

# Revenues Service Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter 1 2008/09

## Introduction

With the abolition of Best Value Performance Indicators and introduction of National Indicators there is a significant change to the requirement for the Council to report on the performance of the Revenues and Benefits service.

The Council will, however, still be required to report on many former Revenues Services BVPIs through statistical returns (e.g. revenue collection rates) and for the most part the former BVPIs are considered to be valuable indicators of performance and therefore will continue to be reported to Portfolio Holder. The BVPI reference number have been retained as a convenient way of maintaining continuity of performance reporting.

A small number of former BVPIs are not considered to add value to the performance management process and will no longer be compiled - these are indicated in the commentary.

## Economic Climate

The current economic climate does not appear to be affecting revenue collection since collection rates for the 1st Quarter show improvements on the same period last year.

### 1. Council Tax Collection

Council Tax current year collection is 0.1% ahead of the same time last year and on track to meet the target of 99.1%.

Pervious years' arrears collection is lower than at the same time last year. The arrears at 1/4/08 were £1.2m compared to £1.4m at 1/4/07 and consequently a higher proportion of debts are from those categories that are most difficult to collect.

### 2. Non-Domestic Rates

Collection is currently 0.4% ahead of last year, however it is not anticipated that this will result in any overall increase in collection rate at the end of the year due to the already very high level of performance (99.8%). First quarter figures indicate that collection performance for SCDC has not been adversely affected by the changes to empty property rate charges.

### 3. Rent Collection

Rent collection is 0.7% ahead of the same time last year and it is anticipated that the collection target will be met.

At 3.7% the number of tenants more than 7 weeks in arrears at the end of quarter 1 is marginally above target, however it is anticipated that the year end target will be met.

The % of tenants in arrears receiving Notices of Seeking Possession is on target at 5.2%.

Only 1 tenant has been evicted for rent arrears and it is expected that the target of 0% will be met.

## **4. Benefits Performance**

### **4.1 Benefits Processing**

There has been a significant change to the measurement of Housing and Council Tax Benefit performance with the introduction of two National Indicators to measure a) the number of changes to entitlement, and b) the average time taken to process new claims and changes to entitlement.

In addition to the new National Indicator 181, the average time to process new claims and changes in entitlement will continue to be reported separately for comparison purposes.

BVPI79a Accuracy of Processing - this is no longer reported since compilation of the indicator required one off sampling of 125 cases per quarter which was a time consuming and resource intensive process. A quality check of 10% of all assessments continues to be conducted and discontinuance of the quarterly sample is not considered to reduce the effectiveness of quality control processes.

Performance for new claims shows an improvement on the same period last year, but this has been achieved at the expense of some deterioration in performance in processing changes of circumstances. Remedial action is being taken to improve average timescale for processing changes of circumstances, however, a sudden serious illness has reduced processing capacity by 11% and is a cause for concern. Short-term measures are being taken to prevent performance deteriorating (overtime and agency employee) but additional temporary resources are likely to be required if performance is to be maintained.

### **4.2 Benefit Overpayment Recovery**

Collection rates for overpaid benefit have improved on last year and year end targets are expected to be met.

### **4.3 Counter Fraud Activity**

Performance Measure 10 (number of reductions in benefit entitlement) has now been subsumed into NI 180 and is no longer reported.

BVPI76b - Number of Fraud Investigators per 1,000 claims remains static at 0.16 and is no longer reported.

The number of investigation conducted is expected to exceed that for the last financial year.

Whilst the number of sanction imposed per 1,000 claims in the first quarter is low at 1.14, a number of further prosecutions are in progress and it is anticipated that performance will recover over the remainder of the year.

In view of recent media interest in the use of surveillance powers by local authorities an additional item has been added to the report to show the number of instances in which surveillance has been used in connection with benefit fraud investigations.

## **5. Sundry Debt Collection**

Collection performance is on target.

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