

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder

21 July 2015

LEAD OFFICER: Alex Colyer, Executive Director Corporate Services

Revenues Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter 4: January - March 2015

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 once again demonstrated their commitment to delivering a high performing, value for money service to residents. The teams have faced many challenges throughout the year, from the increased workload and ongoing impact from welfare reform, to operational changes in the way that we respond to customer telephone calls. Despite the increased demands, all members of the Revenues and Benefits teams have pulled together to embrace new ways of

working and their efforts are demonstrated in the performance information within this report.

8. The end of year Council Tax collection rate for 2014/15 was 99.25%, exceeding the target set of 99.1% and close to the previous year's figure of 99.3%. The net payments collected totalled £97.7m, compared to £88.7m in 2013/14.
9. Non-Domestic rates also performed very well, with an end of year collection rate of 99.4%, an improvement on the previous year's performance of 98.7%. In monetary terms, the net cash collected was £69.9m, compared to £68m in 2013/14.
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
2014/15	Q4	4682	453	175043343

11. Performance in Rent collection was very strong, with a final collection rate of 98.83%, compared to 98.84% for the previous year. In terms of rent not collected, at the end of March 2015 rent arrears were £328k, compared to £317k for the previous year. This is an increase of just £11,000, despite charges of £28m being raised.
12. Sundry Debtor performance has improved in comparison with previous year figures, with just 2.6% of invoices in arrears at the end the financial year, compared to 3.4% for the same period last year. In monetary terms, this equates to £207k in arrears from invoices totalling £7.8m
13. Housing Benefit and Council Support performance for processing has been strong for 2014/15 with new claims processed times averaging at 19.03 days compared to target of 20 days. Change of Circumstances processing times averaged at 12.17 days compared to target of 12.00 days.
14. The combined New claims and Changes performance is recorded at 14.96 days this indicator is not longer required by DWP and will not be recorded for 2015/16. The number of days to process includes all calendar days and is recorded from the date of form or notification of change is received being to date processed with all relevant documentation.
15. The performance of overpayments recovery is difficult to predict as amount of overpayment to collect is not a static figure and is constantly changing. This can be demonstrated where despite collecting more cash in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14 but percentage of collection was down.

Performance for 2014/15:-

- HB overpayments recovered compared to overpayment created in year
2014/15 105.28% £1,253,054 collected
2013/14 111.93% £1,174,298 collected
Target is 125%
- HB overpayment recovery compared to total outstanding for all years
2014/15 45.47% collected
2013/14 47.73% collected
Target is 61.4%
- Overpayments Written off
2014/15 3.36 % £92,528
2013/14 3.29 % £80,875
Target is 5% (Maximum) the write off figures include a significant number of residents where debts have been written off as a result of a Debt Relief Order (DRO)

16. The Fraud team have been transferred to DWP following the responsibility for Housing Benefit fraud investigations being transferred to DWP's Single Fraud Investigation Service from 1 March 2015 and fraud investigations were wound up at the start of February 2015 to enable the planned transfer.
17. The total number successful investigation at the transfer date (1 March 2015) was 119 target for 2014/15 100 successful investigations
18. The total number of fraud sanctions for 2014/15 was 38 including 9 successful prosecutions.
19. Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) there were 558 applications for support and 278 residents received DHP awards ; including 22 residents where removal costs have been paid to enable a moves to a smaller more sustainable properties. The number of applications was slightly less that 2015/16 when 609 applications were received

Expenditure £155,971 2014/15 (Grant £149,992)
£169,337 2013/14 (Grant £151,251)

The additional expenditure has been funded from HRA account; it is expected that some HRA funding will be continued for 2015/16 which will be enable us continue to support residents who financially are in the most need.

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

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