

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 18 February 2016**

**Subject: Finance**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Stavrou**

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## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Finance Portfolio Holder be noted**

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### **Accountancy**

This is always a very busy time of year for the Accountancy Service with the work to compile the budget and produce a variety of reports to the many meetings that consider the budget. As there is a separate report on the budget I will not say anything more about it here.

I am pleased to be able to pass on a piece of good news that covers an aspect of the work done by Accountancy that I expect most Members are not familiar with. When a company we are dealing with goes into administration Accountancy will deal with the Administrator and make whatever claims are possible to protect the Council's position. Several years ago South Herts Waste Management went into administration and the long process of the liquidation has now been concluded. When we make a claim in an administration we do not include the amount in the accounts as quite often there is no return. However, I am pleased to report that we have now received a cheque for £115,000 from the Liquidator of South Herts Waste Management.

### **Benefits**

The quarter three position on the key performance indicators will be considered at the March meeting of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee, but I will take this opportunity to give a brief update. New claim processing shows an improvement for the third quarter running. The current average time taken on a new claim is now 21.78 days, which is ahead of the target of 22 days. The other processing indicator is for changes of circumstance. These are also doing well and are currently being processed in 7.29 days, compared to a target of 10 days.

On 9 February the Resources Select Committee received an update on the work done on housing benefit fraud and compliance. Members may recall that our Benefit Fraud Investigators were required to transfer to the Department for Work and Pensions to join the new Single Fraud Investigation Service. This necessitated a restructure of the Benefits Division to create a Compliance Team and a change in the way suspected frauds are dealt with. The report confirms the difficulties that we had anticipated in dealing with the Single Fraud Investigation Service have materialised. However, the steps taken with the creation of the Compliance Team and the changes in working practices have provided some mitigation.

## **Revenues**

The key performance indicators at the end of quarter three are also positive for Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates. At the end of December the in-year collection rate for Council Tax was 77.91% which was ahead of the target of 77%. Non-Domestic Rates is also ahead of the target of 78.09% with 78.78% having been collected. As well as being ahead of target both of the collection rates are showing an improvement on last year.