

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION

Agenda Item No 17

meeting date: 12 NOVEMBER 2013
 title: REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
 principal author: MARK EDMONDSON

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform committee of debts outstanding for business rates, council tax and sundry debtors. Also to update committee on benefits performance, including benefits fraud investigations, prosecutions and sanctions.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions/Community Objectives/Corporate Priorities

Without the revenue collected from rates, council tax and sundry debtors we would be unable to meet the Council's ambitions, objectives and priorities.

2 NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR)

2.1 The following is a collection statement to 31 October 2013:

	£000	£000	2013/14 %	2012/13 %
Balance Outstanding 1 April 2013		357		
NNDR amounts due	17,352			
Plus costs	3			
Transitional surcharge	19			
Write ons	21			
	17,395			
Less				
- Transitional relief	-111			
- Exemptions	-438			
- Charity, Rural, Former Agricultural Discretionary Relief	-942			
- Small Business Rate Relief	-1,735			
- Write offs	-30			
- Interest Due	0			
	-3,256	14,139		
Total amount to recover		14,496		
Less cash received to 31 October		-9,778	67.5	66.1
Amount Outstanding		4,718	32.5	33.9

NB The figures included in the table include not only those charges for 2013/14 but also those relating to previous years, but we are required to report to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) our in year collection rate. This figure is published and is used to compare our performance with other local authorities. On this measure our current in year collection rate at 31 October 2013 is 69.0% compared with 67.9% at 31 October 2012.

3 COUNCIL TAX

3.1 The following is a collection statement for Council Tax to 31 October 2013:

	£000	£000	2013/14 %	2012/13 %
Balance Outstanding 1 April 2013		486		
Council Tax amounts due	36,995			
Plus costs	51			
Transitional relief	1			
Write ons	2			
	37,049			
Less - Exemptions	-484			
- Discounts	-3,417			
- Disabled banding reduction	-47			
- Council Tax Benefit	55			
- Local Council Tax Support	-2,079			
- Write offs	-5			
	-5,977	31,072		
Total amount to recover		31,558		
Less cash received to 31 October		-21,559	68.3	68.6
Amount Outstanding		9,999	31.7	31.4

NB The figures included in the table include not only those charges for 2013/14 but also those relating to previous years, but we are required to report our in year collection rate to the DCLG. This figure is published by them and is used to compare our performance against other local authorities. On this measure our current in year collection rate for 2013/14 at 31 October 2013 is 69.0% compared to 69.3% at 31 October 2012.

4 SUNDRY DEBTORS

4.1 A summary of the sundry debtors account at 31 October 2013 is:

	£000	£000
Amount Outstanding 1 April 2013		330
Invoices Raised	1,086	
Plus costs	2	
	1,088	
Less write offs	0	1,088
Total amount to recover		1,418
Less cash received to 31 October 2013		939
Amount outstanding		479

Aged Debtors	000s	%
< 30 days	70	14.61
30 - 59 days	40	8.35
60 - 89 days	57	11.90
90 - 119 days	17	3.55
120 - 149 days	7	1.46
150+ days	288	60.13
	479	100

5 HOUSING BENEFIT PERFORMANCE

5.1 The main indicator for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support performance is known as Right Time. The benefit section also report on Local Performance Indicators that have been set within the department for benefit fraud and overpayments.

5.2 The Department for Work and Pensions does not require Local Authorities (LA's) to report on any other Performance Measures but encourages them to monitor their own performance locally.

5.3 We obviously consider it very important to monitor benefit fraud and also overpayment data.

Housing Benefit Right Time Indicator 2013/2014

1 July 2013 – 30 September 2013

The right time indicator measures the time taken to process HB/CTS new claims and change events; this includes changes in circumstances, interventions, fraud referrals and prints generated by the benefit department.

Target for year	Actual Performance 1 July 2013 – 30 Sept 2013	Average Performance
10 days	10.64 days	20 days per IRRV

New claims performance

Target for year	Actual Performance 1 July 2013 – 30 Sept 2013	Top grade 4 for all LA's 2007/08
20 days	19.82 days	Under 30 days

6 HOUSING BENEFIT AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT FRAUD

6.1 The following is a summary of fraud investigations for the period 1 July 2013 – 30 September 2013.

Completed fraud investigations		Average caseload	Number of investigations per 1,000 caseload
Housing Benefit	35	1,935	18.09
Council Tax Support	35	2,618	13.37

Summary of prosecutions/sanctions	
Cautions	0
Administrative penalties	0
Successful prosecutions	1
Total	1

Number of prosecutions/sanctions per 1,000 caseload		
Housing Benefit	1/1,935	0.52
Council Tax Support	1/2,642	0.38

7 HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS

7.1 Overpayment means any amount paid as Housing Benefit when there was no entitlement under the regulations. Performance for the period 1 July 2013 – 30 September 2013:

Performance Measure	%
The amount of Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments recovered during the period being reported on as a percentage of HB overpayments deemed recoverable during that period.	67.46
The amount of Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments recovered during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the financial year plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.	15.95
The amount of Housing Benefit (HB) overpayments written off during the period as a percentage of the total amount of HB overpayment debt outstanding at the start of the financial year, plus amount of HB overpayments identified during the period.	0.46

8 DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS (DHP's)

- 8.1 The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) allocate each local authority an amount of money each year to grant DHP's to claimants in relation to expenditure they have on housing, over and above any entitlement they have to Housing Benefit.
- 8.2 The amount made available by DWP has been increased substantially this year to deal with the impact of welfare reform e.g. Social Sector Size Criteria, Benefit Cap and Local Housing Allowance reforms. As a result this councils allocation increased from £14,088 to £46,969.
- 8.3 We have received a substantial increase in the number of DHP applications (129) and have approved payments in 71% of cases (92) and refused payments in 29% of cases (37).
- 8.4 Awards to date total 75% of the allocation (£35,113) and we may not be able to meet demand within the current allocation.
- 8.5 The Government have made a further pot of funding available (£20m) for councils to bid for increased funding and it is our intention to continue to monitor our expenditure and consider submitting a bid, if it becomes apparent that we will exceed our allocation, based on the rural nature of this authority, the lack of availability of affordable housing and high private rent levels.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Note the continuing progress that we make in collecting these debts, and the performance of our Housing Benefit Section remains satisfactory.

HEAD OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF64-13/ME/AC
4 November 2013

BACKGROUND PAPERS – None

For further information please ask for Mark Edmondson.