

To: Finance and Resources Policy Board

On: 15 March 2017

Report by: Director of Finance and Resources

Heading: Customer & Business Services Performance Report

1. Summary

1.1 This report details performance across key Customer & Business Service (CBS) functions including revenue collection and benefit administration for the period ending 31 January 2017 (including an update on the funding and expenditure position in relation to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and the Scottish Welfare Fund). It also provides a performance update in relation to customer services provision for the same period.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Board consider the content of the report.

3. Revenue Collection

3.1 Council Tax

3.1.1 This section details the collection performance as at 28th January 2017 for Council Tax. It also provides details of the total sums collected for the last year.

3.1.2 The billable sum for 2016/17 is £69,880,552

3.1.3 The Council Tax Reduction awarded is £12,129,593 amounting to 14.79% of the billable sum, which is 0.76% less than at the same point last year.

3.1.4 The sums collected to date for 2016/17 are at a similar level compared with the same point last year, amounting to £64,787,568 which is 92.71% of the billable sum.

3.2 **Non Domestic Rates**

3.2.1 This section details the collection performance as at 28th January 2017 for Non Domestic Rates (NDR). It also provides details of the total sums collected for the last year.

3.2.2 The Non Domestic Rates (NDR) charges billed for 2016/17 amount to £102,384,919.

3.2.3 The cash receipts to date amount to £90,458,784 which is 88.35% of the sums billed. This is a decrease in cash collection as a proportion of net charges billed of 1.39% compared with the same position for 2015/16. This is an improved position from the last reporting cycle when the figure was 1.71%.

3.2.4 The Service tracks NDR receipts closely. Where appropriate and in line with the recovery process the Service will proactively target businesses for payment.

4. **Benefit administration**

4.1. This section details the processing performance in relation to Housing Benefit and the Scottish Welfare Fund, as at the end of January 2017. Also provided is an update on the funding and expenditure position in relation to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and the Scottish Welfare Fund.

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

4.3 **Speed of Processing – Housing/Council Tax Benefit**

4.3.1 As detailed in Table 1 below, processing speed for New Claims is out of target for the period. This delay in processing is due to the two week festive closure of the Council. Resources have been deployed to ensure affected claims have been prioritised. The year to date position remains ahead of target and the Service anticipates that New Claims processing will be on target again in February.

In relation to New Claims processed within 14 days of all information received, this measure is within target for the period and year to date.

4.3.2 Processing of Changes in Circumstance (CIC) slightly out of target for the period, the year to date position remains ahead of target.

(Supplementary processing information is attached in Appendix 2 for members' reference)

Table 1 – Performance Summary

Performance measure	6 Week Reporting Period 2 December 2016 to 12 January 2017	Year to date position	Annual Target
New Claims – processing time	27 days	23 days	24 days
New Claims - % processed within 14 days of all information received	93%	93%	92%
Changes in Circumstance – processing time	11 days	6 days	10 days

4.4 Discretionary Housing Payments

4.4.1 The total budget for Discretionary Housing Payments is shown in table 2 below.

4.4.2 The DHP budget has been calculated to include the full Scottish Government estimate of the amount of funding required to fully mitigate the effect of the Bedroom Tax. This estimate includes a 20% reserve allocation which would be paid in May 2017, if required. In line with DHP Policy and DHP Regulations, the Service makes awards to fully mitigate the effect of the Bedroom Tax and will maximise spend within the year.

4.4.3 An amount of £147,863 (included within the total budget figure in table 2 below) is funding allocated by the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) for other types of financial hardship (not Bedroom Tax.)

4.4.4 Resources of £250,000, approved by the Finance and Resources Policy Board on 24 August 2016 have been added to the DHP budget, shown in table 2 below. These funds were allocated to support customers affected by new Benefit Cap thresholds which were applied by the UK Government and affected customers in Renfrewshire from mid November 2016.

4.4.5 In addition to providing support following the impact of the Benefit Cap, the additional funds provided by the Council will help those experiencing ongoing financial hardship as a result of wider austerity measures implemented by the UK Government.

Table 2 – DHP Budget

Funding Source	amount
DWP	£425,050
Renfrewshire Council	£250,000
Scottish Government*	£1,522,925
Total budget for the year	£2,197,975

*This figure represents the maximum amount required to cover the estimated shortfall of customers impacted by the Bedroom Tax.

Table 3 – DHP Performance Summary

Measure	1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017
Volume of DHP applications received	5,567 applications
Volume of DHP decisions made	5,469 decisions
Number of DHP awards	5,066 awards
Average processing time (target 29 days)	11 days
Total amount committed/paid	£2,045,775

4.5 The Scottish Welfare Fund

4.5.1 The Service continued to make awards in 2016/17, in line with Scottish Government guidance and had spent/committed 79% of its total budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) by the end of January 2017.

4.5.2 The performance data relating to the Fund is presented in table 4 below. The Service processed Community Care Grants well within target for the month and as a result the year to date position has improved slightly since the last report.*

*The year to date position is an average across the year and the position has improved by half a day (0.5 days) since the last report

Table 4 – SWF Performance Summary

Measure	1 April 2016 to 31 January 2017
Number of Crisis Grant applications received	6,898
Number of Crisis Grant Awards	5,490
Total amount paid for Crisis Grants	£382,359
Average Processing time (2 working days target)	1 day
Average Processing time (within month)	1 day
Number of Community Care Grant applications received	1,533
Number of Community Care Grant Awards	1,671
Total amount paid for Community Care Grant	£610,277
Average processing time year to date (15 working days target)	17 days
Average processing time (within month)	11 days
Total amount paid/committed from the fund	£992,635
Total Budget	£1,259,893

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

5. Customer Service Provision

5.1 This section details the performance of the customer service unit for the period 1st to 31st January 2017. The report provides an update on the overall contact centre call handling response times as well as face to face response times across the three customer service locations in Paisley, Renfrew and Johnstone

5.2 Telephone Call handling

5.2.1 The period immediately following the Christmas shutdown is historically the busiest time of year for the Customer Contact Centre.

5.2.2 The Contact Centre received 30,308 calls and answered 94% against a primary target of 90% for the period.

5.2.3 Following the initial increased demand at the start of the month, from Monday 16th January, 97% of all calls were answered from that date to the end of the period.

Table 5 – Customer Service Unit – Primary Target (call handling)

Primary target	Year	January	Year to date
90% calls answered	2017	94%	89%
	2016	80%	87%

5.2.4 The secondary target is to respond to 70% of all calls within 40 seconds

Table 6 – Customer Service Unit – Secondary Target (call handling)

Secondary target	Year	January	Year to date
70% calls in 40 seconds	2017	59%	48%
	2016	26%	43%

5.2.5 The performance against the secondary target for January was below target due to the increased demand following the end of the festive period. The service recovered performance by Monday 16th January with 70% of all calls answered in 40 seconds from that date to the end of the period.

5.3 Face to face provision

5.3.1 The primary target for Face to Face customer service is to ensure average wait time for all customer visits is below 20 minutes. The table below outlines the performance for the period across all Customer Service locations.

5.3.2 The service received 4,322 customer visits in the period and continues to deal with these customers within target performance.

Table 7 – Customer Service Unit – Primary Target (Face to Face)

Location	Year	January	Year to Date
Paisley	2017	14:19	16:32
	2016	16:21	16:10
Renfrew	2017	07:43	10:15
	2016	07:11	06:52
Johnstone	2017	13:00	14:57
	2016	12:48	14:27

5.4 Factors impacting performance in the period

5.4.1 January is historically a busy month, with the first day of business following the festive holiday period the busiest day of the year. This year was no exception with 2,548 calls received on Thursday 5th January. As noted above, the service recovered performance levels by Monday 16th January.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – The level of collection of Local Taxation continues to provide funding for the delivery of Council services throughout Renfrewshire.

2. **HR & Organisational Development** - None

3. **Community Planning** - None

Empowering our Communities – The collection of Local taxes through electronic payments (e.g. Direct Debit, Website and Telephone) is increasing and provides an extensive range of payment opportunities for the public.

Jobs and the Economy – An efficient and effective billing and administrative process is vital in ensuring the recovery of income to the council in order to support the provision of local services.

4. **Legal** – None

5. **Property/Assets** – None

6. **Information Technology** - None

7. **Equality & Human Rights** - None

8. **Health & Safety** None

9. **Procurement** – None

10. **Risk** - None

11. **Privacy Impact** – None

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Appendix 1

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

REVENUES COLLECTION STATEMENT AS AT 28TH January 2017

COUNCIL TAX	2015/16	2016/17
	£m	£m
Projected Yield	77.434	78.511
Gross Charges	80.484	82.010
Less rebates	12.531	12.130
Net Charges Billed	<u>67.953</u>	<u>69.881</u>
Cash Collected	64.805	64.788
Rebate Grant	12.531	12.130
	<u>77.336</u>	<u>76.918</u>
Cash collected as % of Net Charges	95.37%	92.71%
Income as % of Projected Yield	99.87%	97.97%

NON DOMESTIC RATES	2015/16	2016/17
	£m	£m
Projected Yield	92.715	100.337
Gross Charges	115.13	120.314
Less reliefs	20.523	17.929
Net Charges Billed	<u>94.607</u>	<u>102.385</u>
Cash Collected	91.758	90.459
Cash collected as % of Net Charges	96.99%	88.35%
Cash collected as % of Projected Yield	98.97%	90.16%

Customer & Business Services Performance Report – Appendix 2

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)	Nov: 44 days	Dec: 69 days	Jan: 64 days
Average (12 months to date)	41 days		
Average Appeals Completed	7 Appeals per month		

Comment:-

Due to the complexity of the small number of Appeals received in January target was missed. The position has improved since the last reporting cycle.

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	October: 37	November: 28	December: 31
Result Last 3 months	November: 28	December: 31	January: 36

Comment:- The service missed target processing time for Revisions in January, this delay in processing is due to the two week festive closure of the Council, the Service is aiming to recover the position in February.

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. The actual level of checking for this reporting period is higher due to a number of new staff joining the Benefits team and therefore requiring 100% of their work to be checked.

	Target %	Actual %
Volume of Audits	3%	24%
Accuracy – January 17	95%	93%
Accuracy – Year to Date	95%	92%

Comment:- The Service has set a stretching target for Accuracy and this has been narrowly missed for this reporting period. The Service has identified an area of common error and carried out some refresher training. A much higher level of checking has been carried during this period because a number of new benefit assessors have been recruited.