



Performance and Administration Portfolio

Performance Report
Q3 2017-18

Gravesham
Borough Council 

Delivering for the Community

Performance & Administration Portfolio: Cllr. Derek Shelbrooke



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.

Good progress with the annual work plan continues with 37% of the plan completed and a further 28% in progress at the end of quarter three. Members of the Finance & Audit Committee agreed revisions to the annual work plan in relation to audits that are no longer appropriate. A temporary member of staff has also been in post since the end of October 2017 to help fill some of the lost resource created by sickness and a vacancy within the team. This has been funded from existing salary savings and will be ending at the beginning of February 2018.

Investigation activity during the quarter has produced the following results;

- £1917.90 of additional council tax owed due to the removal of discounts or exemptions, plus an additional £2547.52 in future years where discounts no longer apply.
- Three people have received £70 penalties for negligent failure to report changes affecting their entitlement to a council tax discount /exemption (Total £210)
- Two council properties have been recovered as a result of investigations conducted giving a notional saving of £36,000.
- One Right to Buy application was blocked after it was found that the tenants daughter had forged the signature of the tenant. This prevented a loss of £77,900 and the daughter received a caution as an alternative to prosecution in connection with the false statement.

In accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, a follow-up process is in place to monitor and ensure that management actions have been effectively implemented or that senior management has accepted the risk of not taking action. As of 30 September 2017, 16 of the 79 recommendations due in the 2017-18 financial year to date were outstanding; outstanding recommendations relate to:

- Enhancements to the processes for monitoring planning conditions and obligations,
- Enhancements to NNDR relief applications for better fraud prevention,
- Updates to the Constitution in relation to approval arrangements for the acquisition of investment, non-investment and housing assets and the writing-off of small balances,
- A review of the council's business continuity arrangements in respect of IT,
- Formalisation of an asset management strategy,
- A review of the fraud prevention information contained within the employee Code of Conduct,
- Implementation of an updated Homelessness Strategy,
- Enhancements to fraud identification mechanisms within the Right to Buy process,
- Finalisation of arrangements for Payroll Services to be delivered by Medway Council,
- Review of processes for excluding suppliers convicted of fraud from procurement processes, and
- Amendments Council Tax procedure notes.

Progress made towards implementing outstanding recommendations, including the reasons for non-implementation, are monitored on a quarterly basis by the council's Management Team. Details of all recommendations agreed, implemented and outstanding are provided to the council's Finance & Audit Committee as part of the quarterly and annual A&CF update reports.

PI 41 Percentage of internal audit recommendations implemented

	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18
Outturn	80.7%	94.3%	92.9%	87.2%	64.3%	66.7%	79.8%	
Direction of Travel								

Policy Commitment

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

Revenues and Benefits update

New Claims and Change of Circumstances

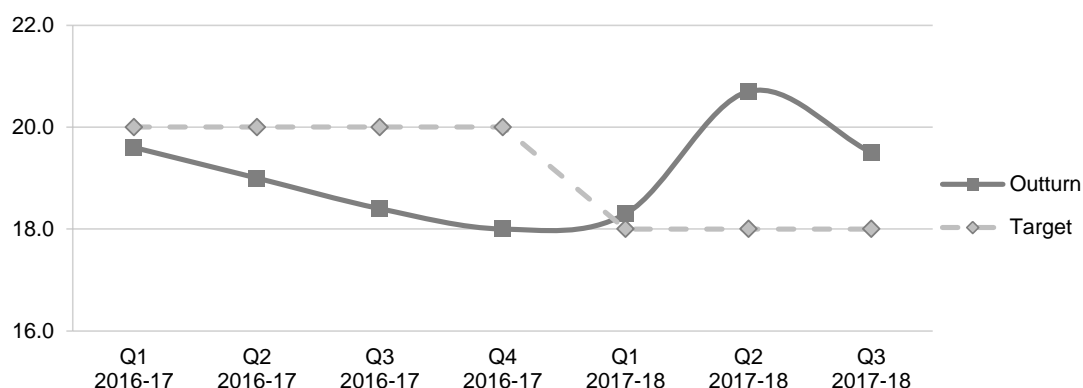
The processing time for new claims is 19.5 days which, although outside the target of 18 days, represents a significant improvement on the 20.7 days achieved in Q2. Gravesham's outturn reflects positively in comparison with the latest national average (23 days) and Kent average (22.3 days).

Similarly the processing time for change of circumstances is 5.5 days, slightly outside of the set target of 5 days. As with new claims, Gravesham's outturn for change of circumstances is well inside the latest national average (8 days) and Kent averages (8.3 days).

Resources in the team in previous months have been affected by sickness and staff leaving the authority. To address this situation the service has recruited some additional officer cover and concentrated efforts on reducing processing times for new claims. These actions have resulted in positive improvements, with the processing of new claims in December reduced to 15.5 days.

The aim therefore is continue with these improvements and reduce both outturns in line with their set target in Q4 2017-18.

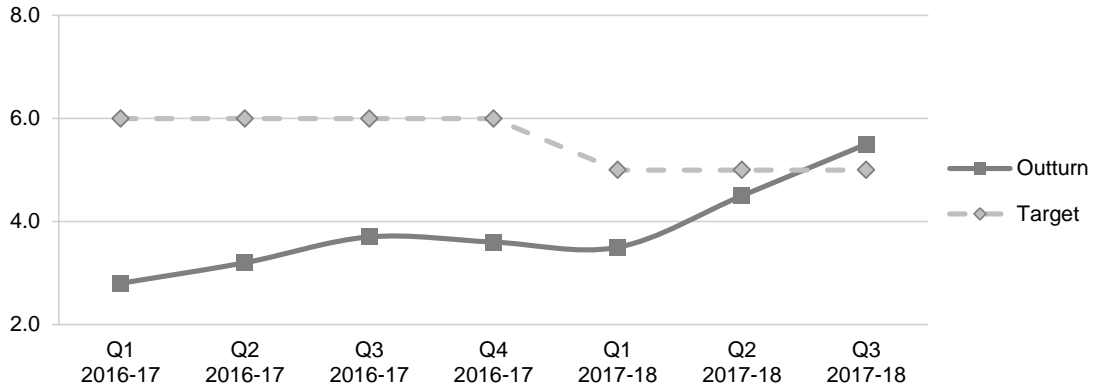
		(NB: Cumulative Outturn)							
PM 11	Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council Tax new claims (days)								
	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	
Outturn	19.6	19.0	18.4	18.0	18.3	20.7	19.5		
Target	20.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	18.0	18.0	18.0		
Target Met	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗		
Exception Notes	The processing time for new claims is 19.5 days which, although outside the target of 18 days, represents a significant improvement on the 20.7 days achieved in Q2. Gravesham's outturn reflects positively in comparison with the latest national (23 days) and Kent average (22.3 days). Increased officer cover has also had a positive impact, with the processing of new claims in December reduced to 15.5 days.								



(NB: Cumulative Outturn)

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

	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18
Outturn	2.8	3.2	3.7	3.6	3.5	4.5	5.5	
Target	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	
Target Met	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	
Exception Notes	The processing time for change of circumstances is 5.5 days, slightly outside of the set target of 5 days. As with new claims, Gravesham's outturn for change of circumstances is well inside the latest national (8 days) and Kent averages (8.3 days). With the additional officer support that has been secured in Q3, the team is focussed on moving change of circumstances back inside target for Q4.							



Policy Commitment

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

The council's Management Team continues to receive comprehensive updates from council services regarding the levels of outstanding debt across the authority.

The Corporate Debt Working Group has taken the opportunity to review its focus and continues to focus on addressing the overall debt levels across the council and looking at corporate debt solutions, with a current work stream considering the methods of payment utilised by the council. Updates against the action plan are presented to Management Team on a regular basis.

Council Tax

The collection rate of 84.4% is above our quarterly target of 84.1%. Whilst the collection rate usually fluctuates from month to month when reviewing across previous years, this 'year to date' figure is particularly encouraging given that the reduction in the amount of Council Tax Support that our residents are entitled to this year. It is assessed that the collection rate is on track to achieve its year-end target of 97%.

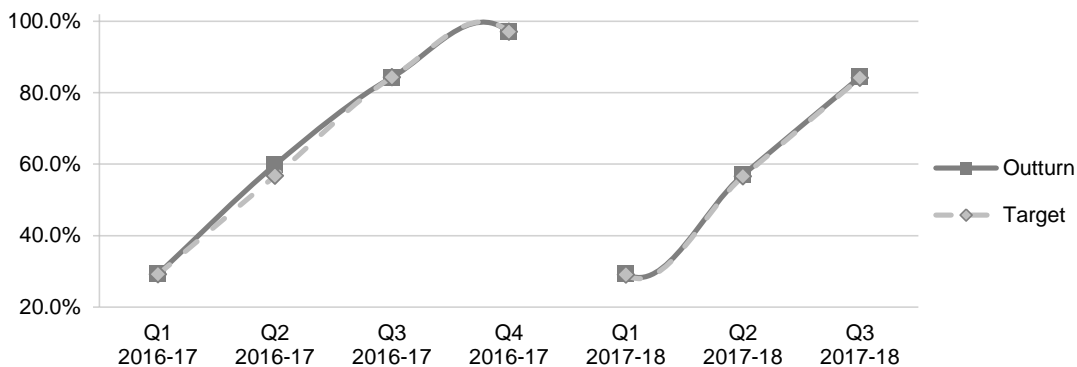
Business Rates

At 83.2%, the cumulative collection rate for NNDR at the end of Q3 was only 0.4% below the stretching target of 83.6%. A key factor in this position to date was the initial delay in issuing the Business Rates e-bills meaning some businesses were unable to make their April payment on time. Despite this, the Q3 outturn is broadly in line with equivalent outturns over the last couple of years and the team will continue in its efforts to work towards matching the year-end outturn of 2016-17, a record level of performance for the authority.

Housing Benefit Overpayment

Q3 of 2017-18 saw the highest amount of overpayments raised in the year to date at £604,203, principally due to a high amount of RTI claims received by the team. Similarly, the team recovered more overpayments in the quarter than in any other quarter this year at £338,993.

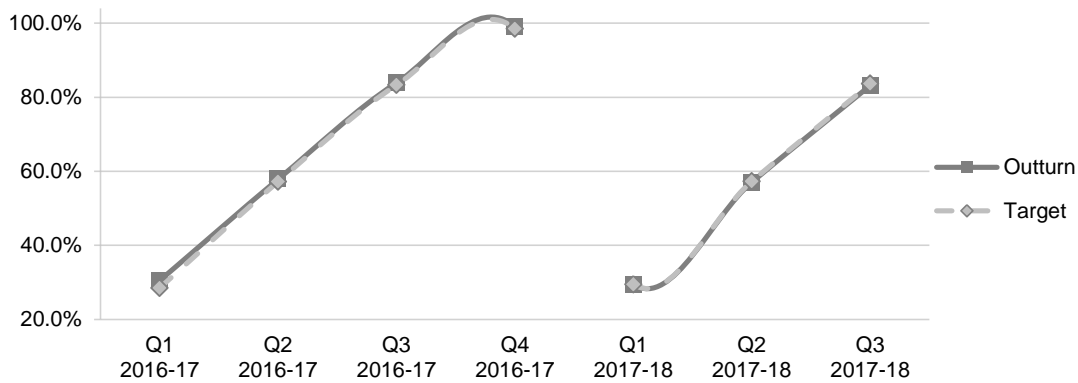
PM 9	<i>Percentage of council tax collected</i>				(NB: Cumulative Outturn)			
	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18
Outturn	29.2%	59.8%	84.3%	97.0%	29.4%	57.0%	84.4%	
Target	29.1%	56.7%	84.3%	97.0%	29.1%	56.5%	84.1%	
Target Met	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Exception Notes								



PM 10 Percentage of NNDR collected

(NB: Cumulative Outturn)

	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18
Outturn	30.5%	57.9%	83.9%	99.1%	29.5%	57.1%	83.2%	
Target	28.5%	57.2%	83.3%	98.5%	29.5%	57.3%	83.6%	
Target Met	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	
Exception Notes	At 83.2%, the cumulative collection rate for NNDR at the end of Q3 was only 0.4% below the stretching target of 83.6%. Broadly in line with equivalent outturns over the last couple of years, the team will continue in its efforts to work towards matching the year-end outturn of 2016-17, a record level of performance for the authority.							



PI 42 Total amount of housing benefit overpayments raised

	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18
Outturn	£449,402	£474,714	£515,459	£449,172	£288,263	£536,595	£684,203	
Direction of Travel	↑	↓	↓	↑	↑	↓	↓	

PI 43 Total amount of housing benefit overpayments recovered

	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18
Outturn	£311,388	£353,817	£355,314	£331,844	£337,593	£325,135	£338,993	
Direction of Travel	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	

Policy Commitment








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

A decision has been made to cease the progression of a shared service for Revenues & Benefits with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. Whilst this decision has not been taken lightly, it has been taken in light of a changing set of circumstances that have resulted in the need to strategically rethink the future direction for the service and the timing of any changes. A report setting out these circumstances was presented to Cabinet on 08 January 2018.

Work on the implementation of the shared service for HR with Medway Council is progressing well. The anticipated launch date for the shared service is 1 April 2018. The officer project group has now met several times and have been working on ensuring that the IT infrastructure to support the shared service is up and running for 1 April. The specific office space to be used by the team has also been reviewed and is due to be reconfigures to accommodate the service in a more effective manner.

Exploration into a shared service for Environmental Health is continuing. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council has decided not to pursue this so a two-way shared service between GBC and Medway Council is being discussed. officers across the service have been informed that these discussions are taking place and have been kept up-to-date as required. It is anticipated that a formal report on this shared service will be presented to Cabinet in the near future.

PI 45 % of posts involved in shared services arrangements

	Q1 2016-17	Q2 2016-17	Q3 2016-17	Q4 2016-17	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18
Outturn	4%	4%	4%	4%	6%	6%	6%	
Direction of Travel								

Policy Commitment

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

An update report was presented to Cabinet on 8 January 2018 which set out the council's progress towards implementation of the options agreed in relation to the service review process. To date, just over £1m of the options agreed (totalling £1.46m) have been reflected within the Medium-term Financial Plan.