

MONITORING REPORT FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DATE: 7 November 2008

PURPOSE

To update Members on activity within the Corporate Services Directorate during the period to 31st October 2008.

BACKGROUND

The Chief Executive reports a projected overspend of £69k against the approved estimate, an increase of £4k since last month.

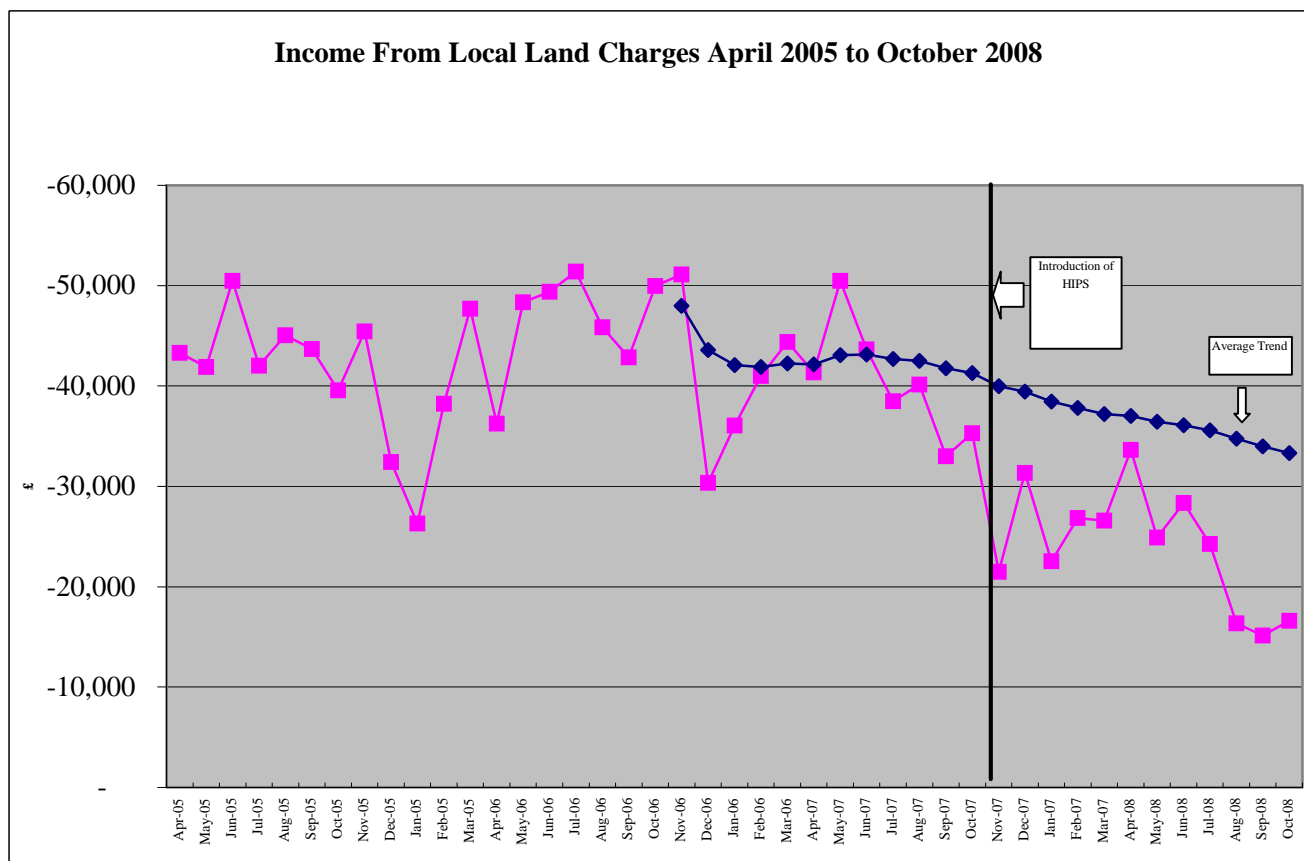
There have been no changes to the approved estimate and this remains at £14,755k.

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR ATTENTION

Revenue

Audit & Review are experiencing problems with recruitment of auditors. In order to complete the audit plan it will be necessary to employ Agency staff until the end of the financial year. The resulting projected overspend of £36k is partially offset by increased income from schools (£11k).

Lower than expected Land Charges income was first highlighted in June this year. The economic climate continues to impact on the housing market and this month the income projection has been reduced by another £50k to -£280k (approved budget -£430k). The graph below shows the income trend for land charges since April 2005.



The projected overspend of 17k for the Customer Service Centre has been increased to £34k following the use of agency staff to cover vacancies. Permanent staff have now filled all but two posts and ongoing costs have been contained within budget.

Council Tax and Business Rates have employed agency staff to cover sickness, maternity leave, and vacancies. This has been necessary in order to achieve collection rate targets. The projected overspend resulting from this is £15k.

Underspends have been reported from Members Services (£10k), Mayoral and Civic (£15k), Electoral Services (£24k) and Human Resources (£15k). Additional income has been identified in Legal Services (£12k), Corporate Performance (£15k) and the Pensions Fund (£20k)

Council Tax Collection

The Council Tax collection rate at month-end for October is 67.53% (see graph below) which is 0.65% higher than last year and has exceeded the October '08 month end target by 0.44%.

The number of Council Tax payers who pay by Direct Debit has reduced slightly by 0.5% since last month to 70.1%. However it is higher than the same time last year.

Business Rates Collection

The percentage of Business Rates collected, as at October is 69.40%. This represents a 0.77% increase in comparison to the amount collected last year (see graph below). The Collection rate is also higher than the October '08 month end target by 0.21%.

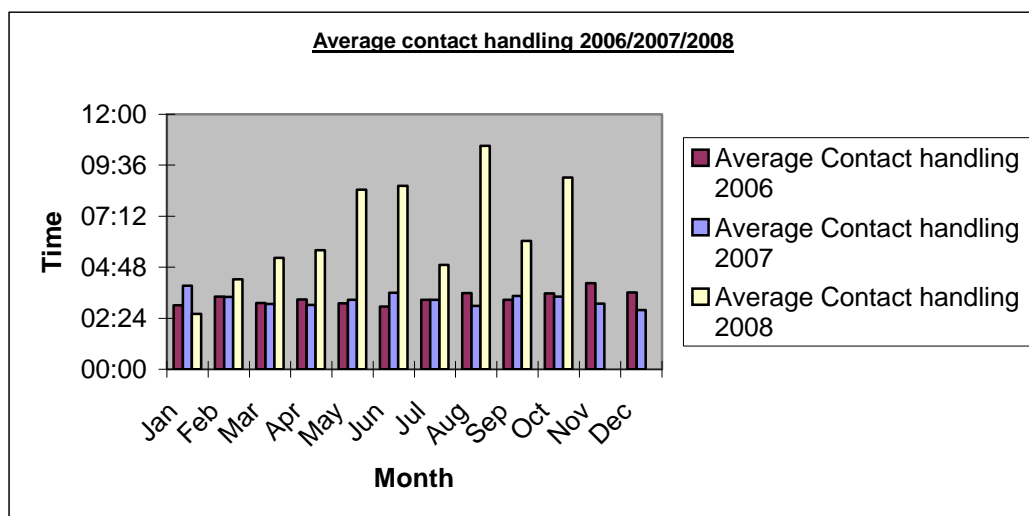
Customer Service Centre

A problem has been discovered in the Siemens telephone system that results in some lost calls during busy periods. Impact on customers is not believed to be high. However, Siemens are investigating the issue and our Siemens contract has been passed to the Legal team for review. The situation will continue to be monitored by senior officers.

Phone volumes for the month of Oct have increased on the previous year's contact volumes by 15.8%. In addition to switchboard calls this increase relates to calls for the new green waste service and the end of the interim arrangements for the National Bus Pass scheme.

The percentage of calls answered was on target for the month (90%) with 91% of all calls answered. Customer contacts at front of house and via email have also been high.

Call handling times have been at a high level in recent months due to council tax summonses having been sent to residents for less than the normal threshold of £100. This generated calls from customers which were complex and time consuming. Furthermore, due to the loss of a number of experienced staff, the CSC has been operating with a newly trained but inexperienced work force. Further training should address the problem and performance will be monitored. See graph below for trend.



Capital Programme

There have been no changes to the corporate services capital gross budget of £1.97m since last month. Anticipated slippage remains at £62k, relating to Grant to Voluntary Organisations. No additional expenditure has been identified.

Programme Status

The following progress on Corporate Services schemes is reported as at October 2008

	September Monitoring	October Monitoring
Number of Schemes in Programme	24	24
Yet to Start	8%	8%
In Progress	84%	84%
Completed	4%	4%
Ongoing Annual Programme	4%	4%