



Harborough District Council,

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council,

North West Leicestershire District Council,

Working in Partnership to provide better services...

Meeting	Joint Committee
Time/Date	4.30 pm on Thursday, 7 SEPTEMBER 2017
Location	The Partridge Suite, Atkins Building, Lower Bond Street, Hinckley
Officer to contact	Democratic Services (01530 454512)

All persons present are reminded that the meeting may be recorded and by attending this meeting you are giving your consent to being filmed and your image being used. You are kindly requested to make it known to the Chairman if you intend to film or record this meeting.

The Monitoring Officer would like to remind members that when they are considering whether the following items are exempt information under the relevant paragraph under part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 they must have regard to the public interest test. This means that members must consider, for each item, whether the public interest in maintaining the exemption from disclosure outweighs the public interest in making the item available to the public.

AGENDA

Item		Pages
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE	
	To receive and note any apologies for absence.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
	Under the Code of Conduct members are reminded that in declaring disclosable interests you should make clear the nature of that interest.	
3.	MINUTES	
	To confirm and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2017	3 - 10

Item	Pages
4. HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS UPDATE	
Report of the Head of Partnership	11 - 26
5. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY REPORT JULY 2017	
Report of the Head of Partnership	27 - 38
6. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE TO JULY 2017	
The report of the Section 151 Officer	39 - 42
7. FORWARD PLAN	
To note the Joint Committee's Forward Plan	43 - 44
8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS	
4.30pm Thursday, 30 November 2017 at The Symington Building, Harborough	
4.30pm Thursday, 25 January 2018 at Council Offices, North West Leicestershire	
4.30pm Thursday, 26 April 2018 at The Atkins Building, Hinckley	
4.30pm Thursday, 28 June 2018 at The Symington Building, Harborough	

Circulation:

Councillor R Allen
Councillor R D Bayliss
Councillor J Hallam
Councillor M Hall (Chairman)
Councillor P King (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor T J Pendleton

MINUTES of a meeting of THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARTNERSHIP REVENUES AND BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE held in the Board Room, Council Offices, Coalville on THURSDAY, 6 JULY 2017

Present: Councillor R D Bayliss (North West Leicestershire) (Chairman)

Councillors R Allen (Hinckley and Bosworth), J Hallam (Harborough), M Hall (Hinckley and Bosworth), P King (Harborough) and T J Pendleton (North West Leicestershire)

Officers: Mrs C Hammond, Mr A Hunkin (NWLDC), Mrs J Kenny (HBBC), Mrs S O'Hanlon (Leicestershire Partnership - Revenues & Benefits), Mr S Riley (HDC) and Mr A Wilson (HBBC)

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor R D Bayliss, seconded by Councillor T J Pendleton and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor M Hall be elected Chairman for the ensuing year.

Councillor M Hall took the chair and thanked Councillor R D Bayliss for doing an excellent job in the past year.

2. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

It was moved by Councillor J Hallam, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

Councillor P King be elected Deputy Chairman for the ensuing year.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr B Cullen, Ms B Jolly and Mrs B Smith

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2017.

It was moved by Councillor T J Pendleton, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

6. FERIS ACTIVITY

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised Members that the report before them was an update on activity so far, as requested previously by the Joint Committee. However the Government had changed the FERIS to Right Benefit Initiative, which was being considered further down the agenda. She informed Members the total reduction to date in Housing Benefit spend as a result of interventions was £298,201 and that no further funding would be received and that the funding the partnership still had remaining would be retained to use for interventions

It was moved by Councillor R D Bayliss, seconded by Councillor T J Pendleton and

RESOLVED THAT

The update on the position of FERIS be noted.

7. RISK BASED VERIFICATION SOFTWARE UPDATE

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised them that since the software had been implemented more high risk claims had been identified than had been predicted, though it did not present a true picture, as at the point of authoring the report twelve months data was not available. Risk Based Verification(RBV) went live in October 2016.

Councillor T J Pendleton asked if it would be possible to look at benchmarking once the system had been in place for a year against the national trends.

In response to questions from Councillors R Allen and M Hall, Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that not as much evidence was requested for the lower risk claims. With high risk claims requiring more than had been required prior to RBV. She explained that of 40 High Risk Claims cases sampled of which 10 required a further review.

Councillor P King sought clarification on whether it was expected that the partnership would run above the national trends and was the sample pulled a percentage of all the claims received.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised Members that the sample pulled were all high risk claims and that a further report would be considered by the Management Board and then to Joint Committee in November once the software had been in place for a year.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. Further report on the to be considered at the November Meeting

8. UNIVERSAL CREDIT - UPDATE

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised Members that there had not been as many issues as expected; however those that has arisen were significant. Both HDC and HBBC had gone live with NWLDC due to go live 2018. She highlighted the process that claimants had to follow and that the DWP did not wish to share information with Local Authorities in relation to claims, but were very quick to seek advice from the partnership. She informed Members that the lack of information meant that there were

processing difficulties in respect of some claims. Feedback had been provided to the DWP with regard to data sharing but no response had been received.

Councillor M Hall stated that levels of fraud could increase due to the lack of information sharing and that officers should keep plugging away to get the information required.

Councillor P King expressed concerns over the lack of information sharing as the DWP 'test and learn' approach was unfair on claimants, as it appears the DWP are not putting the testing into business as usual. Concerns were raised that a delay on the payment could have a knock on effect on housing rent or council tax payments. He also felt that issues would arise with the Employment Support Allowance as it could only be claimed following an assessment, but claimants could not get assessments. He understood that it was not just the Partnership that had these issues, but it was a national concern and therefore the Local Government Association and MPs should be asked to put pressure on the DWP to share information.

Members expressed a number of concerns in relation to the Information sharing and in response to comments and questions from the Committee, officers provided the following information:-

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that officers were provided with 58 power point slides as part of the "handover event" with the DWP, that were not user friendly and at the events issues were raised but no responses to the queries had been received. She added that the partnership had sent five pages of questions and it appeared the DWP did not have the answers at the point the questions were raised.

Mrs J Kenny advised Members that following the handover the council had to be signed off as UC ready. However staff had not been trained and it seemed that the DWP were under pressure to meet deadlines and therefore had put pressure on HBBC to go live.

Mr S Riley advised Members that HDC raised questions at the date of going live and it was felt that it was expected by DWP that one size fitted all.

Mrs J Kenny advised Members that the issues over information sharing was not just Revenues and Benefits and that officers understood the levels of risk. She agreed that lobbying should be part of the wider response to the issues.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The content of the report be noted.

9. RIGHT BENEFIT INITIATIVE

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She informed Members that the initiative would be replacing the FERIS and the authorities would be given funding for staffing only. Members were advised that cases would be received and staff would investigate the mis-matches, therefore the partnership was looking to recruit staff to deal with the work load.

In response to a question from Councillor R D Bayliss, Mrs S O'Hanlon advised Members that they would be no financial penalties if the partnership did not process all of the referrals.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The content of the report be noted and that the Partnership opts into the national initiative.
- 2) The option to use the unspent FERIS funding to recruit 1 temporary assessment staff to be responsible for the work generated by the interventions team and support completion of the optional RTI's be approved.

10. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE YEAR 2016/17

Mr A Wilson presented the report to Members. He highlighted to Members that there was a year-end saving of £169,586, however the remaining FERIS funding was ring-fenced and could not be redistributed back to the partners. He advised Members that it was proposed that £50,000 be retained as a general reserve, the £16,000 from the earmarked reserve be moved back to the general reserve and the remaining £105,250 be used to reduce the next year partner contributions as detailed in the table at 4.2 of the report.

In response to a question from Councillor J Hallam, Mr A Wilson advised Members that it would be prudent to keep a reserve to ensure that there are funds to cover any unforeseen costs and that it could be reviewed annually to see if the amount needed to be increased or returned to the partners.

Members agreed that they were happy for £50,000 to be kept in reserve and the remaining money be used to reduce Partnership contributions.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1) The financial performance and in year savings of the Partnership be noted.
- 2) Moving earmarked reserves of £16,000 back into the general reserve as not required for the purchase of the new Server be noted.
- 3) The carry forward of £84,000 of savings and reserves into 2017/18 to meet the costs of the purchase of the server, hardware, software and business development and recruitment be approved.
- 4) A general reserve of £50,000 be retained for contingencies of the partnership be approved.
- 5) £105,250 of reserves are used to reduce the contributions for the 2017/18 financial year be approved.

11. PERFORMANCE SUMMARY REPORT MARCH 2017

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She advised Members that it had been a busy year but in year collection targets had been met. There had been significant improvement in former years business rate collection all three authorities had met the targets for processing new claims and change events and in relation to LA error and subsidy all three were below the lower threshold. She informed Members that self-service and Arrangement Manager had been implemented and training was being cascaded, and the sickness averages were below the outturn for the previous year. She stated that it had been a good year with lots of good news stories and hoped that the next year would be just as ambitious.

Councillor M Hall stated that he was really pleased with the report especially the sickness.

Councillor J Hallam congratulated the partnership but highlighted that the arrears reduction for the other two authorities was better than for HDC.

Mrs S O'Hanlon stated that Harborough had been in a better starting position than the others but the same effort had been put into all three by officers.

Councillor King raised concerns that the collection figures for Business Rates may not be maintained.

Mrs S O'Hanlon reminded members that they were now receiving headline information as a committee, and the more detailed matters were dealt with by the Management Board.

Councillor J Hallam questioned how debts could be written off for people who then returned to open new business a short time after.

Mr S Riley stated that debt could change and some claim more. He stated that performance and collection were in a good position.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The Performance Summary Report March 2017 be noted.

12. DISCUSSION ON THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CABINET REPORT "DISTRICT COUNCIL COLLECTION OF COUNCIL TAX"

Mr A Wilson introduced the item to Members. He advised Members that the report had been discussed at the Leicestershire Treasurers' Association and felt that County did not understand the process. He stated that the forecasting was being dealt with incorrectly.

There had been surprise at the lack of engagement from the County. For example the final report had been circulated to districts extremely late. He expressed an underlying concern that County felt the need to review the practices, but had not requested information or engagement from the Partnership, controlled by the Management Board and Joint Committee.

Councillor M Hall advised the Committee that the Leader of the County Council had contacted all district and borough leaders and that he had two concerns over the proposals. Firstly the partnership and partner authorities were constantly reviewing collections at all levels and is happy to share especially the figure used for in year collection, and secondly that it appeared that the County was doing its own forecasting on housing growth, which was difficult as each authority could never predict when development was coming forward. He informed Members that he had responded to the County with these points.

Councillor T J Pendleton stated that the County had taken the in-year figure and not considered recovered arrears.

Councillor P King stated that he had met with his Head of Finance and that he was not adverse to any review on collection if it was to be paid for by someone else, but was mindful that if the County wanted to work with the districts then the partnership need to be clear on the terms of any review.

Councillor M Hall stated that it would be an item on the agenda for the District Leaders' meeting. He stated that he was happy for the Partnership to provide information on how it collects and what has been collected rather than using in-year figures.

Mr S Riley advised the Members that all districts and boroughs had looked at the exemptions and passed them to County.

Mrs S O'Hanlon advised that all 3 partner authorities had improved on the previous year's rates and that only 25 Councils had achieved 98.85%. She expressed concern over the impact any review would have on the day to day work.

Mr S Riley highlighted that the papers for the County report did not explore anything other than new houses and that County received forecasts from authorities on a regular basis.

Councillor T J Pendleton made it clear that he was considering the report as a District Councillor and not in his role as a County Councillor.

Councillor P King stated that a joint response should be drafted from the partnership, agreed by Members and sent to County, making clear that there is a management board that reviews all process of the partnership and monthly forecasting is provided.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

A joint response from the Partnership, as agreed by Members, be sent to Leicestershire County Council.

13. SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2017/18

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The final schedule of meetings along with the times and venues be approved.

14. FORWARD PLAN

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the forward plan to Members and advised that it would be updated to include the new dates and the update reports discussed during the meeting.

RESOLVED THAT:

The Forward Plan be noted.

15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor R Allen, seconded by Councillor R D Bayliss and

RESOLVED THAT:

In pursuance of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting on the grounds that the business to be transacted involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

16. COUNCIL TAX RECRUITMENT

Mrs S O'Hanlon presented the report to Members. She outlined to the Committee the background of the report and the proposals for recruitment.

By affirmation of the meeting it was

RESOLVED THAT:

The recommendations as set out in the report be approved.

Councillor P King entered the meeting at 4.40pm.

The meeting commenced at 4.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 5.55 pm

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Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

Housing Benefit Overpayments Update

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Joint Committee on the changes and progress made to date on the process for recovering housing benefit overpayments.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note the contents of the report.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Housing Benefit Overpayments are created when changes which affect a customer's claim are identified and processed on the benefits system. These can be identified through DWP data matches or, are notified by the customer. The overpayment occurs when there is a gap between the date of notification and the date to which the claimant ceased to be entitled to housing benefit or their benefit was reduced.
- 3.2 The Government is focused on reducing benefit fraud and error and has introduced a number of data matching initiatives which each council has a duty to action promptly. In addition, Local Authorities are expected to refer all potential housing benefit fraud cases to the DWP's Single Fraud Investigation Service. Whilst it is a Government initiative the responsibility for the detection of fraud and error still sits with the Local Authority.

The data matching initiatives include:

- Real Time Information Bulk Data Match – This generates the highest amount of overpayments as it notifies the Local Authority of non declared changes to the start and end dates of employment, changes to earnings and pensions etc. in real time direct from HMRC.
- Daily files are received via the Automated Transfer To Local Authority Systems (ATLAS) service to automatically notify the local authority of changes to a person's income;
- The Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) is a benefit claim review Initiative where higher risk claims are targeted for review. From 2017 this will be replaced by the Right Benefit Initiative. Some targeted interventions will still continue.
- Wider Use of Real Time Information (WuRTI) – This takes the above real time information initiative further by allowing benefits assessors' access to HMRC systems to interrogate the earnings and pensions of claimants to identify any non-declared changes.

These matching exercises, whilst benefiting the councils in terms of additional subsidy paid for identifying customer error, generate substantial levels of overpayment debt.

3.3 Overpayments are the most difficult debts to collect for the Partnership. Often the debtor is still in receipt of DWP Benefits; is on a very low income; or, is vulnerable. The recovery options are limited to:

- Direct Earnings Attachments (DEAs)
- Deductions from their ongoing benefit;
- Agreeing an affordable payment plan,
- Instructing a 3rd party collection agency;
- Agreeing with other LAs to recover overpayments from customers who move away from the area and vice versa, or,
- Where the debt is large and there is prospect of recovery, taking action through the County Court to obtain a County Court Judgement. The Judgement allows the court to instruct a County Court Enforcement Agent to try to recover the debt.

3.4 Taking the debtors individual circumstances and their ability to pay into account is key to determining the right recovery method to use to recover a housing benefit overpayment. Deductions from ongoing benefit are fixed at £11.10 per week plus an additional 50% of any earned income disregards, or £18.50 per week if the overpayment is a result of proven fraud. If the debt is large this could take many years to clear and add additional financial stress and pressure when the individual's circumstances are already difficult. Aged debt that cannot be collected within a 'reasonable' timescale should be submitted for write off in accordance with best accounting practice.

4. OVERPAYMENTS RECOVERY - WHERE WE WERE AND WHERE WE ARE NOW.

4.1 In April 2015 the Partnership was restructured. It was recommended by the IRRV, during the service review, that greater efficiencies and improved customer service could be achieved by combining the separate recovery and billing teams to form one generic council tax team.

4.2 The original recovery team dealt with all recovery action for Council Tax, NNDR and Housing Benefit Overpayments.

4.3 The initial focus for the new council tax team was tackling the influx of correspondence which occurs following each annual billing run. The team spent the remainder of the year undertaking formal training sessions and 'on the job' generic training on all aspects of council tax billing and recovery. This was given priority as it comprises the majority of the team's workload. It is also important as it generates significant income for the Partner Authorities and the major preceptors.

4.4 After the annual billing influx for 2016/17 had been tackled and the staff were more confident on all aspects of council tax, a project team was established to fully review the housing benefit overpayments recovery process. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) was carried out identifying all aspects of the current process. The next step was to work through and develop a more efficient and effective process. The before and after housing benefit overpayment recovery process flow charts are shown in Appendix A and B

- 4.5 Before the new process could be implemented, a data cleansing exercise needed to be completed which involved all old debts being moved onto an initial reminder stage and a letter being issued to advise them of their outstanding overpayment. This generated significant customer contact.
- 4.6 The above exercise was completed between November 2016 and January 2017 and the new process was then implemented at the end of January 2017. All old and newly generated overpayments are now dealt with as part of a weekly recovery cycle. This is a positive improvement and has eliminated delays in the process.
- 4.7 The whole team have been trained on the basic types of customer enquiry related to overpayments and they can all make payment arrangements. The next step is to roll out training on the more complex aspects of the process. This will be done gradually with three people at a time being mentored by the member of staff with the greatest knowledge. This ensures that control over the process and consistency in approach is maintained.

5. HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS ANALYSIS

- 5.1 The table below shows the arrears position before and after the data cleanse exercise which was carried out between November 2016 and January 2017.

It should be noted that less than 50% of the total number of invoices were sent a reminder during the data cleanse exercise. Payment arrangements or deductions from earnings or benefits were already in place for the remaining accounts.

<u>Hinckley & Bosworth BC</u>	Value	Number
Overpayment arrears and number of invoices outstanding as at 30.10.16.	£1,447,422	2236
Number of reminders issued on 09.11.16	£767,989	1369
Number of accounts already subject to a payment plan/deduction.	£679,433	867
Arrears at 31.10.2016 (After reminders/customer contact)	£1,342,010	1910
Reduction	£105,412	326

<u>NW Leicestershire DC</u>	Value	Number
Overpayment arrears and number of invoices outstanding as at 30.10.16.	£1,331,970	2099
Number of reminders issued on 21.11.16	£651,863	1191
Number of accounts already subject to a payment plan/deduction.	£680,107	908
Arrears at 31.10.2016 (After reminders/customer contact)	£1,248,284	1818
Reduction	£83,686	281

Harborough	Value	Number
Overpayment arrears and number of invoices outstanding as at 30.10.16.	£988,191	1366
Number of reminders issued on 30.11.16	£592,959	808
Number of accounts already subject to a payment plan/deduction.	£395,232	558
Arrears at 31.10.2016 (After reminders/customer contact)	£904,660	1180
Reduction	£83,531	186

6. AMOUNT OF DEBT RAISED IN 2016/17

- 6.1 The table on the next page shows the level of debt that was raised for each council in 2016/17. The debts are being raised mainly due to the above mentioned DWP data matching initiatives. Despite this debt being a challenge to collect, it is also positive, as it shows how much fraud and error is being identified and reduced.

Housing Benefit overpayment analysis													
HBBC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
Debt raised	£70,560	£56,494	£64,490	£68,198	£39,325	£74,563	£67,088	£56,174	£84,197	£130,933	£62,014	£80,167	£854,202
Partnership collection Rate	4%	7%	10%	12%	16%	18%	20%	21%	25%	26%	29%	31%	
Partnership anticipated collection rate	5%	9%	15%	19%	23%	25%	27%	28%	30%	32%	34%	36%	
HDC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
Debt raised	£44,797	£71,432	£40,800	£51,766	£23,715	£54,368	£70,850	£86,127	£38,111	£72,504	£29,506	£40,146	£624,122
Partnership collection Rate	3%	5%	8%	10%	13%	15%	16%	19%	22%	24%	24%	29%	
Sundry Debt collection rate	1%	1%	2%	3%	4%	8%	8%	9%	10%	10%	10%	13%	
Combined	3%	5%	8%	10%	13%	15%	16%	19%	22%	24%	24%	28%	
Partnership anticipated collection rate	3%	7%	11%	15%	17%	18%	21%	23%	25%	26%	29%	31%	
NWLDC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
Debt raised	£165,048	£61,129	£60,460	£74,581	£74,765	£83,427	£68,073	£79,156	£108,626	£117,865	£49,149	£104,671	£1,046,950
Partnership collection Rate	5%	8%	12%	15%	18%	21%	23%	25%	27%	29%	31%	33%	
Sundry Debt collection rate	1%	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	8%	9%	10%	10%	
Combined	4%	8%	11%	14%	17%	20%	23%	24%	27%	28%	31%	32%	
Partnership anticipated collection rate	4%	4%	11%	16%	19%	20%	23%	24%	26%	29%	31%	34%	

7. Housing Benefit Overpayment Statistics

7.1 The tables below show the overpayment debt position at key dates for each council.

Key:

- **Total arrears** = Total amount outstanding for each council as at the date stated.
- **Number of invoices** = Number of invoices that the total arrears relate to as at the date stated.
- **Raised to date** = The amount of overpayment debt raised during the year as at the date stated.
- **Collection to date** = Includes all payments recovered from Direct Earnings Attachment, Deductions from DWP Benefits and payment arrangements.
- **Housing Benefits Deductions** = Amounts deducted from ongoing housing benefit claims.

HBBC	30.04.2017	31.03.2017	31.12.2016	31.10.2016	31.12.2015
Total arrears	£1,532,407	£1,521,984	£1,462,819	£1,447,422	£1,339,439
Number of Invoices	2213	2170	2165	2236	1896
Raised to date	£80,494	£854,202	£581,087	£440,717	£810,256
Collection to date	£26,381	£212,582	£142,916	£100,607	£180,452
Housing Benefit deductions	£41,676	£471,345	£337,784	£261,471	N/A

NWLDC	30.04.2017	31.03.2017	31.12.2016	31.10.2016	31.12.2015
Total arrears	£1,480,761	£1,457,313	£1,398,494	£1,331,970	£1,104,584
Number of Invoices	2135	2150	2123	2099	1738
Raised to date	£89,873	£1,046,950	£775,264	£587,482	£647,213
Collection to date	£36,852	£228,486	£144,849	£108,445	£166,377
Housing Benefit deductions	£29,553	£489,526	£382,063	£294,111	N/A

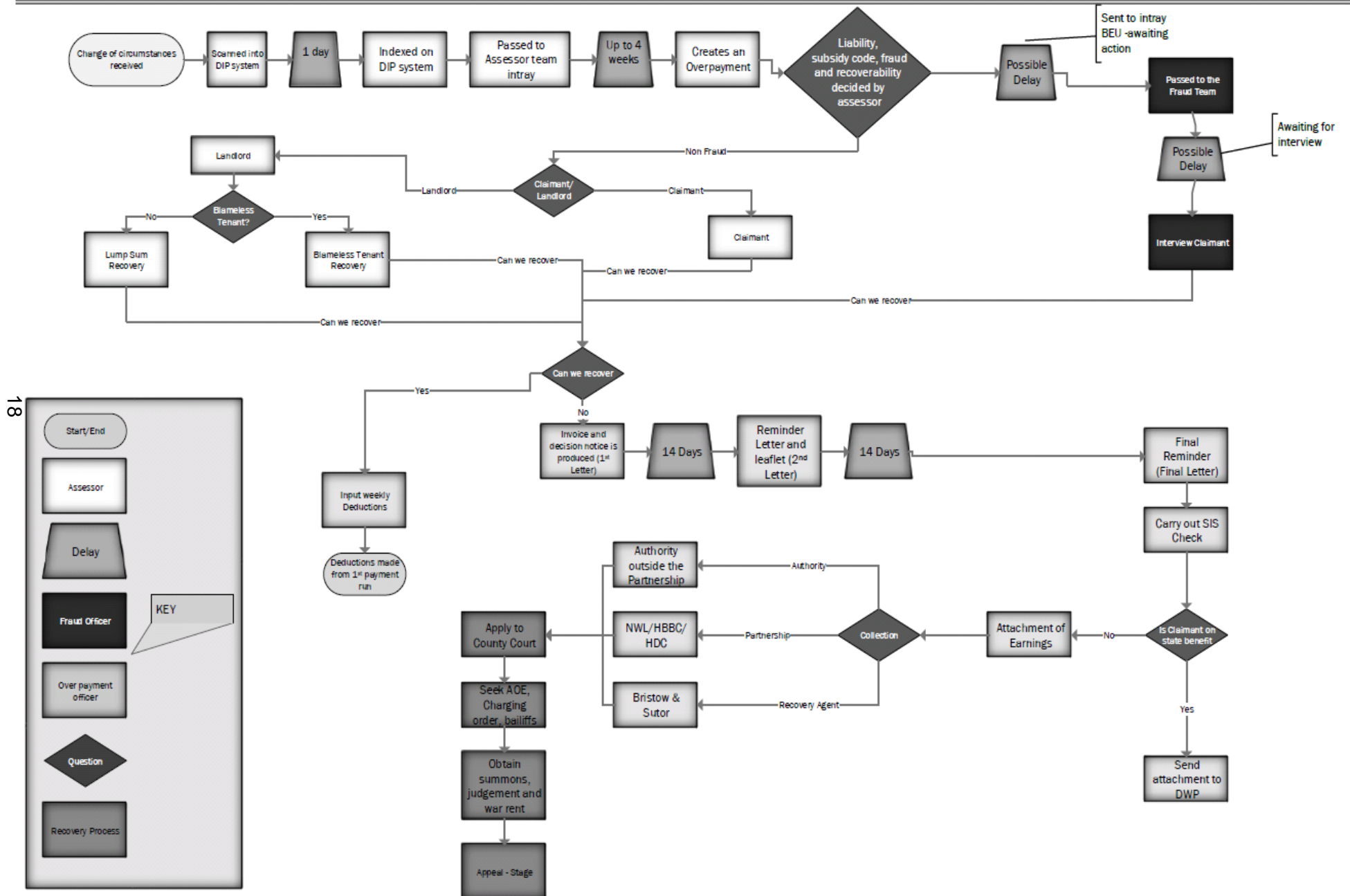
HDC	30.04.2017	31.03.2017	31.12.2016	31.10.2016	31.12.2015
Total arrears	£1,013,540	£1,031,394	£1,015,719	£988,191	£786,298
Number of Invoices	1329	1311	1363	1366	1116
Raised to date	£18,162	£624,123	£481,966	£357,727	£422,089
Collection to date	£18,848	£151,186	£100,081	£75,163	£86,373
Housing Benefit deductions	£16,082	£265,369	£191,275	£135,832	N/A

8. DWP Best Practice Guidance.

8.1 Appendix C contains three tables which provide an analysis of the DWP's suggested good practice as outlined in their Pursuing Housing Benefit Overpayment Recovery Effectively: Good Practice Guide 2015 and how the Partnership compares with their suggestions.

APPENDIX A – PREVIOUS HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT RECOVERY PROCESS

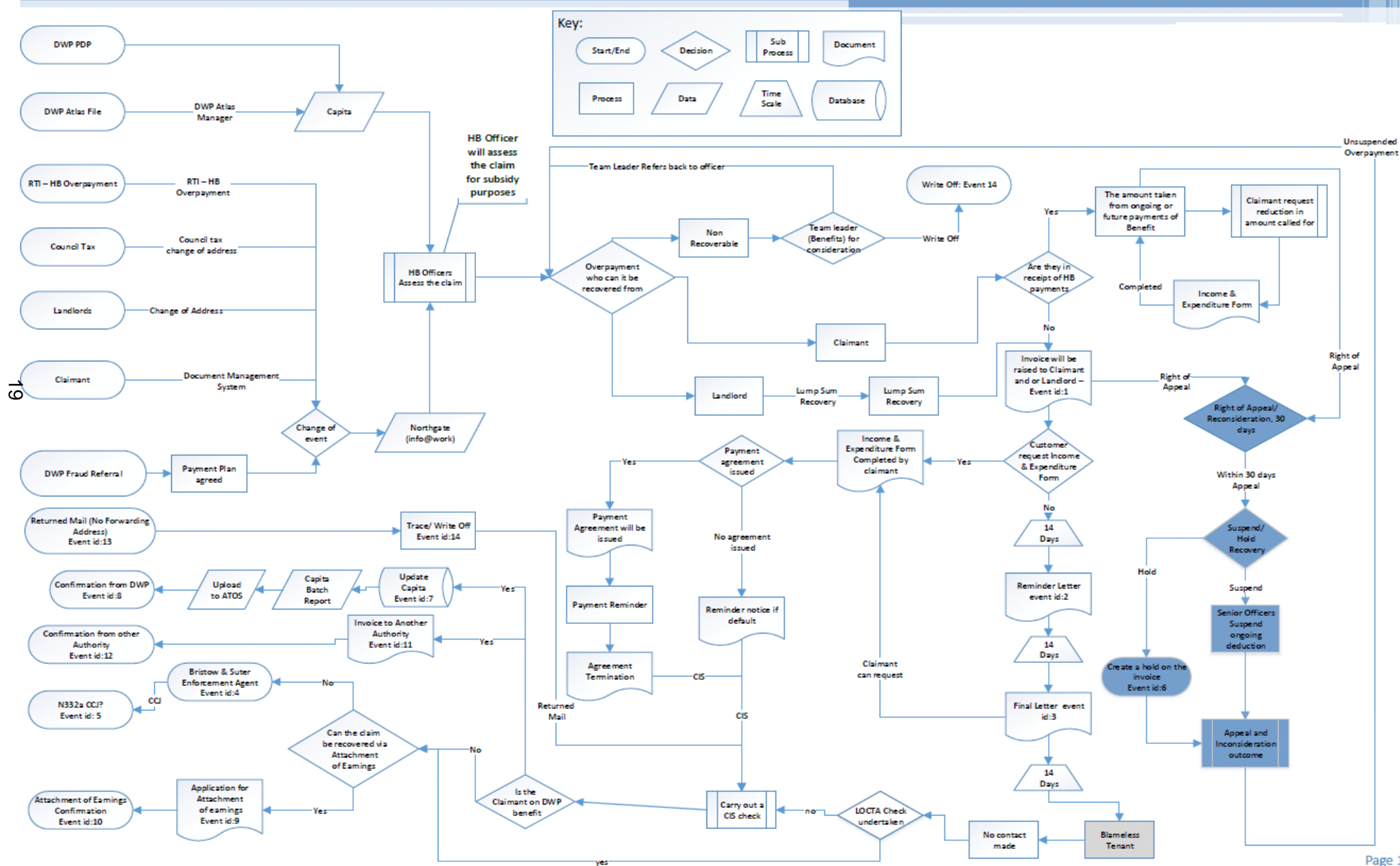
Overpayments Process – 18.05.16 Meeting



APPENDIX B – NEW HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT RECOVERY PROCESS

Overpayments Process 02/02/17 v1.7

March 21, 2017



APPENDIX C

OVERPAYMENT RECOVERY - COMPARISON WITH DWP BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Table 1 - What does a good Housing Benefit recovery team look like?

The DWP say that recovery teams can vary both in structure and size but it is essential that all recovery officers:

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DWP Best Practice	P/ship	Comments
are well trained and motivated in recovery work, with sound knowledge, wider awareness of debt issues and empathy for its debtors	✓	Training on negotiating payment arrangements has been delivered to the whole team. Training on the more complex aspects of overpayment recovery is being rolled out to 3 people at a time to ensure that they practice and embed the knowledge before moving to the next set of trainees. We have an overpayments champion who delivers the training and provides support to the trainees.
have good negotiation and organisational skills, and use their initiative and take ownership of the recovery process	✓	The team all have strong negotiation skills. They understand what is expected of them and take ownership of all contact. They seek advice from colleagues in the Benefits Team if the enquiry is complex.
are encouraged to be innovative, looking for a better, leaner, more efficient way of working	✓	This principle is embedded across the whole Partnership
have clear procedures and targets	✓	New procedures have been devised and were implemented in November 2016. Annual targets are set in the Partnership Service Plan for overpayment recovery.
are effective both within team and across team working; and explore innovative information sharing (within existing data sharing rules)	✓	Where it is legal to do so, the team will use various third party sources of information to aid in debt collection.
are part of a network with other organisations, able to build and maintain strong working relationships with all relevant stakeholders.	✓	The overpayments champion attends the regional overpayments user group/network meetings to share ideas and best practice.

make good use of current availability to 'enabling' technology	⊗	System functionality is limited in the Capita Software. There are no additional modules available which would work with our core software. In the future a text messaging system could interface with the core software and this could be used for housing benefit overpayment, council tax and NNDR debt.
keep up to date with legislation and use exiting powers to their advantage wherever possible	✓	Training is provided on all legislative or procedural changes. We currently utilise all available pre-county court processes. New County Court processes are still being developed but they will only be used in exceptional circumstances due to the additional costs incurred. We will consider this option if we can ascertain that the debtor can pay but is choosing not to.
use adequate software that is fit for purpose	✓	The Capita software is very basic with limited automation. Processes are very manual and not very efficient but it still allows us to carry out full recovery processes.
make full use of multiple payment options.	✓	With the exception of Direct Debit all other payment methods are available to customers. Many payments are collected through a Direct Earnings Attachment (DEA) or a deduction from ongoing DWP Benefits or Housing Benefit.

Table 2 - Effective debt recovery

Good practice includes:

2	DWP Best Practice	P/ship	Comments
	setting out a recovery plan for each case prior to taking any action, as there is little point in pursuing a debt if there is no prospect of recovering it or by a recovery method that will not succeed	✓	After the initial reminder and a further reminder has been issued, in the event of no payment or contact, each case is considered on it's merits and a decision is made by the officer on the appropriate next action to take. It depends on the circumstances of the debtor and their ability to pay.
	capturing telephone numbers (land and mobile) and email addresses so that contact can be made with debtors by phoning, text messaging and email, as required, throughout the recovery process.	✓	Phone numbers and email addresses are captured on the corresponding Council Tax record of the debtor. Text messaging is not currently available but this will be considered in the future when other key projects have been implemented and resources become available.
	ensuring that an income and expenditure form is completed if a debtor claims hardship, and that a set procedure exists for reducing repayment amounts once this form has been submitted	✓	Where debtors request a payment arrangement which is lower than what we deem to be reasonable we will ask for an Income and Expenditure form to be completed. We will follow an internal procedure to consider reducing repayment amounts.
	make use of employer details gathered as part of the Real Time Information project	⊖	We currently obtain employment details either direct from the debtor or via the LOCTA service.
	use of social media sites to obtain employer information	⊖	This is matter is currently with the legal teams to agree the protocols for the use of social media to obtain personal information.
	the income and expenditure form captures the employer details	✓	This question is included on the form.
	benefit processors capture full details of employer when a claimant declares work	⊖	A number of Council Tax Officers have access to the DWP's Customer Information Service (CIS) but employment information is not yet available within this service. This may change in the future.

staff use 'employer' tracing technology where the employer is unknown have previously agreed reduced repayments to ensure that the recovery rate remains appropriate)	✓	The Partnership uses the LOCTA service for all three councils.
ensuring that processes are in place to identify any breakdown in instalment repayments immediately	✓	The new processes, which commenced in November 2016 and were fully implemented in January 2017, are now run on a weekly basis and this process picks up all broken payment arrangements. Reports are also checked on a weekly basis to move individual cases to the next stage.
ensuring that where the debt is sufficiently large, County Court procedures are used (but only if you have a realistic prospect of recovery)	⊖	This is not currently in operation. We intend to develop these processes for very specific cases once the resource in the Team has increased following the recruitment of an additional Senior Council Tax Officer.
keeping in view the largest debts (depending on the size of the LA) to ensure all appropriate action is taken	✓	This is monitored by the overpayments champion
putting in place a collection and monitoring policy and systems to monitor the recovery of Administrative Penalties	✓	The Fraud Officers monitor the level of payments received against Administrative Penalties. These are also picked up on the weekly recovery runs to ensure they are actively being monitored.
using debt collection services intelligently, creating competition where possible by using more than one agent	✓	We use one enforcement agency to collect debts on our behalf. They offer this service at no cost to the Local Authority. Other Enforcement Agencies charge for this service. There is no guarantee of success due to the circumstances of this category of debtor. This is carried out before any court action is taken.
use of social media sites to provide an indication as to a debtors potential means of repayment/life style	⊖	This is matter is currently with the legal teams to agree the protocols for the use of social media to obtain personal information.
using credit reference agency information to support the recovery process.	✓	We use Experian for tracing absconders and to identify a debtor's financial circumstances.

agreeing with other LAs to recover overpayments from customers who move away from the area and vice versa	✓	We are always proactive on this type of recovery if an attachment of benefits or earnings is not a success. To an extent this has now been superseded by a new DWP process called 'PDP' which allows us to electronically refer the case to the DWP. If the debtor has any DWP benefits in payment they will then make deductions from that and send us the payments to reduce the overpayment. However where this is not successful an application will be made to other LAs to recover debts on our behalf.
ensuring that debt recovery teams work closely with fraud investigation teams (and the Single Fraud Investigation Service if appropriate). Any recovery of a fraudulent overpayment should appear seamless to a debtor and should appear to them to be a natural progression of the fraud investigation (arrange to speak with the debtor as part of the fraud sanction process in order to commence recovery at the earliest opportunity)	✓	The new overpayment process includes the Fraud Officers ascertaining at the point of sanctioning the claimant what their financial circumstances are and making a payment arrangement with them at that stage. Employment details are obtained, if applicable, at this point in order for the agreement to proceed.
networking with other LAs to learn lessons and share good practice	✓	The overpayments champion attends the Housing Benefit Overpayments user/networking group.
setting up a benchmarking overpayment recovery liaison group with other authorities	✓	See above.
using national HB Recoveries and Fraud data that is published to support benchmarking, both local and national.	✓	This would be used for specific exercises not as a regular occurrence.

Table 3 - Writing off debt

Good practice includes:

20	DWP Best Practice	P/Ship	Comments
	writing off debt where there is little prospect of the debt being repaid	✓	This principle is applied to all housing benefit overpayment, council tax and NNDR debt. It is always the last report after all appropriate recovery actions have been taken.
	ensuring debt is only written-off, by an authorised officer, in accordance with the LAs corporate or benefit service's write-off policies after all avenues of recovery that the LA considers appropriate have been considered	✓	The delegations are outlined in the write off policy.
	ensuring that the LAs bad debt provision is large enough to cover written off HB overpayments	✓	This is sufficient. It is provided by each finance team annually.
	notating system/system flagging of outstanding overpayments when benefit is no longer in payment, in the event of future benefit award, or other change of circumstances, to enable recovery in the future	✓	An indicator is applied on the Capita system which flags up that there is an outstanding invoice. The benefits officer will liaise with their council tax colleagues to reinstate deductions from benefits.
	regularly reviewing debt that has been written off in order to consider recommencing recovery action (particularly larger debts).	✓	If a debtors circumstances change and this comes to our attention then will re-invoice the debtor and write back any debt previously written off.

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Revenue and Benefit Service

Performance Summary Report

July 2017

Caseload Analysis

Caseload Data																
Position at:	01/04/2011	01/04/2012	In Year Movement	01/04/2013	In Year Movement	01/04/2014	In Year Movement	01/04/2015	In Year Movement	01/04/2016	In Year Movement	01/04/2017	In Year Movement	2017/18		Overall Movement
														Latest Data	In Year Movement	%
Council Tax Dwellings																
HBBC	46,172	46,505	333	46,788	283	47,405	617	48,135	730	48,810	675	49,488	678	49,608	120	3,436 6.9%
HDC	35,923	35,965	42	36,494	529	37,048	554	37,312	264	37,899	587	38,505	606	38,688	183	2,765 7.1%
NWLDC	40,026	40,271	245	40,833	562	41,292	459	41,761	469	42,405	644	43,204	799	43,548	344	3,522 8.1%
Totals	122,121	122,741		124,115		125,745		127,208		129,114		131,197	Current Total:	131,844	Movement	9,723
NDR Rated Assessments																
HBBC	2,876	2,867	-9	2,932	65	2,968	36	2,985	17	3,067	99	3,082	15	3,125	43	249 8.0%
HDC	2,616	2,730	114	2,762	32	2,835	73	2,894	59	2,909	74	2,949	40	2,998	49	382 12.7%
NWLDC	3,182	3,170	-12	3,175	5	3,210	35	3,223	13	3,249	39	3,287	38	3,366	79	184 5.5%
Totals	8,674	8,767		8,869		9,013		9,102		9,225		9,318	Current Total:	9,489	Movement	815
HB/CTLS Live Caseload																
HBBC	7,100	7,579	479	7,555	-24	7,161	-394	6,832	-329	6,459	-702	6,177	-282	5,962	-215	-1,138 -19.1%
										Current Caseload Analysis	PTs combined: 2,146 CTLS only: 2,087 CT's combined: 1,729					
HDC	4,189	4,246	57	4,345	99	4,274	-71	4,086	-188	3,689	-585	3,520	-169	3,424	-96	-765 -22.3%
										Current Caseload Analysis	PTs combined: 2,289 CTLS only: 1,135					
NWLDC	7,187	7,287	100	7,213	-74	6,770	-443	6,550	-220	6,145	-625	5,816	-329	5,743	-73	-1,444 -25.1%
										Current Caseload Analysis	PTs combined: 2,072 CTLS only: 2,153 CT's combined: 1,518					
Totals	18,476	19,112		19,113		18,205		17,468		16,293		15,513	Current Total:	15,129	Movement	-3,347

Dashboard Performance Summaries for each Council follows below:

HBBC													2017/18	Year-End 2017/18 Target	2016/17 Same month cumulative comparison
BENEFITS	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Cumulative		
In month: Right Time (days)	10.5	9.4	12.6	12.0									11.1	11	
Position for 2016/17	8.5	9.5	12.2	12.4	10.5	9.7	10.5	9.8	11.1	10.8	2.8	9.9			10.6
In month: New Claims (Days)	20.2	21.4	23.3	21.7									21.7	19	
Position for 2016/17	15.9	24.2	22.1	23.0	19.2	16.9	16.1	16.6	16.3	14.5	16.3	17.8			21.0
In month: Change Events (Days)	9.6	8.5	11.2	11.0									9.9	9	
Position for 2016/17	7.1	7.4	10.7	10.5	8.6	8.2	9.4	8.6	10.3	10.1	2.3	8.7			8.9
Right Time profiled in month target 16/17	14.1	14.8	14.7	11.0	10.9	10.2	10.8	9.3	10.4	9.8	3.4	10.9			
New Claims profiled in month target 16/17	19.0	24.0	22.0	22.9	18.4	16.8	16.7	14.4	15.0	16.2	17.5	18.9			
Change Events profiled in month target 16/17	13.5	13.7	13.2	9.8	9.8	9.1	10.0	8.2	9.0	8.6	2.5	9.4			
COUNCIL TAX	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	10.9%	20.3%	29.5%	38.7%									38.7%	98.0%	
This years profiled target	11.0%	20.0%	29.3%	38.4%	47.9%	57.1%	66.3%	75.9%	85.1%	94.2%	96.4%	98.0%			
Position for 2016/17	11.0%	20.3%	29.4%	38.6%	48.0%	57.5%	66.5%	75.9%	85.1%	94.3%	96.5%	98.1%			
In Year Arrears Reduction (£)	£2.7m	£2.6m	£2.5m	£2.4m									£2.4m	INFO	
Position for: 2015/16	£2.7m	£2.5m	£2.5m	£2.3m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.0m	£1.9m	£1.8m	£1.8m			
NON DOMESTIC RATES	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	11.0%	20.6%	29.9%	39.3%									39.3%	98.3%	
This years profiled target	11.2%	20.0%	28.1%	37.1%	46.0%	55.0%	63.8%	73.0%	82.7%	92.0%	96.5%	98.3%			
Position for 2016/17	10.1%	19.0%	28.1%	37.1%	46.0%	55.7%	64.9%	74.1%	83.5%	92.9%	96.9%	98.9%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£0.56m	£0.37m	£0.34m	£0.43m									£0.43m	INFO	
Position for: 2016/17	£1.4m	£0.7m	£0.6m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m			
HB DEBT RECOVERY	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments outstanding at year end (Academy)	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.6m	£1.6m									£1.6m	INFO	
Position for 2016/17	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m			
HB Overpayments Recovered	4%	7%	10%	14%									14%	36%	
2017/18 profiled target	5%	8%	11%	13%	16%	19%	21%	22%	26%	27%	30%	36%			
Position for 2016/17	4%	7%	10%	12%	15%	18%	20%	21%	25%	26%	29%	31%			
FRAUD	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
CTLS Sanctions gained	0	1	2	0									3	6	
This years profiled target	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0			

HDC													2017/18	Year -End 2017/18 target	2016/17 Same month cumulative comparison
BENEFITS	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Cumulative		
In month: Right Time (days)	10.8	9.0	10.8	14.0									11.2	11	
Position for 2016/17	9.1	9.3	12.2	10.4	10.9	11.8	11.3	9.8	12.7	9.5	3.0	8.8			10.2
In month: New Claims (Days)	20.6	18.9	20.3	19.1									19.8	19	
Position for 2016/17	15.5	20.1	22.0	18.1	18.9	20.2	15.3	14.5	22.2	14.7	17.9	18.7			18.8
In month: Change Events (Days)	9.3	7.9	9.4	13.3									9.9	9	
Position for 2016/17	7.8	7.9	10.5	9.3	9.2	10.3	10.7	9.0	11.1	8.6	2.5	7.8			8.8
Right Time profiled in month target 17/18	9.8	11.1	11.9	10.1	10.2	10.8	12.0	10.8	9.6	9.5	3.0	8.0			
New Claims profiled in month target 17/18	20.6	22.6	20.9	18.0	16.7	18.9	19.3	19.3	19.1	19.2	19.1	19.0			
Change Events profiled in month target 17/18	8.3	9.5	10.2	8.8	8.9	9.4	10.8	8.9	8.5	8.2	3.0	9.0			
COUNCIL TAX	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	11.2%	20.5%	29.9%	39.0%									39.0%	98.6%	
This years profiled target	11.3%	20.8%	29.9%	39.0%	48.3%	57.7%	67.9%	76.9%	86.1%	95.0%	97.0%	98.6%			
Position for 2016/17	11.3%	20.4%	29.9%	39.1%	48.4%	57.9%	67.2%	76.6%	85.7%	94.7%	96.8%	98.5%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£2.1m	£2.0m	£1.9m	£1.9m									£1.9m	INFO	
Position for: 2016/17	£2.2m	£2.2m	£2.1m	£2.0m	£1.9m	£1.9m	£1.9m	£1.8m	£1.7m	£1.6m	£1.5m	£1.5m			
NON DOMESTIC RATES	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	9.7%	20.5%	28.7%	37.8%									37.8%	99.2%	
2017/18 Target	10.6%	19.6%	28.7%	37.6%	46.5%	56.5%	65.3%	74.1%	83.6%	92.4%	96.9%	99.2%			
Position for 2016/17	10.4%	19.9%	28.7%	37.6%	46.7%	55.1%	64.0%	74.0%	82.6%	92.8%	96.9%	99.6%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£0.27m	£0.33m	£0.23m	£0.21m									£0.21m	INFO	
Position for: 2016/17	£0.4m	£0.3m	£0.3m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m	£0.1m	£0.1m	£0.1m			
HB DEBT RECOVERY	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments outstanding at year end (Academy)	£1.0m	£1.0m	£1.0m	£1.0m									£1.0m	INFO	
Position for 2015/16 (£m)	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.7m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.8m	£0.9m			
HB Overpayments Recovered	3%	6%	9%	12%									12%	31%	
2016/17 profiled target	3%	5%	8%	10%	13%	16%	18%	21%	24%	24%	27%	31%			
Position for 2015/16	3%	5%	8%	10%	13%	15%	16%	19%	22%	24%	26%	29%			
FRAUD	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
CTLS Sanctions gained	0	0	0	0									0	6	
This years profiled target	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0			

NWLDC													2017/18	Year End 2017/18 target	2016/17 Same month cumulative comparison
BENEFITS	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Cumulative		
In month: Right Time (days)	11.0	9.8	11.0	11.2									10.7	11	
Position for 2016/17	10.4	9.3	12.3	11.7	10.8	11.1	10.8	10.4	11.7	11.6	3.4	8.9			10.9
In month: New Claims (Days)	18.9	21.4	16.9	16.4									18.5	19	
Position for 2016/17	16.1	19.8	19.1	21.7	22.9	19.2	16.3	14.1	16.4	18.1	15.3	18.5			19.3
In month: Change Events (Days)	9.5	8.3	10.3	10.3									9.5	9	
Position for 2016/17	9.5	8.1	11.2	9.7	9.1	9.5	9.8	9.8	10.7	10.2	2.8	7.7			9.5
Right Time profiled in month target 16/17	14.9	15.5	15.1	11.5	10.6	9.9	11.1	8.6	10.1	10.2	3.0	8.3			
New Claims profiled in month target 16/17	21.0	23.0	25.1	20.4	20.3	14.6	16.2	13.7	15.9	16.5	15.4	18.5			
Change Events profiled in month target 16/17	13.6	14.3	13.3	10.3	9.1	9.2	10.0	7.7	8.6	8.9	2.4	6.6			
COUNCIL TAX	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	10.2%	19.5%	28.6%	37.7%									37.7%	97.6%	
This years profiled target	10.4%	19.5%	28.8%	37.9%	47.2%	56.4%	65.6%	74.9%	84.3%	93.3%	95.8%	97.6%			
Position for 2016/17	10.2%	19.6%	28.9%	38.0%	47.3%	56.5%	65.5%	74.8%	84.1%	93.1%	95.7%	97.8%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£3.2m	£3.0m	£2.9m	£2.8m									£2.8m	INFO	
Position for: 2016/17	£3.2m	£3.1m	£2.9m	£2.8m	£2.7m	£2.6m	£2.6m	£2.5m	£2.4m	£2.4m	£2.2m	£2.1m			
NON DOMESTIC RATES	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
In Year (%)	10.0%	20.3%	29.0%	38.7%									38.7%	99.0%	
This years profiled target	11.0%	19.0%	30.9%	39.2%	47.3%	56.4%	65.6%	74.2%	82.4%	90.7%	96.0%	99.0%			
Position for 2016/17	9.8%	20.1%	30.9%	39.2%	48.4%	57.1%	67.1%	76.0%	84.8%	91.6%	95.2%	99.3%			
Arrears Reduction (£m)	£0.68m	£0.52m	£0.53m	£0.40m									£0.40m	INFO	
Position for: 2016/17	£0.9m	£0.8m	£0.7m	£0.6m	£0.5m	£0.5m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.4m	£0.3m	£0.2m	£0.2m			
HB DEBT RECOVERY	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments outstanding at year end (Academy)	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m	£1.5m									£1.5m	INFO	
Position for 2016/17	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.3m	£1.4m	£1.3m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.4m	£1.5m			
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
HB Overpayments Recovered	4%	9%	13%	17%									17%	34%	
2017/18 profiled target	4%	8%	11%	16%	19%	20%	23%	24%	26%	29%	31%	34%			
Position for 2016/17	5%	8%	12%	15%	18%	20%	23%	25%	27%	29%	31%	33%			
FRAUD	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar			
CTLS Sanctions gained	0	0	0	0									0	6	
This years profiled target	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0			

DWP Housing Benefit Subsidy impact – ‘Local Authority Error/ Time Delay’

HBBC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Lower Threshold	£6,554	£13,027	£19,420	£25,040								
Upper Threshold	£7,486	£14,655	£21,848	£28,170								
Actual	£6,882	£8,139	£9,461	£19,017								
Lower Tolerance	-£328	£4,887	£9,959	£6,023	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Upper Tolerance	£604	£6,516	£12,387	£9,153	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
HDC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Lower Threshold	£3,888	£7,708	£12,220	£15,783								
Upper Threshold	£4,374	£8,671	£13,748	£17,756								
Actual	£916	£2,580	£3,879	£6,411								
Lower Tolerance	£2,971	£5,128	£8,341	£9,372	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Upper Tolerance	£3,457	£6,091	£9,869	£11,344	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
NWLDC	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Lower Threshold	£6,906	£13,236	£20,315	£26,630								
Upper threshold	£7,770	£14,891	£22,854	£29,959								
Actual	£2,905	£5,593	£9,664	£11,880								
Lower Tolerance	£4,002	£7,643	£10,651	£14,749	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Upper Tolerance	£4,865	£9,298	£13,190	£18,078	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0

Sickness

Sickness for June is given below:

(Data cannot be provided in time to meet report deadline and therefore reported 1 month in arrears)

HBBC	Annual Target 8 days		
	Month		
	June		Cumulative
Long Term	2 Days		25 Days
Short Term	22 Days		84 Days
Days lost	24 Days		109 Days
FTE Average	0.75 Days		3.41 Days
Profiled Target Average	0.66 Days		1.98 Days
HDC	Annual Target 9 days		
	Month		
	June		Cumulative
Long Term	Data currently not available		
Short Term			
Days lost			
FTE Average			
Profiled Target Average	0.75 Days		2.25 Days
NWLDC	Annual Target 8.5 days		
	Month		
	June		Cumulative
Long Term	35.86 Days		35.86 Days
Short Term	10 Days		56 Days
Days lost	45.86 Days		91.86 Days
FTE Average	1.94 Days		3.92 Days
Profiled Target Average	0.71 Days		2.13 Days

Benefits Operational Team

(Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support and Fraud)

Processing

Whilst it is still only NWLDC who are meeting the target for processing new claims, over the last month all 3 councils have improved their in month processing times so the direction of travel is positive. Our concern that HBBC had not improved significantly over the previous month is slightly tempered by the fact that this time last year new claim processing days was considerably higher (23 days) and by the end of quarter three HBBC were back within target so all things being equal we would expect to be meeting target within quarter three.

In terms of processing times for change events we will be prioritising HDC's 'changes' over the coming weeks in an attempt to bring them into line with the other partners and back on target. However it is important to note that we are wholly reliant on the claimant providing the additional information requested as soon as possible, as the clock starts ticking the moment we are initially alerted to the change. Currently both HBBC and NWLDC have either improved or maintained performance on change events.

Caseload Analysis

Our colleagues within Leicestershire are currently looking at movements in caseload and the pensioner/working age split. The following tables provide the analysis for the partnership.

HBBC

Claims	April 16	April 17	Difference
CTS only	2095	2016	-79
HB only	634	626	-8
HB/CTS combined	3820	3669	-151
Working age %	50%	50%	0 %
Pension age %	50%	50 %	0 %

NWLDC

Claims	April 16	April 17	Difference
CTS only	1611	1519	-92
HB only	557	500	-57
HB/CTS combined	4116	3920	-196
Working age %	52%	52 %	0%
Pension age %	48%	48%	0%

HDC

Claims	April 16	April 17	Difference
CTS only	1035	1011	-24
HB only	366	296	-70
HB/CTS combined	1651	1549	-102
Working age %	35 %	33%	-2 %
Pension age %	65%	67%	+2 %

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Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme – 2016/17 (End of Year Adjustment)

HBBC and NWLDC have received an additional payment of £1,443 and £9,443 respectively for the FERIS work completed in 2016/17.

Revenues Operational Team

(Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and Housing Benefit Overpayments)

The collection rates for Council Tax for HDC and HBBC are on target or higher than we collected in the same period last year. NWLDC is still marginally down by 0.2% against the profiled target. The first large batch of cases for 2017/18 was uploaded to the Enforcement Agents at the end of July. We expect to see improvements in collection once these cases move into the compliance stage. During this stage contact is made with debtors and payment arrangements are agreed. Staffing levels in the council tax team continue to be affected by long term sickness, vacancies and annual leave. Recruitment to the Senior Council Tax Officer role and a Council Tax Officer role will take place in August/September.

The collection rates for NNDR continue to be above, or on a par with, the profiled targets for HDC and HBBC. NWLDC has been affected by the revaluation of a large assessment. This change has led to an amendment to their instalment profile. Payment is not due until August.

New Rate Relief Schemes - Update

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- The pub scheme provides for a discount of up to £1,000 to be paid to public houses with a rateable value less than £100,000. Letters and application forms were sent to all eligible public houses in July. The amounts awarded to date are:
HBBC: 59 pubs identified. 33 ratepayers have returned the form. Relief awarded £32,912.
HDC: 60 pubs identified. 26 ratepayers have returned the form. Relief awarded £25,967
NWLDC: 60 pubs identified. 26 ratepayers have returned the form. Relief awarded £19,269
- Development of the new Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme is ongoing. Initial modelling information was sent to all three councils with various scenarios re-modelled throughout July. The draft proposals are currently with the Section 151 Officers. Once agreed they will draft the policies and consult with the major preceptors before each scheme can be formally adopted by Cabinet/Executive.
- In regard to the Supporting Small Businesses Scheme (SSB), the ratepayers who may be eligible have now been identified. A letter and State Aid declaration form will be issued in August informing them about the Scheme. We will ask them to contact us to make a temporary payment arrangement if they are struggling financially. We will update the accounts with the relief and issue revised bills once the software has been upgraded. This is scheduled to take place in October following the completion of the migration to the new Red Hat Server. The number of ratepayers possibly eligible for the scheme is: HBBC: 20, HDC: 38, NWL: 12.

System issues affecting both revenues and benefits

Since the 17th January 2017 we have been maintaining a systems issues log detailing occasions where users have been unable to work because the system has either frozen or crashed. To date there have been 217 reported incidents which, until resolved, will continue to have a detrimental effect on our ability to meet the needs of our customers and partners.

Channel Shift Analysis

HDC					NWL					HBBC				
Service Subscriptions														
	May	June	July			May	June	July			May	June	July	
Application	No of Subscriptions			Increase since previous month	Application	No of Subscriptions			Increase since previous month	Application	No of Subscriptions			Increase since previous month
Council Tax Online	464	540	639	99	Council Tax Online	362	412	465	53	Council Tax Online	1835	1891	1976	85
Housing Benefit Online	57	62	74	12	Housing Benefit Online	41	49	60	11	Housing Benefit Online	77	80	91	11
Landlord Online	35	35	37	2	Landlord Online	22	24	24	0	Landlord Online	63	65	68	3
Business Rates Online	26	27	28	1	Business Rates Online	11	12	14	2	Business Rates Online	36	38	38	0
Ebiling & Enotifications					Ebiling & Enotifications					Ebiling & Enotifications				
Application	No of Subscriptions				Application	No of Subscriptions				Application	No of Subscriptions			
Council Tax Online	126	144	165	21	Council Tax Online	106	119	131	12	Council Tax Online	197	204	228	24
Business Rates Online	9	9	9	0	Business Rates Online	5	5	5	0	Business Rates Online	9	9	9	0
Landlord Online	16	16	18	2	Landlord Online	8	10	10	0	Landlord Online	7	8	8	0
Housing Benefit Online	17	18	22	4	Housing Benefit Online	12	15	16	3	Housing Benefit Online	11	11	15	4

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Leicestershire Partnership Revenues & Benefits

Financial Performance to July 2017

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Joint Committee of the financial performance of the Partnership for the period April - July 2017.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- a) That the financial performance of the Partnership be noted.

3. INFORMATION

Budget Position

- 3.1 The financial position of the Partnership has been outlined in **Appendix 1** to this report. The key headlines have been detailed below for information.
- 3.1.1 The Joint Committee approved a budget for the Partnership for 2017/2018 that indicated that £3,459,650 would be spent on the Partnership, matched by income from the partners and use of reserves. This has since been agreed that reserves of £105,250 will be used to reduce the level of contributions need in year from partners.
- 3.1.2 As at July 2017, the Partnership had underspent against the profiled budget by £203,179. In addition there were £130,476 of timing differences associated with expenditure to the end of July 2017, which will be billed to partners following the quarter end reconciliation, leaving a net underspend of £53,664.

	Budget to July 2017	Actual to July 2017	Variance to Date Over / (Under) Spend	Timing Differences	Variance after Timing Differences Over / (Under) Spend
	£	£	£	£	£
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	1,249,037	1,091,406	(157,631)	130,476	(27,155)
INCOME	(1,045,858)	(1,072,367)	(26,509)	0	(26,509)
	203,179	19,039	(184,140)	130,476	(53,664)

- 3.1.3 The key variances to the end of July 2017 bring to the attention of the Joint Committee are:
- FERIS is underspent by £38,000, mainly due posts being filled on a part-time basis, rather than fulltime due to the nature of the work.
- 3.2 There is a direct link between partner contributions and expenditure incurred and therefore partner contributions have been adjusted by £11,000 to reflect the actual expenditure to date.

As at 31 July 2017, the Partnership is forecasting a breakeven year-end position. This will be reviewed as the year progresses.

Appendix 1: Leicestershire Revenues & Benefits Partnership Monitoring Report to 31st July 2017

Expenditure / Income Type	2017/18 Latest Budget to Date	Actual to Date	Timing Differences	Variance after Timing Differences	2017/18 Total Estimate (Original)	2017/18 Total Estimate (Revised)
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Employees	843,627	710,489	127,940	5,198	2,551,100	2,558,100
Premises Related Expenditure	27,140	24,846	0	2,294	81,050	81,050
Transport Related Expenditure	9,336	6,243	2,393	700	28,000	28,000
Supplies & Services	361,133	342,327	143	18,663	768,300	776,800
Central & Administrative Exp	7,801	7,500	0	301	31,200	31,200
Revenue Income	-1,021,034	-1,009,961	0	-11,073	-3,459,650	-3,354,400
Approved Cfws	0	0	0	0	0	-72,118
Transfer from Reserves	-35,083	-35,083	0	0	0	-105,250
				0		
Other Expenditure - FERIS	10,259	5,061		5,198	0	56,618
Other Income - FERIS	0	-32,383		32,383	0	0
Sum:	203,179	19,039	130,476	53,664	0	0

Timing Differences

Salaries - July 17	HDC	53,970
	NWLDC	73,970
Mileage & Disturbance Costs - July 17	HDC	1,707
	NWLDC	686
Supplies & Services - July 17	HDC	119
	NWLDC	24

130,476

Explanations

	Variance at 30/06/16 (Over) / Under Spend £	Forecast variance (Over) / Under Spend £	Explanation £5k+
Salaries	5,000		Variance > £5k
Premises Related Expenditure	2,000		Variance > £5k
Car Allowances	1,000		Variance > £5k
Computer Software Maintenance & Upgrade	5,000		Variance > £5k
Postages	5,000		Variance > £5k
Printing	3,000		Variance > £5k
Liability Expenses	-2,000		Variance > £5k
Flexible working costs	4,000		Variance > £5k
Minor Variances	4,000		Variance > £5k
Contributions	-11,000		There is a direct link between partner contributions and expenditure incurred and therefore partner contributions have been adjusted to reflect the actual expenditure to date.
Net Other Expenditure & Income - FERIS	38,000		Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) this is a ring fenced grant. £32K grant has been recieved so far during 2017/18. A budget of £57k has been bfwd from 2016/17
	54,000	0	

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FORWARD PLAN FOR JOINT COMMITTEE 2017-2018

Decision	Date of Decision (approx)	Contacts
Financial Performance July 17	7 September 2017	Ashley Wilson - Section 151 Officer
Performance Report	7 September 2017	Sally O'Hanlon – Head of Partnership
Housing Benefit Overpayments	7 September 2017	Sally O'Hanlon – Head of Partnership
Forward Plan	7 September 2017	Sally O'Hanlon – Head of Partnership
Financial Performance October 2017	30 November 2017	Ashley Wilson - Section 151 Officer
Performance Report	30 November 2017	Sally O'Hanlon – Head of Partnership
Service Plan 2018/2019	30 November 2017	Sally O'Hanlon – Head of Partnership
Financial Performance November 2017	25 January 2018	Ashley Wilson - Section 151 Officer
Performance Report	25 January 2018	Sally O'Hanlon – Head of Partnership
Internal Audit Report	25 January 2018	Price Waterhouse Cooper
Budget 2018/19	25 January 2018	Ashley Wilson – Section 151 Officer
Risk Based Verification Update	25 January 2018	Storme Coop – Benefit Operational Manger
Financial Performance February 2018	26 April 2018	Ashley Wilson – Section 151 Officer
Performance Report	26 April 2018	Sally O'Hanlon – Head of Partnership

Last update 17/03/17 - CH

Decision	Date of Decision (approx)	Contacts
Schedule of meetings	28 June 2018	Clare Hammond – Democratic Support Officer
Year End Performance Report	28 June 2018	Sally O’Hanlon – Head of Partnership
Year End Financial Report	28 June 2018	Ashley Wilson – Section 151 Officer