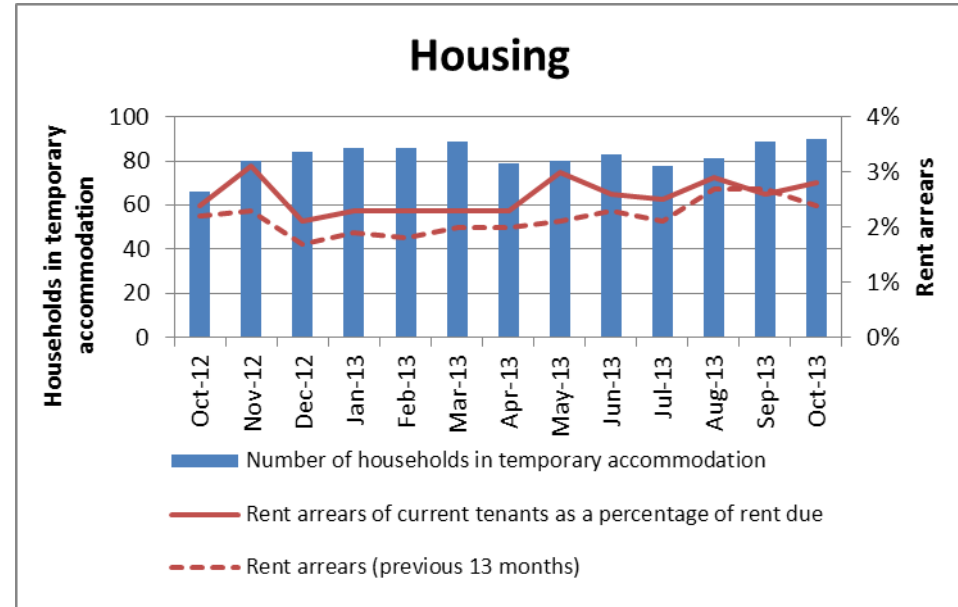
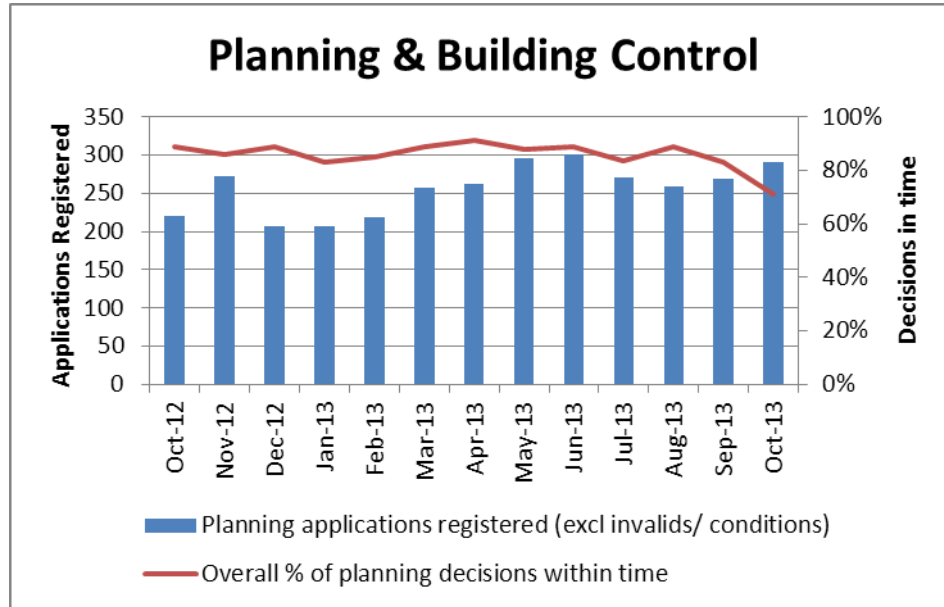
## October 2013



			Oct-12	Nov-12	Dec-12	Jan-13	Feb-13	Mar-13	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	TARGET	
Finance	Forecast budget variance at the year end (General fund for year in question)	Bigger or Smaller is Better	0.7%	0.6%	0.75%	0.0%	-1.0%	-2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	-1.6%	-1.0%	-0.9%	0.0%	0.15%	0%	
	Average time to re let dwellings (excluding sheltered and temporary accommodation changes) (Days)	Smaller	15.1	18	15	28	23	18	20	21.3	24.5	16.9	17.5	24.8	18	21	
Housing	% of rent loss due to voids	Smaller	1.30%	1.38%	1.38%	1.44%	1.42%	1.39%	1.59%	1.55%	1.53%	1.53%	1.53%	1.55%	1.57%	Trend	
	Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due (targets updated for 2013-14)	Smaller	2.4%	3.1%	2.1%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%	3.0%	2.6%	2.5%	2.9%	2.6%	2.8%	3.1%	
	Number of households in temporary accommodation	Smaller	66	80	84	86	86	89	79	80	83	78	81	89	90	Trend	
	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks)	Smaller	18	17.4	17	18.5	17.4	17.6	18.9	16.0	17	17	17.1	15.6	14.7	Trend	
	% of repairs completed on time	Bigger	98.3%	98.6%	98%	99%	98%	98%	99%	99.8%	99%	99.2%	99.2%	99%	98%	98%	
	Housing repairs satisfaction	Bigger	97.8%	99.3%	98%	98%	99%	99%	99%	99.8%	99.3%	99.5%	99.4%	97.8%	97.9%	98.9%	90%
	Number of Benefit Applications	Smaller	312	269	357	251	326	293	263	241	300	272	275	203	257	Trend	
	Days to process Council Tax/Housing Benefit new claims and changes	Smaller	15.81	27.51	25.42	20.47	19.87	24.2	34.57	32.14	36.45	25.53	28.03	22.81	19.69	14	
	% of benefit customers seen within 15mins	Bigger	63%	73%	73%	63%	87%	88%	89%	94%	94%	88%	74%	85%	86%	70%	
Planning & Building Control	All planning applications received		254	303	250	236	272	272	330	240	360	317	259	261	298		
	Planning applications registered (excl invalids/ conditions)		220	272	206	206	219	257	263	296	300	270	258	269	290		
	Overall % of planning decisions within time	Bigger	89%	86%	89%	83%	85%	89%	91%	88%	89%	84%	89%	83%	71%	75%	
Regulatory	Parking Penalty Charge Notices Issued	Smaller	1,455	1,522	1,347	1,008	1,238	1,079	1,380	1,530	1,395	1,710	1,607	1,507	1,886	Trend	
	% Parking Penalty Charge Notices Paid	Bigger	86%	94%	95%	108%	84%	99%	88%	82%	87%	82%	99%	91%	82%	70%	
Community Services	Graffiti and Fly-tipping Calls	Smaller	32	28	25	27	27	31	33	20	23	22	26	26	33	Trend	
	% of households with missed waste collections	Smaller	0.12%	0.09%	0.09%	0.03%	0.09%	0.12%	0.09%	0.09%	0.14%	0.15%	0.17%	0.15%	0.13%	Trend	
	Visits to Tourist Information Centre and www.enjoystalbans.com	Bigger	12,560	13,281	8,857	12,012	11,457	14,128	14,804	16,617	21,032	25,546	35,212	28,663	30,762	Year-on-year Trend	
Customer Services	Museums Visits	Bigger	15,784	10,371	7,218	9,223	12,968	13,148	12,317	12,494	18,798	19,129	16,600	16,645	17,007	Year-on-year Trend	
	% of calls to the Council answered within 5 rings (20 seconds)	Bigger	94.6%	94.7%	93.6%	92.7%	94.5%	92.2%	90.2%	92.6%	91.2%	93.2%	91.2%	91.4%	72.5%	80%	
External	% of customers seen within 15mins (excl Benefits)	Bigger	91%	94%	93%	89%	93%	93%	94%	96%	97%	98%	96%	93%	94%	80%	
	Claimant Count (% Proportion of Population)	Smaller	1.7%	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%	1.8%	1.7%	1.6%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.3	Trend	
	New Jobs (New and Unfilled Vacancies until Dec 2012)	Bigger	808	797	994	668	883	724	934	1,213	1,654	1,688	1,429	1,346	1,440	Trend	
	All Crime (in month)	Smaller	479	441	383	435	411	380	483	427	453	477	470	438	483	Trend	
Anti Social Behaviour Incidents (in month)	Smaller	266	250	219	270	217	206	231	219	227	296	260	203	212	Trend		

## Performance Summary October 2013





# Council Performance & Budget Summary

## Appendix A: Benefits Service

Date From	Date To	Caseload (Including new claims)				Active/ awaiting			New claims					Backlog <sup>^</sup>		
		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
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	
07-Oct-13	13-Oct-13	2,131	808	1,018	1,921	1,205	57	659	248	40	41	67	247	582	312	
14-Oct-13	20-Oct-13	1,921	1,138	1,030	2,029	1,306	29	694	247	50	50	60	247	418	361	
21-Oct-13	27-Oct-13	2,029	959	1,048	1,940	1,228	12	700	247	20	49	60	218	285	380	
28-Oct-13	03-Nov-13	1,940	597	840	1,697	1,056	14	627	218	22	35	58	205	206	336	

<sup>^</sup> The backlog contains cases which are at least 30 days old and have not yet been processed

# Council Performance & Budget Summary

## Appendix B: Significant Planning Matters



### **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 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/Strategic Housing Market Assessment will be published and considered by PPC in November.

### **Redbourn Parish Neighbourhood Plan Area Designation**

A full report on this subject is on the main agenda.

### **Sewell Park (Hunston)**

The Council's appeal against the High Court Judgment dated 5 September quashing the Inspector's decision is to be heard by the Court of Appeal on either 19th or 20th November 2013.

An oral update will be provided at the Cabinet meeting.

The case refers to an appeal by Hunston Properties Ltd (Hunston) 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 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**

Hertfordshire County Council have applied to the Secretary of State for an extension of the deadline to submit a completed section 106 agreement or undertaking from 14th November to 20th December 2013. Helioslough Ltd support HCC's request. The Secretary of State has agreed to their request.

HCC's Cabinet are due to consider the matter at their meeting on 9 December 2013.

### **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).

### **Lea Industrial Estate, Batford, Harpenden**

A public exhibition has been held for redevelopment of site to provide mix of offices (approx. 2,000m<sup>2</sup>) 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.

# Council Performance & Budget Summary

## Appendix B: Significant Planning Matters



### **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).

The issue was discussed at a meeting of all three tiers of local government at HCC on 14 October. HCC are understood to be undertaking further work in response to this meeting, with the intention of providing a public consultation exercise in coming months.

### **Former Ariston Site, Harpenden Road, St Albans**

Discussions with HCC as landowner about a new outline planning application for residential redevelopment and retention of key community uses (including the Pioneer Club and the Judo Club) are now underway. The applications are expected to mirror closely that considered in 2002. HCC will be conducting pre application consultation with local members and interest groups before submitting the application.

### **BRE, Bricket Wood**

Planning application 5/2013/0406 for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of up to 100 new dwellings, associated access and facilities was refused on 10/05/2013.

An appeal has been submitted and is scheduled for a Public Inquiry.

**What has happened in 2013**

<u>Change</u>	<u>Comment</u>			
Removal of the spare room subsidy from 1 April 2013 in the social rented sector.	There are currently 242 council tenants affected by this. The arrears for all council tenants as at 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2012 and 2013 is shown below with the number of tenants and the overall % of tenants in each arrears band plus the situation for the tenants affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy (RSRS). This shows the number of tenants in each arrears band and the % that this represents of tenants affected by the RSRS.			
		1/10/12	1/10/13	Affected by removal of spare room subsidy October 2013
	No arrears	3037 (63% )	2927 (61%)	88 (36%)
	Arrears under £100	599 (12%)	597 (12%)	56 (23%) 45 (18%) had arrears prior to RSRS
	Arrears £100 - £500	849 (18%)	882 (18%)	70 (29%) 33 (13%) had arrears prior to RSRS
	Arrears £500 - £1000	208 (4%)	234 (5%)	18 (7%) 13 (5%) had arrears prior to RSRS
	Arrears over £1000	120 (2%)	154 (3%)	10 (4%) All (4%) had arrears prior to RSRS
	Average weekly rent	£91.75	£96.24	
Introduction of local council tax support scheme from 1 April 2013.	The default scheme was adopted. As this scheme replicated the previous national council tax benefit scheme there was no adverse impact on claimants.			
National Social Fund ended and local social assistance scheme introduced from 1 April 2013.	In Hertfordshire this is a county council responsibility and is administered by an organisation called Herts Help. Applications are taken online or by phone. Applications will be dealt with within one working day. They can also give advice about other help available. People qualifying for help may be given vouchers for foodbanks, clothing banks or furniture schemes, depending on need. Applicants may qualify for a credit union loan or grant and be given a pre-paid card that can be used to buy white goods, such as a cooker or fridge. There are no cash payments. If people need help to pay gas, electric or			

	water bills, they can apply for a credit union loan through Herts Help. An application made on someone's behalf must be made by a recognised organisation or professional such as Citizen's Advice Bureau, YMCA, housing association, or social care worker.
Personal Independence Payment – April 2013 onwards	PIP replaced Disability Living Allowance for people who were aged between 16 and 64 on 8 April 2013. Initially, this was for new claimants only. DWP will gradually start to reassess existing DLA claimants for PIP. From 28 October 2013 onwards, DWP will start to invite some existing DLA claimants living in Wales, West Midlands, East Midlands and East Anglia to claim PIP. DLA claimants do not need to take any action until they are told to do so by DWP. Most existing DLA claimants will not be affected until 2015 or later. DWP expects all invitations to claim PIP for existing DLA claimants to have been issued by September 2017 and that PIP will be dealt with under business as usual processes from May 2018. People who were aged 65 and over on 8 April 2013 (the day PIP was introduced) are not eligible to claim PIP. Anyone of this age who tries to make a new claim to PIP will be signposted instead to claim Attendance Allowance (AA). Existing DLA claimants, who were aged 65 or over on 8 April 2013, will continue to receive DLA for as long as they meet the entitlement conditions.
Benefit cap introduced from July 2013 in this district.	Thirty one claimants were affected by this in the district as whole. The impact of the benefit cap on claimants benefits ranges from a reduction of 50 pence to a reduction of £250.87 per week.

### **Looking Forward**

#### **Universal Credit**

The Government is still expecting Universal Credit to be implemented across the country by October 2017. The latest information is that new claimants will move onto Universal Credit during 2014, but there will not be the full rollout as originally planned. Around 3 million households receiving Housing Benefit will be transferred to Universal Credit on a local authority boundary basis as the old benefit system winds down from the end of 2015 to October 2017. However we have not yet received details of when the rollout will take place in St Albans.

Whilst the role of local authorities in Universal Credit is still not clear, Council officers are holding regular meetings with representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions and the local Jobcentre. We are working together on a Local Support Framework designed to offer help and information to people who will be affected by Universal Credit. Further guidance on the framework is expected from Government later this year.

Meetings have also been held with the Credit Union, the CAB and other voluntary organisations offering financial advice. These meetings have identified the support currently offered, capacity for further assistance to be provided and opportunities for partnership working to assist customers, for example joint seminars held with the CAB.

### **Direct payments to social housing tenants**

The rollout of direct payments to council and housing association tenants was due to commence in October 2013. This has been delayed and a new timetable has not yet been finalised. The direct payment pilot projects have been extended to December 2013.

Landlords of tenants living in exempt supported housing schemes will continue to receive direct payments once direct payments for other tenants commence. This applies to accommodation provided by a housing association, registered charity, voluntary organisation or non-metropolitan county council where the claimant is provided with care, support or supervision by the landlord, or another person on behalf of the landlord.

### **Housing management**

The Housing Management team is currently being restructured to reflect changing demands on the service including welfare reform. Direct payments to tenants will mean that it is likely that arrears casework will increase and a new income recovery team will be set up within the housing management section to carry out this work. This will be a small specialist team whose primary purpose is to manage tenancies with arrears, identifying support services and working with colleagues in benefits (both internal and external) to maximise benefit and rental income. At this stage we have not made any additional staffing commitment until we have a clearer understanding of the service pressures arising from Universal Credit and the introduction of direct payment to tenants. We have however set aside £50,000 in the Housing Revenue Account to support the introduction of Universal Credit and other benefit changes.

Council and housing association tenants in the district affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy are being encouraged to apply for a transfer or mutual exchange to smaller accommodation. There is a Transfer Officer in post to help tenants move to alternative homes. Downsizers are given a high priority under the allocation policy and a drop in event was held on 16<sup>th</sup> October at the Civic Centre for tenants interested in mutual exchange. 14 tenants affected by the spare room subsidy registered for a transfer, of these 2 have moved and 1 is no longer affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy.

### **Discretionary Housing Payment**

We have applications coming in on a weekly basis and have been working with local Housing Associations and our Housing Management team to encourage applications from tenants who are struggling to pay their rent. There are posters and claim forms available in the Civic Centre.

The budget for this year is £170,097. As at 30<sup>th</sup> September we had awarded DHP to 96 applicants totalling £52,901.46.

# Council Performance & Budget Summary

## Appendix C: Welfare Reform Update



Benefit cap	6 awards	£2633.32
Removal of spare room subsidy	59 awards	£25,427.56
LHA restriction	18 awards	£17,734.40
Combination of reforms	1 award	£975.00
No impact	12 awards	£6131.18



The annual staff Reward and Recognition Awards ceremony for 2013/14 was held on Friday 8 November. The awards were presented by Cllr Julian Daly, Leader of the Council and James Blake, Chief Executive, at a lunchtime event in the Council Chamber.

The award-winners were as follows:

### **Transformation and Innovation Award**

This award is presented to a team or an individual that has transformed the customer experience by using innovative or novel methods to improve efficiency, effectiveness, financial savings, customer service, or good public relations.

#### **Winner: Nicky Flynn**

Nicky won the award for designing and delivering a range of community initiatives which make a positive difference to the lives of vulnerable people across the District. One of these initiatives engaged 155 older people in a health and wellbeing programme that included healthy eating, cookery and reminiscence sessions.

### **Working together**

This award is given to a team or an individual that has overcome an issue which could only be resolved by working together to improve the customer experience.

#### **Winner: Customer Services team**

The team won the award for their willingness to learn, their shared knowledge, resilience under pressure and the help and support they show each other. An illustration of this is the way they worked together to deal with an increase in customer enquiries over Easter. They also continued to deliver excellent customer service throughout considerable office and technical change, while being assessed for, and gaining, an external customer excellence award.

### **Leader of the Year**

This award recognises an individual whose leadership stands out above the rest, demonstrating trust, honesty, respect for others, cooperation, transparency and a commitment to improvement.

#### **Winner: Linda Parker**

Linda won the award for her leadership in providing guidance, knowledge and support to her team, and setting high standards. Linda demonstrates trust in her team, supporting them in front of others while looking for continuous improvement.

### **Colleague of the Year**

This award is given to an individual whose commitment to, and support of, their colleagues across the Council has stood out above the rest.

#### **Winner: Lyn Henny**

Lyn won the award for her willingness to help colleagues. She shares her knowledge and experience to help colleagues solve problems and achieve goals. Her valuation work for the Final Accounts 2012/3 received very favourable comments and deserves a special mention.

### Other staff recognition achievements:

- The Council's first 12 Future Leaders are approaching the completion of their secondments to new projects or Departments. This will mark the end of their programme. The programme will be evaluated and run again in 2014-15, allowing time to apply for it to be formally accredited with the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM)
- Five career coaches have achieved a level 5 qualification in coaching from the Chartered Management Institute
- The Council has received two national awards this Autumn – one from the Cabinet Office for Customer Service Excellence and a 'Geoplace' gold award for our address data. These awards will be presented at Full Council on 27 November
- 28 staff are completing additional NVQ qualifications
- 9 employees are currently completing Apprenticeships and Certificates in Housing Studies
- The Licensing Team and Judith Adamson, Regulatory Solicitor, retained Grade 1 Status (Outstanding) from the British Institute of Inn Keeping (BIIAB)