

To: POLICY & RESOURCES (FINANCE) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: CHARTER MARK PROGRESS REPORT
From: DIRECTOR OF FINANCE		
Date: 15 October 2002	Ref: TC/CC/RTC263	

**1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the improvements and changes that have taken place within Cash Collection as result of the Chartermark work being carried out.

**2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The Council is committed to achieving Chartermark status to provide quality services and achieve Best Value in all its operations, particularly throughout the Cash Offices.

**3.0 Improve access and communication**

- 3.1 Improved access to Cash Collection for disabled customers. All 10 Cash Offices will have a disabled access public counter, work has commenced in the Motherwell Cash Office and will be rolled out to all of the other offices.
- 3.2 To assist customers with hearing difficulties a Loop System has been introduced at each Cash Office to enable all customers to transact business without hindrance.
- 3.3 Special needs posters have been written in conjunction with the Plain English Campaign have been introduced together with a Cash Office and Municipal Bank Information and Advice leaflet which has received the Crystalmark award.
- 3.4 All current notices and posters used within the Cash Offices are being reviewed and rationalised to provide clearer information and instructions for the customer.

#### **4.0 Improved procedures**

- 4.1 In order to ensure consistent practice over all the Cash Offices procedure manuals have been updated and will be distributed in the Intranet to ensure any changes in processes are quickly and accurately notified to all Cash staff.
- 4.2 As a result of a customer survey carried out in March 2002 an improved queuing system has been introduced at some Cash Offices in a bid to achieve a targeted waiting time of less than 5 minutes. Monthly information relating to waiting times is displayed in all offices to assist the customer in making use of our services during times which better suit them.
- 4.3 Alternative methods for payment of bills have been introduced to provide better customer service and to meet the Scottish Executive Modernising Government initiative. These methods include :
  - Payment Hotline
  - Paypoint
  - Paperless Direct Debit
  - Post office Payment
  - Debit / Credit payments at cash offices

#### **5.0 Staff Training & Awareness**

- 5.1 Staff from each Cash Office have attended a Royal National Institute for the Deaf awareness course to ensure customers with special hearing needs are catered for.
- 5.2 Disability Awareness training which has been prioritised to front line staff is being scheduled throughout the coming year.
- 5.3 Cash Collection staff will be trained by December 2002 in the use of the Language Line Scheme which will ensure customers with limited use of the English language can receive assistance and advice when required.
- 5.4 Training has also been provided to all Cash Office staff in Customer Care to ensure all people are treated fairly, respecting their privacy and dignity at all times when they visit a North Lanarkshire Council Collection Office.
- 5.5 To ensure each member of staff is equipped to deal with difficult situations all Cash employees have been trained in personal safety by Group Four.

#### **6.0 Comments & Complaints Procedures**

- 6.1 A Points of View suggestion scheme has been introduced in each reception area to encourage our customers to become involved and comment on our services. A customers comments book is also used in each office to record all verbal comments and suggestions made by our customers in person or by telephone.
- 6.2 The existing Comments and Complaints Policy is currently being reviewed with a view to reducing the response times to the complainant and improving the overall service.

**7.0 Corporate Image Update**

**7.1 Uniforms**

To portray a more professional corporate image all cash staff have been provided with uniforms and name badges which will make them easily identifiable to our customers.

**7.2 Signs / Notices**

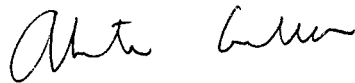
The location of each Cash Office and opening times is printed on the back of all Council Tax bills, shown on the NLC Website and clearly displayed on the outside of each building.

**8.0 Recommendations**

Members are asked to note the progress made to date within the Cash Collection Service.

**9.0 Department Contact**

Any enquiries regarding the report can be made to Mr T Cartwright, Income Manager, Ext 2802.



**Director of Finance**