



SERVICE PLAN 2022/23

The Leicestershire Partnership Revenues and Benefits

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1 Councils' Aims and Priorities:



- Priority 1
- Priority 2
- Priority 3

Harborough District Council

The Place: a safe enterprising and vibrant place
The People: a healthy, inclusive, and empowered community
Your Council: creative, proactive, and efficient



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

A Borough to be proud of

- Priority 1
- Priority 2
- Priority 3

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

People: Helping people to stay healthy, active, and protected from harm.
Places: Creating clean and attractive places to live and work.
Prosperity: Encouraging growth, attracting businesses improving skills and supporting regeneration.



- Priority 1
- Priority 2
- Priority 3
- Priority 4
- Priority 5

North West Leicestershire District Council

Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family town
Our communities are safe, healthy, and connected
Local people live in high quality, affordable homes
Supporting businesses and helping people into local jobs
Developing a clean and green district

2. OVERALL PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SERVICE	To provide a high-quality Revenues and Benefits service to our residents and businesses at an economical cost and in accordance with the principles of continuous improvement and changing customer requirements.
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) To assess and pay Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support accurately and promptly. 2) As part of our DWP liaison role to ensure all referrals are made in accordance with the requirements of the DWP. 3) To issue accurate and prompt Council Tax and NNDR bills to maximise collection rates, and to deal appropriately with non-payers to minimise arrears, whilst supporting those in need . 4) To provide residents with a choice of how to engage with services via access channels that ensure customer choice, safety and are covid compliant 5) To widely publicise the availability of business rate grants, discounts, exemptions, reliefs, and housing benefit, and to provide proactive advice on all Revenues and Benefits matters. 6) To ensure that the service observes all statutory requirements including those governing the administration of Revenues and Benefits, Freedom of Information, Data Protection, Human Rights and Health and Safety. 7) To adhere to our commitment to promote equality and diversity among our residents and staff. 8) To provide and develop innovative services for all customers. 9) To communicate effectively with our customers and stakeholders, developing our services to meet their changing needs. 10) To provide accurate and timely services for our external and internal customers. 11) To maximize collection rates whilst having due regard to the difficulties faced by some customers in making their payments. 12) Develop our services through well trained, empowered and committed staff who are proud to work for the Leicestershire Revenue and Benefits Service. 13) To treat all our customers consistently and fairly. 14) To provide Value for Money services by delivering both financial and processing efficiencies.

Scope of services provided by the partnership	
Council Tax Billing, Recovery & Enforcement	Housing Benefit administration
NNDR Billing Enforcement (including BIDs for both HBBC and NWLDC)	Council Tax Reduction Scheme Administration (Council Tax Support)
The investigation of Council Tax Support Fraud	Housing Benefit Overpayment enforcement
Provision of customer support and guidance	Housing Benefit advice and support
DWP Liaison in respect of Housing Benefit Fraud	Administration and payment of business grants to those impacted by the pandemic
Payment of Test & Trace Isolation Support Payments	Administration of hardship awards and reliefs in any discipline
Certification & audit of grant claims	Response to covid related initiatives as required

3. National & Local Agenda Items

There are new and existing matters that will need to be addressed during 2022 to meet both central government objectives and the Partnerships. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the way we currently deliver our services and the need to switch resources to deliver new initiatives, that continue to emerge without notice or planning. This has a significant impact on the service, and maintaining all business as usual activities to our communities.

The items are:

1. Supporting Businesses through grants payments (most recently the Omicron Grant Scheme)
2. Administration of the Covid-19 Additional relief Fund (CARF)
3. The financial impact on individuals and businesses
4. Expanded retail discount (business rates holiday)
5. Payment of Household support grants
6. Test and Trace Isolation Support Payments
7. The Housing Benefit Award Accuracy initiative
8. Reconciliation, post payment assurance and debt recovery linked to grants work

9. Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) (started in 2021, though not planned)
10. Changes to service delivery bought about by unplanned changes beyond our control
11. New Business Improvement District (BID) for NWLDC

Supporting communities

A number of national measures have been introduced to support businesses and individuals because of the pandemic. It is important to note that the partnership are administering the mandatory grant schemes, the discretionary schemes are dealt with by the host authorities. This is in addition to our business as usual operation.

There are currently:

- Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)
- Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant (OHLG)
- Test and Trace Isolation Support Payment
- Expanded retail discount
- Administering an element of the Household Support Payment

The financial impact on individuals

In 2020/21 Central Government announced an additional £500m exceptional hardship funding to support working age council taxpayers which meant that all working age recipients of LCTS (both existing and new) received a reduction of up to £150 on their council tax demand.

Leicestershire County Council have taken a decision that £60 of funding will be awarded to all working age CTS claimants. Whilst the funding has been issued to LCC, this element will be administered by the districts.

From Monday 28 September 2020, people in England were required by law to self-isolate if they tested positive for coronavirus or are contacted by the NHS Test and Trace service. To support those affected a Test and Trace payment scheme was set up which allowed them to claim for a one-off payment of £500 to support them during their isolation period. The scheme was originally intended to end on 31 January 2022 but it has been extended to at least the 31 March 2022.

We have seen and continue to see an increasing number of Council Tax and Business Rates payers experiencing difficulties to meet their liabilities, this impacts on our levels of recovery, performance and the volume of contact with the LRBP and our colleagues in customer services.

During 2021/22 all business as usual activities recommenced, these continue whilst administering the above.

Changes to Service Delivery

The Housing Benefit Award Accuracy initiative

The Housing Benefit Award Accuracy is a new initiative from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to ensure awards of Housing Benefit are correct, and that those who are entitled, get the right amount.

From 1st April 2022 all LA’s will be required to undertake mandated activities to identify unreported changes of circumstances. This includes a full case review where we will need to contact the claimant who will need to supply all their current details and evidence so that we may check that their a Housing Benefit award is correct.

4 KEY PROJECTS

In addition to the ‘business as usual’ projects we are currently working on a number of new projects during 2022/23

Description	Key actions	Responsible Officer	Critical Support
Business case on an invest to save basis for the following: e-ndr e-automation (e-claim/e-cics) Connect & Serve for customer services	Review and provide business case for the descriptor Review case with a view to a move to e-automation Review and provide business case for the descriptor	L Butler (LB) A Hough(AH) SOHanlon (SOH)	PMT, Systems team, Capita Benefit Teamleaders, PMT, Capita PMT, Systems team, strategic CS group, Capita

XL-print	Review operation & Scope	AHough	PMT, Systems team
Extending services available to customers to enable self service	To include; E-Claim E-Change of circumstances Discount & Exemption module	Scoop (SC) /LB	Academy/Systems/IT
Automation of benefit file transfers into LA systems	Testing to ensure that DWP data is updated as required and not compromised	SOH	Academy/Systems
Compliance with GDPR and data removal/retention	Testing and removal of data	LB/SC	GDPR officer/Legal/systems
Ascendant	Review continued use & costings	SOH	Legal, Systems, PMT
Destin	Review all offers, and if appropriate provide business case to MB	SC	PMT, Systems, LRBP Teamleaders
Promotion & marketing the partnership	As directed by Management Board & Joint Committee	SOH	Comms team /Legal/finance
Consideration of a single employer	Project Delivery as led by CEX	SOH	All partners
Working with potential new partner (s) to onboard and put together business case	As descriptor	SOH	MB, PMT, legal, HR, finance
Accommodation	Work with HBBC programme team with regard to the possibility of moving from the Atkins Building to the Hub. Implementing the agile working arrangements	SOH	HBBC FOM Project team, PMT, LRBP staff

5. CUSTOMERS

Service Standards

- The Leicestershire Partnership aims to demonstrate its commitment to equality, diversity and fairness by:
 - Providing services which are accessible to all and which meet customer needs. We do this by providing information in different languages, in large type or on tape or using British sign language where appropriate.
 - Promoting and demonstrating fairness and equality of opportunity in the employment of staff. This is achieved through a corporate approach to recruitment and staff retention that aims to be inclusive.
 - Being proactive in the promotion of equality and diversity with each council and all its operations.
 - Maintaining and improving turnaround times for new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support

6 PERFORMANCE

All targets will be reviewed following the 2021/22 out-turn. The setting of targets for the 2022/2023 financial year will be reported back to Joint Committee for approval

7 Risks

It is our intention to manage our business risks in a consistent and cost-effective manner.

Risk	Mitigating Actions in place	Actions put in place	Owner
Insufficient Business Continuity arrangements/plans: could	Business continuity plans in place Risk Assessment to prioritise resource against	Following Pandemic vast majority of officers working from home and office attendance is at a minimum. Revised procedures/protocols put in place to facilitate this. We have	SC/LB

prevent ability to deliver services	priority/critical services using generic corporate risk assessment	reviewed a number of processes that deliver the same outcome but do not require an actual visit or for staff to attend the office (ie making payments remotely)	
Failure to keep up to date or not complying with latest legislation and regulations such as Health & Safety policy could lead to damage to reputation and potential prosecution	Implement revised requirements of new H&S Policy once approved by Council Attend training and adopt policy Enforcement of existing H&S policy and procedures	Each partner authority has their own policies which are reviewed and implemented as required Revised protocols concerning use of Atkins building and office attendance during Pandemic in place and strictly observed Risk assessments also updated to include role of visiting officers	SC/LB
Failure to improve sickness absence: causes reduced capacity leading to failure/inability to deliver services/objectives efficiently	Continue to set absence targets and monitor against targets Compliance with Management of Absence arrangements Monthly monitoring of absence statistics provided by HR Setting of targets. Continued focus on long-term absence management and alternative options i.e. rehabilitation	The appropriate sickness absence monitoring framework is adhered to and reported monthly to the Management Board	SC/LB
Reduced benefits subsidy from Central Govt. as a result of poor performance: will have significant impact on reserves and reputation for the authority	Introduced a Quality Checking Procedure within Benefits	Subsidy audit will be undertaken remotely , with an action plan to follow	SC
Effects of the pandemic on collection and increase in Benefit Claims: need to deal with new claims and change of circumstance as quickly as possible to relieve financial hardship and avoid benefit overpayments	Regularly report on performance to Management Board.	As a result of the pandemic a number of Centrally funded initiatives have been introduced including test and trace isolation payments Additionally, we continue to promote the availability of DHP and Council tax Support	SC/LB

Failure to bring projects in on time	Effective Project management and forward planning of available resources	Adherence to project timetables	SOH
Partners do not involve LRBP in planning stage of projects, therefore meaning either BAU is compromised, or we are unable to support partners	All partners contribute to the LRBP service plan effectively	Following repeated incidents, all asked to contribute to the service plan, direct requests for resource via HoP	LRBP Management Board

How?

- Maintain a robust and consistent risk management approach that will identify and effectively manage strategic, operational, partnership and project risks
- Ensure accountabilities, roles and responsibilities for managing risks are clearly defined and communicated
- Consider risk as an integral part of service improvement planning, key decision-making processes, and project and partnership governance
- Communicate risk information effectively through a clear reporting framework
- Increase understanding and expertise in risk management through targeted training and the sharing of best practice.