
To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 6 June 2018

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 31st July 2018 (including an update on the funding and expenditure position in relation to Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) and the Scottish Welfare Fund). This report 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 contents of the report.
-

3. **Revenue Collection**

3.1 **Council Tax**

- 3.1.1 This section details the collection performance as at 28th July 2018 for Council Tax. It also provides details of the total sums collected for the previous year.
- 3.1.2 The billable sum for 2018/19 is £77,767,476
- 3.1.3 The sums collected to date for 2018/19 are £32,533,020 which is 41.83% of the billable sum. This is broadly the same level of cash collection as a proportion of net charges billed compared with the same position for 2017/18.

3.1.4 The Council Tax Reduction awarded is £12,550,760 amounting to 13.90% of the billable sum, which is 0.37% less than at the same point last year.

3.1.5 The Service continues to undertake work to address the reduction in CTR applications. Activities include close tracking of potential applications, data matching and the use of visiting officers to maximise Council Tax Reduction awards.

3.2 Non Domestic Rates

3.2.1 This section details the collection performance as at 28th July 2018 for Non Domestic Rates (NDR). It also provides details of the total sums collected for the previous year.

3.2.2 The Non Domestic Rates (NDR) charges billed for 2018/19 amount to £132,298,931.

3.2.3 The cash receipts to date amount to £37,847,126 which is 28.61% of the sums billed. This is a decrease in cash collection as a proportion of net charges billed of 4.05% compared with the same position for 2017/18.

3.2.4 The reasons for the decrease in collection percentage are two-fold. Firstly, delayed payments from two large customers and secondly, and more significantly the impact of organisations appealing against the rateable value (RV) attributed to their business property by Renfrewshire Valuation Joint Board (RVJB) as part of the revaluation exercise is having an impact. Where following appeal to RVJB, the appeal results in a significant rateable value reduction, this leads to reductions in collection percentage. The current collection percentage reflects the impact of a significant RV reduction for a major account.

3.2.5 The Service tracks NDR receipts closely. Where appropriate and in line with the recovery process the Service will proactively target businesses for payment. NDR collection is at an early stage for 2018/19 and it is expected that the position will be recovered over the remainder of the financial year.

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 April 2018. 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 UK Government's 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 well within target for the period.
- 4.3.2 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.
- 4.3.3 Processing of Changes in Circumstance (CIC) is within target for the period, the year to date position remained ahead of target.

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

Table 1 – Performance Summary

Performance measure	4 Week Reporting Period 15 June 2018 to 12 July 2018	Year to date position	Annual Target
New Claims – processing time	21 days	21 days	24 days
New Claims - % processed within 14 days of all information received	98%	96%	92%
Changes in Circumstance – processing time	8 days	7 days	10 days

4.4 Discretionary Housing Payments

- 4.4.1 The total budget for Discretionary Housing Payments for 2018/19 is shown in table 2 below.
- 4.4.2 Funding for DHP was previously provided to Local Authorities by the Department for Work and Pensions, following the new social security powers devolved to the Scottish Government, DHP funding is now provided entirely by them. The total budget is detailed in table 2 below and shows the indicative spending split provided to the Council.
- 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 will be paid in May 2019, if required.
- 4.4.3 In line with DHP Policy and DHP Regulations, the Service makes awards to fully mitigate the effect of the Bedroom Tax and maximise spend within the year.
- 4.4.4 Table 3 shows the performance information in relation to DHPs. The table shows that processing time in relation to DHP is within target.

- 4.4.5 Award levels have been altered in line with a lower overall budget than last year when the Board agreed to supplement the DHP budget by £120K. The Service anticipates that even with the reduction in award levels not all applications will result in an award and is currently analysing spend year to date and is reviewing current projections to support member consideration of a fund top up resource allocation as part of a wider package of support for customers as they transition to Universal Credit.

Table 2 – DHP Budget

Funding – indicative allocations	amount
Financial Hardship (non Benefit Cap)	£99,384
Financial Hardship (Benefit Cap)	£186,847
Bedroom Tax*	£1,940,786
Total budget for the year	£2,227,017

*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 2018 to 31 July 2018
Volume of DHP applications received	4,061 applications
Volume of DHP decisions made	4,006 decisions
Number of DHP awards	3,907 awards
Average processing time (target 29 days)	9 days
Total amount committed/paid	£1,996,182

4.5 The Scottish Welfare Fund

- 4.5.1 The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) provides a safety net for vulnerable people on low incomes through the provision of Community Care Grants and Crisis Grants. The Scottish Welfare Fund is a national scheme, underpinned by law and delivered on behalf of the Scottish Government by all local councils. The SWF replaced elements of the Social Fund abolished by the Department for Work and Pensions in 2013.

- 4.5.2 The Service makes awards in 2018/19 in line with Scottish Government guidance and had spent 33.64% of its total budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) by the end of July 2018. The Service is currently analysing spend year to date is and reviewing current projections in light of Universal Credit Full Service go live on 19 September 2018 to support member consideration of a fund top up resource allocation as part of a wider package of support for customers as they transition to Universal Credit.
- 4.5.2 The performance data relating to the Fund is presented in table 4 below. The Service has processed Crisis and Community Care Grants well within target for the month.

Table 4 – SWF Performance Summary

Measure	1 April 2018 to 31 July 2018
Number of Crisis Grant applications received	3,001
Number of Crisis Grant Awards	2,376
Total amount paid for Crisis Grants	£166,515
Average Processing time (2 working days target)	1 day
Average Processing time (within month)	1 day
Number of Community Care Grant applications received	674
Number of Community Care Grant Awards	435
Total amount paid for Community Care Grant	£227,926
Average processing time year to date (15 working days target)	13 days
Average processing time (within month)	12 days
Total amount paid/committed from the fund	£394,441
Total Budget	£1,172,473

5. Customer Service Provision

- 5.1 This section details the performance of the Customer Service Unit for July 2018 and the year to date position from 1st April to 31st July 2018. 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 High level monthly summary – in July the contact centre received 35,360 calls and answered 95% against a primary target of 90% for the period.

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

Primary target	Year	July - Calls Received	July - % Answered	Year to Date – Calls Received	Year to Date - % Answered
90% calls answered	2018	35,360	95%	128,674	96%
	2017	28,289	92%	119,040	96%

5.2.3 The contact centre is currently exceeding the primary target of answering 90% of all calls. This was achieved when the overall demand increased by 7,071 (25%) calls for the month of July and a 9,634 (8%) overall for the year to date position.

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

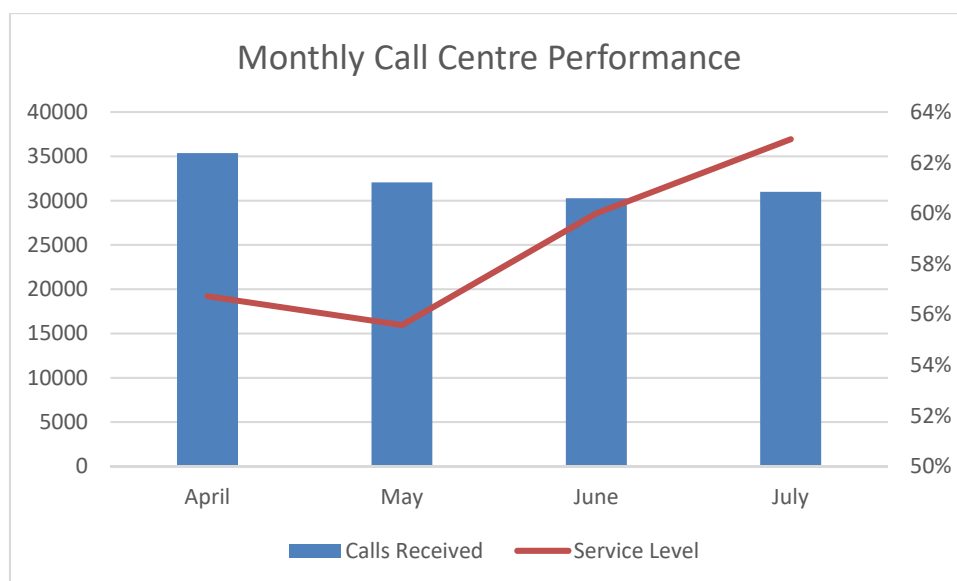
Table 6 – Customer Service Unit – Secondary Target (call handling)

Secondary target	Year	July	Year to date
70% calls in 40 seconds	2018	63%	60%
	2017	66%	68%

5.2.5 The contact centre was below target for the month of July, mainly due to an increase in calls relating to Free School Meals and Clothing Grants, Stinging Insects and Gas Safety Checks as Development and Housing Services conducted a programme to re-align the annual servicing of boilers to the summer months.

5.2.6 Members are reminded that a new contact centre call management system was implemented in April and this required significant management focus over several weeks to ensure continuity of service for our customers and support the training of staff to handle calls effectively.

5.2.7 While the transition to the new ways of working had an impact on the overall service level at the start of the financial year, performance continues to recover with the first week in August seeing a return to a service level above the 70% target.



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 20:00 minutes. The table below outlines the performance for the period across all Customer Service locations.

5.3.2 The service received 3,923 customer visits in the period and continues to deal with these customers within target performance. This is compared to 3,758 visits for the same period last year. All locations continue to achieve target for face to face customer service visits.

5.3.3 Year to date, the customer service centre has supported 15,411 customers within the performance target. The volume of customers is in line with the same period last year.

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

Location	Year	July	Year to Date
Paisley	2018	13:55	17:53
	2017	14:31	14:43
Renfrew	2018	05:51	05:55
	2017	01:49	04:40
Johnstone	2018	12:55	11:15
	2017	12:32	11:48

5.4 Factors impacting performance in the period

5.4.1 The service level for the contact centre was below the target of 70% of calls answered in 40 seconds. The key factors during the month which caused this are outlined below.

- The contact centre experienced a 25% increase in demand compare to last year which is mainly attributed to normal seasonal activity; Free School Meals, Clothing Grants, recycling, special uplifts and enquiries relating to removal of stinging insects.
- This year Building Services also completed a coordinated programme to re-align annual gas safety checks to the summer months which makes resources available in winter months to deal with heating and hot water issues, this resulted in a 40% increase in Gas Safety calls to the contact centre.

5.5 Contact Centre Performance Comparison

5.5.1 A review of contact centre performance has been undertaken to understand how performance levels compare to other councils and a selection of companies in the private sector.

5.5.2 Renfrewshire has two challenging targets for the call centre operation; answer 90% of all calls and answer 70% of calls within 40 seconds.

5.5.3 We approached our telephony partner (BT) to gain insight into how private sector organisations set contact centre targets, and it appears the time to answer within service level in Renfrewshire is more challenging than others. Organisations are moving to a % of calls answered in 60 seconds compared to the 40 seconds at Renfrewshire. The % of calls answered in the 60 second target varies from 70% and 90% depending on the nature of the calls.

5.5.4 Also, in comparison to neighbouring Local Authorities (outlined in the table below), some have already moved to a single % answered target, others have no specific targets however both Lanarkshire authorities are working towards more challenging target than Renfrewshire's current targets. Table 8 below outlines the performance targets for neighbouring Local Authorities.

Authority	Call Centre Target
Glasgow	Answer 90% of calls
North Lanarkshire	Answer 80% of calls in 20 seconds
East Renfrewshire	Answer 85% of calls
South Lanarkshire	Answer 90% of all calls and Answer 70% of calls in 30 seconds
East Dunbartonshire	No target – report on % of calls answered in 120 seconds
Inverclyde	No target – report on volumes only.

5.5.5 Members are asked to note the challenging nature of the 40 second threshold in the secondary target for Renfrewshire and note how this compares to current industry standards. Members are also asked to note that performance against the primary target continues to exceed not only the Council's, but also that of all other neighbouring authorities' targets.

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/Council Planning –**
 - Our Renfrewshire is fair - 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 to sustain tenancies and meet their rent obligations
 - Working together to improve outcomes - An efficient and effective billing and administrative process for the collection of local taxes is vital for ensuring the recovery of income to the council to support the provision of local services. This is supported by a range of payment opportunities for the public, including electronic and digital payments (e.g. Direct Debit, Website and Telephone).
 - Working together to improve outcomes – An efficient and effective Customer Service Unit is vital to ensuring citizens have equality of access to Council services whether this is digitally, by telephone or face to face
4. **Legal** - None
5. **Property/Assets** - None
6. **Information Technology** - None
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - The Recommendation contained within this report has been considered in relation to its 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 because it is for consideration of performance only.
8. **Health & Safety** - None

- 9. **Procurement** – None
- 10. **Risk** - None
- 11. **Privacy Impact** – None
- 12. **Cosla Policy Position** – None

List of Background Papers

- (a) None

Author: **Rhona McGrath, Head of Customer & Business Services, Ext 6879**

Appendix 1

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

REVENUES COLLECTION STATEMENT AS AT 28TH July 2018

COUNCIL TAX		
	2017/18	2018/19
	£m	£m
Projected Yield	82.043	85.957
Gross Charges	86.246	90.318
Less rebates	12.166	12.551
Net Charges Billed	<u>74.080</u>	<u>77.767</u>
Cash Collected	70.694	32.533
Rebate Grant	12.166	12.551
	<u>82.860</u>	<u>45.084</u>
Cash collected as % of Net Charges	95.43%	41.83%
Income as % of Projected Yield	101.00%	52.45%

NON DOMESTIC RATES		
	2017/18	2018/19
	£m	£m
Projected Yield	123.744	129.653
Gross Charges	146.153	151.319
Less reliefs	19.884	19.020
Net Charges Billed	<u>126.269</u>	<u>132.299</u>
Cash Collected	123.191	37.847
Cash collected as % of Net Charges	97.56%	28.61%
Cash collected as % of Projected Yield	99.55%	29.19%

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	60		
Result: last 3 months (days)	May: 53 days	June: 31 days	July: 25 days
Average (12 months to date)	40 days		
Average Appeals Completed	7 Appeals per month		

Comment:- Appeals have been processed well within target over the period.

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	Feb: 38	March: 44	April: 50
Result Last 3 months	May: 35	June: 26	July: 28

Comment:- Revisions have been processed within target for the 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. 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%	7%
Accuracy – July 18	95%	91%
Accuracy – Year to Date	95%	91%

Comment:- The Service has set a stretching target for Accuracy and is slightly behind for the period, audit outcomes are analysed for trends and patterns and takes action to revise guidance/provide additional training where required.

OVERPAYMENTS

	Target %	Actual %
17/18: % recovery of debt raised	73%	76.77%
18/19: % recovery of debt raised	73%	100.81%

Comment:- The value of overpayments reported at the last Board was £7,460,758, the current value is £7,458,475. The amount of overpayments collected is higher than the same point last year, at the same time new debt raised is lower.