

## Current performance of LGSS Revenues and Benefits Service

Northampton revenues and benefits service is currently administered by LGSS under the terms of a Partnering and Delegation Agreement (PDA) that has been in force since June 2013.

The revenues and benefits service is monitored against key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure performance against critical service functions;

- REV01: days taken to process benefit claims
- REV04: percentage of local authority error in determining benefit claims
- REV06: percentage of calls in the contact centre answered
- REV08: percentage of Council Tax collected in-year
- REV09: percentage of Business Rates collected in-year
- REV10: managed debt collection
- REV11: percentage of applications for Discretionary Housing Benefit reviewed within 14 days

The table below sets out the performance of the service against the KPIs from 2012/13 (prior to the commencement of the PDA with LGSS) and projected outturn for the current financial year.

|       |  | 2012/13  | 2013/14   | 2014/15  | 2015/16   | 2016/17<br>(projected<br>outturn) |
|-------|--|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| REV01 | Speed of processing benefit claims.  | 9.9 days | 10.0 days | 9.1 days | 10.2 days | 8.2 days                          |
| REV04 | Percentage of LA error in determining benefit claims                           | 0.29%    | 0.30%     | 0.39%    | 0.35%     | 0.29%                             |
| REV06 | Percentage of calls answered in the contact centre                             | N/A      | N/A       | 83.20%   | 79.90%    | 86%                               |
| REV08 | Percentage of Council Tax collected in-year                                    | 97.15%   | 96.30%    | 96.17%   | 96.04%    | 95.80%                            |
| REV09 | Percentage of Business Rates collected in-year                                 | 99.06%   | 99.24%    | 99.41%   | 98.43%    | 98.00%                            |
| REV10 | Percentage of inactive debt  | 4.40%    | 3.93%     | 3.42%    | 6.23%     | 2.70%                             |
| REV11 | Percentage of claims for Discretionary Housing Benefit reviewed within 14 days | N/A      | N/A       | N/A      | 98.96%    | 98%                               |

Account has been taken of national developments in setting the annual collection rate targets for council tax, the following commentary sets in context the key issue.

The Council Tax collection rate target was adjusted to 96.5% for the 2013/14 financial year to take account of the 8.5% reduction to Council Tax Support. The target has stayed the same for every year since then but is again under review as the impact of increasing reductions to CTRS and the resulting increase in debt that is uncollectable from these cases is assessed.

The NNDR collection rate was reported by the Borough Council of Wellingborough until April 2016. It is believed that at this point the collection rate from WDC to have been overstated. The collection rate calculated by LGSS reflects the in-year collection rate and they are collecting the same, if not increased levels of business rates in 2016/17. This indicator will need to be adjusted for 2017/18.

The service is also monitored against the achievement of savings and income generation targets agreed at the commencement of the partnership with LGSS and reviewed on an annual basis.

Review of performance is undertaken on a regular basis, through monthly reports detailing current performance against the KPI and regular monthly meetings between the Head of Revenues Services (LGSS) and the Head of Customer and Cultural Services (NBC) to discuss any issues that are of concern and agree on any remedial action. These meetings are conducted on a more informal basis than the formal quarterly review meetings of the Quarterly Review Board, which are attended by both the LGSS Client Services Director and the Council's Chief Executive or his representative.

The Revenues and Benefits Board also meets twice annually and is attended by one Councillor and a senior officer.

The KPIs against which the performance of revenues and benefits service is measured were set initially to reflect the level of service that the council was receiving immediately prior to the commencement of the Partnership and have been reviewed on an annual basis.

Since the commencement of the partnership the service has had to implement many changes in government legislation brought about through the Welfare Reform Act, Localism Act and Business Rates Retention etc whilst maintaining levels of service.

At the point of transfer of the service to LGSS in 2013 the revenues and benefits service was performing well and continues to perform at medium to upper quartile through the development of partnerships, maximising investments in service improvements and achieving significant channel shift through close working with existing NBC staff who support the website development and delivery of face to face services via the council's one stop shop.

There have been no significant issues to be addressed in terms of the processing KPIs (collection rates and days to process benefit claims). Performance against these indicators remains strong with any variation from target being investigated promptly and immediate action taken to ameliorate the position.

There is one area where the service has had to invest resources to improve performance. They have worked closely with NBC over the past year to improve the overall performance of the call centre and its ability to respond to the needs of customers. Following a successful recruitment drive and training programmes the service has improved the percentage of calls answered from 83.57% to 95.19.

In terms of financial savings the service has achieved savings of £2.6 million over the 5 year partnership to date and a reduction in ongoing baseline costs in the region of £410k.

The service has successfully maximised income and subsidy, over £1million of additional council tax has been identified for collection over the last few years through various initiatives including a single person discount review, and £400k of additional subsidy has been recovered from central Government (against a government programme of annually reducing administration subsidy payments to local authorities nationally).