

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder

21 April 2015

**LEAD OFFICER:** Executive Director Corporate Services

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### Revenues Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter 3: October - December 2014

#### Purpose

1. To review and report on the current performance of the Revenues & Benefits Section using statistical information and further explanation where required.
2. This is not a key decision, however, the Revenues and Benefits team report quarterly on its performance.

#### Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio Holder note the current performance information for the Revenues and Benefits Team provided in this report.

#### Reasons for Recommendations

4. The Revenues and Benefits teams have continued to deliver to the high standard expected. The increasing number of properties within the district brings with it an increase in workload and a demand for services across all of the teams. The teams have also been providing a supporting role to the Contact Centre, taking calls from customers during peak times in order to minimise call waiting times for customers. Despite these pressures, the teams continue to demonstrate strong performance and provide a value for money service to our residents.

#### Background

5. With the abolition of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) and introduction of National Indicators (NIs) there is a significant change to the requirement for the Council to report on the performance of the Revenues and Benefits service.
6. 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.

#### Considerations

7. The Revenues and Benefits teams have continued to demonstrate strong performance through quarter three of 2014. In addition to the pressure to deliver to a consistently high standard of customer service through their administration and collection functions, the teams have also been under added pressure as they have been providing assistance to the Contact Centre, taking telephone calls from customers during peak times. This support has been instrumental in reducing call

waiting times for customers, and the teams have managed to juggle the conflicting priorities successfully to minimise the impact on the administrative services.

8. As at the third quarter of 2014/15, Council Tax collection remains on target with 87.9% collected, compared to 88.1% for the same period last year. In cash terms the amount collected was £81.3m, compared to £78.7m within the same period of the previous year.
9. The collection rate for Business Rates as at the end of the December 2014 was 87%, compared to 91.1% for the same period of 2013/14. The amount collected was £60.9m, compared to £62.2m for the previous year. However, this is no longer a true comparison, being the first year where customers can opt to spread their instalments over twelve months instead of ten. The impact of this is being carefully monitored, and the forecasts show that we are still on track to meet our collection target of 99%.
10. I am also reporting quarterly on the numbers of business properties, those not in use, and the total Rateable Value within South Cambridgeshire. Appendix A contains a visual representation of these figures showing the trends, and a breakdown by property type is shown in Appendix B.

Year	Period	Total Rateable Properties	Total Unoccupied Properties	Total RV (£)
2012/13	Q1	4417	537	176232799
	Q2	4431	551	175286464
	Q3	4448	555	175907084
	Q4	4459	567	174835864
2013/14	Q1	4453	547	174655404
	Q2	4525	530	174331290
	Q3	4560	490	174458360
	Q4	4566	472	174141793
2014/15	Q1	4586	459	173544088
	Q2	4635	459	174291013
	Q3	4661	482	174576048

11. Rent collection as at the end of December 2014 stands at 97.9%, a slight reduction on last years' figure of 98.2% for the same period. The arrears outstanding were £431k, an increase of £94k since the start of the financial year, despite rent and charges of over £20m being raised during the same period.
12. Sundry Debtor performance has improved in comparison with previous year figures, with 6.2% of invoices in arrears at the end of quarter 3, compared to 8.9% for the same period last year. In monetary terms, this equates to £338k in arrears from invoices totalling £5.4m
13. Housing Benefit and Council Support performance for processing of claims and changes remains strong.
14. The average processing times for New Claims at the end of Quarter 3 is 17.6 days (20 days target). It is expected that new claims processing times will be higher for Quarter 4 but target for New Claims of 20 days will be achieved.
15. The processing time for changes to benefit at the end of Quarter 3 is 12.59 days (12 Days Target). It is expected that change of circumstances processing times at the end of quarter 4 will at or around the target of 12 days.

16. The performance of overpayments recovery is in the main on target. These indicators can be unpredictable as these indicators include overpayments created but performance is strong. Performance for Quarter 3 :-

- HB overpayments recovered compared to overpayment created in year  
**2014/15** 101.14% £885,893 collected **2013/14** 108.75% £888,072 collected  
Target is 125%
- HB overpayment recovery compared to total outstanding for all years  
**2014/15** 36.29 % collected **2013/14** 39.86  
Target is 61.4%
- Overpayments Written off  
**2014/15** 1.22% **2013/14** 1.40%  
Target is 5%

17. The Fraud team have now transferred to the DWP's Single Fraud Investigation Service from 1 March 2015. The number of successful investigations up to and including Quarter 3 was 119 which exceeded the target of 100 cases annually.

18. There were 13 fraud sanctions for Quarter3 including 3 prosecutions.

19. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) requests continued to be at a higher rate than last year despite the reduction in benefit caseload.

Expenditure Q3 2014/15 (Grant £149,992) Year to Date £131,064  
Q3 2013/14 (Grant £151,251) Year to Date £112,009

The expenditure is higher than 2013/14 with more awards this year being used to enable residents to move to more affordable accommodation.. It is likely that DHP expenditure will exceed the grant payment and some HRA funding will be used.

### **Implications**

20. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

### **Financial**

21. Targets relate to revenue collection and will ensure that the Council's budgeted income is received.

### **Legal**

22. The Council has a legal duty to deliver the service in accordance with Billing, Enforcement and Benefit legislation

### **Risk Management**

23. Failure to maintain high collection rates could have an adverse effect on the Council's budget requirements.

### **Equality and Diversity**

24. We ensure that revenue collection and benefits administration are delivered in a fair and consistent manner to all members of the community. Partial EQIA's have been carried out on our Billing & Collection policy, Benefit Administration and Fraud Prevention Policy without any adverse impact

## Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

25. None

### Effect on Strategic Aims

#### **Aim 1 - We Listen to and engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money**

26. Maintain financial resilience whilst channelling our resources to create opportunities for investment, sustainable borrowing and economic growth

#### **Aim 2 - We will work with partners to create opportunities for employment, enterprise, education and world leading innovation**

27. Continue an effective approach to enforcement to target residents' problems whilst effectively supporting local businesses

### Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

No Background Papers

**Report Author:** Katie Brown – Revenues Manager  
Telephone: (01954) 713335

Dawn Graham – Benefits Manager  
Telephone: (01954) 713085