

## Performance and Service Standards

### Revenues and Benefits

Where services are to be shared the partner councils are developing a set of standards and indicators against which future performance will be measured. These will develop as the services change and develop. Although not yet finalised potential ideas being considered and we also asked members for their thoughts as part of the working groups. It is accepted that the ability to collect performance information may not exist from day 1 of the partnership.

### Current Cheltenham Revenues and Benefits Performance Indicators

Revenues and Benefits Key Performance Indicators
Percentage of Council Tax collected in year as a percentage of Council Tax billed in year.
Percentage of Business Rates collected in year as a percentage of Business Rates billed in year.
Average number of days to process new claims.
Average number of days to process changes in circumstances.

### Current Cheltenham Revenues and Benefits Performance Standards

The standard for all service delivery is in accordance with the 'Think Customer Code' as detailed in below;

#### Think Customer!

As a council the only reason we exist is to serve our community – **customer service is at the centre of all we do**. The quality of service delivery has a direct bearing on customer satisfaction and on the reputation of the council as a whole.

#### Action

##### We will:

- make our services easily available
- always listen carefully to what customers say

- give a contact name and details
- let people know what will happen next and if there will be a delay in responding
- answer all enquiries promptly and, where possible, directly (*first time fix*), and
- point people in the right direction if we can't help.

## Behaviour

### We will:

- treat all customers with respect and ensure sensitivity and confidentiality in the delivery of our services
- be polite, honest and helpful
- be knowledgeable, professional and courteous
- go the extra mile to provide the best possible service
- work across services to provide coordinated responses where necessary
- always react positively when things go wrong with the delivery of a service
- we will learn from our mistakes, and
- ensure that our customers help shape the services we deliver.

## Communications

### We will:

- communicate in a way that is easy to understand
- respond to all correspondence promptly
- welcome all feedback and ask customers regularly for their opinions about our services, and
- inform the customer of what we will do to rectify any problem and prevent recurrence.

Other revenues and benefits services standards are in place these are as detail against the activities below.

## Revenues

Activity	Service standard (if relevant)
<b>Council Tax - Valuation and Property Maintenance</b>	
Maintain the council tax property database to correspond with the Valuation List. This includes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying any new or changes to existing properties and notify the Valuation Office Agency (VOA)</li> <li>• Liaison and exchange of information with</li> </ul>	<p>Required to notify VOA within 2 weeks of identification</p> <p>All addresses must be agreed with</p>

<p>Planning, building control and Street Naming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaison with and exchange of information with VOA</li> <li>• Issue of Completion Notices</li> <li>• Amending records to reflect changes on weekly update schedules from VOA</li> <li>• Reconcile CBC property record to Valuation list</li> </ul>	<p>Street Naming before</p> <p>Required to update CBC records within 2 weeks of receiving schedule</p>
<p><b>Council Tax - Liability and Billing</b></p>	
<p>Determine appropriate liability, create new or amend existing accounts and issue appropriate bills. This includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive or collect information to identify the liable person or organisation, changes in circumstances, changes in payment method and eligibility for discounts &amp; exemptions. Create or amend accounts and issue bills and letters</li> <li>• Recalculate instalments and issue bills due to daily changes made to council tax support entitlement</li> <li>• Set up/amend/cancel direct debits and produce bills</li> <li>• Undertake trace enquiries to find absconded debtors</li> </ul>	<p>In line with statutory instalment scheme calculation and 14 day notice period</p> <p>In line with direct debit rules</p>
<p><b>Council Tax - Recovery and Enforcement</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation, processing and issue of statutory recovery notices in line with recovery timetable and court dates</li> <li>• Attend court and present Council's case to obtain liability orders</li> <li>• Deal with all customer queries ,and make payment arrangements, set up attachments to benefit or earnings</li> <li>• Check and process cases to Enforcement Agents monitor cases with enforcement agents</li> <li>• Monitor payment arrangements and attachments /chase payment by phone/letter</li> </ul>	<p>Monthly/statutory requirements for issue of notices</p> <p>Monthly – court dates agreed with court</p> <p>Weekly</p> <p>Monthly</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check cases and Issue various 7 day letters and process cases to alternative recovery methods</li> <li>• Prepare and present councils case as committal hearings</li> <li>• Receive notification of insolvency action, amend accounts according and submit proof of debt forms</li> <li>• Make trace enquires</li> <li>• Prepare and recommend irrecoverable debts for write off cases</li> <li>• Ad-hoc recovery visits by visiting officers</li> </ul>	Daily/weekly/monthly
<b>Council Tax - Customer Service</b>	
<p>All customer contact dealt with by revenues staff - general queries, change of address, discount &amp; exemptions, payment queries, paperless direct debit, recovery queries, response to bills, letter, notices, debit/credit card payments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone calls mainly on council helpline - 01242 264161. Call distributed to other lines via hunt group</li> <li>• Emails <a href="mailto:Counciltax@cheltenham.gov.uk">Counciltax@cheltenham.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:revenues@cheltenham.gcsx.gov.uk">revenues@cheltenham.gcsx.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• Council tax duty officer based in main reception area daily</li> </ul>	Opening hours 9-5 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and 9.30-5 on Wednesdays
<b>Business Rates - Valuation and Property Maintenance</b>	
<p>Maintain the council tax property database to correspond with the Valuation List and the council's LLPG. This includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying any new or changes to existing properties and notify the Valuation Office Agency (VOA)</li> <li>• Liaison and exchange of information with Planning, building control and Street Naming</li> <li>• Liaison with and exchange of information with VOA</li> <li>• Issue of Completion Notices</li> <li>• Amending records to reflect changes on weekly update schedules from VOA</li> <li>• Reconcile CBC property records to</li> </ul>	<p>weekly</p> <p>Weekly</p> <p>weekly</p>

Valuation list	
<b>Business Rates - Liability and Billing</b>	
<p>Determine appropriate liability, create new or amend existing accounts and issue appropriate bills. This includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive or collect information to identify the liable business or organisation, changes in circumstances, changes in payment method and eligibility for reliefs &amp; exemptions. Create or amend accounts and issue bills and letters</li> <li>• Set up/amend/cancel direct debits and produce bills</li> <li>• Undertake trace enquiries to find absconded debtors</li> </ul>	Daily
<b>Business Rates - Recovery and Enforcement</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation, processing and issue of statutory recovery notices in line with recovery timetable and court dates</li> <li>• Attend court and present Council's case to obtain liability orders</li> <li>• Deal with all customer queries ,and make payment arrangements</li> <li>• Check and process cases to Enforcement Agents monitor cases with enforcement agents</li> <li>• Monitor payment arrangements and chase payment by phone/letter</li> <li>• Check cases and Issue various 7 day letters and process cases to alternative recovery methods</li> <li>• Prepare and present councils case as committal hearing</li> <li>• Receive notification of insolvency action, amend accounts according and submit proof of debt forms</li> <li>• Make trace enquires</li> <li>• Prepare and recommend irrecoverable debts for write off cases</li> </ul>	<p>Monthly/statutory requirements for issue of notices</p> <p>Monthly – court dates agreed with court</p> <p>Weekly</p> <p>Monthly</p> <p>Daily/weekly/monthly</p>
<b>Business Rates - Customer Service</b>	
All customer contact dealt with by revenues staff -	Opening hours 9-5 Monday, Tuesday,

<p>general queries, change of address, reliefs &amp; exemptions, payment queries, paperless direct debit, recovery queries, debit/credit card payments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone calls mainly on business rates helpline - 01242 264255</li> <li>• Emails <a href="mailto:businessrates@cheltenham.gov.uk">businessrates@cheltenham.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:revenues@cheltenham.gcsx.gov.uk">revenues@cheltenham.gcsx.gov.uk</a></li> <li>• Business rates staff see customers seen main reception area</li> </ul>	<p>Thursday, Friday and 9.30-5 on Wednesdays</p>
<p><b>Income Control and Reconciliation</b></p>	
<p><b>Payment Processing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check and reconcile daily cash postings for council tax, business rates and benefit overpayments.</li> <li>• Load and post files if automated process fails</li> <li>• Prepare manual payment posting requests</li> <li>• Reconcile open Revenues and cash book to income codes on general ledger</li> <li>• Monitor and manage suspense account</li> <li>• Missing payment enquiries</li> </ul> <p><b>Direct debit Processing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create AUDDIS and payment extract files and process to BACS</li> <li>• Process unpaid and amended DD files and issue revised bills</li> </ul> <p><b>Revenues - refund processing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check all refunds and process file to Bacs or cheque file to accounts payable</li> <li>• Reconcile open revenues financial controls to general ledger</li> </ul> <p><b>Quality control monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample accuracy checks on council tax &amp; business rates processing</li> </ul> <p><b>Email accounts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage and monitor revenues generic inboxes</li> <li>• Run decodes to import emails in to and send batched emails from open revenues workflow</li> </ul>	<p>Must be done daily</p> <p>At least fortnightly</p> <p>In line with DD payment dates and DD rules</p> <p>Weekly</p> <p>Daily/weekly</p>
<p><b>Financial reconciliation, reporting and forecasting</b></p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly reconciliation and collection performance</li> <li>• Quarterly budget monitoring report</li> <li>• Tax base and new homes bonus forecasting</li> <li>• Business rates retention monitoring and forecasting</li> <li>• Calculating tax base for council tax setting</li> </ul>	<p>As required by finance/Sec 151 officer</p> <p>As required by finance/Sec 151 officer</p>
<b>Revenues – Statutory Returns</b>	
<p>QRC</p> <p>CTB1</p> <p>NNDR1</p> <p>NNDR3</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>Annually – October</p> <p>Annually - January</p> <p>Annually – April-May linked to yearend reconciliation</p>
<b>Revenues - Annual billing/yearend</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support council tax setting process</li> <li>• Annual billing testing, processing, reconciliation and issue and new year bills</li> <li>• End of year processing and reconciliation</li> <li>• Preparation of financial reconciliations for general ledger and collection funds</li> </ul>	<p>Council tax setting date, timetable agreed with printers. Statutory 14 day notice period on bills</p> <p>31/03 -01/04</p> <p>In line with yearend timetable for closing accounts</p>

## Benefits

Activity	Service standard (if relevant)
<b>Revenue &amp; Benefits support</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scanning/ referencing of all Revenues and Benefits post</li> </ul>	95% within 24 hours of receipt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Back scanning of internal post and documents</li> </ul>	95% within 48 hours of receipt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Download and process “tell us once” information from the secure DWP website weekly</li> </ul>	95% within 24 hours of receipt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Download and process “Atlas and ETD” information from the secure DWP website daily</li> </ul>	95% within 24 hours of receipt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land registration enquiries via a secure internet link</li> </ul>	80% within 24 hours of receipt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importing emails, housing lettings lists, building control files and creating work</li> </ul>	95% within 24 hours of receipt

<p>items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logging back benefit and council tax support reviews</li> <li>• Validate welfare benefits entitlement via secure DWP website (CIS) using token.</li> <li>• Other clerical support for the revenue and benefits team</li> </ul>	<p>80% within 24 hours of receipt</p>
<p><b>Housing Benefit/Council tax support advice</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Face to face advice service for housing benefit, council tax support, benefit overpayments and general advice on all other welfare benefits at the municipal offices between 10:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday</li> <li>• Checking application forms, verifying supporting documents and photocopying/scanning information at municipal offices between 10:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday</li> <li>• Providing Universal credit advice and support including debt counselling on behalf of DWP at municipal offices between 10:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday.</li> <li>• Staffing a benefit/ council tax support helpline between 9:00 and 17:00 Monday to Friday (except Wednesday which is 9:30 to 17:00)</li> <li>• Providing direct dial contact names/ telephone numbers for officers dealing with a customers claim.</li> <li>• Providing a home visit service for the disabled or elderly who are unable to visit the council offices on housing benefit and council tax support claims.</li> </ul>	<p>Annual Universal credit Delivery Partnership agreement</p>
<p><b>Benefit overpayment recovery</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise debtor accounts, printing and posting of invoices on CIVICA sundry debtor module for benefit overpayments.</li> <li>• Raise debtor accounts for fraud overpayments administration penalties as a result of investigations by DWP and liaise with SPOC officer regarding debts.</li> </ul>	<p>Service standards for this area are defined in Housing benefit regulations, local policies and procedures on overpayment s</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue reminders</li> <li>• Apply income and court costs to debtors accounts</li> <li>• Reviewing underlying entitlement to reduce debts</li> <li>• Negotiate and administer instalment arrangements</li> <li>• Record all correspondence and tel calls onto diary.</li> <li>• Liaise with DWP, housing, landlords, other councils and Bailiffs over recovery action</li> <li>• Pass non paid accounts to legal</li> <li>• Mange queries from customers</li> <li>• Maintaining the CIVICA sundry debt module, move cases though the recovery stages and process work items via workflow module.</li> <li>• Take payments via CIVICA webpay</li> <li>• Contact employers for direct earning s attachments</li> <li>• Contact DWP for recovery from welfare benefits</li> <li>• Transfer debts back to benefits for ongoing recovery</li> <li>• Process cancellations and write offs</li> <li>• Production of management reports, reconciliation, calculation of bad debts and end of year processes</li> <li>• Produce, check and send off government performance and statistical returns.</li> <li>• Liaise with Go shared services regarding missing payments, refunds , journal transfers, cash allocation</li> <li>• Liaise with Cheltenham Borough homes and access housing records via secure link to check credits, refunds, rent breakdown etc</li> </ul>	
<b>Benefit /Council tax Support reconsideration and Appeals</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out an independent review of a benefit/ support decision that has been challenged by a customer.</li> <li>• Request additional supporting information from customer, landlord, employer, DWP, other council or voluntary agency</li> </ul>	<p>95% completed within 7 days of receiving all supporting information.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm revised decision by personal letter giving appeal rights if they still disagree.</li> <li>• Preparing cases for appeal tribunal from customers who still disagree with revised decision</li> <li>• Attending tribunal hearings on behalf of council</li> <li>• Create and update reconsiderations / appeals on the CIVICA appeals module and processing off work items from the workflow module.</li> <li>• Produce, check and monitor performance and statistical returns.</li> </ul>	<p>80% of appeal submissions completed within one month of request.</p> <p>Service standards in this area are defined in Housing benefit regulations, national council tax support regulations for pensioners, local working age council tax support scheme for working age pensioners</p>
<p><b>Quality control monitoring</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check at least a 10% sample of officers work within 24 hours and before decision is posted to customer</li> <li>• Log all sample checks by date and individual officer and record count of total work done, total checked and whether the claim was correct, a critical or non-critical error based on policy and procedures.</li> <li>• Report all critical errors to senior officer for correction and highlight any training needs</li> <li>• Maintain the Quality monitoring spreadsheet throughout the year and produce quarterly returns</li> <li>• Check a 10% sample of write offs and manual adjustments monthly for correct authorisation and that the adjustment is correct</li> </ul>	<p>National standard for monitoring of work is 4% before posting, but we have a local target of 10% within our policy/procedures in this area.</p>
<p><b>Processing of Housing benefit /Council tax support</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To check, validate and calculate all new claims for housing benefit/council tax support as per national and local regulations, working practices, procedures and standards set by the council</li> <li>• To check, validate and calculate changes in circumstances/cancellations for housing benefit/council tax support as per national and local regulations, working practices, procedures and standards set by the council</li> </ul>	<p>Annual average target of 19 days from date of claim to date processed.</p> <p>Annual average target of 4 days from date change reported to date processed.</p>

- To correctly calculate all over and under payments of benefits using the correct classification and reason codes and issue letters as per regulations
- Validate welfare benefit entitlement via secure DWP website (CIS) using token.
- To verify income, capital, earnings, identity, rent under the councils verification standards.
- Request additional information in writing from customer , employer, landlord etc
- To liaise with the council tax department, government agencies, Cheltenham borough homes, housing associations etc to process the claims
- To make fraud referrals or consider underlying entitlement as part of the claims process.
- To process all claims using the CIVICA benefits module and process off work items from the workflow module.
- To correctly categorise all the tenancy types contained in the HB regulations and highlight supported, Homeless, extended or rapid reclaim claims.
- Do referrals to the overpayments teams for debts that are unable to be recovered from ongoing
- To restrict cases subject to the benefit cap regulations and keep records
- To restrict cases subject to the bedroom tax regulations and keep records
- To calculate self-employed and student income
- To action cases subject to the FERIS/RTI data match and keep records
- To action cases subject to Universal credit and keep records
- Do referrals to the Valuation office for rent reviews.
- To cross check council tax records to make sure in tandem (bill/ben process)

Service standards in this area are defined in the following:

- Housing benefit regulations
- National CTS scheme for pension age
- Local CTS scheme for working age
- Local policies and procedures

<b>Discretionary Housing Fund</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To award short term financial help from the fund based on applications and a means test of income/outgoings</li> <li>• To use the CIVICA DHP module to record awards and defined classifications.</li> <li>• To arrange welfare visits to establish need or maximise customers income</li> <li>• To review any appeals against refusal or amount or period of award.</li> <li>• Produce, check and send off government performance and statistical returns.</li> <li>• To report to cabinet/full council if awards exceed fund.</li> </ul>	<p>Service standards in this area are defined in the local DHP policy and procedures.</p>
<b>Payments/reconciliation/statistics/ performance /Gov't returns</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily council tax support payment run</li> <li>• Weekly council tenant payment run into/out of Cheltenham Borough homes system</li> <li>• Weekly rent allowance payment runs via BACS on Bottomline software</li> <li>• Urgent daily payment runs</li> <li>• Monthly cash reconciliation to ledger codes for payments/refunds. Correct discrepancies etc</li> <li>• Monthly reconciliation of benefit subsidy and correct discrepancies</li> <li>• Productions of reports, statistical returns, extract files on a daily/weekly/monthly/quarterly/yearly basis. Check output and correct discrepancies.</li> <li>• Import of data matching, RTI and benefit cap data and Ben Cap data into CIVICA system and produce work items.</li> <li>• Production of government returns such as SHBE, HBRF, HMRC, BRMA, Subsidy, DHP, UC</li> <li>• System testing of CIVICA software such as new products, changes or patch corrections, mail merge documents or new reports.</li> <li>• Produce, manage and extract monthly reviews for posting and progression through</li> </ul>	<p>Service standards in this area are defined by government returns, local policies and procedures</p>

defined stages <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council tax support forecasting</li> <li>• Annual uprating of welfare benefits /premiums and parameters. Year- end calculations, testing, letter production/packing.</li> <li>• Maintain Benefits flexi recording system</li> </ul>	
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## Potential Future Performance Indicators

As mentioned in the introduction there is a potential, in the future, to have some new performance indicators. Below is an example of some of the current indicators collected by Forest of Dean, West Oxfordshire and Cotswold District Councils. It may be that in the future as the services develop further meaningful indicators and service standards are developed for Cheltenham that maintain and enhance the provision of Revenues and Benefits Services. At the member working party discussions it was thought, in the future, it would be useful to have some resolved at first point of contact / right first indicators.

Benefits and Revenues Key Performance Indicators	WODC	FoDDC	CDC
Council tax collected	✓	✓	✓
Non domestic rates collected	✓	✓	
Time taken to process new claims for housing and council tax benefit	✓	✓	✓
Time taken to process change of circumstances for housing and council tax benefit	✓	✓	✓
Number of long term empty properties	✓		✓
Number of cases where positive assistance & intervention was provided which prevented or relieved homelessness for at least 6 months	✓		✓
Number of households living in emergency accommodation			✓