

**Diversity Peer Challenge Report
Slough Borough Council
19/20 March 2009****1. Background**

This report is a summary of the findings of a Diversity Peer Challenge organised by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and carried out by its trained peers. The report satisfies the requirements of the Equality Standard for an external assessment at level 3. The Peer Challenge is designed to validate a council's own self-assessment at level 3 of the Equality Standard, by considering documentary evidence and by carrying out a series of interviews and focus groups with employees and other stakeholders.

The basis for the Peer Challenge is a benchmark which incorporates the set criteria of the Equality Standard at level 3. The benchmark focuses on four key areas: Leadership and Corporate Commitment; Community Engagement and Accountability; Service Delivery and Customer Care and Employment and Training.

The Peer Challenge is not an inspection; rather it offers an external assessment of a council's own judgement of itself against the Equality Standard benchmark, by critical friends who have experience of delivering an equality/diversity agenda in their own councils.

Peers were:

Cllr Andy Matchet – Coventry City Council
Jane Brown- London Borough of Waltham Forest
Patricia Adley – Consultant Peer
Jessica Linacre – Stevenage Borough Council (Shadowing)

The team appreciates of the welcome and hospitality provided by the council and would like to thank everybody that they met during the process for their time and contributions.

2. Overall conclusion

Following this Diversity Peer Challenge, we have reached the following conclusion:

Slough Council has completed a satisfactory self-assessment against the criteria for level 3 of the Equality Standard. Strengths and any areas for improvement identified by the peers are highlighted in paragraph 3.

3. Detailed findings**3.1 Leadership and corporate commitment****Strengths:**

- There is clear evidence of strong political and corporate leadership of the Equality and Diversity agenda from the Leadership of the Council, leader of the main opposition group and the Chief Executive, extending right across the organisation. There is clear non-partisan support for E&D and a widespread recognition that, whilst rapid progress has been made over recent years, it is still necessary to progress and promote the E&D agenda consistently and systematically. There is an Equality & Diversity Champion at cabinet member level. Indication of commitment to all diversity strands are:
 - Support for the establishment of staff LGBT groups as expressed by leading members, unions and staff generally

- A stated passion about rights of G&T communities and a practical commitment, e.g. improving educational outputs
 - Clear understanding by strategic directors of priorities, outcomes etc..
 - Ownership across council beyond management to teams and individuals
- Slough Borough Council demonstrates an honest, mature and realistic approach to Equality & Diversity.
 - There is a coherent narrative linking E&D to economic development and social cohesion, with for example, an inspiring commitment to skill development, economic participation and employment.
 - The Council Equality Working Group positive and clear about the next stage being more cross-directorate and focussing on evaluating outcomes.
 - There are comprehensive and well documented equality policies and strategies across E&D strands with meaningful links to corporate and service objectives. There is a clear vision across the organisation with equality and diversity embedded at all levels Staff are professional, dedicated and committed to excellence in service delivery and see E&D as integral to this. The EIA process is firmly embedded and a strong performance monitoring system is in place. A 'golden thread' is evident running through the authority from Corporate Plan to individual staff development plans.
 - There are schemes for Disability, Gender and Race. There is an attempt to align these with the corporate plan, local strategic partnership and LAA, for example, LAA targets are strongly related to health equality, community safety and community cohesion ambitions.
 - There is clear and meaningful corporate guidance on E&D requirements of the procurement process through the corporate procurement strategy and its EIA. The sustainable procurement strategy provides further impetus. Procurement works closely with service delivery areas in a mature and sophisticated approach. EIAs are undertaken by the service area and these are used to provide challenge at specification stage (to ensure that potential suppliers understand the language of E&D requirements) and consider impacts on end-users or external recipients.
 - There was evidence of strong and pro-active scrutiny of equality issues related to service delivery with active member involvement. The team was particularly impressed that this was accompanied by an open approach to reshaping service delivery.
 - There is a strong partnership ethos with a strong commitment to and understanding of LAA targets demonstrated by LSP partners. Partners recognised the leadership role of the Council.
 - There is a strong LSP and Council commitment, e.g. the annual Diversity Conference mentioned positively by members, stakeholders and partners. There is a clear understanding of services mapped to community profiles based on community knowledge and gap analysis undertaken with partners.
 - There is an awareness of the need to provide challenge to LSP partners, eg annual attendance by the Chief Constable and quarterly attendance by the BCU commander at scrutiny.
 - There are good practical working relationships evident with collaboration between wardens, PCSOs and beat officers. Slough Against Violent Extremism (SAVE) is a powerful example of partnership working. There is an awareness of the need to engage community groups in LSP structures and external challenge.

Areas for improvement:

- There is a need to move beyond surveys and directly capture data on CRM. Continue the drive for better community mapping to validate and inform local knowledge.
- Clarify, develop and communicate the involvement of community groups in LSP processes.
- Develop a coherent public-facing communications strategy so that the ethos of the Council's achievements is embraced more widely.
- Celebrate and disseminate success.
- Provide clearer leadership on 'new' strands e.g. consider developing LGBT awareness on experiences of other organisations and LSP sub-structures.
- Develop the plan for introduction of Single Equality Scheme (SES).
- Support strategic directors in remedying lack of resources through continuous improvement (and VFM) by setting clear priorities and evaluating outcomes corporately e.g. by changing standard practice through pilot activity

3.2 Community engagement and accountability

Strengths:

- Community and volunteer sector representatives are very positive about their relationship with the Council and there is a positive open door policy for individual organisations.
- The community sector representatives are appreciative of the recent widening of engagement activity beyond race issues to include gender and disability issues. The quality and transparency of published race equality data is also valued.
- The annual diversity conference is a good example of both public accountability and partnership work. Its recent expansion beyond race equality issues has been welcomed by the community and voluntary sector representatives.
- There are good examples of engagement with Roma people and travellers particularly in respect of education.
- The introduction of community-based equality champions is a promising development in terms of the potential to promote thematic issues and to highlight issues which may have relevance to more than one equality group.
- The inclusion of Gay Berkshire in the LSP structure is a positive move as the Council seeks to extend itself more fully into the LGBT agenda.

Areas for improvement:

- The recent changes to the LSP structure has resulted in a loss of high level engagement with older people's organisations. It will be important to maintain engagement with this group within the new set-up. In addition it is important that all groups are engaged at a level where they are able to challenge the Council and the LSP.
- There is recognition that the LGBT agenda needs attention. There is already positive activity taking place in terms of engagement with the LSP, positive staff attitudes and sexual orientation monitoring in the more relevant services areas such as social care. A partnership approach to the further development of this agenda may be beneficial

together and may provide opportunities to capitalise on existing or more advanced work taking place in partner organisations such as the staff network within the police service.

- Whilst avoiding consultation and engagement fatigue there is potential for more consistent and practical use of community engagement as part of the process of completing equality impact assessments.
- Consideration needs to be given to directly engaging with disabled people across the diverse of communities in the area

3.3 Service delivery and customer care

Strengths:

- Slough Borough Council displays a strong commitment to equality and diversity which has produced a customer focused culture of service delivery to local people. This has been encouraged through the exceptional cultural understanding of staff and the use of EIAs particularly in Children's and Young Peoples services which has built a mature approach and understanding of customers and their changing needs and priorities.
- There are many examples of innovation and willingness to engage to transfer real outcomes for customers through service delivery. Work of particular significance includes:
 - Extensive groundwork and engagement with local Roma gypsy travellers which has secured the attendance of 20 additional children in school and created provision of lifelong learning programmes
 - Reaching out to the Polish community through the 'underground' website to effectively foster and capture their engagement and the resulting communication for the achievement through national media.
 - Provision of a screening facility for the women's only Asian swimming session in the new pool
 - The production of the Asian catering guide and staff knowledge about the sensitivities of certain disabilities such as AIDs.
- The Council has a strong partnership ethos and strives to work with its partners to develop priorities that deliver outcomes for local people through service improvement and delivery. The involvement of community and voluntary groups through the annual diversity conference is an outstanding example of best practice and should be continually celebrated and broadened to ensure the effective representation of local need.
- There is clear evidence of strong procurement practices that have widened the access for local businesses to effectively compete for opportunities. The requirement for contractors to provide equality monitoring reports on employee representation across their organisations demonstrates sophistication and a proactive attitude that should be lauded as best practice.

Areas for improvement:

- Continue to categorise suppliers at PQQ stage to extend access to contracts
- Greater effort should be invested in developing a communications plan with the objectives of sharing experiences, celebrating achievements and encouraging directorate learning across the Council, with partners and building a reputation within the community. This could be further enhanced along the journey towards achieving Excellent, under the new framework by opening it further to share and celebrate with other partners and Councils, driving the peer learning programme.

- There is still some merit in expanding the involvement of EIAs to all staff. This would capture the depth of knowledge held by staff at all levels, increase the ownership of actions arising and add quality to the EIA process, which would translate into enhanced outcomes.
- Structures to effectively support the monitoring and evaluation of equality actions and outcomes still requires further attention to ensure dedicated and valuable work is not lost. This is would benefit from the implementation and embedding of a rigorous performance management and reporting system that measures the outcomes seeking to be achieved.
- There is still potential to explore the needs of those with 'softer' diverse needs, such as people leaving social care and those with mental health issues. Further information about the needs and provisions for a wider range of diverse needs would go a long way to build the confidence of staff to handle and provide a service and opportunities that truly makes a difference.

3.4 Employment and training

Strengths:

- Managers are open and accommodating. There is a positive open door policy. Staff are enthusiastic, dedicated and feel valued
- There is clear evidence that the equalities agenda is owned across the Council by teams and individuals. Staff are culturally aware.
- There are flexible family friendly working arrangements.
- The workforce is fairly representative of the community it serves.
- Job evaluation and pay harmonisation are at an advanced stage.
- Reasonable adjustments are made in a timely manner.
- Communications have been improved including use of the intranet, internet and magazine.
- There is a BME staff group and a disabled staff group.
- A multi-faith room has been provided for people of all faiths.
- There has been a good take up of E&D members' training both for the induction of new members and ongoing training.

Areas for improvement:

- BME staff are underrepresented in the top 5% of earners (13.16% projected 2008/9). This is an area we consider needs to be addressed.
- Disabled staff are underrepresented in the top 5% of earners (1.35% projected 2008/9). This is an area we consider needs to be addressed.
- Need to ensure that there is systematic support for LGBT staff. Consideration could be given to becoming a Stonewall champion. Consideration could also be given to joint working with the Police, PCT and University in furthering this agenda.
- Ensure that there is clarity in the sickness policy in relation to absence related to disability.

- Need to ensure that all staff are involved in developing Equality Impact Assessments and understand the targets set for their service area.
- There is potential to provide enhanced employment opportunity for people with a disability including those employees at Speedwell who aim to enjoy integrated employment. This agenda could be extended to joint working with partner organisations in both the public and private sector.
- Equality and diversity training for all staff is welcomed. Consideration could be given to ensuring refresher training takes place.
- When considering shared services ensure equal commitment to Equality agenda.

3.5 Main Challenges

As the Council moves forward beyond level 3 to achieving the excellence level of the new framework the following main challenges will need to be addressed;

- The development of the LGBT agenda both inside the Council and with partners
- The provision of active support for disabled people into integrated employment
- Maximising the opportunities offered by the implementation of the new Corporate Equality Plan and the identified need to reconfigure the Council Equality Working Group to create a “golden thread” on equalities and to take the work forward as one organisation.

IDeA March 2009

Appendix C i

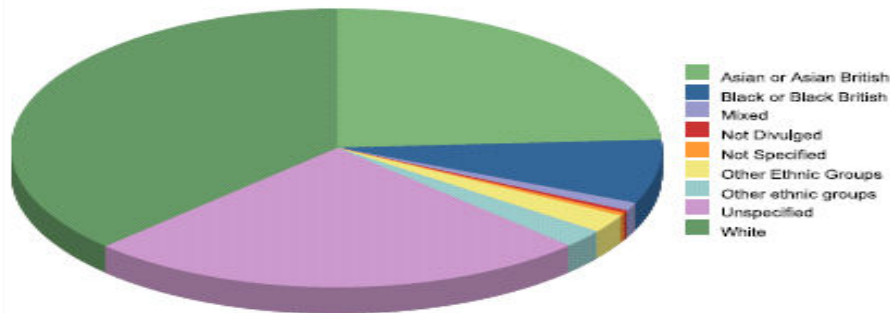
Ward Analysis with SR type

SR Type	Number of Service Requests																Number of Service Requests
	Baylis and Stoke	Britwell	Centra	Chalvey	Clippenharn Green	Clippenharn Meadows	Colnbrook and Poyle	Farnham	Foxborough	Haymill	Kedermister	Langley St Marys	Unknowr	Unspecified	Upton	Wexham Lea	
Apply for service	1													9			10
Blue Badge - new	55	18	46	14	34	24	22	52	37	44	62	29		305	30	37	809
Blue Badge - renew	52	41	50	19	54	20	27	71	49	61	90	50	2	332	59	35	1,012
Blue Badge - replace damaged	1			1	2				1			3		4	1	1	14
Blue Badge - replace lost	6	1	3	2				1	1	5				7		3	29
Blue Badge - replace stolen	2	3	1	1	1	2			1		4	2		12	2	1	32
Bus pass - new disabled	2			1	2	1		1		1		4		4			16
Bus pass - new elderly	5	2	14	3	5	2	3	6	3	4	1	5		42	5	3	103
Call passthrough	202	142	88	44	121	38	35	139	138	224	353	100	9	10,349	52	75	12,109
Call Passthrough - FAQ	227	101	189	83	143	164	112	221	112	220	195	164	13	4,320	148	109	6,521
Call Passthrough - Switchboard	163	92	86	48	104	65	45	139	103	181	186	109	16	13,441	94	95	14,967
Call Turnaround	137	82	141	73	106	80	71	127	89	143	109	106	21	26,469	83	95	27,932
Change in circumstances	1	1	1					2				1		7			13
Change of address	244	54	282	77	155	198	201	272	76	300	127	191	16	2,969	178	169	5,509
Document scanned/received	1,379	437	1,287	638	549	544	444	1,193	444	723	826	450	25	8,131	615	850	18,535
Information not available	105	40	93	34	103	33	45	83	71	99	122	100	1	3,077	85	59	4,150
Notification of death	36	22	37	5	70	39	21	80	17	61	103	36		320	37	69	953

SR Type	Number of Service Requests																Number of Service Requests
	Baylis and Stoke	Britwell	Centra	Chalvey	Clippenhan Green	Clippenhan Meadows	Coinbrook and Poyle	Farnham	Foxborough	Haymill	Kedermistoe	Langley St Marys	Unknown	Unspecified	Upton	Wexham Lea	
Report a problem	21	18	14	6	16	17	7	30	13	43	11	20	2	489	53	28	788
Request advisor consultation	597	153	588	300	161	193	168	490	176	295	349	173	12	3,517	299	340	7,811
Request Information	4,028	2,000	3,505	1,473	2,240	2,003	1,845	3,716	2,136	3,864	3,959	2,261	299	85,275	2,185	2,254	123,043
Apply for service - eform	88	50	99	44	69	72	41	95	62	84	91	57	11	18,412	48	67	19,390
Complaint - CSC		1												1			2
Blue Badge - cancel					2	1			1		1	1		4		1	11
Bus pass - renew elderly					1							1		1	1		4
Bus pass - replace lost					2						2			3			7
Customer feedback noted						1											1
Blue Badge - found									1					4			5
Bus pass - found									1					3			4
Bus pass - renew disabled											1			3			4
Bus pass - replace damaged														1			1
Complaint - corporate														2			2
Bus pass - replace stolen															1		1
Grand Total	7,352	3,259	6,527	2,866	3,940	3,497	3,091	6,718	3,531	6,355	6,595	3,863	427	177,554	3,978	4,292	243,845

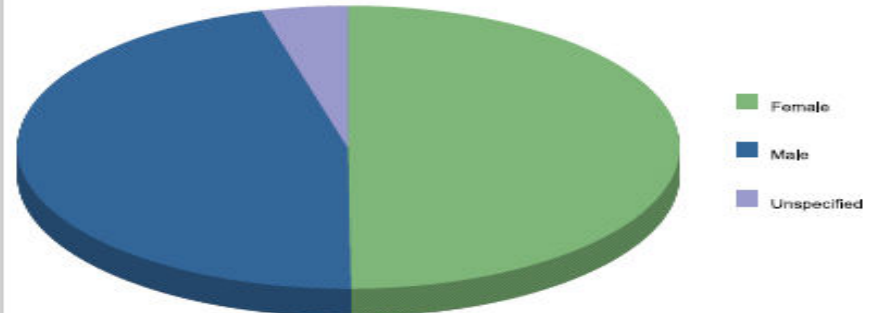
Select a range of dates for the report
Between 1/3/2008 and 28/2/2009

Ethnicity Breakdown



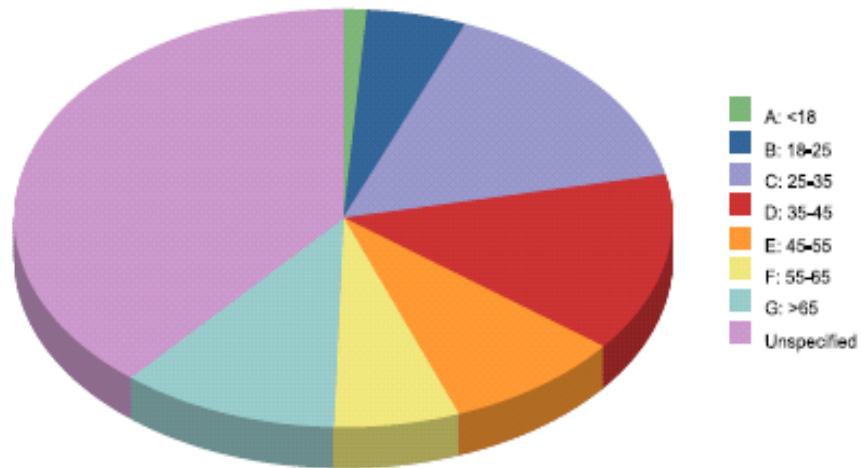
Ethnicity	Ethnicity Subtype	Number of Customers	Percentage of Customers
Asian or Asian British	Any other Asian background	1,385	3.1%
	Bangladeshi	0	0.0%
	Indian	0	0.0%
	Pakistani	0	0.0%
Black or Black British	Unspecified	190	0.4%
	African	0	0.0%
	Any other Black background	0	0.0%
Mixed	Caribbean	944	2.1%
	Unspecified	0	0.0%
	Any other mixed background	193	0.4%
Not Divulged	White and Asian	0	0.0%
	White and Black African	0	0.0%
	White and Black Caribbean	0	0.0%
Not Specified	Unspecified	0	0.0%
Other Ethnic Groups	Any other ethnic group	4	0.0%
	Chinese	0	0.0%
Other ethnic groups	Unspecified	27	0.1%
	Not stated	0	0.0%
Unspecified	Unspecified	11,497	25.7%
		1	0.0%
		0	0.0%
White	Unspecified	0	0.0%
	Any other White background	0	0.0%
	White British	13,764	30.8%
	White Irish	0	0.0%
Grand Total		44,884	100.0%

Gender Breakdown



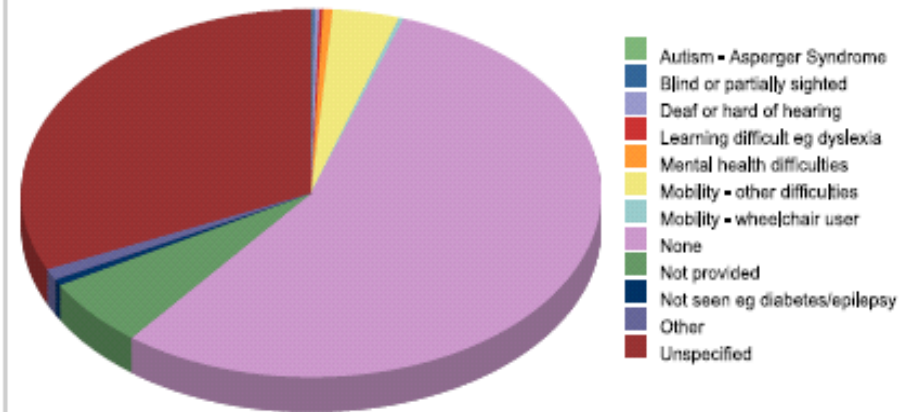
Gender	Number of Customers	Percentage of Customers
Female	22,283	49.9%
Male	20,530	45.9%
Unspecified	1,871	4.2%
Grand Total	44,884	100.0%

Age Range Breakdown



Age Range	Number of Customers	Percentage of Customers
A: <18	514	1.2%
B: 18-25	2,185	4.9%
C: 25-35	6,979	15.6%

Disability Breakdown



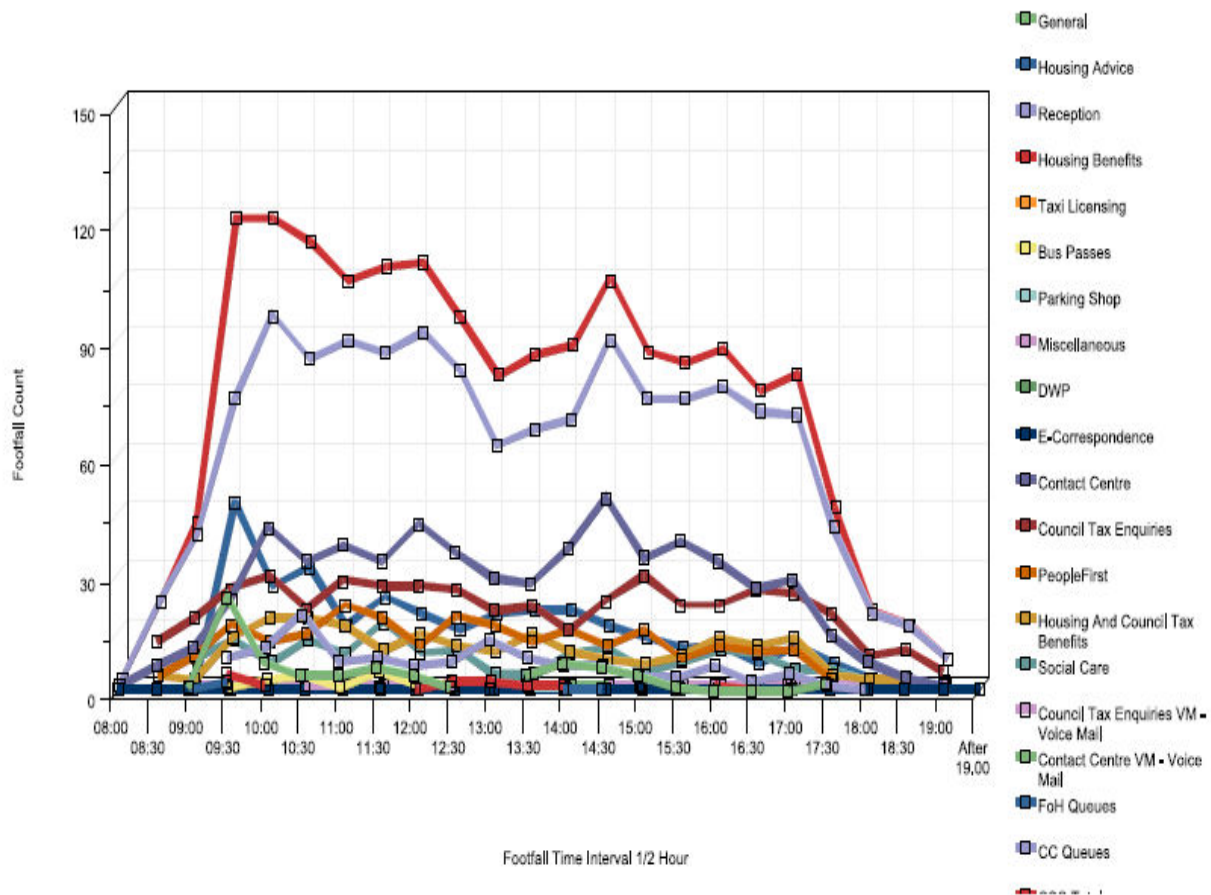
Primary Disability	Number of Customers	Percentage of Customers
Autism - Asperger Syndrome	11	0.0%
Blind or partially sighted	83	0.2%
Deaf or hard of hearing	107	0.2%

Age Range	Number of Customers	Percentage of Customers
D: 35-45	6,204	13.9%
E: 45-55	3,924	8.8%
F: 55-65	2,746	6.1%
G: >65	4,787	10.7%
Unspecified	17,345	38.8%
Grand Total	44,884	100.0%

Primary Disability	Number of Customers	Percentage of Customers
Learning difficult eg dyslexia	99	0.2%
Mental health difficulties	235	0.5%
Mobility - other difficulties	1,663	3.7%
Mobility - wheelchair user	120	0.3%
None	24,771	55.4%
Not provided	2,699	6.0%
Not seen eg diabetes/epilepsy	259	0.6%
Other	434	1.0%
Unspecified	14,203	31.8%
Grand Total	44,884	100.0%

Date Queue Type
16/3/2009 (Not Specified)

CSC Footfall Analysis



Date	Location	Queue Type	Footfall Count																	Footfall Count								
			08:00	08:30	09:00	09:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	12:00	12:30	13:00	13:30	14:00	14:30	15:00	15:30	16:00		16:30	17:00	17:30	18:00	18:30	19:00	After 19:00	
16/03/2009	Front of House	General			2	25	8	5	5	7	5	2		5	8	7	5	2	1	1	1	3						92
		Housing Advice		1	3																							10
		Reception			9	12	20	8	9	7	8	14	9	7	7	4	4	7	3	5	2	1						136
		Housing Benefits				5	2					1	3	3	2	2			2	1								23
		Taxi Licensing					2				1																	4
		Bus Passes				1	3	4	1	5	2																	16
		Parking Shop					1								1	1		1										4
		Miscellaneous							1	1		2	1		2					1				2				10
		DWP											1															1
		Front of House Total				3	46	25	30	15	22	18	14	18	19	19	15	12	9	10	5	10	5	1				296
	Call Centre	E-Correspondence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Contact Centre	1	6	11	23	41	33	37	33	42	35	29	27	36	49	34	38	33	26	28	14	7	3	1		587	
		Council Tax Enquiries			12	18	25	29	20	27	26	25	20	21	15	22	29	21	21	25	24	19	8	10	4		447	
		PeopleFirst			3	8	16	12	14	21	18	11	16	16	12	15	11	15	7	11	9	10	2				229	
		Housing And Council Tax Benefits			3	2	13	18	18	16	10	14	11	9	14	9	7	6	8	13	11	13	3	2	2		202	
		Social Care				7	12	6	12	8	16	8	9	3	3	8	10	4	6	9	8	4	4	1	1		139	
		Council Tax Enquiries VM - Voice Mail				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Contact Centre VM - Voice Mail				0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Call Centre Total	1	24	46	89	106	97	109	103	101	98	77	77	83	95	88	80	87	79	79	42	18	15	6	0	1604	

Indicators..... at-a-glance (October - December 2008)

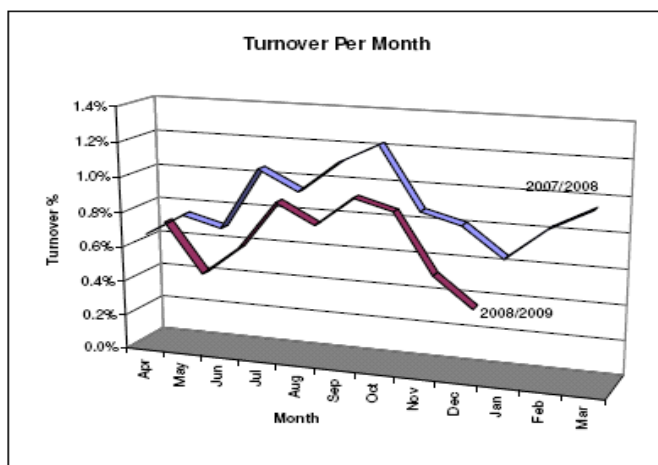
Workforce Profile as at 31st December 2008

Headcount	1767	FTE*	1373.8
Vacancies#	644	Disability	6.3%
BAME**	40.3%	Non BAME	59.7%
Female	70.8%	Male	29.2%

* FTE = Full Time Equivalent
 ** BAME = Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (of those declaring)
 # Vacancies = Posts Vacant

The headcount for the council has risen by 1%, increasing the percentage of staff from BAME backgrounds by 0.6%. The number of staff declaring a disability has also risen, taking the percentage from 5.9% last quarter to 6.3%. The male/female comparison remains constant with 70.8% of the workforce female. The age and service profiles are consistent with previous quarters, with the age group 40-49 and the service length 6-10 years with the largest number of staff. See page 4 for further information.

Turnover

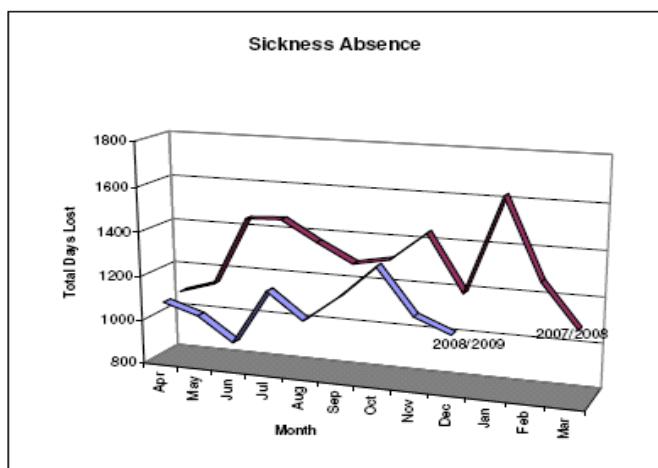


*2008/2009 8.4%
 Quarter 3 2008 1.7%
 2007/2008 10.8%
 Quarter 3 2007 3.0%

The chart opposite continues to follow a similar formation to last year, although the turnover has taken a steeper decline over the last 3 month period. The projected turnover for the year is 2.4% less than last year, whilst the quarter 3 total has reduced by 1.3%. There were a total number of 44 leavers in the period, however only those who resigned (30) have been included in the turnover calculation. Further details are given on page 2.

* Projection

Sickness

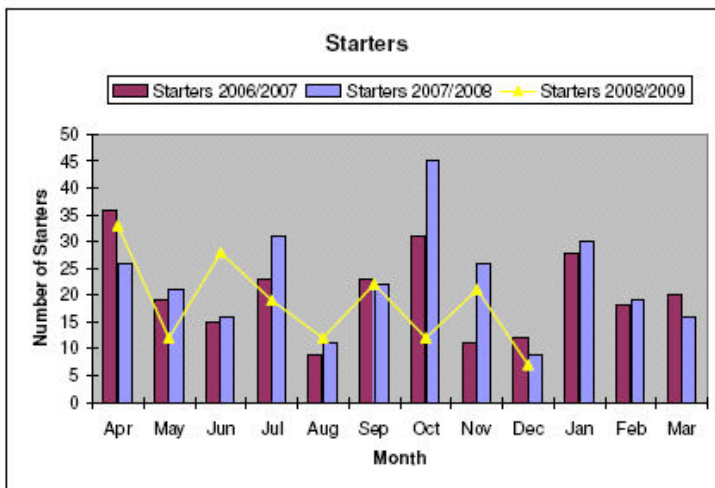


*2008/2009 10.2
 Quarter 3 2008 2.5
 2007/2008 12.0
 Quarter 3 2007 2.9

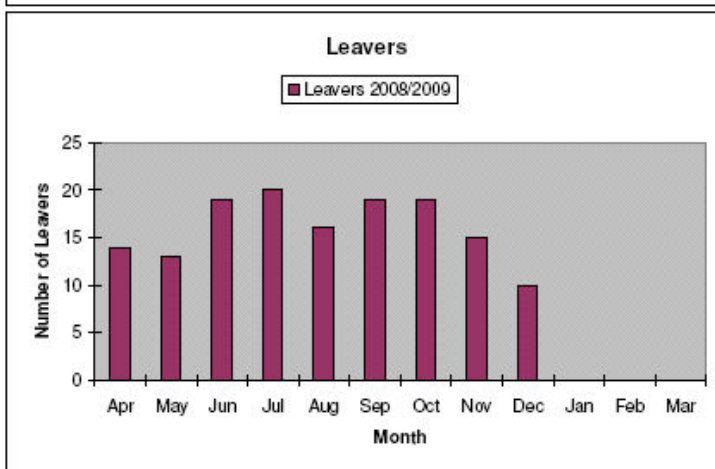
The chart shows sickness continues to be below that reported last year. The days lost per FTE for the quarter are below the results of the same period last year (-0.4%). Sickness continues to show positive improvements, with the projected yearly sickness figure at 10.2 days lost per FTE, 1.8 days less than last year's actual. The total salary cost to sickness this quarter was £271,094 and the highest sickness reason was Infections at 805.5 days lost and a cost to the authority of £70,385. Further details of sickness are given on page 3.

* Projection

Starters & Leavers (October - December 2008)



The number of starters in the third quarter of the year, have reduced by 50% on the same period last year (40 starters 2008/09, 80 in 2007/08). The majority of starters were in Education & Children's Services and Resources with 15 new starters each, with the majority of starters in November (21). The reduction in the number of starters, may, in part, be due to the current controlled recruitment activity restrictions in force.



There were 44 leavers in quarter 3, with the majority leaving in October (19). Community & Wellbeing and Education & Children's Services had the most leavers in this period, losing 17 staff. Resignation was the most prominent reason for leaving (30).

Termination Reason	Total
Resigned	30
Retirement (Ill Health)	0
Retirement (Age)	4
Other*	10

After Resignation, Age Retirement and End of Contract were the next highest reasons with 4 and 5 leavers respectively (20%).

* Other consists of the following reasons: Compromise Agreement, Death in Service, Dismissed, Early Retirement, End of Contract, Left without notice, Redundancy (Voluntary and Compulsory) and TUPE transfers.

Workforce by Directorate & Vacancy Level - December 2008

Directorate	FTE	Full Time	Part Time	Vacancy Level (Posts)
Chief Executive	3.0	2.0	1.0	3
Community & Wellbeing	214.3	189.7	24.6	224
Education & Children's Services	216.5	162.8	53.7	233
Green & Built Environment	70.5	68.8	1.7	71
Improvement & Development	23.5	22.0	1.5	24
Resources	87.3	82.3	5.0	89
TOTAL	615.1	527.6	87.5	644

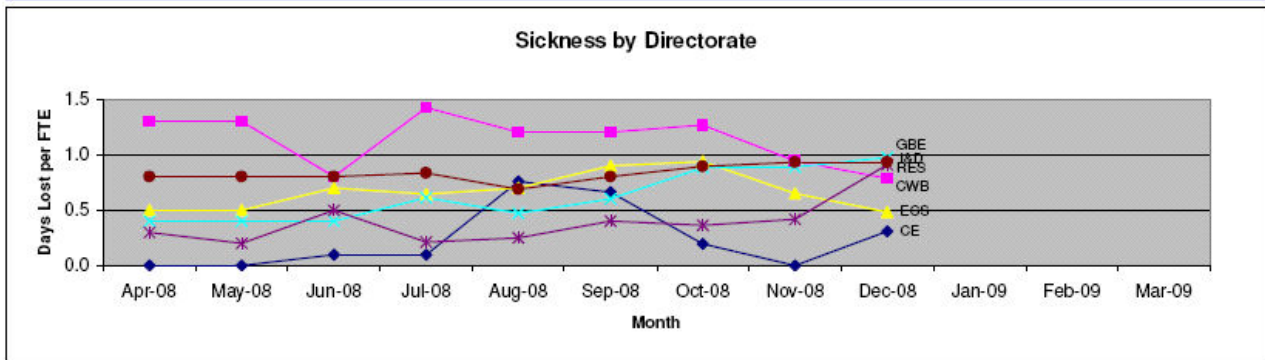
There were 62 less posts vacant at December 2008 than September 2008 (8.7%). Although most directorates saw a reduction in their number of vacancies, Green & Built Environment had the largest fall in vacant posts, from 102 to 71 (30.4%), due to a data cleansing exercise between the HR Business Partner team and the directorate Finance managers. These figures are as last reported by directorates.

Sickness (October - December 2008)

Quarter 3

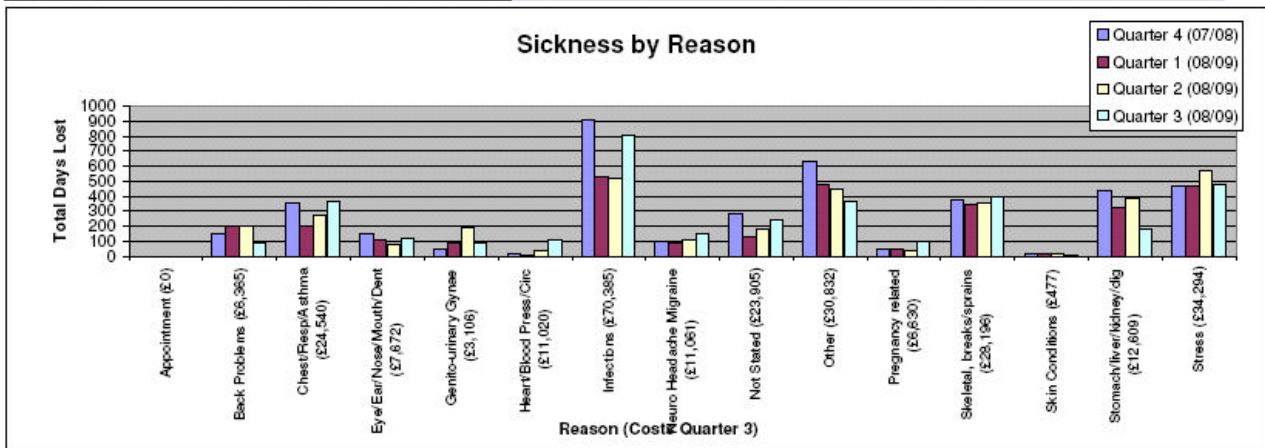
Directorate	Headcount	FTE	% of Workforce	Days Lost due to sickness	% of total days Lost	Days lost per FTE	Salary Cost of sickness
Chief Executive	27	26.0	1.9%	13.0	0.4%	0.5	£1,210
Community & Wellbeing	574	323.3	23.5%	969.5	27.8%	3.0	£45,229
Education & Children's Services	472	379.3	27.6%	784.5	22.5%	2.1	£68,489
Green & Built Environment	239	225.9	16.4%	619.0	17.7%	2.7	£58,928
Improvement & Development	51	45.7	3.3%	77.0	2.2%	1.7	£9,546
Resources	404	373.6	27.2%	1027.5	29.4%	2.8	£87,692
TOTAL	1767	1373.8	100%	3490.5	100.0%	2.5	£271,094

The total number of sickness days lost to the authority has risen for the second consecutive quarter, up 87.5 days on the previous quarter, however with the headcount rising slightly, this has not impacted on the number of days lost per FTE which remains at 2.5 days. The salary costs lost to the authority have increased this quarter by £14,269. Community & Wellbeing have the highest days lost per FTE at 3.0, however this is an improvement on last quarter (3.8). Resources have the largest portion of days lost at 29.4% and the highest salary costs at £87,692. The sickness chart below shows Green & Built Environment and Resources have continued to rise steadily over the period, with Chief Executives and Improvement & Development sharply increasing in December.



Salary Band	Total Days Lost	%
<£15,000	956	27.4%
£15,000 to £19,999	887	25.4%
£20,000 to £24,999	658	18.9%
£25,000 to £29,999	491	14.1%
£30,000 to £34,999	171	4.9%
£35,000 to £39,999	207.5	5.9%
£40,000 to £44,999	84.5	2.4%
£45,000+	35.5	1.0%

52.8% of sickness was taken by staff earning less than £19,999, however staff in this pay bracket only accounts for 48% of the total workforce. 34% of staff earning less than £15,000 and 28% of staff in the £25,000 to £29,999 have recorded their absence as stress, the most sickness days lost to a reason other than infections. Skeletal breaks and sprains accounted for 87% of the sickness taken by staff earning less than £29,999.



Sickness has risen in several categories this quarter, with Infections showing the largest increase in sickness up 286 days on last quarter. Sickness rises in categories such as infections and chest & respiratory problems are not uncommon at this time of the year, so chart movement in those areas is expected. Stress absence has reduced since last quarter by 92.5 days, however this still accounts for 14% of the overall sickness taken. Pregnancy related absence has seen a significant rise in sickness over the quarter, with the total days lost more than doubling. Sickness recorded as other is continuing on a downward trend, showing that the recording of absence by directorates is continuing to improve. The highest salary costs lost to the authority were Infections at £70,385 and stress at £34,294.

Workforce Profile - Ethnicity, Disability, Gender, Age Group & Service Length

Profile as at 31st December 2008

Total Workforce (excluding schools)

Ethnicity Breakdown	31-Dec-08		Slough Census Comparator
	Total	%	
(a) White		58.6	63.7 (-5.1)
British	906	51.3	58.3 (-7.1)
Irish	26	1.5	2.1 (-0.6)
Any Other White Background	104	5.9	3.3 (+2.6)
(b) Mixed		2.3	2.3 (0)
White & Black Caribbean	14	0.8	0.9 (-0.1)
White & Black African	8	0.5	0.2 (+0.3)
White & Asian	10	0.6	0.7 (-0.1)
Any Other Mixed Background	9	0.5	0.5 (0)
(c) Asian or Asian British		26.8	27.9 (-1.1)
Indian	244	13.8	14.0 (-0.2)
Pakistani	170	9.6	12.1 (-2.5)
Bangladeshi	4	0.2	0.1 (+0.1)
Any Other Asian Background	55	3.1	1.7 (+1.4)
(d) Black or Black British		9.3	5.1 (+4.2)
Caribbean	70	4.0	2.9 (+1.1)
African	79	4.5	1.9 (+2.6)
Any Other Black Background	15	0.8	0.2 (+0.6)
(e) Chinese or Other ethnic Group		1.1	1.0 (+0.1)
Chinese	11	0.6	0.3 (+0.3)
Other Ethnic Group	9	0.5	0.7 (-0.2)
Non Disclosure	24	1.4	
Blanks	9	0.5	
Ethnic Minority employees (Headcount)	698		
Total Headcount (Full time and Part time permanent staff and staff on temporary contracts of >12 months as per BVPI guidance)	1767		

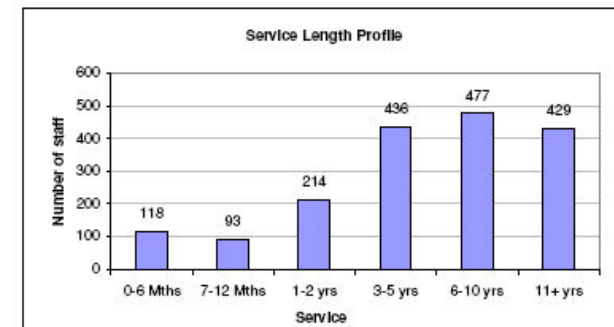
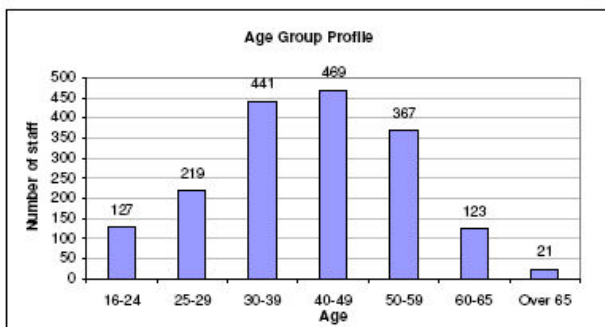
Ethnic Minorities represent 40.3% of those declaring ethnicity, 39.5% of total headcount

White represent 59.7% of those declaring ethnicity, 58.6% of total headcount

Total non-disclosure of ethnic background 1.9% of total headcount.

Gender Breakdown	31-Dec-08		Slough Census
	Total	%	
Female	1251	70.8	50.2 (+20.6)
Male	516	29.2	49.8 (-20.6)

Disability Breakdown	31-Dec-08	
	Total	%
Yes	111	6.3
No	1561	88.3
Non Disclosure	60	3.4
Blanks	35	2.0

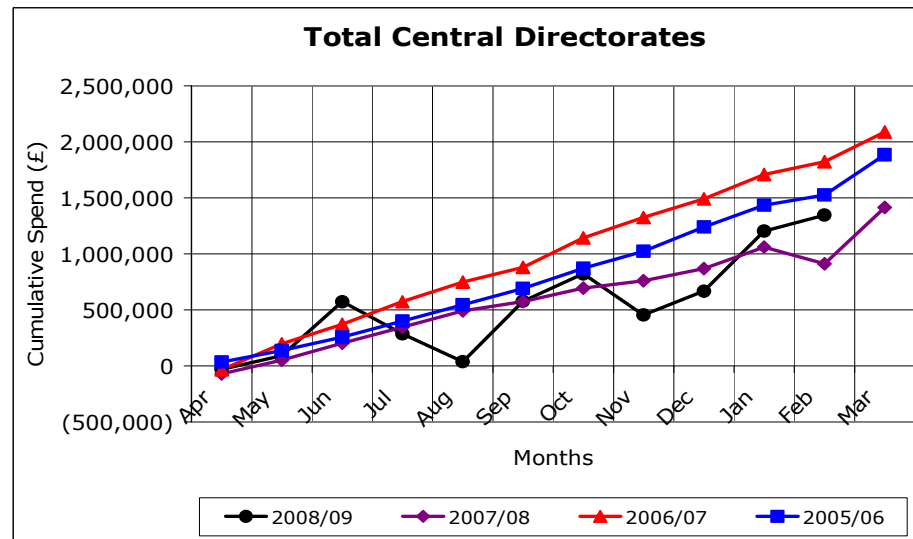
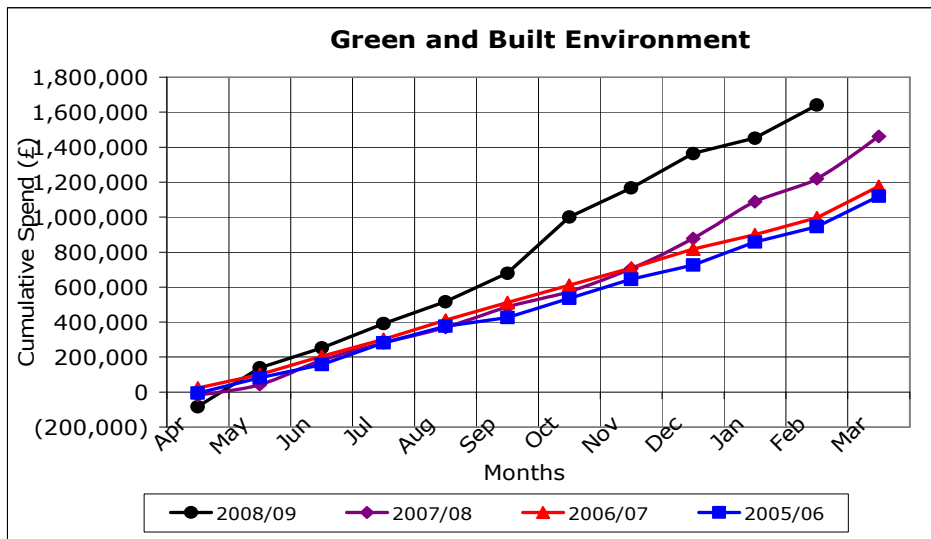
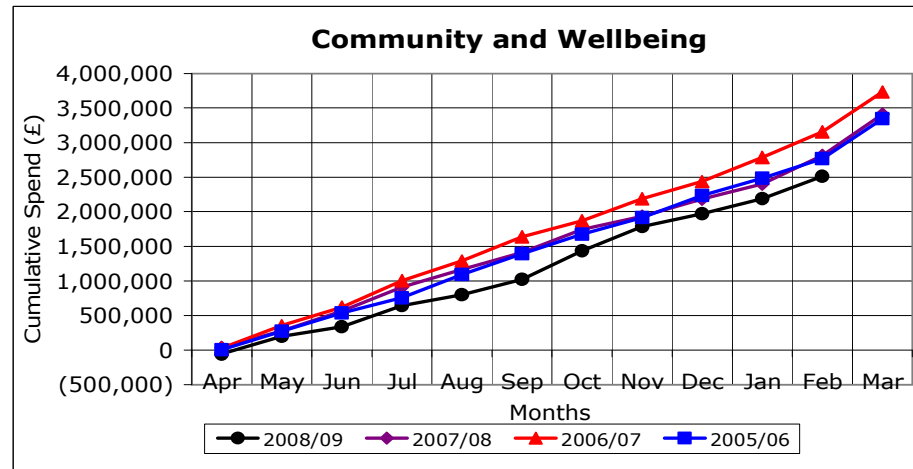
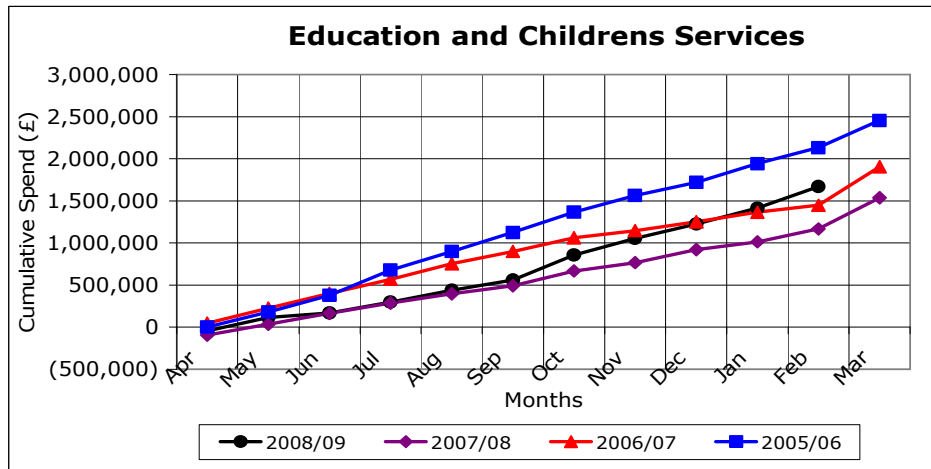


The ethnic profile for quarter 3 shows the number of staff from ethnic minority backgrounds, has increased from 39.7% last quarter to 40.3% this quarter. This has consequently had an effect on the number of staff from White backgrounds, where the percentage of staff is 5.1% down on the Slough census (-4.5% last quarter). The number of staff in the Indian category has seen the largest increase in staff, making the percentage of the workforce rise from 13.6 to 13.8%. Staff from Asian or Asian British has risen against the Slough census and is now 1.1%, whilst staff in Black or Black British groups has seen an increase against the Slough population to +4.2%.

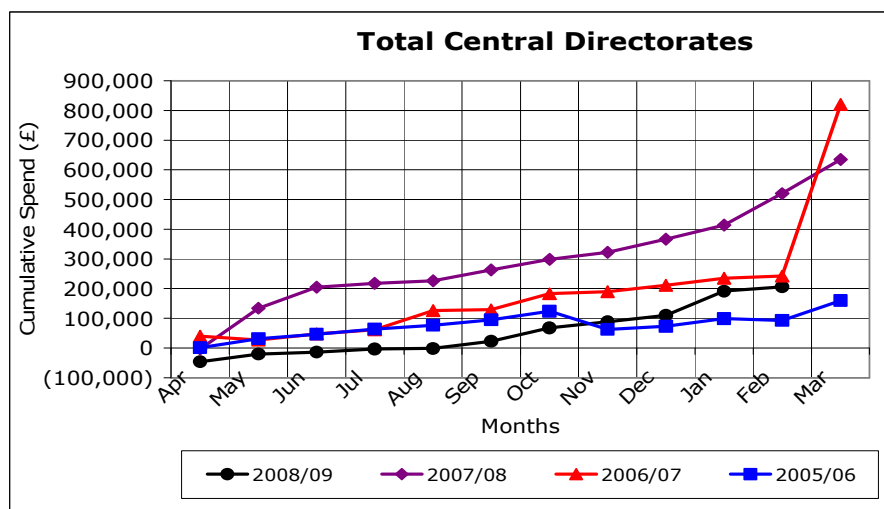
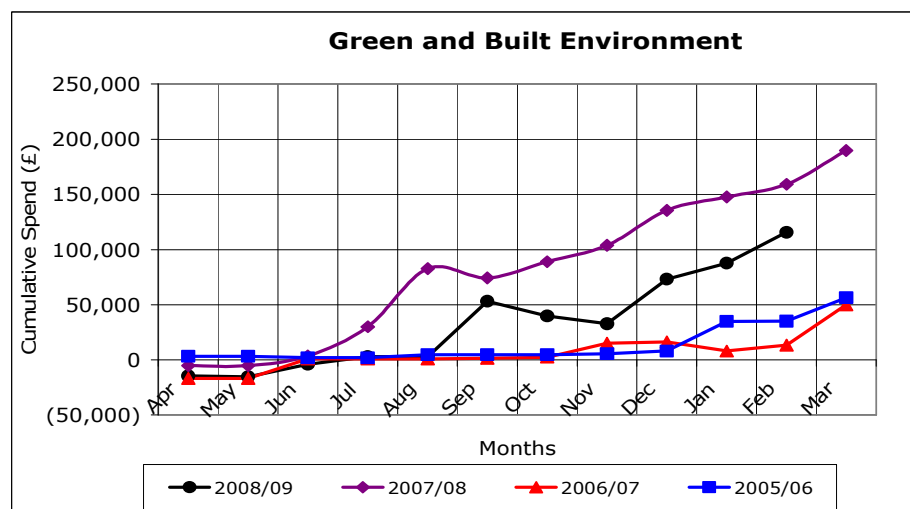
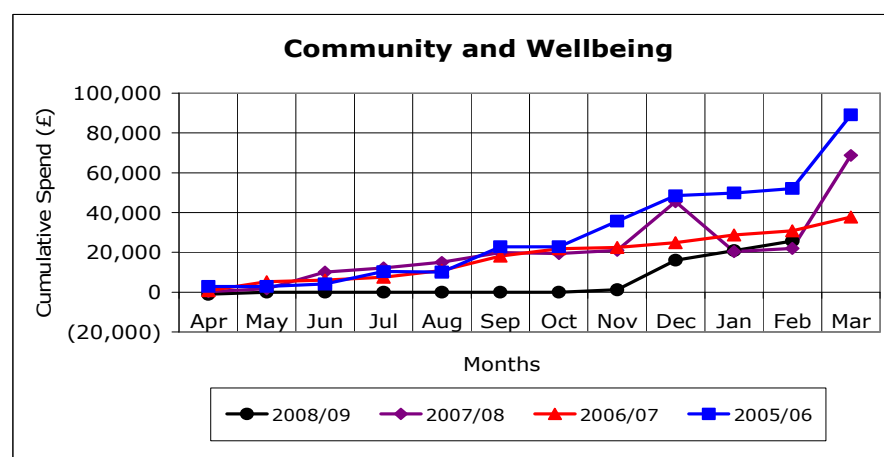
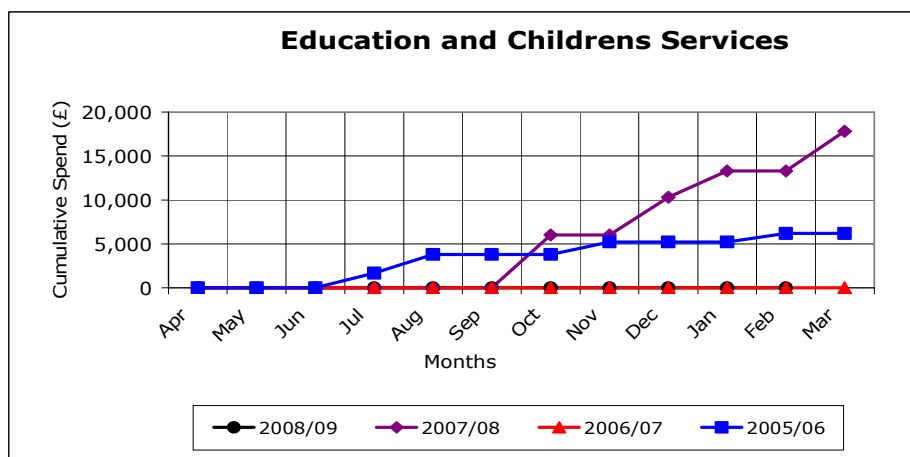
The gender breakdown of staff has remained stable over the quarter, with the percentage of female staff changing slightly from 70.9% to 70.8%. The number of staff declaring a disability has risen this quarter to 6.3%, up from 5.9% in quarter 2. The percentage of staff not wishing to declare a disability has seen an improvement, down from 6.7% to 5.4% this quarter.

The age group profile shows staff aged 40-49 is the most prominent age group in the council (26.5%). 8% of staff are over the age of 60. 6-10 years service has the highest number of staff with 26.9% of the total share.

Year on Year Level of Agency Staffing Spend by Directorate



Year on Year Level of Consultancy Spend by Directorate



Summary Variance Analysis - For the Period Ended: 28th February 2009

Education & Childrens Services

Pressures / Savings	Projected Variance £'000	Description
Children & Families	592	<p>This reflects an increase in the number of external residential placements during the first part of this year together with the part year withdrawal of health funding for one client resulting in a cost pressure of £130k. Also an adverse pressure exists as a result of legislative change in respect of increased liabilities for children in Foster care that want to pursue Further Education which extends the borough's financial commitment to their foster support beyond their 18th birthday until they are 21, together with an increase in the number of clients and extensions to placements within foster settings costs £250k. This will inevitably have an adverse impact on the 2009-10 budget position, particularly as no demographic growth was secured in the PPRG process.</p> <p>The Public Law Outline (PLO) will replace the existing Protocol for Judicial Case Management in Public Law Children Act Cases from 1 April 2008 which aims to reduce unnecessary delay and is designed to promote better co-operation between all the parties involved in care and supervision cases. A result of this is that there has been a dramatic increase in the demand placed upon the provision of Family Group Conferences which is expected to create a pressure of £50k.</p> <p>A continued trend of increases in demand led intervention to prevent children from becoming looked after evidenced from a previously raised issue regarding referral and assessment activity creates a pressure of £90k. Linked to this an increase in the number of foreign clients requiring support has produced a pressure in respect of the interpretation services being accessed at a cost of £40k.</p> <p>Clients leaving care qualify for financial allowance support for 3 years up until their 21st birthday (or 24th depending on whether they pursue FE). A detailed analysis of activity indicates that not all clients exercise this right following changes in their circumstance thus resulting in a cost reduction to the borough. The cost of providing supported lodgings for children leaving care is also expected to reduce this year following expectation that a publicity campaign to recruit carers will not take place until later this financial year. Together these 2 save £100k.</p>
Youth	(50)	The AD for Children & Families, who also leads on the Youth Service, has indicated there will now be an overall saving of £50k across the entire Youth Service.
Inclusion	(244)	The requirement to support clients via direct payments has seen a reduction in the rate of growth that was previously experienced due to parental capacity saving around £50k. A reduction of 2 clients from within residential settings saves £55k. The careful management of vacancies including cases of maternity leave has saved £40k. Other savings of £60k have arisen following the utilisation of DSG funds for additional management support and an extended period of unpaid leave for an employee.
Raising Achievement	(402)	An estimated under spend reflecting current school children take up linked to efficient procurement of contracts across Home to School, the successful sale of school crossing patrol services to schools and the application of grant funding to offset costs as a one-off in 2008-09.
Strategy, Information & Resources	(422)	Primarily as a result of successful negotiation to recover the costs of Capita EMS licences from schools saving £49k, the anticipated reduction in costs associated with both the Primary & Secondary Assessment centres, each of £50k, the expected under spend on the joint arrangement for Teachers Premature Retirement Costs of £23k and an under spend on the budget b/fwd to undertake school suitability surveys of £16k. Savings from the PFI c/fwd request following a reduction in services accessed and deliberate management action across several budget heads have contributed further savings of approximately £100k. Savings of £50k following removal of rates liability for Manor Lodge.
	(526)	

Community & Wellbeing

Pressures / Savings	Projected Variance £'000	Description
Care Packages	769	This is due to overspends of £288k on residential care; £128k on external home care; £230k on Direct Payments (all client groups), and £90k on Nursing, Day & Other Care.
Internal Care Services	239	These are mainly costs being incurred by the Internal Residential Homes (£385k) due to the reprovision programme as well as overspend of £119k relating to Langley Day Centre which has not been closed/changed in line with the 08-09 Star Chamber decision.
Other Services	(531)	This underspend is savings on staff and support costs across a range of services in C&CE and Business Support, Commissioning & Contracts.
	477	

Green & Built Environment

Pressures / Savings	Projected Variance £'000	Description
Waste Disposal	(167)	Contractual dispute - disposal of fridges; plus increased Joint Arrangement contribution; offset by trade waste income maximisation; capitalisation of costs and impact of red bin recycling scheme in recent months.
Highways Maintenance / Lighting Energy	90	Dispute surrounding street lighting energy contract renewal date and negotiated preferential rates; offset by general maintenance savings.
Concessionary Fares	150	Increased initial demand/Shortfall of government grant, partially offset by reduced demand in recent poor weather period.
Housing	248	L & Q Housing - contractual settlement
Staffing	(409)	Potential savings from staff vacancies (net)
Other Variances under £50K (net)	(102)	Wexham Nursery rent income; Chalvey Depot business rates; Flood Defence Levy; Alcohol intervention; Joint Strategic Planning Unit; highways rents; traffic management; running costs savings (via procurement strategy)
	(190)	

Central Directorates

Pressures / Savings	Projected Variance £'000	Description
CSC	123	Targeted savings through BPR not likely to be achieved.
Fundamental Review	384	Anticipated savings not achievable due to delays in the implementation of the Fundamental Review.
Commercial Rents	171	Reduction in Commercial rental income due to a number of vacant units, unachievable accruals from last financial year and loss of income from Accord (c£74k).
Accommodation Strategy	287	Unachievable savings for Accommodation Strategy.
Capital Disposal & Feasibility costs	425	Pressure from Capital Disposal and Feasibility costs (figure to be confirmed).
Slough Music Event	74	Loss on the Slough Music Event.
Targeted Salary Savings	476	Targeted savings from Vacancy Factors/Self Funding Harmonisation.
All Cost Centres	(866)	Gross savings from vacant posts.
Building Maintenance	(100)	Savings on the costs of the corporate building maintenance contract.
Income	7	Expected additional income generated over all cost centres.
Running Costs	70	Additional running costs at St. Martin's Place (Service charges + Building Cleaning).
Running Costs	(44)	Miscellaneous Savings on Running Costs
All Cost Centres	(861)	Possible funding from contingencies & earmarked reserves.
	146	

Risk and Return

English local authorities and the Icelandic Banks

Cross-cutting National Report – Audit Commission

Summary

Local authorities invest large sums of public money

- On 7 October 2008, 451 authorities had investments of over £31 billion.
- The total of deposits far exceeded the level of reserves; some of the deposits included borrowed money.
- In 2008/09, interest was around £1.8 billion, just under 2 per cent of total income.
- In a small number of district councils, income from interest was similar to that from council tax.
- Interest rates fell between October 2008 and March 2009, putting pressure on some budgets.

Deposits were widely spread

- On 7 October 2008, local authorities held deposits in 144 different organisations.
- Fifty-seven per cent of funds were held in UK organisations, the remainder in banks whose owners were based in 24 other countries.
- More than 20 per cent of deposits were in Irish owned institutions.

Local authorities had £954 million in Icelandic banks when they went into administration

- Icelandic deposits amount to about 3 per cent of the total on deposit.
- One hundred and twenty-seven authorities are affected.
- Thirty have funds greater than 5 per cent of gross revenue expenditure at risk.
- Councils are not expecting to cut services or increase council tax significantly as a direct result.

Some local authorities reacted to warning signals about Icelandic banks, but not all

- The total on deposit halved between April and September 2008.
- The number of new deposits fell, but net new deposits after 1 April 2008 exceeded £500 million.
- Seven authorities negligently deposited money after credit ratings for Icelandic banks were downgraded below acceptable levels.

The national treasury management framework is broadly right, but has weaknesses

- Statutory guidance gives weight to credit ratings, but not to other relevant information.
- The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance gives insufficient attention to risks which may be inter-related, for example banks in the same group or country.
- More guidance is needed about how to manage the full range of risks.

Local authority treasury management is of variable quality

- The best authorities:
 - Explicitly balance risk and reward;
 - review and scrutinise policies and procedures regularly;
 - have well trained staff and engaged elected members; and
 - use a wide variety of information.
- Poorer authorities:

- have weak governance;
- depend exclusively on credit ratings; and
- have staff who are inadequately trained.

Recommendations

Central government should:

- Review and revise the weaker aspects of the national framework highlighted in this report, especially the weight given to credit rating;
- Enable and require the Debt Management Office (DMO) to provide deposit accounts to public bodies if those bodies cannot achieve the security they require in the market; and
- Review the cost of early repayment of debt to the Public Works Loans Board to ensure that the structure introduced in November 2007 is not acting against the wider public interest by encouraging authorities to hold unnecessarily large deposits.

CIPFA should:

- Revise and tighten its code of practice for treasury management to take account of the findings in this report;
- Make more explicit the element of the prudential code that allows loans to be drawn down ahead of actually spending the money. Loans should be drawn down only after risks are fully assessed;
- Continue to work with the Association of Corporate Treasurers to develop appropriate training and qualification for those working in treasury management in local authorities; and
- Coordinate information sharing between local authorities to enable them to learn from one another. Any benchmarking activities should, as a minimum, highlight measures of security and liquidity of funds as well as yield.

Local authorities should:

- Set the treasury management framework so that the organisation is explicit about the level of risk it accepts and the balance between security and liquidity and the yield to be achieved. At the highest level, the organisation should decide whether it has:
 - Appetite and capability to be able to manage risk by placing funds with financial institutions; or
 - No appetite and/or insufficient capability to manage the risk of placing funds in the market, and should instead place funds with the UK government's Debt Management Office;
- Ensure that treasury management policies:
 - follow the revised CIPFA code of practice;
 - are scrutinised in detail by a specialist committee, usually the audit committee, before being accepted by the authority; and
 - are monitored regularly;
- Ensure elected members receive regular updates on the full range of risks being run;
- Ensure that the treasury management function is appropriately resourced, commensurate with the risks involved. Staff should have the right skills and have access to information and external advice;

- Train those elected members of authorities who have accountability for the stewardship of public money so that they are able to scrutinise effectively and be accountable for the treasury management function;
- Ensure that the full range of options for managing funds is considered, and note that early repayment of loans, or not borrowing money ahead of need, may reduce risks;
- Use the fullest range of information before deciding where to deposit funds;
- Be clear about the role of external advisers, and recognise that local authorities remain accountable for decisions made; and
- Look for economies of scale by sharing resources between authorities or with pension funds, while maintaining separation of those funds.

The Audit Commission will:

- Ask auditors to follow up this report as part of their use of resources work for 2008/09 and future years;
- Work with CIPFA to ensure that the lessons in this report and the research on which they are based are included in the revised treasury management guidance; and
- Work with others to produce guidance and tools for those in councils with a need to understand the treasury management function.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2008 / 2009												
Line	Cost Centre Code	EXPENDITURE	Funding Source	2008/2009	2008/2009	2008/2009	2008/2009	2008/2009	% of	2008/2009	2008/2009	2008/2009
				March 2008	July 2008	March 2009	Spend per Oracle to 13 March 09	Variance to March 09 Budget	Spend to March 09 Budget	Budget Committed to Date		
				£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	%
		Community and Wellbeing										
1	P793	Cippenham Library Extension	G	0	621	657	452	-205	69%	620	657	69%
2	P277	Community Care / Day Care Project	M	584	459	459	269	-190	59%	300	459	59%
3	P383	Herschel Park Project (Heritage Lottery Parks)	G / M	1,500	546	0	2	2	0%	2	0	0%
		Education and Children's Services										
4	P648	Amalgamation/School Reorganisation - Lea School	M	2,287	1,584	1,069	944	-125	88%	1,366	1,069	88%
5	P673	DDA/SENDA Access Works	G / M	300	247	247	121	-126	49%	125	247	49%
6	P376	Education Capital - Improvements to Schools Portfolio	M	410	307	207	2	-205	1%	42	207	1%
7	P624	Lynch Hill School - External Surfaces	G / M	295	370	201	25	-176	12%	200	201	12%
8	P719	Slough & Eton CE School (TCF)	G / M	3,785	2,651	3,001	2,644	-357	88%	2,851	2,851	93%
9	P720	Wexham School for the Future (TCF)	G / M	2,908	6,301	6,301	4,535	-1,766	72%	6,735	6,301	72%
10	P751	St. Mary's Graduated Childrens Centre	G	506	568	568	569	1	100%	563	568	100%
11	P768	Godolphin Infant - Roof Replacement	G / M	263	359	339	278	-61	82%	311	339	82%
		Green and Built Environment										
12	P388	20 mph Speed Zones	M	300	281	281	24	-257	9%	281	281	9%
13	P231	Art at the Centre - Revitalising the High Street	G / M	3,160	4,032	4,032	2,819	-1,213	70%	4,032	4,032	70%
14	P779	Britwell & Northborough Regeneration	M	1,000	1,240	1,240	0	-1,240	0%	0	0	0%
15	P655	Greener Travel	M	805	795	500	61	-439	12%	500	500	12%
16	P728	Highway Reconfiguration & Resurface	M	600	600	600	292	-308	49%	600	600	49%
17	P006/4020	Housing Imp. Grants: Disabled Facilities (Mandatory)	G / M	503	642	957	524	-433	55%	642	642	82%
18	P004	Housing Imp. Grants: Landlord (Private Rented)	G / M	558	454	214	63	-151	29%	42	100	63%
19	P003	Housing Imp. Grants: Minor Works	G / M	300	300	300	31	-269	10%	130	200	16%
20	P661	Local Safety Scheme Programme	M	375	373	150	20	-130	13%	60	300	7%
21	P662	Street Lighting Improvements Programme	M	500	500	500	501	1	100%	500	500	100%
22	P659	Subway Closure Programme	M	375	375	0	0	0	0%	0	100	0%
23	P795	Waste & Recycling Containers	M	1,075	1,075	1,125	1,089	-36	97%	1,085	1,125	97%
		Green & Built Environment: Affordable Housing										
24	P799	A2 Housing - Slough Garages Phase 3 (Other)	G / M	0	420	420	0	-420	0%	420	420	0%
25	P798	Sovereign HA - Misc. family homes purchases	G / M	0	500	160	0	-160	0%	0	160	0%
26	P519	Warden - Slough Garages Phase 1	G / M	332	332	332	159	-173	48%	332	332	48%
		Resources/Improve & Development/C. Executive										
27	P784	Accommodation Strategy	M	2,130	3,770	3,770	71	-3,699	2%	583	3,770	2%
28	P296	Computer Hardware & Operating Systems	M	250	250	200	130	-70	65%	175	200	65%
29	P365	Customer Service Centre	M	1,624	1,692	1,692	1,277	-415	75%	1,500	1,692	75%
30	P827	DDA Improvement Works	M	1,000	500	280	242	-38	86%	208	300	81%
31	P157	Heart of Slough Project	M	5,779	3,670	1,670	911	-759	55%	163	3,670	25%
		Housing Revenue Account										
32	P558/9	ALMO - Internal Package Improvements	M	5,460	13,096	13,096	13,492	396	103%	15,237	14,812	91%
33	P558/9	ALMO - External Package Improvements	M	1,954	3,020	3,020	93	-2,927	3%	95	780	12%
34	P556	Improvements for Sustainability	M	314	615	615	0	-615	0%	0	615	0%
35	P557	Integrated Housing IT System	M	491	542	542	411	-131	76%	260	542	76%
36	P547	Major Aids & Adaptions (C.Tenants)	M	682	788	788	649	-139	82%	1,187	945	69%
37	P552	Window Replacement Programme	M	683	685	685	221	-464	32%	515	685	32%
38	P516	Winvale Refurbishment	M	749	749	749	3	-746	0%	26	500	1%
39		TOTAL CAPITAL SPEND		43,837	55,309	50,967	32,924	-18,043	60%	41,688	50,702	65%

Prudential Indicators5. Prudential indicators as at 13th March 2009:

	Indicator	2008-09 March 09 Budget £'000	2008-09 13 th March 09 Actual £'000
1	Capital Expenditure General Fund HRA Total	 44,180 21,309 65,489	 23,812 14,749 38,561
2	Capital Financing Sources Grants & Contributions Capital Receipts Revenue and Major Repair Allowance Supported Borrowing Self Financed Borrowing Total	 14,266 13,818 10,491 15,396 11,518 65,489	 9,403 9,148 7,917 11,843 250 38,561
3	Capital Financing Requirement HRA General Fund Total CFR	 7,591 42,328 49,919	 4,038 31,060 35,098
4	Actual Net Borrowing	-14,887	-41,635
5	Authorised Limit for External Debt	78,000	72,516
6	Operational Boundary for External Debt	75,700	72,516
7	Incremental Impact on Band D Council Tax	-£0.58	-£1.86
8	TREASURY MANAGEMENT: (a) CIPFA Code Adopted (b) Interest Rate Exposure - Fixed Rate Borrowing - Variable Rate Borrowing (c) Investment Longer than 364 days (d) Maturity Structure of Borrowing: - Under 12 months - 1 to 2 years - 2 to 5 years - 5 to 10 years - 10 years+	 Yes 75 - 100% 0 - 25% £25,000 0-25% 0-25% 0-50% 0-75% 25-90%	 Yes 100% 0% £19,200 4.2% 11.6% 13.8% 9.7% 60.7%

PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS – A GUIDE

1. **Capital Financing Summary** – Although this indicator is not required by the Prudential Code, it is included within the monitoring so that the capital financing sources can be clearly identified.
2. **Capital Financing Requirement** – This is derived by aggregating specified items from the Council's balance sheet and represents the underlying level of borrowing required to finance historic capital expenditure. The actual **net borrowing** is lower than this because of the reserve part of capital receipts accumulated till 31st March 2004, the beginning of the Prudential system.
3. **Actual Net Borrowing** – represents actual long term borrowing needs (including forward funding for future years) less temporary investments. This is a key indicator and Section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires the Council to ensure that net borrowing does not exceed the Capital Financing Requirement.
4. **Authorised Borrowing Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt** – the former represents a maximum limit for borrowing, which must not be breached and therefore additional headroom has been included to cater for unplanned cash flow situations. The later is a better benchmark as it represents a more likely scenario.
5. **Incremental Impact on Band D Council Tax** – This represents the interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (Principal repayments) of all General Fund Borrowing gross of capital financing FSS. This indicator is calculated by taking the difference between debt charges based on the existing approved capital programme and the debt charges based on the actual spend to-date and dividing the result by the tax base for Council Tax. As the actual capital spend to the end of December 2008 has been funded mainly from capital grants and capital receipts, i.e. non-borrowing sources, indicator 7 reflects the negative impact on council tax compared to the July 2008 approved budget for the full year.
6. **Treasury Management** – these indicators form part of the treasury management strategy and policy statement approved each year before the beginning of the financial year. The main indicator is the adoption of CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management, which the Council adopted before the current Prudential System was introduced.