



Performance and Administration Portfolio

Performance Report Q2 2018/19

Gravesham
Borough Council 

Delivering for the Community

Performance & Administration Portfolio: Cllr. D 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.

The mini restructure for the Internal Audit & Counter Fraud team undertaken at the beginning of the year is now complete, with a vacancy created by the promotion of one of the existing Officers to the new Team Leader post, being filled from 15 October 2018. Following the flexible retirement of one Officer from 1 September 2018, the team is now carrying a 1FTE vacancy created by three officers being part time, to be filled from 1 April 2019.

Members of the Finance & Audit Committee have been presented with their first update for 2018-19, advising on progress of work against the Audit & Counter Fraud Plan; the second update, which covers the period up to 30 September 2018 is due to be presented at the November meeting of the Committee. Progress is being made in relation to the 2018-19 Plan, with a number of audits having been finalised and all bar two Q1 and Q2 audits having reached at least the fieldwork stage.

A total of 67 recommendations were due to be implemented by the end of Q2 and as of 30 September 2018, 13 of these remained outstanding.

Outstanding recommendations related to:

- Enhancements to the processes for monitoring planning conditions and obligations,
- Implementation of an updated Homelessness Strategy and review of the Private Housing Enforcement Policy and Customers Services and Access Strategy,
- Enhancements to the management of security passes,
- The appointment of an Enforcement Agent to recover former tenant areas,
- Introduction of KPIs for Legal Services,
- Redesigning of the Business Continuity Planning template,
- Review of processes to monitor and encourage use of leased pool vehicles,
- Review of arrangements for the use of petty cash, and,
- Completion of work required to ensure PSN compliance.

Progress made towards implementing outstanding recommendations is monitored on a quarterly basis, through reports to 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, as well as updates on any recommendations still outstanding more than six months after the planned implementation date.

The pro-active exercise looking at identifying false student certificates has largely been concluded, a number of discrepancies were identified and these have progressed to investigations; the results of which have been detailed along with other cases. Opportunities for further data matching are being explored.

Investigation Activity during Q2 included the recovery of one council property representing a notional saving of £18,000 to the authority.

Counter fraud reviews are taking place during the year, which will focus on areas where there is thought to be significant fraud risk. These reviews will look at the fraud prevention measures in place, comparing them with identified best practice and making recommendations for improvements where appropriate.

PI 41 Percentage of internal audit recommendations implemented

	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	64.3%	66.7%	79.8%	79.8%	72.2%	80.6%		
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

At 22.7 days, the processing time for new claims (PM 11) in the year to date is currently not meeting the set 2018-19 target of 20 days. Equally, the processing time for change of circumstances (COCs) (PM 12) in the year to date is 6.7 days, again currently not meeting the annual set target of 5 days.

Importantly, performance for both measures has improved significantly on that achieved during Q1. Both performance measures are calculated as 'cumulative' measures, meaning the Q2 outturn is reporting the year to date performance. However, on solely analysing Q2 alone, it can be reported that the outturn for PM 11 for the July to September period was 20.2 days, with PM 12 during the same period recorded as 5.8, both much closer to the established annual targets.

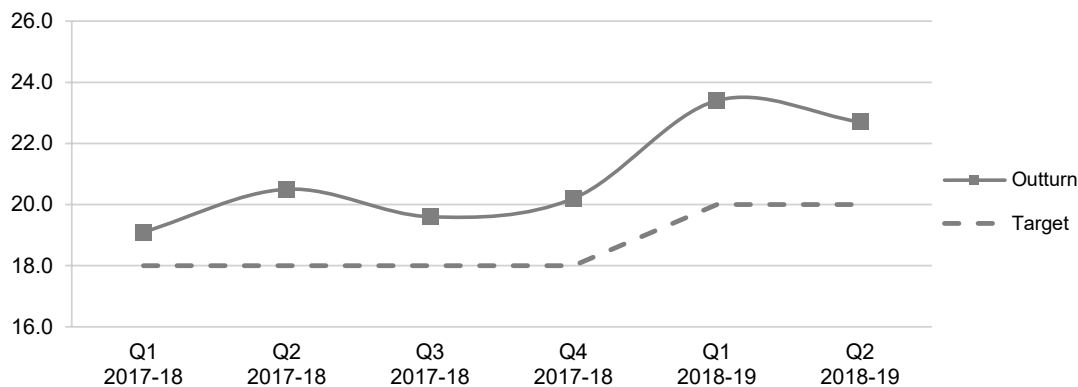
To contextualise the council's position national averages are available only for Housing Benefit (HB) cases, with the latest available national data for the Q1 2018-19 period.

The national average for new claims in Q1 was 23 days, with the Kent average time at 21 days; the council is therefore operating within these averages.

HB COCs at a national level average at 7 days for Q1 2018-19, with the Kent average at 8 days, meaning the council is ahead of the respective average performance levels.

To assist the service, the Housing Benefit section has three new Assessment Officers who are currently training. Once the new members of the team become more confident, their capabilities will help boost the resources available.

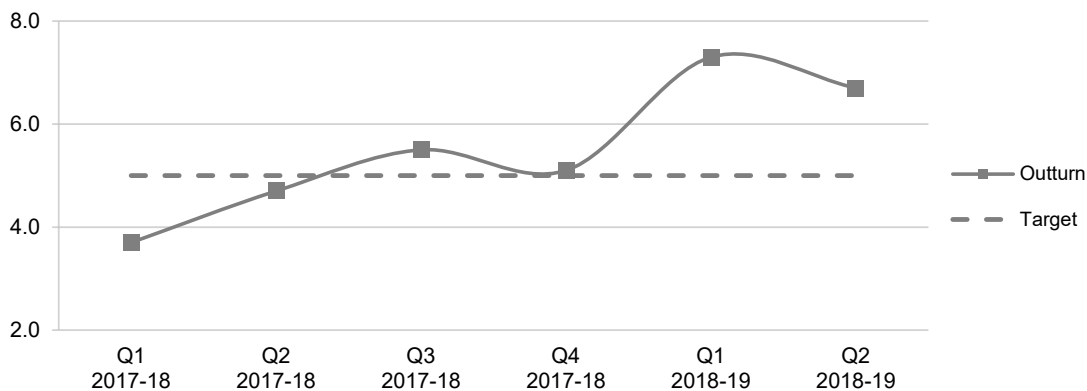
					(NB: Cumulative Outturn)			
PM 11	Average time taken to process Housing Benefit / Council Tax new claims (days)							
	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	19.1	20.5	19.6	20.2	23.4	22.7		
Target	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	20.0	20.0		
Target Met	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗		
Exception Notes	As cumulative figures, the average processing times in the year to date have largely been impacted by the vacancies in the team resulting in the 22.7 days (new claims) and 6.7 days (change of circs) outturns. However, having undergone relevant training, those successfully recruited officers are now in place and progress is being made in reducing outturns where, for Q2 only, new claims were recorded at 20.2 days and change of circs at 5.8 days. Officers will continue to closely monitor this area on a weekly basis to ensure that the progress made over the summer continues.							



(NB: Cumulative Outturn)

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

	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	3.7	4.7	5.5	5.1	7.3	6.7		
Target	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0		
Target Met	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗		
Exception Notes	See PM 11.							



Policy Commitment

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

Council Tax

The Q2 collection rate of 56.53% is on target which is very encouraging given that we have reduced the amount of Council Tax Support (CTS) that our residents are entitled to this year by 20%. However the collection rate usually fluctuates from month to month on a yearly basis.

Business Rates

The Q2 collection rate of 56.2% is below our target of 57.3%. The collection rate usually fluctuates from month to month on a yearly basis, the team will continue in its efforts to work towards matching the year-end target of 99%.

HB Overpayments

The Q2 total raised housing benefit overpayments is £386,855. This is less than the Q2 2017/18 outturn which was £571,557.

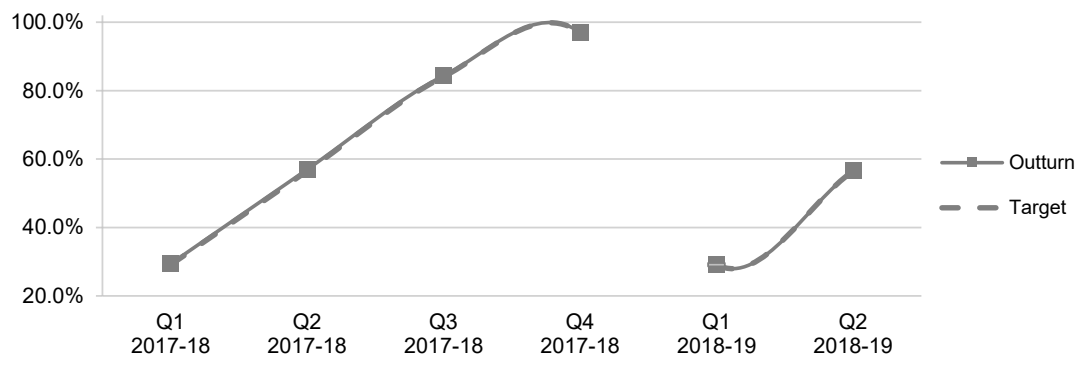
The Q2 total of housing benefit overpayments recovered is £354,419. This figure is slightly higher than what we recovered in Q2 2017/18 (£328,234).

The council's Management Team continues to receive monthly updates from council services regarding the levels of outstanding debt across the authority. The Corporate Debt Working Group 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.

The council has commenced a project to implement software to provide a single view of debt as a means to enabling greater focus of the recovery resources of the council and to better support customers who have multiple debts with the council.

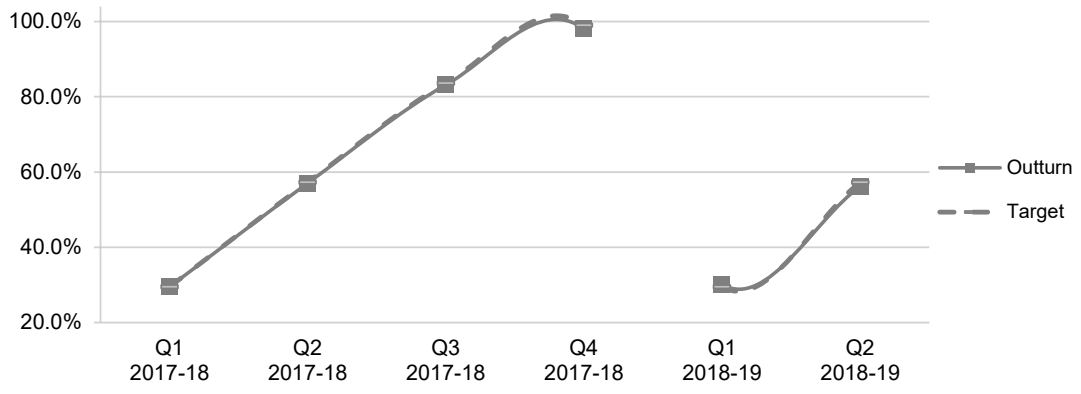
PM 9 *Percentage of council tax collected* (NB: Cumulative Outturn)

	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	29.4%	57.0%	84.4%	97.0%	29.1%	56.5%		
Target	29.1%	56.5%	84.1%	97.0%	29.1%	56.5%		
Target Met	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Exception Notes								



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

	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	29.5%	57.1%	83.2%	98.1%	30.1%	56.2%		
Target	29.5%	57.3%	83.6%	99.0%	29.5%	57.3%		
Target Met	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗		
Exception Notes	At 56.2%, the cumulative collection rate for NNDR at the end of Q2 was only 1.1% below the stretching target of 57.3%. Broadly in line with equivalent outturns over the last couple of years, and reflecting the fact that collection rates fluctuate on a monthly basis, the team will continue in its efforts to work towards matching the year-end target of 99.0%.							



PI 42 *Total amount of housing benefit overpayments raised*

	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	£299,856	£571,557	£699,855	£347,480	£430,384	£386,855		
Direction of Travel	↑	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑		

PI 43 *Total amount of housing benefit overpayments recovered*

	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	£341,154	£328,234	£341,350	£338,698	£418,850	£354,419		
Direction of Travel	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓		

Policy Commitment

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

Work to implement the shared service for Licensing has continued. As reported in Q1, the initial implementation date was suggested to be 1 November 2018, dependent on a number of factors (system access etc.). Taking this into account, a revised implementation date of 1 January 2019 has been confirmed for the shared service. Monthly project group meetings have and will continue to take place to ensure that all required activities are completed prior to the 'Go Live' date.

The Regulatory Services Manager (formerly the Licensing Manager) has continued to provide managerial support to the Medway Licensing Team. This arrangement was due to cease at the end of October 2018 but will now continue until the full shared service is operational.

A report was presented to Full Council on 9 October 2018 to seek authority for the council to accept the formal delegation of the Licensing Service from Medway Council. There is a statutory requirement for Medway Council to formally delegate the delivery of the Licensing function to Gravesham, and for Gravesham to formally accept this.

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

	Q1 2017-18	Q2 2017-18	Q3 2017-18	Q4 2017-18	Q1 2018-19	Q2 2018-19	Q3 2018-19	Q4 2018-19
Outturn	6%	6%	6%	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.

Over recent years, officers have been working to deliver the savings required as outlined in the Medium-term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20, which identified the funding gap facing the council of £2.5m. At this stage, it was estimated that, "... from the 2019-20 financial year, the council will need to save £10,000 per working day (should there be no other changes to income or expenditure) in order to bridge the budget gap...". This funding gap increased to £2.9m at budget setting 2017-18, primarily driven by changes to the design of the New Homes Bonus Scheme. There is still approximately £800k of savings/income generation initiatives to be implemented required in order to meet the full £2.9m required and work is continuing to deliver these initiatives.

Over the course of the past two years, however, there have been a number of further changes which have culminated in the need to identify additional savings/income generation initiatives to deliver further savings within the council's Medium-term Financial plan. A detailed report setting out proposals to address this additional funding gap is due to be presented to Cabinet on Monday 12 November and subsequently to the Overview Scrutiny Committee on 22 November.