



**MEETING** : EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND STEVENAGE  
BOROUGH COUNCIL JOINT REVENUES AND  
BENEFITS COMMITTEE  
**VENUE** : ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD  
**DATE** : TUESDAY 28TH JANUARY, 2014  
**TIME** : 6.00 PM

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:**

**EAST HERTS COUNCIL:**

Councillors L Haysey, J Thornton and M Tindale (Vice-Chairman).

Substitutes: G McAndrew.

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Councillor J Lloyd (Chairman).  
Councillors S Batson and A Webb.

Substitutes: Councillor R Raynor.

*(Note: Substitution arrangements must be notified by the absent Member to Democratic Services 24 hours before the meeting).*

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01279 502174  
E-mail: [peter.mannings@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:peter.mannings@eastherts.gov.uk)

## DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

1. A Member, present at a meeting of the Authority, or any committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Authority, with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in any matter to be considered or being considered at a meeting:
  - must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting;
  - must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting;
  - must disclose the interest to the meeting, whether registered or not, subject to the provisions of section 32 of the Localism Act 2011;
  - if the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days;
  - must leave the room while any discussion or voting takes place.
2. A DPI is an interest of a Member or their partner (which means spouse or civil partner, a person with whom they are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom they are living as if they were civil partners) within the descriptions as defined in the Localism Act 2011.
3. The Authority may grant a Member dispensation, but only in limited circumstances, to enable him/her to participate and vote on a matter in which they have a DPI.
4. It is a criminal offence to:
  - fail to disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest at a meeting if it is not on the register;
  - fail to notify the Monitoring Officer, within 28 days, of a DPI that is not on the register that a Member disclosed to a meeting;
  - participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which a Member has a DPI;
  - knowingly or recklessly provide information that is false or misleading in notifying the Monitoring Officer of a DPI or in disclosing such interest to a meeting.

(Note: The criminal penalties available to a court are to impose a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale and disqualification from being a councillor for up to 5 years.)

## AGENDA:

1. Apologies
2. Chairman's Announcements
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes – 21 October 2013 (Pages 5 – 8).
5. Quarterly Update (Pages 9 – 42).
6. Housing Benefit Data Sharing (Pages 43 – 50).
7. Urgent Business

To consider such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration and is not likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE  
EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND STEVENAGE  
BOROUGH COUNCIL JOINT REVENUES  
AND BENEFITS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE  
ROOM 27, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD ON  
MONDAY 21 OCTOBER 2013, AT 6.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs J Lloyd (Chairman).  
Councillors S Batson, L Haysey, J Thornton,  
M Tindale and A Webb.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Scott Crudgington | - Strategic Director<br>(Resources)                  |
| Peter Mannings    | - Democratic<br>Services Officer                     |
| Su Tarran         | - Head of Revenues<br>and Benefits<br>Shared Service |
| Adele Taylor      | - Director of Finance<br>and Support<br>Services     |

5 MINUTES – 1 JULY 2013

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the meeting held  
on 1 July 2013 be confirmed as a correct record  
and signed by the Chairman.

6 QUARTERLY UPDATE

The Head of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service submitted a quarterly update in respect of performance reporting and future challenges facing the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service. Members were also invited to consider and approve the Customer Charter detailed on pages 25 – 26 of the report now submitted.

Members were advised that there had been significant changes since the July meeting and the workload of

Officers had continued to increase and was currently 13 % higher than the same period last year. In conjunction with the increased caseload, the number of transactions per claim had also increased. Officers attributed this particular increase to changes in tax credits.

Members were also advised that the demand for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) had also risen significantly and had proven to be a very resource intensive work stream.

The Head of the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service stated that it was unlikely that either East Herts or Stevenage would know what the DHP budget would be for 2014/15 until the new year. Members were updated in respect of performance relating to N181, particularly the disparity between the workload of different local Authorities.

Members were advised that new claims for housing benefit had placed a much higher burden of proof on claimants, particularly in relation to employment and changes to housing.

Members were also advised that the shared service had also been affected by the impact of welfare reforms. It was not possible however, to adequately quantify the additional burden on resources relating to the introduction of Council Tax Support.

The Head of the Shared Service stated that both East Herts and Stevenage Councils were addressing the welfare reform issues corporately and significant joint working was being carried out. East Herts had funded three administrative posts to 31 March 2014, and had increased the transactions managed by the Council's corporate customer support team. Stevenage had also increased capacity in the customer support centre to assist with telephone Housing Benefit enquiries.

Members were advised that universal credit had had

significant press coverage in recent months, and it was unclear from the various reports exactly how much progress was being achieved towards a national roll out. It was increasingly unlikely however, that there would be any significant impact on the service during the first half of 2014/15.

Members were reminded that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had been unable to provide any timescales for the transfer of claims, but had already identified areas of complex work that the DWP were unable to take on in the medium term.

Members were reminded that the service plan for the shared service had included an objective to devise a customer charter for approval by Members in October 2013.

Members were advised that there was likely to be a reduced level of funding for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs) for the year ahead. The Stevenage Strategic Director (Resources) commented that DHPs were not a proxy payment for housing benefit.

The Committee received the report and approved the Customer Charter as detailed at Essential Reference Paper 'C' to the report now submitted.

RESOLVED – that (A) the report be received; and  
(B) the Customer Charter for the Revenues and Benefits Shared Service be approved.

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm

|                |
|----------------|
| Chairman ..... |
| Date .....     |

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## EAST HERTS COUNCIL

### EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL JOINT REVENUES AND BENEFITS COMMITTEE – 28 JANUARY 2014

#### REPORT BY THE HEAD OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS SHARED SERVICE

#### 5. QUARTERLY UPDATE

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

#### **Purpose/Summary of Report:**

- To report to Committee the current position in the following areas
- Performance reporting
- Budget 14/15
- Service Plans for 14/15
- Performance Targets 14/15
- Future challenges

|   |
|---|
| <b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND<br/>STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL JOINT REVENUES AND<br/>BENEFITS COMMITTEE:</u> That</b> |
|---|

|            |                         |
|------------|-------------------------|
| <b>(A)</b> | The report be received. |
|------------|-------------------------|

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 Since the last report to Committee (October 2013) the Autumn statement has announced various changes to be introduced from April impacting on Business Rates, more information has been received in respect of the role out of Universal Credit (UC) and changes to Council Tax have been outlined.

1.2 Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) have also received approval from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to join the Hertfordshire Business Rates pool.

1.3 The report details these with the current position and future challenges facing the service.

## 2.0 Report

### 2.1 **Performance reporting**

#### **Workload**

- 2.1.1 The workload received by the Benefits Service continues to increase and is currently 10.61 % higher [East Herts 13.19% Stevenage Borough 8.53%] than that for the same period last year.

| <b>Work received April to December</b> | <b>EHC</b> | <b>SBC</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--|------------|------------|--------------|
| 2012                                   | 35381      | 40009      | 75390        |
| 2013                                   | 40049      | 43342      | 83391        |
| % increase                             | 13.19%     | 8.53%      | 10.61%       |

The rate of increase in workload appears to be slowing down during the third quarter.

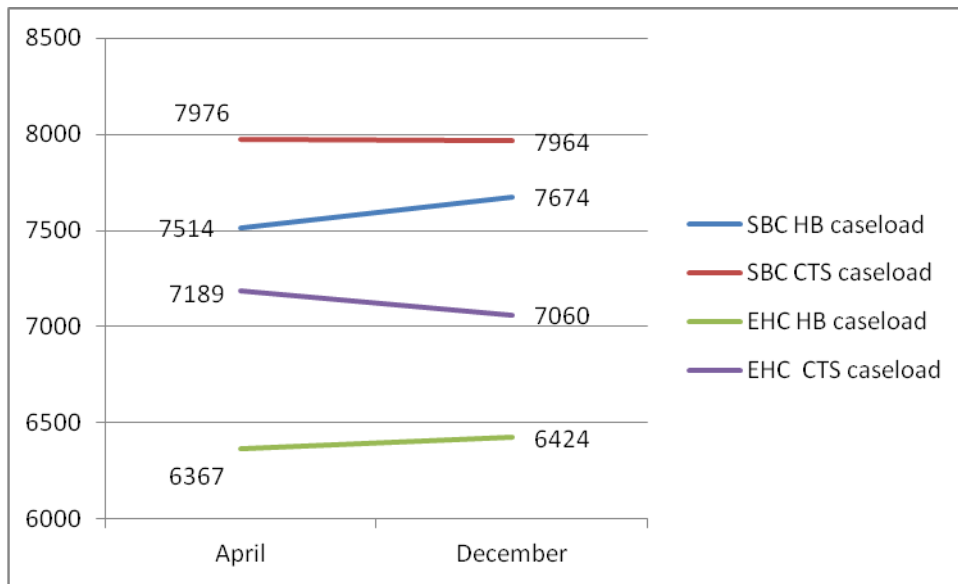
*“Workload” relates to the number of case level items of correspondence received The main sources are; 1. From the customer/landlord or other representative in the post or hand delivered to the offices. 2. From the DWP via ATLAS, 3. from the DWP via ETD, 4. From any party via email or other electronic source.*

*For example: If a claim form is received in the post with 10 supporting documents this is counted as 1 item because it relates to one claim.*

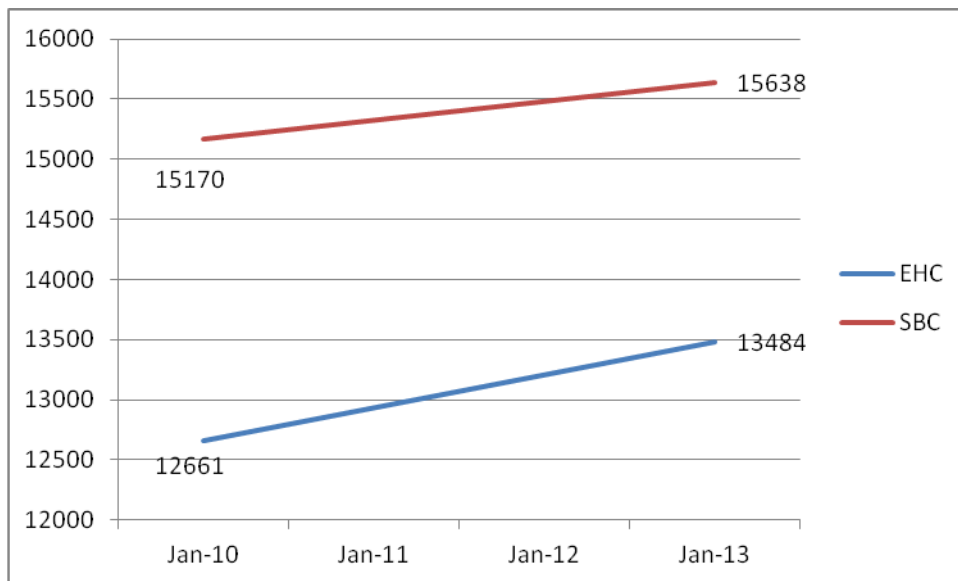
- 2.1.3 To put these figures into context, the following table demonstrates the increased benefits workload since the shared service was scoped.

|   | <b>East Herts</b> | <b>Stevenage</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|---|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Workload received April-December 2010/11    | 23085             | 28447            | 51532        |
| Workload received April to December 2013/14 | 40049             | 43342            | 83391        |
| % Increase                                  | 73.48%            | 52.36%           | 61.82%       |

2.1.4 Caseload has in contrast remained relatively stable this year, although CTS caseloads have reduced.



2.1.5 In contrast the caseload since the scoping of the shared service has increased more significantly.



2.1.6 In conjunction with the increased caseload the transactions per claim have increased. Anecdotally this is attributed to changes in tax credits.

|   |               |               |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Based on 9 months workload                    | East Herts    | Stevenage     |
| Transactions per HB caseload at December 2010 | <b>4.01</b>   | <b>3.93</b>   |
| Transactions per HB caseload at December 2013 | <b>6.23</b>   | <b>5.64</b>   |
| % Increase                                    | <b>55.34%</b> | <b>43.54%</b> |

### Discretionary Housing Payments

- 2.2.1 The demand for Discretionary Housing payments arising from the changes in the welfare reforms has also risen significantly, and has proven to be a very resource intensive work stream.

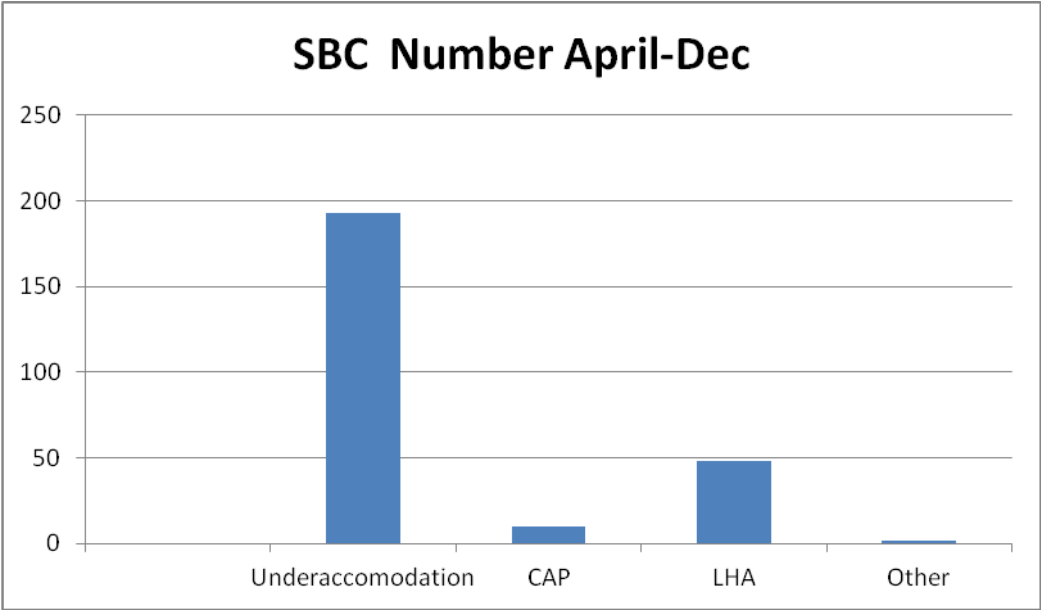
|                               | DHP claims awarded <u>in all</u> of 12/13 | DHP requests received April to December 2013 |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| East Herts<br>Budget £162 055 | 161                                       | 329  |
| Stevenage<br>Budget £163 535  | 110                                       | 375  |

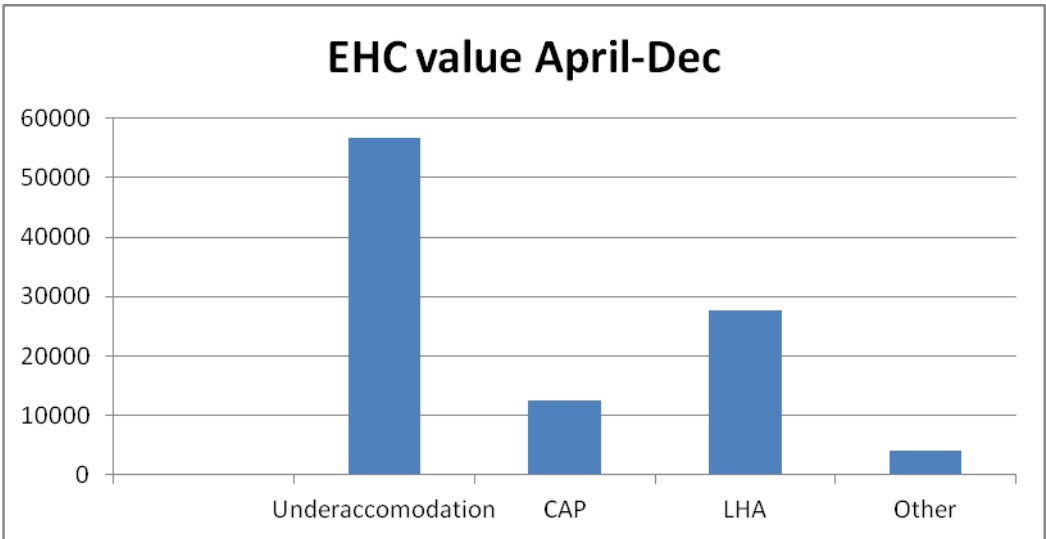
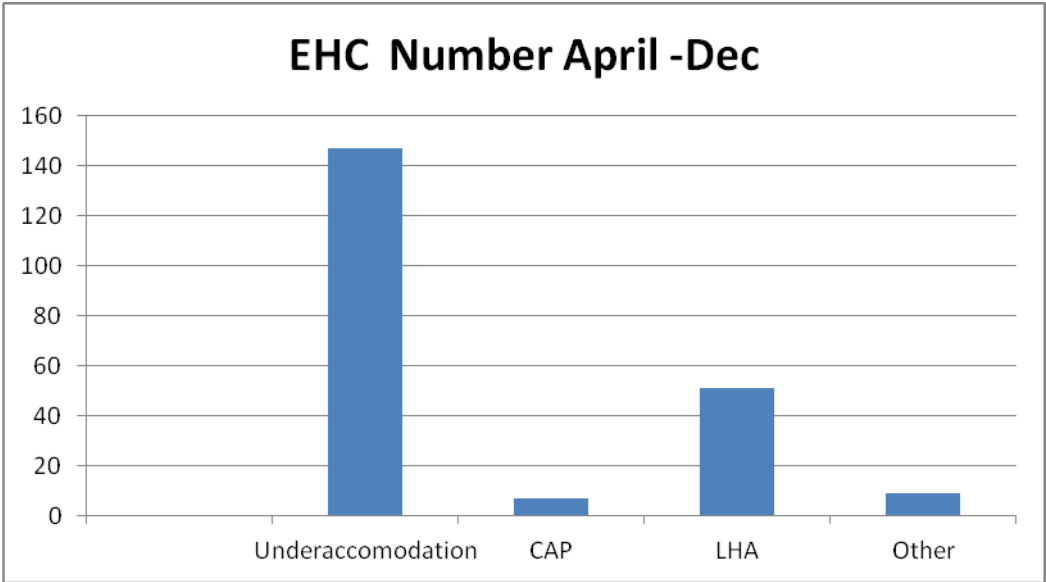
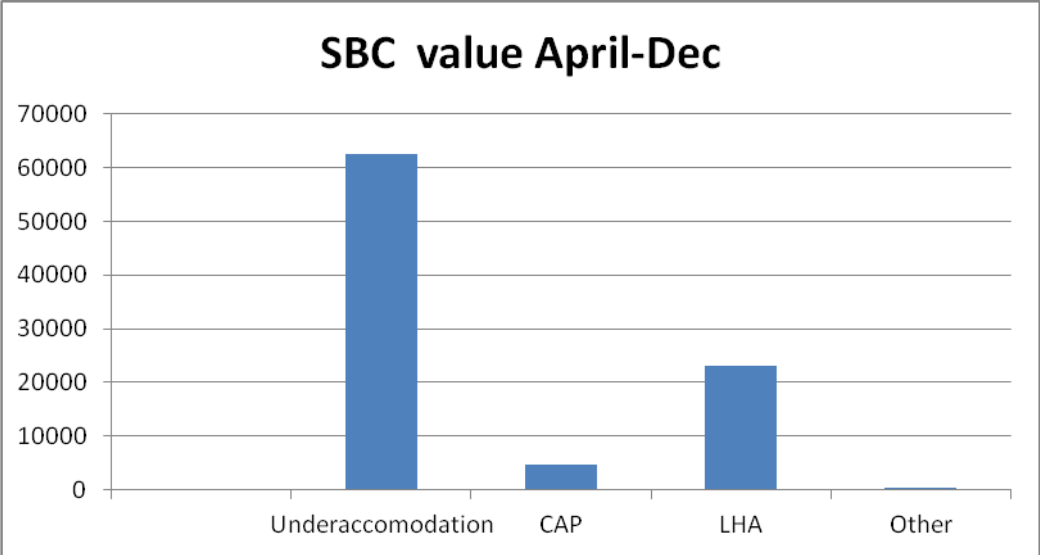
- 2.2.2 Most awards are made for three month periods, which encourages customers to explore longer term solutions to the impact of the welfare reforms. Customers are free to reapply for a further award, but there is an expectation that they will provide evidence of their activity in resolving the situation.
- 2.2.3 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) issued revised instructions in November following a court decision, that narrowed the definition of a child that could qualify for a separate bedroom due to disability. The service has contacted all those households which would be worse off by this ruling and advised them of the availability of Discretionary Housing Payments to support the transition.

2.2.4 The DWP issued revised instructions in January 2014 in relation to customers who may be exempt from the under occupation rule if they have been continuous tenants in receipt of an unbroken award of Housing Benefit entitlement since 1996. They advise that they intend to amend legislation to remove this exemption shortly. In the meantime landlords will be asked to identify any of their tenants that fit the qualifying conditions. Evidencing this qualification may not be possible as records are not required to be retained for this period. DHP's may have to be used to support customers where on the balance of probability they would otherwise qualify for this temporary exemption.

2.2.5 During December the service reviewed all expired awards where a DHP was awarded on grounds of disability, and contacted the customer to encourage a re-application. Customers not responding are being telephoned to encourage take up.

2.2.6 The graphs below show where the DHP has been spent in relation to cause of request.





2.2.7 It is unlikely that the 14/15 DHP budget will be announced by the DWP until March.

**N181 performance**

2.3.1 The current performance for Benefits N181 shows a disparity, between Councils. However as the outstanding workload continues to be at the same date\* for each Council, other factors may need to be considered for the cause.

*\*Work is processed in date order. Aligning each work stream means for example that both Councils Atlas files have been processed up to the 18 September 2013.*

2.3.2 Initial investigations indicate that some differences may be attributed to customer behaviour. Consideration will be given as to how best to address these customer behaviours to improve service delivery.

2.3.3. New claims performance indicators for this year show the following disparity and more recent convergence.

| New Claims | East Herts<br>Days | Stevenage<br>Days |
|------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| April      | 22.65              | 43.05             |
| May        | 27.42              | 48.36             |
| June       | 29.03              | 39.62             |
| July       | 32.41              | 37.02             |
| August     | 24.86              | 30.06             |
| September  | 23.12              | 31.05             |
| October    | 21.34              | 29.76             |
| November   | 21.99              | 27.20             |
| December   | 20.17              | 20.84             |

2.3.4 As previously discussed, the SBC new claims caseload required tidying up at the beginning of the year, producing higher timelines. This was because if a claim becomes defective but is

not manually closed down by an officer, the performance indicator clock keeps ticking.

|            | Cumulative average time to process new claims and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit. | Most recent average time to process new claims and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefit |
|------------|---|---|
| East Herts | 13.72 days<br>(9 data cuts)   | 10.26 days  |
| Stevenage  | 20.71 days<br>( 9 data cuts)  | 8.9 days  |

2.3.5 Performance has been increasing steadily in recent months.

## 2.4 Benefits CAP

2.4.1 The Benefit cap is now running as a 'regular' feature of the Benefits scheme. Customers are affected by the CAP for various periods of time, but the number affected remains small (approximately 35 per authority).

## 2.5 Council Tax and Business Rates

2.5.1 The Revenues service have also been affected by the impact of welfare reforms.

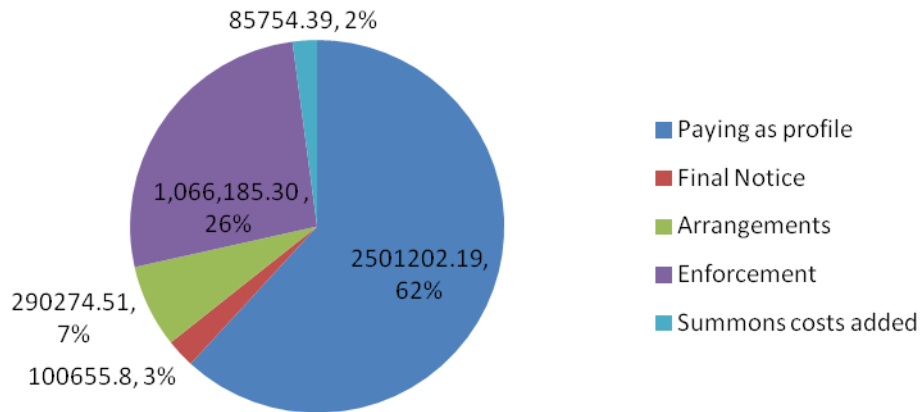
2.5.2 One indicator of this impact is demonstrated by the increase in reminders issued to Council Tax payers.

|            | Reminders issued 2012 April-December | Reminders issued April-December 2013-14 | Average value of reminder in 2013-14 | % change |
|------------|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|----------|
| East Herts | 12172                                | 15089                                   | £111.99                              | 24%      |
| Stevenage  | 8585                                 | 14234                                   | £108.97                              | 65.8%    |

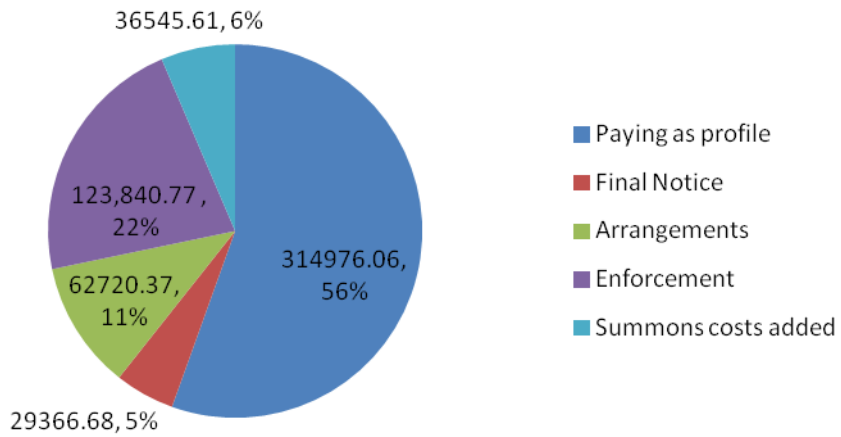
2.5.3 The arrears profile at 1.1.14 for all customers, and for those working age customers in receipt of CTS are detailed below.

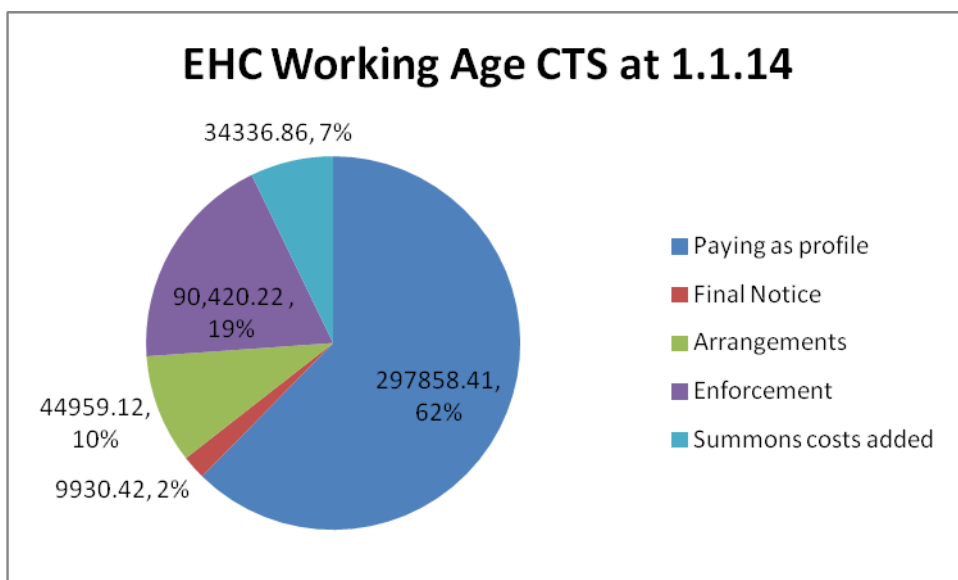
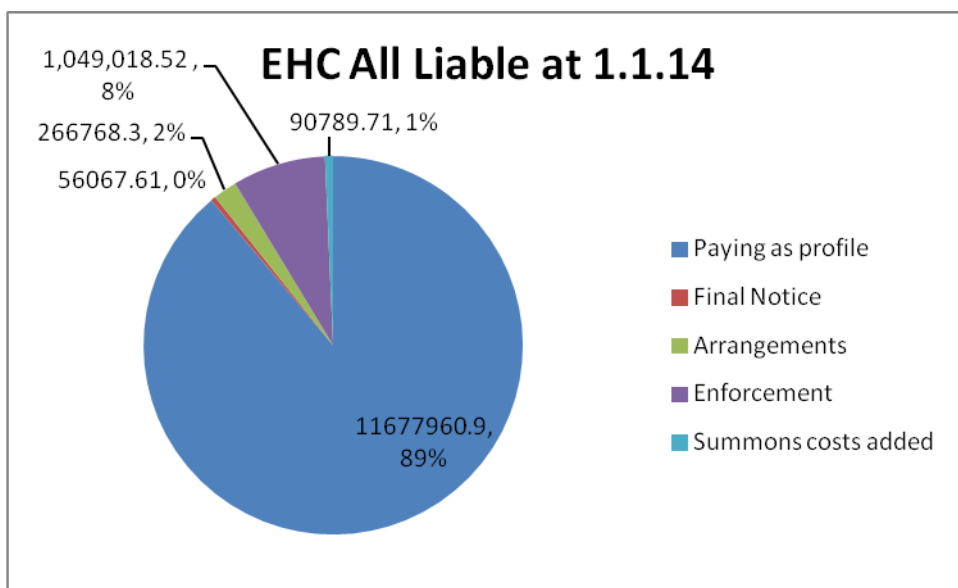


### SBC All Liable



### SBC Working Age CTS





2.5.10 Both Councils are continuing to address the welfare reform issues corporately and significant joint working is being carried out. Consideration of funding for these initiatives for 14/15 is currently underway.

## 2.6 Budget Monitoring

2.6.1 The 2014/15 draft budget is attached at ERPB for consideration.

2.6.2 The assumptions for salaries are:

- National Pay Award 1%.
- Vacancies from Turnover 2% ( previously 3%)
- Increments and Local award as appropriate.
- Pension contributions of 16.6%.

- The Impact of pension's auto enrolment w.e.f. 1.4.2014 – i.e. assumes those currently not in the pension scheme will join and not opt out.

2.6.3 £200k has been requested for additional resources (£100k from each Council) . This is not currently shown in the budget as it will be considered as a growth item.

### 3.0 Service Plans

3.1 The draft service plan is provided at ERP C

3.2 The main objectives beyond normal operational activity are detailed below.

|   |
|---|
| a) Evaluate the Council Tax Support scheme and make recommendations for a revised scheme if appropriate for 15/16.  |
| b) Evaluate the NNDR valuation list and explore options to maximise the RV.   |
| c) Implement the changes to the Benefits system resulting from welfare reform, continue to work with partners to support customers, and develop the 'Here to Help' agenda, whilst responding proactively to any plans for roll out of Universal Credit. |
| d) Evaluate and respond to the principals of the audit commissions 'protecting the public purse' as they impact on this service area.   |

### 4.0 Performance targets

4.1 An extensive list of performance information is collected for the service. Each Council reports a different selection of these indicators, and the proposed targets for these published targets 14/15 are detailed below.

| <b>Stevenage Borough Council</b>   | <b>Target 2013/14</b> | <b>Target 2014/15</b> |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Percentage of council tax collected in the financial year which was due to be paid in that year      | <b>96.00%</b>         | <b>96.00%</b>         |
| The percentage of non-domestic rates due for the financial year which were received by the authority | <b>96.00%</b>         | <b>96.00%</b>         |

|  |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events ( HB only)  | <b>20</b>             | <b>18</b>             |
| Fraud : Number of referrals received<br><br>(number of cases that were referred to the section from any source, (staff, HBMS etc) and regardless if they were accepted for investigation or not)                 | <b>350</b>            | <b>420</b>            |
| Fraud: Number of Cases Closed<br><br>(Number of cases that were investigated and have now been closed - regardless of findings)  | <b>153</b>            | <b>200</b>            |
| Fraud: Amount of overpayment identified (CTB, HB and JSA/IS)<br><br>(Value of overpayments of those cases where the investigation has been closed and coded as fraud regardless if a sanction is pursued or not) | <b>135</b>            | <b>150</b>            |
| Fraud: Number of Sanctions   | <b>55</b>             | <b>60</b>             |
| Fraud: Cases Closed and Fraud Proven<br><br>(Fraud Proven hb6950 - Cases which have been investigated and closed with a decision that fraud was proven regardless if a sanction is pursued or not)               | <b>200</b>            | <b>200</b>            |
|  |                       |                       |
| <b>East Herts District Council</b>   | <b>Target 2013/14</b> | <b>Target 2014/15</b> |
| Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit new claims and change events ( HB only)  | <b>15</b>             | <b>15</b>             |

## 5.0 Future Challenges

## 5.1 **Universal credit:**

### 5.1.1 **Working Age:** *Nationally from 2016/17*

The Government has set out plans for the further introduction of Universal Credit (UC). Working age couples will claim UC from summer 2014 and families from autumn 2014 in the ten proposed pathfinder areas.

5.1.2 These revised plans now refer to full implementation nationally from **2016/17**.

5.1.3 This means a delay of three years and moves the introduction to the other side of the next general election. Whether any new Government will continue with these plans or timescales is unknown.

### 5.1.4 **Pensioners:** *Not before 2018/19 at the earliest.*

As part of the Budget, the Chancellor announced that the introduction of the new single-tier pension would delay plans to deliver the housing credit element of Pension Credit . Consequently Housing Benefit for pensioners will remain until at least the financial year 2017/18.

### 5.1.5 **Spread of Universal Credit:**

Although neither Council is a pilot area for WA UC, if a claimant who is awarded UC moves into our area, they will remain on UC, and we will treat them accordingly for CTS.

5.1.6 If they move into a household as a partner to somebody currently receiving HB and CTS, then the new 'composition of household' will all move onto UC. If they subsequently leave that household, both parties remain on UC.

5.1.7 If they enter a household in our area as a non dependent, then there is no transfer of UC status to the householder/HB claimant.

5.1.8 A claimant in receipt of UC can however still apply for a DHP from the LA, even if we are not paying them HB.

### 5.1.9 **Conclusions:**

This means we will continue to administer Housing Benefit claims for at least the next two years for WA, and four years for

Pensioners, with the exception of a UC claimant moving into the area.

5.1.10 It is rumoured that the DWP may wish to press ahead with the roll out of direct payments to customers in the social sector, ahead of the UC rollout. This will be a significant project for all concerned.

5.1.11 There is still a need to consider the development of a WA CTS scheme that resembles a discount and not a means tested benefit.

5.1.12 Each Council will also need to consider how and when it wishes to get involved with the UC framework which provides a role for Councils in front ending the UC customer interface.

## **5.2 Autumn Statement: For Revenues**

### **5.2.1 Business Rates**

The Chancellor announced a package of business rates measures:

- the Retail Price Index increase in 2014-15 will be capped at 2% instead of 3.2%
- the doubling of the Small Business Rate Relief will be extended for a further 12 months until 31 March 2015;
- ratepayers receiving Small Business Rate Relief that take on an additional property which would currently disqualify them from receiving relief will continue to receive their existing relief for 12 months;
- a discount of £1000 for shops, pubs and restaurants with a rateable value below £50,000 for two years up to the state aid limits, from 1 April 2014;
- A 50 per cent business rates relief for 18 months - between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016 - for businesses that move into retail premises that have been empty for a year or more; *This appears to extend the empty property discounts for new builds introduced from October,\**
- ratepayers will be allowed to elect to pay bills over 12 instalments instead of ten; and

- 95% of the September 2013 backlog in business rates appeals will be cleared before July 2015.
- 5.2.2 The £1000 discount and reoccupation relief will be delivered through authority local discount powers (under s47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988). The other measures will require legislative changes.
- 5.2.3 The DCLG advised in December that they will provide further information on implementation of all measures shortly and will be holding meetings with authority software suppliers.
- 5.2.4 This is a concern as some of these changes will involve substantial enhancements to the systems, and if they are only starting to talk to software suppliers now, it may not be possible to have everything in place for billing which takes place in February.
- 5.2.5 The late notification of these changes will put pressure on the year end processes, revised publicity leaflets and promotion of these new schemes will also need to be carried out.
- 5.2.6 Local Authorities will be refunded for the loss in receipts as a result of these measures. Refunds will be made through s31 grants. It will be necessary therefore for the IT systems to identify and account for these 'losses' from day one.

*\*In October a new temporary measure was introduced which enabled qualifying structures to be exempt from business rates for up to 18 months (up to state aid limits) when it comes into rating between 1.10.13- and 30.9.14*

### **5.3 Changes to Council Tax**

- 5.3.1 The Government propose to introduce a nationwide 50% discount for Annexes occupied by a family member from April 2014.
- 5.3.2 The Valuation Officer (VO) has provided the Department for Central and Local Government (DCLG) with a list of the properties which may be eligible, but are unable to share this with billing authorities. It is believed this may be a result of data protection issues. Representation has been made to the DCLG to overcome this issue so that customers can be advised of their potential entitlement.

## 5.4 Enforcement

5.4.1 From April the Government are planning to introduce a fixed fee structure for enforcement action. The final figures have yet to be published, although it will be necessary for us to advise customers of both old and new schemes from January.

## 5.5 Single Fraud Investigation Service

5.5.1 The DWP still plan to introducing SFIS during 14/15. However it is understood that the Treasury (as at 6.12.13) has yet to make a decision on funding. The decision will have an impact on UC roll out as if TUPE is upheld in SFIS cases it will have a bearing on UC.

5.5.2 If this goes ahead all fraud investigation of Housing Benefit etc will have to cease. Staff will transfer to the DWP, admin subsidy will be cut, and there will be no resources to investigate CTS or any other service specific fraud.

5.5.3 The service is currently exploring the powers and sanctions available to investigate Business Rates and Council Tax fraud, in conjunction with the 'protecting the public purse' audit commission report.

## 6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

### Background Papers:

None.

### Contact Members:

Councillor J Lloyd, Executive Member for Resources (Stevenage Borough Council).  
Councillor M Tindale, Executive Member for Finance (East Herts Council).

### Contact Officer:

Su Tarran – Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service, Extn: 2075.

### Report Author:

Su Tarran – Head of Revenues and Benefits Shared Service, Extn: 2075.



## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

### IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives<br/><i>(delete as appropriate):</i></p> | <p><u>East Herts Council:</u></p> <p><b><u>People:</u></b><br/>This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable</p> <p><u>Stevenage Borough Council: Priorities</u></p> <p><b><u>A Vibrant Town:</u></b><br/>Improve the economy and encourage financial resilience<br/>Regenerate the town centre and neighbourhoods</p> <p><b><u>A Quality Environment:</u></b><br/>Provide affordable homes and housing growth<br/>Help people feel safe</p> <p><b><u>An Excellent Council:</u></b><br/>Deliver value for money<br/>Putting customers first</p> |
| Consultation:   | N/A  |
| Legal:  | N/A  |
| Financial:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Only as referenced in the report.</i></li> </ul>   |
| Human Resource:   | N/A  |
| Risk Management:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Only as referenced in the report.</i></li> </ul>   |

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## FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

ISR2

| Code: Service   | 2012/13<br>ACTUAL<br>£ | 2013/14<br>ESTIMATE<br>£ | 2013/14<br>PROBABLE<br>£ | 2014/15<br>ESTIMATE<br>£ |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>17719 REVENUES &amp; HOUSING BENEFITS<br/>- SHARED SERVICE</b> |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| <b>EXPENDITURE</b>  |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| <b>Employees</b>  |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| 0110 Salaries   | 2,237,624              | 2,209,330                | 2,243,300                | 2,297,880                |
| 0590 Professional Training  | 735                    | 5,000                    | 5,000                    | 5,000                    |
| 0630 Home Working Allowance                                       | 7,252                  | 6,910                    | 7,810                    | 7,690                    |
| 0651 Long Service Award   | 570                    | 350                      | 0                        | 530                      |
| 0661 Staff Appointment Expenses                                   | 1,080                  | 0                        | 7,000                    | 2,500                    |
| 0670 Retirement Gifts   | 0                      | 280                      | 280                      | 0                        |
| 0682 Eye Tests  | 0                      | 600                      | 600                      | 610                      |
| 0693 Childcare Fees   | 1,030                  | 350                      | 350                      | 360                      |
| 0810 Agency Staff   | 311,409                | 200,000                  | 170,130                  | 0                        |
| <b>Transport Related Expenses</b>                                 |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| 2510 Car Expenses   | 27,068                 | 25,500                   | 28,650                   | 26,000                   |
| 2610 Lease Car Costs  | 4,134                  | 3,400                    | 1,420                    | 0                        |
| 2710 Travel Allowance   | 1,261                  | 1,400                    | 1,400                    | 1,430                    |
| <b>Supplies &amp; Services</b>                                    |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| 3010 Purchase & Maint of Equipment                                | 3,215                  | 5,000                    | 5,000                    | 5,100                    |
| 3015 DBS Payments   | 52                     | 50                       | 50                       | 50                       |
| 3038 BFI Funding  | 6,850                  | 6,000                    | 6,000                    | 6,120                    |
| 3110 Protective Clothing & Uniforms                               | 0                      | 100                      | 100                      | 100                      |
| 3210 General Stationery   | 20,445                 | 24,000                   | 24,000                   | 24,480                   |
| 3220 Printing   | 40,000                 | 40,000                   | 40,000                   | 37,300                   |
| 3230 Photocopying   | 2,450                  | 5,000                    | 5,000                    | 5,000                    |
| 3250 Books & Publications   | 1,392                  | 1,600                    | 1,600                    | 1,600                    |
| 3310 Advertising  | 4,610                  | 6,000                    | 6,000                    | 6,120                    |
| 3401 Subscriptions  | 4,787                  | 5,000                    | 5,000                    | 5,100                    |
| 3510 Telephones   | 3,728                  | 7,600                    | 4,000                    | 4,000                    |
| 3572 Postages   | 137,478                | 140,000                  | 140,000                  | 142,800                  |
| 3610 Subsistence Allowance  | 12                     | 50                       | 50                       | 50                       |
| 3620 Training & Development                                       | 7,600                  | 6,000                    | 6,000                    | 6,120                    |
| 3820 Misc & Third Party Insurance                                 | 14,630                 | 14,930                   | 14,120                   | 15,530                   |
| 3870 Other Expenses   | 6,087                  | 10,000                   | 10,000                   | 10,200                   |
| <b>Support Services &amp; Divisional Costs</b>                    |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| 6010 Central Offices Apportioned                                  | (                      |                          |                          |                          |
| 6110 Divisional Costs   | (                      |                          |                          |                          |
| 6110 Support Services   | ( 1,001,880            | 1,016,710                | 1,077,290                | 1,031,760                |
| 6223 Internal Printing  | (                      |                          |                          |                          |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>  | <b>3,847,379</b>       | <b>3,741,160</b>         | <b>3,810,150</b>         | <b>3,643,430</b>         |

## FINANCE & SUPPORT SERVICES

ISR2A

| Code: Service   | 2012/13<br>ACTUAL<br>£ | 2013/14<br>ESTIMATE<br>£ | 2013/14<br>PROBABLE<br>£ | 2014/15<br>ESTIMATE<br>£ |
|---|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>17719 REVENUES &amp; HOUSING BENEFITS<br/>- SHARED SERVICE</b> |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| INCOME  |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| <b>Government Grants</b>  |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| 9056 DWP Grants   | 28,705                 | 0                        | 52,660                   | 0                        |
| <b>Other Grants Reimbursements<br/>and Contributions</b>          |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| 9130 Income From Other Authorities                                | 1,380,304              | 1,273,830                | 1,273,830                | 1,282,899                |
| T's and C's Savings   | 0                      | 7,030                    | 7,030                    | 10,400                   |
| Strain Cost   | 0                      | 1,720                    | 1,720                    | 1,720                    |
| SBC Post  | 0                      | -19,000                  | -19,000                  | 0                        |
| Saving re Ctax leaflet  | 0                      | 0                        | 0                        | -3,500                   |
| Share of Growth/Savings   | 0                      | 90,180                   | 90,180                   | 30,508                   |
| <b>Recharges</b>  |                        |                          |                          |                          |
| 9970 Section Recharge   | 2,438,370              | 2,387,400                | 2,403,730                | 2,321,403                |
| <b>TOTAL INCOME</b>   | <b>3,847,379</b>       | <b>3,741,160</b>         | <b>3,810,150</b>         | <b>3,643,430</b>         |
| <b>NET EXPENDITURE TO SUMMARY</b>                                 | <b>0</b>               | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                 | <b>0</b>                 |

**East Herts Council**

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**Revenues & Benefits Shared Service  
SERVICE PLAN**

**2014/15**

## CONTENTS

|  | <b>Page<br/>Number</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| <b>SECTION 1:</b> Service Plan 'Snapshot' (Word)                     | <b>3</b>               |
| <b>SECTION 2:</b> Key Projects (Word)                                | <b>12</b>              |
| <b>SECTION 3:</b> 2014/15 – Actions (Excel)                          | <b>Excel File</b>      |
| <b>SECTION 4:</b> Financial Implications for future years<br>(Excel) | <b>Excel File</b>      |
| <b>SECTION 5:</b> Risk Assessment (Excel)                            | <b>Excel File</b>      |

## SECTION 1: Service Plan ‘Snapshot’

### Revenues & Benefits Shared Service

**Service Manager: Su Tarran**

#### Service Aims:

- Administer on behalf of both Councils, cost effective Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support services, paying benefits promptly and accurately and investigating fraud.
- Local Taxation Collection; issuing bills promptly and accurately and undertaking effective recovery action to achieve high rates of collection.
- Provide front line services to the public for Benefits and Revenues

#### Service Delivery

**Face to face customer service** delivery is split between the partnership and Stevenage Borough’s Customer Service Centre (CSC). The CSC retain the front facing customer interaction for Stevenage customers visiting the Stevenage Council Offices. Stevenage customers telephoning Stevenage Council directly, will be diverted by the CSC into the partnership. At East Herts the Councils reception team signpost customers to Revenues & Benefits Service officers.

It will be necessary to measure the impact and success of this form of delivery to ensure no duplication of resources.

#### Key service responsibilities:

| Key Service Responsibilities  | Links to East Herts’ Corporate Priority | Links to Stevenage Corporate Policy  |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide advice and support to elected members and senior officers in determining policies on the exercise of discretion allowed by legislation.</li></ul> | Prosperity                              | <b>An Excellent Council</b><br><br>Deliver value for money Putting customers first |
| <b>Benefits</b>   |   |  |

|  |            |   |
|--|------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the integrity &amp; security of the information held on ICT systems and in other media</li> </ul>  | Prosperity | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the control systems operate successfully, so that Benefits are paid promptly and accurately</li> </ul>   | Prosperity | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information to customers that is accurate and helpful and meets their varied needs, having regard to equality of access.</li> </ul>   | People     | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake forward planning, to ensure the service responds effectively to statutory changes and customer expectation</li> </ul>   | Prosperity | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be alert to fraud, seeking to deter it and identify, investigate and prosecute those who engage in fraud.</li> </ul>   | Prosperity | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p> |
| <b>Local Taxation</b>  |            |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the integrity &amp; security of the information held on ICT systems and in other media</li> </ul>  | Prosperity | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the control systems operate successfully, so that Council Tax and NNDR are collected promptly and accurately and that recovery process operate to achieve effective collection.</li> </ul> | Prosperity | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information to customers that is accurate and helpful, and meets their varied needs having regard to equality</li> </ul>  | People     | <p><b>An Excellent Council</b></p>  |



|   |            |  |
|---|------------|--|
| of access.  |            | Deliver value for money Putting customers first                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake forward planning to ensure the service responds effectively to statutory changes and customer expectation</li> </ul> | Prosperity | <b>An Excellent Council</b><br><br>Deliver value for money Putting customers first |






### Customer Insight and Consultation


What consultation have you undertaken in 2012/13?

| Description of consultation | Date it was undertaken | Key findings | Service improvements       |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Gove Metric                 | April- November 2013   | See Below    | Maintain service standards |




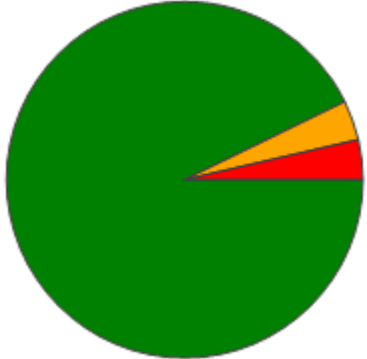

### EHC GovMetric Stats – 1 April to 30 November 2013




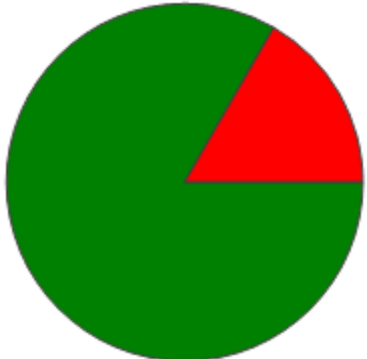

#### Benefits






| F2F, Benefits             |  |  |  | Overall Rating Good   |  |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Number of respondents     | 303   | 14  | 22  |   |  |
| Percentage of respondents | 89%   | 4%  | 6%  |  |  |

| F2F, Time Taken Benefits |  |  |  | Overall Rating Good   |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Number of                | 205   | 7   | 15  |  |  |

|                                  |     |    |    |  |  |
|----------------------------------|-----|----|----|--|--|
| <b>respondents</b>               |     |    |    |  |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b> | 90% | 3% | 7% |  |  |

|   |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>F2F, Advisor/Information, Benefits</b> |  |  |  | <b>Overall Rating Good</b>  |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>              | 77  | 3   | 3   |   |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b>          | 93%   | 4%  | 4%  |  |  |

|                                  |   |   |   |   |   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>F2F, Decision, Benefits</b>   |  |  |  | <b>Overall Rating Good</b>  |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>     | 5   | 0   | 1   |   |   |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b> | 83%   | 0%  | 17%   |  |   |

|  |   |   |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>F2F, Query Resolution, Benefits</b> |  |  |  | <b>Overall Rating Good</b>  |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>           | 16  | 4   | 3   |   |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b>       | 70%   | 17%   | 13%   |  |  |


## Revenues

|                                  |     |    |     |                            |  |
|----------------------------------|-----|----|-----|----------------------------|--|
| <b>F2F, Council Tax</b>          |     |    |     | <b>Overall Rating Good</b> |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>     | 248 | 11 | 34  |                            |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b> | 85% | 4% | 12% |                            |  |

|                                      |     |    |    |                            |  |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----|----|----------------------------|--|
| <b>F2F, Time Taken , Council Tax</b> |     |    |    | <b>Overall Rating Good</b> |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>         | 137 | 6  | 15 |                            |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b>     | 87% | 4% | 9% |                            |  |

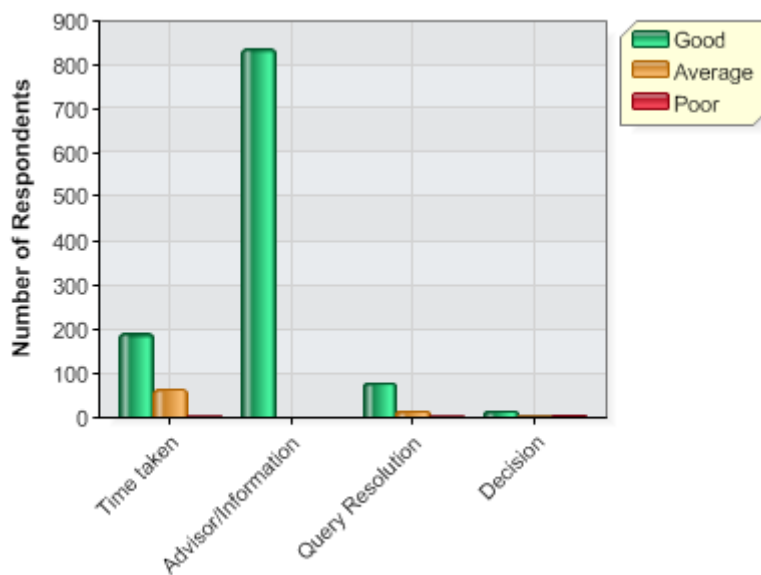
|  |     |    |     |                            |  |
|--|-----|----|-----|----------------------------|--|
| <b>F2F, Advisor/Information, Council Tax</b> |     |    |     | <b>Overall Rating Good</b> |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>                 | 68  | 4  | 10  |                            |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b>             | 83% | 5% | 12% |                            |  |

|                                   |     |    |     |                            |  |
|-----------------------------------|-----|----|-----|----------------------------|--|
| <b>F2F, Decision, Council Tax</b> |     |    |     | <b>Overall Rating Good</b> |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>      | 8   | 1  | 2   |                            |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b>  | 73% | 9% | 18% |                            |  |
| <b>F2F, Query</b>                 |     |    |     | <b>Overall</b>             |  |

|                                  |     |    |     |   |  |
|----------------------------------|-----|----|-----|---|--|
| <b>Resolution, Council Tax</b>   |     |    |     | <b>Rating Good</b>  |  |
| <b>Number of respondents</b>     | 35  | 0  | 7   |  |  |
| <b>Percentage of respondents</b> | 83% | 0% | 17% |   |  |

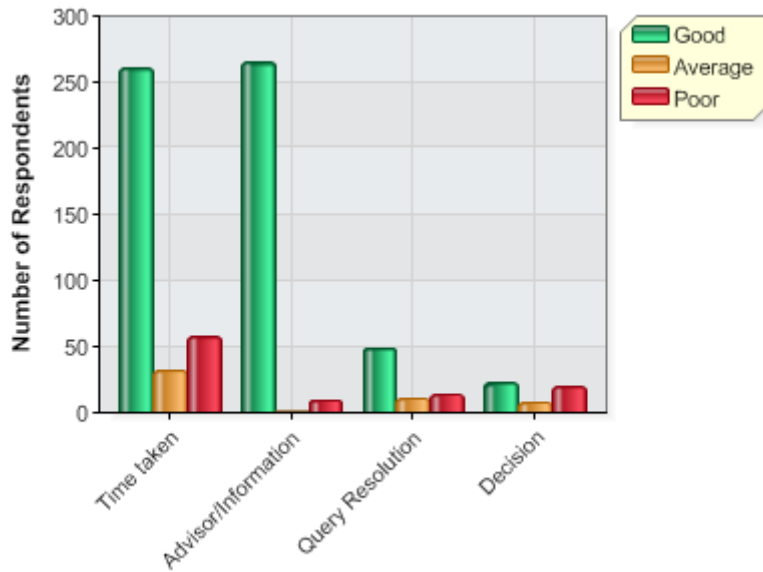
## SBC GovMetric Stats – 1 April to 30 November 2013

### Reason for satisfaction: Benefits: Telephone



| Reason              | Good              | Average           | Poor             |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Time taken          | 190 (14%)         | 64 (52%)          | 9 (39%)          |
| Advisor/Information | 838 (62%)         | 2 (2%)            | 1 (4%)           |
| Query Resolution    | 77 (6%)           | 14 (11%)          | 8 (35%)          |
| Decision            | 12 (1%)           | 4 (3%)            | 3 (13%)          |
| No Reason           | 241 (18%)         | 38 (31%)          | 2 (9%)           |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>1358 (90%)</b> | <b>122 (8.5%)</b> | <b>23 (1.5%)</b> |

### Reason for satisfaction: Benefits: Face to Face



| Reason              | Good             | Average        | Poor            |
|---------------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Time taken          | 261 (44%)        | 32 (62%)       | 58 (59%)        |
| Advisor/Information | 265 (44%)        | 3 (6%)         | 9 (9%)          |
| Query Resolution    | 49 (8%)          | 10 (19%)       | 13 (13%)        |
| Decision            | 22 (4%)          | 7 (13%)        | 19 (19%)        |
| No Reason           | 0 (0%)           | 0 (0%)         | 0 (0%)          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>597 (80%)</b> | <b>52 (7%)</b> | <b>99 (13%)</b> |

What consultation do you have planned for 2014/15?

| Description of consultation | Date it will be undertaken |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Changes to CTS schemes      | Summer 14                  |

Please list below any activity that needs to be undertaken to improve equality within the service following any Equality Impact Assessments:

| Activity | Date it will be undertaken | Lead Officer |
|----------|----------------------------|--------------|
| None     |                            |              |

## Key unit/transactional costs for the service are:

| East Herts only<br>Historical data not available from Stevenage Council | 2007/08<br>Actual | 2008/09<br>Actual | 2009/10<br>Actual | 2010/11<br>Actual | 2011/12<br>Actual   | 2012/13 |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---|---------|
|   |                   |                   |                   |                   | 11/12 was partial single service and partial shared service |         |
| Net cost of Housing and Council Tax Benefit per claim                   | £90.94            | £77.80            | £82.35            | £74.38            | £79.00  | £79.61  |
| Net cost of Collecting Council Tax per property                         | £19.52            | £18.06            | £17.83            | £16.82            | £14.50  | £16.62  |

### Net cost of Housing and Council Tax Benefit per claim

The net cost has increased by 0.77%, within the 3% rate of inflation assumed in the MTFP for 2012/13.

### Net cost of Collecting Council Tax per property

The net cost has increased by 14.62%, above the 3% rate of inflation assumed in the MTFP for 2012/13. The increase is due to a rise in CEC costs of £64k plus EHDC share of Agency costs of £120k, which totals £184k. 53.1% of this total cost (£98k) falls on Revenues.

### People and Workforce Planning

- **Do you need to review your organisational structure? If no when did you last review it?**

The structure was reviewed to establish the shared service, which went live in April 2012, A review will be carried out when there is greater certainty about the impact of the welfare reforms, particularly the timing of the roll out of universal credit.

- **Have your staff got the right skills they need to support your service? If no, what skills are missing?**

Appointments to the new structure for the shared service were undertaken in November 2011. That approach matched people to posts, including an assessment of skills, knowledge and experience. Training continues to ensure these people are supported in their new posts and best placed to respond to the challenges of the welfare reforms

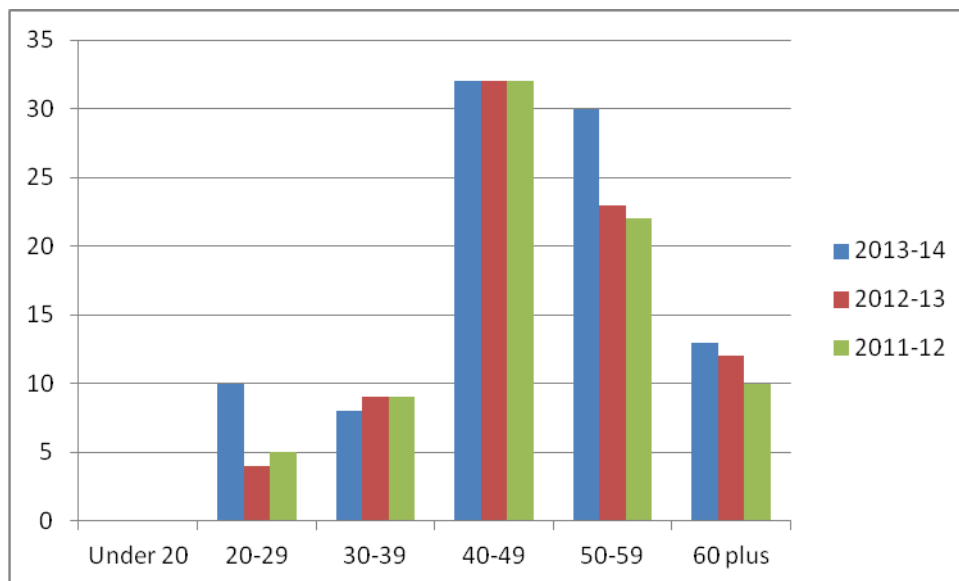
- **Do you have or anticipate any recruitment needs now and in the future (including hard to recruit roles)?**

Yes, as staff turnover in a team of 72 FTE is inevitable.

- **Do you have a succession plan?**

The structure was designed to encourage succession through the levels.

The age profile of staff is changing as demonstrated in the diagram below.



## SECTION 2

### KEY PROJECTS FOR 2013/14

This will help CMT identify if there are core projects that need monitoring corporately.

These should be reflected in your Section 3 as well, so this section needs to just highlight what they are. No detail regarding them is needed in this section.

| <b>Project</b>   | <b>Completion Date</b> | <b>Service involvement</b>   |
|--|------------------------|--|
| Evaluate the Council Tax Support scheme and make recommendations for a revised scheme if appropriate for 15/16.  | 2014                   | Staff involved in administering service through the changes, supporting customers with quality and appropriate advice, and reviewing scheme for 15-16. |
| Evaluate the NNDR valuation list and explore options to maximise the RV.   | 2015                   | Staff involved in maintaining local knowledge, collection and monitoring of recovery as impact in changes is more significant on authorities finances. |
| Implement the changes to the Benefits system resulting from welfare reform, continue to work with partners to support customers, and develop the 'Here to Help' agenda, whilst responding proactively to any plans for roll out of Universal Credit. | 2015                   | Staff involved in administering service through the changes, supporting customers with quality and appropriate advice..                                |
| Evaluate and respond to the  | 2015                   | All Staff involved in service delivery and review of   |



|  |  |            |
|--|--|------------|
| principals of the audit commissions 'protecting the public purse' as they impact on this service area. |  | processes. |
|--|--|------------|



## EAST HERTS COUNCIL

### EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL JOINT REVENUES AND BENEFITS COMMITTEE – 28 JANUARY 2014

#### REPORT BY THE STEVENAGE STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (RESOURCES)

#### 6. HOUSING BENEFIT DATA SHARING

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL STEVENAGE WARDS

---

#### **Purpose/Summary of Report:**

- To advise Members on the ability for the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service to share Housing Benefit customer data with other services at Stevenage Borough Council.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b><u>RECOMMENDATION FOR EAST HERTS COUNCIL AND<br/>STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL JOINT REVENUES AND<br/>BENEFITS COMMITTEE:</u></b> That |  |
|---|--|

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| <b>(A)</b> | The current position regarding the sharing of data between the shared service and other Stevenage Borough Council services and the plans for the introduction of a data sharing protocol be noted. |
|------------|--|

#### 1.0 Background

1.1 A request was raised at joint committee on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 for officers to research the ability of Housing Benefit customer data to be shared with other services at Stevenage Borough Council to support their work.

#### 2.0 Report

#### 2.1 Provisions to share data in Welfare Reform Act 2012

2.2 The Departments of Work and Pension (DWP) frequently issues guidance to councils in the form of numbered Circulars, setting out specific advice on the application of benefits legislation. It is expected that all councils will follow the advice given in these Circulars.

2.3 The DWP issued Housing Benefits Circular A5/2012 which explains the use of provisions made available in the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (s.130-133) and the Social Security Regulations 2012. These provisions of particular relevance to the council can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**.

2.4 The Circular (s. 1.7) also states that the above provisions are “permissive and not mandatory”. This means that the shared service has discretion to share data in the described circumstances. This presents an opportunity to strengthen working relationships between the shared service and other council services for the benefit of customers.

### 3.0 Explicit customer consent

3.1 In data sharing scenarios not accounted for in the Welfare Reform Act, in which a council service wants to have access to an individual’s benefit claim, this may be done where the customer has provided signed explicit consent for this to happen. For example, to provide detailed advice and guidance to a customer, the Housing Advice service may need details of their benefits case.

3.2 The process for services to capture consent and for the shared service to share, is already in place or planned for the Housing Advice and Homeless services, and the council’s Housing Management service.

3.3 This approach overcomes complexities introduced by the Data Protection Act, such as when claim information has been collected by other agencies and then passed to the shared service, or the customer does not want their details to be shared outside the direct needs to process Housing Benefit (or otherwise permitted under statute, such as Welfare Reform Act above).

3.4 The use of explicit customer consent is now being adopted by the DWP for use in the Universal Credit trial areas (Universal Credit Local Support Services Update and Trialling Plan, Dec 2013, section 7,) because they recognise legislation does not cover all data sharing situations and that customers may wish to exercise their right to privacy.

### 4.0 Shared service acting on behalf of another service

4.1 There may be cases in which council services are trying to pro-

actively get in touch with customers, but neither of the above methods appear to give them a way of requesting contact details from the shared service. For example, the Income Team in the Housing Management service may wish to write to people claiming benefit and on low income offering advice and guidance but the shared service may not be able to release that information under the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act, and explicit consent for this kind of contact is not in place for all customers.

4.2 In these cases the shared service can send out the mailing themselves containing whatever literature is required on behalf of the requesting service. This still enables the correct customers to be contacted, but without the need to directly share data between services. There may be a cost to doing this.

#### 5.0 Additional actions

5.1 The above methods will be effective in enabling data sharing in most cases anticipated at this stage. However, if in the future other situations arise, the shared service is committed to finding effective solutions.

5.2 To bring greater clarity and accountability to the process of data sharing between the shared service and other council services, a data sharing protocol is being developed for use in documenting data sharing requests. It's anticipated that a protocol would address issues around data security and restrictions on what it could be used for.

5.3 Now that the permitted methods for sharing data are understood, a piece of work alongside the development of the protocol will be to understand the future level of data sharing requests.

#### 6.0 Next Steps

6.1 Draft of data sharing protocol, with the final version in use anticipated in April 2014.

#### 7.0 Implications/Consultations

7.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None.

Contact Members: Councillor J Lloyd, Executive Member for Resources (Stevenage Borough Council).  
Councillor M Tindale, Executive Member for Finance (East Herts Council).

Contact Officer: Scott Crudginton – Stevenage Strategic Director (Resources), Extn: (34) 2185  
[scott.crudginton@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:scott.crudginton@stevenage.gov.uk)

Report Author: Greg Arends – Business Improvement Manager  
Extn: (34) 2081. [greg.arends@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:greg.arends@stevenage.gov.uk)

## ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPER 'A'

### IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Contribution to the Council's Corporate Priorities/ Objectives<br><i>(delete as appropriate):</i> | <b><i>People (East Herts Council)</i></b><br>This priority focuses on enhancing the quality of life, health and wellbeing, particularly for those who are vulnerable, and delivering strong services<br><br><b><i>An Excellent Council - Putting customers first (Stevenage Borough Council)</i></b><br>Simplify the customer experience - The council strives to deliver excellent services to residents, businesses and visitors in the town. We aim to put our customers first. |
| Consultation:   | <i>None.</i>   |
| Legal:  | <i>None.</i>   |
| Financial:  | <i>It is anticipated that any costs arising from this will be met from existing Stevenage budgets.</i>   |
| Human Resource:   | <i>None.</i>   |
| Risk Management:  | <i>None.</i>   |

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## Essential Reference Paper B

| Purpose and scope   | Likely flow of data  | DWP guidance  |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   |  | Type of data  | Example use at Stevenage Borough Council  |
| <p>Bedroom tax (Social sector size criteria)</p> <p>New benefit rules linking amount of HB to number of bedrooms. Purpose is to identify and then support people affected by the new rules.</p> | <p>Between LA HB teams, other parts of the same LA, or other LAs, and between LAs and social landlords</p> | <p>Landlord can confirm property details to help identify people affected by the new rules. LA HB team can share details about the HB award to help decide what support might be available.</p> | <p>Enables the Partnership to provide information on the council tenants that are impacted by Bedroom Tax to the Housing Management service, so that they can provide appropriate advice and support.</p> <p>This was information was provided to the Income Team in Housing Management in December 2013.</p> |
| <p>Benefit cap</p> <p>Restrictions on amount of HB a person can receive. Purpose is to identify and then support people affected by the new rules.</p>  | <p>Between Different parts of a LA, or different LAs, and between LAs and social landlords</p>             | <p>Details of HB award and any shortfall in amount can be supplied to a landlord so that the landlord and LA can consider what help might be provided.</p>                                      | <p>The Partnership could provide information on impacted households to a council service that needed to provide additional support.</p>   |
| <p>Homeless functions</p> <p>LAs have duties under housing legislation to help prevent or reduce homelessness.</p>  | <p>Between LA HB teams, other parts of the same LA, or other LAs LAs</p>                                   | <p>A range of social security (including details of the HB award) or welfare related information may be shared, in order to identify</p>  | <p>Currently used to provide claim information to the Homeless service in urgent circumstances until formal</p>   |

|  |  |  |                                      |
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|  |  | and support<br>people at risk of<br>homelessness | customer<br>consent can be<br>gained |
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