

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES

COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
DIRECTOR: DENISE PARK**

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HR Services

The installation of the new HR system which will continue our progress towards digitisation of services internally and externally, remains on target for delivery. During September, Payroll Services have already commenced the initial dual running stages of system implementation with other HR Services on schedule to commence in the coming months.

Registrars

Recently the Registrars Service was subject to a Stock and Security Assessment by the General Register Office. The feedback from this inspection was very positive and complimentary about the arrangements in Blackburn with Darwen.

This month our Registration Services, in partnership with Children Services, launched a new service – the registration of births at Children’s Centres within the borough. Initially birth registrations will take place by appointment and ONLY at Little Harwood Children’s Centre each Wednesday between 14:00 and 16:00. If the pilot is successful we are hoping to extend the number of Children’s Centres that offer this service.

Welfare Reform – Universal Credit Update

The Department for Work and Pensions have now confirmed that Universal Credit will commence in Blackburn with Darwen with effect from 24th November 2014. This will only affect new claims for single people and couples where no Housing costs support is required. The dates for the transition of existing benefit claimants to Universal Credit are still not known at this time. This does not reflect well on the progress expected by the Government for this ill-directed policy

Once the delivery partnership agreement between the Department for Work and Pensions and the Council is agreed, a communications plan will be issued which will include presentations for members on this issue.

Text Message Reminders for Council Tax Arrears

During June, the Council Tax team began issuing text messages to residents who are in arrears with their Council Tax bills.

Since introducing this innovation, the Council Tax team has issued 640 text messages in June, 336 in July and 827 in August. Whilst it is still very early days, there has been a slight drop in the number of paper reminders having to be issued to customers. Further analysis of the use of reminders and the impact on customers will take place during the next few months, however, initial customer feedback has been extremely positive.

IT Update

ITM&G continue to support services across the council, implementing new and upgraded systems.

The new customer portal continues to be popular with citizens: since its launch, over 1,100 accounts have been created with 120 forms now available on the portal. We have had over 5,600 forms submitted electronically, with Council Tax Direct Debit requests, tip permit requests and Beez Card applications being the top 3 transactions. Work continues developing the portal to include more environmental services as well as to replace the current outdated waste management system.

The roll-out of a new solution for Members has commenced, providing a secure connection method for accessing email, other council systems and our own data with a modern PC tablet.

A new queue management system for Blackburn and Darwen Town Halls customer services went live in August enabling customers to self-serve and book their own appointments. A new telephony system for customer services and a new Library Management System is also went live this month.

Work is progressing on installing a second internet connection to improve overall capacity and resilience whilst the project to redesign and redevelop the corporate wide area network (WAN) is on track, with procurement completed and orders for services and equipment having been placed.