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**To:** Finance and Resources Policy Board

**On:** 11 November 2015

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**Report by:** Director of Finance and Resources

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**Heading: BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION – WELFARE  
REFORM AND PERFORMANCE STATEMENT**

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**1. Summary**

- 1.1. This report details the processing performance in relation to Housing Benefit and the Scottish Welfare Fund, as at the end of September 2015. The report provides an update on the funding and expenditure position in relation to Discretionary Housing Payments and the Scottish Welfare Fund.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Finance and Resources Board note the content of this report.
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**3. Background**

**3.1 Service Information**

- 3.1.1 The Service continues to successfully balance a significant work load along with managing the impact of the ongoing effect from the welfare reform agenda.

### 3.2 Speed of Processing – Housing/Council Tax Benefit

3.2.1 As detailed in Table 1 below, processing speed for New Claims remains well within target. In relation to New Claims processed within 14 days of all information received, this measure is also within target for the period and year to date.

3.2.2 Processing of Changes in Circumstance (CIC) is within target for the period and year to date.

*(Supplementary processing information is attached in Appendix 1 for member's reference)*

**Table 1 – Performance Summary**

<b>Performance measure</b>	<b>4 Week Reporting Period 7 August 2015 to 10 September 2015</b>	<b>Year to date position</b>	<b>Annual Target</b>
New Claims – processing time	22.43 days	22.10 days	24 days
New Claims - % processed within 14 days of all information received	93.22%	94.14%	92%
Changes in Circumstance – processing time	8.93 days	5.78 days	10 days

### 3.3 Discretionary Housing Payments

3.3.1 The total budget for Discretionary Housing Payments is shown in table 2 below. The budget position has been adjusted to reflect the additional resources of £180,000 provided by the Council, approved at the Finance and Resources Board on 26 August 2015

3.3.2 Members may wish to note the application and award details shown in table 3 below. The table shows a larger proportion of decisions made compared with application volumes. This effect is due to the process put in place by the Service this year that; customers affected by the bedroom tax do not have to reapply for a DHP if they had made an application last year.

3.3.4 The Service will continue to carefully monitor all DHP expenditure. It is anticipated that the entire budget including the recent supplement provided by the Council will be exhausted by the end of the financial year.

**Table 2 – DHP Budget**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>amount</b>
DWP	£366,294
Scottish Government	£1,532,060
Renfrewshire Council	£180,000
<b>Total budget for the year</b>	<b>£2,078,354</b>

**Table 3 – DHP Performance Summary**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015</b>
Volume of DHP applications received	1,178 applications
Volume of DHP decisions made	2,283 decisions
Number of DHP awards	2,070 awards (1,990 customers)
Average processing time (target 29 days)	18.06 days
<b>Total amount committed/paid</b>	<b>£1,195,962</b>

### **3.4 The Scottish Welfare Fund**

- 3.4.1 The Service had spent/committed 47% of its total budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) by the end of September 2015, this equates to 52% of the funding provided by Scottish Government.
- 3.4.2 The performance data relating to the fund is presented in table 4 below. The table has been updated to reflect the budget position, to include the additional resources of £100,000 provided by the Council, approved at the Finance and Resources Board on 26 August 2015
- 3.4.3
- 3.4.4 The Service continues to make awards in 2015/16, in line with Scottish Government guidance. Due to the budgetary position, the service is continuing to make awards for “high” priority applications only.
- 3.4.3 The Service will continue to monitor all SWF expenditure and anticipates that the full budget will be exhausted by year end.

**Table 4 – SWF Performance Summary**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015</b>
Number of Crisis Grant applications received	4,123
Number of Crisis Grant Awards	3,485
<b>Total amount paid for Crisis Grants</b>	<b>£225,212</b>
<b>Average Processing time (2 working days target)</b>	<b>1 day</b>
Number of Community Care Grant applications received	1,095
Number of Community Care Grant Awards	737
<b>Total amount paid for Community Care Grant</b>	<b>£368,419</b>
<b>Average processing time (15 working days target)</b>	<b>10 Days</b>
<b>Total amount paid/committed from the fund</b>	<b>£ 593,621</b>
<b>Funding from Scottish Government</b>	<b>£1,148,857</b>
<b>Amount carried forward **</b>	<b>£19,400</b>
<b>Funding from Renfrewshire Council</b>	<b>£100,000</b>
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>£1,268,257</b>

\*Note that figures are adjusted each month to reflect awards previously made, but not fulfilled.

\*\* amount carried forward from 2014/15 to cover applications received in 2014/15 but not processed by the financial year end

## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - an efficient, effective Benefit Service assists council tenants meet their financial obligations in terms of rent and council tax and ensures overpayments are minimised and DWP subsidy maximised
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None
3. **Community Planning** –  
**Community Care, Health & Well-being** – An effective Benefits service is vital to the quality of life of many of our citizens as it provides vital support for low income households in order to sustain tenancies and meet their rent obligations
4. **Legal** – None
5. **Property/Assets** – None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights**- The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required, following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - None
9. **Procurement** - None
10. **Risk** - None
11. **Privacy Impact** - None.

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# Housing Benefit Statement – Appendix

## Supplementary KPIs – Finance & Resources Policy Board

### APPEALS

Where a claimant disputes a Benefits decision and also disputes a revision decision they can formally make an Appeal. The Benefits Service will prepare a detailed submission which is then considered by the Independent Tribunals Service. Preparation of a submission is a very involved process and requires significant data gathering.

Target processing speed (number of days)	60		
Result: last 3 months (days)	July: 98 days	August: 48 days	Sept: 56 days
Average (12 months to date)	54 days		
Average Appeals Completed (12 months to date)	9 Appeals per month		

**Comment:-**

The Service continues to manage Appeals processing and has recovered following the short term dip in performance during July.

### REVISIONS

Where a claimant disputes a benefits decision in the first instance they can request for it to be looked at again. This is known as a Revision. The process involves a Senior Benefit Assessor reviewing the decision thoroughly to decide whether the decision should stand.

Target	28 days		
Result last report	May: 29	June: 23	July: 24
Result Last 3 months	July: 24	August: 34	September: 28

**Comment:-** The service continues to process Revisions within target, recovering from a short term dip in performance in August due to the summer holiday period.

### ACCURACY

The Service proactively monitors the accuracy of benefits decisions made through a robust audit checking programme. The Service targets to audit 3% of all calculations and measures the percentage where correct benefit has been paid to the customer

	Target %	Actual %
Volume of Audits	3%	13%
Accuracy – September 15	95%	94.16%
Accuracy – Year to Date	95%	95.56%

**Comment:-**

The Service has set a stretching target for Accuracy this year and is achieving this year to date.

### Overpayments

The value of overpayments reported at the last board was £5,758,728, the current value is £6,415,538. Levels are increasing due to the ongoing receipt of real time information from HMRC which has resulted in changes in circumstances identified, not reported directly by customers.

	Target %	Actual %
% recovery of debt raised	73%	68.2%
14/15: % recovery of debt raised	n/a	72.9%

**Comment:-**

The Service is slightly behind target on recovery but anticipates that the target will be achieved.