

SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE

Monday, 17 September 2018

2.00 pm

**Committee Room 1 - City
Hall**

- Membership: Councillors Ray Cucksey (North Kesteven District Council), Rosanne Kirk, Ric Metcalfe (City of Lincoln Council) and John Money (North Kesteven District Council)
- Substitute members: Councillors Peter Burley (North Kesteven District Council), Sue Howe (North Kesteven District Council), Donald Nannestad (City of Lincoln Council) and Fay Smith (City of Lincoln Council)
- Officers attending: Democratic Services (City of Lincoln Council), Jaclyn Gibson (City of Lincoln Council), Philip Roberts (North Kesteven District Council), Claire Moses (City of Lincoln Council), Russell Stone (North Kesteven District Council) and Martin Walmsley (City of Lincoln Council)

A G E N D A

If members are unable to attend the meeting, please advise Democratic Services on 01522 873533 as soon as possible. Substitute members will be contacted if they are required to attend the meeting.

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Please note that, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, when declaring interests members must disclose the existence and nature of the interest, and whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest (DPI) or personal and/or pecuniary.	
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Details of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 27 November 2018 (2.00 pm) venue to be confirmed

Present: Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Councillor Peter Burley (substitute) and Councillor Donald Nannestad (substitute)

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Ray Cucksey, Councillor Ric Metcalfe and Councillor John Money

1. Election of Chair of the Joint Committee for 2018/19

RESOLVED that:

- (1) Councillor Ric Metcalfe be elected as Chair of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee for 2018/19.
- (2) The election of a Vice-Chair of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee for 2018/19 be deferred to the next meeting.
- (3) Councillor Donald Nannestad be elected as a temporary Chair, for this meeting only.

[Councillor Donald Nannestad in the Chair]

2. Confirmation of Minutes - 20 February 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 be confirmed.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

4. Proposed Changes to the Delegation and Joint Committee Agreement to Incorporate the General Data Protection Regulations / Data Protection Act 2018

Purpose of Report

To propose amendments to the Delegation and Joint Committee Agreement to reflect changes in the legal framework relating to data protection.

Decision

That the proposed amendments to the Delegation and Joint Committee Agreement be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The Data Protection Act 1988 was replaced by the new Data Protection Act 2018 which incorporated the EU General Data Protection Regulation into UK law on 25 May 2018.

Both partner authorities needed to ensure the data received, processed, retained and shared was protected in accordance with the legal framework. A number of proposed amendments had therefore been made to the Delegation and Joint Committee Agreement, as set out in Appendix A of the report, which sought to ensure that the Councils' joint working arrangements were legally compliant.

5. Non-Domestic Rate Update

Purpose of Report

To provide the Joint Committee with an update on current issues with non-domestic rates.

Decision

That the report be noted.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The report provided updates of the following schemes introduced as a result of the Spring Budget 2017:

- loss of small business relief 2017/18 and 2018/19;
- support for pubs scheme 2017/18 and 2018/19;
- discretionary relief scheme 2017/18 and 2018/19;
- business rate pilot – 100% business rates retention in 2018/19.

It was noted that at the Spring statement on 13 March 2018 the Chancellor announced that the next business rates revaluation would be brought forward one year to 2021. Following the previous announcement on more frequent revaluations, this meant that three-yearly revaluations would take effect from 2024.

Discussion ensued on the 100% business rates retention pilot, during which it was noted that it was currently too early to assess what the actual benefit would be to each local authority involved. Over the next few weeks an update on the first quarter's performance would be collated for each authority in the Greater Lincolnshire pilot to ascertain how it was progressing. Talks were also currently underway regarding a proposal to extend the pilot by a further year to 2019/20.

It was acknowledged that uncertainty around any potential to extend the pilot for a future year would make budgeting difficult for the shared service and respective partner local authorities. Officers agreed that this, together with wider uncertainties around reductions in other grant funding and income streams, made local government financing generally very difficult to manage in the current climate.

A question was raised in respect of the new discretionary relief scheme and the grant distribution in 2018/19 as to whether this could be carried over to future years. Clarification was given that this funding could not be carried forward and

had to be spent within the financial year it was allocated for. Officers were confident that the money allocated would be spent.

Reference was made to appeals against valuations and it was noted that there was still a significant number outstanding from 2010 which had to be accounted for by way of estimating the cost and provisioning within the budget. It was anticipated that more frequent valuations would help improve the situation going forward.

6. Welfare Reform and Universal Credit Update

Purpose of Report

To provide the Joint Committee with an update regarding the national and local position of welfare reform, with a specific focus on Universal Credit.

Decision

That the report be noted.

Alternative Reasons Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The report provided the Joint Committee with an update on Universal Credit, including the national and local position regarding Universal Credit together with shared service preparations for roll-out to full service, migration of customers in receipt of legacy benefits and the potential impact of migration to City of Lincoln and North Kesteven rent arrears.

It was reported that the Welfare Reform and Project Officer had been working with City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council Housing colleagues to monitor the impact Universal Credit claims were currently having on rent collection. Data showed that of the 183 City of Lincoln tenants in receipt of Universal Credit, as of 30 April 2018, 101 of them had an increase in their arrears totalling £41,327. Details relating to North Kesteven would be forwarded to members of the Joint Committee in due course.

The report included information on the Universal Credit Support Team, which sought to undertake the following:

- provide assisted digital support for customers wishing to make a claim;
- help customers maintain their Universal Credit claim by providing assistance in a variety of means;
- provide personal budgeting support.

The Support Team was also responsible for the training of Benefits Officers in Universal Credit and ceasing of relevant Housing Benefit claims, processing Council Tax Support, allocating overpayments to the correct recovery method, as well as several briefings for other departments, as well as external partners including the Department for Work and Pensions.

A dashboard of statistical information from the Universal Credit Support Team was appended to the report, which provided key information relating to team outputs as well as regional and national updates.

An number of other welfare reforms introduced from April 2018 were set out in the report and included:

- support for mortgage interest payments;
- employer childcare vouchers no longer available to new claimants;
- self-employed National Insurance contributions change.

Progress with the shared service's high-level Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan and Universal Credit Preparation Plan was to be monitored by the Joint Committee on a quarterly basis, with updates on both plans attached to the report at Appendix 3.

As part of introducing the report, the Head of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service explained that the picture in relation to the rollout of Universal Credit was constantly changing, with the team working hard to try and implement what was required. An example was given of full migration scheduled for 2022 which had now been pushed back to 2023.

It was noted that 30% of West Lindsey postcodes would be allocated to the Lincoln Jobcentre as well as some from East Lindsey, and members were reminded that the service was having to work within Jobcentre boundaries rather than local government boundaries. It was emphasised, however, that the shared service would receive funding to support these.

The Head of the Shared Service praised officers of the service for the exemplary way in which they had responded to the complexities of implementing Universal Credit, particularly their willingness to be flexible and go into different roles. Councillor Rosanne Kirk, Portfolio Holder for Reducing Inequality at the City of Lincoln Council, had recently visited the Universal Credit Support Team and commended the team for the work it was undertaking. She was reassured during her visit by the advice that was being given to people, with officers having to deal with very difficult case work and complex issues. It was noted that other local authorities had visited this team and had been impressed with what it was doing.

7. Housing Benefit Overpayments Update

Purpose of Report

To provide the Joint Committee with an update on the recovery of housing benefit overpayment.

Decision

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Joint Committee supports plans to continue with the Housing Benefit Overpayment Action Plan in relation to the areas outlined in the report for 2018/19, including the reallocation of resources to undertake this work.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

As at 2017/18 outturn, the value of outstanding overpayments for the City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council were £4,219,349 and £1,824,908, respectively. The recovery of overpayments could be at different stages and these were usually broken down into either live Housing Benefit claims or Sundry Debtor.

For live Housing Benefit claims the amount of Housing Benefit awarded was reduced each week by a certain amount, known as an ongoing deduction. This amount was used to reduce the outstanding overpayment until it was cleared. Sundry Debtor overpayments were those where the customer was no longer in receipt of Housing Benefit and the customer was invoiced for the outstanding debt, with the customer then required to set up an arrangement to pay.

In April 2018 the Department for Work and Pensions' Housing Delivery Division Performance Development Team conducted an end to end review of the Shared Service Housing Benefit overpayment and debt recovery process. The review was structured to include:

- an analysis of the existing debt provision;
- specific case sampling;
- interviews with staff;
- process observations;
- prevention of debt;
- information feedback.

A report detailing the findings and recommendations of the review was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. Some good practices were identified whilst conducting the review, such as:

- identifying old debtors – reviewing the status of recovery and moving the recovery stage forward;
- filling the expression of interest for a Housing Benefit overpayment recovery officer;
- identifying debtors suitable to be referred to the Department for Work and Pensions as part of their debt service pilot.

Of the eleven recommendations put forward, as set out in paragraph 15 of Appendix 1 to the report, nine had been included in the Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Action Plan which were:

- a review of the current timeline for issuing of reminders;
- a review of the diary dating process;
- putting a process in place to review the level of benefit claw back;
- consideration of claimant capital as a recovery method;
- the introduction of a telephone rota within the recovery team;
- analysis and understanding of management information;
- targeted activity for highest and oldest debts;

- communicating the importance of recovery to all staff so they understood their role;
- collaboration between staff and the Housing Benefit recovery team to share achievements and discuss areas for improvement.

Those recommendations not included in the Action Plan were purposely omitted as they related to quality checking for which there was a separate ongoing project in place.

It was emphasised that the issue of Housing Benefit overpayments was national and not specific to the City of Lincoln or North Kesteven.

8. Revenues and Benefits - Financial Outturn 2017/18

Purpose of Report

To provide the Joint Committee with the financial outturn for the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service for 2017/18.

Decision

That the report be noted.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The shared service's business case indicated potential revenue savings of £475,270 per annum following the successful implementation of the new staffing restructure on 1 February 2012. These savings were already factored into the annual budget for the shared service with an allowance for a contingency budget of £20,000 to be set aside to fund any unforeseen circumstances and increased service demands.

The budgets for 2017/18 were increased by £165,949 over and above the base budget assumption, funded from specific grants received from central government for New Burdens.

The financial performance quarterly monitoring report for the third quarter predicted an underspend of £181,887 against the revised budget, after taking into account New Burden grants. This underspend was largely down to £106,000 of New Burdens grant funding, much of which was received in the latter part of the financial year, and £85,000 due to Benefit Officers not being at the top scale of their respective career grades. It was noted that the way in which staffing costs were budgeted would be looked into in order that they were budgeted more accurately in the future.

The City of Lincoln Council had used £50,000 of its proportion of the underspend to help address future reductions in grant funding.

A summary of the main year-end variations against the approved budget for 2017/18 was outlined in the report at paragraph 4.2.

Discussion ensued on agency staffing costs. It was reported that no agency staff had been used for the benefits aspect of the service, however, use of such staff had been necessary and would continue to be necessary in the future at peak times in respect of revenues. This equated to two officers who were highly experienced and were brought in at times of predicted demand to ensure that the shared service fulfilled its requirements during the production and issue of council tax bills. It was noted that it would not be financially viable to employ permanent members of staff for this purpose.

9. Performance Update

Purpose of Report

To provide the Joint Committee with an update on performance in the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service.

Decision

That the report be noted.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

Council Tax

Annual outturns had increased by 0.08% for the City of Lincoln Council and 0.06% for North Kesteven District Council. It was noted that 2017/18 was the first year that the City of Lincoln Council made changes to its Localised Council Tax Support Scheme, reducing the level of support in some cases.

In considering the current collection levels, it was noted that the collectable debit for both the City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council had increased from 2016/17 by £1.98 million and £2.86 million respectively.

In terms of the new financial year, 2018/19, as at the end of April 2018 Council Tax in-year collection had increased for both the City of Lincoln and North Kesteven by 0.16% and 0.03% respectively.

Business Rates

Annual outturns compared to 2016/17 were noted as follows:

- City of Lincoln – 0.56% down;
- North Kesteven – 0.80% up;
- West Lindsey – 1.19% up.

Although the City of Lincoln Council's in-year collection rate decreased, this was mainly due to some large rateable value schedules coming back from the Valuation Office Agency in March 2018, which were input by officers thereby increasing the debit due considerably without a realistic expectation of payment coming in during the current financial year.

Tables in paragraph 4.9 of the report outlined how 'net collectible debit' and 'total net receipt' compared for each local authority between 2016/17 and 2017/18.

In terms of the new financial year, 2018/19, as at the end of April 2018 business rates in-year collection compared to April 2017 as follows:

- City of Lincoln – 0.68% up;
- North Kesteven – 3.91% up;
- West Lindsey – 2.44% down.

Outstanding Revenues Customers

The number of outstanding revenues customers as at the end of quarter four in 2017/18 showed a very positive position, as outlined in the table at paragraph 4.12 of the report. The key reasons for this were mainly due to the implementation of a number of integrated e-forms during 2017/18, but also a temporary agency resource in place during quarter four to help assist with the predictable increased demand on the team during this period.

Housing Benefit Overpayments

In-period collection as at April 2018 stood at 127.34% for the City of Lincoln and 120.73% for North Kesteven, meaning that more monies had been recovered than raised.

Although in-period Housing Benefit overpayments collection figures remained positive, as demonstrated in the table at paragraph 4.15 of the report, the rising level of outstanding overpayments continued.

A separate item on this issue had been considered by the Joint Committee at this meeting.

Benefits Performance

As at the end of April 2018, benefits customers outstanding figures, split by those who were already in progress against those which had not yet started to be processed, showed that there were 630 claims where the case had not yet been looked at. It was noted that it was a real day-to-day challenge, with decreasing grants from central government also having an impact, to maintain the position of assessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax support claims in a timely and accurate manner whilst also providing vital support to Universal Credit customers. The allocation of resources to a variety of demands would very much be at the forefront of officers' minds moving forward, particularly with Sleaford Jobcentre moving to Universal Credit Full Service in November 2018.

Housing Benefit average processing times were positive and competitive against the national position, with the most recent data available relating to quarter three with the average for new claims being 22 days and 9 days for changes of circumstance.

It was reported that the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service had been shortlisted as finalists for the Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation Awards 2018 in the following categories:

- Benefits and Welfare Reform Team of the Year;
- Most Improved Team of the Year;
- Excellence in Partnership Working.

Further updates would be provided to the Joint Committee in due course.

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**SUBJECT: REVENUES AND BENEFITS - QUARTER 1 2018/19
MONITORING**

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE & TOWN CLERK

LEAD OFFICER: ANGELA ANDREWS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to Members the first quarter's performance for the Revenues and Benefits shared service for 2018/19.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The forecast outturn for 2018/19 predicts that there will be an underspend against the approved budget of £98,082.

3. Background

- 3.1 The approved budget for 2018/19 was agreed by Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee on 20th February 2018. The Committee set a budget for 2018/19 of £2,285,710 for the service and this report shows the progress against this budget for quarter one and shows a projected outturn for the full year.
- 3.2 The budget, as mentioned in paragraph 3.1, has subsequently been revised for the following New Burdens Grants notified to each Authority in quarter one: -

Budget adjustment	CoLC	NK	Total
	£	£	£
Welfare Reform Changes	43,260	21,023	64,283
Single Fraud Investigation Service	1,601	873	2,474
Verify Earnings & Pensions Alerts Service Q1	28,109	21,366	49,475
Verify Earnings & Pensions Alerts Service Q4	7,031	5,344	12,375
UC FS HB Stop Notice	400	400	800
UC FS LCTR Automation	908	908	1,817
SHBE Change	499	499	998
VEP SHBE Change	182	182	364
COA	363	363	727
CIS Interest Automation	17	17	34
PSCS Uprating	11	11	22
API Development	56	56	112
Transition to UC Housing Payment	17,195	4,472	21,667
Removal of Temporary accommodation from UC	529	293	822

UC LA Universal Support Grant Funding Q4 2017/18	4,256	229	4,485
Universal Credit Support 2018/19	16,823	8,138	24,961
TOTAL	121,241	64,175	185,416

4. Quarter One Financial Performance and Forecast Outturn 2018/19

4.1 Performance Quarter 1

Financial performance for the first quarter of 2018/19 is detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. At quarter 1, there is an underspend against the approved budget of £17,151.

4.2 Forecast Outturn 2018/19

The forecast outturn for 2018/19 predicts that there will be an underspend against the approved budget of £98,082. Further detail is attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

4.3 A summary of the main forecast year-end variations against the approved budget for 2018/19 is shown below.

<u>Service Area</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Reason for variance</u>
Revenues and Benefits Management		
IT Costs	5,730	Increased cost of Northgate System.
Benefits		
Salaries (Including Career Grades)	(96,660)	Vacant Hours together with Career Graded Posts budgeted at top of scale however not all officers are at the top of the scale.
New Burdens Grants	(45,380)	New Burdens Funding awarded but cost of additional activities contained within current staffing structure.
Telephones	(9,720)	Saving on Telephone Expenses.
Revenues Local Taxation		
IT Costs	15,000	Additional requirements of the service.
Subscriptions	11,550	Analyse Local Annual Fees included within this.
Printing/Postage	30,000	Activity Level estimated to be the same as previous years.
Benefits/Money Advice		
Car Mileage	(3,500)	Travel organised in a way to try and reduce mileage cost.

<u>Service Area</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Reason for variance</u>
Mobile Phones	1,100	Activity Level estimated to be the same as previous years.

5. Organisational Impacts (nb. Finance, Legal and E & D sections below are mandatory, others to be completed only where there is an impact)

- 5.1 The financial implications are contained throughout the report.
- 5.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.3 There are no equality and diversity implications as a direct result of this report.

6. Risk Implications

- 6.1 A full financial risk assessment is included in the Council's Medium Financial Strategy.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 Members are recommended to note the actual position at quarter 1.
- 7.2 Members are recommended to approve the budget adjustments for 2018/19 as per para 3.2.

Key Decision No

Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply? No

Call in and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? Two

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Martin Walmsley
Telephone 01522 873597

Appendix 1 Actual Position as at Quarter 1 2018/19

	Profiled Budget			Actual			Variance		
	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined
Revenues & Benefits									
Management	53,650	53,650	107,298	56,893	56,893	113,785	3,243	3,243	6,485
Benefits	180,730	124,850	305,578	148,730	107,701	256,431	(32,000)	(17,149)	(49,149)
Revenues Local Taxation	104,550	108,820	213,365	118,917	123,770	242,687	14,367	14,950	29,317
Money Advice	27,950	27,950	55,900	26,048	26,048	52,096	(1,902)	(1,902)	(3,804)
Total Q1 2018/19	366,880	315,270	682,141	350,587	314,412	664,999	(16,293)	(858)	(17,151)

Appendix 2 Forecast Financial Outturn for 2018/19

	Annual Budget			Forecast Outturn			Variance		
	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined
Revenues & Benefits									
Management	158,600	158,600	317,200	161,410	161,410	322,819	2,810	2,810	5,619
Benefits	733,811	506,912	1,240,723	638,641	441,169	1,079,810	(95,170)	(65,743)	(160,913)
Revenues Local Taxation	313,770	326,570	640,340	341,182	355,100	696,281	27,412	28,530	55,941
Money Advice	111,800	111,800	223,600	112,435	112,435	224,870	635	635	1,270
Total 2018/19	1,317,981	1,103,882	2,421,863	1,253,667	1,070,114	2,323,781	(64,314)	(33,768)	(98,082)

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SUBJECT: PERFORMANCE UPDATE

DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT AUTHOR: MARTIN WALMSLEY, HEAD OF SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on performance in the Revenues and Benefits shared service.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on Revenues and Benefits performance information – for Quarter 1 2018/19, and up to the end of July 2018.
- 2.2 The Revenues and Benefits Shared Service has now been in operation since 1st June 2011, and performance has been maintained and improved whilst continuing to provide value for money. Continual improvement and success is being achieved in terms of both statistical and financial performance, as well as positive outcomes for customers of the partner local authorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the 12th June meeting of this committee, a report was presented detailing Revenues and Benefits performance outturn for 2017/18.
- 3.2 Performance is reported to this committee on a quarterly basis.

4. Revenues Performance

4.1 Council Tax

- 4.2 Positive Council Tax in-year collection has been achieved for 2017/18, the table below showing how performance has progressed since the shared service formed in June 2011.

Financial Year	Q1 2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
City of Lincoln	27.09%	97.17%	97.09%	97.12%	96.93%	96.56%	96.32%	96.80%
North Kesteven	30.00%	99.20%	99.14%	99.16%	99.25%	99.16%	99.13%	99.40%

- 4.3 Officers consider this to be extremely positive given the ongoing welfare reforms, the general economic climate and taking into account Universal Credit Full Service went live on 7th March 2018.

When comparing collection rates nationally, North Kesteven's collection rate is ranked 7th out of 326 billing authorities.

Officers have also undertaken comparisons of collection rate to deprivation statistics and rankings. There is a strong correlation between the two sets of figures and it is possible to set a line of best fit using an exponential function. This suggests that City of Lincoln are collecting 1.6% more Council Tax in per year than could reasonably be expected and gives a ranking outcome of 20th.

Comparing Quarter 1 2018/19 to 2017/18, City of Lincoln is above by 0.09% and North Kesteven below by 0.07%.

- 4.4 When considering the current collection levels, it should be noted that the collectable debit for both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven has increased from 2017/18 by £2.3m and £3.6m respectively.
- 4.5 In terms of the position as at end July 2018, City of Lincoln is 0.01% below 2017/18 at 35.63%, and North Kesteven is the same as 17/18 at 39.34%.

4.6 Business Rates

- 4.7 As with Council Tax, positive Business Rates in-year collection has been achieved for 2017/18, the table below showing how performance has progressed since the shared service formed in June 2011.

Financial Year	Q1 2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
City of Lincoln	35.86%	98.87% (Target 99.10%)	99.43%	99.78%	99.46%	99.31%	99.08%	99.20%
North Kesteven	45.03%	99.89% (target 99.09%)	99.09%	99.46%	99.78%	99.53%	99.93%	99.70%
West Lindsey	33.65%	98.53% (Target 98.44%)	97.34%	99.44%	99.17%	99.12%	99.13%	98.90%

- 4.8 Comparing Quarter 1 2018/19 to 2017/18, City of Lincoln is up by 0.03%, North Kesteven up by 3.61% and West Lindsey down by 0.54%.

When comparing collection rates nationally, North Kesteven's collection rate is ranked 3rd out of 326 billing authorities.

Whilst collection for West Lindsey is below as at Quarter 1, there have been significant improvements during the first quarter of 2018/19. Collection was 2.44% down at 30th April 2018 (compared to the same point in 2017/18)

With an increased collection rate of 35.86% for Lincoln and 45.03% for North Kesteven, it should be noted that the total net receipt has also increased from 2017/18 by £1.5m, and £1.2m respectively.

The tables below in paragraph 4.9 show how 'Net collectable debit' and 'Total net receipt' compared for each local authority, between 2018/19 and 2017/18.

4.9 **City of Lincoln:**

	Total net receipt (£)	Net collectable debit (£)
2018/19	16,374,644	45,657,415
2017/18	15,796,661	44,084,752
Difference	+577,983	+1,572,663

North Kesteven:

	Total net receipt (£)	Net collectable debit (£)
2018/19	12,404,586	27,548,160
2017/18	10,918,749	26,364,099
Difference	+1,485,837	+1,184,061

West Lindsey:

	Total net receipt (£)	Net collectable debit (£)
2018/19	6,003,153	17,840,159
2017/18	5,774,453	16,891,924
Difference	+228,700	+948,235

- 4.10 In terms of the new financial year, 2018/19, as the end of July 2018 Business Rates in-year collection compares to July 2018, as below:

- City of Lincoln: 44.51% - this is 0.18% below
- North Kesteven: 51.39% - this is 2.99% above
- West Lindsey: 42.25% - this is 0.45% below

4.11 Business Improvement District (BID) Levy Collection 2017/18

- 4.12 Members will be aware that the Authority is responsible for the administration and collection of the BID levy.

The BID financial year runs from July to June and the figures given below represent collection up to the end of June 2018.

The 2017/18 net collectable debit raised in respect of the Levy was £391,728.

A comparison of in-year collection rates between BID financial years ending 30th June 2017 and 30 June 2018 shows a significant increase in collection and is shown in the table below:

Year ending 30 th June 2017	99.33%	Increase/ (Decrease) 0.63%
Year ending 30 th June 2018	99.96%	

4.13 Outstanding Revenues Customers

- 4.14 The number of outstanding Revenues Customers as the end of quarter 1 2018/19 shows an increase since 31 March 2018. This is due to the reduced numbers of staffing (unforeseen circumstances) within the team during this quarter. The position will be improved in-year due to the resolution of the staffing issues and the continued implementation of changes to current processes through the introduction of new electronic / self-serve forms. The Council Tax Administration team are currently working with City of Lincoln Business Development Team to continue to implement and improve processes to channel shift customer contact, internal contact and adopt 'lean' principles. These have included online e-forms for 'reporting a move' and reporting changes for student accommodation. The e-forms are populated by the customer with their information, and this is integrated into the back-office system. This removed the re-keying of information by the officer – it is simply reviewed, and the change in occupier / account / property information is processed and an updated bill is generated.

However, figures are similar to quarter 1 in 2017/18.

31 st March	Q1 2018	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
City of Lincoln	659	121	296	448	1,025	683	939	1,713
North Kesteven	335	95	223	266	356	545	465	577

4.15 As at the end of July 2018, there are 766 outstanding Revenues customers for City of Lincoln and 376 for North Kesteven. Whilst this has increased since the end of Quarter 1, the rate of increase is not as high, as in previous months. This is due to increased staffing within the team, since mid-July.

4.16 Housing Benefit Overpayments

4.17 The table below shows in-period collection rates as a percentage of the debt raised over the last six financial years (2011/12 is not shown, due to the changeover to the Northgate ICT system for Lincoln during that financial year and a number of conversion exercises that had to be undertaken relating to Housing Benefit Overpayments).

Financial Year	Q1 2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
City of Lincoln	107.66%	81.81%	76.38%	75.22%	68.60%	72.98%	89.14%
North Kesteven	136.61%	88.31%	70.16%	77.76%	64.61%	85.40%	92.85%

4.18 At the end of July 2018 overpayment collection stood at 109.55% for Lincoln and 125.83% for North Kesteven, (meaning more monies had been recovered than raised). This is as a result of the work being undertaken by the Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Team (HBOP). This is covered in a separate report is included within this report pack.

4.19 As well as the in-period Housing Benefit Overpayments collection figures remaining positive as demonstrated above, the level of outstanding overpayments is starting to reduce, as a result of the work undertaken by the Housing Benefits Overpayments Team during this first quarter. The table below shows how this position has developed over the last five financial years.

31 st March	Q1 2018/19	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
City of Lincoln	£4,163,619	£4,219,349	£4,081,552	£3,510,798	£3,186,971	£2,633,438
North Kesteven	£1,764,981	£1,824,908	£1,793,997	£1,482,271	£1,324,672	£1,011,484

4.20 In respect of 2018/19, outstanding overpayments figures at the end of July 2018 are £4,105,545 for City of Lincoln and £1,761,121 for North Kesteven – this is a continued reduction for both authorities.

- 4.21 A separate, more detailed report – ‘Housing Benefit Overpayments Update’ – is included elsewhere on this committee’s agenda, which includes details of the action plan for 2018/19. The plan includes actions identified from a positive two-day exercise involving officers from the Department for Work and Pensions, which took place at the end of April 2018, as well as figures showing the changes in outstanding overpayments since 1 April 2018 to 31 July 2018.

5. Benefits Performance

- 5.1 The table below shows the number of outstanding Benefits customers awaiting assessment, at the end of each financial year since the formation of the shared service:

31st March	Q1 2018/19	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
City of Lincoln	1,312	696	555	1,064	1,267	2,396	2,004	2,401
North Kesteven	445	511	500	714	1,036	978	1,206	2,648

The rollout of Universal Credit Full Service has had a significant impact on the processing performance, with the section receiving 5,585 Universal Credit documents since 1 April 2018. Each of these documents require assessment – with benefits officers having to review the document and make a decision as to the assessment required. As a result, City of Lincoln have seen a significant increase in their documents, which has resulted from the outstanding almost doubling within a number of weeks.

As a result, overtime has been offered to staff to improve the processing position. This was undertaken by the Sleaford-based Team during June 2018, resulting in improved performance figures as shown in the above table. As at 18th July, the oldest date for North Kesteven is 10th July 2018, with 429 outstanding customers. Lincoln-based offers are undertaking overtime during July and August, whilst it is expected the oldest date of work will be brought forward, the level of outstanding work is unlikely to reduce significantly due to the large volume of work being received. Officers will review the position on a weekly basis and ensure plans are in place to improve figures throughout quarter 2 and beyond.

- 5.2 As at the end of July 2018, Benefits customers outstanding figures – split by those who are already in progress (i.e. where the customer has been contacted and further information is required) against those which have not yet started to be processed,

	Benefits customers awaiting assessment (as at 31st July 2018)		
	Customer has been contacted	Customer not yet contacted	Total
City of Lincoln	409	1035	1444*
North Kesteven	165	266	431

5.3 It is a real day-to-day challenge, with decreasing grants from central government also having an impact, to maintain the position of assessing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims in a timely and accurate manner, but whilst also providing vital support to Universal Credit customers – which is being carried out by some of our Benefits Officers from March 2018, when Universal Credit Full Service (UCFS) launched in Lincoln Jobcentre. This ‘challenge’ of allocation of resources to a variety of demands will very much be at the forefront of officers’ minds moving forward, particularly with Sleaford Jobcentre moving to UCFS in November 2018. The Benefits Team also undertakes a variety of other tasks, such as; Discretionary Housing Benefits, Revisions and Appeals, Overpayments collection (not debtor stage), Subsidy and Quality Control, and various initiatives relating to reducing fraud and error in the system. The team have also starting work on the Housing Benefit Overpayment recovery project and have successfully recruited into a vacant Appeals Officer post from within the existing team, resulting in 2 Full Time Equivalent officers being removed from the day-to-day processing.

5.4 In terms of Housing Benefit average processing times, the table below shows the figures for New Claims and Changes of Circumstance for the last five financial years:

Financial Year		Q1 2017/2018 Average no. days	2017/18 Average no. days	2016/17 Average no. days	2015/16 Average no. days	2014/15 Average no. days	2013/14 Average no. days
New Claims	Lincoln	30.13	24.29	29.44	25.45	26.14	28.33
	North Kesteven	24.57	18.81	15.98	12.76	12.05	12.66
Changes of Circumstance	Lincoln	4.72	4.00	4.49	5.40	5.07	6.97
	North Kesteven	3.80	2.82	3.06	2.84	2.91	2.92

These figures for change of circumstances are positive and competitive against the national position – the most recent data available (from Department for Work and Pensions) at the time of writing this report, relates to Quarter 3 2017/18 – with the average for new claims being 22 days, and for changes of circumstance 9 days. However, new claims have increased for both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven. This is due to a significant increase in workload within the quarter, reprioritisation of change in circumstances and the delay in new claim information from the Department for Work and Pensions. In quarter 1 a total of 13,122 changes were processed, compared to 10,873 in the same quarter in 2017/18. Of these, 5,582 are Universal Credit changes. The changes are much more complex, and require more time to be taken to ensure accurate processing. The Universal Credit changes are also time limited, whereby a two week grace period on any overpayment has been given, therefore, priority is being given to this piece of work. In addition, whilst the number of new claims is reducing, those claims that are being received are for the Universal Credit customers where Housing Benefit is still to be claimed (exempt categories). The housing costs are covered by Housing Benefit. As a result, Local Authorities are having to wait for the Universal Credit decision to be made, which is taking around 6 weeks, before an assessment decision can be taken on the Housing Benefit entitlement. This delay by Department for Work and Pensions has contributed to the 6 day increase as shown in the above table.

Unfortunately, the national statistics for speed of processing for 2017/18 is not currently available. Historically, this has been released in October 2017, therefore, an update will be provided at the next meeting of this Committee on 9 November 2018.

However, taking the above into account, change of circumstances performance levels have improved when compared to quarter 1 in 2017/18 – City of Lincoln at 5.38 days in 2017/18 compared to 3.80 days in 2018/19 and North Kesteven at 3.33 days in 2017/18 compared to 2.90 days in 2018/19.

- 5.5 Prompt processing of claims remains vital, but of equal importance is accuracy of processing and ‘getting it right, first time’. The table below the outcomes of claims checked under our quality checking regime, since the formation of the shared service:

Financial Year	Q1 2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
City of Lincoln	87.50%	92%	91%	83%	79%	77%	72%	65%
North Kesteven	95.45%	95%	95%	97%	98%	98%	100%	99%

A total of 41 claims were checked during quarter 1. Whilst the percentage accuracy has reduced for City of Lincoln, the number of claims being checked is increasing as part of the Quality Checking action plan. In July, a total of 48 claims were checked with 45 of these being correct – this is an accuracy rate of 93.75%.

6. Strategic Priorities

- 6.1 Both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven have a number of strategic priorities. Two that have an impact on the Revenues and Benefits Service are:-
- Lincoln: “Let’s Reduce Inequality”.
 - North Kesteven: “Our Community Our Economy”.
- 6.2 The Benefits Service plays a key role in reducing inequality by ensuring residents receive the benefits they are entitled to and providing money / debt advice. The Revenues Section is also mindful of the strategic priorities when engaging with business ratepayers as they recover business rates – and also promoting and encouraging growth in the districts. Digital Inclusion, Channel Shift / Customer Experience, Financial Inclusion and Partnership Working are all key priorities for the shared service.

7. Organisational Impacts

- 7.1 Finance: There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 7.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules: There are no direct Legal or Procurement implications arising from this report.
- 7.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights: There are no direct implications arising from this report.

8. Risk Implications

- 8.1 A Risk Register is in place for the Revenues and Benefits shared service.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Note the performance information as set out in this report.
- 9.2 Note that a performance update will be presented at the next meeting of this committee, on 27th November 2018.

Is this a key decision? Yes/No

Do the exempt information categories apply? Yes/No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? Yes/No

How many appendices does the report contain? Appendix 1: Performance Data – Annual Outturn 2018/19, and July 2018

List of Background Papers:

None

Lead Officer:

Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and
Benefits
Telephone (01522) 873597

17 September 2018 Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee
Appendix 1: Performance Data – Quarter 1 2018/19, and July 2018

Measure	2018/19 Quarter 1		2017/18 Quarter 1		July 2018		July 2017	
	NK	COL	NK	COL	NK	COL	NK	COL
Local Authority								
Council Tax collection (cumulative)	30.00%	27.09%	30.07%	27.00%	39.34%	35.63%	39.34%	35.64%
NNDR collection (cumulative)	45.03%	35.86%	41.42%	35.83%	51.39%	44.51%	48.40%	44.69%
NNDR collection – WLDC (cumulative)	33.65%		34.19%		42.25%		42.70%	
No. Revenues customers awaiting change to be processed	335	659	337	503	376	766	363	522
Total Net Arrears for Council Tax prior years (i.e. not including current year)	£1,343,563	£3,093,688	£1,153,331	£2,903,482	£1,293,929	£2,937,657	£1,137,282	£2,874,982
Total Net Arrears for NNDR prior years (i.e. not including current year)	£170,794	£471,085	£466,579	£595,644	£190,545	£458,654	£465,794	£593,478
Housing Benefit overpayments collection in period	136.61%	107.66%	66.42%	108.89%	125.83%	109.55%	86.30%	99.31%

17 September 2018 Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee
Appendix 1: Performance Data – Quarter 1 2018/19, and July 2018

Measure	2018/19 Quarter 1		2017/18 Quarter 1		July 2018		July 2017	
	NK	COL	NK	COL	NK	COL	NK	COL
Local Authority								
Outstanding Housing Benefit overpayments debt	£1,764,981	£4,163,619	£1,805,923	£4,000,314	£1,761,121	£4,105,545	£1,815,920	£4,021,345
Housing Benefit New Claims: Average number of days to process (cumulative)	24.47 days	30.13 days	22.01 days	23.06 days	23.91 days	29.32 days	20.38 days	22.66 days
Housing Benefits Changes of Circumstances: Average number of days to process (cumulative)	2.90 days	3.68 days	3.33 days	5.38 days	4.08 days	6.53 days	3.81 days	5.99 days
No. Benefits customers awaiting assessment (cumulative)	445	1312	421	577	431	1444	462	524
% Benefits claims checked financially correct (cumulative)	95.45%	87.50%	97.79%	90.75%	95.65%	89.58%	97.11%	91.03%
*Benefits – Customer satisfaction (cumulative)	No survey – review of process taking place	No survey – review of process taking place	No survey	No survey	No survey – review of process taking place	No survey – review of process taking place	No survey	No survey

*Customer satisfaction reviews have not been undertaken for 2017/18 outturn. Officers are currently reconsidering the approach to the reviews and putting forward options to the management team to ensure the reviews are objectives, with the aim of achieving purposeful results.

SUBJECT:	WELFARE REFORM AND UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
LEAD OFFICER:	ROB KAY, WELFARE REFORM AND PROJECTS OFFICER

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Joint Committee with an update regarding the national and local position of welfare reform, with a specific focus on Universal Credit (UC) for this particular report.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides Joint Committee with an update on Universal Credit to include reference to the national and local position of Universal Credit, City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and the Shared Service preparations for roll-out to Full Service, migration of customers in receipt of legacy benefits and the potential impact of migration to City of Lincoln and North Kesteven rent arrears.

3. Background

- 3.1 Future reports will provide Joint Committee with an up to date position on the following:
- National Progress
 - Full Service Preparation – City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and Shared Service Preparation
 - Impact on the Councils income (Rent, Council Tax and Overpayments)
 - Universal Support Team
 - Background Papers.

4. National Progress – Universal Credit

- 4.1 As Full Service roll-out progresses, the number and range of people claiming UC is likely to grow quickly. As of 17th July 2018, there are 403 jobcentres running the Full Service with roll-out scheduled to be completed by December 2018.
- 4.2 Latest figures published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) were released on 17th July 2018, with statistics relevant to the period up to 14th June 2018.
- 980,000 households receiving UC – this is a 7% increase from May 2018
 - 360,000 (37%) were in employment.

- 4.3 It is expected managed payment figures will increase as the roll-out to Full Service gains momentum. A managed payment can be applied for by the landlord for payment of rent or rent arrears deduction. The payment of UC Housing Costs would be paid direct to the landlord. Landlords are required to complete a form requesting this.

5. Recent Universal Credit changes

5.1 Support for 18 to 21 year olds claiming Universal Credit

In the Autumn Budget 2018, Ministers have reversed a 2014 move stopping individuals under the age of 21 automatically being entitled to Universal Credit housing costs. This decision has not yet been passed through legislation, and it is likely this will not take place until Autumn 2018 as the legislation has been delayed by 6 months.

As a result, currently, 18/21 year olds are not eligible for support towards their housing costs, unless they are classed as vulnerable (as defined by DWP). Around 90% of 18-21 year olds are in these categories.

The DWP provides a programme of intensive support for all 18 to 21 year olds making a new claim to Universal Credit. This programme is being rolled-out in line with the roll-out schedule for Universal Credit. It aims to encourage and support all young people into employment, work-related training or an apprenticeship, including a programme of intensive support that's tailored to the individuals' needs and job goals. If the individual is attending training or work experience, travel and childcare costs may also be reimbursed.

5.2 Universal Credit and Supported Housing

Consultation on a new way of providing funding for supporting housing and a "sheltered rent" closed earlier this year. The new arrangements were intended to start next year and this would have reduced drastically the number of Housing Benefit claims (including for those of pension age). Instead, ring fenced funding would have been provided to local authorities to provide support for these customers.

On 9 August 2018, Government announced that all these plans have been dropped and that local authorities will therefore be maintaining Housing Benefit for all supported housing, including short-term. This reflects the particular needs of these vulnerable groups of people, and the government's commitment to protect them. The plans to introduce a sheltered rent have also gone.

6. Impact on the Councils income – Rent

- 6.1 The Welfare Reform and Project Officer has been working with City of Lincoln Housing and North Kesteven Housing colleagues to monitor the impact UC claims are currently having on rent collection.
- 6.2 The data shows that of the 421 City of Lincoln tenants in receipt of UC, as of 30th June 2018, 101 of them have had an increase in their arrears, totalling £49,619.77.

- 6.3 The same information is being gathered for North Kesteven tenants and of the 45 UC customers as of 29th June 2018 arrears have increased by £4,525.67.

7. Universal Support Team

- 7.1 The team continue to work on a rota basis and are located in Lincoln Jobcentre 9am – 12pm & 1pm – 4pm every day to be on hand to support customers. A dedicated e-mail address and telephone number are also in place, for direct access to this team.

- 7.2 Providing Assisted Digital Support (ADS) for customers wishing to make a claim by:
- Supporting the customer to transact with Universal Credit using a personal computer or their specific device
 - Ensuring the customer keeps log-in credentials safe
 - Setting up a personal email address if the customer doesn't already have one
 - Ensuring that the customer is able to access their email account to retrieve the email code
 - Ensuring that the customer is aware of the details they need to have to hand to safely complete their identity verification and claim Universal Credit
 - Supporting the customer to scan relevant documents to process a claim
 - Ensuring that the customer understands how to access the 'partner code' and the requirement for their partner to complete their online claim using the partner code

Helping our customers maintain their Universal Credit claim by providing assistance in:

- Managing their claim via the online Universal Credit account on whatever device they have access to
- Managing their own email account on whatever device they have access to
- Navigating the platform and clearing their personal 'To do' list
- Making journal entries
- Uploading documents including their CV and medical certificates
- Notifying a change of circumstances
- Making enquiries
- Printing documents

Provide Personal Budgeting Support (PBS) for our customers by:

- Supporting customers to manage their monthly payments and prioritise essential bills such as rent
- Supporting customers who require personal budgeting assistance to manage their Universal Credit. The support to be offered includes:
 - Identifying the appropriate channel and provider to deliver personal budgeting support and referring the customer to the right place immediately
 - Providing, or arranging, telephone or face to face personal budgeting support and follow up action as appropriate
 - Referring customers who may need an alternative payment arrangement to Jobcentre Plus
 - Referring customers to Welfare Advice for other support services such as debt advice

Resulting in claimants being able to:

- Understand their Universal Credit award and what they can claim as well as entitlement to other benefits or grants
- Work out monthly income and outgoings
- Recognise priority bills, such as rent
- Identify and cut back on non-essentials
- Complete and maintain a budgeting plan
- Convert from a Post Office card accounts/Simple payments to more appropriate banking products, including a transactional bank account
- • Set up or re-organise direct debits for prioritised payments.

7.3 The UC Support Team and Benefits Team Leaders are currently reviewing how UC claims are processed and will be putting guidance together for all processing staff. The guidance will clarify processes relating to the cessation of relevant Housing Benefit claims, processing Council Tax Support and allocating overpayments to the correct recovery method.

7.4 **Preparation for North Kesteven Full Service**

Sleaford Jobcentre go live with Universal Credit Full Service on 14 November 2018.

Officers are reviewing the objectives and outcomes of the Universal Credit Support Team based at Lincoln, to ascertain whether the positive partnership working arrangements with Jobcentre Plus and internal processes that need to be and can be replicated at the Sleaford office.

The Welfare Reform and Project Lead met with the Jobcentre Sleaford Partnership Manager on 8th August to begin building a relationship with the Jobcentre and get to know the management and staff.

Sleaford Jobcentre staff will be visiting the Universal Credit Support Team in Lincoln to meet the members of the team, to be introduced to the processes and to see how Universal Credit is working for Lincoln residents.

An Expression of Interest will be issued to all Benefits Officers within the Shared Service (based in Sleaford) at the end of September, ring fenced for Benefits Officers based at Sleaford. If the process at Lincoln is replicated, the Universal Credit Team will consist of 2 members of staff to assist with Assisted Digital Support and Personal Budgeting Support. It is anticipated to have these staff in place by 15th October 2018.

Once in place, they will spend the next month in the build up to the go live date based between Sleaford (building relationships with Sleaford Jobcentre plus) and City of Lincoln Jobcentre. This will be so that the Benefits staff can undertake job shadowing and learn how to assist customers.

The current Universal Credit Support Team are working closely with Housing and Communications teams to ensure the relationship is there to support customers and ensure the information is on hand, as well as the web team.

7.5 The UC Dashboard

The UC Dashboard has been updated with the most recent statistical information and provides, at a quick glance, key information relating to the teams outputs, along with regional and national updates. This can be seen in **Appendix 1 (City of Lincoln)** and **Appendix 2 (North Kesteven)**, and is also detailed below: --

3 April to 30 June 2018

During this period, the UC Support Team have supported: -

	Assisted Digital Support (ADS)	Personal Budgeting Support (PBS)	ADS/PBS Combination
City of Lincoln	185	93	32
North Kesteven	19	12	7

The average time to undertake an ADS/PBS is 41 minutes.

The average age of the customer requiring support is 42.

Assisted Digital Support Provided for all shared service UC customers as at 30 June 2018

Type of Support	Number of customers supported
New claim UC	237
Council Tax Support	74
Change of circumstances for UC	30
Password	15
Email	68
Updating journal	48
Logging in	11
Uploading	9
Booking interview	126
Collecting documents	3

Personal Budgeting Support Provided for all shared service UC customers as at 30 June 2018

Type of Support	Number of customers supported
Advance payment	66
DHP	57
Direct Debits	24
Income and Expenditure (budgeting)	44
Debt referral	10
Other benefits	15
Alternative Payment Arrangement	46
Council Tax Support arrears	6
Housing Solution referrals	10
UC Calculation	22
Food voucher	15
Referral other depts.	33
Bank account	10
Attending interview with customer	1

Universal Credit information documents

- 5,582 UC documents have been received from the period 1 April to 30 June 2018. These documents are issued by the Department for Work and Pensions and relate to Universal Credit changes in circumstances.

7.6 Case Studies

Case Study 1 – Mrs A

Mrs A was referred to the UC support team for Personal Budgeting Support on the 11 April 2018. Mrs A was very distressed and upset, so the UC Support Officer a private 2 hour appointment for the 16 April 2018 to go through income and expenditure and to help increase income. The following actions were undertaken: -

- Universal Credit application completed
- Email address set up
- Council Tax Reduction application completed
- Discretionary Housing Payment application completed
- Food voucher issued
- First identification interview Universal Credit claim booked. The UC Support Officers attended this with Mrs A
- Discussed advance loan and the repayments of these and helped work out whether Mrs A could afford to repay these back
- Quick calculation completed to give indication of entitlement
- Budgeting advice given

Mrs A contacted the UC Support Team again in regards to her landlord and her Universal Credit payment, again she was very upset and distressed, and as a result, a second 2 hour appointment was booked. During this appointment, the following actions were undertaken: -

- UC Support Officer contacted the landlord and advised, with permission, that Mrs A had applied for Universal Credit, when her first payment would be and that Mrs A had requested a managed payment for UC to be paid to the landlord.
- Notified Child Tax Credits that Mrs A had applied for Universal credit
- Arranged for Mrs A to attend the Citizens Advice Bureau on 24 April 2018 to discuss her debts

Mrs A contacted the UC Support Team on 23 May 2018 stating she had no Housing Element included in her UC payment. The following actions were undertaken: -

- UC Support Officer met Mrs A and they attended the DWP offices in City Hall.
- Mrs A logged into her online UC account and contacted the UC Service Centre to discuss what was happening with this payment.
- The landlord had not verified her rent, so the UC Support Officer contacted the landlord to chase this information
- Once the landlord had sent the information, the DWP verified the rent and this was included in the next payment

The above case study shows the complexity of UC claim making, along with the additional support required. The total time the UC Support Officer spent with Mrs A was 5 hours over a total of 4 days.

8. Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan

- 8.1 Progress with our shared service's 'high level' Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan and Universal Credit Preparation Plan is to be monitored by Joint Committee, on a quarterly basis.

Updates on progress of both plans are provided at **Appendix 3** to this report. The action plan is fluid and flexible to respond to changes in welfare reform related priorities, changes and demands.

9. Strategic Priorities

- 9.1 **City of Lincoln: Let's drive economic growth and North Kesteven: Our economy and Our Community:** An understanding of Universal Credit and its wider impacts on City of Lincoln residents and arrears levels is important when reducing poverty and driving economic growth across the City. The aim of Universal Credit is to provide a simplified means tested benefits system, with the objective of avoiding the poverty trap, where there is a disincentive to work longer hours because of the loss of benefits and higher taxes.

9.2 **City of Lincoln: Let's drive economic growth and North Kesteven: Our economy and Our Community:** - A key role in reducing inequality by ensuring residents receive the benefits they are entitled to and providing money / debt advice. There are strategic priorities when engaging with those in receipt of Welfare Benefits, Digital Inclusion, Channel Shift/ Customer Experience, Financial Inclusion and Partnership Working are all key priorities as part of this report.

10. Organisational Impacts

10.1 **Finance:** There could be significant financial implications to City of Lincoln Council as set out in previous updates of this report.

10.2 **Legal implications inc Procurement Rules:** There are no direct Legal or Procurement implications arising from this report.

11. Risk Implications

11.1 The Council bears the risk of any rent arrears which are not fully recovered

12. Recommendation

12.1 Joint Committee notes this report – and that an update will be presented at the next meeting of this Committee, on 27th November 2018.

Key Decision No

Do the Exempt Information Categories Apply No

Call In and Urgency: Is the decision one to which Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply? No

Does the report contain Appendices? Yes

If Yes, how many Appendices? Appendix 1: Universal Credit Dashboard – City of Lincoln
Appendix 2: Universal Credit Dashboard – North Kesteven
Appendix 3: Welfare Reform Action Plan

List of Background Papers: No

Lead Officer: Rob Kay, Welfare Reform and Projects Officer,
Telephone 01522 873767

Average time spent with customers — **43 minutes**

Average age of customers — **43**

NK Only

19 ADS

7 ADS/PBS

12 PBS

PBS total

No answer — **40**

Contact info needed — **8**

No help wanted — **12**

April — June 18

UCINFO (01/04—30/06)

Total — **5,582**

As of **29/06/2018**

Council Tenants — **45**

UC DHPs (30/06/2018)

On-going — **11**

One-off — **1**

UC Housing NKDC as of 29/06/2018

45 UC cases

Now

Total Arrears - £14,986.03

Average Arrears - £333.02

Number of cases in arrears - 39

At Date of Claim

Total Arrears - £10,460.36

Average Arrears £237.74

Number of cases in arrears – 26

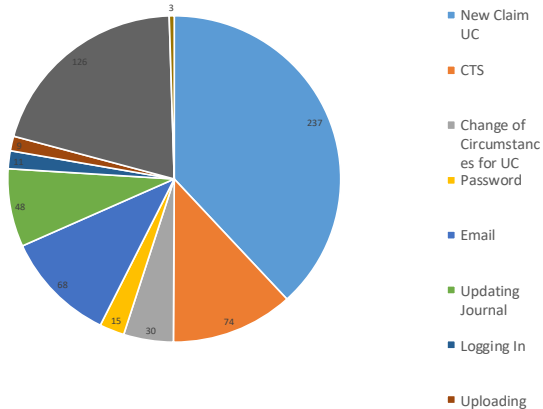
Cases where arrears have increased – 30

Cases where arrears have decreased – 10

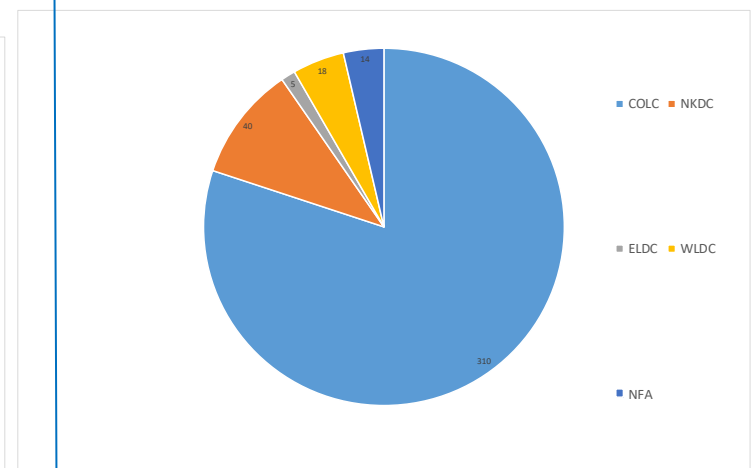
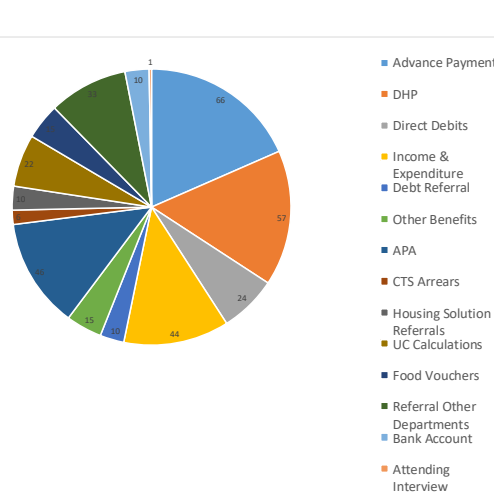
APA – 3

TPD – 1

ADS Total breakdown



PBS total breakdown



Key dates:

- Temporary Accommodation — **11 April**
- 2 Week HB Run On — **11 April**
- Newark — **09 May**
- Skegness — **13 June**
- Spalding — **11 July**
- Louth, Gainsborough and Boston — **12 September**
- Sleaford — **14 November**
- 3 or more Children Under UC — **January 19**

COLC

As of **28/06/2018:**

HB working age —
5,453

HB pensioners —
1,957

CTS working age &
pensioners — **8,788**

UC Customers CTS
— **534**

NKDC

As of **28/06/2018:**

HB working age —
2,525

HB pensioners —
1,873

CTS working age &
pensioners — **5,802**

UC Customers CTS
— **101**

National UC Stats

14/06/2018

National — **980,839**

COLC — **2,090**

NKDC — **619**

Postcode	Postcode Live date	Jobcentre
LN3 5, LN4 1, LN4 2, LN5 0, LN5 9, LN6 3, LN6 4, LN6 5, LN6 8, LN6 9	07/03/2018	Lincoln
NG23 7	09/05/2018	Newark
PE20 3	12/09/2018	Boston
LN10 6, LN4 3, LN4 4, NG32 3, NG34 0, NG34 4, NG34 7, NG34 8, NG34 9	14/11/2018	Sleaford



April — June 18

Average time spent with customers — **42 minutes**

Average age of customers — **41**

185 ADS

PBS total

No answer — **40**

32 ADS/PBS

Contact info needed — **8**

93 PBS

No help wanted — **12**

UCINFO (01/04 — 30/06)

Total — **5,582**

As of **30/04/2018**

Council Tenants — **421**

UC DHPs (30/06/2018)

On-going DHP — **21**

One-off DHP — **2**

UC Housing COLC as of 30/04/2018

264 arrears increased total of **£81,161.88** from date of claim

143 arrears decreased by **£31,152.11** from date of claim

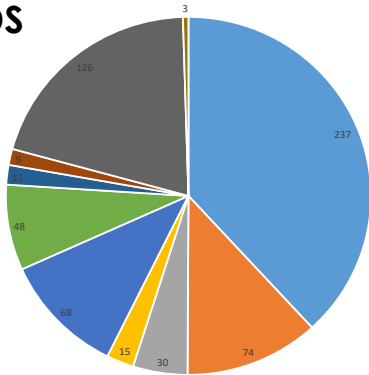
14 not in arrears or in credit

Total increase **£49,619.77** from dates of claim

Total arrears at point of claim was **£132,686.93**

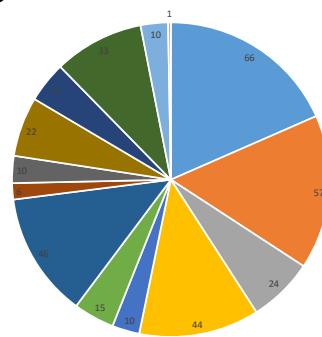
Total arrears as of **30/04/2018** is **£182,306.70**

ADS

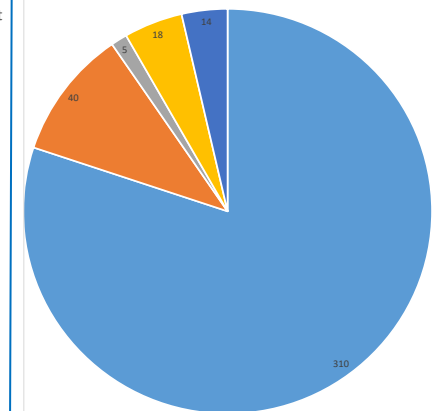


- New Claim UC
- CTS
- Change of Circumstances for UC
- Password
- Email
- Updating Journal
- Logging In
- Uploading

PBS



- Advance Payment
- DHP
- Direct Debits
- Income & Expenditure Debt Referral
- Other Benefits
- APA
- CTS Arrears
- Housing Solution Referrals
- UC Calculations
- Food Vouchers
- Referral Other Departments
- Bank Account
- Attending Interview



- COLC
- NKDC
- ELDC
- WLDC
- NFA

Key dates:

- Temporary Accommodation — **11 April**
- 2 Week HB Run On — **11 April**
- Newark — **09 May**
- Skegness — **13 June**
- Spalding — **11 July**
- Louth, Gainsborough and Boston — **12 September**
- Sleaford — **14 November**
- 3 or more Children Under UC — **January 19**

COLC

As of **28/06/2018**:

HB working age —
5,453

HB pensioners —
1,957

CTS working age &
pensioners — **8,788**

UC Customers CTS
— **534**

NKDC

As of **28/06/2018**:

HB working age —
2,525

HB pensioners —
1,873

CTS working age &
pensioners — **5,802**

UC Customers CTS
— **101**

42

COLC UC Stats

14/06/2018

National — **980,839**

COLC — **2,090**

NKDC — **619**

COLC UC Stats

14/06/2018

Employment — **769**

Not in employment
— **1,321**

COLC UC Stats

14/06/2018

Age

16-19 — **115**

20-24 — **447**

25-29 — **376**

30-34 — **272**

35-39 — **211**

40-44 — **186**

45-49 — **149**

50-54 — **142**

55-59 — **119**

60-65 — **58**

Over 65 — **0**

Unknown — **0**

COLC UC Stats by work condition

10/05/2018

Unknown or missing regime — **0**

Preparing for work — **31**

Planning for work — **40**

Working – no requirements — **383**

No work requirements — **232**

Working – with requirements — **294**

Searching for work — **1,113**

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
WR3	Analysis of any shared service staff training and development needs, identification of transferrable skills	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Moved to Q3 2017/18, and ongoing (was Quarter 2 2016/17)	<p>Update 4.5.16: Suggested insufficient information is available at this stage, so this analysis to move to same timescale alongside action WR2. Universal Credit training to staff (and other stakeholders) delivered prior to 30.11.15, and updates as required.</p> <p>Update 21.10.16: Suggested insufficient information is available at this stage, so this analysis to move to same timescale alongside action WR2.</p> <p>Update March 2017: As above – permanent WR&PO role in place – rollout of Full Service UC to be confirmed</p> <p>Update July 2017: Full service rollout announced and WR meetings at COL and NK have been re-introduced with Welfare Reform Lead chairing these meetings. Feed in from Vision 2020 – 2 projects Welfare Reform (WR) and Universal Credit (UC).</p> <p>Update November 2017: UCFS meetings have taken place at both sites – UC Planning document is being developed and will be completed in readiness for an update to CMT on 28 November.</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>Update November 2017: WR & UC meeting due to take place on 28 November with both COL and NK – presentations by 2 companies to show online UC calculation tool.</p> <p>Update November 2017: RB Business Plan for 2018/19 will be going to JC on 28 November – inclusion of training needs analysis</p> <p>Update January 2018: Expression of Interest advert has been sent to Shared Service Benefit Officer on 17/01/2018 for a seconded opportunity to be involved with UC Support Team project.</p> <p>Opportunity is ring fenced to HB Officers as an ongoing knowledge of HB/UC is essential</p> <p>Update May 2018: Expression of interest successful and 2 HB Officers have secured full time roles as UC Support Team Members.</p> <p>In post from 12 February 2018 receiving training and live with full service from 7 March 2018.</p> <p>Update July 2018: Test and learn approach is being reviewed during July, to look at original aims, objectives and outcomes so far.</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				Update July 2018: Outcome of review will form preparation for Full Service rollout for North Kesteven
WR4	Assess impacts of COL/NK funding changes regarding national UC rollout	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Ongoing	<p>Overall DWP and DCLG Admin Grants reduced for 2016/17 (for HB and CTS, respectively) and adjustment made to shared service budget.</p> <p>Update 21.10.16: DWP and DCLG Amin grants not yet known for 2017/18</p> <p>Update 27 February 2017: Universal Support 17/18 grant funding offer received for personal and digital support: COL = £4,107 NK = £1,028 This is broken down in to quarters – sign up required from S151</p> <p>Update 13 March 2017: Universal Support funding agreement signed by COL and NK S151</p> <p>Update 10 July 2017: Q1 performance against US funding: Digital support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 1 – target is 7 • NK = 0 – target is 5 Personal budgeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 4 – target is 5 </p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NK = 0 – target is 3 <p>Actions being taken – WR meetings arranged for August to remind all of responsibilities and requirement of funding – Vision 2020 meeting for COL, Customer experience board for COL, Digital inclusion meeting for NK</p> <p>Update: Q2 performance against US funding: Digital support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 9 – target is 9 • NK = 7 – target is 6 <p>Personal budgeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 4 – target is 6 • NK = 1 – target is 3 <p>1. Actions being taken – PBS and ADS are included in the UC Plan and will be a standing item on the WR and UC Planning meeting agendas so performance can be reported.</p> <p>Update: Q3 performance against US funding: Digital support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 15 – target is 7 • NK = 4 – target is 4 <p>Personal budgeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 4 – target is 4 • NK = 1 – target is 3

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>PBS is reliant on DWP referrals, these have not been coming through and this has been fed back in the quarterly MI reports.</p> <p>Update: Q4 performance against Universal Support (US) funding: Digital support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 15 – target is 7 • NK = 4 – target is 4 <p>Personal budgeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = 4 – target is 4 • NK = 1 – target is 3 <p>With the introduction of the UC Support team, the number of customers supported has increased significantly since full service rollout date.</p> <p>Update July 2018: 2017/18 – Hit 95% of the target for NKDC and 134% for COLC, meaning NKDC received full funding and COLC received additional 20%</p> <p>Update July 2018: Q1 2018/19 Target: ADS COLC 25; NKDC 8 PBS COLC 40; NKDC 12</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>Actual ADS COLC 217; NKDC 26 PBS COLC 125; NKDC 19</p> <p>Also assisted 5 from ELDC, 18 from WLDC and 14 NFA</p>
WR11	Training delivery plan for UC and USDL to be formulated	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Ongoing (was March 2015 – June 2015)	<p>Training/awareness sessions for various internal and external stakeholders underway.</p> <p>Update April 2017: WR&P Officer attendance at team meetings to advise on 17/18 national changes – including local CTS schemes</p> <p>Update July 2017: Ongoing for assessment staff with changes to legislation included in monthly QC checking – any fails will be picked up with individuals – ongoing and more than 1 staff member will be picked up in individual 1-1's and team meetings respectively. LCTS to be included in QC from September 2017 and undertaken by</p> <p>Update January 2018: As above</p> <p>More in depth Training will begin from Mid-February</p> <p>Update May 2018: 1-1 training has been provided to all Benefits Officer across the shared service – this has</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>covered the role of the UC Support Team and the impacts of recent legislation changes surrounding 2 week transition award of HB</p> <p>Update July 2018: Welfare Reform and Project Lead is based at NKDC 1 day per week to support Housing Benefit Officers</p>
WR13	Other opportunities for co-location to support USDL work identified	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Ongoing throughout 2015/16, 2016/17 and into 2017/18.	<p>Update 20.1.16: Discussions taking place with Sleaford and District Citizens Advice, for potential trial co-location in NKDC Offices, Sleaford.</p> <p>Update 4.5.16: 6-month trial of Citizens Advice in NKDC Offices commenced 3.5.16.</p> <p>Update: 24.10.16 Trial in NKDC has seen low numbers (23 clients in 5 months) with most referrals coming from DWP. CAML feel that this is positive and expected take-up to be slow. Have extended trial to March 2017</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with CA in Lincoln. Prices & options for accommodation and capital works have been supplied and CA are now looking at whether this presents a workable solution for their business.</p> <p>Update April 2017: CAML have extended their location at NKDC offices following successful trial.</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>Update July 2018: Welfare Reform and Project Lead will begin meetings with Sleaford Jobcentre plus to assist UC customers from Nov 2018</p>
WR15	Invest to Save monthly monitoring	Revenues and Benefits Manager	March 2018	<p>Update April 2017: This was the LCC Corporate Fraud funded project. From April 2017 this will be funded solely through the shared service.</p> <p>Update July 2017: Q1 performance is positive. CM attending invest to save meeting in August for a paper to go to LFO's on 31 August</p> <p>Update September 2017: LFO's have considered the invest to save paper and project plan – further meeting to take place in October 2017 for all LFO's to be in attendance and give steer for next steps / agreement of any joint working</p> <p>Update November 2017: LFO's have considered the invest to save paper and project plan – Manager service SPD review to be undertaken in April – with COL/WL leading on tender process. Managed service CTS review to be undertaken with tender as part of SPD process. COL/NK Invest to save project ongoing to 31 March 2018 for Business Rates, SPD and empty homes (agreement of RB Joint Committee)</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>Update January 2018: Managed Service Single Person Discount review to be undertaken from April 2018 to August 2018. Managed service CTS review is going back to LFO's for discussion as only WL, COL and NK would be interested and there could be significant impact on resources if this is undertaken at the same time as the SPD review. COL/NK Invest to save project for Business Rates has now ceased as the resource has been removed from this project. Current NDR staff will be picking this up as part of day-to-day working.</p> <p>Update May 2018: Managed Service Single Person Discount Review – successful procurement exercise this been undertaken with a supplier being contacted for contracts to be signed and access to system. Project is due to start in June 2018</p> <p>Update July 2018: SPD review has started with letters being issued to those customers identified as high risk. Review to be completed by end August 2018</p>
WR17	Quarterly updates to Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee on welfare reform strategy progress	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Quarterly throughout 2017/18	<p>Update 22.10.15: Updates presented to Joint Committee 8.9.15 and 24.11.15.</p> <p>Update 20.1.16: To be presented to Joint Committee 23.2.16.</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>Update 4.5.16: To be presented to Joint Committee 24.5.16.</p> <p>Updated 5.8.16: To be presented to Joint Committee 6.9.16.</p> <p>Updated: 21.10.16: To be presented to Joint Committee 22.11.16</p> <p>Updated April 2017: Decision taken not to provide updates for next 2 JC's due to minimal activity. Update from November to include UIC full service preparation.</p> <p>Updated September 2017: UC Full service and WR update to be issued to JC for 28 November and COL CMT on 14 November.</p> <p>Updated November 2017: As above, although CMT date amended to 28 November due to a number of updates received and outcome of autumn statement on 22 November.</p> <p>Updated January 2018: CMT have approved the formation of a UC Team</p> <p>Updated May 2018: UC progress and UC Support Team update to be provided at COL CMT on 29 May</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>2018, 12 June 2018 R&B Joint Committee and 18 June 2018 NKDC P&R OSP.</p> <p>Update July 2018: UC progress update to be provided at RB JC in September 2018 and NKDC P&R OSP on 25 September 2018</p>
WR27	Agreement to initial Universal Credit Partnership Delivery Agreement between COLC/NKDC and DWP	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	<p>2017/18 DP agreement to be finalised and in place – target by end March 2017.</p> <p>2018/19 – review Universal Support funding agreement</p> <p>New Action for 2019/20 – review Universal</p>	<p>Update 27 February 2017: Universal Support 17/18 grant funding offer received for personal and digital support: COL = £4,107 NK = £1,028 This is broken down in to quarters – sign up required from S151</p> <p>Update 13 March 2017: Universal Support funding agreement signed by COL and NK S151 Update 13 March 2017: Funding will need to be reviewed for 2018/19 and new agreement signed</p> <p>Update May 2018: 2018/19 funding agreements – have been agreed and signed, for both COL and NK.</p> <p>Update July 2018: COLC gained additional 20% USDL funding.</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
			Support funding agreement	Exceeded targets massively, further work undertaken with partnership manager to scrutinise support provided stats
WR28	Review of DHP procedures for COL + NK for 2016/17 and 2017/18	Benefits Team Leader (Lincoln	Prior to 1 st April 2017, and throughout remaining 2016/17 and 2017/18 via monthly monitoring	<p>Update March 2017: Policy for 17/18 reviewed and agreed.</p> <p>Update April 2017: Benefits Team Leader to meet monthly with respective Housing Teams and colleagues to discuss DHP. Plan in place for additional resource during renewal period – on track</p> <p>Update July 2017: Q1 Monitoring – on track for spending – no concerns identified.</p> <p>Update August 2017: CM attendance at Vision 2020 meeting to request transfer of DHP underspend in HRA to CTS – this was refused. Led to Bob asking for review of policy if we have underspend, are we too harsh? Meeting arranged with CM, LB, and Housing in September 2017. Meeting also arranged in September with NK Housing for potential bid to continue with 320k from NK HRA and general review of policy. LB will review policy for introduction of more UC customers and monthly changes.</p> <p>Update November 2017: Meetings held with Housing Teams to discuss budget and current spend – both</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>teams asked to review and return with proposals for remaining spending of both government and HRA funded: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COL = £174,966 (budget = • NK = £116,198 (budget = <p>Update January 2018: Meetings continue to be held with Housing Teams to discuss budget and current spend – both teams asked to continue to review awards and highlight cases in need of DHP.</p> <p>Update May 2018: Underspend for both COL and NK DHP for 17/18. DHP meetings being arranged for 18/19 across both sites – this will encompass other areas such as performance updates, review of eviction reasons etc</p> <p>Update July 2018: NKDC unallocated = £45,036.68 24/07/2018 from £126,693 COLC unallocated = £87,425.06 24/07/2018 from £208,624</p>
WR29	Monthly monitoring of 2017/18 Council Tax Support Schemes COL + NK	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Monthly, throughout 2017/18 as part of taxbase	Update July 2017: Ongoing through taxbase: COL = Overspend as Ctax increase as not included as part of modelling / budgeting NK = On track as per budget

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>Update November 2017: Ongoing through taxbase: COL = £7,483,735 (reduction from September of £70,080) – MTFS is £7,471,020 – total overspend of £12,715 NK = £5,127,738 – On track as per budget – reduction from September of £10,743</p> <p>Update November 2017: Ongoing through taxbase: COL = £7,418,927 (reduction from November of £64,808) – MTFS is £7,471,020 – total underspend of £52,093 NK = £5,120,670 – On track as per budget – reduction from November of £7,067</p> <p>Update May 2018: 18/19 scheme in place. Ongoing review through taxbases.</p> <p>2019/20 Scheme to start being considered in June 2018. Committee timetables in place.</p> <p>Update July 2018: 19/20 Schemes are currently being modelled with meetings planned with Chief Finance Officers and Leaders in early August. NKDC CMT taking place on 14 August 2018 with COL CMT on 21 August 2018.</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
WR30	Review of 2017/18 Council Tax Support Schemes COL + NK for 2018/19 scheme	Revenues and Benefits Manager	End July 2017	<p>Update July 2017: COL scheme has caused vulnerable customers to face hardship. Protection for vulnerable customers to be included in option for 18/169 scheme Increase in EHP awards has resulted in full 310k being spend – report to CMT to request transfer of DHP from HRA to EHP</p> <p>Update August 2017: DHP transfer declined by CMT – EHP to be awarded as Section 13A – relevant officers made aware.</p> <p>Update May 2018: 18/19 scheme in place. Ongoing review through taxbases.</p> <p>2019/20 Scheme to start being considered in June 2018. Committee timetables in place.</p> <p>Update July 2018: 19/20 Schemes are currently being modelled with meetings planned with Chief Finance Officers and Leaders in early August. NKDC CMT taking place on 14 August 2018 with COL CMT on 21 August 2018.</p>
WR31	Assessment of options for 2018/19 Council Tax Support Schemes	Revenues and Benefits Manager	End July 2017	<p>Update June 2017: Modelling for 18/19 schemes taking place. No modelling tool available for UC banding from Northgate. Unlikely to change UC for 18/19 – will</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
	<p>COL+NK – including links into UC</p> <p>New action – consider options for CTS schemes 2019/20</p>	<p>Revenues and Benefits Manager</p>	<p>Quarter 2 2017/18</p>	<p>review impacts and consider approach for 19/20 once we know facts and how UC is impacting on customers, service, collection etc.</p> <p>Update July 2017: COL scheme = Agreement for all options to be considered – support for protection of vulnerable customers</p> <p>NK Scheme = CM met with S151 Officer to discuss options – and steer on consultation. All options can be considered at this stage</p> <p>Update August 2017: COL Scheme = Agreement to all options to be considered as part of consultation – preference for protection for vulnerable and removal of family premium.</p> <p>Update September 2017: NK Scheme = CMT 6th September – request for presentation to Exec which CM has put together and is with S151 for agreement.</p> <p>CM has engaged team members for consultation process – web, comms, media teams and Critiqom are also aware in readiness for URL on site and issuing of letters and press release.</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

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Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
				<p>Update November 2017: NK Scheme = OSP P&R 13 November. Consultation ends 17 November – 372 respondents as at 3 November COL Scheme = consultation ends 10 November – 332 responds as at 8 November</p> <p>Update January 2018: Both Execs have approved the proposed CTS schemes and will be going to Council on 23rd January (COL) and 25th January (NK).</p> <p>Approved at Exec as follows: - COL – Protection for vulnerable and increase EHP to £20,000 NK – Reduce backdating to 3 months and continue with EHP of £20,000</p> <p>Update May 2018: 19/20 Scheme to start being considered in June 2018. Committee timetables in place.</p>
WR32	Produce annual COL/NK welfare reform report	Revenues and Benefits Manager	<p>November 2017</p> <p>November 2018</p>	<p>Update May 2018: 2018/19 Report – Complete and report has been approved by R&B Joint Committee on 20 February 2018</p> <p>Update May 2018: 2019/20 report required</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
WR33 Vision 2020	Preparing for Universal Support group to meet between COL and NK (working with partners as required)	Revenues and Benefits Manager as part of Vision 2020	From January 2015, and ongoing	<p>Updated April 2017: Was formation an development of USDL but WLDC have removed this work. UC to be managed by WR&P Officer for the shared service.</p> <p>Updated August 2017: CMT / Vision 2020 have agreed to the formation of a 'preparing for Universal Support' Group. To be managed by CM as part of Vision 2020 attendance and direct management to WR&P Officer</p> <p>Updated November 2017: Monthly meetings have been planned and include R&B, Housing, Customer Services, JCP – Comms teams will also be invited.</p> <p>Updated January 2018: Monthly meetings taking place alternate sites</p> <p>Updated May 2018: Monthly meetings taking place alternate sites</p> <p>Updated July 2018: Monthly meetings taking place alternate sites</p>
WR34 Vision 2020	Further Support for residents to adapt to welfare reform	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Ongoing throughout 2017/18 and beyond	<p>Updated July 2018: Update is the same each month.</p> <p>Vision 2020 performance update template provide all updates on this</p>

**APPENDIX 3: September 2018 - Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee – Welfare Reform Strategy Action Plan update
July 2018**

Ref.	Action	Responsible Officer/ Organisation	Target Date	Comments/ Updates
WR35 Vision 2020	Maintaining support for people moving to Universal Credit	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Ongoing throughout 2017/18 and beyond	<p>Updated July 2018: Update is the same each month.</p> <p>Vision 2020 performance update template provide all updates on this</p> <p>Links to WR33</p>
WR36	Analyse potential impacts of key welfare reform announcements from Budgets in 2017	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Ongoing throughout 2017/18 and beyond	<p>Updated July 2018: Update is the same each month.</p> <p>Vision 2020 performance update template provide all updates on this</p> <p>Links to WR34</p>

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SUBJECT:	WELFARE TEAM UPDATE
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT AUTHOR:	JOANNE CROOKES, CUSTOMER SERVICES MANAGER, CITY OF LINCOLN COUNCIL

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the activity undertaken and the outcomes achieved by the Welfare Advisers in the Revenues and Benefits shared service.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the previous financial year (2017-2018)
- 2.2 The Welfare Team is an integral part of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service. The team has 7.5 FTE advisers based in both Lincoln and Sleaford. The advisers deliver the service by agile working. They have the technology to enable them to work from home, from customer addresses, from outreach offices and council premises. They are able to tailor service delivery to the needs of the customer.
- 2.3 The team offer two distinct but closely linked services. Benefits Advice and Money Advice. The Benefits Advice Service offers a help-desk facility during council opening times. This is effectively a 'duty' officer who is available to answer customers' enquiries, book appointments and home visits; calculate individual entitlement to means-tested benefits and see drop-in customers if necessary for emergencies such as the provision of food larder vouchers. The advisers run a series of outreach sessions and see customers in office appointments and where necessary in their own homes
- 2.4 The Money Advice side of the service is operated under the administrative auspices of Community Money Advice and is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). The FCA require that there is a clear and distinct separation between the line management of staff giving regulated debt advice and the line management of staff who are responsible for the collection of income. As a result of this requirement the Welfare Team report to the Customer Services Manager at City of Lincoln Council.

3. Team performance

- 3.1 Performance data is collated quarterly and distributed to the Head of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service and housing management at both authorities. Information on money advice caseloads and debt levels are also monitored and reported through to Community Money Advice and the FCA
- 3.2 In future an annual report of this information will be presented to the joint committee
- 3.3 The team do not have performance targets as such. This is due to the nature of the role and the service that is provided. Many of the customers are very vulnerable and they present with a range of challenges. It is imperative that the welfare advisers are able to spend as long as necessary to provide the support that each individual needs to negotiate their benefit claim

4. Performance statistics

- 4.1 The team have been as busy as ever this year providing advice and support to some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged residents in the districts. In total the team have dealt with 5,484 customers for benefit related queries.
- 4.2 As well as advising people about the benefits they are entitled to claim the team also help with the completion of forms which can be difficult for customers to understand. Some of the forms are extremely lengthy and complex and without this assistance there is no doubt that some eligible people would be discouraged from applying and accessing their entitlements.
- 4.3 Assistance is given with every type of Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) benefit as well as Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) tax credits and local authority benefits. The team also advise on charitable awards and grants from a wide range of providers. There have been a number of successful applications to the Anglian Water Trust fund for example.
- 4.4 In the year 2017-2018 the team issued a total of 306 food vouchers for local community larders and food banks. This is often in response to a crisis or where claimants have been affected by delays in the processing of benefit claims. In these instances the team will also endeavour to help resolve the long-term issues affecting the individual's ability to afford to feed themselves and their families. In many cases this will result in the person becoming part of the money advice casework.
- 4.5 Additional benefits claimed by customers who have sought the advice and assistance of the Welfare Team are set out in the table overleaf. The figures are weekly amounts of benefit awarded. The amounts reported are actually in payment. Where customers qualify for a benefit but choose not to apply for it this amount is not counted as awarded.

Benefit Type	Weekly value awarded (£) NK District	Weekly value awarded (£) City of Lincoln
Attendance Allowance	11,102.35	4,702.65
Bereavement Benefits	50.00	59.11
Carers Allowance	375.60	398.51
Child Benefit	68.80	75.80
Child Tax Credit	218.92	1,322.55
Council Tax Discounts	5.50	11.36
Council Tax Support	953.35	2,039.94
DHP	328.50	1,713.43
Disabled band reduction (Ctax)	0	3.50
DLA Child	238.40	570.80
EHP	3.51	85.76
Employment Support Allowance	494.36	4,191.36
Housing Benefits	5,861.11	6,964.28
Income Support	62.48	469.90
Jobseekers Allowance	0	580.00
Maternity Allowance	0	134.76
Pension Credit	4,268.96	1,766.71
Personal Independence payment	3,842.85	7,727.70
Social Fund	0	0
State Retirement Pension	142.76	666.10
Working Tax Credit	34.91	263.88
Grants	227.05	0
Universal Credit	0	147.68
TOTAL value of additional income weekly	£23,392.80	£34,076.12
TOTAL value of additional income paid over 52 weeks	£1,216,425.60	£1,771,958.24
TOTAL value of additional income paid over 52 weeks for both districts in the Shared Service	£2,988,383.84	

4.6 It should be noted that there are many instances where people are advised that they do not qualify for anything. Many of the enquiries made will result in the team giving bad news about the likelihood of a benefit being awarded or explaining that a change in circumstances might bring an entitlement to an end.

4.7 In addition to the weekly amounts of benefit awarded to individuals and listed above at 4.5, in many cases customers have backdated awards or lump-sum payments. These payment are shown in the following table.

Benefit Type	Lump sum payments (£) NK District	Lump sum payments (£) City of Lincoln
Attendance Allowance	78,932.51	12,787.40
Bereavement Benefits	2,500	6,500
Carers Allowance	6,381	5,729.54
Child Benefit	2,067.60	0
Child Tax Credit	2,176.19	341.49
Council Tax Discounts	1,054.17	107.02
Council Tax Support	15,742.08	15,403.87
DHP	7,366.35	4,005.62
Disabled band reduction (Ctax)	2,355.70	12.60
DLA Child	1,790.45	1,780.10
EHP	109.76	129.34
Employment Support Allowance	3,847.60	50,601.56
Housing Benefits	974.46	24,883.31
Income Support	45.35	1,159.45
Pension Credit	27,411.28	24,113.75
Personal Independence payment	31,109.19	43,965.62
Social Fund	1,370	4,754
State Retirement Pension	142.76	0
Working Tax Credit	0	726.00
Grants	3,912.95	250.00
TOTAL value of lump sum payments	£194,210.96	£199,532.02
TOTAL value of lump sum payments to both districts	£393,742.98	

4.8 The statistics and figures of additional benefits claimed across the board are impressive when viewed in isolation. It is the individual cases and the incredible impact that the team can have which is particularly inspiring and gratifying

5 Money Advice Casework

5.1 A crucial service offered by the team is the FCA regulated debt advice which is the Money Advice caseworker support. 60% of the team are trained in debt casework and they offer a full service, starting with the preparation of the Standard Financial Statement (SFS). Customers' income and expenditure levels are explored to establish whether there are options to claim additional benefits or increase income in some other way.

5.2 Expenditure levels are explored to establish whether they reasonable and where possible these are reduced. Often this can be a discussion with the client about their expectations and their financial maturity. Sometimes it is a matter of looking at cheaper tariffs for utilities or taking a relatively simple step such as installing a water meter

- 5.3 All debts are tackled and the advisers will engage with creditors, negotiating where possible to agree affordable repayment plans. Where this is not feasible other options including Debt Relief Orders (DRO) and bankruptcy are explored. There is a registered and authorised DRO intermediary at both sites
- 5.4 In 2017-2018 the team received 272 referrals for Money Advice. 168 individuals and couples were signed up for casework and given support to deal with their debts. The total debt managed was £924,252.46 for 95 NK residents and £399,104.41 for 73 City of Lincoln residents.
- 5.5 In the North Kesteven District area 67% of the Money Advice clients are local authority tenants. In the City of Lincoln this figure is 61%
- 5.6 The total level of debt managed across the shared service was £1,323,356.87. 65% of debt casework clients are council tenants. While the average or mean debt for the clients assisted works out at £7,877 per client, there are vast differences between the individuals helped. Some people present with relatively small rent and Council Tax arrears and other clients have huge mortgage arrears and multiple loan and credit card debts.

6. Individual Successes

- 6.1 It is difficult to quantify how much the Welfare Team means to residents in terms of alleviating the stress and confusion caused by the difficulties in negotiating the benefit system, or dealing with debt which has got out of control. However it is worth looking at some more qualitative data to underline how the team impact on the circumstances of some of last year's key success stories.
- 6.2 Mr & Mrs M who were referred by Wellbeing. They were not really engaging with the Wellbeing Service and were panicking about him going into hospital and her not being able to cope. They both qualified for Attendance Allowance at £55.65 per week and we secured a Council Tax SMI of £336.75 for her.
- 6.3 Customer P was also referred by Wellbeing. She had never claimed anything in her life before. She was awarded Attendance Allowance at £83.10 per week; Pension Credit of £33.24 weekly, Housing Benefit of £20.57 per week and Council Tax Support of £5.84 weekly. Total increase in weekly income of £142.75 which is £7,423 per annum. She also received combined back payments of benefit totalling £1,416.80.
- 6.4 An example of a Money Advice client: He qualified for a Debt Relief Order but he couldn't afford the £90.00 fee. This stalled progress until Framework Housing, who are his landlords, agreed to pay the fee. This has reduced his debt by £5342.31.
- 6.5 An example of a successful charitable grant application; Mrs W lost her partner suddenly and she had no money to pay for the funeral. We successfully applied for the DWP funeral payment but she was still quite a bit

short of the full amount and we applied to the Dickinson Trust, a local charity in South Kyme. They awarded a cash grant of £500.00 to meet the shortfall.

6.6 Mr N had not received Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for over two years due to a “technical” error. He was extremely vulnerable. With our assistance successfully had ESA re-instated and was awarded a back payment for the missing two years of £16,600.

6.7 Mr & Mrs H were in receipt of DLA but had to swap to the new Personal Independence Payment. We helped with this and secured increased payments. The couple then became entitled to Pension Credit, full Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. Their extra income per week is as follows:
Pension Credit £151.52 (lump sum backdated payment of £606.08)
PIP for Mr H £28.30
PIP for Mrs H £57.30
Housing Benefit £7.37
Council Tax Support £2.18
Total £246.67pw

7 Future priorities

7.1 The team are getting to grips with the introduction of Universal Credit. This change has come on top of the problems associated with PIP replacing DLA. Many customers are needing support to manage the change in their relationship with the benefit system

7.2 It is early days but the future trend for the team is likely to see less assistance with benefit calculations and form completion and more help with personal budgeting and debt casework. We are also working closely with our Housing colleagues to manage the impact on rent arrears

8. Strategic Priorities

8.1 Both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven have a number of strategic priorities. Two that are directly affected by the work undertaken and the outcomes achieved by this team are :-

- Lincoln: “Let’s Reduce Inequality”.
- North Kesteven: “Our Community Our Economy”.

8.2 The Welfare Team plays a key role in reducing inequality by ensuring residents receive the benefits they are entitled to and providing money / debt advice.

8.3 Digital Inclusion, Channel Shift / Customer Experience, Financial Inclusion and Partnership Working are all key priorities for the shared service.

9. Organisational Impacts

9.1 Finance: There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

- 9.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules: There are no direct Legal or Procurement implications arising from this report.
- 9.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights: There are no direct implications arising from this report.
- 10. Risk Implications**
- 10.1 A Risk Register is in place for the Revenues and Benefits shared service.
- 11. Recommendations**
- 11.1 Note the performance information as set out in this report.

Is this a key decision? Yes/No

Do the exempt information categories apply? Yes/No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? Yes/No

How many appendices does the report contain? None

List of Background Papers: None

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SUBJECT:	NON-DOMESTIC RATE UPDATE
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT AUTHOR:	CLAIRE MOSES, REVENUES AND BENEFITS MANAGER

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide Members with an update on current issues within non-domestic rate.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 This report provides Joint Committee with an update on non-domestic rate to include reference to City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council together with West Lindsey District Council. The report is not intended to include non-domestic rate issues (for example, performance matters) covered in other reports before the Joint Committee.

3. Background

3.1 The report brought to the last meeting of the Joint Committee provided Members with an update on the following non-domestic rate issues:-

- Business Rates Pilot;
- Spring Budget 2017;
- Discretionary Relief Policy; and
- Local Government Finance Bill 2017.

3.2 Focus for both Government and billing authorities since the last meeting of Joint Committee has been on implementing the measures announced by the Chancellor in the Spring Budget on 8 March 2017, which have impacted on funding for reliefs during 2017/18 through to 2020/21. The latest position on all three measures is covered in this report.

3.3 Additional updates are provided in this report and will update on the following non-domestic rate issues: -

- Business Rate Pilot – 100% Business Rate Retention in 2018/19; and
- Spring Statement 2018.

4. Spring Budget 2017

4.1 Supporting Small Business Relief Scheme – 2017/18 to 2020/21

This relief was made available to those ratepayers who faced a large increase as a result of the loss of small business or rural rate relief. The transitional relief scheme does not provide support in respect of changes in reliefs. Therefore, those ratepayers who lost some or all of their small business or rural rate relief, may have faced very large percentage increases in bills from 1 April 2017.

To support these ratepayers, the Supporting Small Businesses Relief Scheme ensured that the increase per year in the bills of these ratepayers is limited to the greater of:-

- A percentage increase p.a. of 5%, 7.5%, 10%, 15% and 15% from 2017/18 to 2020/21; all plus inflation. Unlike the transitional relief scheme, for the first year of the scheme, the percentage increase is taken against the bill for 31 March 2017 after small business rate relief or rural rate relief; or
- A cash value of £600 per year (£50.00 per month). The cash minimum increase ensures that those ratepayers paying nothing or very small amounts in 2016/17 after small business rate relief are brought in to paying something.

Billing authorities were expected to use their discretionary powers under Section 47 Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant the relief. In doing so, they will be compensated for the cost of granting the relief through a Section 31 grant from Government.

The number of hereditaments that have been identified for 2018/19 and have benefitted from the scheme as at 30 June 2018 for each of the three authorities, is as follows:-

Loss of small business relief – 2018/19

Authority	No. identified	No responded	Total award
City of Lincoln	8	5	£7,007
North Kesteven	23	19	£24,552
West Lindsey	26	15	£20,201

Once this relief had been announced, officers manually adjusted accounts – this has ensured those ratepayers who faced large increases as a result of the loss of small business or rural rate relief, are not left waiting for relief to be awarded.

4.2 Support for Pubs Scheme – 2017/18 to 2020/22

This relief is for pubs that have a rateable value of below £100,000. Under the scheme, eligible pubs receive up to a £1,000 discount on their bill for 2017/18. Billing authorities were expected to use their discretionary powers under Section

47 Local Government Finance Act 1988 to grant the relief. In doing we will be compensated for the cost of granting the relief through a Section 31 grant from Government. If the balance outstanding is less than £1,000 the amount awarded will be for the full amount outstanding.

During quarter 1 of 2018/19, Officers identified those ratepayers that may be entitled to relief and sent application forms. By doing so, ratepayers can declare whether any relief awarded would not exceed the state aid limit. The number of application forms returned as at 30 June 2018 were as follows: -

Support for Pubs Scheme – 2018/19

Authority	No. identified	No. awards	Total award
City of Lincoln	63	22	£22,000
North Kesteven	40	31	£28,793
West Lindsey	59	29	£26,118

At the meeting of this Committee, on 20 February 2018, clarification was provided with regards to the percentage of relief awarded against the number of pubs identified. There are a number of factors to be considered when awarding the reliefs, such as whether the pub is subject to state aid. Whilst the number of pubs with a rateable value below £100,000 have been identified, officers will not know whether these pubs will be subject to state aid until forms are returned. If a form has not been returned, officers have sent reminders and encouraged pubs to apply for the relief.

4.3 Discretionary Relief Scheme

A £300m discretionary fund over four years from 2017/18 through to 2020/21, to support those businesses that faced the steepest increases in their business rate bills as a result of the recent revaluation, has been established. The intention is that every billing authority is provided with a share of the £300 million to support their local businesses. Billing authorities are expected to use their share of the funding to develop their own discretionary relief schemes to deliver targeted support to the most hard-pressed ratepayers.

The £300m covers the four years from 2017/18; the proposed breakdown being:-

- £175m in 2017/18
- £85m in 2018/19
- £35m in 2019/20
- £5m in 2020/21

2018/19 Scheme

Letters were sent to the Chief Financial Officers of each Billing Authority on 28 April 2017 to confirm the grant distributions, and for 2018/19 the grant distributions for the three authorities, is as follows:-

- City of Lincoln £96,000
Council:
- North Kesteven DC: £91,000
- West Lindsey DC: £76,000

It had been proposed that the agreed Option for 2017/18 be applied to future years but with lower amounts to be used in the 'award column'. It had also previously been agreed for the decision regarding the proposed scheme for 2018/19 to be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer for final decision.

During quarter 1 of 2018/19, Officers have undertaken a number of exercises to correctly identify those ratepayers that may be entitled to relief and calculated the cost of relief for all businesses affected by the revaluation, whereby the 2018/19 charge has increased as a result.

Since 2017/18, the number of accounts identified for all 3 districts have decreased, and as a result, the value of relief awarded is as follows: -

- City of Lincoln – this is a banded scheme. The award has remained the same for all bands, with the exception of those facing an increase of between £25 and £500 – the relief to be awarded for 2018/19 has increase from 50% to 70% - providing additional support to those ratepayers. This is shown in **Appendix 1**.
- North Kesteven – this is a banded scheme. The award has remained the same for the first 2 bands, but all others have reduced to 80% of the 2017/18 award. This is shown in **Appendix 2**.
- West Lindsey – this is a percentage reduction scheme, with all identified ratepayers receiving a 50% reduction – this is a decrease from 2017/18 of 80%.

Chief Finance Officers have delegated authority to approve the 2018/19 scheme, and as a result, the relief is currently being awarded to all accounts identified and ratepayers will be issued with a decision notice and letter of explanation. This is much earlier than for the 2017/18 scheme.

In doing this, ratepayers can declare whether any relief awarded would not exceed the state aid limit.

An update on the number of application forms returned, and awards made will be verbally provided at the next meeting of this Committee. However, the table below shows the number of accounts identified and the total cost of relief for both 2017/18 and 2018/19 for comparison purposes.

New Discretionary Relief Scheme – 2017/18 and 2018/19 comparison:

Authority – City of Lincoln	No. identified	Total awards made	Total award (£)	Current not spent (£)
2017/18	675	413	£137,981	£60,019
2018/19	346	-	£90,668	£5,332

Authority – North Kesteven	No. identified	Total awards made	Total award (£)	Current not spent (£)
2017/18	540	339	£127,585	£53,406
2018/19	278	-	£87,510	£3,490

Authority – West Lindsey	No. identified	Total awards made	Total award (£)	Current not spent (£)
2017/18	329	217	£105,004	£52,996
2018/19	197	-	£75,764	£236

5. Business Rate Pilot – 100% Business Rates Retention in 2018/19 – 75% in 2019/20

- 5.1 In 2018/19 the both councils along with the other Lincolnshire Districts, Lincolnshire County Council and North Lincolnshire Council successfully bid to become one of ten successful 100% Business Rates Retention Pilots. This means that for 2018/19 both Councils will receive 60% of business rates growth, above the baseline positions, with 40% allocated to the County Council (under 50% retention the funding were 50% Central Government, 40% City of Lincoln Council and 10% Lincolnshire County Council). Crucially the pilot scheme includes a 'no detriment' clause meaning that no authority shall receive less than if it was operating under the current 50% retention scheme.
- 5.2 Based on an assessment of the amount of Business Rates that are expected to be collected during 2018/19 the additional resources currently estimated to be retained through the pilot is £18.6m of which £1.4m is attributable to the City of Lincoln and £1.4m attributable to North Kesteven.
- 5.3 Although the pilot bids were only awarded for a one year period the 2018/19 Local Government Finance Settlement promised a further round of new pilots in 2019/20.
- 5.4 Prior to the summer recess the Government took the opportunity to announce it's plans for the 2019/20 Business Rates Retention Pilots. The main points were as follows:

- All authorities that have not already been awarded pilot status for 2019/20 can apply, including the 2018/19 pilots;
- The 2019/20 pilots will be at 75% Business Rates Retention (i.e. lower than the 100% pilots of 2018/19);
- The 'no detriment' clause applied to 2017/18 and 2018/19 Pilots, will not apply to Pilots set up for 2019/20;
- There will be a Safety Net set at 95%, to reflect the additional risk locally that 75% retention introduces, and this will apply pilot wide and not to individual authorities; and no levy will be paid;
- The Pilot programme in 2019/20 is likely to be smaller than the programme in 2018/19 (i.e. ten pilot areas, plus London plus the original five 2017/18 pilots);
- Successful pilots would last for one year up to the end of March 2020 (i.e. in April 2020 it is intended that 75% is rolled out nationally); and
- Bids are to be submitted by 25th September 2018.

It is worth noting that Devolution Pilot areas and the London Borough Pilot have been automatically allowed to continue on a 100% basis in 2019/20 and with their 'no detriment' clause in place.

- 5.5 The existing 2018/19 Lincolnshire pilot members are now assessing the benefits and any risks associated with a 75% pilot along with the possibility of widening the pilot to include North East Lincolnshire. LG Futures have been commissioned to review the latest publicly available Business Rate projections in order to ascertain whether they were likely to reflect further growth in the business rate base or were predicting a decline in business rate collection (potential to the safety net) which could be a risk to any pilot area. Initial projections of a 75% pilot based on the current pilot member authorities indicates that a further £9.9mm of business rates could be retained in the County during 2019/20. Widening the pilot to include North East Lincolnshire would increase the additional available funds to £10.3m. If the pilot bid is approved and these additional funds materialise they will be available to be distributed across Lincolnshire/Greater Lincolnshire on an agreed basis. Without the pilot bid these funds would continue to go back to Central Government as currently.

A report is currently being prepared to be presented to the Chief Executives meeting on 10th September to seek approval to submit a bid for 2019/20 pilot status and to agree which of the authorities should be included in that bid.

- 5.6 As part of the bid submission, a request will be made to form a Lincolnshire business rate pool should the 100% BR bid not be approved. The report to the Chief Executives meeting will determine which authorities will be included in this pool.

6. Strategic Priorities

6.1 Both City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven DC have a number of strategic priorities. Two that have an impact on the Non-Domestic Rate Service are:-

- City of Lincoln Council: “Let’s Reduce Inequality”.
- North Kesteven DC: “Our Community and Our Economy”.

6.2 Both authorities look to protect the poorest people. The Non-Domestic Rate Service is mindful of the strategic priorities when engaging with business ratepayers as they look to recover the business rate. Digital Inclusion, Channel Shift, Financial Inclusion and Partnership Working are all key priorities for the shared service.

6.3 At the City of Lincoln Council, a strategic priority that underpins the authority’s vision for 2020 is ‘*Let’s reduce inequality*’; within which, there is the aspiration ‘*Let’s help people succeed*’. To achieve this aspiration, there is to be examination of the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy. This will involve an exploration of how the city council’s Discretionary Rate Relief Policy could be used to create employment opportunities for residents.

7. Organisational Impacts

7.1 Finance

No direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

No direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.3 Land, property and accommodation

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

7.4 Human Resources

There are no direct implications arising from this report.

7.5 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights (including the outcome of the EA attached, if required).

The equality implications have been considered within this report. In bringing forward any change to the existing criteria for awarding discretionary relief, consideration will be given as to whether a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

7.6 Significant Community Impact

There is no change in policy / strategy or the way the service is being delivered.

7.7 Corporate Health and Safety implications

There are no corporate Health and Safety implications.

8. Risk Implications

8.1 A Risk Register is in place for the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service and is monitored by the Shared Service Senior Management.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Members are requested to note this report.

Is this a key decision? Yes / No

Do the exempt information categories apply? Yes / No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? Yes / No

How many appendices does the report contain?

2
Appendix 1 – City of Lincoln Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme 2018/19
Appendix 2 – North Kesteven Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme 2018/19

List of Background Papers: None

Lead Officer: Claire Moses, Revenues and Benefits Manager
Telephone: 01522 873764

CITY OF LINCOLN DISCRETIONARY RELIEF SCHEME 2018/19

Increase in rate bill following the revaluation by comparing the 2017/18 bill with 2018/19 bill	Amount of extra relief they would receive under the scheme	No. of properties affected	Cost of scheme
Up to £25	100%	34	£535
£25 to £500 bill increase	70%	211	£31,832
£501 to £1,000 bill increase	£300	54	£16,200
£1,001 to £2,000 bill increase	£650	29	£18,850
£2,001 to £3,000 bill increase	£1,050	9	£9,450
£3,001 to £4,000 bill increase	£1,500	6	£9,000
£4,001+ bill increase	£1,600	3	£4,800
Total		346	£90,668
Surplus from budget of £96,000			£5,332

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NORTH KESTEVEN DISCRETIONARY RELIEF SCHEME 2018/19

Increase in rate bill following the revaluation by comparing the 2017/18 bill with 2018/19 bill	Amount of extra relief they would receive under the scheme	No. of properties affected	Cost of scheme
Up to £25	100%	1	£4
£25 to £500 bill increase	50%	158	£17,546
£501 to £1,000 bill increase	£240	58	£13,920
£1,001 to £2,000 bill increase	£520	19	£9,880
£2,001 to £3,000 bill increase	£840	16	£13,440
£3,001 to £4,000 bill increase	£1,200	7	£8,400
£4,001+ bill increase	£1,280	19	£24,320
Total		278	£87,510
Surplus from budget of £91,000			£3,490

SUBJECT:	HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS UPDATE
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
REPORT AUTHOR:	CLAIRE MOSES, REVENUES AND BENEFITS MANAGER (SHARED SERVICE)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee with an update on the recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out how officers intend tackling the outstanding Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments debts, as well as detailing the scope for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Housing Benefit debt recovery health check.

3. Background

- 3.1 Housing Benefit overpayments can occur for a variety of reasons;
- Customers not promptly notifying of a change of circumstances affecting their entitlement to HB;
 - Delays in re-assessment of HB once a change has been reported to the Benefits Officer;
 - Fraudulently-claimed HB;
 - Error made in assessment of HB by the local authority; and
 - Error made by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Her Majesty Revenues & Customs (HMRC) in one of the benefit or incomes used in the assessment of Housing Benefit entitlement.

- 3.2 Due to the nature of the relatively large amounts of HB being paid over an extended period, individual overpayments can be sizeable and for some debts, these take many years to recover at standard weekly rate deductions from ongoing HB entitlement and DWP benefits.

4. Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) – Overpayment Review – April 2018

- 4.1 In April 2018, the DWP's Housing Delivery Division (HDD) Performance Development Team (PDT) conducted an end to end review of the Shared Service Housing Benefit overpayment and debt recovery process.

- 4.2 The HDD team met with the Head of Service and Revenues & Benefits Manager to discuss the scope of the review and current processes within the team to identify and recovery overpayments.
- 4.3 As a result of the scoping meeting, it was agreed that the PDT consultants would carry out an end to end on-site overpayment process review for two days. This was undertaken at City Hall, with the PDT meeting a number of key staff – including senior management, team leaders, benefits officers, appeal officers and members of the recovery team. The review was structured to include: -
- Analysis of the existing debt provision;
 - Specific case sampling;
 - Interviews with staff;
 - Process observations;
 - Prevention of debt; and
 - Information feedback.
- 4.4 During the two days, senior management highlighted the targeted work which had already been undertaken in relation to overpayment recovery. At the last meeting of this Committee, Officers advised an action plan was in place to reduce the number of overpayments. The following actions were undertaken during quarter 3 and 4 of 2017/18: -
1. During November and December 2017, the Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Officer completed a review of all City of Lincoln overpayments which were being recovered via ongoing Housing Benefit. The aim of the review was to contact those customers to increase the weekly repayment figure or, where the overpayment was low, to seek payment in full. As a result of this work, the number of customers with an outstanding overpayment not at sundry debt stage decreased from 1,006 to 874. The Officer has continued to review the ongoing and new cases on a quarterly basis to ensure effective and proportionate managed arrangements are in place
 2. From January 2018, the recovery officer began a review of the North Kesteven cases, in particular the older cases which were at 'write off' stage – with a view for a final decision to be made and for these overpayments to be written off. As a result of this, there has been a reduction in the number of overpayments not at sundry debt stage. Work has been undertaken to action all historical write off's which had been approved but not cleared on the Benefits System.

The Officer has also reviewed all cases currently being recovered via ongoing Housing Benefit, using the same approach as for City of Lincoln (point 1 above). This has resulted in the number of customers with an outstanding overpayment not at sundry debt stage decreasing from 558 to 455.
 3. During Quarter 4, a detailed analysis of cases at sundry debtor stage was due to be undertaken. The work that was being undertaken up to December 2017 was being absorbed by the existing members of the recovery team. It was intended for an Expression of Interest exercise to be undertaken in December 2017, however, due to a number of other work pressures, staffing changes and changes in Government schemes, the work was temporarily stopped. Officers have now reallocated resources allowing recruitment into a dedicated role, as

detailed in section 5.4 of this report.

5. Actions during Quarter 1 2018/19

- 5.1 As a result of the review, the PDT provided officers with a report detailing the findings and recommendations, this was provided at the last meeting of this committee. These findings have formed the HB Overpayment Recovery Action Plan shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 5.2 The PDT identified some good practices whilst conducting the review, as well as acknowledging the shared service has already recognised work that needed to be done – such as: -
- Identifying old debtors – reviewing the status of recovery and moving the recovery stage forward;
 - Filling the Expression of Interest for a Housing Benefit Overpayment recovery officer; and
 - Identifying debtors suitable to be referred to the DWP as part of their Debt Service pilot.
- 5.3 The PDT put forward eleven recommendations of which nine have been included in the HB Overpayment Recovery action plan. These are: -
- Review current timeline for issuing of reminders;
 - Review of diary dating process;
 - Process in place to review the level of benefit claw back;
 - Consideration of claimant capital as recovery method;
 - Introduction of a telephone rota within the recovery team;
 - Analysis and understanding of management information (MI);
 - Targeted activity for highest and oldest debts;
 - Communicating the importance of recovery to all staff so they understand their role; and
 - Collaboration between staff and the HB recovery team – to share achievements and discuss areas for improvement;
- 5.4 During May 2018, an advertisement for 1 Full Time Equivalent Housing Benefit Recovery Officer (fixed term) was sent as an expression of interest which was ring-fenced to Housing Benefit Officers. The successful candidate was appointed in Mid-May, who has experience in overpayment recovery and started to work with the Team Leader in late May to review the recommendations from the PDT and to form the action plan.

The PDT returned on 15 June to provide a verbal update to all staff involved in the review. The action plan then commenced from 18 June 2018.

6. Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery action plan

6.1 The action plan is shown in **Appendix 1**. This action plan is being used as a working document and is providing the HB Overpayment team with a clear direction for the work which is to be undertaken during the next nine months.

This action plan is updated regularly and will be provided in future committee reports to show the progress which is being made.

6.2 A number of key actions have been undertaken already: -

- ✓ Action 1 to 4: These are covered earlier in the report;
- ✓ Action 5: Working arrangements – objectives and aims set for the HB Overpayment Recovery team;
- ✓ Action 7: Management Information spreadsheet set up;
- ✓ Action 9: Staff awareness of the importance of overpayment recovery;
- ✓ Action 10: Benefits Officers training took place to improve confidence when discussing overpayment with customers;
- ✓ Action 11 & 12: Overpayment stages broken down to get an understanding of who is involved at each stage, alongside the work needed for the recovery to be successful;
- ✓ Action 12: Various methods of recovery being utilised;
- ✓ Action 13, 16 & 17: Targeted review of highest and oldest debts – sourcing the most effective recovery method;
- ✓ Action 20 & 21: Overpayments over 4 months where no action has been taken, passed to HB Overpayment recovery team to work on;
- ✓ Action 2: DWP Debt Service is being utilised – with positive outcomes – attachment of earnings;
- ✓ Action 24, 33 & 34: Write off process has been reviewed and write offs are undertaken regularly
- ✓ Action 25: Agreement with NK for overpayments created for a value of £10 and under, where the only method of recovery would be invoice, are to be classed as 'uneconomical to recover' and sent for automatic write off;
- ✓ Action 35: Review of old debts from Lincoln Civica system are being reviewed; and
- ✓ Action 36: Designated Overpayments telephone line set up for customer contact.

6.3 The action plan will continue to be monitored by the Revenues and Benefits Manager, and forms part of 1-1 meetings with the Benefit Team Leader and the HB Overpayment Recovery Team. As part of these meetings, recovery methods are constantly being reviewed, along with the effectiveness of the work undertaken by the team.

7. Financial outcomes – quarter 1 2018/19

7.1 As part of the formation of the HB Overpayment project, Officers have reviewed all recovery methods available for all stages of debt. The stages are have broken down as follows: -

- Overpayments recovered from ongoing Housing Benefit;
- Overpayments at sundry debtors less than 4 months old;
- Overpayments at sundry debtors over 4 months old; and
- Write off.

As a result, Officers are now able to have a detailed understanding of what stage debts are at and, at a glance, whether the debts are increasing or decreasing, and where resource allocation is needed.

7.2 Since the project started in June 2018, there has been some significant improvements. Key information is broken down as follows: –

City of Lincoln:

	Outcome	Comments
✓	Total value of outstanding overpayments has decreased by £58,211	Total overpayments at 31 May 2018 were £4,180,532 – this has now reduced to £4,122,320
✓	Number of overpayments at *clawback stage have increased from 1,664 to 1,715	Staff training has been positive – staff are setting clawbacks at first point of contact with customers
✓	Value of overpayments at clawback stage have decreased by £63,086	Staff training has been positive - clawback values are higher, with staff undertaken income and expenditure assessments to ascertain appropriate level
✓	Number of overpayments at sundry debtors less than 4 months old has decreased by 57	Successful introduction of cut-off of 4 months – anything older than this will go to the HB Overpayment recovery team for action. Workload adjusted for member of staff undertaking this work – to ensure they can concentrate on these debts, and these debts only.
✓	Value of overpayments at sundry debtor stage has decreased by £47,203	As above
x	Number of overpayments at sundry debtor over 4 months old has increased by 61	The 4 month cut-off has resulted in more debts coming across to the HBOP team. Within these debts, also includes: - ✓ the debt recovery service action whereby, 247 cases have been successfully

		<p>identified for attachment of earnings. As a result of this, once in place, the level of recovery will be much higher than the local authority could have recovered.</p> <p>✓ Old system (Civica) overpayments are being reviewed</p>
x	Value of overpayments at this stage has increased by £52,088	<p>As above</p> <p>Once the attachment of earnings starts, this figure will be expected to reduce.</p>

***Clawback is where an overpayment can be recovered by reducing ongoing Housing Benefit entitlement**

North Kesteven:

	Outcome	Comments
✓	Total value of outstanding overpayments has decreased by £21,779	Total overpayments at 31 May 2018 were £1,760,880 – this has now reduced to £1,739,101
✓	Number of overpayments at clawback stage have increased from	Staff training has been positive – staff are setting clawbacks at first point of contact with customers
✓	Value of overpayments at clawback stage have decreased by £17,763	Staff training has been positive - clawback values are higher, with staff undertaken income and expenditure assessments to ascertain appropriate level
✓	Number of overpayments at sundry debtors less than 4 months old has decreased by 17	Successful introduction of cut-off of 4 months – anything older than this will go to the HBOP recovery team for action. Workload adjusted for member of staff undertaking this work – to ensure they can concentrate on these debts, and these debts only.
✓	Value of overpayments at sundry debtor stage has creased by £8,256	As above

x	Number of overpayments at sundry debtor over 4 months old has increased by 18	The 4 month cut-off has resulted in more debts coming across to the HBOP team. Within these debts, also includes: - ✓ The debt recovery service action whereby, 111 cases have been successfully identified for attachment of earnings. As a result of this, once in place, the level of recovery will be much higher than the local authority could have recovered.
x	Value of overpayments at this stage has increased by £4,239	As above Once the attachment of earnings starts, this figure will be expected to reduce.

7.3 It is important to note, that whilst the value of overpayments outstanding is decreasing, staff are still creating overpayments – through delays in changes in circumstances being processed – these delays can be caused by customers, the DWP or by ourselves.

However, the rate of recovery of the overpayments is exceeding the creation of overpayments – the performance report presented at this committee shows an in period collection rate of 107.66% for City of Lincoln and 136.61% for North Kesteven (paragraph 4.15 of the Performance Update report)

The measure of success for this piece of work will be to ensure all overpayments are being recovered, using the variety of recovery methods available, and for those where recovery is not a viable option, a decision is made with regards to next stage such as write off. As a result, officers are confident the level of outstanding debt will reduce, the remaining debt will be at an effective recovery stage. Overpayments will continue to be created, due to delays in customer notification and the local authority delay in processing, however, recovery of these debts will be undertaken with immediate effect and will be reviewed regularly to ensure recovery continues.

8. Strategic Priorities

8.1 Both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven have a number of strategic priorities. Two that have an impact on the Revenues and Benefits Service are:-

- Lincoln: “Let’s Reduce Inequality”.
- North Kesteven: “Our Community and Our Economy”.

8.2 Both authorities look to protect the poorest people. The Benefits Service plays a key role in reducing poverty and disadvantage by ensuring residents receive the benefits they are entitled to and providing money / debt advice. The Revenues Section are also mindful of the strategic priorities when engaging with business ratepayers as they recover the business rate. Digital Inclusion, Channel Shift, Financial Inclusion and Partnership Working are all key priorities for the shared service.

9. Organisational Impacts

9.1 Finance: There would be a positive financial implication arising from this report in relation to the reduction in outstanding Housing Benefits overpayments.

9.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules: There are no direct Legal or Procurement implications arising from this report.

9.3 Land, property and accommodation: There are no direct implications arising from this report.

9.4 Human Resources: There are no direct implications arising from this report.

9.5 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights (including the outcome of the EA attached, if required) – There are no direct Equality, Diversity or Human Rights implications arising from this report.

9.6 Significant Community Impact: There is no change in policy / strategy or the way the service is being delivered.

9.7 Corporate Health and Safety implications: There are no corporate Health and Safety implications.

10. Risk Implications

10.1 A Risk Register is in place for the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service.

11. Recommendation

11.1 Members are asked to note this report and note that an update will be brought to Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee on 27 November 2018; and

Is this a key decision? ~~Yes~~/No

Do the exempt information categories apply? ~~Yes~~/No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? ~~Yes~~/No

How many appendices does the report contain?

Two

Appendix 1: Housing Benefit Overpayment Action Plan

List of Background Papers:

None

Lead Officer:

Claire Moses, Revenues and Benefits Manager
(Shared Service)
Telephone (01522) 873764

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Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Action Plan – 2018/19

Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
1	Expression of interest to be issued to staff	Benefits Team Leader (BTL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email to all Housing Benefit Officers with expression of interest details – start date 18 June 2018, after HDD report 	08.05.18	17.05.18	Completed
2	Management Information to be set up and agreed	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BTL to speak with Recovery and Systems Team Leaders to ascertain what MI is available on Northgate system 	18.06.18	Weekly for team Monthly for reporting	Completed – MI spreadsheet set up and completed monthly
3	Review of HDD Findings	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HDD report to be reviewed by BTL and R&B Manager to set action plan 	26.05.18	18.06.18 and then weekly	HBOP Plan agreed and implemented
4	Review of Housing Benefit Debt Service project	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Login to online forum to read through the guidance and 	08.06.18	Monthly	Completed

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> experiences of other teams • Check data download table 			
5	Agree working arrangements for HBOP officers	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To liaise with Recovery Team Leader to discuss current working arrangements and processes for sundry debts 	08.06.18	Monthly	Monthly meeting in dairies and taking place
6	Meet with successful HBOP officer	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a remit of the role and gain input into creation of action plan 	08.06.18	Monthly	Remit of role to be reviewed monthly at 1-1
7	Set up MI spreadsheet	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MI spreadsheet to provide baseline stats as at 31 May 2018 • To be completed each month to give comparison figures • MI details to be gathered are further down in the action plan for each stage of debt 	01.06.18	Monthly	Completed

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
8	Recovery method flowchart	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To produce a recovery method flowchart which clearly shows preferred recovery method routes (taking into account recommendations from HDD regarding capital, review of methods etc) 	08.06.18	Monthly	To be reviewed monthly to ensure fit for purpose
Creation of overpayments						
9	Understanding the importance of recovery (HDD recommendation 10)	BTL's and Recovery Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication of the work and action plan is needed from the outset at benefit and recovery team meetings. Staff need to understand debt recovery is part of their role and understand the level of debt and importance of recovering this 	30.06.18	Monthly	<p>Complete: BTL and HBOP to attend Team Meetings to speak with staff about the project and the importance of recovery</p> <p>12.07.18 – Meeting with NK staff took place</p>

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
10	Benefits Officer training	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidence in discussing overpayments with customers Setting appropriate arrangements 	30.06.18	Monthly	Effectiveness of training to be reviewed at team meetings (discussion with staff) along with reviewing relevant stats
11	Review diary dating process (HDD recommendation 2)	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure consistent approach to diary dating including how and when this should be done. Removal of use of outlook? Use of Northgate diary suite? Who should be reviewing the diary date? The Benefits Officer or the HBOP Officer? 	30.06.18	Monthly	<p>Complete: Diary date report to be reviewed by HBOP team to ensure it is being used to full capacity</p> <p>Spreadsheet set up and saved in LINK drive to ensure all staff have access and can review</p>
12	Consider claimant capital as recovery method (HDD recommendation 4)	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital to be considered before recovery from ongoing benefit or payment arrangement 	08.06.18		To be included as part of the HBOP recovery flowchart

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
Overpayments recovered from ongoing Housing Benefit						
13	Monthly management Information (MI) required	BTL / HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed MI required: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No. at this stage ○ Value at this stage 	31.05.18	Monthly	<p>Baseline stats for 31.05.18</p> <p>Each month to be available within 3 working days of 1st of each month</p>
14	Review level of clawback (HDD recommendation 3)	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process in place to review when a claimant returns to HB where there has been a recovery reduction previously 	08.06.18	Monthly	<p>Clawback for COLC reviewed for May. Issues with BOXI report for NK. Logged with Support Team</p> <p>Reports all working and being reviewed monthly</p>
Overpayments at sundry debt and on arrangement						
15	Monthly management Information required	BTL / HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed MI required: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No. at each stage 	31.05.18	Monthly	Baseline stats for 31.05.18

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Value at each stage ○ No. passed on to next stage 			Each month to be available within 3 working days of 1 st of each month
16	Consider current timeline for reminders (HDD recommendation 1)	HBOP Team	Looking at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reducing reminders at days 21 and 35 ● Starting action at day 31 	15.07.18	N/A	BTL to discuss with Recovery Team Leader
17	Passing on of non-arrangement debts to HBOP Recovery team	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Process needed as to what point the debt is passed to the HBOP recovery team for next action (such as referral to DWP debt service) 	08.06.18	Monthly	<p>Complete: Process has been agreed and is now in place</p> <p>To be reviewed monthly to ensure these debts are being passed on to next stage</p>
18	Telephone rota (HDD recommendation 5)	Recovery Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Consider putting a telephone rota in place, for example half a day at a time so debt officer time dealing with debt 	31.07.18	N/A	

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			recovery is not as highly impacted			
Overpayments over 4 months old and where there is no arrangement						
19	Monthly management Information required	BTL / HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed MI required: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No. at this stage ○ Value at this stage 	31.05.18	Monthly	<p>Baseline stats for 31.05.18</p> <p>Each month to be available within 3 working days of 1st of each month</p>
20	Existing overpayments over 4 months old with no action: Removal of these overpayments from sundry team	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be removed from the recovery team and brought into the HBOP team 	08.06.18	N/A	Actioned – HBOP team working on these cases
21	Existing overpayments over 4 months old with no action: Review of status of recovery	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of recovery stage to be reviewed • Appropriate action to be undertaken – arrangement / debt service or write off <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Detailed MI required: - 	31.07.18	Monthly for new cases	<p>Prioritised cases over £2000 where no recovery in place</p> <p>20.07.18 – prioritised cases where a debt is o/s from 12/13</p>

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No. at this stage ▪ Value at this stage 			
22	Use of DWP Debt Service Project	BTL / HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These debts to be reviewed and passed to DWP Debt service project for potential recovery from earnings • Detailed MI required: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No. at this stage ○ Value at this stage 	30.06.18	Monthly	Cases for July included all cases for NK and COLC where an overpayment was created 12/13 and there had been no payments received towards the o/s debt in the last 4 months. 247 cases for COLC and 111 for NK
23	Looking at highest and oldest debt MI (HDD recommendation 7)	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted review of these cases 	31.07.18	Monthly	458 cases identified and sent to DWP
Write Offs						
24	Monthly management Information required	BTL / HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed MI required: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No. at this stage 	31.05.18	Monthly	Baseline stats for 31.05.18

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value at this stage 			Each month to be available within 3 working days of 1 st of each month
25	Review of write off process for COL and NKDC	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure process is correct and agreed by all parties 	31.05.18		Complete: Process reviewed and all agreed
26	Review NKDC write off of OP's created £10 and under (where only recovery is invoice) – uneconomical to recover	BTL / R&B Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To meet with NKDC Finance to agree process 	31.07.18		Complete: NKDC have agreed for automatic write off of these debts
Management Information (MI)						
27	MI to be collated monthly	BTL / HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MI as above to be collated on a spreadsheet for easy monthly comparison 	31.05.18	Monthly	<p>Baseline stats for 31.05.18</p> <p>Each month to be available within 3 working days of 1st of each month</p>

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
28	Management Information (MI) to be readily available (HDD recommendation 6)	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that team leaders and senior recovery staff are able to analyse and understand the MI to manage debt recovery performance • Feedback to HBOP officers – providing update on performance, looking at ‘issue’ areas • Feedback to team members – providing update on actions taken and outcomes 	01.07.18	Monthly	<p>Baseline and June stats to be available 1 July 2018</p> <p>Monthly stats to be available within 3 working days of 1st of each month</p>
HBOP Team and their role						
29	Collaboration between Benefits / Recovery Officers and the HBOP Team (HDD recommendation 11)	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bi-monthly meetings where achievements can be shared and areas for improvements can be discussed 	01.07.18	Bi-Monthly	Meetings taking place with BTL, HBOP and Recovery Team

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This can be led by the HBOP Project Manager 			
30	Direct Recovery from ongoing Benefit	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lincoln and NK reports to be worked on monthly 	Ongoing	Monthly	Reports all working and being reviewed monthly
31	Newly created Invoices	Recovery Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All invoices up to 4 months old to be dealt with by Recovery Team 	Ongoing	Monthly	To be reviewed each month to ensure nothing of 4 months old is with recovery team
32	HB Debt Service	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BTL and HBOP team to work together to identify cases for the Debt Service BTL to work with Support Team to provide the data each month 	Ongoing	Monthly	BTL to send the data via Data Hub on the 14 th of each month. Responses to be received back on 21 st of each month
33	Write Off's - Current	BTL/Recovery Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BTL'S to deal with Write Off's Recovery Team Leader to deal with Write Off's for those cases at 	Ongoing	Monthly	Complete: Different process at each site – differences identified and all involved have

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			invoice and that are under 4 months old			agreed to the process
34	Write Off's – HBOP Project	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lincoln – Spreadsheet completed by HBOP Team, Write Off form completed, signed by HoS, overpayment written off Northgate by Lincoln Benefit team leader, HBOP Team notified and spreadsheet updated NK – Spreadsheet completed by HBOP Team, Write Off form completed, signed by HoS, data sent to NK Team Leader to seek approval from Tina @ NK, overpayment written off Northgate by NK Benefit team leader, 	Ongoing	Ongoing	Complete: Spreadsheet to be sent to MCW for authorisation

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Action No.	Action Needed	Responsible Person	Action	Completion Date	Review Date	Comments
			HBOP Team notified and spreadsheet updated			
35	Review of old debtors from Civica system	HBOP Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review cases from old Debtor system 	Ongoing	01.09.18	1378 invoices to be reviewed. 301 cases completed.
36	To set up designated telephone number for the public to call	BTL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak to IT to set up number Review letters and update contact information 	01.07.18		Complete: Designated phone number, 3371, set up

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