

To: Finance, Resources and Customer Services Policy Board

On: 14 November 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 30 September 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.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board consider the contents of the report.
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3. Revenue Collection

3.1 Council Tax

- 3.1.1 This section details the collection performance as at 28th September 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 £77,766,151
- 3.1.3 The sums collected to date for 2018/19 are £46,866,045 which is 60.27% of the billable sum. This is the same level of cash collection as a proportion of net charges billed compared with the same point in 2017/18.

3.1.4 The Council Tax Reduction awarded is £12,514,094 amounting to 13.86% of the billable sum, which is 0.33% less than at the same point last year. 3.1.5

3.1.5 The Service continues to work to address the reduction in applications referred above. 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 September 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 £130,955,278.

3.2.3 The cash receipts to date amount to £67,309,200 which is 51.40% of the sums billed. This is an increase in cash collection as a proportion of net charges billed of 0.13% compared with the same position for 2017/18.

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 September 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, including Universal Credit Full Service Roll out which commenced in Renfrewshire on 18 September 2018.

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 10 August 2018 to 13 September 2018	Year to date position	Annual Target
New Claims – processing time	20 days	21 days	24 days
New Claims - % processed within 14 days of all information received	97%	96%	92%
Changes in Circumstance – processing time	10 days	9 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 (SG), DHP funding is now provided entirely by SG. 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 Table 2 below has been updated to reflect the additional £140,000 of resources approved by the Council's Leadership Board on 19 September 2018
- 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.

Table 2 – DHP Budget

Funding – indicative allocations	amount
Financial Hardship (non Benefit Cap) – Scottish Government	£99,384
Financial Hardship (Benefit Cap) – Scottish Government	£186,847
Bedroom Tax* – Scottish Government	£1,940,786
Financial Hardship – Renfrewshire Council	£140,000
Total budget for the year	£2,367,017

*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 30 September 2018
Volume of DHP applications received	4,621 applications
Volume of DHP decisions made	4,625 decisions
Number of DHP awards	4,418 awards
Average processing time (target 29 days)	10 days
Total amount committed/paid	£2,092,355

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 Table 4 below has been updated to reflect the additional £48,000 of resources approved by the Council's Leadership Board on 19 September 2018 in anticipation of increased demand following the commencement of Universal Credit Full Service.
- 4.5.3 The Service makes awards in 2018/19 in line with Scottish Government guidance and had spent 46.32% of its total budget for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) by the end of September 2018.

- 4.5.4 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 30 September 2018
Number of Crisis Grant applications received	4,336
Number of Crisis Grant Awards	3,425
Total amount paid for Crisis Grants	£240,457
Average Processing time (2 working days target)	1 day
Average Processing time (within month)	1 day
Number of Community Care Grant applications received	979
Number of Community Care Grant Awards	618
Total amount paid for Community Care Grant	£324,874
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	£565,331
Budget provided by Scottish Government	£1,172,473
Additional Council Resources	£48,000
Total Budget	£1,220,473

5. Customer Service Provision

- 5.1 This section details the performance of the customer service unit for September 2018 and the year to date position from 1st April to 30th September 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 September the contact centre received 25,747 calls and answered 96% against a primary target of 90% for the period.

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

Primary target	Year	September - Calls Received	September - % Answered	Year to Date – Calls Received	Year to Date - % Answered
90% calls answered	2018	25,747	96%	185,866	97%
	2017	27,913	95%	179,719	96%

5.2.3 The contact centre is currently exceeding the primary target of answering 90% of all calls.

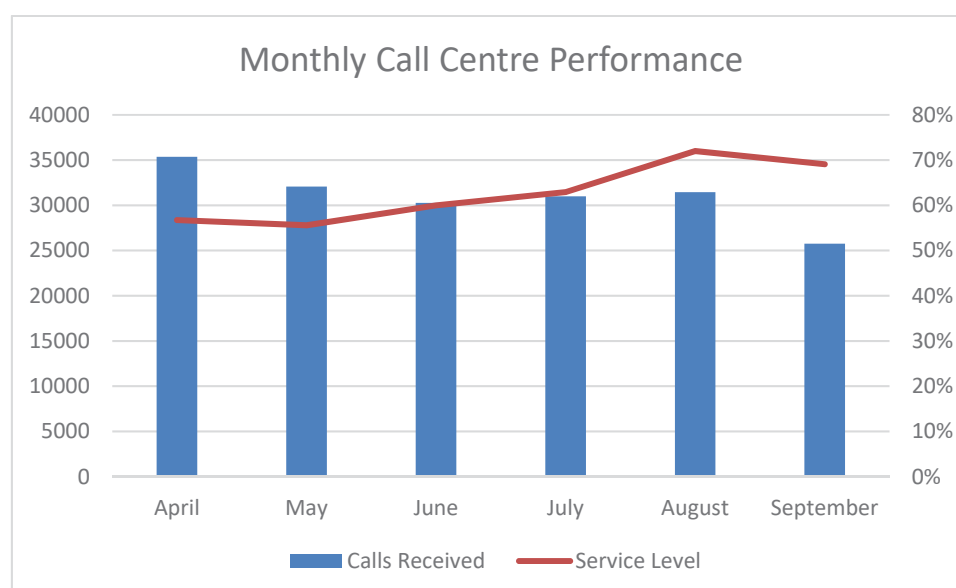
5.2.4 The secondary target is to respond to 70% of all calls within 40 seconds

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

Secondary target	Year	September	Year to date
70% calls in 40 seconds	2018	69%	62%
	2017	65%	66%

5.2.5 The contact centre was marginally below target for the month of September, mainly due to the public holiday weekend which typically resulted in an increased demand during the last week of the month.

Members are reminded that a new contact centre call management system was implemented at the end of April which had an impact on the year to date performance compared to last year. By August, the service had recovered and was achieving target, with 72% of calls answered within 40 seconds.



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 3,524 customer visits in September and continues to deal with these customers within target performance. This is compared to 3,833 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 23,025 customers within the performance target. The volume of customers is broadly in line with the same period last year.

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

Location	Year	September	Year to Date
Paisley	2018	15:49	16:53
	2017	16:14	16:09
Renfrew	2018	06:47	06:12
	2017	07:31	05:42
Johnstone	2018	11:19	11:23
	2017	11:54	11:43

5.4 Factors impacting performance in the period

The service level for the contact centre was below the target of 70% of calls answered in 40 seconds. The key factor which caused this was the September Weekend public holiday.

The contact centre was achieving target of 70% for the month on Thursday 20th September, however the increased demand immediately after the long weekend holiday reduced the overall performance level to 69% by the end of the month.

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

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Appendix 1

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

REVENUES COLLECTION STATEMENT AS AT 28TH September 2018

COUNCIL TAX	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m
Projected Yield	82.043	85.957
Gross Charges	86.207	90.280
Less rebates	12.144	12.514
Net Charges Billed	<u>74.063</u>	<u>77.766</u>
Cash Collected	70.805	46.866
Rebate Grant	12.144	12.514
	<u>82.949</u>	<u>59.380</u>
Cash collected as % of Net Charges	95.60%	60.27%
Income as % of Projected Yield	101.10%	69.08%

NON-DOMESTIC RATES	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m
Projected Yield	123.578	128.336
Gross Charges	146.049	151.138
Less reliefs	19.949	20.183
Net Charges Billed	<u>126.100</u>	<u>130.955</u>
Cash Collected	122.807	67.309
Cash collected as % of Net Charges	97.39%	51.40%
Cash collected as % of Projected Yield	99.38%	52.45%

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)	July: 25 days	August: 21 days	September: 33
Average (12 months to date)	42 days		
Average Appeals Completed	6 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	May: 35	June: 26	July: 28
Result Last 3 months	July: 28	August: 29	September: 23

Comment:- The service missed target processing time for Revisions due to year end activity, the outstanding volume of Revisions is significantly lower than last year therefore the Service aims to be back within target by the next reporting period.

ACCURACY

The Service proactively monitors the accuracy of benefits decisions made through a robust audit checking programme. The Service targets to audit 4% 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	4%	17%
Accuracy – September 18	95%	88%
Accuracy – Year to Date	95%	89%

Comment:- The Service has set a stretching target for Accuracy, during the period new employees had taken up benefit assessment roles and as a result this has affected the overall accuracy. Focussed training and support remains ongoing for new team members.

OVERPAYMENTS

	Target %	Actual %
17/18: % recovery of debt raised	73%	76.77%
18/19: % recovery of debt raised	73%	89.05%

Comment:- The value of overpayments reported at the last Board was £7,458,475, the current value is £7,433,821. The collection percentage was boosted by targeted action for recovery of overpayments from ongoing Housing Benefit during April.