

# BT Lancashire Services

Annual Review

West Lancashire Borough Council

2014/2015

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## 1 Introduction

Welcome to the 2014/2015 Annual Review of the work of BT Lancashire Services (BTLS) on behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC), for the delivery of both its Revenues and Benefits Service and ICT Service.

In July 2011, a contract between Lancashire County Council and West Lancashire Borough Council was agreed. This is a 10 year contract to deliver shared Revenues, Benefits and ICT Services on behalf of West Lancashire Borough Council through the strategic partnership with BT Lancashire Services.

The agreed business model continues to be based on ‘up front savings’ (of 15%) with no reduction in services. The cost of the ICT Service and the Revenue and Benefits Service in 2014/2015 was £3.154 million and for this period, direct savings to West Lancashire Borough Council amounted to £539,000. This is in addition to the agreement which also aims to deliver added value and investment (borne by the Partnership).

In summary the Contract in 2014/2015 has delivered to West Lancashire Borough Council:

- Direct savings of £539k.
- ICT/Revenue and Benefits investment of £607k – relating to the transfer and implementation of a new dedicated ICT system for the service.
- Combined ICT and Revenues and Benefits Added Value of £160k.

A high level summary of the financial benefits to West Lancashire Borough Council from the Partnership in its first four years, as at the 31 March 2015, is as follows:

Activity	2011/2012 (£k)	2012/2013 (£k)	2013/2014 (£k)	2014/2015 (£k)	Total to Date (£k)
Savings	266	522.0	530	<b>539</b>	<b>1,857</b>
Revenue and Benefit ICT System	150	550.0	141	<b>607</b>	<b>1,448</b>
Payroll Service	-	13.5	13.5	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>
Other Financial Benefits	25	30.5	79	<b>160</b>	<b>295</b>
Total Cashable Savings (1)	441	1,116	763.5	<b>1,306</b>	<b>3,627</b>

**Table 1: Summary of Financial Benefits 2011-2015.**

**Note: (1) 2011/2012 = Part Year**

## Governance

The governance of the Contract continues to be overseen by the Shared Services Board, having representation from West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and BT Lancashire Services. The role of this Board is to review the implementation and delivery of services, monitor service delivery and performance, discuss future opportunities, working together and building positive long term relationships.

The key contractual elements of the Agreement include:

- A Shared Services Agreement between West Lancashire Borough Council and Lancashire County Council to deliver these services through its partner, BT Lancashire Services.
- A double secondment model for all West Lancashire Borough Council employees from the Borough Council to the County Council and then seconded into BT Lancashire Services. This was a first of its kind which protected the terms and conditions of staff and their public sector pensions. These costs are borne by BT Lancashire Services as part of its financial obligations and Contract.

A set of fundamental principles agreed by all the parties is viewed as key to the creation of a successful and long term relationship.

- In terms of the Revenues and Benefits Service, the partnership provides a Revenues and Benefits Service that delivers a service including Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates billing and collection, debt recovery, prevention and detection of fraud and a creditors and debtors function.
- In terms of ICT, the partnership delivers a service that includes provision of a service desk, operations service, desktop service, applications service, and network and voice services. It also includes access to a range of BTLS technical specialist and project management capability to enable business areas within the council to set an ICT strategy and implement projects to meet its business requirements.

A monthly 'Quality of Service' Report is produced which includes the following information in respect of the services provided:

- A synopsis of the services delivered (executive summary)
- Performance against any Contractual and Non-Contractual Service Levels
- Continuous Improvement – Service improvements and on-going developments
- A preview of key activity looking forward

## 2 2014/2015 High Level Performance Review

Details of performance against targets in respect of 2014-15 for both services have been provided on an on-going basis in monthly Quality of Service Reports. In addition this data has been presented on a quarterly basis to the Shared Service Board – again via the Quality of Service Report. A high level summary of performance for the year can be summarised as follows:

### ICT:

- Severe Business Disruption – **100%** resolved within agreed timeframe against target of **99%**.
- Major Business Disruption – **100%** resolved within agreed timeframe against target of **97%**.
- Minor Business Disruption – **99%** resolved within agreed timeframe against target of **97%**.
- Minor Disruption – **99%** resolved within agreed timeframe against target of **97%**.
- Advice and Guidance – **100%** resolved within agreed timeframe against target of **97%**.

### Revenues and Benefits:

- Collection of current year's Council Tax – collected **96.03%** against a target of **97.10%**.
- Collection of current year's NNDR – collected **96.40%** against a target of **97.20%**.
- Collection of previous year's Council Tax – collected **33.56%** against a target of **24.50%**.
- Collection of Sundry Debtors – Collected **90.73%** against a target of **89.10%**.
- Benefits overall processing time – **6.62** days against a target of **12 days**.
- **£86.09k** of Housing Benefit Local Authority Error – against a target of **£139,235**.
- Collection of Housing Benefit overpayments – collected **£203,868** against a target of **£170,000**.

### 3 2015/2016 Continuous Improvement & Planned Developments

In this section we highlight the planned activity for each of the services scheduled to take place during 2015/2016 (in ICT Services this will also be in line with the implementation of the ICT Strategy).

#### ICT:

- **PSN Accreditation;** with the council's Public Service Network accreditation due for submission in June 2015 and the End of Support notice for Microsoft Server 2003 issued for July 2015, Quarter One and Quarter Two deliverables will focus on ensuring that the council maintains their current accreditation with the delivery of the following projects supporting this:
  - Windows Server 2003 Migration
  - AD Upgrade
  - Microsoft Exchange Upgrade and Migration
  - PSN Accreditation 2015
  - Mobile Device Management (Air Watch)
  - Macfarlane Telephony – System resilience review and recommendations
  - Northgate M3PP Upgrade
  - IDOX Upgrade Programme (5 stages)
- **Development Days:** ICT Services will liaise with WLBC to agree priorities and the development day requirements of the council through the regularly scheduled Roadmap Review Board; this work will be focussed around the review of SQL old platform content.
- **Agility Platform:** during the year a new agility platform will be built and discussions will take place to agree key milestones in the migration of the WLBC laptop estate to the new platform.
- **Email Filtering:** a new service of filtering emails will be delivered to the council in year which will include improved security and new self-service functionality.
- **New Intranet:** work will continue this year to develop the council's new Intranet site and deliver a test system for User Acceptance Testing. It is anticipated that the new site will be launched June/July 2015.

#### Revenues and Benefits:

- **The implementation of ISO9001 Quality Management standards:** this is a very positive step towards taking RBS to a higher level of efficiency and effectiveness. Activity is

currently underway to introduce standards and a way of working with a specific focus on easy access to key data including regulations and working practices, improved governance and communications including 121's, Team Briefs and Training and also the identification and rectification of non-conformance – identifying when we have done something wrong and getting it right in the future. The first ISO9001 audit is due at the end of June 2015.

- **Recovery and Enforcement:** we introduced a recovery programme last year that increased the frequency of activity and also decreased the time lag between recovery stages. This had a positive impact on overall collection and recovery performance and the level and frequency of activity is being repeated in the 2015-16 Programme.
- **Learning and Development:** to include mandatory training such as Health and Safety and also technical training including refresher courses on new/changed regulations and ways of working. Training needs will be linked to outputs from 121's and the delivery and tracking of training will be linked to the ISO9001 initiative.
- **Internal and External Audit:** during last year we worked to a timetable for both internal and external audit activity; a timetable that was developed in collaboration with the respective audit leads. In terms of both internal and external audit activity, feedback from the auditors was positive and we have now agreed schedules for 2015/2016.
- **eDocumentation optimisation:** to be considered both from an efficiency perspective but also from a customer service perspective - to enable customers to claim, for example, Benefits by populating an on-line claim form which is then automatically routed to an electronic in-tray for processing. This initiative will be aligned to a similar but wider-ranging initiative planned by the Council.
- **Financial liaison:** all activity relating to the Council's financial data requirements for the RBS has been agreed and scheduled. On an on-going basis, this data will be provided in accordance with this schedule.
- **Welfare Reform:** the Universal Credit (UC) Task Group continues to monitor the impact of UC and Council Members are being updated via periodic briefing sessions. Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) continues to be an area of focus. We are now engaged with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Project Team and the transition activity has been mobilised.
- **Organisational restructure:** the project is mobilised to move towards a new organisational structure – proposals have been agreed at management level and the process of job evaluation and moderation is underway. Currently the plan is to introduce the updated

structure as soon as possible – timings will be subject to operational priorities and a clear understanding of the future status of the service in particular relating to UC. RBS management will work closely with WLBC colleagues to manage the implementation of the new structure.

**2015/2016 Year End and 2016/2017 Billing:** this key activity was recently completed very successfully and 2015/2016 bills were dispatched on schedule. This was a major achievement for the team and all lessons learnt from this time will be applied to the next year end/billing exercise.



## 4 2014/2015 ICT Review

The service is currently delivered through:

- Provision of a Customer Service Desk function.
- Desktop, Network and Infrastructure Support.
- Support of Key West Lancashire Borough Council applications.
- Delivery of ICT projects and Service Improvement Plans.

The total cost of the ICT Service in 2014/2015 was 1.174 **million**, giving a guaranteed saving of **£207k** to West Lancashire Borough Council. These savings are in addition to the **£498k** combined for 2011/2012, 2012/2013 and 2013/2014.

In addition to the delivered saving of **£207k**(in 2014/2015), other financial benefits have been gained by West Lancashire Borough Council through the delivery of the BT Lancashire Services ICT Service.

### ICT Strategy

In 2014/2015 BTLIS supported the council in developing a comprehensive ICT Strategy. This was a significant undertaking that has allowed the council to create a prioritised programme of ICT work to support the delivery of its business objectives.

The ICT strategy was developed over a series of meetings between senior business representatives at the council and BTLIS ICT technical specialists. The strategy contained nine priorities, of which seven have been delivered, with two carried forward into the new financial year; these are the SQL Server 2005 content review/migration and a review of Electronic Document Management systems across the council.

The strategy has shaped much of the project activity that has been undertaken this year. Other significant work streams have also been delivered which include, the preparatory work for PSN accreditation, upgrades to some key business applications and initiatives to improve the ICT support given to members and business leads.

### Infrastructure Improvements

#### **New SQL Server Platform**

ICT Services completed an initial build of a new SQL server platform in anticipation of a review of the significant number of databases and applications situated on the existing SQL platform. The new

platform also enabled a key system upgrade of the Civica Icon system to be completed, with a number of other significant upgrades also now scheduled.

## **Desktop Upgrade/Replacement**

ICT Services upgraded/replaced 90% of the 134 Windows XP machines to Windows 7 Pro, required as part of a strategic piece of work to facilitate West Lancashire Borough Council's PSN Compliance. Users of the remaining 10% of PCs to be upgraded require various third party software packages and input from the software vendors is needed to complete the upgrades. This work is classed as Phase 2 and will be completed in the first quarter of 2015/2016.

ICT Services also successfully completed the rollout of replacement PCs for the Planning Service. The PCs were upgraded to Microsoft Windows 7 Pro and Microsoft Office 2010 to enable the upgrade of the core planning application IDOX from version 8.2 to version 9. The ICT Service completed all of the PC installations outside of normal office hours to minimise disruption to services.

## **Migration of Applications**

ICT Services completed the migration of the core planning applications to a new server infrastructure and the work again was scheduled during a weekend to minimise disruption to services. The new server infrastructure was required to replace an ageing infrastructure and to accommodate an upgrade of the core planning application IDOX Uniform.

ICT Services also assisted the Housing and Regeneration Service with the migration of their QL application to a new physical server. This was a complex piece of work that included preparation and installation of the new server, performing backup and restoration procedures out of hours, both pre and post testing and pre go live. This work required various sections of the ICT Service to work closely with staff from the West Lancashire Housing and Regeneration Services project team to collectively deliver this project.

## **Verismic**

During March 2015, ICT Services implemented Verismic software to satisfy security requirements of the council's internal and external auditors by introducing the use of more complex passwords and account lock out after three unsuccessful attempts. This new mechanism enables any user who forgets their password to reinstate their own network account securely by answering a series of questions to verify their identity and subsequently reset their password.

## **Disaster Recovery Exercise**

In November 2014 the Council held a disaster recovery exercise at the Civic Hall, Ormskirk to test the response of the Council's critical services in the event of a disaster recovery situation. Representatives from ICT Service played an active role in the exercise, with positive feedback received from senior WLBC officers.

## PSN Accreditation

West Lancashire Borough Council achieved its 2014 PSN accreditation on its first submission, a significant achievement for both the council and BT Lancashire Services.

Activities supporting the accreditation included:

- Full penetration testing of the West Lancashire Borough Council estate covering the network perimeter, internal PSN gateway and the internal council network, including servers and PCs. Testing outcomes were extremely positive with only a small number of issues identified, which were all mitigated through patching or decommissioning of equipment.
- McAfee DLP (data loss prevention) was implemented for USB lockdown and the management of removable media.
- The development of a DMZ (secure PC which is isolated from the main corporate network) from which the council can access data sent in via USB devices from members of the public to support planning applications. This solution is now in development across other areas within the council.
- The ICT Service also designed and implemented a secure file transfer protocol (FTP) enabling the council to transfer data acquired on the DMZ securely to the corporate network. This facility is a 'one way' transfer of data to maintain PSN compliance.

## Other ICT Projects

The WLBC **payment system (Civica ICON)** was successfully upgraded, allowing the council to continue to take card payments from their customers. WLBC handle approximately **70,000** card transactions per year through ICON. The project was essential to maintaining service continuity through the latter half of the financial year, as the existing version of the software ceased on 30 September 2014 because it was no longer Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCIDSS) compliant. The project involved the upgrade of the Web, Call Centre and automated telephony systems and the implementation of new chip and pin machine and software. ICT Services were key to the success of the project by implementing the changes and co-ordinating the testing with staff from across the WLBC as well as the Lancashire County Council Customer Access Centre, BTLs Revenues and Benefits and Civica Engineers.

ICT Services subsequently completed a mandatory upgrade of the Civica ICON system during January 2015, as required by the external supplier.

**Asset Management Software** was rolled out to the Council's PC estate, enabling the Council to use management information to analyse and track their software assets and licences to ensure appropriate numbers of licences are in place. This will help to mitigate the risk of substantial fines being levied against the Council.

## Other ICT Support

**Election Support:** During May and December 2014 and again in March 2015, ICT Services worked closely with the WLBC Elections team to prepare for, and provide on-site support for local, national and European elections. This included the sourcing and set-up of audio visual equipment to the main stage, delivery and installation of TV services to the press room, delivery and installation of corporate PCs and provision of access to the corporate network which was required for live posting of election results. The updating of the COINS system with latest election results was also performed by ICT Services onsite.

**Councillor Support:** Following the council elections, ICT Services staff met with the new Councillors, to discuss their ICT requirements, subsequently placing orders for new equipment. The ICT Service also liaised with the six other newly elected members to assess their ICT requirements.

ICT Services also developed enhanced support procedures specifically for councillors including:

- A dedicated mailbox for councillors to raise ICT support requests by email
- Councillors having the option to bypass the telephony route to report an issue
- Direct access to ICT incident co-ordinators who are responsible for allocating support requests to technicians
- Continued access to our ICT Customer Service Desk in the event of email being inaccessible

**Councillor Clinics:** Three councillor clinics were held during 2014/15. These clinics aimed to provide direct access for Councillors to specialist BTLS ICT staff. The clinics presented an opportunity for Councillors to address any ICT issues and meet BT Lancashire Service Technicians and Engineers. Positive feedback was received directly from the Councillors on the value of these sessions.

**ICT User Group:** Council ICT User Groups took place in December 2014, 25<sup>th</sup> March 15 and January 2015. Terms of Reference for the group were agreed, and for the first meeting the senior project manager was available to Council ICT representatives for the day in order to address any queries regarding RFPs in the pipeline. Positive feedback was received from officers at these meetings.

## Performance

2014/2015 was a strong year in terms of performance against contractual Service Level Agreement. There are five targets, based on the impact of an issue and in all five cases the target figure for resolution was exceeded.

No.	Definition of SLA	Target (%)	Performance Year 2014/2015 (%)
1	Severe Business Disruption Business Unit (sub-unit): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unable to operate</li> <li>service component failed or severely impaired</li> </ul>	99	100
2	Major Business Disruption Critical user or user group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unable to operate</li> <li>business unit experiencing significant reduction in service performance</li> </ul>	97	100
3	Minor Business Disruption: Single user or user group unable to work with no available workaround	97	99
4	Minor Disruption: Single user or user group experiencing problems but with ICT defined available workaround	97	99
5	Advice and Guidance	97	100

**Table 2: Contractual Targets.**

The number of escalated and auto generated incidents reported during 2014/2015 compared to the same period last year:

Incidents Raised	Incidents Meeting SLA (%)	2013/2014 Year to Date	2014/2015 Year to Date	2014/2015 Year to Date Variation (%)
Priority 1	100	0	0	-
Priority 2	100	5	4	(20)
Priority 3	100	179	211	17.9
Priority 4	99	1,314	1,075	(18.2)
Priority 5	100	176	137	(22.2)
Total	-	1,674	1,427	(14.8)

**Table 3: Incidents reported in 2012/2013 compared to 2013/2014.**

Key performance indicators gathered monthly:

Key Performance indicator	Year 2014/2015
Percentage of incidents resolved 0–8 hours (any priority)	66.9
Priority 3 - percentage resolved within 8 hours	83.1
Priority 4 - percentage resolved within 8 hours	65.6
Priority 5 - percentage resolved within 8 hours	54.6
Percentage of Interactions resolved at first point of contact (any priority) by service desk	6.4
Number of incidents raised by Elected Members	59

**Table 4: Key performance indicators.**

The following table shows the volume of telephone calls answered by AskICT Service Desk during 2014/2015 compared to last year.

Activity	Year 2012/2013	Year 2013/2014	Year 2014/2015
Calls answered	2,157	<b>1,594</b>	1194
% of calls answered	93	<b>91</b>	92

**Table 5: AskICT calls answered.**

## Key Highlights

To summarise, the highlights for the ICT service for 2014-15 are:

- Strong performance against the contractual Service Level Agreement, with three of the five Priorities achieving 100% and the remaining two achieving 99%, all five priorities exceeding their contractual targets
- Achievement of PSN accreditation on its first submission, with a wide range of activities undertaken to support this.
- Development of a comprehensive ICT Strategy creating a prioritised programme of ICT work to support the delivery of West Lancashire Borough Council's business objectives.

Additionally the following initiatives have been implemented in conjunction with the Business Relationship Management team:

- Established monthly user groups providing a productive forum for both ICT Services and West Lancashire Borough Council staff
- Appointment of a dedicated member of staff, to provide a single point of contact and to manage all active RFPs
- Delivery of ICT Strategy Planning Workshops, promoting collaborative working and clarification of business requirements and objectives.

## 5 2014/2015 Revenues and Benefits Review

The total cost of the Service in 2014/2015 was £1.980 million giving a guaranteed recurring saving of £332k pa to West Lancashire Borough Council. These savings are in addition to the recurring savings of £169k delivered in 2011/2012, £323k delivered in 2012/2013 and £328k delivered in 2013/2014.

In addition to the delivered saving of £332k (in 2014/2015), other financial benefits have been gained by West Lancashire Borough Council through the delivery of the Revenues and Benefits Service by BT Lancashire Services most notably a significant improvement in Revenues collection and arrears reduction when compared to the previous financial year.

### Performance

The agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA) comprises, in total, **seven** performance indicators covering the Service. In the case of one of the performance indicators – Benefits Fraud Sanctions and Prosecutions – the target was suspended for the year. All **seven** indicators are contractual. West Lancashire Borough Council requested that data is also provided for the average time to process benefits new claims and change of circumstance; volumes of complaints received and payment of creditor invoices on time.

No.	Definition of SLA	Target	2014/2015 Performance Year to Date
1	NI 181 – Average time to process all items	12 days	<b>6.62</b>
2	Overpayment Recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments (payments received)	£170K p.a.	<b>£203,868</b>
3	Benefit Fraud Sanctions & Prosecutions	Target suspended	<b>45</b>
4	Benefits Local Authority Error Overpayments – Lower Threshold YTD based on Initial Estimate for 2013/2014	Below £139,235	<b>£86,090</b>

**Table 6: Benefits Service Contractual Performance Targets 2014/2015**



No.	Definition of SLA	Target	2014/2015 Performance Year to Date
5	Council Tax Collection Rate Current Year (BVP19)	97.10%	<b>96.03%</b>
6	Council Tax Previous Years Arrears	24.50%	<b>33.56%</b>
7	NNDR Collection Rate Current Year	97.20%	<b>96.40%</b>
8	Sundry Debtors	89.10%	<b>90.73%</b>

**Table 7: Revenues Service Contractual Performance Targets 2014/2015**

## Service Delivery Chronology

During 2014-15, the team has focused on a range of activities and initiatives aimed at delivering overall and sustainable improvements to all elements of the Revenues and Benefits Service. The view of the BTLS RBS management was that at the end of the previous year the service was not delivering to the Councils priorities. Our key objectives for 2014-15 included addressing those priorities for the service – specifically, from a Revenues perspective, collection and arrears reduction and for Benefits, timely and accurate claim management. In addition, a further objective was to introduce a culture of effective stakeholder engagement underpinned by collaborative and strong working relationships. A final key objective was to introduce more effective governance and communications arrangements with our people – to address a negative perception in this respect.

The following is a brief summary of RBS service delivery activity during 2014-15:

- **2014-15 Local Tax billing:** We started the year with a successful 2014-15 Local Tax billing exercise – all bills for Council Tax and NNDR were dispatched within the timescales required to enable collection of the New Year's charges. This ensured that a primary Council objective of Local Tax collection got off to a very positive start and the next immediate priority was to ensure a sustainable and structured approach to collection and arrears reduction – something that had not been achieved the previous year. The collection and reduction of Council Tax arrears was identified as a problem that required specific attention and it was agreed that it was in the best interests of all to adopt a more holistic approach to this activity. The approach has produced positive overall results and a significant improvement on the previous year. More details of this are provided in the next section of this paper – Performance Summary.
- **Staff Engagement:** During the early part of the year, the transition of the service to BTLS was underway. It was evident that a significant culture change from the previous regime was required to address the view from our people that they were not being listened to. The

transition was successfully completed in May and the first tangible test of how staff were feeling was the initial staff survey in June 2014. It was evident from the low participation rate (24%) and the general feedback that there were issues and it was important to understand what these were and do something about them. Generally communications with staff needed to be improved and initiatives were introduced including quarterly Staff Information Days and a Staff Forum which initially met monthly. Evidently such initiatives had a positive impact and the outcomes of the December 2014 Staff Survey were much improved – 70% participation and better overall results. Some concerns remained relating to communications such as Team Briefs and 121's but these will be addressed as a part of the implementation of ISO9001 Quality Management during 2015-16.

- **Technology Migration:** Also in May 2014 a major project was mobilised to migrate the RBS technology platform from Liverpool to Lancashire. From an operational perspective there was a real need for this to happen due to the change in partnership from One Connect Limited to BT Lancashire Services and the associated separation from LDL, it was essential that, the WLBC BTLS Revenues and Benefits service became fully independent and self-sufficient. We worked very closely with our ICT colleagues to produce a plan for migrating the platform and introducing a fit for purpose local technology solution within a short timescale. As a result of joint working and collaboration between RBS and ICT staff, this was achieved by October 2014 and most importantly from a service delivery perspective, it was achieved with limited negative impact on performance.
- **Welfare Reforms:** The Governments Welfare Reforms programme continued to be a major feature of our work programme during 2014-15. The roll out of Universal Credit (UC) has been the "headline" activity for the majority of the year – the pivotal point of this activity was the roll-out of UC in West Lancs in September 2014. Key to the success of the roll-out was the establishment of a cross-organisation Task Group which included representation from WLBC, BTLS RBS, the local Job Centre and also Lancashire County Council – an excellent example of joined-up working. As anticipated the impact of UC locally in terms of claimant numbers has been low although there was clear evidence of a growing cohort towards the end of the year – as at March 2015 there were almost 600 UC claimants in West Lancs. Members and senior Council Managers have been provided with periodic updates as the impact of UC grows.

The Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) has also been an increasing priority during the latter part of the year – DWP confirmed their intentions in relation to the timing of transfer of work and resource to SFIS. Priority was given to staff engagement and involvement in the transition activity and WLBC HR have taken a key role in this activity.

With regard to the other elements of Welfare Reform, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and Social Sector Size Criteria (SSSC) have had most impact from an operational/service delivery perspective. DHP's have been managed well in collaboration with colleagues from the

Councils Housing Service – in particular spend in relation to grant funding. With regard to SSSC, the key issue during the year was a change in legislation to address a "loophole" in the administration of such cases. This change was managed effectively and in particular, the appropriate customer communication arrangements were implemented.

- **Internal and External Audit:** It was established early in the year that the previous working arrangements between RBS and both internal and external audit had not worked for either party. Initial engagement with both the WLBC Head of Audit and also the external audit lead identified the need for more collaborative working arrangements to ensure that the audit work could be carried out within required timescales and at times that worked operationally for the Service. A plan was jointly produced and agreed which addressed these objectives and all audit work was completed on schedule and with minimal impact on service delivery. Generally the outturns from the audit work have been positive and the WLBC Head of Service was able to report that "...Internal and external audit work has identified significant and sustained improvements in the accuracy of benefit processing.."
- **Financial Liaison:** As with the audit work, activity described generically as Financial Liaison was not working for either the Council or RBS. This activity includes the collection, consolidation and provision of RBS-related data required by the Council to enable and/or support the submission of key financial returns. Initial engagement with the Borough Treasurer identified a need for more collaborative working arrangements and a plan was jointly agreed to deliver such information in an accurate and timely way. This has resulted in much improved working arrangements
- **Web Site Review and Update:** Another key activity from the Work Programme was to address issues with those elements of the Councils web site specifically relating to RBS. In addition to the need to re-brand all documentation due to the transfer of the business to BTLs, it was also established that many of the documents were out of date and required a re-fresh and up-date. Working closely with the Councils web team the opportunity was taken to carry out a thorough review of all documentation and the position is now much improved. There were some issues raised in a recent SOCITIM exercise but they have also now been resolved.
- **2014-15 Year End and 2015-16 Local Tax Billing:** Finally, having had a good start to the year in terms of the 2014-15 Local Tax billing, we also managed to finish well with a successful 2015-16 billing. This is a particular highlight as it was the first time that this key exercise was completed without external support. This was a real achievement and again a great example of joint working with our ICT colleagues – which, together with the technology migration project earlier in the year, resulted in an internal BTLs award for Team of the Year.

## Performance Summary

The headline position in relation to performance is that all areas for RBS have improved when compared with the previous year – overall a positive outcome.

For the Benefits and Sundry Debtors/Creditors teams, all performance indicators were ahead of target at the end of the year. Significantly – and linking back to the Councils priority relating to accuracy – the Benefits Local Authority Error (LAE) outturn was the best it has been for a number of years. This is particularly important considering what occurred with this measure in 2012-13 resulting in potential loss in subsidy.

In terms of Revenues, it has been regularly reported that the Council Tax Support (CTS) scheme has had an impact on Council Tax collection – typically the collection rate for CTS accounts has been around 25% lower than non-CTS accounts. However the factor that has had the greatest impact on Local Tax collection and arrears reduction during 2014-15 has been the identification of an issue with Council Tax arrears and, to a lesser extent, NNDR arrears.

A detailed analysis of previous years debt, a significant proportion of which precedes the One Connect/BTLS contracts, was carried out and a summary of the findings was presented to senior WLBC managers together with a proposed action plan. This plan incorporated active pursuance of debt where it was considered appropriate and viable together with a strategy for write-offs – again where considered appropriate. It was agreed at that time that more emphasis and focus on previous arrears collection/reduction was the right approach and would result in a better overall outcome

This approach resulted in the position in relation to arrears reduction significantly improving during the latter part of the year but there was a corresponding negative movement in relation to current collection during that period.

However, despite the downturn in the collection of current Council Tax, the overall year-end outturn for the 3 x Revenues SLA measurements - current Council Tax collection, previous years Council Tax collection and current NNDR collection - was very positive and resulted in an improvement in Local Tax collection and arrears reduction of almost £3.7m – summarised below:

<b>Local Tax collection and arrears reduction – comparative data – March 2014 – March 2015</b>			
	<b>March 2014 (£m)</b>	<b>March 2015 (£m)</b>	<b>Improvement (£m)</b>
Council Tax current	£48,389,388	£50,100,527	£1,711,139
Council Tax previous	£1,046,967	£2,214,279	£1,167,312
NNDR current	£29,939,018	£30,759,209	£820,191
<b>Local Tax Total</b>	<b>£79,375,373</b>	<b>£83,074,015</b>	<b>£3,698,642</b>

In summary and building in a factor for "NNDR Previous", in addition to the 2014-15 figures providing a positive position when compared to last year's outturns, they also show that the overall collection and arrears reduction compares favourably against target. This is summarised in the table below:

<b>WLBC / BTLS RBS Overview of Comparative Collection and Arrears Reduction - 2014-15</b>				
	<b>2014-15</b>			
	<b>Target</b>		<b>Actual</b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>£</b>
Council Tax current (CTC)	97.1	£50,691,231	96.03	£50,100,527
Council Tax previous (CTP)	24.5	£1,616,310	33.56	£2,214,279
NNDR current (NNDRC)	97.2	£31,116,371	96.4	£30,759,209
<b>Sub total</b>		<b>£83,423,912</b>		<b>£83,074,015</b>
NNDR previous (NNDRP)	24.5	£1,021,157	32.84	£1,368,716
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£84,445,069</b>		<b>£84,442,731</b>

## Key Highlights

To summarise the highlights for the Revenues and Benefits service for 2014-15:

- An increase in the total amount of revenue collection and arrears reduction - £90m of revenue collected in total
- Successful technology-related projects and effective joint working with our ICT colleagues – platform migration and year end/2015-16 billing.
- Excellent cross organisational joint working to plan, prepare and manage the impact of Welfare Reforms and in particular UC go-live.
- Improved staff engagement and communications including Staff Information Days and Staff Forum leading to improved staff survey results.
- Positive feedback from the Council in terms of improved levels of performance. .
- Overall, an improvement in all SLA's when compared to the previous year – more revenue collected, local tax arrears reduced and improved levels of accuracy particularly in Benefit-related work.

## 6 Quality

We have made a commitment to place quality at the core of the business. BT Lancashire Services maintain or is working towards of a number of management systems to align our organisation to a number of national and international standards. These provide a proven business improvement framework and a robust mechanism for achieving excellence.

### ISO 9001 Quality Management System

ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems is the internationally recognised standard for the quality management of businesses. It focuses on processes which control the delivery of products and services and ensures that customer needs and expectations are met. It gives a clear demonstration of commitment to quality. The ICT Service successfully achieved certification to the standard in June 2012. We are externally audited at six monthly intervals and last year were re-accredited in June 2014 and December 2014. It is our aim for the Revenues and Benefits Service to be included in the scope by mid-2015.

### ISO 27001 ICT Information Security Systems

ISO 27001 aims to ensure that adequate controls are in place to address the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information. The standard is designed to ensure the selection of adequate and proportionate security controls, which help the organisation to protect its information assets and gives confidence to any interested parties.

As part of BT Lancashire Services' overall strategy to demonstrate a commitment to client security, and to ensure that security is embedded deep into the culture of the organisation, in 2014/2015 BTLs established a security team within ICT Services, tasked with ensuring that the organisation aligns with industry best practice. To achieve this the team have instigated the following actions:

- Update and further development of a full range of ICT security policies, to ensure ICT staff have comprehensive and up to date security guidance available to enable them to carry out their roles
- Review and enhance ICT security incident reporting procedures, to enhance the information on the number and nature of incidents and to track these to conclusion
- To review the way in which security risks are assessed to ensure that robust decisions are made on how to remove or mitigate such risks

## ISO 20000 IT Service Management Systems

ISO 20000 is the first worldwide standard specifically aimed at IT Service Management. It describes an integrated set of IT service management system processes for the effective delivery of services to the business and its customers. It is aligned to the approach defined within the IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) from The Office of Government Commerce (OGC). BTLS is committed to delivering its ICT services in line with best practise guidelines of ISO 20000; we undertook changes to some of our key internal ICT processes in 2014/15 to more closely align to the standard and will continue this improvement activity through 2015/2016.