

Revenues Service Quarterly Performance Report - Quarter1 2009/10

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

Economic Climate

The current economic climate continues adversely affected non-domestic rate collection. We have issued guidance and application forms for the Government's deferral scheme which allows ratepayers to defer paying part of any increase from last year's charge. We are unsure as yet what the response will be. There will also shortly be a Small Business Rate Relief take up campaign. So far the Council Tax Collection Rate has not been affected.

1. Council Tax Collection

Current in year collection is 30.9% compared with 30.7% at this time last year

2. Non-Domestic Rates

Current in year collection is 34.2% compared with 34.1% at this time last year. The number of staff on the team has been reduced by 50% while recruitment is underway. A temporary member of staff will start on 17/08/09

3. Rent Collection

2009/10 collection rate for current tenants at week 17 is 95.19% compared with 95.37% at this stage last year. This is slightly down due to the extra work involved in the reductions imposed on the Rent increases. This is confirmed by the fact that the number of tenants more than 7 weeks in arrears has increased from 217 to 475 (4.7%). New monitoring methods have been introduced to review the biggest 25 debts every 2 weeks and a random review of 20 further cases in arrears.

4. Benefits Performance

4.1 Benefits Processing

The Council has set a target of 13 days for National Indicator 181, which measures the average number of days taken to process new claims and changes to Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit entitlement. In order to meet this target the Benefits Service aims to process new claims within 20 days and changes of circumstance within 8 days.

The current economic recession is resulting in increasing numbers of claims for all types of benefit as the number of people unemployed or on reduced income. The numbers of claims for benefit have increased by 30% compared with 2008/9 this has affected processing times which peaked in May at an average processing time of 32 days, performance has improved and processing time year to date average is now 28.48 days.

4.2 Benefit Overpayment Recovery

Collection rates for overpaid benefit are slightly down compared with same time last year, this will be monitored to ensure that year end targets can be met.

4.3 Counter Fraud Activity

The number of fraud referrals received has increased by 6% compared to last year, and consequently the number of investigations conducted also exceed those for the last financial year.

The number of sanctions imposed is considerable higher than both 2007/8 and 2008/9 . The numbers of cautions and administrative penalties issued are also higher than in the previous year. The increased workload in evaluating the additional number of referrals has also reduced the resources available to conduct investigations.

5. Sundry Debt Collection

The current percentage of invoices in arrears is 21% compared to 22% at this time last year. July being the first month this year that the figure is less than last year. The total outstanding is £672,115

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