

Decision Maker: EXECUTIVE AND RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 9 July 2015

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

Title: REVENUES SERVICE MONITORING REPORT

Contact Officer: John Nightingale, Head of Revenues and Benefits
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Chief Officer: Director of Finance

Ward: (All Wards);

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 This report provides information regarding the performance of the Revenues Services administered by Liberata in the second half of 2014/15. A letter from Amanda Inwood-Field, Liberata's Contract Director, provides an update on each individual service and is attached at **Appendix 1** with statistical data relating to the Revenues service shown in subsequent appendices.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The PDS is requested to note the information contained within the report and the letter provided by Liberata detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy:
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council:
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: 400003
 4. Total current budget for this head: £3.49m
 5. Source of funding:
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 2 plus Liberata staff
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement: The amount of legislation is too extensive to cite in full, below are detailed the major Acts and Regulations covering the services.

Local Government Finance Act 1988

The Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992

Local Government Finance Act 2012

Rating Law and Practice: England and Wales

LGPS Regulations 2013

2. Call-in: Applicable:
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): The services covered in this report affect all Council Taxpayers, Business Ratepayers, Members and Pensioners, this amounts to an estimated 138,000 households.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The Revenues and Benefits Team monitor the contract, sets targets and performance standards, liaises with partners, progresses the development and improvement of services through leadership on specific improvement initiatives. The team also ensures the services comply with current legislation, financial regulations, contractual obligations and audit requirements. A summary of performance by the services is contained in **Appendix 2**.
- 3.2 To maintain the drive for improved service performance, monthly service review meetings are held with operational and senior Liberata management. Bromley's Heads of Service and Liberata's Contract Director meet regularly to deal with escalated issues, review policies and develop new ideas.

Council Tax

- 3.3 The in-year Council Tax collection rate for 2014/15 was 97.70%, this being an improvement of 0.2% on the previous year. This positive variance was achieved despite the increase in the minimum contribution required from working-age claimants of Council Tax Support.

The 2014/15 performance on collection of current year and arrears was 97.57%, this compares to 97.52%% in 2013/14, a positive variance of 0.05%.

Business Rate

- 3.4 The in-year Business Rates collection for the financial year 2014/15 was 98.80%, this being a 0.1% improvement on the previous year. In my mid-year report I had raised concern as to the collection rate, which at that time was indicating a reduced level of collection. However, strong second half performance reversed this trend.

However, the current and arrears figure was down on the previous year, with the collection rate being 97.11% compared to 97.98% in 2013/14.

With effect from 1st April 2014 Retail Relief became available for certain categories of shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments which had a rateable value of £50,000 or less. The relief entitled them to a reduction in their rates of up to £1,000. Those establishments identified as potentially meeting the criteria for this relief were issued with an application form together with information on the application process. The Retail Relief scheme has been extended into 2015/16 and the discount has been increased from £1,000 to £1,500. This will automatically roll over to businesses that had previously applied and qualified for Retail Relief. The scheme remains open to any other businesses that may qualify.

Cashiers

- 3.5 The payment kiosk sited in the Civic Centre central reception continued to take high volume of payments. Exercises to convince callers to change to alternative methods of payment have continued. However, with the increased number of households required to pay Council Tax following the introduction of Council Tax Support (some of which are relatively small amounts), the demand for this facility has remained high.

Payment kiosks are now available at the new Penge library. Marketing exercises have been undertaken as initial usage was low. Usage of this facility is now increasing.

Payroll

- 3.6 The number of employees paid on the 31 March 2015 payroll was 4608.
- 3.7 During the year 15 schools converted to Academy status, with more scheduled to convert during 2015/16

Pensions

- 3.8 Membership numbers recorded on the pensions administration system as at 31 March 2015 were 5,782 actives, 5,066 deferred and 4948 pensioners.
- 3.9 Work has been undertaken in respect of changes to the Teachers' Pension Scheme and NHS Pension Scheme effective from April 2015

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The report refers to the significant income collection undertaken through the Exchequer Services contract with Liberata

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy, Legal and Personnel
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	