

East Herts Council

**Revenues & Benefits Shared Service
SERVICE PLAN**

2014/15

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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">• Provide advice and support to elected members and senior officers in determining policies on the exercise of discretion allowed by legislation.	Prosperity	An Excellent Council Deliver value for money Putting customers first
Benefits		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the integrity & security of the information held on ICT systems and in other media 	Prosperity	<p>An Excellent Council</p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the control systems operate successfully, so that Benefits are paid promptly and accurately 	Prosperity	<p>An Excellent Council</p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p>
<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. 	People	<p>An Excellent Council</p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake forward planning, to ensure the service responds effectively to statutory changes and customer expectation 	Prosperity	<p>An Excellent Council</p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p>
<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. 	Prosperity	<p>An Excellent Council</p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p>
Local Taxation		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the integrity & security of the information held on ICT systems and in other media 	Prosperity	<p>An Excellent Council</p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p>
<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. 	Prosperity	<p>An Excellent Council</p> <p>Deliver value for money Putting customers first</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information to customers that is accurate and helpful, and meets their varied needs having regard to equality 	People	<p>An Excellent Council</p>

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




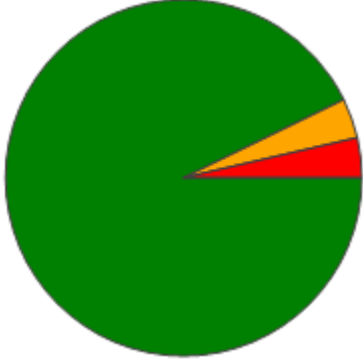

EHC GovMetric Stats – 1 April to 30 November 2013




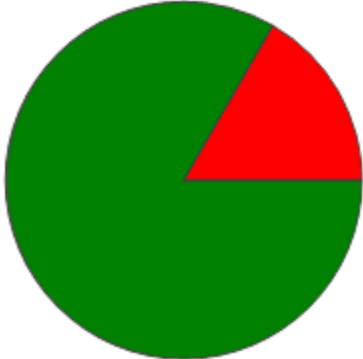

Benefits






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		






respondents					
Percentage of respondents	90%	3%	7%		






F2F, Advisor/Information, Benefits				Overall Rating Good	
Number of respondents	77	3	3		
Percentage of respondents	93%	4%	4%		






F2F, Decision, Benefits				Overall Rating Good	
Number of respondents	5	0	1		
Percentage of respondents	83%	0%	17%		










F2F, Query Resolution, Benefits				Overall Rating Good	
Number of respondents	16	4	3		
Percentage of respondents	70%	17%	13%		


Revenues

F2F, Council Tax				Overall Rating Good	
Number of respondents	248	11	34		
Percentage of respondents	85%	4%	12%		

F2F, Time Taken , Council Tax				Overall Rating Good	
Number of respondents	137	6	15		
Percentage of respondents	87%	4%	9%		

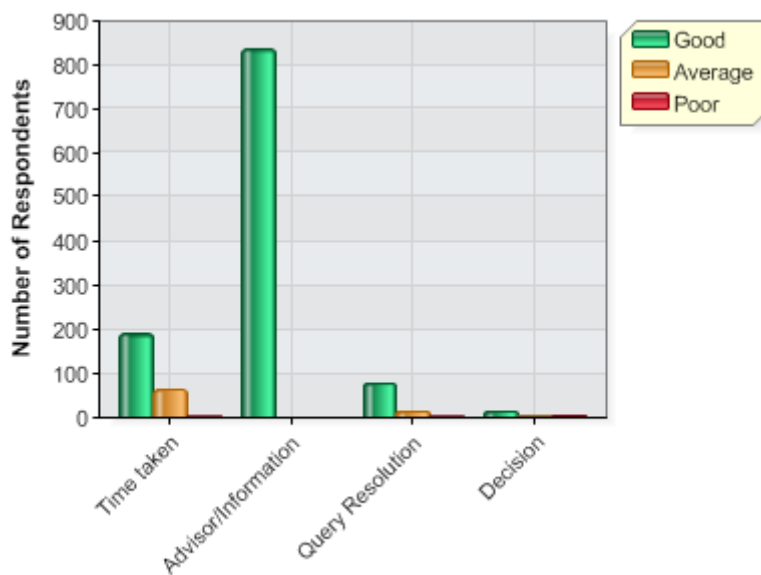
F2F, Advisor/Information, Council Tax				Overall Rating Good	
Number of respondents	68	4	10		
Percentage of respondents	83%	5%	12%		

F2F, Decision, Council Tax				Overall Rating Good	
Number of respondents	8	1	2		
Percentage of respondents	73%	9%	18%		
F2F, Query				Overall	

Resolution, Council Tax				Rating Good	
Number of respondents	35	0	7		
Percentage of respondents	83%	0%	17%		

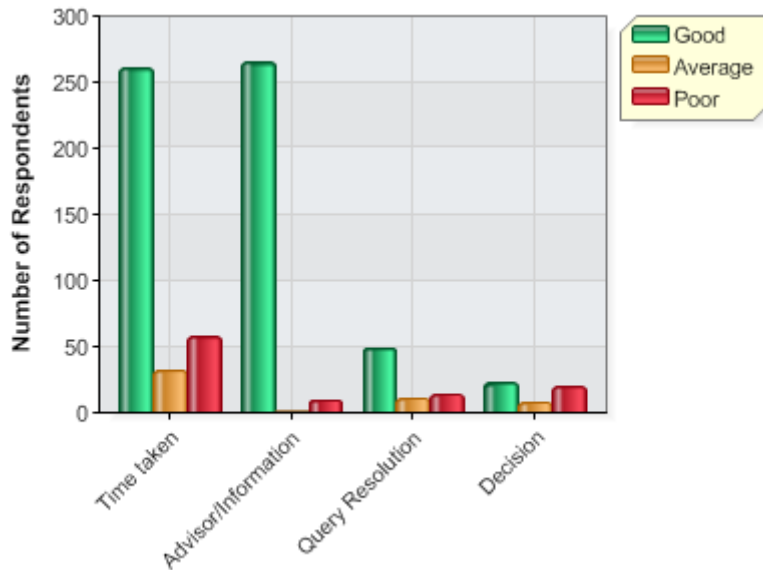
SBC GovMetric Stats – 1 April to 30 November 2013

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%)
Total	1358 (90%)	122 (8.5%)	23 (1.5%)

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%)
Total	597 (80%)	52 (7%)	99 (13%)

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 Historical data not available from Stevenage Council	2007/08 Actual	2008/09 Actual	2009/10 Actual	2010/11 Actual	2011/12 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

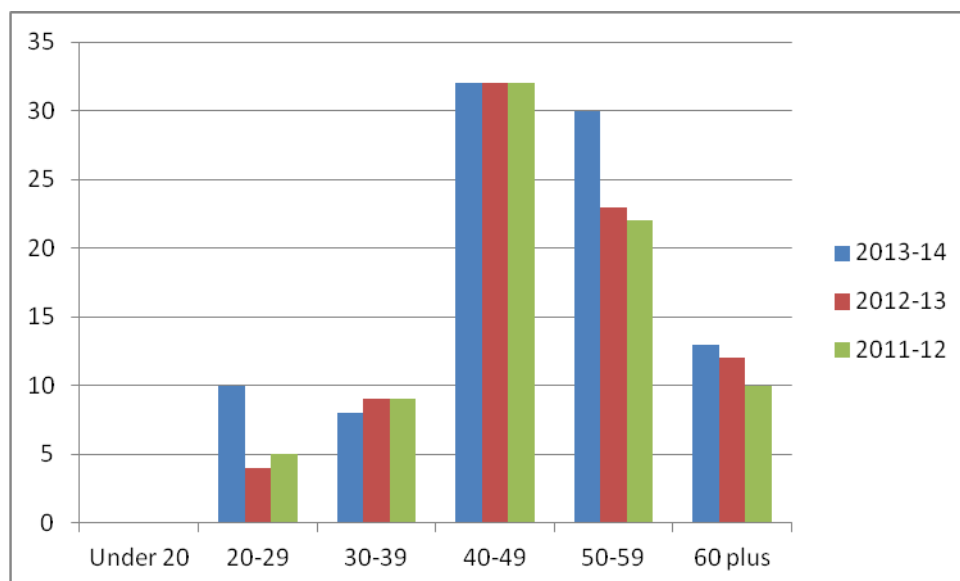
- **Do you have or anticipate any recruitment needs now and in the future (including hard to recruit roles)?**

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.

Project	Completion Date	Service involvement
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.
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