

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

1. Purpose of Report

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

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on Revenues and Benefits performance information up to the end of Quarter 3 2017/18.
- 2.2 The Revenues and Benefits Shared Service has now been in operation since 1st June 2011, and performance has continued to be maintained and improved whilst providing value for money. Continual improvement and success is being achieved in terms of both statistical and financial performance, as well as positive outcomes for customers of the partner local authorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 At the 28th November meeting of this committee, a report was presented detailing Revenues and Benefits performance up to the end of Quarter 2 2017/18.
- 3.2 Performance is reported to this committee on a quarterly basis.

4. Revenues Performance

4.1 Council Tax

- 4.2 As at the end of Quarter 3, in-year collections compared to the same point in 2016/17 are as follows – Lincoln slightly up by 0.05%, and North Kesteven slightly down by 0.18%.
- 4.3 When considering the current collection levels, it should be noted that the collectable debit for both City of Lincoln and North Kesteven has increased from 2016/17 by £1.93m and £2.88m respectively. As a result of this, the collection figure (£'s) has increased from 2016/17, as shown in tables below in paragraph 4.4.

4.4 City of Lincoln:

	Collection %	Net collectable debit (£)	Total net receipt (£)
December 2017	79.77	39,266,457	31,321,258
December 2016	79.72	37,337,899	29,767,316
Difference	+0.05	+1,928,558	+1,553,942

North Kesteven:

	Collection %	Net collectable debit (£)	Total net receipt (£)
December 2017	86.27	57,554,738	49,651,727
December 2016	86.45	54,678,087	47,270,367
Difference	-0.18	+2,876,651	+2,381,360

4.5 Business Rates

4.6 Compared to the same point in 2016/17, as at the end Quarter 3 all three in-year Business Rates collections for which the shared service is responsible, are improved, as follows:

- City of Lincoln 1.15% up;
- North Kesteven 0.32% up;
- West Lindsey 0.33% up.

4.7 The tables below, in paragraph 4.8, detail changes in Net collectable debit and Total net receipt, when compared to the end of Quarter 3 2016/17.

4.8 City of Lincoln:

	Collection %	Net collectable debit (£)	Total net receipt (£)
December 2017	86.43	43,838,636	37,889,196
December 2017	85.28	44,374,786	37,844,607
Difference	+1.15	-536,150	+44,589

North Kesteven:

	Collection %	Net collectable debit (£)	Total net receipt (£)
December 2017	85.21	26,260,198	22,375,815
December 2016	84.89	26,313,561	22,336,361
Difference	+0.32	-53,363	+39,454

West Lindsey:

	Collection %	Net collectable debt (£)	Total net receipt (£)
December 2017	81.87	16,835,282	13,783,184
December 2016	81.54	16,948,715	13,820,112
Difference	+0.33	-113,433	-36,928

4.9 Outstanding Revenues Customers

- 4.10 The number of outstanding Revenues Customers in our document imaging system decreased significantly from Quarter 2 to Quarter 3 2017/18 – Lincoln from 624 to 80, and North Kesteven from 393 to 68, - equating to a total of 148 outstanding items at the end of December 2017, a reduction of 290 from the figure at the end of December 2016 (438). This has been achieved through progress utilising integrated e-forms within the team, as well as staffing resources being put in place to address the level of outstanding work.
- 4.11 Whilst always of paramount importance to have a little number of outstanding items as possible to enable current demands (e.g. e-mail and telephone calls) to be dealt with promptly, it is particularly important during Quarter 4 as all new year Council Tax bills are due to be issued – so any notifications of changes (e.g. addresses, discounts, etc) need to be processed so that accurate, updated bills are issued for the new financial year.

4.12 Housing Benefit Overpayments

- 4.13 As at the end of Quarter 3 2017/18, in-period collection stands at 74.92% for Lincoln and 87.47% for North Kesteven – representing ongoing positive performance in this area.
- 4.14 However, again despite the positive rates of in-period overpayments collection, the ongoing issue of outstanding level of overpayments continues. Positively North Kesteven's outstanding figure has actually decreased from Quarter 2 to Quarter 3 – by £29,728. Conversely, Lincoln's figures has increased by £126,979. It is recognised that due to the higher level and demographic of caseload, a much higher level of Housing Benefit overpayments is raised for Lincoln compared to North Kesteven – up to the end of Quarter 3 in 2017/18, the figure is £1,371,131 and £695,045 respectively.

	Q3 2017/18	Q2 2017/18	Q1 2017/18	2016/17 outturn
Lincoln	£4,248,202	£4,121,223	£4,000,314	£4,081,552
North Kesteven	£1,823,546	£1,853,274	£1,805,923	£1,793,997

- 4.15 A separate, more detailed report – 'Housing Benefit Overpayment' – is included elsewhere on this committee's agenda, which includes details of a proposed action plan for the remainder of 2017/18 and into 2018/19.

5. Benefits Performance

- 5.1 Outstanding assessment work has decreased by 31% from Quarter 2 to Quarter 3 2017/8, although the outstanding figure of 934 is higher than that at the end of Quarter 3 2016/17 (829). However, this is still a positive position to be in despite there being some vacant hours on the team as at the time of writing this report.

As at the time of writing this report (29th January) Benefits customers outstanding figures – split by those who are already in progress (i.e. where the customer has been contacted and further information is required) against those which have not yet started to be processed – show that there are 288 claims where the case has not yet been looked at:

	Benefits customers awaiting assessment (as at 29th January 2018)		
	Customer has been contacted	Customer not yet contacted	Total
City of Lincoln	635	159	794
North Kesteven	506	129	635

5.2 Average processing times, financial accuracy and customer satisfaction all continue to perform well.

5.3 Overall, the Benefits Service is displaying positive performance – despite a raft of challenges and legislative and procedural changes, largely due to the ongoing rollout of welfare reforms. It is an ongoing ‘balancing act’ of ensuring Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments work continues to be processed promptly and efficiency, whilst recognising the need to take on board new areas of work such as Universal Credit support (e.g. digital support and personal budgeting support). Officers will endeavour to keep dealing with these changes in a positive and proactive manner.

6. Strategic Priorities

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

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

6.2 The Benefits Service plays a key role in reducing inequality by ensuring residents receive the benefits they are entitled to and providing money / debt advice. The Revenues Section is also mindful of the strategic priorities when engaging with business ratepayers as they recover business rates – and also promoting and encouraging growth in the districts. Digital Inclusion, Channel Shift, Financial Inclusion and Partnership Working are all key priorities for the shared service.

7. Organisational Impacts

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

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

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

8. Risk Implications

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

9. Recommendations

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

9.2 Note that a performance update will be presented at the next meeting of this committee, on 12th June 2018.

Is this a key decision? Yes/No

Do the exempt information categories apply? Yes/No

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

How many appendices does the report contain? Appendix 1: Performance Data to end Quarter 3 2017/18

List of Background Papers: None

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