

## SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 25 November  
2021

2.00 pm

Committee Rooms 1-2, City  
Hall

- Membership: Councillors Ric Metcalfe (City of Lincoln Council) (Chair), Sue Burke, Ray Cucksey (North Kesteven District Council) and Sally Tarry (North Kesteven District Council)
- Substitute members: Councillors Ian Carrington (North Kesteven District Council) and Donald Nannestad (City of Lincoln Council)
- Officers attending: Democratic Services (City of Lincoln Council), Jaclyn Gibson (City of Lincoln Council), Tracey Parker, Philip Roberts (North Kesteven District Council), Russell Stone (North Kesteven District Council) and Martin Walmsley (City of Lincoln Council)

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### A G E N D A

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**If members are unable to attend the meeting, please advise Claire Turner (Democratic Services Officer) on 01522 873619 as soon as possible. Substitute members will be contacted if they are required to attend the meeting.**

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2. Declarations of Interest	
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, 8 February 2022 (2.00 pm) in Committee Room, North Kesteven District Council Offices



**Present:** Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),  
Councillor Sue Burke, Councillor Ray Cucksey and  
Councillor Sally Tarry

**Apologies for Absence:** None.

**10. Confirmation of Minutes - 22 June 2021**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**11. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**12. Business Rates Update**

Purpose of Report

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

**Decision**

That the content of the report be noted.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reason for Decision

The following updates were noted:

*Expanded Retail Discount*

On 3 March 2021 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in England would be granted 100% business rates relief from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021; and 66% relief from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, limited to £2 million per business for properties closed on 5 January 2021, or £105,000 per business for other eligible properties. Local authorities would be reimbursed if they used their discretionary relief powers.

*Nursery Discount*

On 3 March 2021 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that eligible nursery properties in England would continue to be granted 100% business rates relief from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021; and 66% relief from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, limited to £105,000 per business for other eligible properties. Local authorities would be reimbursed if they used their discretionary relief powers.

### *Discount for businesses affected by Covid-19*

On 25 March 2021, the government announced funding of £1.5 billion for businesses affected by Covid-19, who had been unable to benefit from the existing relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses. It was stated that a 'material change of circumstance' would not be included in the criteria for obtaining the funds and detailed guidance had not been published,

### *Fire Stations and Hospitals - Potential Reductions in Rateable Value*

On 4 December 2020, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) advised all local authorities that they might see changes in the rateable values of hospitals and fire stations, with reductions on average of around 10% on hospitals; and 9% on fire stations, depending on the age of the properties.

On 20 May 2021 the VOA advised that following a challenge to the proposed rateable values of court buildings, average reductions in rateable values of these buildings of 18% would be expected, with the reductions applying from 1 April 2017.

### *Public Toilet Relief*

The Non-Domestic Rating (Public Lavatories) Act 2021 had introduced a requirement for 100% mandatory business rates relief to hereditaments that consisted wholly or mainly of public lavatories, which would apply from 1 April 2020.

## **13. Revenues and Benefits - Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2021/22**

### Purpose of Report

To provide the Joint Committee with the first quarter's financial performance for the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service for 2021/22.

### **Decision**

That the actual position at Quarter 1 be noted.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

### Reason for Decision

The approved budget for 2021/22 had been agreed by the Joint Committee on 23 February 2021 and had been set as £2,584,830 for the shared service. Financial performance for the first quarter of 2021/22 was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, which reported an underspend against the approved budget of £39,211.

The forecast outturn for 2021/22 predicted that there would be an underspend against the approved budget of £75,191 with further details set out in Appendix 2 of the report. A summary of the main forecast year-end variations against the approved budget for 2021/22 was outlined in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

## 14. 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 and an update be presented at the next meeting of this Committee on 25 November 2021.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

### Reason for Decision

The report provided information on revenues performance for Quarter 1 2021/22 for (a) council tax for the City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council; and (b) business rates for the City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council and West Lindsey District Council. Comparisons to the national and local position in terms of performance was provided, where possible.

Performance continued to be impacted by Covid-19. Actions in response to the impact of Covid-19 had included:

- deferrals of council tax and business rates payments where applicable and appropriate;
- processing a significant increase in housing benefit and council tax support claims, and universal credit related documents; and
- assessment and award of new government reliefs and payments (such as Test and Trace Support payments)

The revenues and benefits shared service had now been in operation since 1 June 2011, and performance had been maintained and improved whilst continuing to provide value for money. Continual improvement and success were being achieved in both statistical and financial performance, as well as positive outcomes for customers of the partner local authorities. However, the Covid-19 pandemic had understandably impacted on some areas of performance and these impacts were likely to continue for many more months.

In respect of council tax up to the end of quarter 1 2020/21, in-year collection decreased for both the City of Lincoln and North Kesteven by 0.81% and 0.10% respectively. Due to the financial impacts of Covid-19 on residents' incomes, it was anticipated that the recovery of monies would remain a real challenge throughout 2021/22. Net collectable debit for 2021/22 (compared to 2020/21) had increased by £3.5m for Lincoln and £3.1m for North Kesteven.

In respect of business rates, for Quarter 1 2021/22, compared to the same point in 2020/21, in-year collection was down for all three Local Authorities, 12.21% for Lincoln, 5.01% and 3.42% for North Kesteven and West Lindsey respectively. However, these figures were significantly affected by the new reliefs available in 2020/21 (namely expanded retail discount) and into 2021/22, so comparing 2021/22 to 2020/21 and to 2019/20, was not appropriate.

As detailed at paragraph 4.8 of the report, there had been key movements in the business rates bases in the first quarter.

At the end of quarter 1 2021/22, outstanding revenues customer cases stood at a total of 3,354, of which 2,255 were from the City of Lincoln and 1,099 were from North Kesteven. Previous reports were not comparable, owing to customer e-mails now being captured in the Revenues Document Management System, The reported figure at the end of Quarter 1 2021/22 would effectively become the new 'baseline'.

An action plan was in place to address the level of demand on the revenues team, which remained high, in terms of incoming correspondence, telephone calls and e-mails.

The table at paragraph 5.2 of the report indicated that City of Lincoln was processing benefit claims in 16.81 days, compared to North Kesteven at 13.77 during quarter one.

Provision of welfare and benefit continued to be key with a team of dedicated and knowledgeable officers providing invaluable support to residents of Lincoln, as set out in further detail within the table at Paragraph 6.1 of the officer's report. Officers agreed to provide this Committee with comparisons of the Welfare Team's performance in quarter one 2021/22 compared to previous years.

## **15. Welfare Reform 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 the local advice referral process, Covid-19 support and discretionary housing payments.

### **Decision**

That the content of the report be noted and an update be presented at the next meeting of this Committee.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

### Reason for Decision

This report provided Joint Committee with an update on national universal credit changes; including a reference to the national statistics and national legislation changes.

The report also provided Joint Committee with an update regarding local advice referral into the welfare reform support team, national and local changes made to support those financially adversely affected by Covid-19 and an update on the financial position for discretionary housing payments.

As a result of Covid-19, there had been a number of changes made to legacy benefits, universal credit and support for those in or retaining employment, which had been reported previously. The £20 per week uplift in universal credit payment was due to end in the autumn of 2021. The Team would proactively support customers, where it was practicably possible, once the uplift had come to an end.

As a result of Covid-19, the welfare reform support team had been able to provide vital support to new and existing customers – both over the phone and via email. The team was able to explain to customers what support was available; to undertake assessments for universal credit, housing benefit, council tax support and discretionary housing payments; and to provide advice and guidance to the Revenues and Benefits staff regarding changes to legislation.

The report outlined details of the Covid-19 test and trace self isolation payments introduced from 28 September 2020 to support those who had been told to self-isolate and had a legal obligation to do so. The national scheme was due to end on the 30 September 2021.

As at 30 July 2021, in total the welfare reform support team had received 2,047 applications for Lincoln and 1,117 for North Kesteven for test and trace self-isolation payments or through the winter grant scheme, with 714 clients for Lincoln and 364 for North Kesteven having received a payment.

Latest figures for discretionary housing payments (DHP) spend showed an unallocated grant of £21,689 remaining for City of Lincoln and £18,789 for North Kesteven, This figure could be reflected against a total allocated fund of £138,379 for City of Lincoln and £95,525 for North Kesteven in 2021/22. However, these allocations were only based on 71% of the national grant allocation – a mid-year review is to take place nationally and further discretionary housing payment grants awarded to local authorities as appropriate. The first round of DHP grants for both local authorities had been exhausted and other cash-limited internal budgets being utilised until the second round of grants was announced by central government.

The council tax hardship fund, which had been part of the government's response to Covid-19, had been expected to be used to provide council tax relief, alongside existing local council tax support schemes for 2020/21. The amounts spent up to 21 May 2021, paid towards the year 2020/21, were:

- City of Lincoln Council £678,946 towards 3,893 individual council tax accounts
- North Kesteven £279,681 towards 2,562 individual council tax accounts

The remaining balance of the awards would be allocated towards helping the most vulnerable with further council tax relief alongside existing local council tax support schemes for the year 2021/22.

Initial allocations were paid to eligible Council Tax accounts in July 2021, as follows:

- City of Lincoln Council: £359,922;
- North Kesteven: £172,686.

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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE UPDATE</b>
<b>DIRECTORATE:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>
<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b>	<b>MARTIN WALMSLEY, HEAD OF SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS</b>

## **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 Revenues and Benefits performance information in respect of Quarter 2 2021/22.
- 2.2 This year, the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service reached its ten-year anniversary of formation, having been in operation since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011. Levels of performance have largely 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. However, the Covid-19 global pandemic has understandably impacted on some areas of performance, - these impacts are likely to continue for many more months.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 At the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021 meeting of this Committee, a report was presented detailing Revenues and Benefits performance to the end of Quarter 1 2021/22.
- 3.2 Performance is reported to this Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 3.3 Performance continues to be impacted by Covid-19. Officers have continued to proactively respond to Covid-19, including;
- Deferrals of Council Tax and Business Rates payments being permitted where applicable and appropriate.
  - Processing a significant increase in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims, and Universal Credit related documents.
  - Assessment and award of new government reliefs and payments (such as Test and Trace Support payments).

Performance is likely to be impacted for many more months due to the cumulative effects of Covid-19 on household and business incomes.

## **4. Revenues Performance**

### **4.1 Council Tax**

- 4.2 Up to the end of Quarter 2 2021/22, in-year collection for Lincoln and North Kesteven was

down by 0.95% and up by 0.52%, respectively. Due to the financial impacts of Covid-19 on residents' incomes, it is anticipated the recovery of monies will remain a real challenge throughout 2021/22, and potentially beyond too. Net collectable debit for 2021/22 (compared to 2020/21) has increased by £3.2m for Lincoln and £3m for North Kesteven.

Description		September 2021	Compared to September 2020	Compared to September 2019
Council Tax Collection	City of Lincoln	49.59%	Down 0.95%	Down by 3.28%
Council Tax Collection	North Kesteven	56.52%	Up by 0.52%	Down by 0.9%
Council Tax Net liability	City of Lincoln	£49,344,922	Up by £3,221,154	Up by £4,446,710
Council Tax Net Liability	North Kesteven	£71,813,119	Up by £3,020,847	Up by £5,826,859

- 4.3 As a reflection of economic impacts on Covid-19 on residents' incomes, Council Tax Support caseloads increased sharply in 2020 and have now plateaued somewhat and started to fall, as shown in the table below. Of course, this may change again as impacts of certain national 'protections' on residents' incomes such as the furlough scheme ending become clearer.

	City of Lincoln	North Kesteven
September 2021	8,799	5,655
September 2020	9,031	5,855
September 2019	8,542	5,564

- 4.4 Remaining Council Tax Hardship fund monies are being considered at present to be allocated to Council Tax accounts within the financial year 2021/22 – which will continue to help to mitigate hardship for those eligible, also having a positive impact on in-year collection performance.

#### 4.5 Business Rates

- 4.6 Up to the end of Quarter 2 2021/22, compared to the same point in 2020/21 in-year collection is down for all three local authorities: Lincoln (by 9.45%), North Kesteven (by 2.98%) and West Lindsey (by 2.44%). However, these figures are significantly 'skewed' by the new reliefs available in 2020/21 (namely Expanded Retail Discount - ERD) and into 2021/22 – so comparing 2021/22 to 2020/21, and to 2019/20, is not 'like for like'. Positively, each local authority's in-year collection is 'less down' compared to the end of Quarter 1 2021/22 – indicating a positive direction of travel.

Description		September 2021	Compared to September 2020	Compared to September 2019
Business Rates collection	City of Lincoln	55.70%	Down by 9.45%	Down by 3.88%
Business Rates collection	North Kesteven	61.72%	Down by 2.98%	Down by 1.28%
Business Rates collection	West Lindsey	53.73%	Down by 2.44%	Down by 5.07%
Business Rates Net Liability	Lincoln	£35,945,862	Up by £16,756,029	Down by £9,160,743
Business Rates Net Liability	North Kesteven	£26,218,957	Up by £5,965,361	Down by £2,059,361
Business Rates Net Liability	West Lindsey	£16,288,957	Up by £4,406,162	Down by £1,599,919

4.7 It is important to bear in mind the changes to the ERD – where the 100% relief from 2020/21 is extended for the first three months of 2021/22 then reduces to 66% relief from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021 to the end of March 2022. Therefore, businesses who qualify have nothing to pay in the first three months of 2021/22, but for statistics/collection purposes officers are still treating liability as if it were equally distributed across the year. Therefore, officers are not comparing 'like for like' throughout the year – however, by the end of Quarter 4 2021/22 this comparison should align over the whole twelve months. Positively, the 'direction of travel' all three in-year collections is positive, with each being 'less down' than at the end of Quarter 1 2021/22.

4.8 In terms of the Business Rates bases in respect of Lincoln and North Kesteven, the table below show key movements in the second quarter of 2021/22.

2021/22 NDR 1 Figures and comparison – City of Lincoln Council				Key business movements
NNDR Account information as at £	Original Budget NDR 1 for 2021/22 £ <i>These figures include an estimate for growth/decline</i>	2021 only Position at end of September 21 <i>These are the actual figures and no longer include estimate for growth/decline</i>	All years – 2021 and changes to previous years made in the current year  Position at end of September 21  (At the end of March 22 – these figures will equate to the NDR3 position)	For the year 2021-22 – Retail Relief was not announced until March 2021. Therefore, there was no allowance for retail relief included in the NDR 1 for 2021 which is produced in January 2021.  The retail relief scheme for 2021 is not as generous as the 2020 scheme, as for the customers that meet the criteria the scheme gives them rate relief of 75% over the whole year, and several companies do not qualify due to some capping that was introduced in the 2021 scheme.
Forecast Gross Rates (GRP and SBRR yield)	57,222,633	57,125,358	55,963,237	We are still receiving applications for the retail
Transitional Arrangements	21,043	17,193	190,571	
Mandatory Relief – inc SBRR and charity relief	-9,024,919	-9,094,418	-8,745,783 (this reduction is due to various reductions in Rateable value at the University)	
Unoccupied Property relief	-2,000,000	-2,494,398	-2,597,250	

Discretionary relief includes charity top up , not for profit and rural rate relief (unfunded) <b>Includes business growth budget</b>	-386,967	-234,122	-236,967	relief.
S31 Grant Discretionary Relief	-6,904	-9,538,193	-9,389,820	
Net Rates Payable	45,324,886	35,781,419	35,150,979	

2021/22 NDR 1 Figures and comparison – North Kesteven District Council				Key business movements
NDR Account information as at £	Original Budget NDR 1 for 2021/22 £ <i>These figures include an estimate for growth/decline</i>	2021 only Position at end of September 21 <i>These are the actual figures and no longer include estimate for growth/decline</i>	All years – 2021 and changes to previous years made in the current year  Position at end of September 21  (At the end of March 22 – these figures will equate to the NDR3 position)	<p>For the year 2021-22 – Retail Relief was not announced until March 2021. Therefore, there was no allowance for retail relief included in the NDR 1 for 2021 which is produced in January 2021.</p> <p>The retail relief scheme for 2021 is not as generous as the 2020 scheme, as for the customers that meet the criteria the scheme gives them rate relief of 75% over the whole year, and several companies do not qualify due to some capping that was introduced in the 2021 scheme.</p> <p>We are still receiving applications for the retail relief.</p>
Forecast Gross Rates (GRP and SBRR yield)	38,080,694	38,063,812	37,907,947	
Transitional Arrangements	-201,936	-341,982	-387,944	
Mandatory Relief – inc SBRR and charity relief	-6,355,666	-6,478,622	-6,567,112	
Unoccupied Property relief	-609,392	-765,595	-774,863	
Discretionary relief includes charity top up , not for profit and rural rate relief (unfunded)	-169,077	-283,564	-283,718	
S31 Grant Discretionary Relief – this includes the original retail relief scheme at 50%	-40,768	-3,954,513	-3,941,964	
Net Rates Payable	30,703,855	26,239,535	25,952,346	

## 4.9 Outstanding Revenues Customers

- 4.10 The number of outstanding Revenues Customers at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22 is 5,133 (split Lincoln 3,454, North Kesteven 1,679) – this has continued to increase as has been the trend over the last nine months. However, it should be noted that previous reported statistics are not comparable to those now being reported, due to outstanding customer e-mails now also being captured in the Revenues Document Management System, which was not the case before – so these are now also included as outstanding work waiting to be processed. Therefore, the reported figure that was reported at the end of Quarter 1 2021/22 effectively becomes the new ‘baseline’.
- 4.11 The volume of Revenues work has been unprecedented during the Covid-19 pandemic, - the main area of outstanding work is Council Tax documents.

Just before lockdown in March 2020, the team processed a review for Council Tax Annexed discounts. Officers regularly review a number of discounts provided to customers on our systems – there are a number of review forms that are still waiting to be processed.

The team has also undertaken both a single person discount review in April–July 2021, and an empty homes review from July–September 2021. Both exercises should have taken place in the previous year but were adjourned to this year due to the pandemic. Queries from the public regarding both of these reviews has taken up a lot of officer time but this is a part of the duty our service has to review discounts and exemptions.

Officers are working hard to address the level of outstanding work, which is starting to reduce, but not at the rate required to reach an ideal low level before new year Council Tax billing. Options are currently being considered to bring in additional temporary resources to assist in clearing outstanding Council Tax work.

- 4.12 Demands on the Revenues Team remain high, in terms of incoming correspondence, telephone calls and e-mails. An action plan is in place to address the level of outstanding work – an update on progress will be provided to Joint Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> November.

## 4.13 Housing Benefit Overpayments

- 4.14 As at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22, in period collection of Housing Benefit overpayments stands at:
- City of Lincoln: 162.20%,
  - North Kesteven: 113.30%.
- 4.15 Outstanding Housing Benefit overpayments debt also continues to decrease overall. As at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22:
- City of Lincoln: £2,911,280,
  - North Kesteven: £1,422,980.

## 5. Benefits Performance

- 5.1 As at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22, there are 2,001 Benefits customers outstanding (split Lincoln 1,411, North Kesteven 590). This figure has decreased overall, from 3,375 at the end of Quarter 1 2020/21 (split Lincoln 2,587, North Kesteven 788). Additional temporary resources have been allocated to assist in achieving this decrease, however Quarter 3

2021/22 is already proving to be a 'challenging' period due to the extremely high number of Universal Credit change documents being received. A verbal update will be provided to Joint Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> November.

5.2 Despite the significant demands on the Benefits Team, officers continue to turn around claims and reported changes of circumstance promptly, and accurately. As at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22

<b>End Quarter 2 2021/22</b>	<b>City of Lincoln</b>	<b>North Kesteven</b>
New Claims	17.50 days <i>(End Quarter 2 2020/21 16.69 days)</i> <i>(End Quarter 2 2019/20 23.43 days)</i>	16.69 days <i>(End Quarter 2 2020/21 15.93 days)</i> <i>(End Quarter 2 2019/20 21.59 days)</i>
Changes of Circumstance	5.49 days <i>(End Quarter 2 2020/21 4.63 days)</i> <i>(End Quarter 2 2019/20 5.22 days)</i>	4.45 days <i>(End Quarter 2 2020/21 3.26 days)</i> <i>(End Quarter 2 2019/20 5.20 days)</i>

The most recent national figures on Housing Benefit processing times were released on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021, and are in respect of Quarter 1 2021/22. These figures stated that the national averages to be 20 days for processing New Claims and 7 days for Changes of Circumstance, - demonstrating the positive nature of Lincoln and North Kesteven Housing Benefit processing times:

5.3 In terms of the claims checked that were 'correct, first time' (with even £0.01p 'out' being classified as an incorrect assessment), at the end of Quarter 2 2021/22:

- City of Lincoln: 95.26% (261 out of 274 checked),
- North Kesteven: 96.50% (441 out of 457 checked).

These checks are in addition to the significant amount of checks also carried out under the audit requirements of the annual Housing Benefit Subsidy claims.

## **6. Welfare and Benefits Advice**

6.1 Providing benefits and money advice continues to be key, with a team of dedicated and knowledgeable officers providing invaluable support to residents of Lincoln. In Quarter 2 2021/22, the team has achieved the following:

<b>Quarter 2 2021/22</b>	<b><u>City of Lincoln</u></b>	<b><u>North Kesteven</u></b>
<b>Advice provided enabling weekly value of additional benefits</b>	£4,672	£1,896
<b>Advice provided enabling lump sum award of additional benefits</b>	£95,208	£23,296
<b>No. of customers to whom help provided</b>	1,391	297
<b>No. money advice referrals</b>	33	10

## **7. Strategic Priorities**

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

- Lincoln: “Let’s reduce all kinds of inequality”.
- North Kesteven: “Our Communities”, “Our Economy”.

7.2 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.

## **8. Organisational Impacts**

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

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

8.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights: There are no direct implications arising from this report.

## **9. Risk Implications**

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

## **10. Recommendations**

10.1 Note the performance information as set out in this report.

10.2 Note that a performance update will be presented at the next meeting of this committee on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2022.

**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 to end Quarter 2 2021/22

**List of Background Papers:**

None

**Lead Officer:**

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

Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021  
 Performance Update  
 Appendix 1: Performance Data Quarter 2 2021/22

<u>Measure</u>	<u>Quarter 2 2021/22</u>		<u>2020/21 Annual Outturn</u>	
	<b>NK</b>	<b>COL</b>	<b>NK</b>	<b>COL</b>
<b>Local Authority</b>				
<b>Council Tax collection (cumulative)</b>	56.52%	49.59%	98.03%	94.78%
<b>NNDR collection (cumulative)</b>	61.72%	55.70%	97.21%	98.97%
<b>NNDR collection – WLDC (cumulative)</b>	53.73%		97.90%	
<b>No. Revenues customers awaiting change to be processed</b>	1,679	3,454	461	1,650
<b>Total Net Arrears for Council Tax prior years (i.e. not including current year)</b>	£1,340,228	£1,131,345	£1,506,747	£3,243,876
<b>Total Net Arrears for NNDR prior years (i.e. not including current year)</b>	£274,211	£221,501	£61,847	£121,299
<b>Housing Benefit overpayments collection in period</b>	113.30%	162.20%	104.40%	160.84%
<b>Outstanding Housing Benefit overpayments debt</b>	£1,422,980	£2,911,280	£1,471,374	£3,153,505
<b>Housing Benefit New Claims: Average number of days to process (cumulative)</b>	16.69 days	17.50 days	15.42 days	16.91 days
<b>Housing Benefits Changes of Circumstances: Average number of days to process (cumulative)</b>	4.45 days	5.49 days	2.56 days	2.88 days
<b>No. Benefits customers awaiting assessment (cumulative)</b>	590	1,411	743	2,123
<b>% Benefits claims checked financially correct (cumulative)</b>	97%	95%	96%	93%

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<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>REVENUES AND BENEFITS - FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 2 2021/22</b>
<b>REPORT BY:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE &amp; TOWN CLERK</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>MARTIN WALMSLEY, HEAD OF SHARED REVENUES AND BENEFITS</b>

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To present to Members the second quarter's performance for the Revenues and Benefits shared service for 2021/22.

**2. Executive Summary**

2.1 The forecast outturn for 2021/22 predicts that there will be an underspend against the approved budget of £44,639.

**3. Background**

3.1 The approved budget for 2021/22 was agreed by Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021. The Committee set a budget for 2021/22 of £2,520,080 for the service.

3.2 At quarter one, this budget was subsequently reduced by the sum of £60,110, to reflect changes resulting from the deletion of vacant posts as agreed by Joint Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The budget has then been increased by a further £17,790 as a result of New Burdens funding giving a revised budget of £2,477,760.

3.3 At quarter two this budget remains unchanged and is broken down as follows:-

	<b>CoLC</b>	<b>NK</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Original Budget</b>	<b>1,342,040</b>	<b>1,178,040</b>	<b>2,520,080</b>
Deletion of vacant posts	(34,500)	(25,610)	(60,110)
New Burdens – Q1:			
Northgate changes – PDVR, SDP, HBMS & Savings Credit	8,900	8,890	17,790
<b>REVISED BUDGET</b>	<b>1,316,440</b>	<b>1,161,320</b>	<b>2,477,760</b>

#### 4. Quarter Two Financial Performance and Forecast Outturn 2021/22

##### 4.1 Performance Quarter 2

Financial performance for the second quarter of 2021/22 is detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. At quarter 2, after the application of the above budget adjustments, there is an underspend against the approved budget of £31,276.

##### 4.2 Forecast Outturn 2021/22

The forecast outturn for 2021/22 predicts that there will be an overspend against the approved budget of £62,421, this is against the previous forecast underspend of £30,552. 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 2021/22 is shown in the table below.

The main reason for the forecast overspend is Benefits overtime which is largely due to the administration of Test and Trace Support Payments. Each Council has received a grant to compensate them for administration of these payments, however these grants are outside the shared service budget.

<u>Service Area</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Reason for variance</u>
<b>Benefits</b>		
Overtime	62,030	Additional hours required as a result of increased demand due to the Covid-19 pandemic response and TTSP administration.
Recharges	(8,000)	LiNK Housing Benefit Subsidy income.
<b>Revenues Local Taxation</b>		
Staffing Costs	(22,040)	Vacancy savings for first 5 months – recruitment now in place.
Agency Costs	25,000	Anticipated agency costs in response to backlog as a result of vacancies and increased workloads due to Covid-19.
IT Costs	17,750	New Software requirements.
Recharges	(5,795)	Additional Link HB Subsidy income.

<b>Benefits/Money Advice</b>		
Staffing Costs	(14,380)	Vacancy savings and reduced costs as a result of staff turnover and new junior appointments.

## 5. Organisational Impacts

- 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. Recommendations

- 7.1 Members are recommended to note the actual position at quarter 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 2 2021/22

### Actual Cash Limit as at Q2 - 2021/22

	Profiled Budget			Actual			Variance		
	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined
Revenues & Benefits Management	96,430	96,430	192,857	95,787	95,787	191,573	(643)	(643)	(1,287)
Benefits	318,320	231,430	549,755	326,442	236,389	562,831	8,122	4,959	13,081
Revenues Local Taxation	186,240	193,830	380,070	171,496	178,496	349,992	(14,744)	(15,334)	(30,078)
Money Advice	57,470	57,470	114,935	50,974	50,974	101,949	(6,496)	(6,496)	(12,991)
<b>Total 2021/22</b>	<b>658,460</b>	<b>579,160</b>	<b>1,237,617</b>	<b>644,699</b>	<b>561,646</b>	<b>1,206,344</b>	<b>(13,761)</b>	<b>(17,514)</b>	<b>(31,276)</b>
Adjustment for Agency pressure:							(12,250)	(12,750)	(25,000)
							16,667	8,333	25,000
<b>Grand total</b>							<b>(9,345)</b>	<b>(21,931)</b>	<b>(31,276)</b>

## Appendix 2 Forecast Financial Outturn for 2021/22

### Projected Cash Limit Outturn - 2021/22

	Annual Budget			Forecast Outturn			Variance		
	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined	CoLC	NK	Combined
Revenues & Benefits Management	183,130	183,130	366,260	184,169	184,169	368,337	1,039	1,039	2,077
Benefits	626,700	455,630	1,082,330	655,729	476,735	1,132,464	29,029	21,105	50,134
Revenues Local Taxation	391,200	407,160	798,360	401,416	417,793	819,209	10,216	10,633	20,849
Money Advice	115,410	115,410	230,820	110,090	110,090	220,180	(5,320)	(5,320)	(10,640)
<b>Total 2021/22</b>	<b>1,316,440</b>	<b>1,161,330</b>	<b>2,477,770</b>	<b>1,351,404</b>	<b>1,188,787</b>	<b>2,540,191</b>	<b>34,964</b>	<b>27,457</b>	<b>62,421</b>
Adjustment for Agency pressure:							(12,250)	(12,750)	(25,000)
							16,667	8,333	25,000
<b>Grand total</b>							<b>39,381</b>	<b>23,040</b>	<b>62,421</b>

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**SUBJECT: BUSINESS RATES UPDATE**

**DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**REPORT AUTHOR: EMMA-JANE BRODRICK, RECOVERY AND NNDR/BID TEAM LEADER**

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Joint Committee 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, North Kesteven District Council and West Lindsey District Council. The report is not intended to include non-domestic rate performance matters, as this is covered in the 'Performance Update' report before this Joint Committee today.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The report focuses on the changes announced as a result of Covid-19 and the support provided to businesses in the form of relief, – as grants are not directly paid by the Revenues and Benefits shared service, these are not covered in this report. The report also focuses on the financial impact of recent appeals and reductions to rateable values.
- 3.2 Focus for both Government and billing authorities since the last meeting of Joint Committee has been a continuing response to Covid-19 measures, which have been announced since 11 March 2020.

## 4. Expanded Retail Discount

- 4.1 As announced at the Budget on 3 March 2021 by the Chancellor, the government will continue to provide eligible retail, hospitality and leisure properties in England with 100% business rates relief from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. This will be followed by 66% business rates relief for the period from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, capped at £2 million per business for properties that were required to be closed on 5 January 2021, or £105,000 per business for other eligible properties.
- 4.2 Eligibility criteria was set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and issued to Local Authorities on 2 April 2020. This can be found here:
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>
  - [Business rates: expanded retail discount 2021 to 2022 - local authority](#)

guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) .

4.3 Properties that will benefit from the relief will be occupied hereditaments that are wholly or mainly being used:

- a) as shops, restaurants, cafes, drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues;
- b) for assembly and leisure; or
- c) as hotels, guest & boarding premises and self-catering accommodation.

4.4 DLUHC guidance provided further detailed lists of properties which fell into the above categories but made it clear that the list is not intended to be exhaustive. The list was intended to be a guide for Local Authorities (LA's) as to the types of uses that the Government considers for the purpose to be eligible for relief. LA's were required to determine for themselves whether particular properties not listed are broadly similar in nature to those above, and if so, to consider them eligible for the relief.

4.5 Government will reimburse LA's that use their discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (amended). LA's had already completed their NDR1 for 2021/22.

4.6 In terms of Expanded Retail Discount (ERD), the figures below reflect the significant reduction in the amounts awarded during 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 (due to the reduction from 100% to 66% ERD from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021):

<b>ERD awarded</b>	<b>City of Lincoln</b>	<b>North Kesteven</b>	<b>West Lindsey</b>
<b>2020/21</b>	£28,002,354	£6,748,970	£5,048,076
<b>2021/22</b>	£9,409,389	£3,823,251	£2,278,720

4.7 In the recent budget there were some announcements regarding Non Domestic Rates although the full details are not known yet –

1. For 2022/23 – the multipliers which are used to calculate the business rates will be frozen for the second year at 49.9p and 51.2p. This will have a financial impact on the income to the Authority. In legislation, the multiplier should go up in line with the inflation figure in September of the previous year. This was originally the RPI but this was changed a few years ago to the CPI. It is expected, but not confirmed, that the council will be compensated for this 'loss of income' under a Section 31 grant as it has been previously when inflation exceeded 2% but the government capped the increase of the multiplier to 2%.
2. A 'new' relief was announced for eligible retail, hospitality, and leisure properties with a 50% relief on rates bills up to £110,000 per business. This is similar to the capping level for 2021/22 which was £105,000 for any business that was not mandated to close. There is no differentiation for next year between mandated to close and not mandated to close, therefore this is likely to take all the national chains out of the scheme. Additionally, the scope of this discount is noted to 'return to pre-covid 19 eligibility for retail properties'. Hospitality and leisure are to remain in the

scope, which they were not prior to covid 19. However prior to Covid 19, the maximum rateable value to qualify for retail relief was 50,999.

There are other types of business such as estate agents, employment agencies etc that I believe will also fall out of the scope of the new relief as pre covid they were not included, and they are not hospitality or leisure – this includes estate agents, employment agents etc.

## 5. Nursery Discount

5.1 As announced at the Budget on 3 March 2021 by the Chancellor, the government will continue to provide eligible nursery properties in England with 100% business rates relief from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021. This will be followed by 66% business rates relief for the period from 1 July 2021 to 31 March 2022, capped at £105,000 per business for other eligible properties.

5.2 Eligibility criteria was set out by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and issued to Local Authorities on 2 April 2020. This can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-nursery-childcare-discount-2020-to-2021-coronavirus-response-local-authority-guidance>
- [Business rates: nursery \(childcare\) discount 2021 to 2022 – local authority guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) .

5.3 The relief was to be applied to hereditaments occupied by providers on Ofsted's Early Years Register and wholly or mainly used for the provision of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which are subject to businesses rates in the year 2021/22.

5.4 There is no rateable value limit on the relief and where necessary, Ofsted were able to provide Local Authorities (LA's) with access to the register to help identify eligible hereditaments.

5.5 Government will reimburse LA's that use their discretionary relief powers under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (amended). LA's had already completed their NDR1 for 2021/22.

All potentially affected businesses have been advised in writing that they need to complete a form for the rate relief and payments have not been taken where no business rates would have been due. For the 66% relief, an application form needed to be submitted, these were sent out in March and officers undertook a further mail merge exercise for those accounts where the form has not been received, advising the customer that the amended bill when issued, will be issued without the 66% unless the enclosed form is completed and returned. For late applications, amended bills would have to be issued.

The 3-month Expanded Retail Discount and Nursery discount were applied to accounts on 23 May 2021, following required software being made available.

5.6 In terms of the Nursery Discount, the figures below reflect the reduction in the amounts awarded during 2021/22 compared to 2020/21 (due to the reduction from

100% to 66% from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021):

<b>Nursery Discount awarded</b>	<b>City of Lincoln</b>	<b>North Kesteven</b>	<b>West Lindsey</b>
<b>2020/21</b>	£163,935	£169,808	£34,626
<b>2021/22</b>	£115,164	£111,131	£28,727

## **6. Discount for businesses affected by Covid-19**

- 6.1 On 25 March 2021, central government announced a £1.5 billion package for businesses affected by Covid-19.

The announcement included:

*Ministers have today set out plans to provide an extra, targeted support package for businesses who have been unable to benefit from the existing £16 billion business rates relief for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses. Retail, hospitality and leisure businesses have not been paying any rates during the pandemic, as part of a 15 month-long relief which runs to the end of June this year.*

*Many of those ineligible for reliefs have been appealing for discounts on their rates bills, arguing the pandemic represented a ‘material change of circumstance’ (MCC).*

*The government is making clear today that market-wide economic changes to property values, such as from COVID-19, can only be properly considered at general rates revaluations, and will therefore be legislating to rule out COVID-19 related MCC appeals.*

*Instead the government will provide a £1.5 billion pot across the country that will be distributed according to which sectors have suffered most economically, rather than on the basis of falls in property values, ensuring the support is provided to businesses in England in the fastest and fairest way possible.*

*Allowing business rates appeals on the basis of a ‘material change in circumstances’ could have led to significant amounts of taxpayer support going to businesses who have been able to operate normally throughout the pandemic and disproportionately benefitting particular regions like London.*

- 6.2 At the time of writing this report, the required detail regarding the relief nor individual local funding allocations are available – and may not be until November/December 2021.

## **7. Fire Stations and Hospitals – potential reduction to rateable value**

- 7.1 On 4 December 2020, the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) contacted all Local Authorities to advise they may start to see changes in the rateable values of hospitals and fire stations. These categories have been in discussion under the VOA’s Group Pre-Challenge Review (GPCR) procedure.

7.2 Rating agents have requested GPCR discussions in early 2020 and submitted checks against a representative sample of properties within each class. The GPCRs facilitated the provision and exchange of evidence culminating in agreed valuation schemes.

7.3 On average reductions will be around 10% on NHS and private hospitals, and 9% on fire stations however this will be subject to wide variation dependant on the age of the properties.

Most reductions are needed to reflect the application of new age and obsolescence scales for non-industrial properties, following guidance given in the Upper Tribunal decision *Hughes v York Museum*. Larger reductions, in the region of 23%, are likely on:

- hospitals built after 2010 (further building costs were produced by the agents to support this); and
- older 1960s/70s built hospitals (particular those of a 'tower block design'; these having greater functional obsolescence).

7.4 Whilst the initial reductions will flow from GPCR Challenges, the scheme reductions the VOA have agreed will likely be actioned on any existing and future Check cases; these can be actioned as soon as the VOA have confirmation all physical factors they hold in their surveys are correct.

7.5 On 20 May 2021 we received a further notification from the Valuation Office that there was a CPCR Challenge regarding Court Buildings. This has been completed on a representative group of around 30 Courts. The agreed basis results in average reductions of around 18% - 1970's buildings may have higher reductions of around 28%. These reductions could go back to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017.

Affected numbers within the shared service, are as below:

Local Authority	No. hereditaments	Charge for 2021/22
City of Lincoln	Combined (x2)	£325,120 £61,952
North Kesteven	0	
West Lindsey	0	

## 8. Business Rates Review

8.1 The final report for a Business Rates Review was also published at the Budget. The Budget and the Review commits in the longer term, to making improvements to the Business Rates system – these include the following;

More frequent revaluations, moving to a revaluation every three years starting from the next revaluation which comes into force on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, the next being 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026 and so on.

The process of revaluation starts approximately 2 years before the new valuations come into force. For the revaluation due on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, the rateable value will be assessed based on the rental evidence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021. There will be a new

duty on the ratepayer to provide the Valuation Office with the information

A new relief will be provided to support investments in property improvements. It is expected that this will include a 12 month exemption on an increase in the rateable value where a property is improved. However the final detail of this is not known at this time and we will report the finer detail of this as soon as this is known.

There was a new exemption and relief to support green technologies announced. Unfortunately, again, the announcement was made without any of the detail being known and so, we will report the finer detail of this as soon as this is known.

A technical consultation has been announced on these points and we will respond to this when it is available.

## **9. Strategic Priorities**

- 9.1 Both authorities look to protect the poorest people. The Revenues Team is mindful of the strategic priorities when engaging with business ratepayers as they look to recover the business rate.

## **10. Organisational Impacts**

### **10.1 Finance**

Local Authorities will be compensated in full for the costs of the new business rates reliefs announced as part of the March 2020 and March 2021 Budgets and in response to Covid-19.

Each local authority will need to take into consideration the implications arising for fire stations and hospitals when preparing their NNDR1 returns, as well as ATM's and GP surgeries (as reported to this Committee previously) as part of their provision for appeals calculations when preparing their NNDR3 returns, with a consequent impact on the level of surplus or deficit to be declared. There will also be an ongoing loss of NNDR which will be accounted for during the preparation of future NNDR1 forecasts.

### **10.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules**

No direct financial implications arising from this report.

### **10.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights**

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.

## **11. Risk Implications**

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

## 12. Recommendation

12.1 Members are requested to note this report.

**Is this a key decision?** No

**Do the exempt information categories apply?** No

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

**How many appendices does the report contain?** None

**List of Background Papers:** None

**Lead Officer:** Emma-Jane Brodrick, Recovery and NNDR/BID Team  
Leader  
Telephone: 01522 873598

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**SUBJECT: WELFARE REFORM UPDATE**  
**DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
**LEAD OFFICER: REBECCA COX, WELFARE REFORM AND PROJECT LEAD**

**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 the local advice referral process, COVID-19 support and Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) for this report.

**2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 This report provides Joint Committee with an update on national Universal Credit (UC) changes; to include reference to the national statistics and national legislation changes.

The report also provides Joint Committee with updates regarding:

- Local advice referrals into the Welfare Reform Support Team;
- National and local changes made to support those financially adversely affected by Covid-19;
- Financial position for Discretionary Housing Payments.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The national Welfare Reform agenda has had a significant impact on residents of Lincoln and North Kesteven since 2013 when certain changes were introduced – such as Removal of Spare Room Subsidy, and Benefit Cap – and has continued as further changes have been introduced, such as the ongoing rollout of Universal Credit. These changes have resulted in major changes to the operating of our shared service, to ensure a proactive and positive response to welfare reform and the impacts on residents.

**4. National Progress – Statistics**

- 4.1 Latest national figures published by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) were released on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021, with statistics relevant to the period up to August 2021:

- 5,806,015 households receiving UC (this is a decrease from 5,938,958 as reported at the last meeting of this Committee).

Local authority statistics are also available:

- City of Lincoln – 11,065 (10,985 as at the last report)
- North Kesteven – 6,664 (6,650 as at the last report).

## **5. Advice Referrals to Welfare Reform Support Team**

- 5.1 Referrals come from Councils' service areas, customers and external stakeholders into the Shared Service Welfare Reform Support team (formerly Universal Support Team).
- 5.2 The advice referral process has resulted in all internal teams and partners working together with the objective of improving the customer journey.
- 5.3 As part of our shared service's COVID-19 response, the Welfare Reform Support Team has been able to provide vital support to new and existing customers – both over the phone and via email. The team is able to explain to customers what support is available to them (national and local), undertake assessments for Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments. This has also been a model which has been able to be flexible and adapted for the Test and Trace Support Payments scheme.

## **6. COVID-19 National support for customers affected**

- 6.1 As a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, there have been a number of changes made to legacy benefits, Universal Credit and support for those in or retaining employment, - which have been reported to this Committee previously. Members may already be aware that the increased Universal Credit payment in the form of a '£20 per week uplift' has recently ended. A change in the Universal Credit taper rate was also announced in the October 2021 Budget, - the amount of Universal Credit withdrawn for every pound someone earns will be cut from 63p to 55p.

## **7. COVID-19 Test and Trace Self Isolation Payments**

- 7.1 From 28 September 2020, anyone who has been told to self-isolate has a legal obligation to do so. To support those who self-isolate, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) introduced the Test and Trace Self Isolation Payment (TTSP).
- 7.2 The TTSP scheme is administered by Local Authorities, with guidance from DHSC. There are two schemes – the mandatory and discretionary. Both schemes are payments of £500 and certain eligibility criteria need to be met.
- 7.3 **The mandatory scheme:**

This is a national scheme and eligibility criteria has been set by the Department for Health and Social Care. The payment is £500 providing the individual lives in England and meets all the following criteria: -

- have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive; and
- employed or self-employed; and
- unable to work from home and will lose income as a result of self-isolating; and
- currently receiving at least one of the following:

- Universal Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- income-based Employment and Support Allowance
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit.

#### 7.4 The discretionary scheme:

There are three national eligibility criteria which have been set by the Department for Health and Social Care, then each Local Authority can include their own discretionary criteria.

#### 7.5 The shared service has approved the same policy for both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven District Council. The eligibility criteria is as follows: -

- have been told to stay at home and self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, either because they have tested positive for coronavirus or have recently been in close contact with someone who has tested positive; and
- employed or self-employed; and
- unable to work from home and will lose income as a result of self-isolating; and
- have capital of less than £1,000 – this limit was removed from May 2021 as the scheme was reviewed; and
- have income which does not exceed expenditure.

#### 7.6 The Welfare Reform Support Team has received all applications and undertaken assessment decisions. Also, the team secured further funding from Lincolnshire County Council to make TTSP-related payments utilising Winter Grant Scheme monies.

In total, the team has received a total of 3,065 applications for City of Lincoln, which at the time of writing this report (on the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021), 1,229 have received a payment. A breakdown of the applications is shown in the table below:

##### City of Lincoln:

	Received	Pending	Unsuccessful	Total Paid/Eligible	Value
Mandatory	833	130	243	461	£230,500
Discretionary	2,139	603	815	720	£360,000
Winter Grant Scheme	93	0	45	48	£24,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,065</b>	<b>733</b>	<b>1,103</b>	<b>1,229</b>	<b>£614,500</b>

In total, the team has received 1,1660 applications for North Kesteven, of which at the time of writing this report on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, 564 have received a payment. A breakdown of the applications is shown in the table below:

North Kesteven:

	Received	Pending	Unsuccessful	Total Paid/Eligible	Value
Mandatory	454	104	123	218	£109,000
Discretionary	1,161	308	543	319	£159,500
Winter Grant Scheme	45	0	18	27	£13,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,660</b>	<b>412</b>	<b>684</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>£282,000</b>

7.7 The national TTSP scheme was due to end on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 but was extended in June until the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021, and has since been extended again and is now due to end on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

## 8. Discretionary Housing Payments

8.1 City of Lincoln's government grant for 2021/22 is £186,707 and North Kesteven's £122,652. 2021/22 DHP central government grants for both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven have decreased from 2020/21.

8.2 The impact of Universal Credit (UC) in Lincoln and North Kesteven is constantly increasing and will continue to do so as UC continues to be rolled out. Covid-19 has had an impact on the number of UC claims being made – seeing an increase in claims, and as a result an increase in UC-related DHP awards. The next stage of UC rollout is still due to be undertaken, with a managed migration process for remaining legacy benefit customers – however this may not be commencing in our Districts, for 1-2 years (or longer).

8.3 The table below updates on DHP spend for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021.

LA	Total funding = Central Government DHP Grant 2021/22	DHP net spend as at 30 Sept 2021	DHP committed for 2021/22	DHP Total spend for 2021/22	% Grant spend	Unallocated DHP Grant
<b>City of Lincoln</b>	£186,707	£115,282	£47,674	£160,956	86.21%	£25,751
<b>North Kesteven</b>	£125,652	£79,682	£28,911	£108,593	86.42%	£17,059

8.5 The table below breaks down the number of DHP applications received and determined up to 30<sup>th</sup> Sep

<b>DHP applications – Year Quarter 1 2021/22</b>	<b>City of Lincoln</b>	<b>North Kesteven</b>
Total number awarded	495 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = 238)</i>	278 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = 160)</i>
No. awarded for Housing Benefit	284 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = 139)</i>	134 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = 79)</i>
No. awarded for Universal Credit	211 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = 99)</i>	144 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = 81)</i>
Average DHP award	£325.16 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = £490.02)</i>	£390.62 <i>(Quarter 2 2020/21 = £555.54)</i>

- 8.6 internal DHP working group continues to review DHP procedures with the aim of ensuring that those most in need of additional help with their housing costs receive appropriate support. The team has reviewed our DHP policy for 2021/22, with a view to allocating central government grant effectively under the backdrop of Covid-19 recovery.
- 8.7 For 2021/2022, Local Authorities were not given their full DHP grant for the year. It was announced by the DWP on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021 that they had allocated the final part of funding for the financial year. Overall, City of Lincoln's grant has decreased by 25.4% compared to 2020/2021 and North Kesteven's has decreased by 28.9%.
- 8.8 As at the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021, the City of Lincoln has £19,911 left of its funding and North Kesteven has £10,963. Officers are considering options such as:
- Fundamental review of DHP Policy;
  - Review of housing allocations policy;
  - Securing of additional funding to supplement government DHP grant – e.g. homelessness prevention monies, General fund, HRA funding (this may require a government directive);
  - Review of cases currently in receipt of 'longer-term' DHP.

## **9. Council Tax Hardship Fund**

- 9.1. As part of its response to COVID-19, the Government announced in the Budget on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 that it would provide local authorities in England with £500m of new grant funding to support economically vulnerable people and households in their local area.

The expectation was that the majority of the hardship fund would be used to provide council tax relief, alongside existing local Council Tax Support schemes for 2020/21. The Guidance notes were released on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 with confirmation of the grant allocation.

Grant allocation was made based on the Council Tax Support (CTS) working age caseload and City of Lincoln were awarded £1,209,846, and North Kesteven £535,715.

Amounts spent up to 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021 – paid towards the year 2020/21:

- City of Lincoln Council           £678,946 towards 3,893 individual Council Tax accounts;
- North Kesteven                 £279,681 towards 2,562 individual Council Tax accounts.

9.2 The remaining balance of the awards will be allocated towards helping the most vulnerable with further council tax relief alongside existing local Council Tax Support schemes for the year 2021/22.

Initial allocations were paid to eligible Council Tax accounts in July 2021 , and by 30<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021, the totals awarded were as follows:

- City of Lincoln Council:   £337,439;
- North Kesteven:             £164,358.

9.3 Officers are aiming to spend the remaining balances within 2021/22.

- City of Lincoln Council: £202,802.82
- North Kesteven:         £91,597.51

## 10. Household Support Fund

10.1 £421 million has been made available in England to support those most in need this winter. This funding covers the period 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. £5,464,685.20 has been awarded to Lincolnshire County Council under section 31 of the Local Government Act 2001, to administer the scheme and provide assistance to households most in need.

The expectation is that it should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills. It can also be used to support households with wider essential costs. At least 50% of funding must be spent on families with children.

Lincolnshire County Council is working closely with all Lincolnshire District Councils, with a view to Districts issuing an element of this funding to those requiring this kind of assistance – it is envisaged this Districts scheme will be live shortly. The latest published position is on Lincolnshire County Council’s website, at this link: [Household Support Fund – Lincolnshire County Council](#) . Our Revenues and Benefits shared service will deliver these District scheme Household Support Fund payments for Lincoln and North Kesteven.

## 11. Strategic Priorities

11.1 **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.

11.2 **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.

## 12. Organisational Impacts

12.1 **Finance:** There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report.

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

## 13. Risk Implications

13.1 The Councils bear the risk of local authority rent arrears which are not fully recovered.

## 14. Recommendation

14.1 Joint Committee notes this report, also that a further update will be presented at the next meeting of this Committee.

**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?** No

**If Yes, how many Appendices?** None

**List of Background Papers:** No

**Lead Officer:** Rebecca Cox, Welfare Reform and Project Lead,  
Welfare.Reform@lincoln.gov.uk

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**SUBJECT: REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN 2022/23**

**DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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

## **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 As set out in the Shared Revenues and Benefits Business Case Delegation and Joint Committee Agreement, an annual Business Plan will be presented to this committee in November/December each year for consideration and approval.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 This report sets out the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Business Plan for 2022/23.

## **3. Business Plan**

- 3.1 The Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Business Plan for the financial year 2022/23 is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

- 3.2 Key features of the plan, are:

- Key Achievements in 2021/22;
- Savings in 2021/22;
- Key Activities for 2022/23;
- Strategic Priority schemes 2022/23;
- Towards Financial Sustainability projects 2022/23
- Key Risks;
- Performance Management;
- Safeguarding;
- Equality actions;
- Working in Neighbourhoods;
- Workforce Development;
- Social Value;
- Data Protection and Information Governance.

## **4. Summary of Plan**

- 4.1 The year 2021/22 has been another positive year for the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service, albeit very challenging with a whole host of Covid-19 recovery related-initiatives. The impacts of Covid-19 have been substantial and cannot be underestimated. The financial impacts on taxpayers and businesses have been substantial, which has understandably impacted on revenues collection. The service continues to promote the 'Get in touch, not in debt' message – with very much a focus on 'welfare' when making payment arrangements with customers.

Also, the increase in the Benefits workload as more people sadly find themselves out of work has provided another challenge which the service has responded to positively.

- 4.2 The impacts of Covid-19, like in many other service areas, have been significant and are likely to continue for some considerable time going forward – with increased contact from taxpayers and businesses struggling to pay their bills, as well as increased levels of benefit claims and associated support.

A number of additional demands have been placed on our Revenues and Benefits Service over the last eighteen months, including;

- Test and Trace Support Payments;
- Support for Business Grants;
- Winter Grant Scheme payments;
- Council Tax Hardship Fund;
- Business Rates Reliefs;
- Increase in Benefits claims/changes;
- Universal Credit changes.

These additional demands should not be underestimated and understandably impact on levels of performance in some areas.

However, despite these major challenges, performance in most areas remains positive – officers are wholly committed to achieving the best possible standards of service to our customers.

- 4.3 Officers have settled in well to the new way work of working – the hybrid/blended approach of 40% office/ 60% homeworking, - which is meeting front-facing customer demands, whilst gaining advantages of homeworking through efficiencies and increased productivity in some areas. A ‘one team’ and customer-focussed culture has also been maintained through this new way of working, as colleagues do get to see each other in person again through office presence – and as well as through regular communication through MS Teams.
- 4.4 Ongoing budget pressures including combined reductions in funding through Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) means that the service has had to continue adapting the shared service budget accordingly, allocating resources to areas of higher customer demand, and operating vacancy management extremely carefully.
- 4.5 The plan for 2022/23 continues to look at a range of key initiatives, with new workstyles, e-services, financial inclusion/welfare reform initiatives and standards of performance being crucial areas for the new financial year.
- 4.6 The shared service has further increased its focus on seeking partnership working opportunities and new areas of work which fit within the service’s wider remit, as well as successfully maintaining current arrangements and taking on new shared projects where these opportunities arise.
- 4.7 It continues to be extremely challenging times for local government in general, not least of which being in respect of Revenues and Benefits – due to the nature of the

service whereby each household and business in the districts is impacted in some way by the services we provided – and a range of new areas of work demands being placed on the service (examples highlighted in paragraph 4.2).

- 4.8 It remains the case that our shared service is not seen as a ‘transactional service’, but a key strategic and customer-focussed service that has tangible and real impacts on people’s lives. Our service aims to achieve positive impacts for residents of Lincoln and North Kesteven wherever possible, aiming to help people become financially and digitally included and helping those who can do find employment. Our shared service is extremely well placed to tackle the challenges, and positive opportunities, ahead.

## **5. Strategic Priorities**

- 5.1 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 all kinds of Inequality”.
  - North Kesteven: “Our Communities”.
- 5.2 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.

## **6. Organisational Impacts**

- 6.1 Finance: Any costs/savings need to have due regard to the Medium Term Financial Strategies of both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven. As at the timing of writing this report details of central government funding for 2022/23 is unavailable (e.g. Housing Benefits Administration Subsidy).
- 6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules: There are no direct Legal or Procurement implications arising from this report.
- 6.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights: There are no direct implications arising from this report.

## **7. Risk Implications**

- 7.1 A Risk Register is in place for the Revenues and Benefits shared service, and is included at Appendix 2 to this report.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 The Joint Committee is recommended to:
- 1) Comment on the Annual Business Plan for the shared service, and
  - 2) Approve the 2022/23 Business Plan.

**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 – Business Plan 2022/23  
Appendix 2 – Risk Register  
Appendix 3 – Business Plan 2022/23 (shortened version)

**List of Background Papers:** None

**Lead Officer:** Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits  
Telephone (01522) 873597

## Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

*Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits*

### Business Plan - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023





## Overview

### Services delivered by this Area

The functional services within the area cover:

**The Revenues and Benefits Shared Service delivers Revenues and Benefits functions for City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council.**

**This includes;**

- Collection of Council Tax;
- Collection of Business Rates (also collecting for West Lindsey District Council);
- Processing of Housing Benefit / Council Tax Support claims;
- Processing of Discretionary Housing Payment applications;
- Collection of City of Lincoln Business Improvement District levy;
- Welfare/Benefits/Money advice;
- Recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments;
- Recovery of other incomes (currently only for City of Lincoln – former tenant arrears, sundry debtors);
- Welfare Reform Support;
- Response initiatives supporting Covid-19 recovery, including: Test and Trace Support Payments, Household Support Fund
- Benefit appeals;
- Proactive and joined-up responses to anti-poverty, financial inclusion and tenancy sustainment matters;
- Partnership working on employment and skills projects;
- Key links into and delivery of corporate fraud projects.

**The shared service has a Housing Benefit caseload of almost 7,500, a Council Tax Support caseload of nearly 14,500, and bills almost 100,000 domestic and 10,000 commercial properties.**

V1 Prepared by: M.Walmsley, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Agreement date:

1<sup>st</sup> Review date:

2<sup>nd</sup> Review date:

3<sup>rd</sup> Review date:

Director's comments:

## **Section One: Key achievements in 2021/22**

### **A. Key activities delivered include:**

<b>Key activities</b>	<b>Completed by</b>	<b>Summary of outcome achieved</b>
<p>Continue response to impacts of Covid-19, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lead and engage in 'new workstyles'</li> <li>- Support for staff in terms of new ways of working, wellbeing and communication</li> <li>- Analyse and proactive respond to revenues collection matters and benefit claims impacts</li> </ul>	Shared service	<p>Linked into corporate steer from both partner Councils, providing a clear direction and response to new ways of working, ICT and staffing-related matters. Delivery of 'hybrid/blended' working from September 2021.</p> <p>Daily, weekly and monthly monitoring of revenues and benefits work demands – ensuring focus on customer welfare, whilst recognising the need to collect monies due.</p>
Continued implementation of a strategy for the Councils' response to Welfare Reform support and advice	Shared service	<p>Provision of a clear and proactive response to the challenges presented to the service in relation to the national and local welfare reform agendas, as well as due to impacts of Covid-19, including Universal Credit changes and Test and Trace Support Payments.</p> <p>Positive and proactive work with City of Lincoln and North Kesteven Housing teams to ensure a joined-up approach to tenancy sustainment.</p>
Reducing Inequality / Anti-Poverty	Shared service	Key role in a number of initiatives aiming to reduce poverty in the districts, working with other internal and external stakeholders providing proactive responses to poverty-related issues.
Customer Experience/ Channel Shift:	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and	Enhanced telephone services to better accommodate working from home and allowing better management and flexibility of calls to the shared service.

Key activities	Completed by	Summary of outcome achieved
	Benefits Manager	Focus on reducing usage of e-mails, promoting usage of e-forms to obtain all relevant information needed for Council Tax enquiries.
Revenues and Benefits assurance	Shared service	<p>Further embedment of robust quality-control/subsidy arrangements, achieving high levels of 'right first time' Benefit assessments.</p> <p>Achievement of 100% subsidy on local authority error overpayments in respect of 2019/20 claims.</p> <p>Key role in working with Lincolnshire Counter Fraud Partnership developing a potential Single Person Discount rolling review initiative.</p>
<p>Delivery of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service between City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council.</p> <p>Opportunities to deliver other work areas</p>	Shared service	<p>Secured new 5-year arrangement to administer Business Rates for West Lindsey District Council.</p> <p>Secured new 3-year (plus potential 2-year extension) to work with West Lindsey District Council on Housing Benefit subsidy arrangements.</p> <p>10-week Revenues work with West Lindsey District Council, September-November 2021.</p>
Optimise performance levels with reference to impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly around Council Tax and Business Rates in-year collection, and increased number of Benefits applications	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager	<p>Generally positive performance levels achieved, although Covid-19 is understandably impacting on revenues collection levels as well as resulting in increased Benefits/ Universal Credit related-work.</p> <p>Proactive utilisation of 2021/22 Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) grants, to help those most in need with assistance regarding housing costs.</p> <p>Review of DHP arrangements, looking at procedures in advance of 2022/23 in light of anticipated reduction in government grant</p>

Key activities	Completed by	Summary of outcome achieved
		funding.

## B. Savings initiatives completed or started include:

Key savings initiative	Completed by - service area?	Summary of outcome achieved
Shared Service collaboration – savings mainly from staffing restructure and ICT system change	Shared service	<p>The shared service is delivering savings for both authorities.</p> <p>Income from partnership arrangements with West Lindsey District Council.</p> <p>Reduction in Benefits Officer resources to take into account decrease in central government funding.</p> <p>£34k staffing savings regarding City of Lincoln, through Towards Financial Sustainment initiative</p>

## C. All other key achievements

Include in this section any other achievements – for example, independent reviews, awards, nominations etc.

### Audit Lincolnshire assurances:

- Business Rates – High Assurance.
- Housing Benefit Subsidy Testing 2020/21 – High Assurance.
- Housing Benefit & Council Tax Support – High Assurance.

## Section Two: Key activities in the group's forward plans for 2022/23

### Agreed delivery projects

<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Outcome/savings sought</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Continue response to impacts of Covid-19, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Embed and review new ways of working, including any associated accommodation reviews.</li> <li>- Analyse and proactive respond to revenues collection matters and benefit claims impacts</li> </ul>	Linking into corporate steer from both partner Councils, to continue providing a clear direction and response to new ways of working, ICT and staffing-related matters.	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Throughout 2022/23
	Daily, weekly and monthly monitoring of revenues and benefits work demands – to ensure there is a focus on customer welfare, whilst recognising the need to collect monies due. Review and re-allocate resources as required in light of increased Benefits and Universal Credit demands.	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager	Throughout 2022/23
Continue implementation of a strategy for the Councils' response to Welfare Reform support and advice	Continue to provide a clear and proactive response to the challenges presented to the service in relation to the national and local welfare reform agendas, as well as due to impacts of Covid-19.	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Throughout 2022/23
	Analyse impacts of Discretionary Housing Payments funding and any associated changes in related procedures and policy	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Throughout 2022/23
	Work with City of Lincoln and North Kesteven Housing teams to ensure a joined-up approached to tenancy sustainment	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Throughout 2022/23
Customer Experience/ Channel Shift:	Identification of further e-form self-serve solutions in	Revenues and	First review by end

<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Outcome/savings sought</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
	Revenues and Benefits	Benefits Manager	Quarter 2 2022/23
	Embed standards of response (to be agreed) for all customer channels – focus on e-mails/ e-forms to take place	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	By end of Quarter 2 2022/23
Revenues and Benefits assurance	To achieve 100% subsidy on local authority error overpayments, and optimisation of subsidy in other areas such as exempt accommodation	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Throughout 2022/23
	Analyse impacts on subsidy claim from continued rollout of Universal Credit	Subsidy and Quality Control Lead Officer	Throughout 2022/23
	To further develop / introduce Single Person Discount rolling review arrangements	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Quarter 3 2022/23
Delivery of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service between City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council, whilst seeking opportunities to deliver other work areas	Ongoing shared service, further development of operations of the service – looking for potential enhancements and growth for service. Actively maximise opportunities to enhance wider service delivery and grow as a shared service	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Prior to, throughout 2022/23 and ongoing
	Positively review current partnership arrangements with other local authorities and organisations	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Monthly and quarterly as required, throughout 2022/23
	The 2022/23 budget for the Revenues and Benefits shared service will continue to deliver savings for the partner local authorities.	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Prior to 2022/23 and through quarterly reviews with Finance colleagues
Optimise performance	Maintenance and/or	Head of	2022/23

<b>Key activity</b>	<b>Outcome/savings sought</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
levels with reference to impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly around Council Tax and Business Rates in-year collection, and increased number of Benefits/ Universal Credit applications	improvement of current in-year collection levels, however reference will need to be made in relation to reasonably achievable performance levels due to Covid-19 impacts	Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager	2022/23
	Maximisation of Council Tax and Business Rates taxbases	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager	
	Maintenance of/ Improvement in Benefits claim processing times and reduction in outstanding workload – aim to work within a maximum of 2 weeks	Benefits Team Leaders	Review by end Quarter 2 2022/23
	Reduction and maintenance of lower level of Revenues-related work, aiming to work within a maximum of 2 weeks	Council Tax and Recovery Team Leaders	Review by end Quarter 2 2022/23
	Monthly monitoring of DHP spend and issues	Revenues and Benefits Manager	Monthly throughout 2022/23
Employment and Skills	To actively identify and engage with employment and skills projects with other organisations, - for example, The Network, Department for Work and Pensions – with the aim of increasing employability skills, reducing dependency on benefits and to increase levels of financial inclusion	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Throughout 2022/23
Reacting to funding challenges 2022/23 and in	To ensure that the budget is managed throughout 2022/23	Head of Shared	In advance of and

Key activity	Outcome/savings sought	Owner	Timescale
preparation for 2023/24 – e.g. in respect of Housing Benefit Administration Subsidy, Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government Council Tax Support grant, New Burdens grant/s	and responses made accordingly, as well as preparation of a budget for 2023/24	Revenues and Benefits	throughout 2022/23
Consider/ implement replacement 'self-serve' online system for Revenues and Benefits	Sustainable, cost-efficient and customer-focussed self-serve online facilities for Revenues and Benefits customers of our shared service	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefit	By end Quarter 2 2022/23

#### **D. Strategic priority schemes and any additional Leadership priorities**

Service	Key activity/ project	Outcomes sought	Owner	Timescale
Revenues and Benefits shared service	Vision 2025/Reducing Inequality	Identify projects for 2022/23 ensuring these are delivered on time and within any associated budget	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	In advance of and throughout 2022/23
Revenues and Benefits shared service	NK Plan 2021-24	Identify projects for 2022/23 ensuring these are delivered on time and within any associated budget	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	In advance of and throughout 2022/23

#### **E. Towards Financial Sustainability projects**

\* **Strands:** Withdrawal of services (**W**); cost cutting/reviewing services (**R**); collaborative working (**C**); fair & appropriate charging (**FC**); procurement & commissioning (**P**); asset rationalisation (**A**)

Service	Key activity	Strand (*)	Outcome/savings sought	Owner	Timescale
Revenues and Benefits Shared Service	Review staffing resources and identify/deliver savings to contribute towards corporate savings targets and pressures	R	City of Lincoln – target £24k for 2022/23 and ongoing  North Kesteven – no specific target at this stage	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	With effect from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022

Revenues and Benefits Shared Service	Continuing active consideration of other shared service options – e.g. other areas of work, potential opportunities	R	Efficiencies/savings through shared service opportunities	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	Prior to and throughout 2022/23
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## F. Other agreed delivery projects

N/A

Service	Activity	Outcomes sought	Owner	Timescale

## Section Three: Other Service Planning considerations in 2021/22

### G. Key risks for the area

Risks from Service Managers and those allocated from CMT strategic risk register	Action we will take to mitigate the risk	Who and by When?
Failure to respond to impacts from Covid-19, from both customer and staffing perspectives	<p><b>Controls in place:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Customers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'Get in touch, not in debt' message promoted</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Staffing resources (re)-allocated to areas of demand</li> <li>○ Welfare Reform support and Welfare Benefits/Advice functions in place</li> <li>○ Channels of customer access regular reviewed and changes implemented – e.g. e-forms</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits – prior to and throughout 2022/23</p> <p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits – prior to and throughout 2022/23</p> <p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits – prior to and throughout 2022/23</p> <p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager – throughout 2022/23</p>

Risks from Service Managers and those allocated from CMT strategic risk register	Action we will take to mitigate the risk	Who and by When?
	<p>- Staffing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ICT facilities for homeworking made available where appropriate – PCs and telephones</li> <li>○ Overall and individual risk assessments for access to work premises, visits, etc</li> <li>○ Regular communications through a variety of channels from management and peer-to-peer</li> <li>○ Wellbeing arrangements in place – Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits has monthly meeting with HR Associate, ad hoc staffing matters are proactively responded to by management</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits – prior to and throughout 2022/23</p> <p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits – throughout 2022/23</p> <p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager – prior to and throughout 2022/23</p> <p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits – monthly meetings with HR</p> <p>RBMT – throughout 2022/23</p>
<p>Failure to maintain Council Tax and Business Rates Collection Levels on behalf of the Shared Service.</p>	<p><b>Controls in place:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Performance targets/measures reviewed in advance of 2022/23, to take account of Covid-19 impacts</li> <li>● Performance is monitored and managed on a regular basis</li> <li>● Impacts of Covid-19 proactively analysed and responded to accordingly</li> <li>● Regular reporting into Revenues and Benefits Management Team, Revenue and Benefits Operational Board, Joint Committee</li> <li>● Effective management of</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits – January-March 2022</p> <p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager – Throughout 2022/23</p>

Risks from Service Managers and those allocated from CMT strategic risk register	Action we will take to mitigate the risk	Who and by When?
	<p>daily workflow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of customer experience initiatives ongoing such as e-billing, online Council Tax DD forms and other integrated e-forms.</li> <li>• Council Tax Support Schemes to be approved January 2022</li> </ul> <p><b>Further action required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing challenge of working practices and moving resources to areas of demand.</li> <li>• Continue to review of staffing arrangements and 'pressure points' in advance of and throughout 2022/23</li> <li>• Review Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23 and options for 2023/24</li> <li>• Review of Exceptional Hardship Fund 2022/23 and options for 2023/24</li> </ul>	
<p>Failure to provide timely and accurate assessment of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing payment applications on behalf of the Shared Service</p>	<p><b>Controls in place:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily management of workload through Document Management System</li> <li>• Processes in place to deal with claims 'on demand' wherever possible</li> <li>• Rolling review of subsidy data from Northgate System</li> <li>• Management of incoming work and processes to minimize value of overpayments raised</li> <li>• Training and mentoring of staff</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager – Throughout 2022/23</p>

Risks from Service Managers and those allocated from CMT strategic risk register	Action we will take to mitigate the risk	Who and by When?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of subsidy-quality assurance processes - reviewed</li> <li>• More targeted and efficient quality control mechanisms, improving accuracy levels and rolling training plan to address any training requirement.</li> <li>• Performance and quality assurance framework in place</li> <li>• HB New Claims process review project plan scoped and implemented</li> </ul> <p><b>Further action required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued monitoring of resource allocation – e.g. HB /CTS, Universal Support and other Benefits-related projects, to also take account of Covid-19 impacts</li> <li>• Maintaining improvements in HB Overpayments processes and collection taking into account resources required</li> <li>• Ongoing weekly/monthly monitoring of New Claims and Change of Circumstances process improvements and positive impacts on KPIs</li> </ul>	
Failure to respond to national Welfare Reform and UC agenda	<p><b>Controls in place:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead Welfare Reform Officer role in place (currently to 31.3.2022)</li> <li>• Welfare Reform Strategy in place and approved in April 2015</li> <li>• Effective partnerships with public and third sector bodies</li> </ul>	

Risks from Service Managers and those allocated from CMT strategic risk register	Action we will take to mitigate the risk	Who and by When?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-location with DWP</li> <li>• Welfare Reform Support team in place (currently to 31.3.2022)</li> <li>• Effective comms in all welfare reform changes</li> <li>• Regular liaison with Department for Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice re UC support arrangements</li> </ul> <p><b>Further controls required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quarterly updates to RB Joint Committee</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of Welfare Reform Strategy</li> </ul>	<p>Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits, Revenues and Benefits Manager – Throughout 2022/23</p> <p>Initial review prior to 2022/23</p>

## H. Performance Management

Performance	Planned action	Service
<b>What are the key plans for ensuring reported performance is of good quality</b>		
<b>What service measures do you want to see reviewed this year</b>		
<p>Strong and robust performance reporting arrangements are well embedded in the Revenues and Benefits shared service – a detailed spreadsheet of performance data and management information is completed monthly and reviewed/challenged by the Head of Shared Revenues &amp; Benefits and Revenues &amp; Benefits Manager. Performance is a standing agenda item at Revenues &amp; Benefits Management Team (RBMT) meetings.</p> <p>Service measures are continually reviewed to ensure the most appropriate performance areas are being reported to Members and Corporate Management Teams – a further review is required in advance of 2022/23, to ensure all measures are still appropriate and whether and also that targets/measures take appropriate account of the ongoing impacts of Covid-19.</p>		

## H. Statutory duties – Equality and Diversity; Safeguarding (Children and Adults at risk)

This should include appropriate actions that will be closely monitored in order to meet your equality objectives under the Equality Act 2010, and in particular the Public Sector Equality Duties; as well as safeguarding duties.

<b>Key actions within your services that are being under-taken as part of the Equality Objective Action Plan – progress and plans for the coming year</b>
Profiling of service users profile and development of action plan to address any issues identified.
<b>What key actions are services taking to close significant Equality Information gaps?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of language interpretation telephone line service</li> <li>• Ongoing review of availability of Revenues and Benefits correspondence in other formats.</li> </ul>
<b>List the policies and strategies to receive an Equality Analysis this year where Head of Service sign off is required</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Tax Support Schemes for 2022/23 and 2023/24.</li> <li>• Discretionary Housing Payment policy (if required).</li> <li>• Welfare Reform Strategy (if required).</li> </ul>
<b>What actions need to be taken to meet the area’s Safeguarding Duties? How will the delivery of your services take into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults?</b>
<p>Ensure appropriate staff in the shared service receive/ have received (refresher) training on safeguarding requirements and processes, as required.</p> <p>In line with corporate training place, ensure any new/ refresher Safetalk/ ASIST training takes place, as required.</p>

## I. Working in Neighbourhoods

<b>How are you, as Head of Service, going to engage with the neighbourhood agenda? In which specific services will you ensure there is a focus on neighbourhood working?</b>
The Welfare Team within the shared service has a specific role of working in neighbourhoods via outreach surgeries and in individual customers’ homes – providing benefits, money and debt advice. Head of Shared Revenues & Benefits has key links into Sincil Bank revitalisation projects, in particular in relation to Employment and Skills –related initiatives. The service also engages with the Communities and Voluntary Coordination cell, working with other Lincolnshire Councils. The Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits is currently Chair of Lincolnshire Financial Inclusion Partnership (FIP), looking at neighbourhood-wide, district/s-wide and countywide financial inclusion initiatives.

## J. Workforce Development

Workforce Development	Planned action	Service
What are the key plans for training and developing staff?		

<b>Workforce Development</b>	<b>Planned action</b>	<b>Service</b>
Proactive response to changing climate in relation to Revenues and Benefits	Ongoing review job roles, skill sets and staff development/training requirements.	Revenues and Benefits Shared Service
Proactive support for new workstyles	To fully engage with new workstyles agenda, communicating effectively with all team members	Revenues and Benefits Shared Service
Improving workforce capability	Staff appraisals April 2022-July 2023	Revenues and Benefits Shared Service
City of Lincoln Council Workforce Development Strategy / One Council Organisational Development Pillar	Delivery of actions as required within the Strategy action plan / Throughout 2022/23	Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

## **L. Social Value**

<b>Social Value</b>	<b>Planned action</b>	<b>Service</b>
<b>What are the key plans for delivering social value through your services?</b>		
Head of Shared Revenues & Benefits has a full understanding of Social Value and will ensure this is considered going forward in any procurement / contracts relating to the shared service.		

## **M. Data Protection and Information Governance**

<b>Data Protection and Information Governance</b>	<b>Planned action</b>	<b>Service</b>
<b>What are the key plans/ considerations in respect of Data Protection and Information Governance in respect of your services?</b>		

<b>Data Protection and Information Governance</b>	Planned action	Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure ongoing compliance from all staff – a high volume of sensitive and confidential data is held within the shared service</li> <li>- Working with Information Governance Lead Officer to ensure ongoing review of data held within the service and that appropriate Information Sharing Agreements are in place</li> <li>- General Data Protection Regulation – Working with IT and Legal Services, to ensure Revenues and Benefits shared service continues to comply with GDPR</li> <li>- Ensure continuing adherence to requirements of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Department for Work and Pensions, with annual sign-off of MoUs for both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven.</li> </ul>		

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## Risk Register Template

Likelihood	4 Almost Certain				
	3 Probable		1, 2, T3, 4, T4	3	4
	2 Possible		T1, T2		
	1 Hardly Ever				
		1 Negligible	2 Minor	3 Major	4 Critical
	<b>Impact</b>				

**RISK REGISTER:** Revenues and Benefits Shared Service

**VERSION:** New Template @ 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**REVIEWED:**  
 Original version produced: 4<sup>th</sup> March 2011  
 Updated: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2012  
 Updated: 18<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
 Updated: 7<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
 Updated: 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014  
 Updated: 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015  
 Updated: 27<sup>th</sup> June 2016  
 Updated: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2016  
 Updated: 28<sup>th</sup> July 2017  
 Updated 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017  
 Updated 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018  
 Updated 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018  
 Updated 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019  
 Updated 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019  
 Updated 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
 Updated 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021  
 Updated 5<sup>th</sup> November 2021

**OWNER:** Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits

The matrix below, helps you define where the risk is by scoring it on a basis of ‘Likelihood’ and ‘Impact’

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee  
Appendix 2: Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Business Plan 2022/23 – Risk Register**

<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>4 Almost certain</b>	Retain	Transfer Modify Retain	Avoid Transfer Modify	Avoid Transfer Modify	<b>Description of occurrence</b>	Occurs several times per year. It will happen.
	<b>3 Probable</b>	Retain	Prioritise for Modifying Retain	Transfer Modify Retain	Avoid Transfer Modify		It has happened before and could happen again.
	<b>2 Possible</b>	Retain	Prioritise for Modifying Retain	Prioritise for Modifying Retain	Transfer Modify Retain		It may happen but it would be unusual.
	<b>1 Hardly ever</b>	Retain	Retain	Retain	Prioritise for Modifying Retain		Never heard of it occurring. We can't imagine it occurring.

<b>1 Negligible</b>	<b>2 Minor</b>	<b>3 Major</b>	<b>4 Critical</b>
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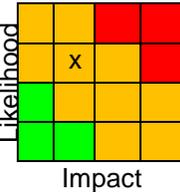
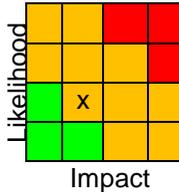
Impact	Service Delivery	Finance	Reputation	People
Critical (4)	Prolonged interruption to service	Severe costs incurred	Adverse national coverage with significant change in stakeholder confidence	Fatality, disability or serious long term health problem
Major (3)	Key targets missed- some service compromised	Significant costs incurred	Adverse local media coverage with moderate change in stakeholder confidence	Series injuries. Exposure to dangerous conditions
Minor (2)	Management action required to over short – term difficulties	Some costs incurred (handled within management budgets)	Adverse local media for 1-7 days	Minor injuries or discomfort. Feeling unease
Negligible (1)	Handled within day to day routines	Little loss anticipated	No significant comment or media coverage	No injury

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee**  
**Appendix 2: Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Business Plan 2022/23 – Risk Register**

		<b>Risk Owner</b>	<b>Risk Appetite</b>  (How much risk are we prepared to take and the total impact of the risk we are prepared to accept)	<b>Current Controls/Actions</b>	<b>Current Risk Score</b>	<b>Target Risk Score at end of 2022/23</b>	<b>Assurance -Status</b>  (Full, Substantial, Limited, No)	<b>Assurance – Direction of Travel</b> (Improving, Static, Declining)
1	<b>Failure to maintain performance / current levels of Council Tax and Business Rates Collection on behalf of the Shared Service</b>	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	<b><u>Creative &amp; Aware</u></b>  Finance & Money	<b>Controls in place:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance targets/measures reviewed in advance of <b>2022/23</b>, to take account of Covid-19 impacts</li> <li>Performance is monitored and managed on a regular basis</li> <li>Impacts of Covid-19 proactively analysed and responded to accordingly</li> <li>Regular reporting into Revenues and Benefits Management Team, Revenue and Benefits Operational Board, Joint Committee</li> <li>Effective management of daily workflow</li> <li>Range of customer experience initiatives ongoing such as e-billing, online Council Tax DD forms and other integrated e-forms.</li> <li>Council Tax Support Schemes <b>to be considered/approved</b> January <b>2022</b></li> </ul> <b>Further action required:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing challenge of working practices and moving resources to areas of demand.</li> <li>Continue to review of staffing arrangements and ‘pressure points’ in advance of and throughout <b>2022/23</b></li> </ul>			Substantial	Range of indicators, but in the main performance is either improving or being maintained

67

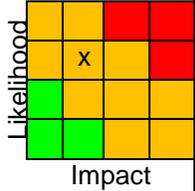
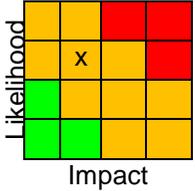
**25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee**  
**Appendix 2: Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Business Plan 2022/23 – Risk Register**

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23 and options for 2023/24</li> <li>Review of Exceptional Hardship Fund 2022/23 and options for 2023/24</li> </ul>					
68	2	<p><b>Failure to provide timely and accurate assessment of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing payment applications on behalf of the Shared Service</b></p>	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	<p><b><u>Creative &amp; Aware</u></b></p> <p><b>Reputation &amp; Public Confidence</b></p> <p><b>Finance &amp; Money</b></p>	<p><b>Controls in place:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily management of workload through Document Management System</li> <li>Processes in place to deal with claims 'on demand' wherever possible</li> <li>Rolling review of subsidy data from Northgate System</li> <li>Management of incoming work and processes to minimize value of overpayments raised</li> <li>Training and mentoring of staff</li> <li>Review of subsidy-quality assurance processes - reviewed</li> <li>More targeted and efficient quality control mechanisms, improving accuracy levels and rolling training plan to address any training requirement.</li> <li>Performance and quality assurance framework in place</li> <li>HB New Claims process review project plan scoped and implemented</li> </ul> <p><b>Further action required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued monitoring of resource allocation – e.g. HB /CTS, Universal Support and other Benefits-related projects, to also take account of Covid-19 impacts</li> </ul>			Substantial	Range of indicators, but in the main performance is either improving or being maintained

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee  
Appendix 2: Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Business Plan 2022/23 – Risk Register**

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining improvements in HB Overpayments processes and collection taking into account resources required</li> <li>Ongoing weekly/monthly monitoring of New Claims and Change of Circumstances process improvements and positive impacts on KPIs</li> </ul>																																																						
69	3 . <b>Failure to respond to national Welfare Reform and Universal Credit agenda</b>	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	<b><u>Opportunity</u></b> <b>People/Finance</b>	<p><b>Controls in place:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Lead Welfare Reform Officer role in place (currently to 31.3.2022)</b></li> <li>Welfare Reform Strategy in place and approved in April 2015</li> <li>Effective partnerships with public and third sector bodies</li> <li>Co-location with DWP</li> <li>Welfare Reform Support team in place (currently to 31.3.2022)</li> <li>Effective comms in all welfare reform changes</li> <li>Regular liaison with Department for Work and Pensions and Citizens Advice re UC support arrangements</li> <li>Quarterly updates to RB Joint Committee</li> </ul> <p><b>Further controls required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing review of impacts of administration of Test &amp; Trace Payments Scheme <b>and other similar/related</b> on capacity of Welfare Reform Support Team</li> <li><b>Review of Welfare Reform Strategy</b></li> </ul>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Likelihood</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>X</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Impact</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	Likelihood								X												Impact					<table border="1"> <tr><td>Likelihood</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>X</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>Impact</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	Likelihood							X													Impact					Substantial	Improving
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**25<sup>th</sup> November 2021 Revenues and Benefits Joint Committee**  
**Appendix 2: Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Business Plan 2022/23 – Risk Register**

70	4 .	Failure to respond to impacts of Covid-19 on Revenues and Benefits Shared Service.  - Lead and engage in 'new workstyles'  - Support for staff in terms of new ways of working, wellbeing and communication  - Analyse and proactive respond to revenues collection matters and benefit claims impacts	Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits	<p><b><u>Creative &amp; Aware</u></b></p> <p><b>Reputation &amp; Public Confidence</b></p> <p><b>Finance &amp; Money</b></p> <p><b>People</b></p>	<p><b>Controls in place:</b></p> <p>- Customers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'Get in touch, not in debt' message promoted</li> <li>○ Staffing resources (re)-allocated to areas of demand</li> <li>○ Welfare Reform support and Welfare Benefits/Advice functions in place</li> <li>○ Channels of customer access regular reviewed and changes implemented – e.g. e-forms</li> </ul> <p>- Staffing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ICT facilities for homeworking made available where appropriate – PCs and telephones</li> <li>○ Overall and individual risk assessments for access to work premises, visits, etc.</li> <li>○ Identification of more vulnerable staff and associated risk assessments made</li> <li>○ Regular communications through a variety of channels from management and peer-to-peer</li> <li>○ Wellbeing arrangements in place – Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits has monthly meeting with HR Associate, ad hoc staffing matters are proactively responded to by management</li> </ul> <p><b>Further controls required:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing review of impacts of administration of Test &amp; Trace Payments Scheme <b>and other</b></li> </ul>			Substantial	Improving

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				similar/related on capacity of Welfare Reform Support Team				
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# Business Plan 2022/23 – Summary

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*Providing Revenues & Benefits for City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council*

## **Key activities delivered in 2021/22:**

- ❖ **Response to Covid-19**
- ❖ **Delivery of 'New Ways of Working'**
- ❖ **Enhanced telephone system**
- ❖ **Positive levels of performance**
- ❖ **Welfare Reform support and advice**
- ❖ **Test and Trace Support Payments**
- ❖ **Expansion of partnership working**
- ❖ **Key role in anti-poverty, reduction of inequality and financial inclusion initiatives**



## **Key activities in 2022/23:**

- ❖ **Continue response to impacts of Covid-19 – support to residents, businesses, staff**
  - ❖ **Review of Welfare Reform Strategy**
  - ❖ **Key role in projects relating to reducing inequality and financial inclusion**
  - ❖ **Identifying and delivering new ways of improving customer experience, including new e-forms**
  - ❖ **Embed standards of response for all customer channels – including e-mails/ e-forms**
  - ❖ **To lead and further expand partnership working with other organisations**
  - ❖ **Optimise performance levels with reference to impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly around Council Tax and Business Rates in-year collection, and increased number of Benefits applications**
  - ❖ **Utilise Discretionary Housing Payment grants in the most appropriate and effective manner**
  - ❖ **Increase opportunities for customers through a range of Employment and Skills related initiatives**
  - ❖ **Delivery of strategic projects through:**
    - **City of Lincoln Council Vision 2025;**
    - **NK Plan 2021-24.**
  - ❖ **Contribute towards corporate savings targets and pressures**
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