

Service Delivery Plan 2024-27

Service	Revenues and Benefits	Head of Service	Jane Walker
Service Purpose and Core Functions			
<p>Revenues and Benefits is a shared service between Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) and Watford Borough Council (WBC)) since 2010. TRDC is the lead authority.</p> <p>Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic the service had improved its service provision and was regularly in the top-quartile nationally for delivering processing benefit claims and has consistently improved its revenue collection rates despite over £500k of costs have been removed from the service. Now in Jan 2024 the service is once again moving back to top-quartile performance.</p> <p>Our remaining HB customers will migrate to Universal Credit from February 2024 with the migration completing during 2024/25. We are waiting for a timetable from the DWP which should shed further light on when our migrations will complete. In anticipation of a reduced HB caseload, a review of service delivery and structure is planned to commence from April 2024.</p> <p>Revenues and Benefits is by far the biggest service in both councils. It has a combined turnover of c£250m, paying out c£40m in benefits and collecting c£200m in Council Tax and Business Rates. Across the two councils there is around:</p>			
Watford <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,869 HB customers • 5,534 Local Council Tax Support Customers • 44,811 Council Taxpayers, and • 2,909 businesses <hr/>		Three Rivers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2,006 HB Customers • 3,813 Local Council Tax Support Customers • 38,929 Council Taxpayers, and • 2,118 businesses <hr/>	

Link to Corporate Framework	Key Action/ Deliverable for 2023-26	Lead Officer	Milestone (Specific and measurable)	Milestone date (Month/Year)	Internal/External Partners	Additional Capital or Revenue cost and/or saving
RRLL SC	Review Council Tax Support Schemes. prepare reports to suggest ways in which the schemes could be changed	Head of Revenues and Benefits	Scoping Proposals prepared. Consultation Implementation	April 2023 May 2023 Summer 2023 April 2024	Finance HCC	£250,000 saving from removal of agency staff budget (60:40 shared services split)

Targets – Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Targets*	Target 2023/24	Projected 2022/2023 outturn	Target 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Rationale for setting of target / changes to target
RB01	Council Tax Collection	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%	
RB02	Business Rates Collection	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	
RB04	Time taken to process changes in circumstances	5 days	5 days	5 days	4 days	4 days	Introduction of some automation
RB05	New Claims – average time taken to process	5 days	7 days	5 days	5 days	5 days	Introduction of some automation
RB06	Accuracy of work processed	92%	92%	92%	95%	95%	Target retained to reflect additional workload and pressure on the service because of C19 and CoL – and realistic level of year-on-year improvement
RB07	Collection of Housing Benefit Overpayments	92.5%	102.19% TRDC (in-	92.5%	92.5%	92.5%	Target retained but it is difficult to predict impacts of CoL which may have an impact in 23/24

			year collection)				
			97.71% WBC (in-year collection)				

Service Volumes

Activity / Process	Projected annual volume for 2023/2024	Estimated annual volume for 2024/25	Notes / explanation for estimated change	Impact (both service and corporate level)
New Claims for HB and CTS	1,500	1,500		May receive a higher amount depending on the increase in the annual council tax charge for 2024/25 and if customers continue to be impacted by the CoL crisis.
Changes in Circumstances				
Three Rivers				
Atlas Apr – Jan 2023 7,207	8,650	6,000	Tax Credit notifications received via Atlas (from the Department for Work and Pensions) will decrease in 2024/25 as customers in receipt of Tax Credit are migrated to Universal Credit. This will mean that the number of Universal Credit notifications we receive will increase.	
UC Apr – Jan 2023 19,515	23,000+	25,000+		
Watford				
Atlas Apr – Jan 2023 11,850	14,220	17,000		
UC Apr – Jan 2023 24,182	29,000+	31,000+		
Other CIC's				
Three Rivers Apr – Dec 2023 2,085	2,500	1,500		
Watford Apr – Dec 2023 4,022	5,000	3,000		

Recovery of Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Benefit Overpayments and Sundry Debts	Waiting on number of accounts and value of arrears			
Energy Rebate Grants Core Scheme		N/A		These schemes closed in 2022 but there is still a lot of work to ongoing work to carry out refunding customers who have an ERG unclaimed credit on their council tax account despite having had a letter from us asking for their bank details. 2,066 WBC customers 1,633 TRDC customers

Key Risks to Service Plan delivery

1 = not likely/low Impact 4 = will definitely happen/major service changing impact

No	Description of Risk	With no Mitigation			Mitigation	With Mitigation		
		Likelihood (1-4)	Impact (1-4)	Risk Score		Likelihood (1-4)	Impact (1-4)	Risk Score
1	Insufficient Staff	2	3	5	Agency staff, assistance from CSC's, offer of overtime.	1	1	2
2	Failure of IT systems	2	3	5	Battlebox, disaster recovery process, payments by cheque / cash if necessary, mobile phones for officers	1	1	2
3	Fraudulent activity (Internal and external)	2	2	4	Work alongside internal Investigations Team and DWP Fraud Team. Ensure staff up to date with I-learn training	1	1	2

					module. Internal and external audits.			
4	Recession / Pandemics / Cost of Livings Crisis - leads to greater take-up of benefits and added pressure on service.	2	3	5	Agency Staff, resource assistance from other departments, overtime	1	1	2
5	Recession / pandemic / cost of living crisis leads to more non-payment of council tax and business rates.	2	3	5	Agency Staff, resource assistance from other departments, overtime	1	1	2
6	Recession / pandemic / cost of living crisis means it is more difficult to collect sundry debts and HB overpayments.	2	3	5	Agency Staff, resource assistance from other departments, overtime	1	1	2
7	Breach of Data Protection etc. Acts	2	2	4	Checking process in place before post is released internal quality and assurance checks	1	1	2

Impact Assessments Required or Reviews Due

Equalities & Diversity	Sustainability & Climate Change