

CABINET
15 JUNE 2017

REVENUES AND HOUSING BENEFITS PERFORMANCE 2016/17

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 2016/17.

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 2016/17.

2.0 Overview

2.1 Although the Revenues and Housing Benefits Teams are operating in challenging times, against a backdrop of continuing welfare reforms, with the threat of more to come and there is still the uncertainty of exactly how the full roll-out of Universal Credit will impact on the organisation, their level of performance during the last 12 months has been very good.

3.0 Revenues performance in 2016/17

3.1 The Revenues team has successfully achieved an improved collection rate on both Council Tax and Business Rates in 2016/17 and are now investigating more electronic processes to further streamline operations, these measures include e-billing and increasing direct debit customers. This reflects very strong team performance during the year.

- 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

	2015/16	Collection Rate	2016/17	Collection Rate
Council Tax Collected inc arrears	£45.3m	98.1%	£47.3m	98.1%
Council Tax net Arrears – from previous year	£1.702m		£1.782m	
Business Rates Collected inc arrears	£15.9m	99.1%	£15.9m	99.2%
Business rates net Arrears – from previous year	£0.287m		£0.217m	

Note – collection figures rounded to 1 decimal place (CT 98.07% in 15/16 and 98.10% in 16/17 and for BR 99.10% in 15/16 and 99.18% in 16/17).

4.0 Housing Benefit Performance in 2016/17

- 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 pending roll-out to a full Universal Credit (UC) service, dealing with the Local Welfare Assistance scheme and the loss of experienced officers who are now harder to recruit to these roles as circa 50% of our current caseload to the DWP.

Speed of Processing

- 4.2 The 2015/16 average time for processing new claims was 14.2 days and changes of circumstance (CoC) was 6.9 days. Both of these times are below national averages of 21 days and 9 days respectively. This places our processing performance in the top quartile nationally.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YEAR
NEW	14.9	13.4	14.2	14.2	14.2
CoC	7.3	9.2	7.4	4.6	6.9

For information purposes processing times for Council Tax Reductions (CTR) were 16.0 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 2015/16. This is partially down to new single person claims being dealt with under UC by the DWP.

16/17	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
HB	4,186	4,134	4,067	4,060
CTR	4,694	4,679	4,640	4,647

Total Housing Benefit paid to date

- 4.4 The table below shows the total sum of Housing Benefit paid during 2016/17.

14/15	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
£ million	5.1	9.5	13.7	18.1

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