

REVENUES AND HOUSING BENEFITS PERFORMANCE 2017/18

Cabinet Member Cllr Peter Hare-Scott
Responsible Officer Andrew Jarrett – Director of Finance, Assets & Resources

Reason for Report: To report on Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and Housing Benefit performance for 2017/18.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the Report be noted.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: In line with good practice and value for money. Poor performing services can have a detrimental effect on the well being of the community.

Financial Implications: Maintaining a good in year collection rate for Council Tax and Business Rates is essential to cash flow management, to ensure that the Billing Authority meets all our own commitments and our commitments to precepting authorities. We must also ensure benefit payments are made in an accurate and timely manner to avoid loss of subsidy.

Legal Implications: No issues.

Risk Assessment: Low cash flow collection could result in the Authority not achieving its financial income targets. Poor performance and increased demand on the Benefit service could have significant impact on the income of the Authority.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The commentary below gives an overview of the performance of the Revenues and Housing Benefits Services in 2017/18.

2.0 Overview

- 2.1 2017/18 saw some minor changes to our Council Tax Reduction Scheme, a slight relaxing in some of the preceptors ability to increase their share of the Council Tax and a delay in the local roll-out of Universal Credit. These challenges have been well managed within these two service areas and we still have seen excellent levels of performance regarding both collection levels and speed of response times.

3.0 Revenues performance in 2017/18

- 3.1 The Revenues team has successfully managed to maintain a high collection rate on both Council Tax and Business Rates in 2017/18 and continue to

investigate more electronic processes to further streamline operations, these measures include e-billing and increasing direct debit customers.

- 3.2 Table 1 below gives Members an overview of the amount collected during the financial year for both Council Tax and Business Rates.

Table 1 – Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates

	2016/17	Collection Rate	2017/18	Collection Rate
Council Tax Collected inc arrears	£47.3m	98.1%	£49.7m	98.0%
Council Tax net Arrears – from previous year	£1.782m		£2.006m	
Business Rates Collected inc arrears	£15.9m	99.2%	£13.8m	99.2%
Business rates net Arrears – from previous year	£0.217m		£0.157m	

Note – collection rate figures rounded to 1 decimal place.

4.0 Housing Benefit Performance in 2017/18

- 4.1 The Housing Benefit Team continues to perform well in terms of payment times against national comparative data. This is really encouraging when taking account the continued pressures of welfare reform changes, the volume of work required to prepare for the roll-out of Universal Credit (UC) and dealing with the Local Welfare Assistance scheme.

Speed of Processing

- 4.2 The 2017/18 average time for processing new claims was 15.75 days and changes of circumstance (CoC) was 6.5 days. Both of these times are well below national averages of 21 days and 9 days respectively (based on data upto Q3). This places our processing performance in the top quartile nationally.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YEAR
NEW	15	16	17	15	15.75
CoC	9	9	5	3	6.5

For information purposes processing times for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims were 17.3 days for new claims and 6.3 days for CoC's.

Caseload

- 4.3 The numbers of Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Reduction (CTR) claims have both fallen from the levels experienced in 2016/17. This is partially down to new single person claims being dealt with under UC by the DWP.

16/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
HB	4,038	3,943	3,890	3,868
CTR	4,435	4,363	4,301	4,251

Total Housing Benefit paid to date

- 4.4 The table below shows the total sum of Housing Benefit paid during 2017/18.

17/18	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
£ million	4.8	9.9	14.1	17.8

Note – The above shown figures are cumulative.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 Both teams have continued to perform well despite the extra pressures being placed on them as a direct consequence of Central Government imposed legislation.

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Peter Hare-Scott and Management Team