

East Herts Council

Revenues & Benefits Shared Service SERVICE PLAN

2013/14

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SECTION 1: Service Plan ‘Snapshot’

Note: Filling in this section is compulsory

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"> • Provide advice and support to elected members and senior officers in determining policies on the exercise of discretion allowed by legislation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence
Benefits		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the integrity & security of the information held on ICT systems and in other media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the control systems operate successfully, so that Benefits are paid promptly and accurately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence

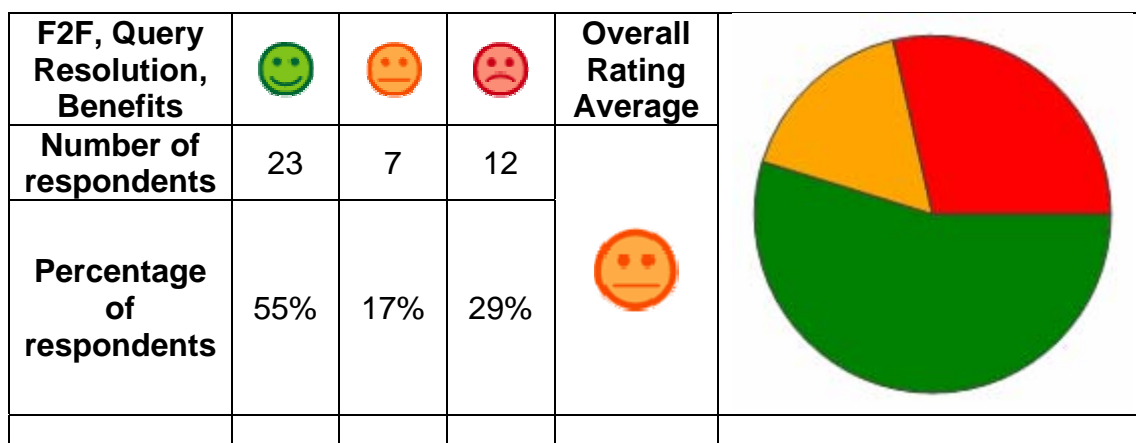
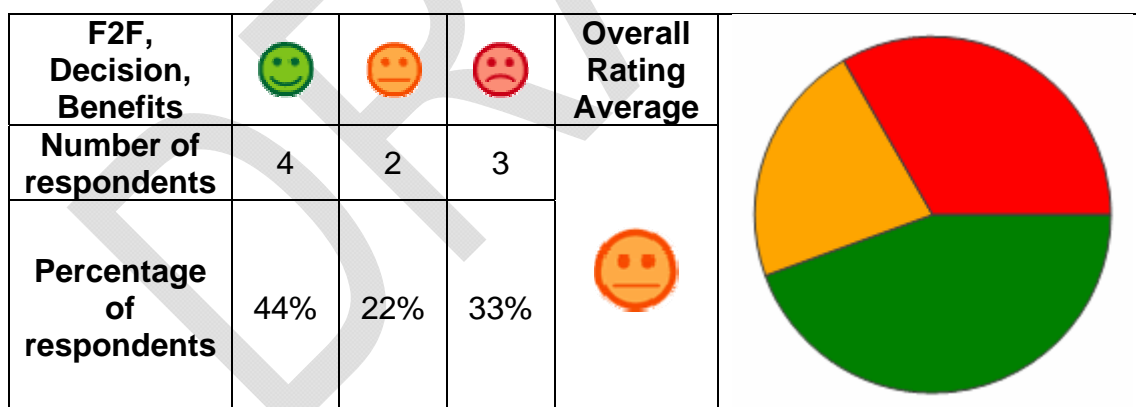
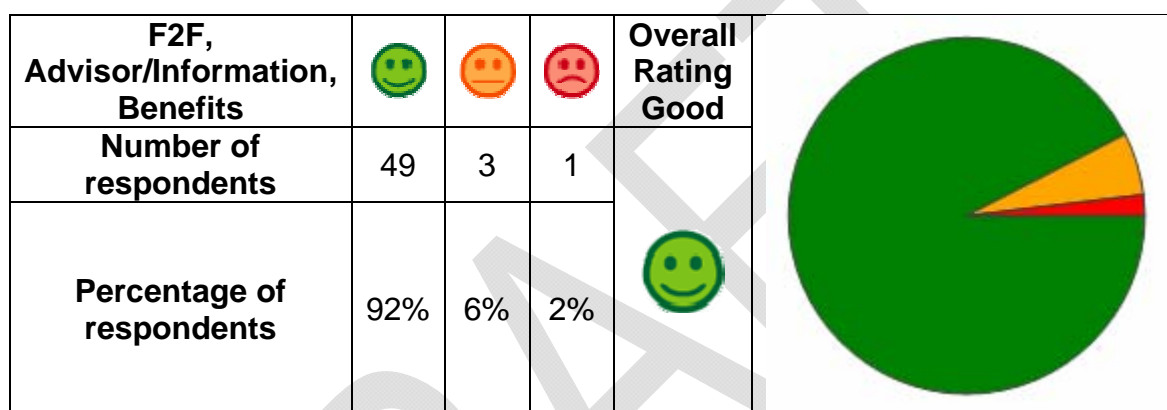
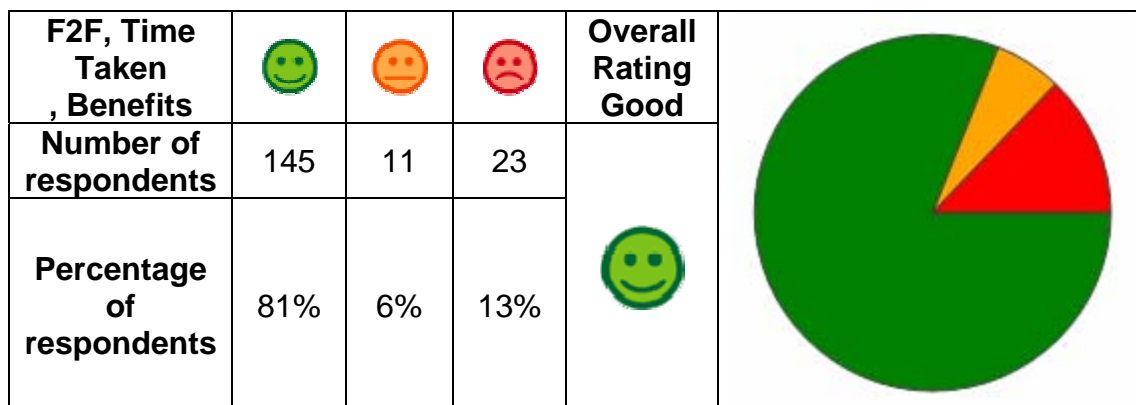
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to customers that is accurate and helpful and meets their varied needs, having regard to equality of access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake forward planning, to ensure the service responds effectively to statutory changes and customer expectation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be alert to fraud, seeking to deter it and identify, investigate and prosecute those who engage in fraud. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Move towards Excellence
Local Taxation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the integrity & security of the information held on ICT systems and in other media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information to customers that is accurate and helpful, and meets their varied needs having regard to equality of access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake forward planning to ensure the service responds effectively to statutory changes and customer expectation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move towards Excellence

Customer Insight and Consultation

What consultation have you undertaken in 2012/13?

Description of consultation	Date it was undertaken	Key findings	Service improvements
Exit survey Bishop Stortford	June 12	95% of customers very satisfied or quite satisfied with service received.	Maintain service standards
Gove Metric	April-October	See Below	Maintain service standards

EHC Benefits GovMetric Stats – 1 April to 31 October 2012



Gov Metric data on Revenues & Benefits at Stevenage CSC

BENEFITS AND COUNCIL TAX GovMetric FEEDBACK (01/04/2012 – 31/10/2012)

Service Summary

Benefits	Good	Average	Poor
Number of respondents	567	32	56
Percentage of respondents	87%	5%	9%

Council Tax

Number of respondents	618	26	35
Percentage of respondents	91%	4%	5%

Benefits

Channel	Good	Average	Poor
Face to Face	542 (86%)	32 (5%)	53 (8%)
Telephone	23 (92%)	0 (0%)	2 (8%)
Web	2 (66%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)
Total	567 (87%)	32 (5%)	56 (9%)

Council Tax

Channel	Good	Average	Poor
Face to Face	247 (84%)	14 (4%)	32 (10%)
Telephone	371 (96%)	12 (3%)	3 (0%)
Web	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Total	618 (91%)	26 (4%)	35 (5%)

What consultation do you have planned for 2013/14?

Description of consultation	Date it will be undertaken
Changes to CTS schemes	Summer 13

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 Historical data not available from Stevenage Council	2007/08 Actual	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 Actual 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
Net cost of Collecting Council Tax per property	£19.52	£18.06	£17.83	£16.82	£14,50
Net cost of Discretionary Non Domestic Rates per number of business properties	£33.26	£32.07	£32.77	£26.14	£31.92

Please analyse your key unit costs :

Net cost of Housing and Council Tax Benefit per claim

The net cost has increased by 6.2%, above the rate of inflation. The increase was due to a rise in central establishment charges by £119k, despite an increase in the number of claims.

Net cost of Discretionary Non Domestic Rates per number of business properties

The net cost has increased by 22.1%, above the rate of inflation. This is a result of an increase in the granting of discretionary relief in accordance with the council's policy. Officers have recommended that this measure is deleted as it is not meaningful.

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 reform being introduced during 2013.

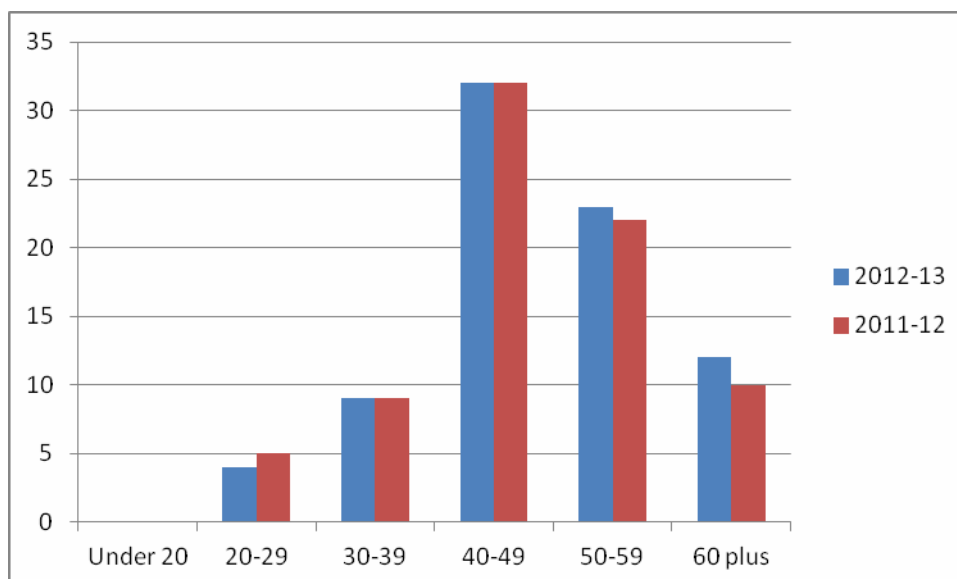
- Do you have or anticipate any recruitment needs now and in the future (including hard to recruit roles)?

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.

Project	Completion Date	Service involvement
Introduce the local scheme for Council Tax support	2013	Staff involved in administering service through the changes, supporting customers with quality and appropriate advice, and reviewing scheme for 14-15.
Introduce the changes to the business rates scheme	2013	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	2013	Staff involved in administering service

Benefits system resulting from welfare reform		through the changes, supporting customers with quality and appropriate advice..
Deliver excellent customer service		All Staff involved in service delivery and review of processes.

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