



04 Sound & Self-sufficient Council

"a well-run and innovative council supporting its staff to realise commercial opportunities whilst transforming its services to deliver at the best possible value for money"

Policy Commitment

1. Underpin all council activity with sound governance and internal control measures minimising the opportunities for fraud and corruption.

The team have continued to make good progress in delivering the planned work for Gravesham for 2016-17, and performance against many of the team's indicators has improved during the period. A review of the remaining resources available for the year projected that the team would have less work days available than would be required to deliver the plan, and as such the Finance & Audit Committee approved a revision to the plan, removing two pieces of audit assurance work. A full update on the performance and outputs of the team from 1 September to 31 October 2016 was presented to the Finance & Audit Committee on November 2016, and an update on the period 1 November 2016 to 13 January 2017 will be presented to the Committee on 7 February 2017.

A review has been conducted of the Audit & Counter Fraud Strategy 2016-2020 and the Quality Assurance & Improvement Programme; the results of these reviews will be presented to the Finance & Audit Committee in March 2017.







Work began on the development of the Audit & Counter Fraud Plan for 2017-18, with the preparation of a resource budget and initial horizon scanning and risk assessment activities.

Matches from the 2015-16 National Fraud Initiative have all been cleared and data has been supplied to the Cabinet Office for the 2016-17 exercise with the results expected on 26 January 2017. The Kent Intelligence Network has now issued its first matching results for investigation; this cross matched Single Persons Discount data with the Social Housing Waiting List and after some initial teething problems with software, we have now been able to confirm that Gravesham received 150 matches. These are currently being checked to eliminate any false matches and enquiries will be undertaken on any where there are discrepancies noted.

Actions for Improvement

Performance Indicator

PI 41 *Percentage of internal audit recommendations implemented*

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	50.0%	79.0%	89.0%	93.0%	81.0%	94.3%	92.9%	
Direction of Travel	N/A							

Policy Commitment

2. Quality frontline services delivered on time and to the right people.

Revenues and Benefits update

Revenues & Benefits

New Claims

The processing time for new claims is 18.4 days which is better than our outturn for 2015/16 of 19.1 days and is the best it has been for a number of years and is within our target of 20 days.

Change of Circumstances

The processing time for change of circumstances is 3.7 days which is better than the outturn for 2015-16 of 4.7 and is within our target of 6 days.

The improved benefits performance is as a result of a number of factors including a reduction in caseload, changes of circumstances coming through electronically, rather than us having to write out, and being more focussed in processing new claims on a risk basis.

Actions for Improvement

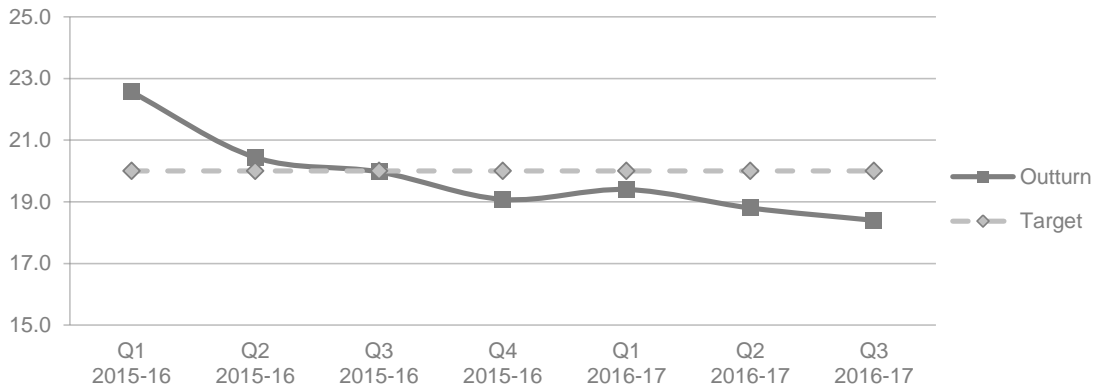
Revenues and Benefits update

Performance Measures

(NB: Cumulative Outturn)

PM 11 Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council Tax new claims (days)

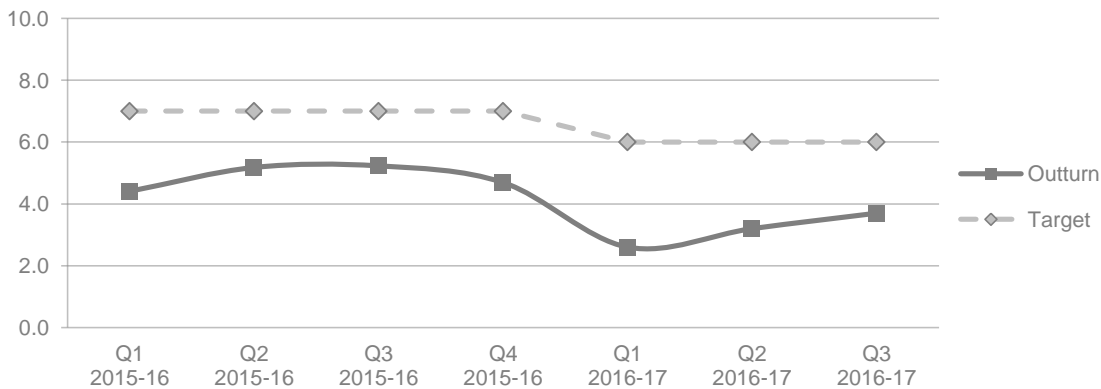
	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	22.6	20.4	20.0	19.1	19.4	18.8	18.4	
Target	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0
Target Met	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Exception Notes								



(NB: Cumulative Outturn)

PM 12 Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council Tax change of circumstances (days)

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	4.4	5.2	5.2	4.7	2.6	3.2	3.7	
Target	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Target Met	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Exception Notes								



Policy Commitment

3. Work to maximise income collection through the robust management and recovery of debts owed to the council.

Council Tax

The collection rate of 84.11% is slightly down on what we achieved in the third quarter of 2015/16 of 84.40% and slightly below our target of 84.30%.

Business Rates

The collection rate of 83.62% is better than what we achieved in the third quarter of 2015/16 of 83.43% and is on target to achieve the collection rate of 98.75%.

The slight reduction in Council Tax collection is probably expected due to the impact of the CTR scheme albeit the impact is still not as much as was predicted. However we will look at ways to increase the collection rate before the end of March.

NOTE: The Q3 outturns for amount of overpayments raised and recovered are not currently available. This is as a result of a new initiative that has been introduced by the DWP for recovering debts from the DWP known as Payment Deduction Program (PDP). Any debts that are being recovered via this method are incorrectly being shown as either fully or partially recovered when in fact they are still outstanding resulting in incorrect outturns.

It is intended to report the correct figures to Members as part of the Q4 reporting cycle.

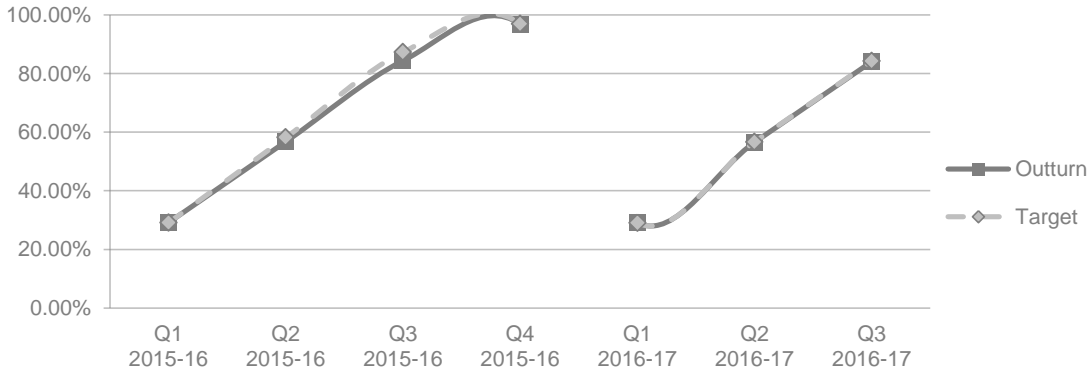
Actions for Improvement

Plans for 2016/17 include holding a 'recovery surgery' on 19 January 2017, inviting anyone with recovery action to come to discuss their accounts with us. If this is a success it may be an ongoing monthly event. Rundles have also been asked to have a surgery targeting 2016 debt.

Performance Measures

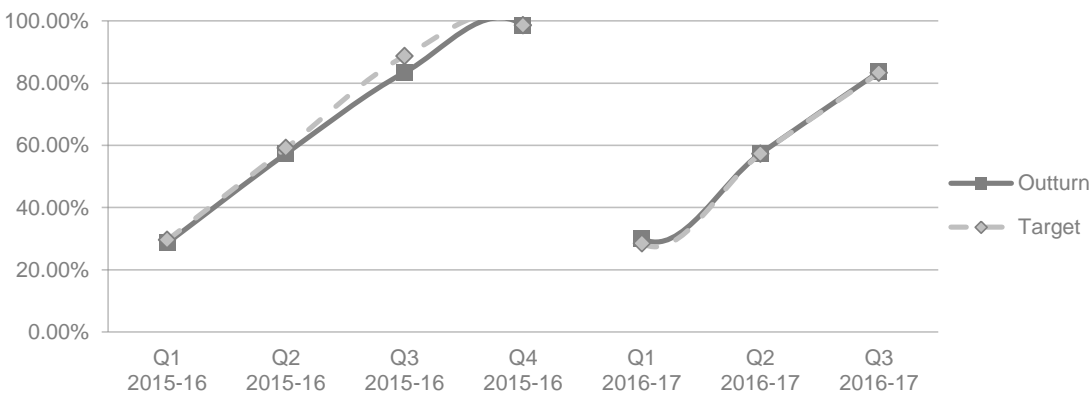
PM 9 *Percentage of council tax collected* (NB: Cumulative Outturn)

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	29.16%	56.78%	84.40%	96.86%	29.12%	56.57%	84.11%	
Target	29.10%	58.20%	87.30%	97.00%	29.10%	56.70%	84.30%	97.00%
Target Met	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	
Exception Notes	The Q3 outturn of 84.11% is slightly below the 84.30% target. The team are proactively running weekly reports to ensure payments allocation is correct, telephoning more customers and sending out broken arrangement letters weekly. Customer Services has also been advised to secure immediate payments.							








PM 10 *Percentage of NNDR collected* (NB: Cumulative Outturn)

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	28.63%	57.32%	83.43%	98.51%	30.07%	57.38%	83.62%	
Target	29.55%	59.10%	88.65%	98.50%	28.50%	57.20%	83.30%	98.50%
Target Met	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Exception Notes								








Performance Indicators

PI 42 *Total amount of housing benefit overpayments raised*

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	387,743	1,006,130	470,107	675,375	449,402	474,714	N/A	
Direction of Travel	N/A						N/A	

PI 43 *Total amount of housing benefit overpayments recovered*

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	271,947	302,594	304,403	298,316	311,388	353,814	N/A	
Direction of Travel	N/A						N/A	

Policy Commitment

4. Implement genuine channel shift through an enhanced IT infrastructure, enabling customers to access key services online, anytime, anywhere.

IT Service update

The Web Developer in IT Services has been working with the Digital Team on a number of eForms that require database lookups and access to data from other systems. These are complementing the Firmstep system and assisting the migration of forms from the Councils older eBase forms system.

The new Cash Receipting system has gone live in Finance. This replaces the final system that was running on the Council's old Universe server and brings to a close the legacy systems migration project.

The data quality of the Local Land and Property Gazetteer continues to improve, and we are now at a stage where 85% of the data has been cleaned. The final 15% represents the more complex cases which will take longer to address. However, we now have sufficient confidence in the quality of the data to start using it to automate business processes. The first application of this has been to streamline the process whereby indexes are set up in the document management system which link to the Uniform Planning system. Previously this was a manual process but it can now be done automatically.

The project to replace the Councils web and telephone payment system is now underway and a test environment has been made available for us to use.







Work has also started on the IT elements of a number of shared services which include Revenues and Benefits, Legal Services and Payroll / HR.

Actions for Improvement

IT Service update

Performance Indicators

PI 48 *Percentage of council tax accounts signed up for e-billing*

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%	1.1%	7.3%	8.5%	10.0%	
Direction of Travel	N/A							

Policy Commitment

5. Deliver on opportunities for the sharing and selling of council services.

Work has continued into the development of a shared Legal Service with Medway Council, with the formal report on this activity presented to Cabinet on 09 January 2017. The project group has been set up in order to progress this shared service, with officers from IT, Finance, Property and HR on the group to ensure all elements of the shared service are considered. The implementation date for the shared service is 01 April 2017 with estimated savings in the region of £80,000.







Discussions have continued with colleagues from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council regarding the development of a shared service for Revenues and Benefits and the Cabinet has reconfirmed its commitment to such an arrangement. As previously report to Cabinet, great care is being taken in the progression of this shared service, particularly given its high profile nature and potential impact on the customer and as such, the long-term aim for the implementation of this shared service is Summer 2018.

Actions for Improvement

Further work will continue in the coming months to ensure the implementation date of 01 April 2017 is met for the Legal Shared Service. Work will continue in the analysis and development of a shared service for Revenues and Benefits and a further report on this item will be brought back to Cabinet in due course.

Performance Indicators

PI 45 *Percentage of posts involved in shared services arrangements*

	Q1 2015-16	Q2 2015-16	Q3 2015-16	Q4 2015-16	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17
Outturn	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	
Direction of Travel	N/A							

Policy Commitment

6. Continuously review and adapt how we deliver our services to achieve financial efficiencies and improved performance.

The council has commenced its analysis of the service review options identified, with a view to implementing changes in order to either reduce the overall budget for the council or increase income opportunities. To date, the Cabinet have approved the options for Economic Development and Public Health which has resulted in a potential saving to the council of £487,000.

Implementation of these options has commenced with the tourist information service previously operated from the TownCentric building in the St George's Centre closing from 31 December 2016. A new, reduced tourist information service will begin to be delivered from the Gravesend Borough Market on Thursdays to Sundays, from February 2017.

The Cabinet have considered the options for Parking & Amenities, Revenues and Benefits and Regulatory Services, and at its meeting in January 2017 approved the options for these reviews which will deliver a further £523,000 (although this includes an estimated £100,000 for the shared service development in Revenues and Benefits).

Actions for Improvement

The next round of service review options for Planning & Regeneration, Customer & Theatre Services and the DSO will be presented to Cabinet in February and March 2017 for review and formal approval.

The project groups to support the delivery of the options that have been approved have either been established or are in the process of being established in order to drive these activities forward.

Policy Commitment

Any other areas of work (relevant to the strategic objective)